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Tenant Participation and Estate
Management: Empowering Tenants?

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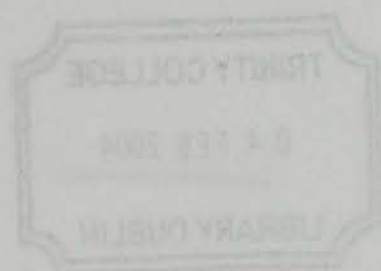
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TENANT PARTICIPATION AND ESTATE MANAGEMENT: EMPOWERING TENANTS?

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Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Sheila, for her love and encouragement, and in memory of my brother Liam, who is sadly missed.

Acknowledgements

In the course of undertaking the research and writing of this thesis I have incurred many debts, intellectual, practical and personal. My primary intellectual debt is to Dr. Andrew MacLaran of the Geography Department, TCD, who supervised the thesis. His intellectual acuity forced me to face the tough questions of theory, method and eventual synthesis of research results. His critical readings of the text were exemplary and this thesis is the better for his insights, although all remaining faults are my own. This debt, however, extends beyond the four years of work for this thesis and to a period of over ten years of academic co-operation and friendship.

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However, my main personal debt is to my wife Sheila. Working on a thesis requires the encouragement, forbearance and patience of those closest to us, and these qualities have been displayed in abundance by Sheila. She will not, however, lament the passing of this thesis into history.

SUMMARY

The objective of this thesis is to investigate the genesis and development of tenant participation in the local-authority housing sector in Ireland. In particular, it seeks to analyse the impact and efficacy of tenant participation in empowering tenants in decision making regarding the management of their estates. In essence, the work explores one aspect of the relationship between the state and its citizens. Tenant participation is supposed to be a new form of relationship between the state and citizens whereby the citizen has a greater say in decision-making through the medium of participation structures. Therefore, the conceptual and theoretical literature examined focuses on the state, citizenship and participation, taking pluralist, neo-liberal, social democratic, Marxist and communitarian viewpoints.

At a general level, the rationale for the emergence of tenant participation results from the shifting relationships between the state, the market and the citizen. At a more specific level, tenant participation has emerged in the context of the long-term decline of the local-authority sector in Ireland, which has seen the tenure decline in absolute and relative terms. More pointedly, it has witnessed an increasing concentration of the poor into the sector and local authority housing could now be described as a welfare housing sector. With this concentration of poverty has come a series of social problems often associated with a lack of social order and stability on estates and the emergence of negative images of local-authority estates and the ultimate labelling of many as 'problem' or 'sink' estates.

This residualisation of the sector has been compounded, in the view of many analysts, by the historic mismanagement of the sector by local authorities. It is now firmly established that local authorities effectively ignored the management of their estates for decades. A lack of investment in maintenance and a failure to manage estates socially in terms of allocations and lettings, allowed many to fall into environmental disrepair and social disorder. The policy of tenant participation emerged in the early 1990s against this depressing background. By and large, the policy and agenda for tenant participation was promoted by central government which heavily criticised the lack of estate management by local authorities. Over the course of the past decade, policy and guidance at central government level has developed significantly. However, ultimately, such policy must be implemented at a local level and the primary aim of the research is to explore and analyse the development, implementation and impacts of tenant participation at a local or estate level.

In order to investigate this newly emergent situation, the thesis takes a sample of urban local authorities, and selected estates in these authorities, to examine the development and impact of tenant participation. The sample is based on two criteria, first that tenant participation structures were more likely to be developed in urban local authorities where there are large estates of houses with significant social and economic problems and second, that a sufficient sample be taken to make the results meaningful. In other words, the methodology seeks to take a path between undertaking a large scale survey which might lead to little in depth understanding and undertaking a very small number of in depth case studies which might lead to distorted impressions of what was happening nationally. To this end, five urban local authorities were selected (Dublin City Council, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, South Dublin County Council, Limerick City Council and Waterford City Council) which between them have over 40% of the national local-authority rented stock. In order to investigate the development of tenant participation, background estate management information was collected for all authorities. More centrally, the thesis employed a series of in-depth qualitative interviews in all five authorities with representatives of tenant groups and with local-authority estate managers. In all, 69 such interviews were completed over the course of the research in the five authorities.

The findings of the case study research show that tenant participation has developed since the start of the 1990s, although at an uneven and sometimes very slow pace. The legislative basis for participation is very weak and, although the good practice base for tenant participation is reasonably established, the level of formal policy development at local authority level is very weak. The level and degree of participation across all the authorities was overwhelmingly of a consultative

nature, with very few examples of tenant groups having formal decision-making powers or formal influence. As such, the main structures of participation were either ad-hoc estate boards or consisted of liaison between estate officers and tenant representatives. Most tenant groups were resourced to some extent. Increasingly, small-scale funding was made available to employ tenant advocate workers and most of these jobs were filled by local tenants. Material resources tended to include the provision of office space and finance for office costs as well as training programmes. On the local authority side, there has been noticeable change in structures. Across all of the authorities, estate officers or tenant participation officers were employed whose function was to work with local tenant groups. In addition, some authorities have decentralised functions to regional or local offices.

With regard to the core issue of the agenda for participation, the key issues of anti-social behaviour, allocations and lettings, house maintenance and general estate maintenance came across with every tenant group. There was a remarkable consistency about the issues, all of which are estate-based, and comprise immediate and urgent issues which impact negatively on day-to-day life on estates. While anti-social behaviour and allocations dominated in most authorities and estates, there were differences of degree regarding the importance of these issues. How then have tenant groups experienced and interpreted tenant participation? While there are clearly variations across the authorities and between estates, there are a number of consistent messages. The first is that initially estate management was welcomed as it seemed to promise a change of policy and practice by local authorities, real influence for tenants and an end to the manifest problems on estates. However, the second consistent message is of this optimism dissipating rather quickly and a realisation, gained from experience of the process, that operating the structures and achieving results would be slow and frustrating. While there is not outright cynicism, there is a keen recognition that the level of tenant influence is limited. However, there was little appetite for moving outside the structures of tenant participation, and some evidence that formerly grassroots or direct protest organisations had to an extent become enmeshed in the process. The numbers of tenant activists remain small, they tend to be involved over a long time and are predominantly women. There is some evidence of conflicts over representation and over the limited amount of resources available.

The experiences of local authority estate officers reflect to some extent the tenant experiences. They concur that quality of life is blighted by anti-social activities. The predominant view of tenant groups is that the function of the local authority is to develop and manage them. They are critical of the unrepresentative nature of many tenant groups and take a cautious approach to allowing tenants have influence over allocations. They are positive about the decentralisation and devolution of services to a local and estate level. While not as critical as the tenants, many recognise the limitations of estate management and in particular the difficulties of delivering change in head quarters. There is evident caution regarding the future efficacy of tenant participation partly because of the lack of multi-dimensional and multi-agency approaches to estates but also because of a recognition of the persistence of poverty among the tenant population.

Because of the dominance of the market and the institutional features of the social housing system, social housing in Ireland now caters for a welfare-dependent population which is located in easily identifiable inner-city flats complexes or peripheral estates. Despite this, tenant participation can have an impact on the quality of life on estates in certain domains with respect to day-to-day life, and it has had some influence in easing the severe problems often encountered on urban social housing estates. However, tenant participation has little or no impact on structural forces and only limited influence on the institutional workings of local authorities. In conclusion, while tenants are actively participating in the management of their estates, the level of their empowerment over decision-making is very limited. Indeed, it might be argued that the whole panoply of participation structures and processes is a state-led strategy to not only ameliorate the worst effects of social exclusion but to assuage and placate both the tenants and the wider society.

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INTRODUCTION

I PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

It is now commonplace to observe that societies in the so-called developed world are dominated to a greater extent than ever before by market forces. The past thirty years have witnessed the increasing domination and penetration of societies by the market and this can be seen at various levels. We are now in an era of globalisation and, although this is subject to all manner of dispute and contention, it is undeniable that globalisation represents an expansion of the market and to some degree a lessening of the power of nation states and governments. Nation states themselves increasingly pursue pro-market and entrepreneurial strategies. This can be seen in the development and implementation of urban policy which more and more pursues pro-development strategies, through entrepreneurial planning, fiscal incentives and the like. Cities and regions now compete with one another to attract inward investment and urban and regional governance is geared towards facilitating such competition (Sassen, 1998). At the beginning of the 21st century, the superiority of market provision is widely accepted in mainstream political circles and political debates are not about alternatives to the market but about ways and means of ameliorating the worst effects of market forces.

Given this context, perhaps one of the more surprising developments over the past decade has been the rise of a politics of participation and empowerment. At various levels, demand for a more participatory and empowering politics has developed and an entirely new lexicon relating to participation, empowerment and partnership has emerged (Taylor, 2003). The essential proposition of this new politics is that ordinary citizens are increasingly disempowered either through being excluded from the market or, more particularly, excluded from the power structures of the state and that new structures are needed in order to empower citizens, primarily via the state. These new structures may be varied but the common denominator is that citizens are included in some form of participatory process where their voice can not only be heard but also taken heed of. On the surface, this seems like an emancipatory and socially progressive project. Somewhat incongruously, however, this project has been taken up by some unlikely or improbable organisations, including the World Bank. The World Bank has adapted the language of

participation and insist that its projects be subject to a process of citizen participation and partnership. Moreover, there is implicit in such appeals to the state a view that the state is in some manner neutral but also an essentially optimistic view of the ability of local communities, for example, to influence the state.

More commonly and, it must be said, somewhat more convincingly, the politics of participation is more often employed at a local scale, whether it be at community or neighbourhood level, and tends to address issues which are seemingly amenable to solution. In part, this may arise from a belief that the forces of globalisation and the penetration of the market are difficult to resist and that the only place where some power and influence can be used is at the local level on local issues (Forrest and Kearns, 2001). From a theoretical viewpoint, this emphasis on participation and empowerment at a local level finds support and sustenance in a variety of conceptual and ideological places. Neo-liberal and New Right analysts are keen to empower the consumer and see it as a way of forcing the state to provide a better service to its clients. For those of a social-democratic persuasion, there is some common ground here with a belief that the state is overloaded and needs to decentralise and develop decision-making at a local level. For communitarians, the emphasis on the local and on community is perfectly attuned to their belief that rampant individualism has corroded the moral value of community and undermined social cohesion (Etzioni, 1995, 1998; Frazer, 1999).

The rise and current ubiquity of ideas of social cohesion, social capital and participation are testament to a pervasive belief that the domination of the market is having corrosive effects on the fabric of society in terms of its community basis and social solidarity (Taylor, 2003). The essential accusation contained in these ideas is that the domination of the market has increasingly reduced society to a mass of competing individuals who selfishly and ruthlessly seek to maximise their own ends. In so doing, they rend the cohesion, community and trust in society asunder. Interestingly, however, the broad thrust of the solutions suggested have little to do with transforming market structures. While identifying the culprit in broad terms, the solutions tend to focus on exhortations to increase trust, capacity, participation and so on and to remanufacture community spirit, social cohesion, social capital and solidarity. This is generally to be achieved with regard to changing the relationship of the

citizen to the state rather than to the market. The main culprit, the market, effectively stands absolved of any responsibility to remedy the problem.

Nonetheless, the language of urban policy is suffused with the rhetoric of participation. No policy, it seems, can be discussed, still less implemented, without the imprimatur of having been the subject of public participation (Taylor, 2003). Citizen participation in urban policy-making and implementation is said to produce better decisions by public institutions while also increasing the level and quality of citizenship. On the surface, this seems to be a positive development, a democratising of the decision-making process, a new situation where powerful institutional interests are having to share power with the public and to account for themselves, where participatory democracy is enhanced and citizens have real power and influence. Yet, there is an uneasy feeling that while there have undoubtedly been changes in the manner in which urban public policy decisions are made, that power relationships between the public and key institutional actors has not necessarily altered all that much. So, does the emphasis on citizen participation presage a real change in how decisions are made, a fundamental change in urban governance, or is it more plausibly interpreted as a sophisticated rhetoric which masks traditional power relationships?

In the context of local authority housing in the Republic of Ireland, this thesis explores the potentialities and the limitations of citizen participation as a means for regenerating local authority housing estates. Estate regeneration initiatives, which encompass physical and environmental renewal, economic interventions, and public service improvements, are undertaken with varying degrees of citizen participation, and these policies are seen as methods of moving local authority estates from being socially excluded areas to places of inclusion and social cohesion. This thesis thus examines participation at a local scale in Ireland by exploring and analysing the case of tenant participation in the local-authority housing sector. Over the past decade, attempts have been made to allow tenants to participate in the management of their estates or neighbourhoods by engaging in various participatory and partnership structures with their landlords, the local authorities. Local authority housing estates in Ireland are seen as places where there has been a collapse of social cohesion and social capital (Fahey, 1999a). Consequently, tenant participation is seen as a key mechanism for improving local services to social housing estates and of enhancing

the level of citizen participation. This is a significant development in terms of local governance and public policy and has not been the subject of any in-depth research.

II SOCIAL HOUSING DECLINE

The market may be dominant in terms of policy and practice, but it is certainly not unproblematic in terms of the outcomes it produces. The counterpoints to the veneration of the market have been the detrimental consequences of market forces. Over the past two decades, social analysts have identified an increase in social exclusion and social polarisation (Skifter Andersen, 2003). Moreover, they have identified what they see as a diminution in the degree of social cohesion and 'social capital' in society (Putnam, 2000). In effect they have argued that there is an increase in the socially and economically marginalized, that these sections of the population find it increasingly difficult to escape from their circumstances, that they are, in effect, more and more locked into a marginalized situation. Moreover, this social exclusion and marginalisation has taken a particular spatial form, with the excluded living in highly segregated enclaves whether it be in the inner city or in peripheral housing estates. The characteristics of these excluded populations, which may be dominated by single parents, the elderly, ethnic minorities and so on, may be such that these groups find it impossible to escape from the position they are in (Musterd and Murie, 2002). The idea of the neighbourhood as the site of social dysfunction and as the place of experimentation in increasing cohesion and solidarity, has of late become fashionable in academic circles (Forrest and Kearns, 1999; 2001; Kearns and Parkinson, 2001; Galster, 2002).

From a specifically housing perspective, there is broad agreement among researchers that across Europe social housing has suffered a serious decline in the last twenty years. This process of decline, often called residualisation, has many facets, but the main ones have been the relative decline of the tenure compared with owner occupation, the increasingly marginalised or impoverished circumstances of tenants housed in the sector and the increase in problem estates where a myriad of social problems reside. Overall, social housing is seen to have failed in certain key respects, especially with regard to the creation of problem estates (Power, 1997, 1998; Harloe, 1995). Social housing has increasingly become a welfare housing sector, significantly different to its post war character where it

was more broadly based with respect to the socio-economic composition of the tenant population.

In Ireland, the context for the emergence of tenant participation policies has been the continued residualisation of the local authority sector. Since the mid 1980s, the sector has declined dramatically and has effectively become a welfare housing sector. At the broad level of the housing system, the local authority-housing sector is clearly residual with respect to its numerical importance, housing just 9% of the country's households in 2001, compared with 20% in the 1960s (O'Connell and Fahey, 1999; Fahey, 1999a, 1999b). One of the main elements of this decline has been the serious reduction in the absolute and relative levels of local authority housebuilding since the 1980s. Local-authority housebuilding accounted for 20-30% of new housing construction in the 1970s but this declined sharply in the 1980s and 1990s to well under 10% of new housebuilding. The second contributory factor has been the tenant purchase schemes. It is estimated that over two thirds of all dwellings built by local authorities have been sold to tenants since the foundation of the state (Fahey, 1999a).

This process of decline has resulted in high levels of poverty and welfare dependency among local-authority tenants, with such households being thirty times more likely to be in poverty than owner occupiers (Nolan *et al*, 1998). Recent research by Murray and Norris (2002) on Dublin City Council tenants confirms their continued impoverished condition. Moreover, there is a public perception of local-authority housing as socially negative and in some ways socially dysfunctional. Local-authority estates are sometimes seen by the wider public as being socially problematic, the locus of vandalism, anti-social behaviour and more serious criminality associated with hard drugs. The study team headed by Fahey (1999a) emphasised, vividly in some cases, a sense of the harshness, difficulty and sometimes hopelessness of living on some estates. However, the study also demonstrated the historic contribution of local-authority housing in improving housing standards and, that while poverty is endemic in many housing estates, tenants are part of communities which endure, sometimes against enormous odds. It also seems evident that central government does not envisage the local authority sector's playing a key role in the provision of housing in the future. Private provision for owner occupation has long been the preferred option of government policy and this seems set to remain so despite a substantial capital allocation for new social housebuilding (Government of Ireland, 1999; Bacon, 1998, 1999, 2000;

Drudy and Punch, 2001, 2002). In short, the local-authority system looks set to retain its residual character and its decline is unlikely to be reversed in any significant way.

The dimensions of the perceived failure of local authority housing are many but they are encapsulated in the notion of problem local-authority housing estates. In the public imagination at least, such estates are seen to be associated with a myriad of social problems. Problem estates contain predominantly impoverished households, are typified by crime and other social order problems, and the issues seem to be insoluble. Moreover, many such estates are different from the considered norm of private housing estates by virtue of their location, architectural design and environmentally poor condition. In short, the local authority estate is perceived as a separate world, socially, economically, environmentally and geographically. While this is a populist, even a convenient idea, and has been used by central government to criticise local authorities, there are no firm figures for how many estates are regarded as problematic nor how many dwellings are affected (Fahey, 1999a).

However, while there is an obvious popular appeal in such ideas, it masks a complex history. The decline of the local-authority housing sector and the consequences of that decline are the product of a complex interplay between general housing policy, local authority housing policy and economic and social change. More positively, O'Connell and Fahey (1999) has emphasised the key role of the local-authority housing sector in housing those in need over the past 30 to 40 years, its consequent role in aiding social stability and, very pertinently, contributing very significantly to the growth of homeownership through the sale of local-authority housing to tenants. In this recent study, Fahey observes that there is a variety of living conditions and experiences among local authority. O'Connell (1999) also makes the point that local authorities housing has historically given low income households security of tenure, affordable rents, reasonable quality accommodation and an affordable entry to home ownership.

The fate of the local-authority housing sector in Ireland has not been unique, though clearly it has distinguishing characteristics. According to Power (1999), the equivalent sectors in many other European countries have also undergone a process of decline with broadly similar results. The clearest parallel has been with the UK, where the decline of the sector has been subject to extensive academic analysis. The process of decline has been termed residualisation, which is a term of convenience for the amalgam of trends and

processes which characterise the decline of the sector. According to an earlier study by Power (1997) in which she analysed public housing across selected European countries, Ireland had the most residualised estates of anywhere she had investigated.

Some commentators have argued that poverty and social issues have been compounded by, at best, bad housing management and at worse, deliberate neglect (O'Connell, 1999; Fahey, 1999a). In other words, local authorities have effectively left estates to rot. This is manifest in two ways. First, local authorities have a poor record in the maintenance of their estates with the consequence that many estates deteriorated physically at an alarming rate. Second, they have taken a hands-off approach to the management of their estates from a social viewpoint. This can be interpreted in different ways, more benignly as a type of indifference, more negatively as a deliberate neglect borne of paternalism, authoritarianism and contempt for tenants. O'Connell (1998, 1999) contends that local authorities historically viewed sales policies as a proxy for housing or estate management in that the sale of a house to a sitting tenant relieved the authority from the responsibility for maintenance and other management matters. In was, in other words, a method of avoiding housing management responsibilities. The policy of sales to tenants, inevitably perhaps, resulted in the most settled and older estates being privatised and the worse estates being left. Flat complexes, such as those built in inner Dublin and the high-rise complex in Ballymun, could not be sold to tenants due to legal complications and difficulties over title.

III REGENERATION AND PARTICIPATION

Although there are multiple causes for the decline of local-authority housing and the development of poor quality estates, the lack of an effective estate-management policy and the failure to involve tenants in estate management are now considered to be significant factors in the persistence of poor quality environments. Tenant participation and estate management can thus be partly understood and interpreted as policy responses to the seemingly intractable problems on local authority estates. It seems to offer, at first glance at least, a technical and management solution to social problems. For long ignored, there is now an emerging and developing debate on local authority housing management and regeneration policies in Ireland (O'Connell, 1998; Fahey, 1999a; Memery and Kerrins, 2000; National Economic and Social Forum, 2000; Conway, 2001; Redmond, 2001a; Norris and O'Connell, 2002). The general lineaments of this debate could be summarised

as follows. On the one hand, local authorities have been heavily criticised for the manner in which they have historically managed their estates. These criticisms have centred around almost axiomatic beliefs that they were inefficient, ineffective and uneconomic in managing their housing stock, as well as being unresponsive to tenants' needs and demands (Department of the Environment, 1993; O'Connell, 1998). On the other hand, recent Government policy initiatives have sought to transform this negative characterisation and envision local authority landlords becoming better managers, providing a better quality public service which is both more efficient and economic, delivering an improved service to tenants. In short, local-authority managers are envisaged as becoming enlightened bureaucrats who will deliver sustainable estate regeneration (Redmond and Walker, 1995).

Indeed, the vocabulary of central and local government policy documents on social housing is so replete with the rhetoric of tenant participation that one could be forgiven for concluding that a new era was established in the management of the sector. However, rhetorical power aside, it cannot be assumed that tenant participation is automatically good or even effective. Despite this warning, there is an enormous amount of theoretical and policy-related literature now available which purports to explain best practice in tenant participation, most of which assumes that it is almost entirely beneficial and unproblematic.

Local authorities are now, through legislation and other policy instruments, formally committed to implementing a process of tenant participation (Government of Ireland, 1992, 1997a). The implementation of a tenant participation policy is meant to entail two interrelated though core changes to local-authority housing management policy. First, it requires the specification and implementation of a comprehensive and high-quality housing management service. Second, and crucially, the specification of the service and its implementation must be conducted with the active participation of tenants. This second point is vitally important as it is clearly possible to try to improve services without necessarily consulting with tenants (Department of the Environment, 1996a; Department of the Environment and Local Government, 1998a). In short, then, tenants are to be seen as equal and effective partners in the process of housing and estate management. This is the theory of tenant participation, the practice may be something else entirely.

Tenant participation is, certainly from the viewpoint of policy makers such as central government, taken to be unambiguously a good thing, garnering general approbation from various official quarters. As a term, it has a powerful rhetorical resonance, implying some form of participative democratic influence in the running and renewal of estates and, more pertinently, it is seen as one means of rescuing problematic estates subject to social disorder and breakdown. In the Irish context, O'Connell (1998) has already sounded a note of caution about the lofty expectations linked with tenant participation, arguing persuasively that the structural socio-economic position of local authority tenants is a barrier to real and effective influence. With respect to attempts at estate renewal, there have been three broadly related and interconnected policy responses to the problem of local authority housing. These are estate renewal, improved housing management and tenant participation, respectively focused on place improvement, institutional change and citizen capacities.

Estate Renewal

There has been a programme of estate renewal, known as the remedial works scheme, in operation since 1985 which has funded the refurbishment of over 60 estates (Norris, 2001). This programme is funded and organised by central government but implemented at local level by the local authority concerned. The necessity for such a centrally-imposed programme poses questions regarding the relationship between the local and central state regarding housing policy suggesting that local authorities were either unable, unwilling or incapable of maintaining estates, seeming to confirm to the criticism that local authorities were flawed housing managers. Apart from the remedial works scheme, a major redevelopment scheme is underway in Ballymun, Dublin. Ireland's only high-rise complex of local authority dwellings, the entire scheme of 3000 dwellings is to be demolished and redeveloped as a low-rise medium-density development (Prichard, 2000). In addition, a number of smaller flats complexes in the Dublin area are on the verge of demolition and redevelopment. Complexes such as Fatima Mansions, St. Michael's estate and O'Devaney Gardens are the subject of redevelopment plans which will probably entail the selling of portions of the site to private developers and the income will be used to finance refurbishment and redevelopment of the social housing (Dublin Corporation, 2000, 2001). These plans are usually placed in the context of improving social and tenure mix. The regeneration of social housing increasingly has a privatised dimension to it.

Improved Housing Management

It has been taken as axiomatic that local authorities in Ireland have been poor landlords, assumed to be guilty of neglect of estates, or of ineffective policies towards estates. Since the early 1990s, there has been a clearly-defined policy that attempts to transform local authority housing management. These flexible managers will, in theory, be efficient, produce value for money and make their housing service customer focussed (Department of the Environment, 1996b; Government of Ireland, 1996). These seemingly admirable aims relate to a wider shift in urban governance. In the field of urban planning and urban renewal the Irish state has become increasingly entrepreneurial in character, with traditional bureaucracies like planning departments bypassed in the name of getting things done (McGuirk and MacLaran, 2001). The shift in housing management, and public management generally in Ireland, reflects a changing urban managerialism applied to social and welfare policy. In this new world of urban management and governance services might, at one extreme, be completely privatised. In the UK for example, local-authority housing departments were involved in compulsory competitive tendering, whereby they had to tender with private firms for the service they had been providing. This has now transformed into a 'best value' regime. At a less extreme level, there is a clear impetus to transform public-sector organisations into more effective, economic, customer-driven and accountable units (Cairncross *et al*, 1997). Whatever the specifics of the policies, the broad approach suggests considerable change in the welfare state and how services are provided, and this includes the housing management service to local-authority tenants.

Tenant Participation

The third main strategy, which is closely linked and interrelated with the first two, is the promotion of tenant participation. Estate renewal requires, at the very least, consultation with tenants, while improving housing management is supposed to require the input of tenants. While there is extensive mention of tenant participation in government policy documents, and more recently in local-authority policies, there is little detailed knowledge of how this actually operates in practice (Department of the Environment, 1991, 1993, 1995). Still less is there discussion about clear conceptual and theoretical concerns that arise. The idea of tenant participation immediately raises complex questions regarding the nature of power and decision-making. To what extent, for example, does tenant participation confer power or influence on tenants in decision-making? Does it genuinely

increase the level of democratic participation in society? Does it reflect an increase in active citizenship among tenants? To what extent is it imposed from above or is there a real demand for such participation? In the context of local authority tenants, is there an argument that tenant participation is about co-opting tenants into managing their own poverty and social problems and that rather than empowering tenants it masks their real disempowerment? These are obvious questions that arise from the idea of tenant participation but have not been asked let alone answered in the Irish context. Examined individually, each of the policy approaches mentioned is important. Taken together, they are suggestive of a much wider change in policy that has, generally, emanated from central government and is to be implemented by local government.

IV RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Table I.1 below illustrates in a simplified form the context within which the study is conducted. The nature of the problem of social housing can be conceived in different ways, as structural, as the result of institutional malfunctioning, as the result of the weak capacities of tenants, all resulting in excluded places or neighbourhoods. Conversely, the solutions can also be classified as structural, as institutional change and improvement, as increasing the capacities of tenant populations and of changing the way places and neighbourhoods function. This thesis is primarily concerned with the attempts to improve quality of life on estates through the participation of tenants in the management of their estates in conjunction with local authorities.

The problem	<i>Structural</i>	Poverty and social exclusion	Access to housing
	<i>Institutional</i>	Poor management by local authorities and state services	Exclusion from decision making and influence
	<i>Capacities</i>	Marginalised population	Social cohesion and social capital
	<i>Place and neighbourhood</i>	Estate specific	Social order; culture of poverty and behaviour
The solution(s)	<i>Structural</i>	Economic	Welfare
	<i>Institutional</i>	Improved estate management and services	Tenant influence on decision making; participation and partnership
	<i>Capacities</i>	Resources	Training
	<i>Place and neighbourhood</i>	Estate improvement	Social cohesion
Source: Author			

The central question which arises from these various contexts is obvious enough. To what extent do tenants have a genuine and demonstrable influence in the management of their estates and locales and to what extent does this influence lead to a measurable improvement in their quality of life? Participation promises, it invites people in, it develops hopes and expectations, but to what degree does it actually deliver? This thesis seeks to explore, in particular, the emergence and development of tenant participation and the degree to which tenants collectively are empowered.

In particular, the primary aim of the thesis is to explore the ways in which tenants have become more involved in the regeneration of estates, focusing specifically on their role in influencing the management of their estates. Regeneration and renewal in the context of this thesis refers more to the involvement of tenants in the management of estates on a day-to-day basis and not just on the physical and environmental renewal of estates. The diagnosis of social housing estates often refers to their environmental degradation but more importantly highlights the social dysfunction on estates (Fahey, 1999a). While estates such as Ballymun are undergoing major redevelopment and have quite well developed participation structures, to an extent this is atypical. The main focus of this thesis is quite deliberately on the more quotidian daily and weekly estate management issues rather than on areas where large financial investments are being made. It could be argued convincingly that it is easier to generate tenant participation structures and tenant interest when large-scale redevelopment is to take place with a concomitant allocation of financial and other resources. On the other hand, it is likely to be more difficult to engage tenants collectively in what may be more long term and intractable issues to do with estate management where there are no extra resources and the results are not as directly visible.

How do these policy responses interact and how are they to be interpreted? It is the contention and hypothesis of this thesis that while these measures can have an impact on the quality of life of tenants on estates, and as such are to be welcomed, that the participation of tenants will have but a limited impact on the institutional features and performance of local authorities and little impact on tenants' structural socio-economic position. The policy responses, and in particular the promotion of tenant participation, might more fruitfully be interpreted as instruments to assuage and manage the primarily negative results of residualisation. Put differently, the working hypotheses of the thesis is that structural and institutional factors will ensure that tenant participation can only ever

have a limited impact on improving quality of life. It is posited that the very geographical distinctiveness of many local authority estates, along with their stigmatisation, has led governments to attempt to control, regulate and assuage the more direct expressions of disorder.

Thus, the thesis is specifically concerned with the question of why tenants have come to have more influence in the renewal and management of estates and, crucially, to assess the nature and extent of this influence. The emphasis and perspective is thus on the role of tenants in estate management as one element of broader attempts to regenerate estates. As such, the thesis does not concern itself directly or centrally with social and economic strategies for regeneration or with the government programme for new systems of local authority management except in so far as they relate to the involvement of tenants. In order to answer these questions it is necessary to address the following broad questions and issues.

1. The conceptual and theoretical basis of tenant participation
2. The extent and nature of the decline of local authority housing in the EU and Ireland
3. The policy background to the increasing role of tenants in estate renewal and estate management.
4. The policies and structures of tenant involvement at local authority level
5. The extent of the role of tenants and the degree of their influence

How then does the thesis address these broad questions?

V THESIS STRUCTURE

Part 1 Research Context

Part 1 establishes the context for the thesis. As the central theme of the thesis deals with the idea and practice of citizen participation the purpose of Part 1 is twofold. The first purpose is to set the thesis in some sort of theoretical, conceptual and critical context. While on the surface the idea of participation may seem something merely pragmatic and utilitarian in nature, and devoid of any negative appraisal, the reality is that it hides multiple meanings and the examination of theory seeks to unpack some of these meanings as an aid to understanding the purpose of tenant participation. The second purpose is to explore in some detail the material reality which tenant participation seeks to solve or ameliorate.

Thus, it examines the decline of the social housing sector, the consequences of that decline and the subsequent emergence and implementation of a variety of policies to regenerate social housing areas. In almost all such regeneration policies, participation is either viewed as being a central component in making policies effective or viewed as an end in itself in terms of improving governance, democracy or citizen capacities. The order of the chapters of Part 1 are summarised next.

Chapter 1 analyses the varying theoretical perspectives on the relationships between the state and its citizens. It takes a broad approach and summarises pluralist, social-democratic, neo-liberal, Marxist and communitarian perspectives. Each of these perspectives takes a significantly different normative and empirical view regarding the relationships between the state and citizens and thus allows a critical interrogation of the specific literature on tenant participation. Chapter 2 examines the specific literature on tenant participation. It first explores some of the more conceptual and theoretical literature which tends to have its theoretical bias unstated. It then moves to an exploration and analysis of the literature on the practical implementation of tenant participation, the so-called 'good practice' literature. Taken together these chapters provide a critical context in which to analyse the claims regarding the benefits of tenant participation.

Moving from the theoretical to the more empirical, Chapter 3 examines the nature of social housing residualisation in the EU and Ireland, focusing in particular on the debate regarding social exclusion and poverty neighbourhoods. It focuses in detail on the decline of the sector in Ireland and the consequences of that decline. Chapter 4, rather than examine in detail the empirical literature on regeneration and participation, instead takes a different strategy. While offering an overview of this enormous empirical literature, the main emphasis is on taking a critical perspective on regeneration and participation.

Part 2 Research Findings and Analysis

The overall purpose of Part 2 is to examine critically the development and implementation of tenant participation policy in Ireland. While Part 1 relies almost wholly on secondary sources, Part 2 is primarily based on new empirical work and therefore on primary data. Although there has been some significant research describing the process and consequences of residualisation in Ireland there has been little research on the actual implementation of tenant participation or of its consequences. Therefore, there is a key

empirical justification for the research. The essential approach taken was to examine the operation of tenant participation through undertaking case studies. Thus, a number of urban local authorities were selected across Ireland and the implementation of tenant participation was examined primarily through a series of qualitative interviews with tenant representatives and local-authority estate officers. The aim here was to get behind the rhetoric of policy pronouncements and to examine the structures and workings of participation on the ground. The order of the chapters of Part 2 are summarised next.

Chapter 5 details the research methodology used to evaluate the effectiveness of tenant participation and centres on the undertaking of a number of case studies of five different local authorities and of selected housing estates in those authorities. Chapter 6 examines the development of estate management and tenant participation policy in Ireland and utilises primary documentation, secondary documentation as well as interviews with representatives in central government. It seeks to establish in detail the avowed purposes of tenant participation policy and the manner in which it is supposed to be implemented. Chapter 7, using the limited available information on housing and estate management, provides an overview of the estate management contexts in the case study authorities through analysis of trends in local authority housing development, sales to tenants, lettings and the costs of housing management. Chapter 8 reports in detail on the results of the qualitative interviews and describes in detail the policies and structures of tenant participation across the local authority case study areas. It provides an overview of the policies and structures of participation of each local authority while also examining the implementation of these structures on individual estates. Chapter 9 examines the perspectives of tenant representatives. Utilising the detailed interviews with tenant activists, the chapter describes and analyses the core issues for tenant groups and tenant activists as well as investigating the functioning of the tenant groups themselves. Chapter 10, again using material from the detailed interviews, examines the perspective of local authority officials of the implementation of tenant participation. Both these chapters seek to weave the descriptive material of the interviews with an analytical focus. Finally, chapter 11 concludes with some considerations on tenant empowerment in the light of the findings and reflects on the theoretical implications.

CHAPTER 1

THE STATE AND CITIZENSHIP: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

I INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines critically the relationship between tenants and local authorities, which, put in more general terms is an examination of the relationship between citizens and the state. Specifically, it is an examination of the relationship between the local state and citizens in the context of formal participation over the provision of local state services at housing-estate level. There are clear conceptual issues to be discussed here, the main one being the relationship between the state and citizens and, in particular, the manner in which citizens participate in decision making. The chapter is thus structured around theoretical overviews and analyses of the relationships between the state and the citizen. An understanding of the nature of the state and the role of power relations is important in order to come to conclusions about the potential and limits of citizen participation. Section II describes the emergence of the theoretical debate on participation and empowerment while section III discusses the main theoretical and conceptual approaches to state-citizen relations, namely pluralist, social-democratic, neo-liberal, Marxist and communitarian perspectives while section IV concludes the chapter.

II PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

The central narrative of this thesis deals with the emergence over the past decade of what can be termed a theory and politics of participation and empowerment. This amounts to a call for greater citizen involvement in the process of decision making at various levels of government and is thus about recasting the relationships between citizens and the state. Theoretically, it is comfortable with standard pluralist, social democratic and even Marxist philosophies, illustrating how slippery and elastic is the notion of participation. It derives some theoretical sustenance from ideas about communitarianism and movements for deeper or more deliberative democracy (Tam, 1998; Frazer, 1999; Pierre and Guy Peters, 2000). However, participation and empowerment can mean radically different things depending on the political viewpoint being taken. Nonetheless, it is difficult, politically at least, to argue against greater citizen participation and more empowerment especially when it is seen as a potential solution to various problems such as the crisis of legitimacy of

modern government and modern states and the more general problem of the perceived decline of social cohesion and social capital (Putnam, 2000). Tenant participation is clearly an attempt at a localised form of participation and empowerment and this chapter seeks to locate the development of participation in the wider conceptual and theoretical debates regarding the relationships between the state and its citizens.

In this respect, over the past decade or so the term governance, as distinct from government, has come into vogue and like many such terms that emerge in the political and social sciences its precise meaning remains a source of debate (Kearns and Forrest, 2000; Pierre and Guy Peters, 2000). However, at its very broadest it signals that the relationships between the state, citizens and the market has changed significantly over the past two decades or more and this has given rise to contentious debates in the social sciences as to the degree of such changes and its consequences. The foundation of these debates is based on an ideological and empirical critique of state-society relationships in the 1970s and in particular a critique of the social-democratic welfare state (Esping-Andersen, 1999). This critique was essentially a neo-liberal or New Right one. It emphasised the superiority of market provision over state provision and advanced a general argument that the market should dominate individual and collective life.

More specifically, it emphasised two failings of the state. In the first place, the state was seen as acting to inhibit the market through unnecessary regulation and more importantly through large scale spending on the provisions of the welfare state. Consequently, in the context of urban policy, the general trend of state policy has been to facilitate market forces to a greater extent and this has taken the form of increased entrepreneurial urban governance and a ubiquitous focus on partnerships and participation (Kearns and Forrest, 2000; Kearns and Paddison, 2000; McGuirk and MacLaran, 2001; Andersen and Van Kempen, 2001). The increased entrepreneurial nature of state interventions has resulted in the growth of a significant literature on what is termed regime theory, which essentially focuses on the manner in which the state facilitates market forces in urban development (Judge *et al*, 1995). In the second place, the welfare state was viewed as having given rise to a dependency culture among welfare recipients which, according to neo-liberals, dictated that the scale and form of welfare provision be changed (Murray, 1996). Where expenditure on the welfare state could not be drastically reduced or privatised, the policy

consequences of this were the introduction of market measures into the public service. These might involve contracting out, internal competition, alternative service providers, a search for greater efficiencies, better value for money and the adoption of a client or customer focus by public service providers. By fragmenting public service provision, by offering exit mechanisms and greater choice, it was argued that citizens would no longer be dependent on a monolithic state service which was seen as badly targeted, inefficient and bureaucratic and generating a culture of welfare dependency. This critique of the welfare state, while mainly originating from the neo-liberal position, has also been adopted by mainstream social-democratic parties such as New Labour in the UK. Indeed, the critique has now transformed into a new orthodoxy on the need to implement the policies and practices of what has become known as 'new public management' (Walsh, 1995). These latter developments have a direct parallel in developments in Irish public policy, with the central state seeking greater efficiencies from both the civil service and from local government (Government of Ireland, 1996; Department of the Environment 1996b). As chapter 6 will demonstrate, one of the key drivers of the tenant participation agenda in Ireland has been the push by the central state to force change in local government.

Aside from the neo-liberal critique, which stresses withdrawal of the state, another critique on the nature of governance has developed in the past decade which has its provenance in a number of different theoretical and political positions (Pierre and Guy Peters, 2000; Heywood, 1999, 2003). This critique centres around the argument that representative democracy suffers a crisis of legitimacy and insufficiently addresses the needs of citizens, especially at the local level. The modern state is seen to have failed in certain key respects. The decline in voter participation is regarded as one indicator of a problem of legitimacy and this is associated with a widening gulf between the represented and representatives or between the citizen and the state. More generally, there is the argument that the state cannot deliver the services and functions needed in a modern society and this is reflected in a crisis of the welfare state where the state is viewed as being overloaded and delivering poor quality services in a centralised and bureaucratic manner.

From this general argument about state failure, and somewhat paradoxically, there has arisen various propositions for instituting greater participatory democracy, a demand for more state activity rather than less (Taylor, 2003). By this is meant greater direct

involvement of citizens in decision making and by implication increases or at least changes in state involvement with citizens. While there are some parallels with the 'new right' call that public service providers take a more customer-care orientation, the call for greater citizen involvement combines the argument that public authorities should be more client centred, with the argument that there is a democratic deficit and that this deficit should be made up by more direct democratic involvement. Out of this position comes the vast and complex debate about participation and empowerment. The focus here is not just about public authorities asking what the customer wants, it is about active citizens being empowered through new mechanisms of participation. In short, it is about citizen empowerment. This position is associated with a broad array of political and theoretical positions such as communitarianism and deliberative democracy which are examined later in the chapter (Tam, 1998; Pierre and Guy Peters, 2000).

While recognising that tenant participation entails public authorities changing the manner and form of service delivery, this thesis focuses primarily on the issue of citizen empowerment rather than the issue of new public sector management. In other words, the focus is on the degree to which tenants have access and influence over decision-making procedures or have power of influence over decisions rather than on the internal structures of local authorities. In order to accomplish this, it begins by summarising the essentials of mainstream pluralist democratic theory. In so doing, it allows a consideration of alternative political and ideological positions. This chapter then summarises mainstream social democratic views, neo-liberal views, Marxist political economy perspectives and what is termed the communitarian perspective.

III PERSPECTIVES ON THE STATE AND CITIZENSHIP

In considering the role of participation in estate management, it is necessary to analyse the varying conceptions of the nature of public participation in decision making. This chapter begins with a concise examination of the literature on liberal democratic theory, as most of the specific literature which specifically addresses tenant participation adopts underlying assumptions which are part of the broader debate regarding democracy. Discussions of democracy and democratic participation revolve around competing and conflicting liberal-pluralist, neo-liberal, social democratic, Marxist and communitarian interpretations. These political and philosophical debates regarding the state, the market and citizenship are

centuries old. It is tempting, though perhaps foolhardy, to summarise these debates by arguing that they all revolve around either a normative or political stance with respect to the market. For the sake of discussion, Table 1.1 outlines the main elements of four different theoretical perspectives and the subsequent analysis resolves around the main points indicated in the table.

Table 1.1 Tenant Participation – Theoretical Contexts

Theoretical Orientation	<i>Pluralism</i>	<i>Social Democracy</i>	<i>Neo-Liberal</i>	<i>Marxism</i>	<i>Communitarianism</i>
Political focus	State as a neutral arbiter	Keynesian welfare state	Rolling back the state	State as locus of class conflict	State as enabler
Central propositions	Interest groups compete for scarce resources Competition for political and other resources	Political power exercised by parliaments via elected representatives Organised labour seeks redistribution via welfare mechanisms Bureaucracies, managers and organisations hold significant power	Market mechanisms Democracy is there to support the market and subservient to it Welfare state is antithetical to the market Welfare state is socially objectionable in that it induces dependency	Distribution of resources is established through the market system which is inherently unequal Political systems reinforce this inequality, although class struggle is in part played out in the political arena whereby compromises can be reached.	Third Way approaches Bottom –up approaches to power Localisation of services Community development

Liberal-pluralist perspectives

Judge (1995) summarises the main elements of pluralism. These are: that power is fragmented and decentralised; that all groups have some resources to make their case; that the dispersal of power is a desirable characteristic of democracies and that there is a disaggregated decision-making process which leads to uncertainty in decision making as opposed to structurally determined outcomes. These pluralist conceptions of the state and decision-making are closely linked with traditional accounts of democratic theory and in particular with standard descriptions of representative democracy. A representative democracy can be characterised as being about one person one vote, a system based on

majoritarianism, the existence of organised political parties, regular elections and the existence of various pressure and interest groups. This standard account is, naturally enough, subject to complex debates by democratic theorists (Hyland, 1995; Weale, 2000; Estlund, 2002).

The essence of the pluralist interpretation contends that the function of the state is to act as a neutral arbiter between competing interest groups in society which vie for limited resources. Pluralist theories generally specify only the political as their domain for analysis and leave the economy as separate (Dunleavy and O' Leary, 1987; Dahl, 1998; Held, 1996). Thus, governments are elected through a democratic representative system and arbitrate between competing groups in society. In this sense there is said to be a plurality of power centres in society with no particular group dominating and no structural system of power relations. Thus the state has no inherent bias or self interest and performs in an enlightened and disinterested way. Citizens, in this perspective, are considered to have relatively equal access to power and influence. There are similarities to the postmodern view of power in this description of pluralism.

However, this set of propositions is generally viewed as naïve with regard to the actual operation of governments and of power relations in general (Judge, 1995). One of the elementary criticisms is that there are quite marked and fundamental differences in power and resources between different interest groups thereby rendering their petitions to the state unequal. In other words, there is no such thing as a unified 'common good' or 'public interest'. In fact, society is riven with all manner of economic, social and political divisions. Moreover, the assumption of state neutrality is seen as untenable with the state itself having its own interests. While the pluralist idea is weak in some respects, what it does do, however, is set up a benchmark interpretation of the role of the state and citizens by which other perspectives can be analysed and compared. The central criticisms of this pluralist, or naive pluralist position, stress that it has little to say about the operation of the economy and markets, about the possibility of political elites controlling power or of the potential of the state itself to have interests which express themselves through the state's organisational, bureaucratic and institutional framework. However, these omissions are dealt with by other theoretical perspectives.

Democratic Decision-Making Procedures

Despite these general criticisms of the pluralist position it nonetheless has some strengths, one of which is its account of the procedural aspects of democratic decision making. Such an account offers important insights which, crucially, enable comparison with other types of decision making procedure. Hyland (1995), in a sophisticated analysis of democratic theory, covers many of the issues that are important to the thesis. His central idea and organising principle is that he defines democracy as effective political equality in decision-making. From this seemingly simple idea a whole series of ramifications derive. He defines effective political equality as both strict adherence to the procedural elements of decision-making and also that all parties to a decision possess the necessary background (socio-economic and other resources) to participate in the decision-making process. In other words, he is arguing that for democratic decision making to be equal there needs to be broad equality with respect to the resources that all parties possess. This may seem an innocuous point but as shall be seen later, neo-liberals would fundamentally disagree with the need for a level playing field. Without equality of resources, he claims the democratic decision-making process is fundamentally flawed. In this regard, there are four elements or moments in democratic decision-making. It is important to note that these four points refer only to the procedural elements of political decision-making. They do not account for the economy or other forms of power. The four elements of decision-making are summarised below. As Hyland argues, equality in the decision-making procedure is crucial:

‘..equality at certain crucial stages is a necessary precondition for the achievement of any significant degree of overall equality’ (Hyland, 1995, p58).

Setting the agenda

The first moment regarding the decision-making process concerns the issue of who sets the agenda, how is it set and whether it is controlled in such a way that there are only trivial alternatives for decision. This concerns the now well known debate regarding the ‘second face’ of power and decision making. In this regard, equal access to information is crucial. What is essentially being pointed to here is whether prior to the formal decision-making procedures the agenda is already slanted or unfairly structured. As Hyland argues,

‘In the extreme, those with no agenda-setting power could be equally reduced to the position of slaves who were allowed the right to choose between trivial alternatives while being denied the power to choose anything significant’. ‘It follows, then, that overall effective equality requires, at the first moment of decision making, equal agenda-setting

rights'. 'The right of agenda-setting is ineffective without the relevant information' (Hyland, 1995, p58).

This particular passage has serious implications for tenant participation and raises clear questions regarding who sets the agenda between tenants and local authorities and how it is set. With respect to setting the agenda there are clearly all manner of problems which may arise regarding who sets the agenda for decision-making and what actual issues are up for decision. For example, if only trivial issues are up for decision, this may mean that key issues are already decided on or are not for political decision making. Moreover, if the state or other institutions withhold information then decision making is not equal.

Comparative Assessment

The second key moment in the decision making process concerns the analysis, discussion and debate about the information and choices at hand. Once again, equality is important. Freedom of speech and of information are necessary conditions of this second moment, that is the ability to debate the issues set out in the agenda. In addition, the ability to assess proposals may imply the need for equivalence in terms of cultural and educational backgrounds as well as the need for a variety of forums in which to discuss potential decisions. With regard to tenant participation obvious questions arise regarding whether there is an appropriate forum for discussion and importantly in this instance, whether there is an equality of educational background that implies a broad equality of understanding of the issues.

Decision Making Process

The third key moment concerns the equal rights of individuals in making the decision. Traditionally in the democratic literature this means adherence to the maxim of one person, one vote. However, it also means the potential weighting of votes to ensure proportional representation. Clearly, at least in most western democracies, in national or local elections the right to vote is statutorily enshrined in some way. However, this may not be the case in other decision making processes. However, with regard to non-statutory decision-making, a key question arises as to the actual decision making process itself. Who, for example is enfranchised or how exactly is the decision made in the implementation of tenant participation?

Decision Implementation

The fourth moment in the decision-making process concerns the vitally important issue of whether the decision made is acted on and implemented. As Hyland argues,

No matter what degree of equality is achieved in the first three moments it counts for nothing if the outcome in the issue area in question is not determined by the decision arrived at in the third moment but rather is the result of the activity of some other agency, whether intentional or not' (Hyland, 1995, p66).

With regard to tenant participation for example, crucial questions arise with respect to who implements the decision and who is accountable for the implementation of decisions. And most importantly, is there a correspondence between the decision made and the decision implemented? This latter point is crucial in terms of local situations. What is evident from this brief description of the decision-making process is that at all stages equality is essential in order to conclude that a decision has been reached in a fully democratic manner. Clearly, however, there are all sorts of ways in which equality can be subverted at each of these stages in the process, whether intentionally or through external forces.

This account of the different moments of democratic decision making, while primarily intended to apply at the level of the nation state, is equally applicable in local government and local circumstances and, by extension, to any democratic decision-making procedure. It therefore provides a means of measuring the degree to which tenant participation complies with these various moments of decision making. This may seem like setting a unrealistically high standard for decision making with regard to tenant participation. However, it can be argued that this test is a fair one as tenant participation is supposed to be a local form of decision making. At the very least it allows comparison of tenant participation procedures with the strict tests of democratic decision making. So, assuming that compliance with these various moments of the democratic decision making process delivers effective political equality in decision making, we can then compare how various models of tenant participation comply with this sequence of rules. While it might be argued that tenant participation is not necessarily a decision-making procedure, it is clear that in many cases it is seen as being so and in any case is nearly always seen as a form of local participatory democracy.

In general, however, one of the substantive points is that inequalities of resources can preclude meaningful participation and that pre-existing economic and institutional differences can make participation an unequal game (Dahl, 1998; Held, 1996). Regarding this, Hyland asks the following question:

‘Are we then to say that a system of rule, the structure of power that determines political outcomes in a society, does not approach anything like high levels of democracy unless the socio-economic, cultural, and educational conditions for full and equal participation are realised?’ (Hyland, 1995, p102).

His answer to this question is an emphatic yes; in order for effective political equality to exist, participants must have equality of resources in terms of educational, cultural and economic resources. This is clearly an expansive definition of democracy and the implications of this position are profound for it implies that society should be so structured that there is an equivalence of resources among citizens so that they are not disadvantaged in the process of political decision making. This has clear implications for the manner in which the economy is organised and the way in which the state acts as a redistributive mechanism. Indeed, this position is similar to a standard social-democratic view of society where the state should secure minimum entitlements and act as promoter of equality and justice. Thus, as the quotation below illustrates, for many democratic theorists there is a difference between what may be called formal or procedural rights as distinct to substantive rights.

‘On the one hand it is argued that rights, no matter how robust in content or how strongly legally entrenched they are, will be next to worthless to someone who does not have the background prerequisites necessary to utilise those rights’ (Hyland, 1995, p105).

Put differently, there is a fundamental distinction between participation and empowerment. The former merely implies engagement in a process while the latter implies some form of outcome in terms of real influence over decisions. This simple distinction is crucial in analysing the implementation of tenant participation and begs the obvious but substantive question of whether tenants are merely participating in a process or are actually being empowered. Formal rights may allow participation in a procedure but the lack of substantive equality of resources may mean that the act of participation is effectively meaningless and does not lead to any genuine empowerment. From this position Hyland goes on to argue for a participatory model of democracy where citizens are empowered in decision making, not only through adherence to the formal procedures of democratic

decision making but also through a conscious commitment to providing citizens with an equivalence of the necessary resources to participate in decision making.

‘...saying that everyone is equally entitled to rights of democratic participation implies that there are obligations incumbent on society as a whole, and ultimately on the government of that society, to ensure the provision to everyone of all those conditions, economic, educational, cultural, necessary to render effective political participation for all. If we are committed to the value of such participation, we should be committed to the provision of all the necessary preconditions, and not just to the removal of negative constraints; we should be committed to, in the terminology now fashionable, the positive empowerment of citizens’ (Hyland, 1995, p105, my emphasis).

This contains the essence of the key political and philosophical divisions over the meaning of democracy. Broadly, for those on the left of the political and ideological spectrum the argument about supplying the preconditions for participation are crucial. However, for those on the right, this is anathema and formal procedural rights take precedence.

In theory, democracy is supposed to deliver effective political equality in decision making. However, even within what may be called mainstream democratic theory there are arguments which state that there are fundamental obstacles to achieving effective political equality (Dahl, 1998; Jessop, 2002a, 2002b). The key objections to the procedural version of democracy are the following. First, it has been argued that political elites control political decision making to a major extent, second that organisational and institutional actors (e.g. public bodies) influence decision making and third, there is the contention that the market system and the attendant unequal distribution of resources undermines the possibility of effective political equality. Whether taken singly or in combination the arguments seriously weaken the pluralist case. Hyland emphasises this latter point in particular:

‘One major dispute in modern democratic theory concerns that contention of some theorists that countervailing structures of power, particularly of economic power, can all but negate the putative equality of citizens as participants in political decision making...’ (Hyland, 1995, p58).

This argument finds favour in what can broadly be termed the social democratic perspective on the relations between state and citizen. The main contention of this position is that effective political equality can only be achieved with redistribution of resources.

Social-Democratic Perspectives

Hyland’s theoretical point with respect to unequal distribution of resources finds historical, political and economic expression in the existence of social democratic welfare states. The

existence of the welfare state is the historical result of the struggle between capital and organised labour which has resulted in the political representation of labour in representative democracies and the creation of welfare states which sought to redistribute economic resources in an effort at socio-economic equality (Esping-Andersen, 1999). While we shall see later that the neo-liberal view prioritises formal rights over substantive rights and argues for minimal intentional (government) restraint on the individual, the counterargument to the neo-liberal view is that freedom from intentional constraint is just one kind of freedom. In the social democratic perspective the central question revolves around the issue of creating a society which is free from the negative consequences of an unfettered market. In other words, the purpose of the social democratic movement was and is to create a society which was free from the scourge of poverty, unemployment, inadequate incomes, inadequate shelter and so on. This can be put differently by saying that a society should be so organised that citizens receive not just minimal entitlements but that it seeks to produce greater equality among citizens. This in turn requires mechanisms for the redistribution of wealth and resources and by implication the creation of substantive positive freedoms and rights. Historically, this has been pursued through the political arena by organised labour forming political parties, seeking political power through representative government and instituting the welfare state, the historic compromise between labour and capitalism.

The theoretical point here is that for citizens the relationship with the state is not neutral as in the pluralist view, or minimal, as in the neo-liberal view, but activist in that mass political organisation and mobilisation was crucial in order that the parties of labour secured power in government. When in government, redistribution of resources could take place through the mechanisms and institutions of the welfare state, through provision of health, education, income maintenance and housing programmes for example. In this view, citizens voted regularly, were involved in political parties and, where appropriate and necessary, received their entitlements. Clearly, in historical terms, what is meant by the welfare state has varied considerably across developed nations, with more restrictive and more expansive versions of the welfare state (Esping-Andersen, 1999).

The operation of the representative model is in theory relatively straightforward. Elected representatives are elected through universal suffrage on the basis of policy platforms. Those successfully elected implement policies and decisions primarily through the aegis of

the organisations of the state, the civil service and other public bodies. At local level, policy and decisions are made by the institutions of local government. In the social democratic view the state is clearly not a neutral arbiter. On the contrary, the state can directly influence the distribution of resources and life chances. However, it often does so through the medium of a variety of state apparatuses and organisations.

Therefore, the power of public bureaucracy and managers becomes important in the distribution of resources as the relationship between the state and citizens is mediated by organisations and state bureaucrats. Public organisations have rules and procedures of their own which can significantly influence resource allocation and access to power structures. In this respect, one of the potential obstacles to citizen participation is the sheer complexity and seeming impenetrability of public and state management structures. This may be reinforced by the argument that public authorities possess certain professional knowledge and expertise which precludes ordinary citizens from making informed choices. This has clear relevance and resonance in this study, as local authorities and housing managers are key actors in the management of local-authority housing estates. Another version of this general idea comes in the form of public choice theory which seeks to apply the lessons of neo-classical economics and rational maximisation to the political and organisational sphere (Walsh, 1995; Judge, 1995). Public choice theory contends that politicians and bureaucrats seek to fulfil the demands of the customer, in this case the electorate or the general populace, and in so doing exercise decisions which impact significantly on citizens. From the perspective of this study, the essential proposition which emerges from this position is that bureaucratic and organisational structures can significantly influence, though not determine, the allocation of state resources. For social housing tenants, who are generally excluded from the market, the organisation, rules and regulations of the local state are crucially important. Access and influence to the organisations of the state are thus important.

Neo-Liberalism

If the liberal-pluralist position can be caricatured as naïve, the neo-liberal position can be caricatured as being hard-headed and direct. For neo-liberals, individual autonomy and promotion and regulation of the market should be the dominant organising principles of society. The argument against state intervention is that it constrains both individual

freedom and fetters the free market (O' Brien and Penna, 1998). This fairly straightforward political, ideological and philosophical position leads directly to a belief that the relationship between the state and the citizen should be a minimal one, with the state enforcing the rules of the market and upholding basic rights of citizens. For the neo-liberal, the starting point of any discussion is the need to protect individual autonomy and freedom, in particular to protect individual autonomy from intervention by authority in whatever form. This is not a complete denial of the need for government or a role for the state but it is an argument which says that the state should have a minimal role and should confine itself to establishing a framework for the protection of individual rights and the operation of market relations. In practice this translates as allowing individual autonomy as a producer or consumer in the market. In this view, therefore, the citizen has a limited relationship with the state. The representative democratic system, with its regular elections, should be a sufficient form and degree of citizen participation in society.

However, democratic decision making, or collective decision making, implies that individual freedom must be circumscribed in some way. This constraint of individual freedom or autonomy has been the subject of centuries of debate which focuses on the relationship between individual freedom and the degree of constraint imposed by authority, in this case democratically elected governments and democratic decisions (O' Brien and Penna, 1998). Liberals and neo-liberals of recent decades contend that individual rights, individual freedom and individual autonomy, take precedence over the rights of authority (government) to interfere with or coerce people. That is, democracy is ultimately subservient to individual rights and other core values such as justice. In the pantheon of values, equality is a secondary one for the neo-liberal. For them at any rate, while democracy is an important system, its main function is to guarantee the rights of individuals to pursue their own lives. By this it primarily means guaranteeing the ability to enter into the market. According to O' Brien and Penna (1998), Hayek, who provides the philosophical and ideological underpinning of new right thinking, defines freedom in a negative fashion, as freedom from coercion or restraint, especially freedom from state coercion with regard to the market economy. In Hayek's view of society and human nature the market is privileged

Social democrats and others, however, would regard the ideas about intentional (authority) constraint as contestable. It seems to some theorists that the distinction between intentional and external constraints is an absurd one and based on supposed moral outcomes. So, echoing Hyland's (1995) point regarding the need for equal resources to ensure effective political equality, the counterargument is that formal liberty without effective empowerment is a travesty of human freedom. Moreover, impersonal forces and constraints do not, as the neo-liberals claim, still leave people free to choose. In a market society you may be free to be poor and excluded. Freedom from intentional direction (government) does not correspond with freedom in its totality. Put simply, lack of money in the market makes one less free, regardless of freedom of exchange. Thus, the distinction between intentional and impersonal constraint is to some degree a specious one. Impersonal constraint, that is market exclusion, can be just as negative in denying individual freedom than intentional constraint (O'Brien and Penna, 1998).

In sum, the position of neo-liberal theorists can be caricatured as being essentially anti-state. Hayek was highly critical of the level of state intervention associated with the post-war welfare state and his basic tenet was that major state intervention was unnecessary and ultimately led to a form of authoritarianism. Proponents of the neo-liberal view argue that the state should provide only the judicial framework for individual and personal rights and that it should not constrain individuals or establish positive rights for minorities. Second, they argue that the state should not interfere with the market economy but merely provide the legal framework for its operation. In this sense, they clearly favour a minimalist state (Gamble, 1999; Hay 1999). Third, they argue that fetters on individual freedom are morally dubious, in that they do not allow individuals take full responsibility for their thoughts and actions. They do not, apparently, allow for moral virtue. This is the basis for the argument between left and right over the balance between rights and duties. Fourth, positive rights for minorities and programmes are not only politically anathema but that they are also counter-productive in that they destroy personal autonomy and action. Fifth, and very generally, external or impersonal constraints on individual freedom (such as the free market) as not as morally or politically negative as intentional constraints.

This distinction between impersonal (external forces to an individual) and intentional constraint (directed government action) is crucial for Hayek and the right. It is Hayek's

belief that intentional constraint has the following negative characteristic. It implies a paternalistic attitude on behalf of the state towards the citizen; the view that we know better than you. According to Hyland, the argument revolves around the following notion: 'When directly constrained the person does not have to assess the context of action, attempt to understand the values at stake and responsibly choose the appropriate plan of action' (Hyland, 1995, p129). In short, there is no virtue in their moral decisions, whereas impersonal constraints do not touch the inner self of the individual. This is a conceptual way of saying that excessive reliance on the state leads to dependencies of various sorts and we have seen this argument bear political fruit in various political attacks on welfare dependency. In other words, translated politically, it is a claim that the social democratic philosophy and the welfare state as its embodiment has a rights-centred approach which has deleterious consequences and effects on society generally but in particular on those who end up being dependent on state welfare (Murray, 1996). From the perspective of tenant participation, this general position can be utilised through arguing that the state assign more individual and collective responsibility to tenants to solve their own problems; in effect to transfer of responsibility from the state to the citizen. However, it would also seem clear that tenant participation can also be used so that tenants demand better and more services from the state, not something wanted by the new right. Thus, a neo-liberal argument for tenant participation would emphasise tenants becoming more involved in the self-management of their own problems and not be another demand for more services. It might, however, be used to argue that the local state improve its service efficiency and economy. Thus, we can see even from brief examination of the higher level theory that there exists a series of key tensions and paradoxes in what tenant participation might mean in practice.

Out of this view of personal autonomy and its associated precepts, it is easy to predict the attack on the welfare state from an economic viewpoint but also from a moral one (Dunleavy and O' Leary, 1987). The operations of the state, and the operations of the welfare state in particular, breach the main principals of neo-liberal thought. The welfare state establishes all manner of positive rights and positive entitlements to resources for citizens, moreover, entitlements which are generally provided by the state itself. In redistributing expenditure, the state is clearly interfering in the market economy through expenditure of taxes but also through the manner of such expenditure, which is generally

directly provided through state organisations. In addition, the argument is advanced that by establishing entitlements to resources for citizens this produces a dependency effect among citizens. In popular parlance, by providing welfare entitlements it reduces incentives for citizens to fend for themselves in the market. The welfare state is coercive, in that it provides directive and intentional frameworks for the behaviour of individuals. This in turn removes moral choice from individuals and creates dependency, rather than individual reliance and individual responsibility.

In the urban sphere, therefore, it is easy to see how these ideas can be translated into support for a more entrepreneurial urban policy. If, as neo-liberals maintain, the main function of the state should be to maintain the legal conditions for free market transactions (minimalist state), then it is not much of a logical leap to infer that the state should actively intervene in helping the free market. Calls for a minimal state can lead to an argument for the reduction of regulation in urban planning, for example, to allow development to proceed without the hindrance of the state (McGuirk and MacLaran, 2001). The argument against the welfare state can be used to justify reductions in social programmes such as state housebuilding. Calls for a minimal state can also be transformed into calls for the state to act more entrepreneurially in its provision of services. This can take the form of reducing services, privatising service provision, allowing the customer more choice of providers, attempting to bring the disciplines of the market into the internal workings of the state through internal markets and so on (Walsh, 1995).

The conservative government in the UK from 1979 to 1997 deliberately experimented in implementing some neo-liberal policies, which was seen clearly in urban and housing policy (Thornley, 1993; Cole and Furbey, 1994). While its urban policy was clearly an activist one in terms of state intervention, which points to a contradiction in neo-liberal theory, the riposte presumably is that neo-liberal intervention is aimed at freeing up the market rather than imposing constraint on individuals. In short, this implies a moral and philosophic distinction between tax breaks for developers and welfare payments for the unemployed. The developer, presumably, is not being sucked into a dependent relationship while the unemployed person is. This contradictory view of state intervention leads to an entirely negative view of welfare entitlements. For example, some conservatives claimed that the welfare state created dependency among the population and particularly those who

depended most on it for their livelihood (O' Brien and Penna, 1998). In particular, it inculcated a culture which expected rights to be delivered by the state with little or no need for individual responsibility. According to O' Brien and Penna (1998), some new right theorists argued that this created moral and community breakdown with the clear signs manifest in single parenting, drugs, unwillingness to work and community and social disorder. Modern welfare, in other words, was therapeutic and created dependency.

Ultimately, these two different perspectives are philosophically opposed and are the foundations to two different worldviews. In privileging the free market and individual autonomy, neo-liberals are opposed to state intervention on the grounds that it interferes with the efficient operation of the free market and also circumscribes individual autonomy. Thus, the neo-liberals are opposed to social democracy and the welfare state as they interfere with the market and take individual responsibility and moral choice away from individuals. The notion of autonomy is one that is based on freedom from state interference and is thus grounded in a particular view of human nature and politics. In this view, the welfare state creates dependency in individuals and communities and robs them of their individual responsibility to provide for themselves. Moreover, it also interferes with traditional sources of welfare such as the family, the church and voluntarism. The idea that the state should provide the legal framework for the operation of the free market leads to the idea that the state should provide incentives for business. In the sphere of urban policy, it leads fairly directly to the idea of reducing state involvement in urban government and in redirecting such urban government towards deregulation of barriers to entrepreneurs.

The opposing view, the social democratic view, sees freedom in a more positive manner. In this perspective, freedom is interpreted as freedom from hunger, disease and want. Freedom, in short, is based on rights, the right to accommodation, income, social protection etc. Moreover, such a notion of freedom is not seen as inherently incompatible with the idea of individual freedom and autonomy. Without the material resources to live a decent life, it is argued, the neo-liberal idea of freedom is effectively a sham. Social democrats, conclude therefore, that collective provision and rights of various sorts are required, often provided directly through the state. This philosophical view is the underpinning of the welfare state. The actual history of the welfare state reflects these conflicting views in complex ways. In the past twenty years the neo-liberal critique has

dominated in ideological and practical terms and core ideas have seeped into the policy programmes of so-called social-democratic parties such as 'New Labour'. It seems that governments of many hues now speak the mantra of efficiency, effectiveness and value for money and are radically changing the form of the central and local state with respect to service delivery. The new right held the welfare state accountable for the slow-down in western economies in the 1970s and with the election of conservative governments set about changing the practice of the welfare state through constraint and modification, though not wholesale reversal.

Marxist Perspectives

The central conception of the state in the pluralist model is that the state is in some way neutral regarding citizens or interest groups. Even in the social democratic model while there is a recognition that it is important to gain political power in order to redistribute resources, there is still a belief that control of the state can ultimately solve distributional conflicts. However, Marxist notions of the state claim that the state is the locus of class conflict, neither neutral with respect to interests nor unidirectional in its influence. In so far as it represents the balance of class forces and of economic relations it is representative of capitalist interests but contains within it the contradictions inherent in class-based societies. The function of the state in Marxist conceptions is threefold. First, to secure the conditions for capitalist accumulation, second, to secure the appropriate reproduction of labour power and, third, to secure the appropriate reproduction of social relations. There is a huge, complex and controversial literature on the Marxist theory of the state which will not be entered into here. Broadly, and very simplistically, however, there are two different approaches (Gamble, 1999; Hay, 1999; Pierson, 1999). The first, termed the instrumentalist view of the state, contends that the state is in effect the instrument of the ruling classes and its policies and programmes are deliberately directed at their own political and material interests. The second perspective argues that the state is the reflection of the class structure of a society and its influence is therefore not unidirectional. While the state may ultimately serve the interests of the dominant class, the state has relative autonomy in the process of policy formulation and implementation (O' Neill, 1997; Painter, 2000; Jessop, 2002a, 2002b; Brenner *et al*, 2003). In both these views, therefore, efforts to control the machinery of representative government can only be effective to a point as they will ultimately have little impact on the fundamental economic structure of society.

From the viewpoint of tenant participation this theorisation has a number of implications. First, the Marxist view argues that in a class-based society there are fundamental material divisions regarding resource access and this has clear implications regarding social housing tenants who are generally impoverished. Second, that the state represents the dominant classes in society and that access to the power of the state is inherently unequal. This implies that tenant groups will have difficulty in accessing the power structures of the state. Third, that the actions of the state will systematically favour the interests of dominant classes. This implies that state strategies, even ones of participation, will be not lead to any genuine change in power relations. The Marxist view thus seems deeply pessimistic about the ability of ordinary citizens to affect change. However, there is another tradition, certainly with regard to the urban domain, which points to the potentiality of grassroots movements to engender change (Fitzpatrick, 2001; Heywood, 1999, 2003; Castells, 1997).

Castells (1977, 1983) developed much of the theoretical and empirical work which stressed the potential of grassroots movements to affect change. Having started with a structuralist interpretation of Marxism, which he found limiting, he moved to a more fluid, dialectical analysis which stressed the ability of popular movements to achieve change in struggles with the state. Instead of emphasising traditional class conflict over production, he focused on struggles between popular movements and the state as a provider of what were termed collective consumption goods such as housing, transport, neighbourhood facilities and so on. These popular movements, termed urban social movements, could focus on a wide variety of consumption issues but could in Castell's view mobilise sufficiently to achieve change at the urban level. However, from a Marxist viewpoint, there remained problems over the degree to which such struggles were related to class struggle and the manner in which such movements might be co-opted by the state or achieve very limited reform, all quite pertinent questions with regard to tenant participation. More generally, and in direct reaction to the structuralist Marxist viewpoint, analysts such as Saunders (1981, 1990) have developed theories of urban politics which stress the politics of consumption and the role of agency and contingency in the achievement of economic and political outcomes.

Communitarianism and Deliberative Democracy

While Marxism is still influential with regard to its critique of economy and society, it holds little or no sway regarding a realistic political programme. In practical political terms the two dominant discourses revolve around neo-liberal and social democratic regimes. However, over the past decade, what has been termed the 'third way' approach has been promoted which argues that there is a way between left and right (Giddens, 2001; Powell, 2000; Driver and Martell, 2000; Low, 1999; Robson, 2000). The essential argument of the third way is that political discourse and practice have been reduced to two alternatives, the free market or social democratic statism. However, adherents of the third way perspective, the most notable being Giddens (2001), suggest that there is an alternative mode of governance and that it is both possible and necessary. It is necessary because society has changed in fundamental ways and old approaches are no longer effective or applicable and it is possible because the dualism between neo-liberalism and social democracy precludes discussion and development of alternatives. The essence of the third way approach is an attempt to combine the rights-based emphasis of social democracy with the duties-based emphasis of neo-liberalism and in particular traditional conservatism (O' Brien and Penna, 1998). Some critics argue that so-called third way approaches are nothing but neo-liberalism in disguise (Driver and Martell, 2000; Powell, 2000; Fine, 2001). While this approach has very broad implications, this review focuses on one aspect of this discourse which emphasises increasing the level and form of citizen participation.

A number of loosely connected ideas, which can be tied to the general propositions of third way approaches, coalesce in the idea of participation and empowerment. The idea of communitarianism, made prominent by Etzioni (1995, 1997, 1998), is one of the cornerstone ideas. In addition, there is a series of ideas on participatory democracy calling for more deliberative democracy, more direct democracy and so on which are influential. The idea put forward by Hirst for a multiplicity of self governing voluntary associations (associationalism) can also be included in this range of ideas (Hirst, 1994, 1997, 2001; Hirst and Bader, 2001). In addition, ideas emanating from Habermas about communicative action have inspired a literature on collaborative action, partnership and participation in the sphere of urban planning for example (Healey, 1997). This section reviews the central ideas of both communitarianism and deliberative democracy as exemplars of this general trend. As Pierre and Guy Peters (2000) have argued, most of these ideas have a common thread

which is a critique of established governance as being too distant from the citizen. Unlike the neo-liberal proposition, which is to dismantle the state as far as possible and to empower citizens as consumers, these ideas seek to create more government and more governance in the form of more structures for various forms of collective participation.

Before examining communitarianism and deliberative democracy in more detail it is worth specifying their critique of representative democracy. The critique focuses on four shortcomings, namely the size of government, its remoteness, the displacement of goals and the adversarial nature of representative politics. The argument about the size of government is that modern government is too large in terms of the number of tasks it seeks to accomplish, too centralised and insufficiently localised, thus resulting in a mismatch between promise and performance, creating a crisis of legitimacy as citizens see a failure to deliver on political promises. The essence of this overall critique is that even if government wanted to, the very size of government structures and the quantity of demands on governments, make it difficult to empower people at the local level. The second criticism, related to the first, is the accusation of remoteness by which is meant that citizens find it hard to influence policy and decision making. While representative democracy fulfils many of the rules of democratic decision making, it falls short in ensuring that there is a close correspondence between the decision made and the decisions implemented. This is because the nature of elections is such that voters decide on a very broad policy front in the first place rather than on a set of specific decisions. Large-scale and centralised governance also lacks the institutions and mechanisms to allow for deliberate and collective influence. In short, citizens tend to become disengaged from the process of governance. The third criticism refers to displacement of goals which is a logical consequence of the other points notably that politicians, because of the distance between the elected and the electorate, when in office can seek to pursue their own ends. This of course is similar to the standard accounts of political elitism. The final criticism refers to the adversarial nature of representative systems of government. Restated, this is another way of saying that there are few collaborative or deliberative mechanisms for decision-making (Pierre and Guy Peters, 2000).

Communitarianism has two basic tenets which replicate in part the above criticisms but also contain distinctive features. The first element, and the central critique of other

perspectives, contends that there is an urgent need to return to community-based living and values as an antidote to the rampant individualism and breakdown of social cohesion in modern societies (Frazer, 1999; O' Ferrall, 2000). Indeed, Frazer (1999) argues that there is an irreducible moral core to the communitarian argument and that it draws on a variety of sources, including religious ones. This can be seen in its emphasis on traditional values and support for the family for example. The second major tenet, which is viewed as an antidote to the effects of possessive individualism, is that big government has failed and that it should be replaced by smaller units of governance, in this case units based at a local community level. Communitarians argue that communities, of whatever shape, are not reducible to individuals and that community in the form of family and other institutions has a social coherence of their own. Indeed, Etzioni argues, in contradistinction to liberals, that community is as important as the sovereign individual (Frazer, 1999). For Etzioni, the hallowed grail of individual autonomy is based on certain social foundations and there is no such thing as the completely free floating individual. There is a clear rupture here with the thinking of liberals and neo-liberals.

Communitarians posit that big government should be broken down into smaller community government in which there is a refocus of the balance between individualism and collectivism. In this their position is close to that of Hirst on the need for a multiplicity of voluntary associations as governing units. The emphasis is on decentralisation and devolvement of powers from government as it currently exists. Contrary to the liberal stress on individual autonomy, they emphasise the need for individual behaviour to be modified by collective welfare considerations. This latter proposition contains an essentially moral critique of the individualistic and selfish nature of modern society. Communitarianism thus has readily identifiable implications for tenant participation. The call for small-scale community governance fits neatly with tenants participating and managing their own estates. Moreover, the moral agenda fits nicely into a view that tenants should take responsibility for their own lives, which has resonance's in some more traditional conservative arguments.

Perhaps one of the central criticisms of communitarianism is what some would argue is its excessive faith in the desire of individuals for collective forms of self governance (Pierre

and Guy Peters, 2000; Heywood, 1999, 2003). As Frazer (1999) argues, the world has moved beyond the simplicities of communitarian hopes and it is simply not how people live today in modern democracies. Individual autonomy as a core value of liberal democracies is assumed. This problem is exacerbated by the inevitable question of what constitutes community in a modern society and, even if this could be defined in some agreed manner, what precisely would such a community be responsible for governing. In other words, what kinds of issues are appropriate to be managed at a local level and what kinds of issues can be actually solved at a local level? There are, in short, issues which may only be appropriately managed by big government. What then of deliberative democracy?

The basic tenet of deliberative democracy is the premise that representative democracy does not allow sufficient citizen influence on the policy-making process or on the decision-making process. Consequently, the main idea of deliberative democracy is to create institutions and forums for greater deliberation by citizens, especially at a local level. So, both of these ideas have strong commonalities and both focus on the need to strengthen citizen decision making at a local or community level. The emphasis in deliberative democracy is perhaps more on the process of discussion and deliberation than on the specific institutions of community government. Regarding such forums, there are four key questions that need to be asked: first, whether they have actual decision making power or whether they are merely advisory; second, whether such forums are continuous or only happen in once-off situations; third, how participants are selected and whether forums are open to all potential participants or to just a selection; and finally, whether the agenda is narrowly confined or open.

Fung and Olin Wright (2001) sketch a framework or model which they term 'empowered deliberative democracy' which is summarised in Table 1.2. They first name three general principles which are fundamental to all localised democratic experiments, a focus on tangible problems, the involvement of ordinary citizens and a deliberative approach to solutions. They then name three institutional design features to enact these principles, the devolution of public decisions to empowered local units, the creation of formal linkages with similar units and vertical authority units (that is, not wholly autonomous from coordinating or command centres) and the and generation of new state institutions to support these experiments. The latter point implies that they colonize state power and

transform formal governance institutions (Fung and Olin Wright, 2001, p23). Crucially, the main enabling condition is that there is 'rough equality of power' between participants. The outcomes desired are that problems are solved in an equitable manner and that they lead to a broadening and deepening of democracy at local level. In assessing any particular experiment in deliberative democracy they say there are a number of tests. These are whether the decision making process was actually deliberative in nature, whether decisions made were implemented and monitored, whether there was linkages with higher authority, whether such experiments and initiatives act as a learning school in applied democracy and whether such experiments are stable and sustainable.

Table 1.2 Empowered Deliberative Democracy

Principles	i	a focus on specific, tangible problems
	ii	involvement of ordinary people affected by those problems and by the officials responsible (bottom up participation)
	iii	deliberative development of solutions to the problems. (deliberation, consensus building)
Design Properties	i	Devolution to empowered local units
	ii	Formal linkages to higher power centres
	iii	Generation of new state institutions
Enabling Condition	i	'rough equality of power'
Desired Outcomes	i	Problem Solving
	ii	Equity
	iii	Broad and Deep Democracy
Assessment of experiments	i	How genuinely deliberative are decision-making processes
	ii	Do decisions translate into action
	iii	Are decisions monitored
	iv	Is there co-operation with higher power levels
	v	Is deliberative democracy a 'school for democracy'
	vi	What are the actual outcomes
Criticisms of the model	i	Participants will have very unequal power relations
	ii	External forces and institutional contexts may impose severe limitations on decision and action
	iii	Free rider problem
	iv	Fragmentation of local efforts
	v	Political and civic disengagement
	vi	Stability and sustainability of experiments
Source: adapted from Fung and Olin Wright, 2001		

They also set out a series of general criticisms and questions that can be levelled at any deliberative democratic experiment. The first and most obvious is whether participants genuinely have equal resources and power, the second is whether external forces or institutional contexts preclude certain decisions or distort the process, the third refers to the free rider problem, the fourth refers to the potential fragmentation of local efforts through the proliferation of local initiatives, the fifth refers to the danger of civic apathy and the final concern refers to the long term stability and sustainability of such programmes. This reasonably detailed and programmatic model offers a number of fruitful theoretical and practical criteria against which tenant participation initiatives might be compared.

The objections to the deliberative model are similar in some respects to those of the communitarian model. In addition, there is the standard concern about how the deliberative process may import pre-existing power structures and biases. What too of the scale of such forums? There is a point at which deliberative forums become unwieldy. Finally, there is perhaps an overly optimistic view implicit in such models that consensus can be achieved. More generally, Mouffe (2000) argues that third way propositions and the deliberative democracy argument imply a consensus which in reality does not exist. Conflict, in other words, is inherent in society and the constant stress on consensus is not only incorrect but that it plays in to the hands of reactionary forces. Neo-liberal policies and practices operate regardless of the language of participation and consensus.

IV CONCLUSION

The argument that the citizen is disempowered in various ways finds resonance in neo-liberal, social democratic, political economy and communitarian perspectives. The neo-liberal argues that the state has become too involved in the day-to-day lives of citizens and that it is prescriptive, a 'nanny state' so to speak. So, neo-liberals seek a withdrawal of the state from public service provision and, where this is not possible, seek either privatised options or a situation where the state operates with market discipline in providing services, thus producing value for money and also taking account of the customer or client. In short, the neo-liberal seeks to empower the citizen through empowering the customer.

The social democrat accepts the view that representative democracy has problems of legitimacy in that there is an increasing divide between the represented and the representative. In particular there is a divide between the representatives and the socially excluded. So, the social democrat seeks ways of increasing the amount and degree of citizen involvement through all manner of new participation and partnership methods and also of making state provision more customer driven. This also accords well with postmodern and third way advocates. Of the latter, communitarians wish to empower citizens especially at the community or local level. For the left, the idea of empowerment is, of course, attractive. While there is a clear view that it does not alter fundamental economic structures, it does promise more direct action, a deeper democratic participation and the promise of ways in which new social movements can pressure the central and local state. Thus, participation and empowerment, which are distinct concepts, are attractive to many sides of the political and ideological divide and are, as Riseborough (1998) argues, slippery, elusive and elastic concepts. These theoretical perspectives contain a large normative element, the way participation should happen. The manner in which tenant participation is to be interpreted is partly dependent on testing through empirical evidence, which this thesis seeks to do, but also through a more critical examination of the more applied tenant participation theory which is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

TENANT PARTICIPATION THEORY

I INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 provided a critical overview of the main conceptual perspectives on the relationship between the state and the citizen. This chapter examines the more detailed literature relating directly to tenant participation. Section II examines the particular ideas of citizenship, participation and empowerment, which in a sense are the application of the general concepts in Chapter 1. While they are covered both explicitly and implicitly in Chapter 1, there is a direct literature which deals with the nature of citizenship and, in particular, the notion of active citizenship. It also analyses the literature on the theory of tenant participation. While some of this is inevitably derivative of broader conceptual stances, some is also specifically geared to the relationship between the local state and the tenants of social housing landlords. For example, there are specific attempts to conceptualise tenant participation, especially in the form of various 'ladders' of participation. Section III explores what is termed the 'good practice' literature which purports to advise landlords and tenants as to how to organise and implement tenant participation in practical ways. However, although often presented in a neutral fashion, this literature is replete with various theoretical and ideological assumptions. Section IV concludes the chapter.

II CITIZENSHIP, PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

This section of the chapter examines some of the key attempts to apply a theoretical or conceptual approach to tenant participation. It first summarises the application of the main approaches used in Chapter 1 to tenant participation, then examines some of the literature on citizenship as a practical application approach to participation and then analyses some of the specific attempts to conceptualise tenant participation.

Theoretical Overview

It is worth at this point examining the implications of the broad conceptual orientations to tenant participation. Table 2.1 summarises this examination. The pluralist position would interpret a tenant group as just one more interest or lobby group presenting demands to the state. Such a group would be considered equally powerful to any other interest groups.

In turn, the state would arbitrate on its demands in a rational, balanced and disinterested manner. From the social democratic perspective, tenant groups would seek to present their demands through the electoral process by influencing policy platforms and, if successful, these demands would be implemented by state officials. Alternatively, the demands of the tenant group would be addressed directly to state officials or managers. The outcomes of this would depend on the degree to which the tenant group was organised and the level of its material and financial resources as well as the rules of the bureaucratic game operated by state officials. In sum, there would be differential access to power as compared with more powerful groups. For communitarians, a tenant group, given its local basis and presumed community-orientation, should operate in tandem or partnership with the local state. The existence of tenant groups is thus to be welcomed and promoted, and state-community partnerships should be developed as fora for decision making. However, for neo-liberals, it is preferable to deal with tenants as either clients or customers and not as collectives. Services should be delivered efficiently and economically to tenants while tenants as clients would not only have rights but obligations and responsibilities as well. Failure to comply with such duties might result in sanction. Alternatively, tenants may be offered means of exiting from the local authority as a service provider. For the Marxist, the tenant group may offer possibilities of challenging state power as a protest or grassroots movement. However, such groups may also be incorporated or co-opted into the state apparatus through participation in such structures.

Table 2.1 Theoretical Perspectives on Tenant Participation

	Pluralist/liberal	Social Democratic/communitarianism	Neo-liberal	Political Economy/Marxist
Main proposition	Local government a neutral arbiter at local level	Local government hold some power	Reform of state and public service provision	Tenant participation can be liberating in some respects.
	Tenant groups one more interest group	Housing managers determine the agenda for tenant participation.	Exit mechanisms; Contracting out; customer or client focus	But it can also lead to incorporation and be part of the discourse and hegemony of ruling interests. Social control and management.

Source: After author

Citizenship

Debates regarding the relationships between the state, the market and civil society have continued for decades (Andrews, 1991; Hirst, 1997). At different times the point of emphasis has changed. For example, arguments regarding the changing nature of the state and the welfare state dominated in the 1980s as neo-liberal philosophies, policies and practices took hold. The essence of this debate about the changing welfare state was an argument about the nature of markets and, certainly in the neo-liberal viewpoint, the effectiveness and superiority of market provision over state provision. Somewhat lost in this argument has been consideration of the nature of civil society and the nature of citizenship. Very crudely put, for those of a pro-market persuasion, citizenship and civil society is defined primarily with respect to citizen involvement with the market. Conversely, for those of a pro-state persuasion, citizenship revolves around the citizens' relationship with the state. In short, citizenship has, to a significant extent, been reduced to being either state-centred or market-centred.

What has tended to get obscured in these arguments about political economy has been deeper consideration of the role of civil society generally and citizenship in particular. What, in other words, can be said about the role of the non-market and non-state sector? Over the past decade, a body of work has emerged which considers the role of civil society and citizenship in greater depth (Lister, 1997; Barbalet, 2000; Delanty, 2000; Miller, 2000; Faulks, 2000; Etzioni, 1995, 1998; Janoski, 1998; Turner, 2001). Simplifying considerably, the development of citizenship debates has centred on the underlying assumption that in the developed economies of the EU and the US the role and function of civil society has shrunk in the face of the increasing market-domination of many aspects of society (Putnam, 2000). This shrinkage of the space for civil society has many facets. For example, arguments about the decrease in political participation (voting) can be ascribed to the perceived failure of the state and the dominance of the market. Likewise, the debates about the decline in social capital can be easily seen as an argument about the decline of civil society in the face of the increasing pressures in a market-saturated society. Less trust, lower levels of civic participation, and a turn to private individualised lives are seen as symptoms of a decline in civil society leading to reduced social cohesion across all social classes (Putnam, 2000; Forrest and Kearns, 2001).

For those who agree with this analysis, the supposed decline of civil society and the demise of social capital are seen as unhealthy and need to be reversed. In some quarters the antidote to this trend is seen to be a reinvention and reinvigoration of civil society generally and in particular inducing greater levels of active citizenship. The essence of such active citizenship is the voluntary effort and participation of citizens. Generally, such voluntary activity takes place within the confines of a voluntary or community group. However, another dimension to such voluntary activity is the relationship between such voluntary groups and the state.

Following Miller (2000), we can distinguish between three conceptions of citizenship: the liberal, the libertarian and the republican all of which have some relationship to the main theoretical positions outlined in Chapter 1. The liberal conception posits a set of rights and corresponding obligations enjoyed equally by everyone who is a citizen in the community in question. Central here is the idea that there should be a fair balance between rights and obligations. As everybody is granted a minimum of economic or material welfare, an element of redistribution between citizens is presupposed in this view of citizenship. Here the rights are formalised legally as civil, political and social rights, while the obligations are usually more intangible. This conception of social rights is associated with the work of Marshall (Barbalet, 2000; Faulks, 2000). The so-called 'third way' approach and communitarian theory also fit into this conception with a greater stress on citizen responsibilities over citizen rights (Chandler, 2000; Tam, 1998; Giddens, 2001).

The libertarian conception, or the neo-liberal conception, posits that the relationship between the state and the citizen should be limited and explicitly contractual. People need to be citizens only to the extent that they demand goods that require public provision. The citizen is to be a rational consumer of these public goods. The state is modelled as an enterprise and the citizen as its customer. Apart from its monopoly to enforce basic personal and property rights it is not self-evident, in this view, what service and goods the state may provide. In other words, there is a complete difference between this conception and what might be termed the social democratic view where, historically at least, it was considered that the state would automatically provide certain services. The citizen is to enjoy consumer sovereignty, implemented in two ways, contract or choice. The instrument of contract means that the consumers who feel they have not been delivered the service to

which they are entitled may take legal action against the provider. With choice, the dissatisfied consumers may go to an alternative provider, e.g. equipped with vouchers, thus implying a quasi-market for the service in question. In this kind of market, people's demand for a service may be regulated through user fees or charges covering at least a part of the cost of providing it (Walsh, 1995)

The republican conception, which is similar to the participative democratic position, posits that the citizen is to enjoy a set of equal rights, including social rights, but in addition to this it sees the citizen as somebody who is actively participating in discussions and the decisions which shape the future society (Pateman, 1989). Ideally, a citizen identifies with the community to which he or she belongs and seeks to promote its common good. While the capacity or competence to participate may be unevenly distributed, there is a belief here in the learning or empowering effect of starting to participate. Moreover, enjoyment of basic civil, political and social rights is seen as important for people's opportunity to participate. Participants may legitimately pursue their own views and interests but in their capacity as citizens they have to be able to convince others about the reasonability and fairness of their causes or claims on the community.

Broadly speaking, these three concepts of citizenship correspond to different understandings of what 'active citizenship' might mean (Kearns, 1992; Chandler, 2000; Clarke *et al*, 2002; Marinetto, 2003). According to the liberal concept, active citizenship could mean that people not only enjoy the rights associated with citizenship but also fulfil their obligations. According to the libertarian concept, active citizenship could mean that people are taking responsibility for their own well-being and security by exercising choice in the market as well as in relation to public provisions. An alternative position of the new right, however, stresses the affluent citizen giving of their time to the less deserving (Ignatieff, 1991). According to the republican concept, active citizenship could mean that people not only have the theoretical possibility of participation in discussions and decision making affecting their future well-being but actually use this possibility.

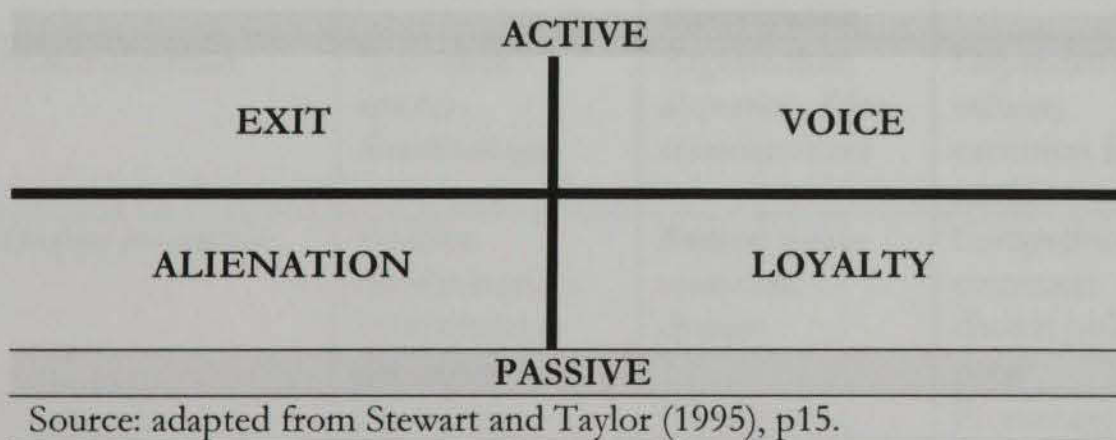
Citizen options: Exit and Voice Mechanisms of Empowerment

How then is active citizenship put into practice? Sorensen (1997) discusses the well-known distinction originally drawn up by Hirschman (1970) between what are termed exit options

and voice options of empowerment. In reviewing theories of democracy, she distinguishes between aggregative theories and integrative theories. Aggregative theories of democracy ‘tend to focus on democracy as a means of distributing political power and influence and of regulating conflict within society’ (Sorensen, 1997, p.555). By contrast, integrative theories of democracy tend to focus on the ability of democratic institutions to produce democratic citizens. In broad outline, this seems to be a distinction between essentially neo-liberal models and participatory democratic models. Sorensen argues that exit options of empowerment suggest that citizens should have ways in which they can choose alternative institutions or services, very much in the libertarian or neo-liberal mode. In contrast, voice options of empowerment suggest that citizens should have a means to influence existing institutions or services, which essentially reduces itself to participative modes of governance (Held, 1996; Pateman, 1989).

Figure 2.1 illustrates the variety of citizen empowerment options. Broadly speaking active options are either through exit, which is via market choice, or via voice, which is through mechanisms of participation and partnership. Alternatively, and perhaps misnamed as options, citizens can be passive through loyalty to existing state services or be alienated from state services. These options are not mutually exclusive. It is quite possible in theory, and occurs in practice, that citizens can avail of any of these options.

Figure 2.1 Citizen Empowerment Options



The policy of tenant participation is clearly a voice option. However, it cannot be assumed that tenants can avail of all options. Economic or policy circumstances may dictate that there are no exit options or choice available. Tenants therefore may have to remain silent or avail of options to influence policy and practice. In the Irish case, it is fair to say that

prior to the advent of a formal tenant participation policy they had either the option of being alienated or of loyalty, which in the circumstances (see Chapter 3) is really no choice at all.

Conceptions of Tenant Participation and Tenant Empowerment

Table 2.2, which is adapted from Shaw and Martin (2000), examines different theoretical perspectives on active citizenship. The pluralist/social democratic view takes an essentially passive view of citizenship. Citizens vote on a regular basis and get involved in interest groups as the need arises.

Table 2.2 Conceptions of Citizenship and Tenant Participation

	<i>Social democracy: the problem of the inactive citizen</i>	<i>Structuralist critique: the problem of citizen action</i>	<i>Marketization: the problem of the citizen as customer</i>	<i>Democratic renewal: the challenge of active citizenship</i>
<i>Theoretical perspective</i>	Pluralist	Marxist; political economy	Neo-liberal; new right	Differentiated universalism
<i>Priorities</i>	Managing change & integration	Contradictions of welfare capitalism	Institutional restructuring	Repoliticising citizenship; democracy
<i>Implicit model of society</i>	Social consensus	Class consciousness and conflict	Possessive individualism	Solidarity in diversity
<i>Construction of citizenship</i>	Individually ascribed political status	Worker; political activist	Entrepreneur; customer	Collectively asserted social practice
<i>Definition of democracy</i>	Institutionalised participation	Working class control; emancipation	Market freedom	Continuous cultural and political process
<i>Nature of problem</i>	Ignorance-apathy-disadvantage	Exploitation; alienation; false consciousness	Dependency culture; exclusion from market	Inequality; democratic deficit
<i>Strategy/prescription</i>	Positive discrimination; compensatory provision	Radical socio-economic change	Competition; consumer choice; policing poor	Progressive redistribution; solidaristic politics
<i>Tenant role</i>	Promoting self help; selective remedial action	Obfuscation; regulation or politicisation	Promoting enterprise; brokering contract culture; surveillance	Politicising policy; activating citizenship

Source: adapted from Shaw and Martin, 2000, p411

However, one of the problems of citizenship in contemporary society is that citizens are overwhelmingly passive. The Marxist view tends to identify the structural limitations of activating citizens and the potential for citizen movements to be co-opted by the state. This is an essentially negative or pessimistic view, a view however, that may have a strong empirical foundation. The neo-liberal takes the view that the citizen is a utility maximiser in the market and that citizenship is essentially about regular voting. With regard to relationships with the state the citizen is either a customer or a client for state services. The active citizen does appear in neo-liberal views but this is generally as the good citizen who is altruistic and philanthropic towards those less fortunate (Kearns, 1992; Heywood, 1999). The communitarian or democratic renewal perspective argues for a more activist view of citizenship with the citizen involved to a greater degree in local political activity for example.

As Scott *et al* (2000a) point out, interpretations of the genesis and impact of tenant participation are influenced by a variety of theoretical or conceptual perspectives that are often implicit in what is a mainly a policy-related literature.

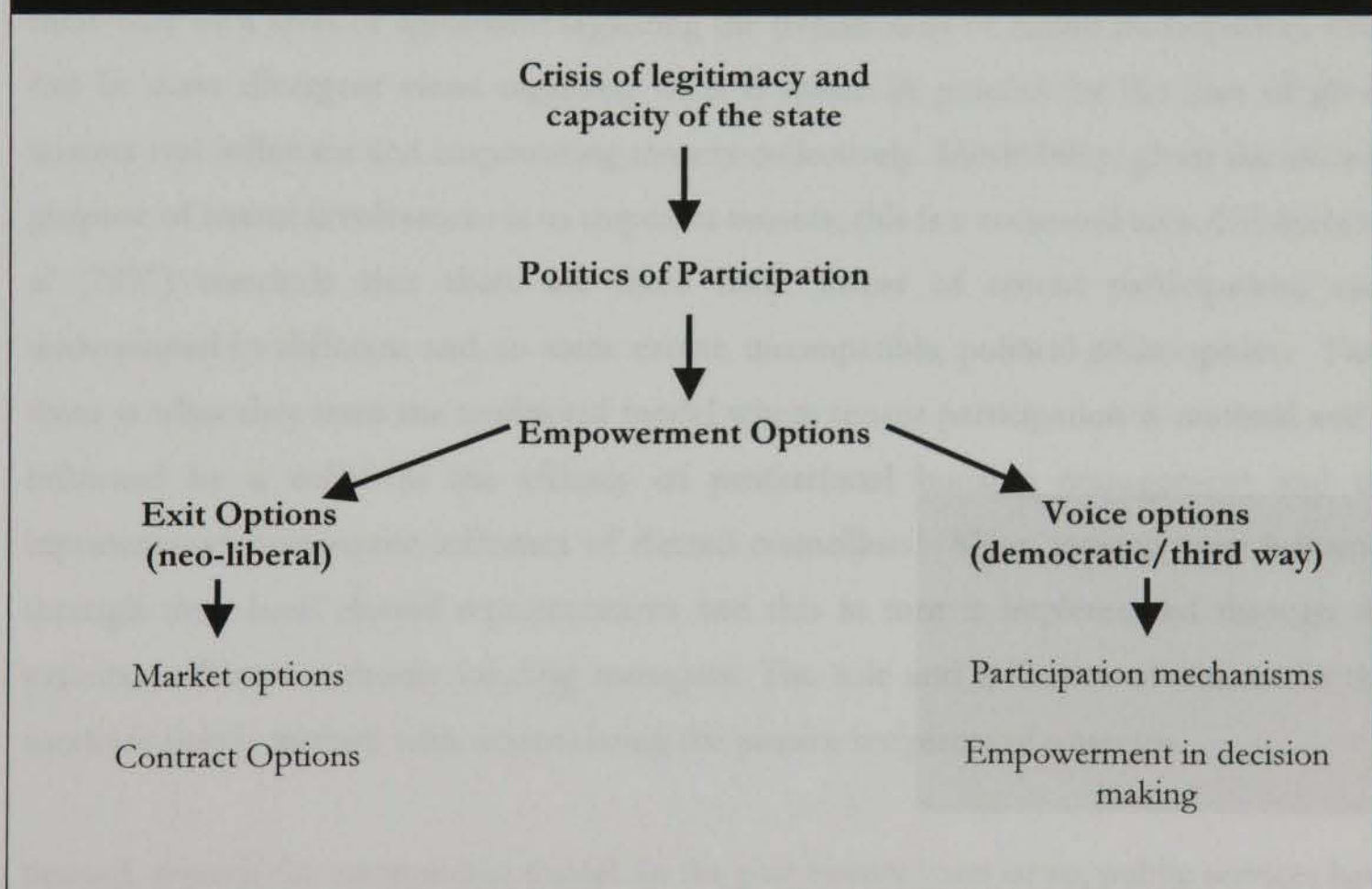
'Discussions of governance arrangements inevitably can be traced back to political philosophies (although these are usually unstated in much of the literature). Hence, it can be argued that 'good practice' in tenant participation depends very much on the political stance of the proposer' (Scott *et al*, 2000a, p11).

The fact that most writing on tenant participation leaves its theoretical or ideological position unstated is crucial and, as will be seen later in the thesis, deeply problematic. One of the central assumptions in the detailed 'good practice' literature is that by adhering to the detailed guidance tenant participation will produce successful outcomes. However, one of the more significant absences of such guidance is the lack of analysis of the potential results of the process. The guidance is thus mainly about the process of participation rather than outcomes.

Figure 2.2 attempts to situate the examination of tenant participation in the context of the broader theory. From a variety of ideological and theoretical perspectives there is general agreement that there is a crisis of legitimacy and capacity in the state and particularly in its ability to provide the services of the welfare state. The demand, in terms of quantity and quality, for state services has increased and cannot be met adequately because of resource constraints and organisational capacity. Neo-liberals argue as a matter of principle that the

state should not necessarily be the provider of first resort, while also maintaining that the state should divest itself of many of its social welfare functions turning them over to market provision. For the social democrat, there is a measure of agreement regarding the crisis of legitimacy and capacity of the state to deliver services and, to an extent, an agreement with the neo-liberals that new ways of delivering services are required. This has led to the emergence of so-called 'third way' politics which is supposedly something between neo-liberal and statist solutions (Giddens, 2001; Hirst, 1994, 1997, 2001; Mouffe, 2000). However, while there is some agreement on the nature of the problem, differences do emerge regarding solutions. The argument from Figure 2.2 is that tenant participation can be quite clearly situated as a voice option which emerges out of the more general ideas of communitarianism and deliberative democracy, which in turn are part of the larger literature on a politics of participation and empowerment.

Figure 2.2 Situating Tenant Participation Conceptually



Source: Author

The more specific conceptual literature on tenant participation is in general agreement that tenant participation serves two related purposes (Cairncross *et al*, 1997; Cooper and Hawtin, 1997a, 1998a). The primary purpose is to give tenants an active voice and real

influence in the specification and implementation of improved housing and estate management services. A secondary, though interrelated purpose, is to empower tenants as citizens, thereby moving towards greater participative democracy (Taylor, 1995, 1998b; 2000a, 2003). While most of the tenant participant literature purports to be ideologically and conceptually neutral, the reality is that the literature applies a mixture of these different theoretical perspectives (Cooper and Hawtin, 1997b, 1997c, 1997d, 1998b). Perhaps the two most dominant perspectives utilised are the neo-liberal with its emphasis on the efficacy of client-centred service provision and the democratic renewal perspective which emphasises the activation of citizenship and renewal of social cohesion. In summary, the citizen should either face more towards the market or more towards common community approaches.

Ultimately, the aim of tenant participation is to improve the quality of life for tenants on local authority housing estates, thus improving community and social cohesion. While there may be a level of agreement regarding the overall aims of tenant participation, there can be quite divergent views regarding what is meant in practice by the idea of giving tenants real influence and empowering tenants collectively. Inevitably, given the avowed purpose of tenant involvement is to empower tenants, this is a contested area. Cairncross *et al* (1997) conclude that there are three main forms of tenant participation, each underpinned by different and, to some extent, incompatible, political philosophies. First, there is what they term the traditional model where tenant participation is minimal and is informed by a belief in the efficacy of professional housing management and the representative democratic influence of elected councillors. Thus, tenants exert influence through their local elected representatives and this in turn is implemented through the expertise of local authority housing managers. The role and influence of tenants in this model is strictly limited, with tenants being the passive recipients of a service.

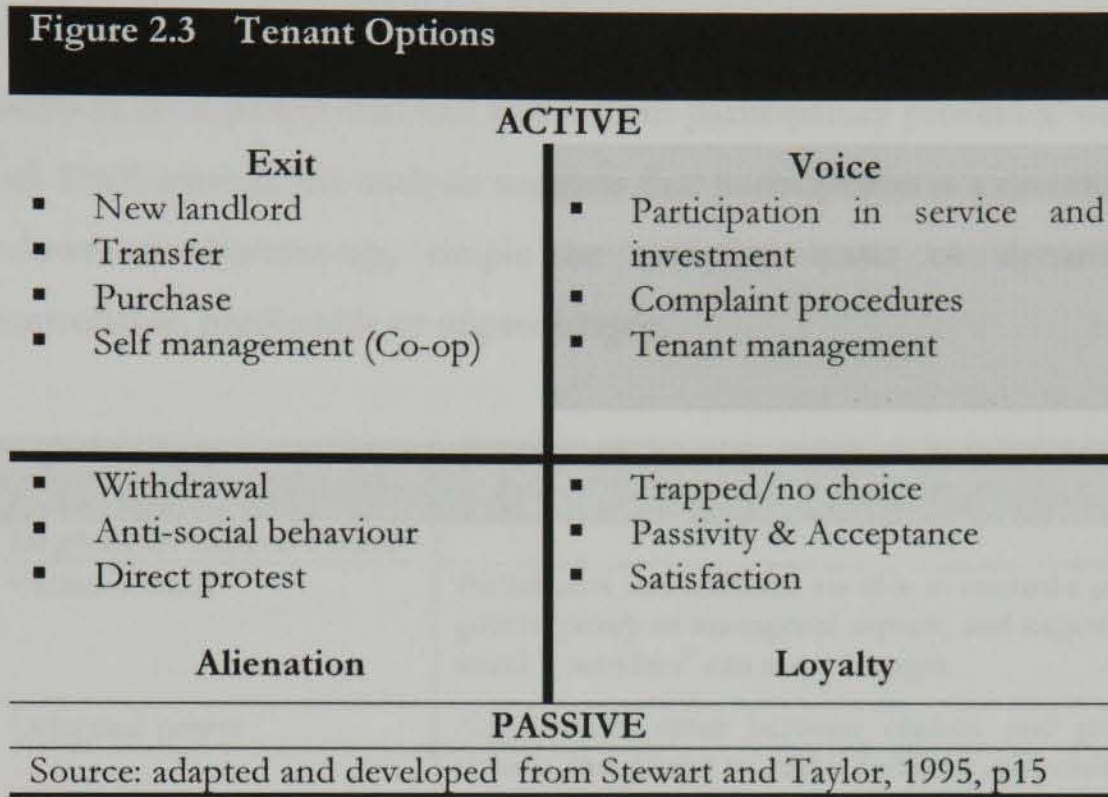
Second, there is the consumerist model. In the past twenty years or so, public services have had to change the manner in which they deliver services and become more customer-focused. At its extreme, this model assumes that tenants are similar to private customers in the market place and the service to tenants should reflect their needs and wants on an individual basis. From this perspective, tenant participation is seen as a means and method of delivering and mediating improvements in services. As receivers of services, it is argued

that tenants are best placed to specify and prioritise what improvements are needed. In that sense it is seen as giving tenants a 'voice' to influence local authority decisions. In addition, it is seen as having the added benefit of delivering better value for money for public expenditure in the short term and of delivering sustainable regeneration in the medium to long term. Another element of the consumerist approach is giving tenants the option of exist, and this may take the form of existing the tenure of changing landlord for example. This approach is associated primarily with the ascendancy of the new right and with neo-liberal political philosophy (Goodlad, 2001).

The third approach is what is termed the citizenship approach. Here, there is a greater emphasis on the collective influence of tenants and on involving tenants in dialogue, consultation and shared decision making. While there is an emphasis on tenants being enabled to improve service delivery, this approach contains an extra dimension that is about tenants collectively being empowered through some form of democratic participation method. Thus, apart from practical gains in services and in estates, tenants are said to develop capacities as active citizens, thereby improving the quality and depth of citizenship (Taylor, 2003; Carley, 2002; Chapman and Kirk, 2001; Somerville and Steele, 1995). Tenant participation is therefore seen as an antidote to the perceived passivity of tenants and to the alleged deficiencies of local representative democratic structures and local-authority housing management. From a policy viewpoint, however, there is a common core between the consumerist and citizenship perspectives which sees tenants as having a clear voice in determining improvements to quality of life on their estates. In practice these models are blurred, though they provide a useful framework for investigating the nature of tenant participation .

The idea of tenant participation immediately raises a series of questions about power, notably the extent to which tenant participation confers power or influence on decision-making to tenants. Does it genuinely increase the level of democratic participation in society? Likewise, does involvement in tenant participation structures reflect an increase in active citizenship among tenants? To what extent is tenant participation imposed from above or is there a real demand for such participation? To what extent is tenant participation about co-opting tenants into managing their own poverty and social problems and rather than empowering tenants it masks their real disempowerment. Drawing on the

theoretical review so far, Figure 2.3 below presents the options available to tenants. The policy options which have developed over the past two decades have either been those allowing exit, for example the right to transfer landlord, or the right to buy, or voice options, which leads to the development of participation and partnership with local authorities.



Levels of Tenant Participation

While it is now clear that tenant participation can be regarded as a voice option within the range of different options available to tenants, this does not tell us anything about how such a voice options might be both conceived and put into practice. There are a number of approaches to this question, the most common being the idea of a ladder of participation in which the level of voice or participation can be decided on (Arnstein, 1969; Burns *et al*, 1994; Burns *et al*, 2001). The most quoted work in defining different types of participation is Arnstein’s (1969) ‘Ladder of Citizen Participation’. As can be seen from Figure 2.4, Arnstein uses the image of a ladder to describe a single axis along which the multiple and competing meanings of participation could be arranged. At the lowest level of the ladder are two forms of ‘non-participation’, which are termed ‘manipulation’ and ‘therapy’. According to Arnstein, some government organisations have manufactured spurious forms of participation which are in reality aimed at inducing citizens to accept a predetermined course of action. The next three rungs are outlined as forms of ‘tokenism’. These include informing, a one-way flow of information to citizens; consultation, when

citizens may be heard, but under these conditions lack power to ensure their views are acted on; and placation, in which government gives in to some citizen demands but retains the right to decide. Further up the ladder are levels of citizen power with increasing degrees of decision-making power. Citizens can enter into a 'partnership' that enables them to negotiate and engage in trade-offs, and at the highest rungs are 'delegated power' and 'citizen control'. Although there are limitations to Arnstein's descriptions, it nevertheless provides a useful departure point for descriptions of the gradations of participation and the redistribution of power that can result from participatory processes with empowerment as a goal. Furthermore, the analysis suggests that participation is a diverse process and can be top-down or bottom-up, simple or complex, static or dynamic, controllable or uncontrollable, predictable or unpredictable.

Figure 2.4 Ladder of Empowerment

Degrees Of Citizen Power		
8	Citizen control	Participants and residents are able to control a program or an institution, govern policy an managerial aspects, and negotiate the conditions under which "outsiders" can make changes
7	Delegated power	Negotiations occur between citizens and public officials that give citizens the power to make decisions and maintain control over plans and programs
6	Partnership	Power is redistributed through negotiation between citizens and power holders and they agree to share planning and decision making responsibilities
Degrees Of Tokenism		
5	Placation	Occurs when ground rules allow the have-nots to advise, but the power holders still have the decision-making power; truly appeasing citizens depends on the quality of technical support they have in expressing their priorities and the extent to which the community has been organized to argue for those priorities
4	Consultation	Involves inviting citizens' opinions (often through surveys, meetings, etc.); power holders gain evidence that they have gone through the necessary steps for involving "those people"
3	Informing	Involves advising citizens of their rights, responsibilities, and options; often involves one-way communication (from officials to citizens) with no means for citizens to express their opinions and no power for negotiation
Non-Participation		
2	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 that create their "pathologies"
1	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
Source: Arnstein (1969)		

Somerville (1998a) presents an interesting and more sophisticated analysis of tenant participation and eschews the analogy of the ladder. He argues that tenant participation should be assessed on three general criteria, whether it is empowering or not, whether it is effective and whether it is representative. He further distinguishes between different types of institutional arrangements for tenant participation, internal markets, tenant-led management and landlord-tenant partnerships. As can be seen from Table 2.3, further questions revolve around where does the impetus for change originate, the top or the bottom? Is tenant participation part of a groundswell of local pressure and can it thus be classified as an urban social movement? Or, is the pressure for change coming from the top, is central or local government initiating the change? In addition, there is a tendency to assume that any participation process necessarily leads to greater independence for tenants. However, this may not always be the case. Somerville argues, for example, that certain forms of tenant participation may in fact place additional burdens of responsibility on tenants who are already weighed down by social exclusion and its impacts. What kind of relationship does tenant participation imply for local authorities and tenants? Tenants may wish to use the exit option, pursue a more equal relationship with their landlord or leave the relationship intact but still demand better services. There are thus different impacts, ones which conserve existing relationships, ones which reform existing structures and ones which radically alter those structures. Does the process benefit the tenants as a collective body, an elite of unrepresentative tenants or individual tenants? Somerville thus points to the complex nature of tenant participation and that different tenant participation strategies and actions will have very different origins and impacts.

Table 2.3 Model of Tenant Participation Processes

Classificatory Criteria	Empowerment Processes		
	<i>Direction of Action</i>	Top down	
<i>Dependency Effect</i>	Increasing Dependence		Increasing independence
<i>Institutional Change</i>	Conservative	Radical	Reformist
<i>Beneficiaries</i>	Individuals	Collectives	Elites
Source: adapted from Somerville (1998a) p238.			

In avoiding the analogy of the ladder of participation, Somerville (1998a) also sets out the manner in which top-down tenant participation can be implemented. The strategies are:

1. Empowerment through knowledge (information; training; education)
2. Empowerment through statute (individual and collective rights)
3. Empowerment through resourcing (material and financial)
4. Empowerment through agreement and power transfer

The benefit of this typology is that it focuses on practical strategies that local and central government may follow in the implementation of tenant participation. Somerville (1998a) also presents a typology of bottom-up processes which fall into similar categories:

1. Increasing formal and informal participation in collective activity
2. Increasing exercise of rights
3. Increasing assertiveness in access to resources required for participation
4. Increasing pressure for participation in decision making processes.

These typologies are very useful in placing policies that have been tried in practice and in making any comparative assessments. Although not formalised in such terms, much of the so-called 'good practice' literature falls into some of these categories.

III IMPLEMENTING TENANT PARTICIPATION: GOOD PRACTICE GUIDANCE

This section summarises and analyses the literature on 'good practice' in tenant participation. This literature purports to describe and explain exactly how tenant participation should be implemented in real situations. This section summarises and analyses some of the plethora of good practice guidance on how to implement tenant participation (Audit Commission, 1999; Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 1998, 1999a, 1999b, 2001; New Economics Foundation, 2000; www.tpas.org.uk). While there is a substantial array of such guidance, there is general agreement on the basic principles of tenant participation and how it should be implemented and indeed a great deal of repetition between different publications. Although much of this material is from the UK, Ireland has recently developed its own good practice guidelines, although it must be said that they are very similar to the UK material (Housing Unit, 2001a; Irish Council for Social Housing, 1996; Community Workers Cooperative, 1998). The underlying assumption of such guidelines is that if they are followed then participation will work and will produce successful outcomes. This of course begs obvious

questions regarding the avowed aims and purpose of tenant participation and the outcomes that are sought.

Definition and Purpose of Tenant Participation

Because approaches to tenant participation are driven essentially by political values, tenant participation defies easy definition. At its essence, it is about tenants having some kind of say in decisions affecting their homes and neighbourhoods. Beyond that, according to Cooper and Hawtin, 'as a concept it remains nebulous and ambiguous' (1998a, p3). So, definitions in the literature tend to reflect the different aims and objectives of the authors. The definitions and comments shown below are all taken from Scott *et al* (2000a, p13). To start with a contemporary 'official' view, the Scottish Office says:

"Tenant participation is about tenants influencing decisions about housing policies, housing conditions and housing (and related) services. It is a two way process which involves the sharing of information ideas and power. Its aim is to improve the standard of housing conditions and service."

Even more broadly, Somerville and Steele (1995, p260) define tenant participation as:

'..tenant participation can be defined as collective action based on the local housing area'

While these definitions are quite vague, the next three quotations emphasis the need for flexibility and the need to recognise the particular needs of local situations:

"tenant participation can mean different things to different people and as such is used to mean different things at different times by the same people." (Institute of Housing and Tenant Participation Advisory Service, quoted in Scott *et al*, 2000a)

"Good tenant participation requires flexibility rather than rigid structures. If there is a will on both sides, good tenant participation strategies will evolve by consensus." (Scottish Office, quoted in Scott *et al*, 2000a)

"... there is no single blueprint for an effective resident involvement strategy. Every landlord's strategy will differ depending on the history and pattern of involvement locally, whether there is an active tenants' movement and (crucially) what residents want." (Chartered Institute of Housing, quoted in Scott *et al*, 2000a)

These definitions and qualifications do not advance us very far beyond the obvious. A better understanding of tenant participation can be gained from examining the claimed benefits of such a process.

A number of authors have summarised the hypothetical benefits of tenant participation. It is said to bring a fresh perspective and the ability to see problems in new ways; it helps to target more accurately local needs; it utilises local knowledge of an area; it generates projects that are more acceptable to local people; it fosters a greater sense of local ownership of projects hence contributing to their longer term sustainability; it builds local skills and capacities; it aligns local programmes with the government's stated commitment to partnership working; and finally it helps revitalise local democracy (Burton, 2003; Scott *et al*, 2000a; Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 1998, 1999a, 1999b, 2001). In short, tenant participation will improve the effectiveness of policy while also improving the capacities of local citizens.

Principal Elements of 'Good Practice'

Table 2.4 details the main components of the extensive good practice literature. This can be summarised by saying that there are four essential features to good practice.

Policies and Agendas

The first element is the need for clear policies and agendas for tenant participation. In this respect, tenants must be treated as equal partners. The literature abounds with the language of partnership and there is an assumption that tenants can achieve this status of equal partnership with local authorities. Moreover, as in any negotiations, what is on the agenda for discussion must be as unambiguous as is possible and the agenda must also be wide enough to be meaningful to tenants. What matters to tenants may well be a multiplicity of neighbourhood issues which goes beyond the sometimes narrow remit of housing departments.

Table 2.4 Summary of Good Practice Components

<p>1 Policies and Agendas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tenants should be treated as equal partners ▪ There should be a tenant participation policy and strategy ▪ All aspects of the housing service should be up for discussion ▪ Tenants should be involved in determining the agenda ▪ Estate profiles and plans are needed as a planning base
<p>2 Decision Making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The level of participation should be made clear (information, consultation or shared decision making). ▪ The Parameters of participation should be clear so as to avoid undue expectations on either side. In short, clarity is needed on each aspect of the agenda. ▪ Structures should be made clear (informal groups; estate boards etc.)
<p>3 Implementing Decisions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There should be clear outcomes and action points from meetings and consultation. ▪ Responsibilities for taking action should be clearly outlined. ▪ There should be consistent monitoring and evaluation. ▪ Clear service standards and targets for should be set. ▪ Outcomes should be measured. ▪ Satisfaction of tenants should be measured.
<p>4 Enabling Tenants to Participate</p> <p>Tenants, almost by definition, have limited material resources. It is up to the local authority to provide resources to enable tenants to participate.</p>
<p><i>Standards for tenants' groups</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tenant groups should have a written constitution; regular elections and meetings; membership clearly open to all tenants; regular newsletters or other written communications with members; ▪ Independent training advice should be available to tenants
<p><i>Standards on resources for tenant participation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Resources should be sufficient to ensure that tenants have the support they need to set up new structures or arrangements for involvement and to sustain existing ones. Support should include: reasonable financial help; facilities ; advice; staff resources. ▪ However, tenant groups should not end up doing the local authorities work.
<p><i>Standards on information and meetings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Full information on policies should be available and be easily accessible. ▪ Meetings should be open, accountable and efficiently run.
<p>Source: adapted from a variety of 'Good Practice' sources</p>

Decision Making

The second core element of good practice guidance relates to decision making and in particular the level and structure of tenant participation to be implemented. It is necessary to be explicit regarding the level of participation which is being entered into. There is widespread agreement that there are four levels of tenant participation which denote different levels of influence by tenants. The most basic level of participation is provision of information by the local authority to tenants on the housing service and the receipt of feedback from tenants. The next level is consultation, where the views of tenants are sought and are taken into account in the making of decisions and the provision of services.

The next level is shared decision making. In other words, there is a formal sharing of power where the local authority must act on tenants' views. This may take the form of tenants possessing voting rights or having specific agreements over service provision. Tenant management, the next level, is where tenants have full control and are thus autonomous in making decisions on the housing service. For tenants and the local authorities, there is a need for broad agreement and understanding regarding the level of participation that is to be implemented. Classically, confusion over what tenant participation means can lead to frustration for both tenants and local authorities. Consultation, for example, may imply completely different things to tenants and local authorities; the former may see it as conferring real power of decision, while the latter may merely see it as obtaining views and information. All guidance agrees on the absolute need for local authorities to have a comprehensive written policy on tenant participation which states the foregoing in clear terms (Housing Unit, 2001a; Chapman and Kirk, 2001; Carley, 2002). In general, the structures and methods to make participation operational will depend on the level of participation which is being pursued.

Implementing Decisions

The third core element refers to the issue of implementing decisions. In this regard, tenants need to have a real influence which produces specific identifiable outcomes in order that participation is not merely a form of tokenism. This seems to be the critically important one as it focuses on the need for tenants to hold actual demonstrable influence over decision making which produces genuine outcomes with respect to service improvements on estates. This avoids to a degree the often vacuous language of partnership and empowerment which may be used to cover failures in producing actual improvements and changes in services and decision making. Moreover, the parameters of decision making must also be clear. In other words, the degree of influence on each agenda item must be apparent to both tenants and the local authority. For example, if lettings and allocations policy is on the agenda, the extent of tenant influence on decisions must be clear.

Enabling Tenants To Participate

The fourth core element refers to the need to enable tenants participate in a meaningful manner which brings up the crucial issue of resources for tenant participation. This may mean resources directly provided to tenant groups for example, but may also refer to the

manner in which local authorities organise their service. Whatever the level of participation, it must be remembered that the local authorities are comparatively resource rich and that tenants generally speaking are deprived or resource poor. Moreover, it should also be borne in mind that in a deprived and vulnerable community participation is not necessarily a natural or rational action. A more rational reaction may be for tenants to argue that the local authority should just do its job properly without recourse to new structures of participation. Therefore, if local authorities wish to involve tenants as a basis for providing a better housing management service it needs properly to encourage and resource tenant groups. While tenants have responsibilities with regard to their tenancy agreements they have no legal or moral responsibility to engage in tenant involvement, which, it must be remembered, is a voluntary activity. There is thus a need to provide basic material resources such as office space and equipment where an organised tenant group does exist. There is also a need to provide modest financial resources, for example delegated budgets for training, the running costs of offices and the costs of estate or community workers who act as advocates for tenants and tenant groups. In this regard, there is a need for full and comprehensive availability of information as an essential prerequisite for any form of tenant participation. In theory this would seem simple enough to achieve, although in practice local authorities may be deeply reluctant to release certain information. Moreover, information is something which can be managed in a variety of ways for different purposes.

Improving Services

It is worth emphasising that perhaps one of the most important and recurring points that the good practice literature stresses is that tenant participation is a mechanism for improving the housing management service (Department of the Environment, 1996a, 1998b). Put more simply, the implementation of a tenant participation policy should mean significant change in the organisation and delivery of housing management. Conversely, tenant participation should not be a token addition or layer which leaves housing management effectively unchanged. The good practice guidance is clear regarding the types of change that could occur in terms of local authority reorganisation, all of which have potentially serious ramifications for local authority service delivery. It may involve internal re-structuring, de-centralisation to local estates offices, the creation of dedicated tenant participation posts, the creation of dedicated budgets and so on. The support of senior

management, for instance, is regarded as essential. Also, of key importance is the need for local authorities to operate inter-departmental co-ordination of services at estate level which might be organised through co-ordinated service plans which operate at estate level. Depending on the size of the authority and the size of estates, there may be a need or demand for local estate offices. Increasingly, it is considered necessary to develop estate action plans which are inter-agency in nature (Housing Unit, 2001a). More specifically, there is a need for dedicated tenant participation staff who operate at estate level and have delegated authority over certain agreed matters. This hands-on approach is seen to have benefits in terms of local estate management. Finally, in undertaking tenant participation it is essential that outcomes are set which specify goals and targets, as otherwise the danger is that tenant participation schemes can become prolonged talking shops where little is achieved. Invitations to the negotiating table presume that there is something that can be discussed and achieved as result. This is particularly the case with tenants, who have traditionally not had a seat at the table. The manner and degree to which local authorities turn their operations to improve estate management can clearly also be a resource for tenants.

Tenant Participation Standards

The following section sets out some of the detailed standards for the practice of tenant participation on a daily basis. It is primarily based on the sets of standards laid out in UK government guidance on the implementation of tenant compacts (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 1998, 1999a, 1999b). The Irish best practice guidance broadly replicates this UK material (Housing Unit, 2001a).

Tenant Participation Policies

All guidance agrees on the absolute need for local authorities to have a comprehensive written policy on tenant participation. There is a need for tenants to be involved in the formulation of the policy and also to agree with it. In England, tenants and the local authority formally sign and agree to written Tenant Compacts (Cole *et al*, 2001). Such policies should have clear and identifiable outcomes. In that regard, it is incumbent on local authorities to develop a customer care code specifying the type and level of service that is to be provided. It is important that properly constituted and representative tenant groups are formed.

The Agenda

Critically, what is available for discussion and negotiation must be made clear. As in any negotiations, what is on the agenda for discussion must be unambiguous. Not all housing or neighbourhood issues will necessarily be on the agenda, and some issues will be outside the remit of the local authority (e.g. serious law and order issues; economic issues). Moreover, the parameters of decision making must also be clear. In other words, the degree of influence on each agenda item must be apparent to both tenants and the local authority. For example, if lettings and allocations policy is on the agenda, the extent of tenant influence on decisions must be clear. In the Irish case, for example, the local authority has a legal duty to allocate houses according to housing need and tenants should, theoretically, have no influence on lettings policy generally or in specific cases. Tenancy agreements impose both rights and obligations on tenants and these must be observed. A narrow and limited agenda will be insufficient for tenant participation to work. In other words, the agenda must be wide enough to be meaningful to tenants. This may take factors beyond strictly housing matters into account. What matters to tenants may well be a multiplicity of neighbourhood issues which goes beyond the remit of housing departments.

Structures and Methods of Participation

In general the structures and methods to make participation operational will depend on the level of participation which is being pursued. Table 2.5 summarises the kinds of methods associated with different levels of participation. Perhaps the crucial distinction here is that between consultation and shared decision-making. In the former there are a variety of methods which may confer some influence on tenants, while in the latter there are clear legal agreements where tenants have actual powers of decision-making, whether it be negative or positive.

Table 2.5 Structures and Methods of Participation	
Levels of Tenant Participation	Typical Structures and Methods
<i>Information</i>	Newsletters; meetings; letters; leaflets; tenant handbooks; advertisements; posters; notices;
<i>Consultation and dialogue</i>	Open Meetings; questionnaires; tenant surveys; estate boards
<i>Shared decision making or devolution</i>	Estate agreements; estate management boards; service agreements; estate action plans
<i>Tenant management</i>	Estate Management Boards; devolution of functions; tenant management
Source: Author	

Resources for Tenants

It must be remembered that local authorities are the parties which are resource rich and that tenants generally speaking are deprived or resource poor. Moreover, it should also be borne in mind that in a deprived and vulnerable community, participation is not necessarily a natural or rational action. A more rational reaction might be for tenants to argue that the local authority should just do its job properly (Bengtsson, 2001). Therefore, if local authorities wish to involve tenants as a basis for providing a better housing management service it needs properly to encourage and resource tenant groups. It is vital to remember that the onus is on local authorities to facilitate tenant participation. A view that sees tenants as being uninterested or recalcitrant with respect to participation is one which is essentially indefensible. While tenants have responsibilities with regard to their tenancy agreements they have no responsibility to engage in tenant involvement. There is thus a need to provide basic material resources such as office space and equipment where an organised tenant group does exist. There is also a need to provide modest financial resources, for example delegated budgets for training, the running costs of offices and estate or community workers.

According to the recommendations on Tenant Compacts in England (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 1998, 1999a) the following standards regarding to resources should be adhered to: the supply of reasonable financial help (e.g., start-up grant, annual grant, estate budgets); the provision of facilities (e.g., access to premises and equipment; stationery; photocopying; help in distributing newsletters); the provision of advice, including independent advice, community development support, support for local tenant networks; the provision of tailored training to meet the needs of tenants' representatives or tenants' groups, including possible joint training with council staff and members, where appropriate; and, the pursuit of innovative approaches to encourage new tenants to get involved, so that structures remain representative and sustainable. Moreover, local authorities should provide tenants with full information on what resources, including staff time, are available to implement its policies for tenant involvement; which officers are responsible for delivering specific goals in the strategy; and, what resources are available to support training and capacity-building amongst tenants' representatives and tenants' groups, and to sustain established tenant participation structures.

Estate-Centred Management

There is a need for dedicated tenant participation staff who operate at estate level and have delegated authority over certain agreed matters. This hands-on approach is seen to have benefits in terms of local estate management. Of key importance is the need for local authorities to operate inter-departmental co-ordination of services at estate level. This could perhaps be organised through co-ordinated service plans which operate at estate level. Depending on the size of the authority and the size of estates, there may be a need or demand for local estate offices. In some cases there will be a necessity for estate action plans which are inter-agency in nature, as recommended by the Housing Management Group (Department of the Environment, 1998b). Estate action plans should contain the following: a survey of satisfaction regarding the condition of houses and the estate and the running of the estate; technical appraisal of the housing stock; the identification of problems and issues; a commitment to work with tenants to improve their confidence in participation; a commitment to work towards new structures of tenant participation and estate management and increases and improves social networks and hence community development

Standards for Tenant Groups

These standards try to make sure that tenants' groups have a mandate to get involved by meeting reasonable criteria for formal recognition by the council. Councils should negotiate and agree these criteria with tenants first. The criteria should not place too great a burden on tenants' groups, particularly small groups or those set up for mainly social reasons. Councils should be sensitive to the needs of all tenants' groups and should consider making different criteria available to different types of groups. They should take into account a group's size, purpose and whether it is receiving council funding. The intention is to promote the formation of active tenants' groups. Tenants wishing to set up and participate in tenants' groups with a role under the compact will meet the council's agreed and published criteria for formal recognition. Where tenants' groups have a formal role in decision-making, they should be able to show that they are democratic, accountable and have all of the following: a written constitution; equal opportunities policies (including race equality policies) which are complied with; regular elections; open financial records (and annual accounts if appropriate); regular meetings, including an annual general meeting which a minimum necessary number of tenants attend before the meeting can take

decisions and where someone takes the minutes; a level of active membership determined by the council and tenants; procedures to make sure that information on the group is made widely available to tenants and all tenants are encouraged to become more active; membership clearly open to all tenants; regular newsletters or other written communications with members; means of showing how they have met their objectives and still have the skills to work effectively.

Standards for Information

These standards try to make sure that the information councils give tenants meets their needs. These standards may also help recognised tenants' groups to communicate information to their communities. These standards should also apply to tenants' groups which have a formal role in decision-making. Councils and tenants should negotiate what level and range of information they will provide locally. Councils will have to consult in ways that meet their tenants' requirements and fit with other local circumstances. They may need to hold a continuing dialogue or a one-off consultation exercise on a specific issue. Information should be: accessible (i.e. in plain language and be available in large print); expressed clearly, avoiding jargon and racist, sexist or other biased language; of good quality, timely and tailored to tenants' needs. Moreover, tenants should, as appropriate, receive information on: housing strategies, policies and priorities; housing investment options and plans; arrangements and requirements for delegating housing management, including contracting out of services; monitoring and reviewing performance and setting service standards and targets; housing management and other relevant local services; present and future capital works affecting tenants, their homes and their area; how tenants can get involved in housing management and decision-making and what this would mean for them, including benefits for both tenants and the council.

Standards for Meetings

These standards try to make sure that there is effective communication and feedback in meetings between the council and tenants on issues covered by compacts. This is so that tenants can participate fully and contribute to the decision-making process. The standards should also apply to meetings of tenants' groups with a formal role in decision-making. They may also apply where recognised tenants' groups funded by the council communicate with their communities and feed back tenants' views to the council. Meetings are only one

way in which councils and tenants can interact with each other in the decision-making process. Tenants should decide with their council whether meetings are the best way for them to be involved in decision-making. To be effective, meetings should have: clear objectives and a mandate; a clear action plan to deal with matters arising; arrangements for reporting back the outcome, including feedback, to those who took part. Moreover, meetings should be: publicised effectively and in good time; held at suitable times and in accessible places, to maximise attendance; and, properly chaired, and conducted in a fair and democratic way so that everyone gets a chance to have their say and is kept informed. Councils should pay allowances (e.g. towards the cost of child care, or care facilities) and should provide transport, where appropriate. They should also provide technical assistance for people who need special help, such as facilities for interpreters.

Local Authority Organisation and Resources

Perhaps one of the most important points about tenant participation is that it is a mechanism for improving the housing management service. Thus, tenant participation and improvements in housing services are completely interrelated and integrated. Put more simply, the implementation of a tenant participation policy should mean significant change in the organisation and delivery of housing management. Tenant participation should not be a token addition or layer which leaves housing management effectively unchanged. Tenant participation should necessitate a fundamental review of housing management structures. The support of senior management is essential, otherwise staff at estate level will have no back up.

Outcomes

It is essential that outcomes are set which specify certain goals and targets. Otherwise the danger is that tenant participation schemes can become prolonged talking shops where little is achieved. Invitations to the negotiating table presumes that there is something that can be discussed and achieved as result. This is particularly the case with tenants, who have traditionally have not had a seat at the table.

Standards for Monitoring and Measuring Performance

These standards try to make sure that authorities consistently monitor and assess how estate management performs and that they set performance standards and targets for a common set of indicators. Councils and tenants should: assess the results of operating

compacts against their original expectations; review policies, practice and performance at regular intervals; set clear service standards and targets for tenant consultation and involvement; if service standards and targets are not met, investigate and find remedies; monitor and evaluate different approaches to tenant participation, looking particularly at the scope for changing their own approach to make sure this remains effective and efficient; monitor tenant representatives and groups to make sure they continue to carry out their roles effectively; monitor equality of opportunity and levels of involvement by all groups, including ethnic minorities; assess performance against what other housing organisations are achieving; and check that councils consult with and involve tenants from all parts of the community effectively. Performance measures and targets should be set each year for tenants' satisfaction with participation arrangements and services in their local area.

The literature on good practice and the specification of standards for participation is both very detailed and very comprehensive. From the viewpoint of a consumerist perspective, the good practice literature sets a series of client or customer standards which in theory should be adhered to. If such guidance was to be followed in its totality, then local authorities would have to quite fundamentally change their policies and practices. It would have major implications for the manner in which authorities are organised and the manner in which they deliver their service. The research seeks to investigate and analyse the degree to which Irish local authorities comply with these standard and the degree to which it actually empowers decisions.

IV CONCLUSION

The first part of this chapter showed that much of the literature on tenant participation seeks to locate tenant participation within a broader discourse on citizenship. However, debates on citizenship either explicitly or implicitly contain assumptions derived from broader theoretical and conceptual debates. Essentially debates on citizenship divide into two broad normative perspectives. In the first, the citizen is to be empowered through the market as a customer or a client and in the second the citizen is to become an activist in the production of better democracy and civic outcomes. Nonetheless, despite these differences, it can be argued that there is a generally optimistic view contained in much of

the literature, that tenant participation can produce positive outcomes in terms of quality of citizenship and service outcomes.

Moreover, it seems clear, especially from the review of the so-called 'good practice' literature on tenant participation, that one of the strongest underlying theoretical and conceptual assumptions is that such participation fits into a pluralist model of local governance. In other words, there is a belief that power is diffusely held and exercised by a wide variety of actors and institutions. Moreover, as Scott *et al* (2000a) argue, there is an assumption that tenants can have a genuine and real influence in determining decisions that affect them. Tenant participation, therefore, as a new addition to the layers of democracy and decision making procedures, can be seen as formally adding tenant groups to the list of actors involved in the democratic process.

CHAPTER 3

RESIDUALISATION OF SOCIAL HOUSING

'People living in distressed urban areas are isolated from the metropolitan opportunity structure provided by *institutions* (schools, welfare systems, the legal system), *markets* (notably the labour market and the housing market), and the *local community* (family and non-family aid and support services' (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1998, p9)

I INTRODUCTION

The language and rhetoric of participation is essentially positive and optimistic. However, the economic, social and environmental circumstances of many social housing tenants is far from positive or optimistic. Therefore, this chapter examines the material context in which policies and programmes of tenant participation are developed. In other words, it examines the social exclusion of the social housing population. Section II examines some comparative research which gives a EU-wide perspective on social exclusion and the development and persistence of poor neighbourhoods while Section III examines the residualisation of the Irish local-authority housing sector.

II SOCIAL EXCLUSION, RESIDUALISATION AND NEIGHBOURHOODS IN THE EU

There is broad agreement among researchers that across Europe, local authority-housing, or more broadly, social housing, has suffered a serious decline in the last twenty years (Harloe, 1995; Power, 1997, 1998, 1999; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1998). This process of decline, often called residualisation, has many facets, but the main ones have been the relative decline of the tenure compared with owner occupation and other tenures, the increasingly marginalized or impoverished circumstances of tenants housed in the sector and the increase in 'problem estate's with associated social-order problems. Overall, local-authority housing is seen to have failed in certain key respects, especially with regard to the creation of difficult-to-let estates. Local-authority housing has increasingly become a welfare housing sector, significantly different to its post war character, where it was more broadly based with respect to the socio-economic composition of the tenant population.

More recently, this residualisation of the sector has been placed in the slightly broader context of social exclusion. A comparative literature has recently developed which focuses

on social exclusion and poor neighbourhoods (Bartley, 1998; Madanipour *et al*, 1998; Andersen and Van Kempen, 2001; Cars *et al*, 2002; Skifter Andersen, 2002; Musterd and Ostendorf, 1998; Musterd *et al*, 2000; Musterd and Murie, 2002). This literature emphasises the multi-dimensional nature of exclusion, its increasing spatial expression in poor neighbourhoods which are dominated by social renting and the existence of what is termed a neighbourhood effect whereby poverty and exclusion is compounded because of its concentration in neighbourhoods or pockets of deprivation.

The Dimensions of Social Exclusion

Social exclusion is a term which has come into official government use in the past decade and has primarily emerged from European Union debates and analyses about poverty and social policy (Atkinson, 2000). For good or ill, the term now dominates debate on poverty and social policy, to the extent that in the UK there is a dedicated Social Exclusion Unit in the Deputy Prime Minister's office. The concept of social exclusion also dominates debate in Ireland. What then is social exclusion, how is it different from the concept of poverty, for example? Social exclusion is not just a condition of economic poverty, but is similar in certain respects to the term multiple deprivation in that it means certain groups are disadvantaged across a number of aspects of life. Whereas multiple deprivation tended to focus on objective or measurable indicators of disadvantage, social exclusion is broader and places great emphasis on certain axes of exclusion. Analysts who support the use of the term social exclusion claim it not only identifies axes or aspects of exclusion but that it also implies a certain explanatory framework relating to a broad array of socio-economic and political processes (Bartley, 1998; Atkinson, 2000; Byrne, 1999). Broadly speaking, households may be excluded economically, socially, environmentally and politically.

This description and characterisation of social exclusion is multi-faceted. There is an implicit sense in this description and others like it, that social exclusion can lead to forms of social disintegration and chaos, hence the focus on issues of social cohesion and social capital in more recent debates (Kearns and Forrest, 2000; Andersen and Van Kempen, 2001). According to the OECD (1998), 'Areas of concentrated deprivation in cities impede economic development, weaken social cohesion and engender high environmental costs' (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1998, p9). Thus, for

the OECD at least, the exclusion of sectors of the population from the mainstream has negative societal costs which need to be addressed through various policy instruments. Table 3.1, which draws on the extensive literature on social exclusion in urban areas, illustrates the various dimensions of exclusion that disadvantaged groups may endure (Madanipour *et al*, 1998; Musterd and Murie, 2002; Kesteloot, 2002).

Table 3.1 Social Exclusion Frameworks	
AXES OF EXCLUSION	
Economic and Market	Consequences of exclusion
Labour Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High unemployment, particularly high long-term unemployment ▪ Low skills base ▪ High poverty levels ▪ High welfare dependency
Education and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poor educational attainment ▪ Early school leaving
Housing Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Market access to housing is limited ▪ Social allocation of housing is predominant
Neighbourhood and Community	
Housing quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poor housing conditions internally and externally ▪ Poor maintenance
Environmental quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poor-quality physical environment ▪ Poor design and aesthetics
Spatial Segregation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Isolation ▪ Accessibility problems – to transport and services
Commercial Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Insufficient commercial services ▪ Inferior and expensive commercial services
Population structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vulnerable groups ▪ Disproportionate numbers of single parents ▪ High population mobility and turnover
Social behaviour and norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Criminality ▪ Vandalism ▪ Anti-social behaviour ▪ Neighbourhood effects
Stigma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poor reputation – reflected in individual self esteem ▪ Stigmatisation
Social capital and social cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limited social networks ▪ Poor trust, norms ▪ Lack of confidence and community capacity
Governance and Welfare	
Service relationship and governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bureaucratic housing and estate management ▪ Disjointed and Uncoordinated housing service ▪ Them and us relationship ▪ Exclusion from decision-making
Service level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poor welfare services: health; education; social services
Service quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poor quality of management and maintenance
Source: Author	

This framework, developed as an organisational device for this thesis, serves as a means of organising and classifying the extensive literature on social exclusion and inclusion. If these are the various attributes of exclusion, then inclusion presumably is in key respects the converse of such exclusion. Economic exclusion refers primarily to exclusion from the labour market (joblessness; part-time jobs; low paid and insecure jobs) and hence to work and the income that comes with reasonable employment. It may also refer to having the ability to access only low-paid part-time employment. In a related manner, another key dimension of market exclusion refers to the low educational and skills base of affected populations. Moreover, low incomes, whether from welfare transfers or low-income employment, can effectively exclude certain households from access to reasonable quality affordable accommodation. Thus, exclusion from the housing market, and a subsequent reliance on social allocation or welfare subsidies for housing, is a key form of exclusion.

Although there is nothing inevitable about exclusion taking a spatial form, neighbourhood and community exclusion follows on strongly from market exclusion. It refers to the tendency for the poor to become spatially or geographically concentrated in poor neighbourhoods, whether they be inner-city areas or peripheral housing estates. Here, the quality of housing and the surrounding environment can often be substandard. Moreover, such areas tend to attract fewer and inferior commercial services than do higher-income areas. As evidenced from EU-funded research, the exclusion tends to impact disproportionately on certain populations. For example, there tend to be higher proportions of single parents, single persons, elderly and ethnic minorities located in such areas (Musterd and Murie, 2002; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1998). There is increasing evidence that many poor neighbourhoods are also sites for disruptive social behaviour (Power, 1997, 1998). Furthermore, an increasing trend in the literature is to suggest that populations in such areas, because of the multiple deprivation suffered, lack the individual or community capacities to escape from their circumstances. This is generally referred to as a lack of social cohesion or social capital, akin, in striking ways to the old culture of poverty arguments (Forrest and Kearns, 1999, 2001; Taylor, 2002a; Allen *et al*, 2001).

Exclusion from governance refers in part to the poor quality of state services provided to disadvantaged areas, but also to the general exclusion of the population from the decision-

making processes of the various state and quasi-state agencies. Much of the literature on social exclusion points to the inadequate quantity and quality of state services available to the excluded (Musterd and Murie, 2002; Allen *et al.*, 2001). This is in effect a critique of welfare state provision, the argument being that such provision is often bureaucratic and badly targeted.

Explaining Social Exclusion

While it is comparatively easy to describe the dimensions of social exclusion, it is more difficult to ascribe reasons as to the growth of such exclusion. Certainly, since the mid 1970s, the economic and political landscape has changed. In European Union countries there has been significant economic restructuring, with a process of deindustrialisation and the emergence and ascendancy of a service and information-based economy. This has had profound effects on labour markets and employment patterns, with some analysts pointing to the emergence of increased social polarisation. In the political sphere, conservative and new right governments and policies have been dominant, with consequent changes in state activity. States and governments have become more entrepreneurial, meaning that they are explicitly more accommodating to business and commercial interests. More pertinent to this thesis, the welfare state has been reconfigured and realigned across Europe (Esping-Andersen, 1999). While this has not necessarily meant comprehensive reductions in welfare spending, it has resulted in significant changes in certain sectors in terms of spending and the manner of delivery (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1998). In Ireland, for example, there were major reductions in spending on social housing in the 1980s, cutbacks that were never reversed (Nolan *et al.*, 2000). This has been combined with strong shifts in demographic patterns.

In testimony to the fact that social exclusion and residualisation have occurred across many developing countries, the OECD and the European Commission have published major studies examining the extent, consequences and causes of social exclusion and its impacts on neighbourhoods (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1998; Madanipour *et al.*, 1998; Musterd and Murie, 2002; Kesteloot, 2002). The essential proposition of this body of research is that increased social polarisation, which results from the interplay of economic, political and demographic trends, has increased the scale of

social exclusion and that the socially excluded are increasingly to be found in poor neighbourhoods.

The Extent of Urban Social Exclusion

Measuring the extent of disadvantage and social exclusion will depend on the indicators chosen. In its 1998 study of distressed urban areas, the OECD used a limited set of basic indicators related to employment and income. From this rather blunt measuring instrument it estimated that:

'In the ten countries surveyed .. the proportion of the population of major urban areas in relative distress ranged from 7 per cent to 25 per cent, representing up to 10 per cent of the national population. Approximately 20 million people in those countries surveyed are living in deprived areas, out of a metropolitan population of 185 million' (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1998: 11).

Table 3.2 displays evidence of social exclusion from various OECD countries. Using a limited number of indicators, it shows that in comparison with an urban average, disadvantaged areas have higher rates of unemployment, younger populations, far higher rates of single parent households, proportionately higher ethnic minority populations, lower educational attainment and a preponderance of rented accommodation.

Table 3.2 Disparities (Expressed as a ratio) between disadvantaged areas and the urban average

	Ratio of rates of unemployment	Population under 15	Over 65	Lone parent families	Non-national population	Educational attainment	Rental housing
Canada	1.9	0.81	0.84	1.72	1.4	0.80	1.1
Finland	1.4	0.89	0.88	1.23	1.67	0.67	2.2
France	1.9	1.27	0.81	2.35	2.11	0.52	3.8
Ireland	2.1	1.07	1.10	1.50		0.51	2.0
Spain	1.6	1.05	1.00				1.2
Sweden	1.4	1.10	0.63	1.55	2.71		1.8
UK	2.8	1.25	0.79	2.75		0.76	
USA	1.6	1.13	1.14	2.44	1.57	0.44	1.3

Source: OECD, 1998, p35

While Table 3.1 shows that the dimensions of exclusion are complex, there is an absence of clarity on how exclusion is defined, reminiscent of the debate on multiple deprivation in the 1970s. How exactly does one measure whether an individual, household or community is socially excluded. How many dimensions of exclusion should an individual

suffer to be excluded? How long should the exclusion last to be categorised as excluded? How is an excluded community defined? How many individuals or households should be excluded in order that a community, neighbourhood or estate is defined as excluded? Not surprisingly perhaps, in identifying neighbourhoods that are deprived, the UK has used what really amount to traditional indicators of deprivation, such as income, employment, education and so on. There, the Social Exclusion Unit, in identifying deprived areas have used indicators which would have been very familiar to urban geographers of the 1970s (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998, 2001). Thus, while the concept of social exclusion is new, the method of measurement remains in key respects resolutely traditional. The absence of clarity regarding definitions of exclusion clearly has major implications for definitions of social inclusion and for area-based programmes in particular. Put differently, at what point is an individual, a household or a community said to be included once more into the society's mainstream?

Social Exclusion and Spatial Exclusion

While the term social exclusion may lack precision, it does have the advantage of being widely ranging and raises all manner of questions about the persistence of poor neighbourhoods. Geographers have long been familiar with the existence of spatial variations in the level of living and the quality of life at various spatial scales. In particular, there has been a considerable amount of attention given to the intra-urban differences in quality of life and the residential differentiation that is apparent at an urban scale (Knox, 2000; Pacione, 2001). The problem of the inner city was analysed as was the existence of poverty in suburban and outer urban areas. Geographers in particular were keen to measure the inequalities apparent within cities and identified areas of multiple deprivation. Along with measurement of the problem came various attempts to attribute causation, varying from the neo-classical economic paradigm, managerialist and institutional explanations to Marxist structural explanations (Bassett and Short, 1980). The point of this brief excursion into the recent history of urban geography is to illustrate that the problem of place poverty has been around a long time and that there have been frequent attempts at explanation. So, what has changed? Why are academics and policy-makers talking of social exclusion rather than multiple deprivation? Has the nature of the problem really changed so fundamentally or is the new language just that, a new term to describe the same problem?

The novelty of this social exclusion approach, if indeed it is a novelty, lies to an extent in positing that socially-excluded groups are excluded from the mainstream of society, that such exclusion is increasingly concentrated in certain poor neighbourhoods, that it is increasingly a long term exclusion and that groups find it extremely difficult to reconnect to the mainstream, economically, politically and socially. The OECD argues that:

‘The problem of distressed urban areas is not poverty as such. Many poor people live outside distressed urban areas; and many of the people living in these areas are not poor. It is not low incomes alone that characterise these neighbourhoods, but an interlocking mix of environmental, social and economic circumstances, sometimes exacerbated by public policies, that discourages investment and job creation and encourages alienation and exclusion.’ (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1998, p10)

Groups which have been identified as at risk include the elderly, the young, single parents and ethnic minorities, groups who seem to be left behind even in times of economic buoyancy. In other words, the argument seems to be about the possibility or probability of change, or mobility out of impoverished circumstances. The socially excluded, it seems, are so cut off from the mainstream that they find it extraordinarily difficult to escape their condition. This exclusion is based on low-income (welfare dependency), low educational attainment, living in areas which are poorly resourced in terms of public and private services and poor housing and physical environments.

A general set of consequences tend to ensue, which could be termed the social dysfunction of areas, which includes a variety of criminal and anti-social behaviour and a resultant stigma to an area. All of this leads to a lack of social cohesion and a fatalism and lack of confidence among the excluded. One of the most important themes in the EU literature, therefore, is that the social exclusion of the population increasingly has a spatial expression. To urban geographers this is hardly a ground-breaking observation, but from the extensive research emanating from EU-funded projects, it seems that the spatial concentration of poverty in particular neighbourhoods and housing estates is regarded as a new phenomenon. The research emphasises the idea that to be poor in a poor neighbourhood puts additional burdens on households and on the community and this notion further implies that there is sometimes a lack of community capacity (cohesion) to solve the problems of poor neighbourhoods. It further implies that one of the ways of improving poor neighbourhoods is to in some way enhance the cohesion and capacity of such areas.

Acknowledging that poverty is not just confined to poor neighbourhoods, the argument nonetheless is that poor neighbourhoods suffer from a series of cumulative disadvantages, pointing to the notion that populations in such neighbourhoods are in a sense cut off from the means to escape into the mainstream, be it market, institutional or community. Whether households have actually to escape physically from the neighbourhood to access the opportunity structure elsewhere, or whether policies of inclusion should ensure that the opportunities are available to the neighbourhood is unclear. Paralleling the debate on exit and voice mechanisms in citizenship, one can either escape from the neighbourhood or seek improvements through enhanced voice. There seems to be a tacit admission here that the exclusion which matters, or which is prioritised, is what might be regarded as 'visible exclusion'.

While socio-economic forces may generate overall social differentiation, there is no necessary reason why there should be such a concentration of poverty in particular neighbourhoods or in local authority housing. In other words, why is there not a random distribution of the socially excluded? There must be intermediary factors in generating this situation. Figure 3.1 attempts to extract the key points in the literature regarding the spatial dimensions of social exclusion. The first and most obvious point is that socio-economic sifting of the population is generated through labour markets, educational opportunities and the degree of redistribution in a society through the welfare state. In short, structural processes are the primary determinant of social differentiation. Societies are thus more or less market dominated, more or less affected by globalisation and have differing degrees of welfare protection and provision. It is true, certainly within the EU, that economic liberalism has dominated over the past decade with consequences for labour markets and welfare states respectively. In short, there are clear structural issues related to the economy and the state which generate varying degrees and levels of social and economic sifting of the population, or to put it differently, which produce greater or lesser proportions of the populace which are socially excluded. Many commentators have referred to a process of increased social polarisation, with segments of the population such as the jobless, the educationally disadvantaged, together with vulnerable demographic groups such as single parents, the elderly and ethnic minorities, increasingly divorced from the mainstream labour market.

The second point refers to the most important factor which generates overall spatial differentiation in housing, which is the manner in which access to housing is obtained. In other words, housing provision may be more or less market-dominated (housing produced as a commodity for sale) and, accordingly, there will also be differing degrees of social provision and allocation. Table 3.3 develops a schematic model of how housing is provided, from a needs-based model to a market-allocation model. The crucial point here is that the housing system, which is determined by the interplay of market and state, has major implications regarding issues of access and affordability as well as generating particular spatial expressions. Market provision of housing produces different housing markets, organised spatially according to ability to pay. While in Ireland, market provision has tended to dominate, with social provision for the poorest only, in other EU countries there has been a greater social or collective provision, at least in times past (Harloe, 1995). Thus, the provision of housing in a society will reflect the degree of balance between market and social provision. Where access is mostly determined by ability to pay, the socially vulnerable may have little choice but to attempt to access social housing. Where there is greater social and collective provision, the social base of households will be wider. If, as has been the case across the EU, the role of market allocation has increased, through the cutback of social provision and the privatisation of the existing social housing stock, then the socially vulnerable will be mainly filtered into the remaining social stock.

The third key point is that the manner in which social housing is provided by the state can have a bearing on the development of neighbourhoods of social exclusion. Referring to Ireland and the UK, for example, the state through local authorities influences directly the size of social housing estates, their location and their design. Thus, in the UK for example, local authorities have, historically at least, built large-scale estates, often in peripheral areas of cities, and often of a quite different design (high-rise) to privately-developed housing (Power, 1997). This can literally set social housing apart both spatially and in design terms. Policies of privatisation have also had a direct impact on social housing neighbourhoods where tenants of older estates have bought their dwelling.

Figure 3.1 Social Exclusion and Spatial Exclusion		
Levels of structuration	Mechanism	Consequences
1 Structural Socio-Economic Structuration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Degree of market liberalism or penetration ▪ Strength of welfare state system ▪ Globalisation and its impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social and economic sifting of economically and socially vulnerable populations ▪ Increased social polarisation
	↓	
2 Housing Markets and Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Degree of market orientation and penetration of the housing system ▪ Social provision of housing ▪ Tenure structure and tenure mix ▪ Privatisation of housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Residential differentiation at urban scale reflecting market system and social provision
	↓	
3 Institutional – creation of estates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local authority development policies – estate location; estate size, design etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creation of single tenure estates and neighbourhoods ▪ Local spatial scale
	↓	
4 Institutional - Persistence of poor neighbourhoods and estates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local authority management and maintenance system ▪ Allocation policies ▪ Welfare services ▪ Exclusion from governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recognisable poor areas ▪ Poor populations ▪ Poor environment ▪ Poor services ▪ Poor education ▪ Social disorder and dysfunction ▪ Lack of social cohesion and social capital ▪ External and internal stigma ▪ Entrapment
Source: Author		

The fourth point refers to the persistence of social exclusion in certain neighbourhoods. With increases in social polarisation there has been no diminution in the demand for social housing. Thus, a shrinking social housing stock is under increasing demand from those who cannot afford to purchase or rent on the market. As allocation is generally based on the principle of housing need, the households who end up in certain neighbourhoods are the economically and socially most marginalised and vulnerable. Historically at least, many such neighbourhoods were left with little direct local management and poor levels of

maintenance (Power, 1997). This marginalised population is further disadvantaged through the poor provision of commercial and state services. With little hope of obtaining accommodation through the market and limited scope to move within the social housing system, certain neighbourhoods (often social-rented housing) increasingly become the milieu in which the socially excluded live and socialise. There is an increasing emphasis in the literature on what are seen as the negative consequences of the persistence of such neighbourhoods. This tends to refer specifically to such issues as anti-social behaviour but also to more general phenomena such as the lack of social cohesion and social capital (Forrest and Kearns, 2001).

This sequence of argumentation is important in understanding the process of exclusion and its spatial manifestation. Moreover, it is vital in understanding and evaluating area-based regeneration projects. This sequence of explanation comprises a hierarchy of causation. First, the operation of structural or macro socio-economic processes is of paramount importance. Put another way, if such processes and systems operated in a more egalitarian manner, then the nature of social exclusion would be fundamentally different. Second, if the housing system were operated in a different manner, if it were not so market or tenure-dominated, then the spatial patterns would be different. Third, if the manner in which social landlords planned and developed their housing were different (not spatially segregated to the same degree etc), spatial patterns would be different. Fourth, if the social landlords and welfare state services operated in a more pro-active and inclusive manner, the services to households would be different. This hierarchy of causation has clear implications for the potential success of area-based regeneration programmes. It is crucial, in other words, to be clear about the level at which area-based interventions are being made. Are they interventions at the structural level (economy and/or state); at the level of the housing market; at the level of the local state (social landlords); or at the level of local services. The spatial patterns of social exclusion evident in many countries are thus the product of complex interplays between market forces, central-state forces and local-state forces, and intervention initiatives and programmes therefore must be evaluated in this context. Put more simply, a robust understanding of the causes of social exclusion enables an equally robust analysis as to the potential impact of regeneration initiatives. It is important to make judgements as to whether programmes are merely attempting to deal with the symptoms of social exclusion, dealing with its worst effects and consequences, or

whether programs are genuinely aimed at altering the fundamental causal mechanisms of social exclusion.

Table 3.3 Needs-Based and Market-Based Housing Systems

Table 3.3 Needs-Based and Market-Based Housing Systems	
Needs based	Market allocation
Use value	Exchange value
Need	Demand (ability to pay)
Social good	Economic good
Non-profit production	Speculative production
Policy	Policy
Unitary	Dualist (market)
Integrated	Segregated
Non-profit leads	Residualisation of non-profit
Tenure neutral	Single tenure privilege
State and/or third sector	Private capital
Voluntary, community self-build	Fiscal subsidies, tax breaks
Direct construction	
Outcomes	Outcomes
Social cohesion	Social division
Rights based	Privilege
Greater spatial integration	Spatial segregation
Source: adapted from Drudy and Punch, 2002	

Housing and Social Exclusion: Residualisation

The socially excluded are not just confined to the social-rented sector but are located throughout the housing system (owner occupied; private rented; social rented; homeless etc.). However, much research shows that social-rented housing has increasingly accommodated socially marginalised households. Indeed, the OECD comments that:

‘Among the most frequently cited characteristics of distressed urban areas are that housing tenure is predominantly rental, and that the majority of the rental accommodation is social housing’ (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1998, p54).

This quotation alludes to what has been termed a process of residualisation of social housing (Marsh and Mullins, 1998; Somerville, 1998b; Priemus and Dielman, 2002). The term residualisation is essentially a term of convenience to describe multi-dimensional processes and problems related to the decline of social housing. The essence of the residualisation proposition is that the social-rented tenure has become the housing option

of the least well off, or a welfare housing sector. There are three main components to the idea of residualisation. The first concerns the decline of the social-housing sector. This has generally occurred because of a combination of cutbacks in investment in new social housebuilding and the pursuit of the privatisation of the stock through tenant purchase schemes. This decline in investment, together with the sale of existing social housing stock, have led to a fall in the share of the social housing sector compared with other tenures. Moreover, this decline is put in even sharper perspective because of the growth of other tenures, particularly the growth of homeownership. So, in relative terms at the very least, the social housing stock has fallen as a proportion of the total housing stock across many EU countries. In some cases, this decline in relative position has also been accompanied by an absolute fall in the social-housing stock. These trends pose obvious questions regarding the changing nature of housing systems, in particular their increasingly market-oriented nature and the economic and political rationale for these changes. Harloe (1995) attributes the changes to the widespread emergence of a fiscal crisis of the state and consequent cutbacks in welfare programmes. Moreover, this was combined with the aggressive promotion of owner occupation, as new-right policies come into political ascendancy during the 1980s and 1990s.

The second component of residualisation, which is related to the first, refers to the increasingly welfare nature of social housing. As the tenure has declined and as allocation is commonly on the basis of housing need, tenants are drawn increasingly from the poorer segments of society, with high rates of unemployment and a low educational and skills base. In that sense, social housing has increasingly become welfare housing. Moreover, in many cases, this concentration of welfare-dependent populations is located in identifiable social housing estates or neighbourhoods. Thus, because of the manner in which social housing tends to be planned and developed, social housing estates are areas where there is a spatial concentration of economically and socially marginalized households.

The third component of the residualisation thesis refers to the increasing tendency for such social-housing estates to be seen as socially problematic. This generally refers to the wide-ranging phenomenon of anti-social behaviour which is seen as characteristic of some estates. This can result in certain places being regarded by tenants as virtually impossible to live in because of the level of social stress and to be viewed by those 'outside' as places

which are out with the social norm and thus stigmatised in various ways. Moreover, many such estates are associated with physical and environmental deterioration. The argument is not that all social-rented stock is problematic but that an increasing proportion of it is problematic.

Poor and Problematic Neighbourhoods

There is limited robust evidence on the actual amount of problem housing. However, the few estimates that have been made range from 10 per cent in England, to 5 per cent in Denmark (Fahey, 1999a). Power (1997), using a broad definition of problems and difficulty, estimates that on average 15-30 per cent of social housing in Europe was problematic, in which neighbourhoods and estates were increasingly difficult places to live for tenants and increasingly difficult places to manage for social housing landlords. The OECD comments:

‘Among the similarities, distressed areas are characterised by: young populations; high rates of single parenthood, very low income levels and high dependence on income transfers, low levels of socio-occupational mixity, high levels of informal economic activity, high crime rates and rates of drug and alcohol abuse, few local commercial enterprises and poor access to retail centres, more households without a car or telephone, and high mortality and disease rates’ (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1998, p11).

‘Distressed urban areas are portions of cities or their suburbs, usually at the scale of residential neighbourhoods, in which social, economic and environmental problems are concentrated, The cumulative effect, however, is to limit access to opportunities, resource and services that are considered normal or standard in other parts of the city’ (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1998, p15).

Tables 3.4, derived from Power’s (1997 and 1998) work on mass social housing in Europe, illustrate the multiplicity of problems associated with problem social-housing estates. She identifies numerous problems relating to physical design, management and financial and the concentration of social disadvantage. This description is supported by the review of the OECD:

‘Because of the vast scale and unusual style of many of these developments, repairs and maintenance were often difficult and costly’. ...With such poor management and overstretched maintenance, the sense of neglect transferred to residents and vandalism and graffiti became more widespread, worsening the appearance of buildings, damaging their reputation in the eyes of the outside world, and increasing still further the repair bills and waiting times’ (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1998; p55).

Table 3.4 shows in particular the problem of low demand estates, with high levels of empty or void dwellings combined with high levels of population turnover.

Table 3.4 Common Problems in European Social Housing Estates

<p>Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communal environments ▪ Weak security ▪ Over-large blocks ▪ Overall scale of estate <p>Communal Problems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of privacy ▪ Unsupervised common areas ▪ Isolation of estate from urban landscape ▪ Monotonous design and environment ▪ Limited social contract due to communal problems <p>Management and Financial Problems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Population turnover and stability ▪ Maintenance costs and complexity ▪ Insufficient local management organisation ▪ Weak caretaking structures ▪ Vandalism and anti-social behaviour ▪ Lettings problems and vacancies ▪ High management costs and arrears of rent ▪ Settling in problems and lack of support ▪ Extreme conditions <p>Concentrated Social Disadvantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poverty ▪ Concentration of lone-parent families ▪ Young people without skills and without work ▪ Crime and policing difficulties ▪ Ethnic minority concentrations ▪ Disorder
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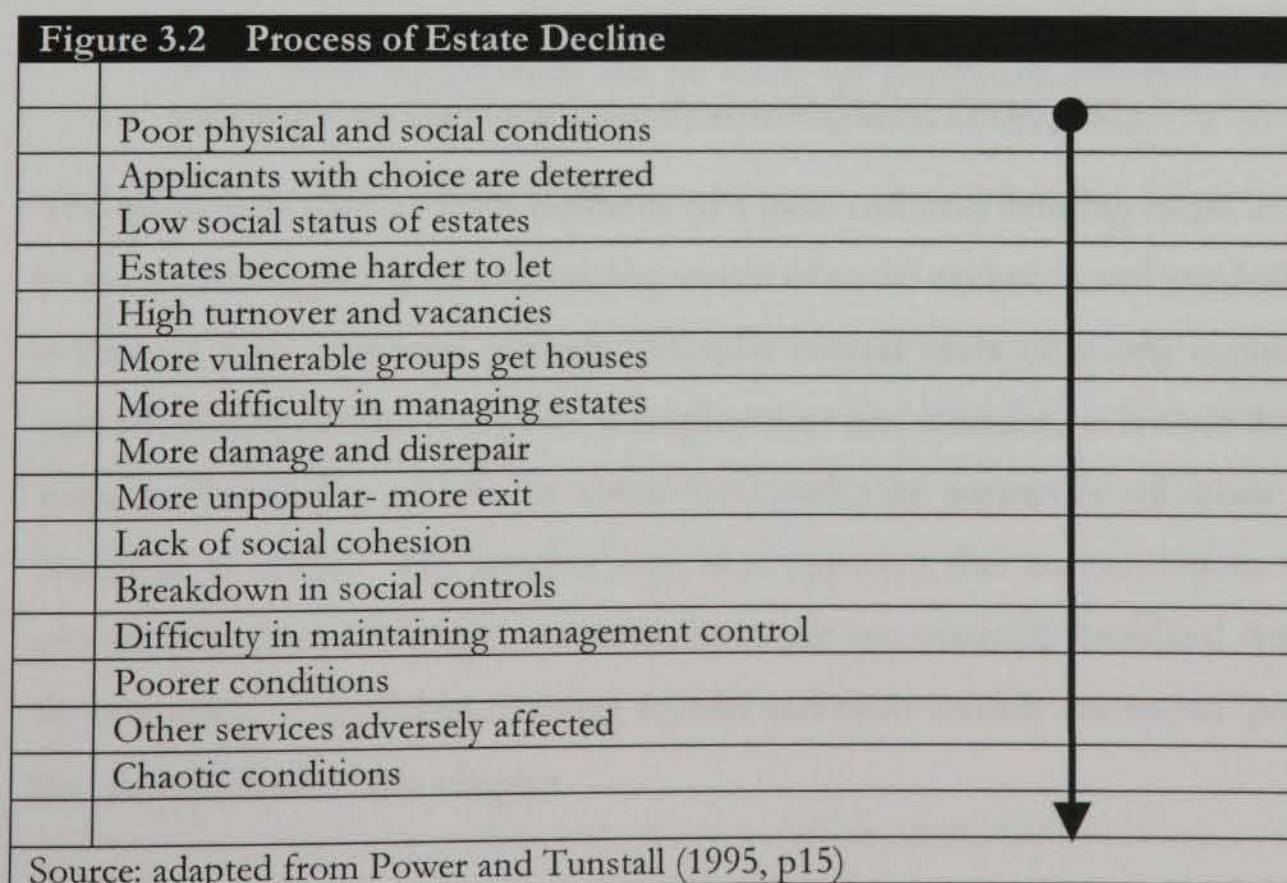
Source: Power, 1998, p225.

Process of Estate Decline

If only a proportion of social-rented housing is problematic in this sense, then how do such estates and neighbourhoods develop and persist? The OECD, in its overview of distressed urban areas, suggests a process whereby initial problems emerge, the better-off leave, are replaced with poorer and more vulnerable families and the process of decline accelerates speedily thereafter. Once problems emerge the better-off residents begin to leave and 'The poorest, who have no choice, remain' (OECD, 1998, p58). The sequence of decline is then summarised as comprising the following: private and public services deteriorate; resignation and underachievement take root, leading to low educational

achievement, low expectations, low morale and confidence; local residents have difficulty obtaining educational or vocational qualifications as a result of poorer educational facilities and fewer role models; low skill workers tend to be spatially isolated from jobs; the neighbourhood can have negative externalities, such as high crime rates and vandalism, which inhibit the creation of employment opportunities by, for example, requiring firms to install expensive security equipment or paying inflated insurance premiums; and concentrated deprivation leads to a form of discrimination based on place of residence – often termed ‘address effects’ (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1998, p53).

Power (1997) and Power and Tunstall (1995) have undertaken extensive research into the decline of social housing, or what they term mass housing, across Europe. They take a particularly jaundiced and critical view of the nature of mass public housing, arguing that it was doomed from the start as a social answer to housing problems. They have set out various models for the sequence of decline of social housing estates. Figure 3.2 shows different sequences of estate decline. The common features which emerge tend to be the physical and environmental degradation of estates, the emergence of voids and signs of unpopularity, a failure of management to take remedial action and a descent into even poorer physical and social conditions.



Given the variety of problems found on some social-housing estates, the existence of neighbourhood effects has been hypothesised in recent years (Kintrea and Aatkinson, 2001; Galster, 2002). Essentially, the proposition of the neighbourhood effect is that it is worse to be poor in a neighbourhood where there is a preponderance of similarly poor households than in a neighbourhood which is more economically and socially mixed. For example, anti-social behaviour may be prevalent; individual confidence and self esteem may be lower, there may be stigma attached to the estate (address effects) and social norms pertaining to the wider society may be weakly represented. Overall, the argument seems to be that some neighbourhoods may develop a culture where 'deviant' behaviour is common and residents have a feeling of siege and entrapment.

III RESIDUALISATION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING IN IRELAND

Overview

'The view from her window depresses her: roaming gangs of vandalising youths, children drinking and smoking hash in the green spaces, 'joyriding' and burnt out cars. ...Summertime brings more mayhem – ramming Garda cars and drinking in the open spaces until 4am. '.....'The women involved in the study know why they are the way they are. They also know how to fix it. Their frustration comes from being trapped in a vicious circle of poverty that makes them feel like outcasts. For those who rear their children well, helping them to beat the odds and stay off drugs, there's still little hope of the children having a better life elsewhere.' Quotations from residents in Quarryvale, North Clondalkin, Dublin (Irish Times, May 28, 2002)

'The prevalence of antisocial behaviour and the absence of a sense that order and civility in the social environment can be taken for granted by residents is the biggest single problem in troubled local authority estates' (Fahey, 1999a, p257).

The quotations above, from residents of a local authority housing estate in Dublin, testify to the enduring problems and consequences of social exclusion and residualisation, even at a time of high economic growth. Despite several years of strong economic growth in Ireland, and significant increases in employment and incomes, it is clear that in certain key respects the quality of life for some local authority tenants is still poor (Fahey, 1999a; Nolan et al, 2000). Put another way, it is apparent that concentrations of poverty still persist, and that poor neighbourhoods have not automatically benefited from an upturn in the economy. This feeling of being socially and economically entrapped points to some of the main themes of this chapter.

Having examined the development of socially excluded neighbourhoods in the EU, the remainder of the chapter traces the residualisation of the local-authority sector in Ireland and its consequences. First, it gives a summary description of the general historical trends in Irish housing provision and policy since the second world war. Second, it focuses on the core factors in the residualisation of the sector, namely the cutbacks in public housebuilding in the mid 1980s and the programme of sales to tenants. Third, it examines the consequences of the decline in the sector, especially the increasingly impoverished composition of the tenant population and also the evidence on the conditions of life on local-authority housing estates.

Table 3.5 summarises the main elements of the residualisation of the local-authority sector in Ireland thereby providing the context for the remainder of the section. There have been three main trends which have resulted in the residualisation of the sector. The first has been the drastic cuts to the social housebuilding programme from the late 1980s to the mid 1990s. The second was the impact of the various tenant purchase schemes that have been in existence over the past 30 years. The right-to-buy has existed since 1970 and at various times central government have instituted heavy discounts on the market value of council dwellings. In the mid to late 1980s, a particularly generous scheme was taken up by large numbers of tenant households. The third trend was the so-called surrender grant, a scheme whereby tenants received a non-refundable grant to assist in purchasing a private house in return for surrendering their local authority tenancy. The net effect of these three major policies has been the residualisation of the sector as demonstrated through the increasingly marginalised nature of the tenant population and the development and persistence of problem or difficult-to-let social housing estates.

The broad elements of the decline of social housing in Ireland are reasonably clear (O'Connell and Fahey, 1999). Since the 1960s the sector has fallen from 18% to 8% of the national housing stock. This fall in tenure share has occurred because of the absolute and relative decline of local authority housebuilding and because of the extensive privatisation of the sector through a series of right-to-buy schemes. In the past decade, local authority housebuilding has accounted for just 8% of annual total housebuilding, whereas it averaged between 20% and 30% in the 1970s and 1980s. This is a result of severe cutbacks in the 1980s during a period of fiscal crisis, and these cutbacks were never

reversed, despite the advent of an economic upturn (Memery, 2001). In recent years, as total housebuilding has increased, local authority development has reduced in relative terms. In 2000, for example, local authority housing development accounted for just 6% of total housebuilding (Redmond, 2001a, 2001b). The emergence of the voluntary sector as an arm of the social rented sector reflects government policy of diversifying social housing provision. As yet, however, the voluntary sector has had a relatively marginal impact on overall housing provision, though this is set to increase in the coming years.

Table 3.5 Towards Welfare Housing in Ireland

	Period	Impact
<i>Policies and Trends</i>		
Public Housebuilding	1987-1993	Significant falls in building leading to small net additions to the stock.
Tenant purchase scheme	1986 and 1988	Substantial sales result in the local authority stock falling from 120,000 to 93,000 between 1987 and 1991. Waiting lists begin to rise again.
Surrender grant scheme	1984-1987	Established tenants leave to be replaced by more economically and socially marginal households. Waiting lists fall.
<i>Results and Impacts</i>		
Changing Tenant Profile	1984-present	Households economic position worsens appreciably. Household types also change.
Problem Estates	1980s to present	Problems of spatial concentrations of poverty in poor neighbourhoods with allied social order problems
Source: Author		

The Housing System and Housing Tenure

One of the central changes in the Irish housing system in the post-war period has been the radical change in tenure structure. Table 3.6 details these changes. The rise of the owner-occupied sector has been the dominant trend of the last 30-40 years. Eighty per cent of all households are owner occupiers, compared with 60 per cent in 1961. This rise of homeownership has been associated with a decline in the rented sector, both private and public. The local authority sector declined from 18 per cent to under 10 per cent of tenure between 1961 and 1991, while the private rented sector has fallen from 17 per cent to 8 per cent over the same period. While the data from the 2002 Census is not yet

available, it is likely that the relativities have remained largely unchanged. However, it is probable that the percentage of privately-rented housing has increased somewhat due to the national fiscal incentive scheme for landlords and the general demand for privately-rented accommodation.

The reasons for the rise of owner occupation are complex and are not central to this thesis. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that homeownership has been heavily supported by national governments through a series of favourable fiscal incentives. These include mortgage interest tax relief, grants for first time buyers, no stamp duty on new houses and the absence of capital gains or property taxes. More pertinently, owner occupation has been boosted by the tenant-purchase schemes operating in the local authority sector. Fahey (1999a) estimates that the owner-occupied stock in 1999 was approximately 910,000 dwellings, and that 231,000 local authority dwellings have been sold to sitting tenants. In short, 25 per cent of the current owner occupied stock was built by the local authorities, but then sold into home ownership.

Table 3.6 Households by Tenure

Tenure	1946	1961	1971	1981	1991	1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Owner Occupied	54	59.8	68.8	74.4	79.3	80
Social rented	11	18.4	15.5	12.4	9.7	9
Private rented	35	17.2	13.3	10.1	8.0	10
Other	0	4.6	2.4	3.1	3.0	1
Housing Stock	na	676000	726363	896054	1019723	1,130,000

Sources: National Economic and Social Council (1988); Downey (1998) and Central Statistics Office (various)

Local Authority Housebuilding and Investment

From the end of the Second World War until the late 1980s, Irish housing policy was dominated by a need to redress severe housing shortages, a result of historic under-provision in the pre-war years and the need to eliminate extensive slum conditions. In the 1940s, following the war, housing conditions in Ireland were seriously substandard. Tenements, overcrowding and lack of basic facilities were still commonplace (O' Sullivan, 1998b). The substandard condition of the housing stock posed the major challenge to government until the early 1960s. In that period, substantial amounts of housing were

built by public authorities and extensive slum clearance also occurred. However, as can be seen from Figure 3.2, the main push in housebuilding began in the late 1960s and continued until the early 1980s. After a downturn in the mid-to late 1980s, levels of housebuilding began to rise again and reached their highest levels in the late 1990s and early part of this century.

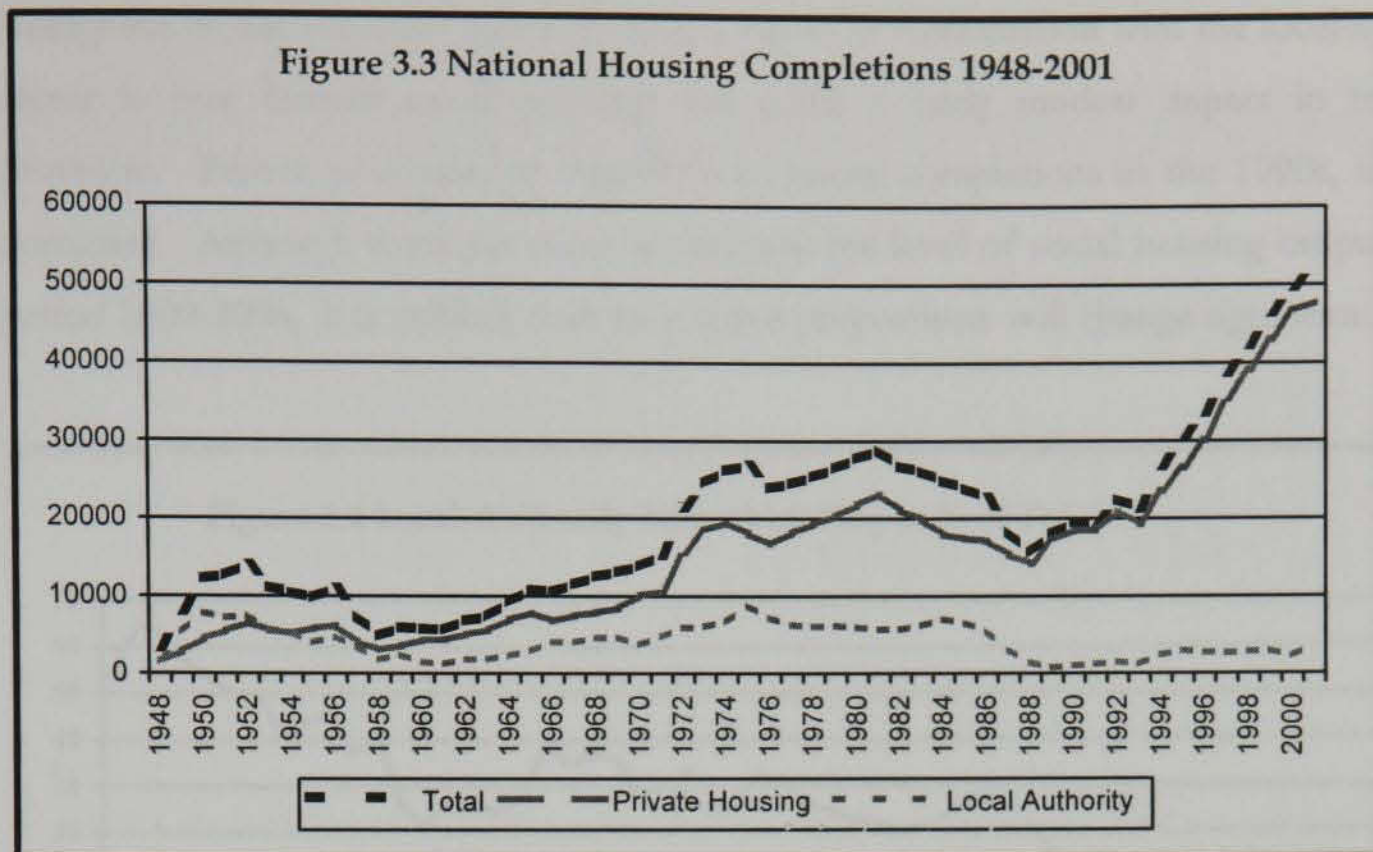
The levels of new housebuilding illustrated in Figure 3.3, and their timing, are reflected in the significant changes in basic indicators of housing conditions and quality. Table 3.7 traces the changing levels of housing conditions from 1946 to 1991. As can be seen, there was some progress between 1946 and 1961, reflecting the level of housebuilding, particularly local authority building, and slum clearance. However, even in 1961, only half of all dwellings had piped water, and almost 60% did not have inside sanitary facilities. However, by 1981, the housing boom of the 1970s had resulted in major improvements in housing conditions. A small minority of households lacked piped water and sanitary facilities. Indicators of overcrowding and housing density had also improved significantly. By 1991, across most traditional indicators of housing conditions, only a small minority of households had housing that was of poor quality.

Table 3.7 National Housing Condition Indicators

Indicators		1946	1961	1971	1981	1991
Households with piped water inside	%	38.7	51	78.8	95.0	98.8
Households with sanitary facilities inside	%	23.1	42.7	70.8	90.0	97.3
Dwellings with fixed bath	%	15.4	33.2	55.8	81.8	?
Persons in households with more than 2 persons per room	%	25.7	17.8	14.8	9.1	2.0
Average persons per room	No.	1.01	0.9	0.86	0.74	0.64
Average persons per private household	No.	4.16	3.97	3.94	3.68	3.34

Source: National Economic and Social Council (1988) p10 and Central Statistics Office (various)

Figure 3.3 shows that since the second world war there have been discernible cycles of housebuilding activity. In the immediate post-war period there was a substantial level of housebuilding which lasted until the mid 1950s. In this latter, period the Irish economy was in deep recession and it was not until the mid 1960s that housebuilding began to recover. From then until the mid 1980s, there was a long boom in housebuilding with a downturn in the mid 1980s. Since the middle of the 1990s, there have again been high levels of building, the highest levels historically.

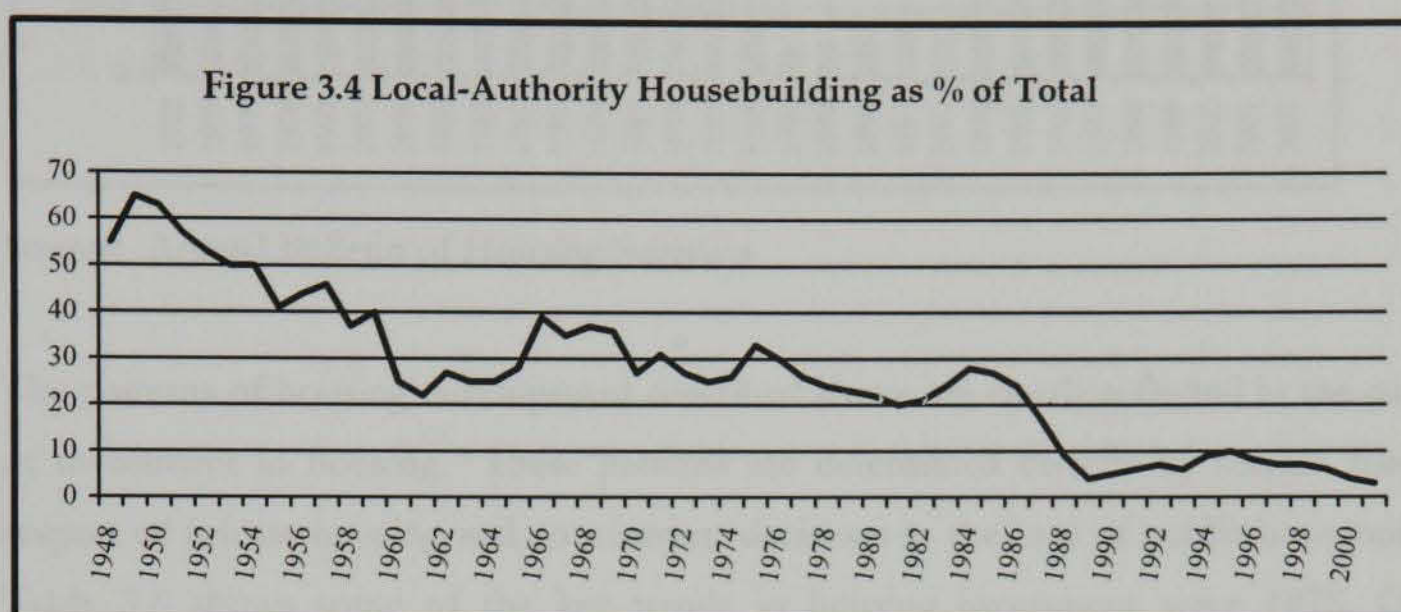


Source: Annual Bulletin of Housing Statistics (various years)

Since 1948, 77% of all the new housing built in the State has been built privately, with local authorities accounting for almost 23% of new building. Thus, local authorities have made a significant contribution to the provision of housing in the State. This contribution has varied over time and Figure 3.4 demonstrates this. The overall trend over the 50 years shown is the relative decline of the contribution of the local authority sector. In the immediate post-war period, local-authorities were major providers, accounting for over 50% of all housebuilding in the early 1950s. From the early 1960s to the mid-1980s they consistently provided over 20% of all new dwelling completions. However, from the mid 1980s, the proportion of local authority provision fell dramatically and has remained consistently below 10% of total provision. This decline in the last decade or so has been both relative and absolute. In the thirty year period up to 1986, the local authority sector provided an average of 5,000 dwellings per annum. Since 1987, the annual average has been just 2,000 houses.

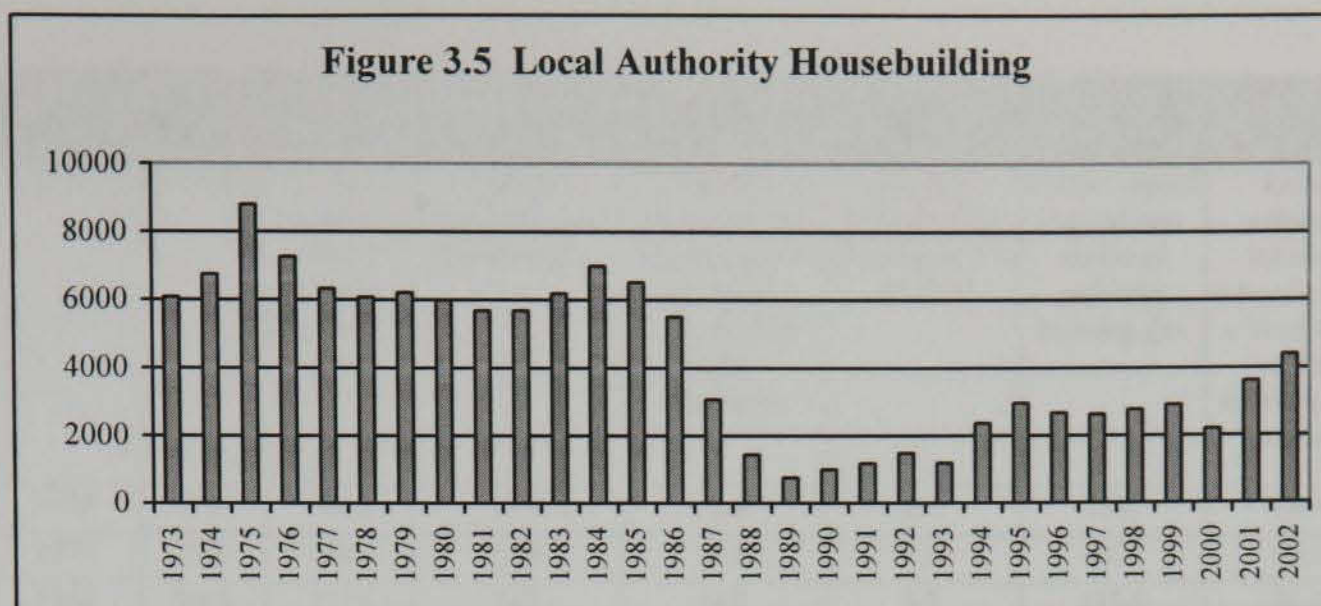
Since the early 1960s then, the local authority sector has been through two major phases. The first phase was characterised by a significant contribution to the dwelling provision and thus to the improvement in housing conditions. This ended fairly abruptly in 1987 with drastic cutbacks in local authority building. Since then, the sector has been very much a residual one with regard to its contribution to overall dwelling construction. The

emergence of the voluntary housing sector, which in combination with the local-authority sector is now termed social housing, has made a fairly modest impact in terms of provision. Private provision, at over 90% of house completions in the 1990s, is clearly dominant. Although there are plans to increase the level of social housing output in the period 2000-2006, it is unlikely that the relative proportions will change significantly.



Source: Quarterly Bulletin of Housing Statistics (Various years)

Figure 3.5 demonstrates the sudden downturn in local authority housebuilding in 1987. Output was halved in 1987 and halved again in 1988. From an average output of over 5000 houses between 1973 to 1987, output averaged about 1000 houses between 1988 and 1993. Output has recovered somewhat in the past six years but has not returned to the levels of provision in the 1970s and early 1980s. Economic restructuring, especially reductions and switches in welfare spending in the 1980s, saw dramatic reductions in public housebuilding, and there has not been a return to previously high levels of public housebuilding (O'Connell and Fahey, 1999). The restructuring has had an effect on both spending levels and on the tenant population.



Source: Annual Bulletin of Housing Statistics

The patterns of housing development described above are clearly reflected in the patterns of investment in housing. These patterns are determined broadly by market forces in respect of private housing and government decisions in the case of public housebuilding. Table 3.8 shows some of the key trends in housing investment since 1978. Overall investment in housing relative to GNP has fluctuated in line with changes in the economy. In the late 1970s total investment in housing (all new-build and refurbishment) averaged over 6% of GNP. From 1986 to 1993 total housing investment averaged just over 3% of GNP, a time of economic recession. This figure has risen since 1994 and by 1999 had reached 7.5% of GNP, indicative of the sustained housing boom in recent years where house completions have grown as have house prices. Figure 3.4 also demonstrates the historic decline of the local-authority sector. The pattern of investment in local authority housing parallels that of the level of new housebuilding. Between 1978 and 1986, investment in local authority housebuilding accounted for on average 20% of all investment in housing. Since then the level of investment has averaged less than 10%.

Table 3.8 Housing Investment 1978-2001

Year	GNP £m	Gross Domestic Fixed Capital Formation £m	Capital Formation in Housing £m	Capital Formation in Housing as a % of Gross Domestic Fixed Capital Formation	Capital formation in Housing as a % of GNP	Public capital expenditure on Local authority housing £m	Local authority housing expenditure as a % of total capital formation in housing
1978	6455	1863	401	21.5	6.2	75.8	18.9
1979	7515	2446	558	22.8	7.4	89.7	16.1
1980	9003	2718	515	18.9	5.7	113.6	22.1
1981	10854	3350	747	22.3	6.9	144.6	19.4
1982	12454	6531	760	11.6	6.1	188.8	24.8
1983	13602	3414	787	23.1	5.8	208.7	26.5
1984	14844	3553	759	21.4	5.1	207.5	27.3
1985	15698	3401	744	21.9	4.7	193	25.9
1986	16728	3419	676	19.8	4.0	147.8	21.9
1987	18306	3322	580	17.5	3.2	101.4	17.5
1988	19298	3470	564	16.3	2.9	54.8	9.7
1989	21925	4278	747	17.5	3.4	43.4	5.8
1990	25591	5287	842	15.9	3.3	51.1	6.1
1991	26775	5072	919	18.1	3.4	64.8	7.1
1992	28181	5211	1075	20.6	3.8	65.5	6.1
1993	30370	5259	1018	19.4	3.4	92.6	9.1
1994	32885	6043	1334	22.1	4.1	157.1	11.8
1995	36503	7124	1567	21.8	4.3	180.3	11.5
1996	40146	8563	1900	21.9	4.7	191.9	10.1
1997	45500	10684	2459	22.8	5.3	218.3	8.9
1998	52183	13398	3234	24.0	6.1	242.2	7.5
1999	58200	15500	4342	24.6	6.9	279.1	6.4
2000	69379	19541	5070	25.9	7.3	411.1	8.1
2001	76376	21042	5859	27.8	7.7	652	11.1
2002	81951	21793	5887	27.0	7.2	788.4	13.4

Source: Annual Bulletin of Housing Statistics (various years)

Exiting the Tenure: Tenant Purchase

The objective of this section is to explore in more detail the central elements of the decline of the public housing sector, and in particular to focus on what was the key period, the 1980s, which saw the residualisation of the sector established. In addition to the cutbacks described above, it is estimated that two thirds of all housing built by local authorities since the foundation of the Irish state has been sold to tenants and hence into owner occupation. Long before the right-to-buy schemes were started in the UK, similar programmes were available in Ireland, often at massive discount prices. These schemes

have contributed significantly to the high level of owner occupation in Ireland, now in excess of 80%, and it is estimated that a fifth of the current owner occupied stock was developed by local authorities (O'Connell and Fahey, 1999). These right-to-buy initiatives have been controlled by central government and houses have been sold at between 20% to 50% below market value. This generosity by the state has been interpreted, convincingly, as demonstrating the centrality to successive governments of home ownership in housing policy (O'Connell and Fahey, 1999).

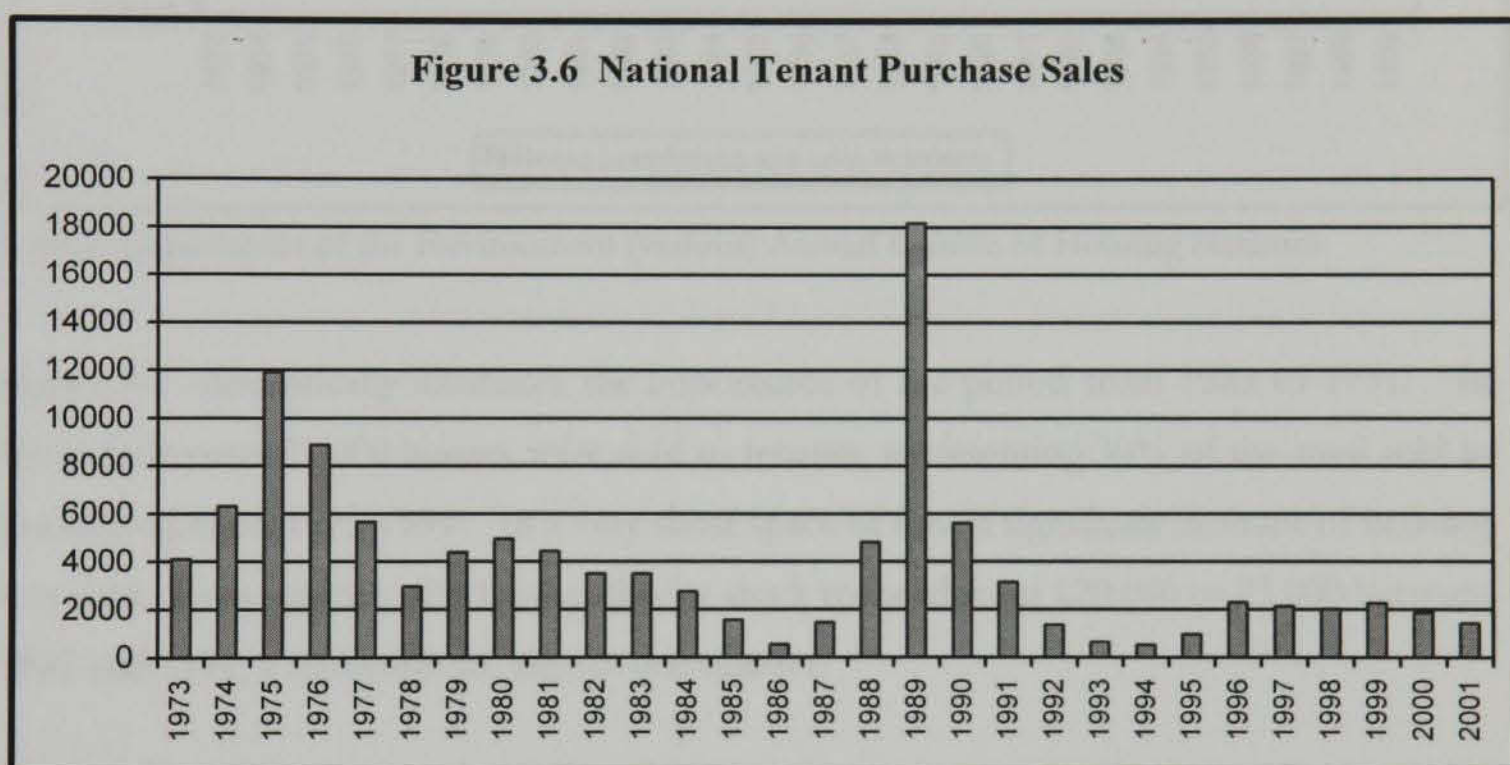
The policy of sales to tenants has a number of consequences. First, it has been the better housing stock in terms of build quality and location which has been sold off. Second, by definition, only those households who could afford the right to buy schemes undertook such purchases and these tenant households were the ones in some form of employment, often the community builders. Thirdly, this has clearly reduced the amount of stock available for letting to households in need. The policy of reducing the amount of local authority housebuilding in absolute and relative terms has meant that because of sales, the amount of stock has remained fairly static at around 100,000 units in management since 1989. Vacancies are thus a mixture of new building and casual vacancies. Tenancies can be held in perpetuity and income increases are not a reason for ending a tenancy.

Table 3.9 provides an historic overview of the relationship between the amount of dwellings built and sold by local authorities. It shows that historically 70% of all dwellings built by public landlords have been sold under tenant purchase schemes. Between 1964-1998, more dwellings have been sold than have been built. This extensive level of sales to tenants has effectively left the local authority stock averaging 100,000 over the past 20 years.

Table 3.9 Local Authority House-Building and Sales

	<i>Dwellings built</i>	<i>Dwellings sold to tenants</i>	<i>Still in Local authority ownership</i>
Pre 1964	178,300	74,400	103,900
1964-1998	151,700	156,600	99,000
Totals	330,000	231,000	99,000
Source: Fahey (1999)			

Figure 3.6 focuses on the more recent period and illustrates the level of sales to tenants through the tenant-purchase schemes from 1978. There have been clearly discernible trends in the pattern of sales, most notably the very high levels in the early 1970s and especially in the period 1988-1990. While tenants have a right to purchase at anytime, central government has brought in several special schemes which have given tenants exceptional discounts on the market price of dwellings (National Economic and Social Council, 1988). This was the case in 1973 and again in 1988, and the results are evident with large scale take-up of the particular purchase schemes at these times. In the period from 1973 to 1999, 110,500 dwellings were sold to tenants through the tenant purchase schemes. In 1989 alone, over 18,000 houses were sold to tenants, the result of a particularly munificent tenant purchase scheme.



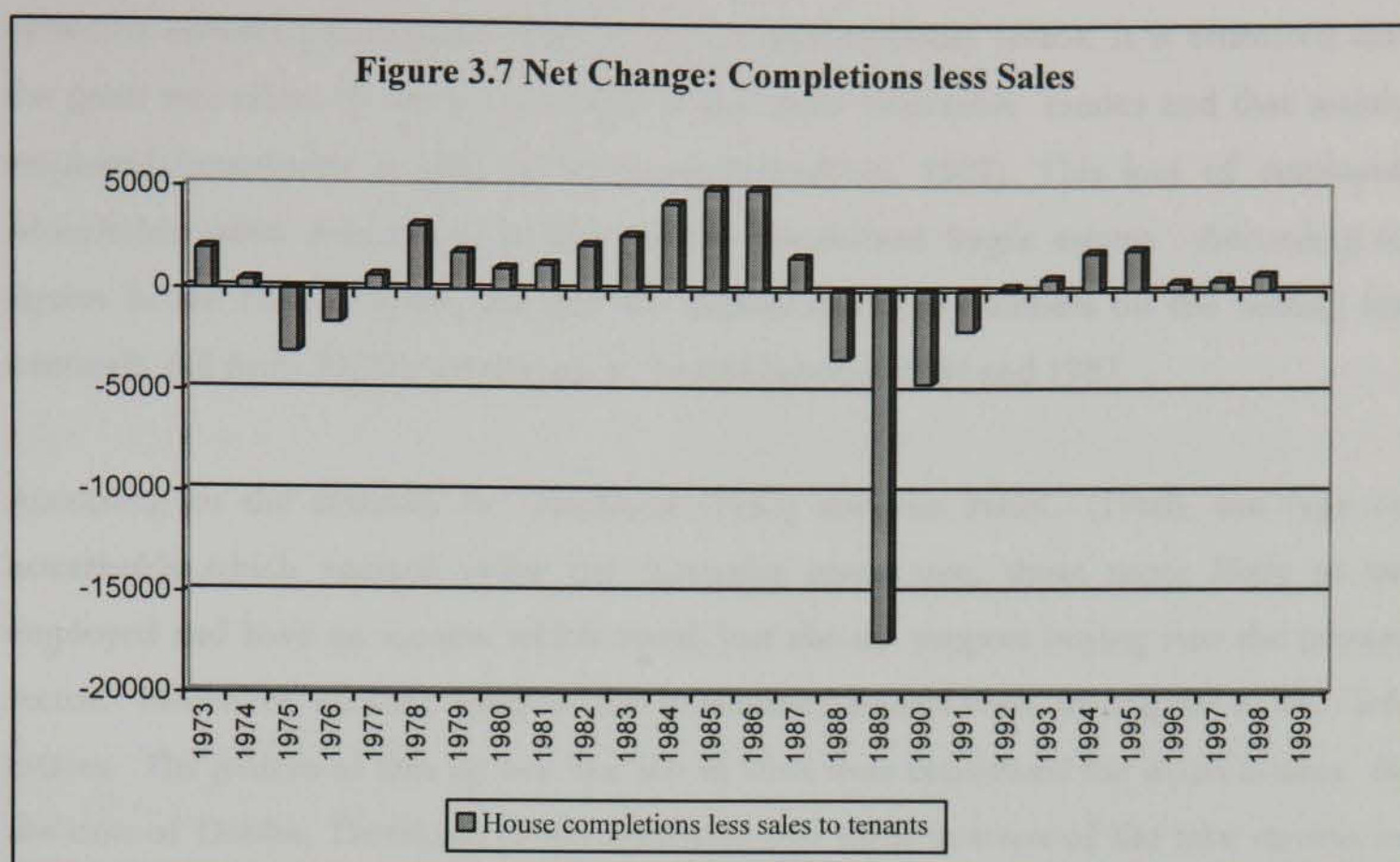
Source: Annual Bulletin of Housing Statistics

Table 3.10 and Figure 3.7 illustrate in more detail the relationships between the number of dwellings built and the number of dwellings sold to tenants. In the period 1973 to 1999, there was a surplus of dwellings built over dwellings sold of only 5,324. Put another way, there was only a 5% retention of stock over the period.

Table 3.10 Dwellings Built Less Dwellings Sold

1973-1999	
Local Authority Dwellings Built	113,647
Local Authority Dwellings Sold	108,323
Surplus/Deficit	+5324

Source: Annual Bulletin of Housing Statistics



Source: Department of the Environment (various) Annual Bulletin of Housing Statistics

Figure 3.7 dramatically illustrates the importance of the period from 1988 to 1991. In those four years 32,000 houses were sold to tenants, representing 30% of the total sold in the entire period 1973-1999. In a very short space of time a significant amount of housing was sold. Consequently, the local authority stock reduced from 120,000 to 93,000 between 1987 and 1991, a reduction of almost one quarter.

Exiting the Tenure: Surrender Grant

A further factor in the residualisation of the sector was a tenancy surrender scheme which operated in the mid 1980s. In October 1984 the government introduced a grant for tenants or tenant purchasers of three years standing to vacate their dwelling. In return for surrendering their local authority, house tenants were given a grant of £5000 in order to purchase a private house. They were also eligible to receive a £2000 new house grant available to any first time buyer as well as a £3000 mortgage subsidy (National Economic and Social Council, 1988). These terms were very attractive and by the time the scheme was ended in March 1987, 7,700 tenant households had availed of the grant and vacated their houses. The ostensible purpose of the grant was to free up local-authority housing for households on the waiting list and also, to boost the private housing market. Primarily

used to boost a flagging private housing market, it is generally acknowledged that the surrender scheme had negative impacts on the local-authority sector. It is estimated that the grant was taken up most extensively in the most vulnerable estates and that mainly employed households availed of the grant (Threshold, 1987). This loss of employed households, often community leaders, further destabilised fragile estates. According to figures in the NESC report, this had the desired effect as numbers on the waiting list nationally fell from 29,900 households to 18,600 between 1984 and 1987.

According to the research by Threshold (1987) and the NESC (1988), the type of households which vacated under the surrender grant were those more likely to be employed and have an income which could, just about, support buying into the private sector. Moreover, socially, many of the community leaders were among those who left estates. The pattern of take up was heaviest in what were considered the worst estates. In the case of Dublin, Threshold (1987) estimated that three quarters of the take up was in three areas, Darndale, Ballymun, and estates in Tallaght, areas recognised as under particular stress from unemployment and social problems. The impact on these estates was an exodus of the more economically and socially stable tenants and their replacement with tenants of a lower economic status. For estates with already high levels of unemployment, this considerably worsened the socio-economic conditions.

Impacts: The Changing Profile of Tenants

With the privatisation of the stock, the exit of economically and socially stable households via the surrender grant, and the sharp reductions in investment, the demographic, economic and social base of the tenant population has changed dramatically since the mid 1980s. This section reviews those changes.

Changing Households

Assessments of housing need have consistently shown high demand for local-authority housing since the late 1980s. Clearly, such demand was being met by a shrinking sector. As the main criterion for allocation of social housing was (and is) housing need, it was logically inevitable that the allocations and letting system would result in housing increasingly being allocated to the worse off households, both economically and socially.

The types of households accommodated were therefore reflective of the excess of demand over supply and of changing economic, social and demographic trends.

It was in this period 1984-1987, that the tenant profile began to change significantly and shift even more towards the most socially and economically marginal of households. Table 3.11 details the shift in the types of households allocated housing between 1983 and 1987. The main change was the increase in the proportion of single-parent families, rising from 10 per cent. to 21 per cent. This rise in single-parent households is also reflected in the types of households who were actually allocated housing. Table 3.11 details allocations between 1983 and 1987. In 1983 only 8 per cent of all lettings had been to single parent families but by 1987 this had increased to nearly 20 per cent.

Table 3.11 Lettings of Local Authority Housing by Household Type -National

	1983		1987	
	N	%	N	%
Elderly Persons	1046	12.9	1266	13.1
Disabled Persons	62	0.8	58	0.6
Travellers	124	1.5	147	1.5
Homeless Persons	363	4.5	870	9.0
Single Parent Families	684	8.4	1894	19.6
Families	5896	72.6	5405	56.1
TOTAL	8125	100	9640	100

Source: National Economic and Social Council, 1988, p151

The 1993 Assessments of Housing Need shows that one third of all local authority housing applicants were single parents, the vast majority being single mothers (Fahey and Watson, 1995). This is almost four times the representation in the general population. Economically, Nolan and Watson (1995) report that only 18% of tenant households received all their income from employment. Conversely, 78% of all tenant households were reliant in some manner on welfare payments or income transfers. Lone parents were particularly vulnerable, with 91% of such households depending on welfare payments.

Changing Economic Circumstances

Table 3.12, which is taken from official poverty analyses, shows, in dramatic fashion, the impoverishment of local authority tenants. Using the poverty line of below 60% of

average income, it shows that in 1987 almost 60 per cent of local authority tenant household were below the poverty line. By 1994 this had increased to 75 per cent. Thus, the vast majority of local authority tenants were in poverty as officially defined. Table 3.12 also shows the incidence of poverty. Taking local authority renters and tenant purchasers together, in 1987 almost 38 per cent of those in poverty nationally were in local authority estates. By 1994, this had decreased somewhat to 33 per cent. However, using another poverty indicator developed by the Economic and Social Research Institute, which combines the 60% income level with deprivation of basic amenities, local-authority renters fare even worse when compared with the rest of the population. (Nolan et al, 1998; Fahey and Williams, 2000). The work of Nolan et al also reveals that local authority tenants in urban areas were poorer than their rural counterparts. Of course, what it also shows is that generally over half of all those in poverty are not in local authority housing, and this has implications for area-based interventions.

Table 3.12 Poverty Level and Housing Tenure, 1987, 1994.

	<i>Level of Poverty</i>				<i>Poverty Contribution</i>				<i>All Households %</i>	
	<i>% < 50% of average income</i>		<i>% < 60% of average income</i>		<i>% < 50% of average income</i>		<i>% < 60% of average income</i>		1987	1994
	1987	1994	1987	1994	1987	1994	1987	1994		
Owned Outright	16.8	18.1	30.0	37.8	44.2	40.5	45.9	45.9	44.4	42.0
Owned with Mortgage	6.7	8.7	2.5	14.6	11.1	14.8	12.2	13.5	28.1	32.0
Local Authority Tenant Purchased	17.8	21.8	27.5	41.6	8.1	7.3	7.3	7.6	7.7	6.3
Local Authority Rented	37.4	49.8	59.1	74.6	32.1	30.9	29.6	25.1	14.5	11.7
Other Rented	14.4	15.1	27.7	34.0	4.5	6.5	5.0	7.9	5.2	8.0
All	17.0	18.8	29.1	34.6	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Nolan, Whelan, and Williams, (1998).

The most recent evidence for poverty comes from a study of local authority tenants in Dublin City Council, which has 25 per cent of the national local authority stock and tenant population. Table 3.13 shows that at the 60 per cent poverty measure, almost three quarters of Dublin City Council tenants were in poverty, compared with 27 per cent for the general population. This very large sample size demonstrates that despite several years of strong economic growth poverty is still endemic in the local-authority sector.

Table 3.13 Level Of Poverty Among Households Renting Dublin City Council Dwellings Compared to the General Irish Population, 2001

	Dublin City Council	General Population
	%	%
% < 40% of average income	39.2	9.1
% < 50% of average income	62.5	20.4
% < 60% of average income	73.1	27.2

Source: Murray and Norris, 2002

Impacts: Neighbourhoods, Estates and Quality of Life

The structural position of local authority housing has thus been determined by both general socio-economic processes and by central government housing policy. However, the condition of local authority housing is also influenced strongly by the policies of local authorities as landlords. Local authorities have influenced development through the following mechanisms. Building has often been at the urban periphery, sometimes of a poor quality (low cost schemes in 1970s), maintenance has been poor, often uneconomic and ineffective, management has been poor in terms of service delivery and relations with tenants and allocations policies have contributed to problems of segregation between and within estates (Fahey, 1999a; National Economic and Social Council, 1988).

While there is plenty of objective evidence which illustrates the impoverishment of the local authority tenant population, it is only in recent years that there has been some research on the quality of life on local authority estates. Before moving to that work, it is worth reflecting on the report of the NESC in 1988, which was written at a time of key change in the sector. It provided a good contemporaneous source both for hard information but also for more impressionistic views of how the local authority sector was changing in the late 1980s. It is clear from the following quotations that Blackwell believed that the sector was being transformed into a welfare sector. Referring to the period up to 1988, he argues:

‘Over the past five years, the process has accelerated whereby public rented housing in Ireland has moved towards “welfare housing” on U.S. lines – stigmatised housing for a residualised minority which is seen as comprising special groups at the very bottom end of the income distribution, and for nobody else’ (National Economic and Social Council, 1988, p89).

In addition, there are some interesting comments on allocation policy, which suggest that lettings policy was made in an ad hoc basis, with for example, single-parent families being sent to particular estates and even to specific streets within estates.

'Problems arise over allocations and transfers within the public sector in the case of certain marginalised groups. At least up to the recent past, faced with larger demands than they could meet with and armed with insufficiently decisive instructions about whom to exclude, officials have had to invent priorities of their own. They may tend to discriminate directly or indirectly against certain kinds of households. One parent families, for example, may be systematically sent to less attractive houses, or their poverty and marginalisation may attract penalties imposed on "bad housekeepers" or "poor rent payers". As a result of these processes, social stigmas may be imposed on particular streets or neighbourhoods. The relatively secure or higher income households then seek to escape from such neighbourhoods, thereby exacerbating these problems. Over time, these neighbourhoods have presented increasingly expensive problems of vandalism, maintenance, rent arrears, unlettable housing, public order and so on' (National Economic and Social Council, 1988, p155).

There are also interesting comments on the management of public housing.

'Public rented housing has been well built from a structural point of view, with some notable exception such as the "low cost" housing which was built in the 1960s. It has been reasonably administered but with all the faults of the British system which was its model – centralisation, paternalism, lack of tenant involvement – but has been used very largely to help working people to buy homes of their own. Parts of it have been socially and physically neglected and the priority accorded to ownership has produced 'transit camp' areas in which the sense of community withers. The strong tradition of state-sponsored bodies developed for many other purposes in a country lacking strong capitalist enterprises has not been brought effectively to bear in the housing field' (National Economic and Social Council, 1988, p89).

These more qualitative judgements are backed up by the available evidence from the 1980s. While local-authority housing in Ireland was never a general needs sector which housed a wide variety of households of differing economic circumstances, prior to the 1980s the relative size of the tenure did produce a more mixed tenant population. The combination of the tenant-purchase schemes, the surrender grant and the cutbacks in public housebuilding, served to establish and reinforce the residual and welfare character of the sector.

The most recent analysis of local-authority housing by Fahey (1999a) contains a generalised description of the tenure in the late 1990s. While the description is simplistic it is also useful in obtaining a sense of the state of local authority housing which was not entirely negative. Table 3.14 profiles the public housing stock in 1991. The key highlights are

that local authority housing is mainly located in urban areas (80%) and that the Dublin alone (the four Dublin authorities) accounts for 43% of total local authority rented dwellings. This is partly a historic legacy because of the high levels of slum clearance in urban areas and the consequent high levels of public housebuilding.

Table 3.14 Local Authority Housing Stock, 1991

<i>Areas</i>	<i>L.A. rented</i>	<i>Tenant purchase*</i>
	No.	No.
National	98,929	65,256
Dublin region	42,838	18,966
Other areas	56,091	46,290
		*Being purchased

Source: Census of Population, Volume 10, Housing

At first glance, the advantages of the tenure seem considerable. Tenants have, certainly when compared to the private rented sector, good security of tenure. Tenancies can be inherited and, even with major rises in income, households are not reassessed with respect to housing need, although rent levels are supposed to be recalculated. The differential rent system produces low nominal rents as the local authority is obliged to set rents with regard to tenant income. This is advantageous from the tenant viewpoint but not so from the landlords as the local authority is not charging economic rents which relate to the cost of housing and other services. In the UK, social landlords charge economic rents and tenants are subsidised through social assistance schemes like housing benefit. However, the level of disposable income may still leave many tenants in poverty. There are other advantages as well. Maintenance costs are generally borne by the local authority and, historically, dwellings have been structurally well built, although there are notable exceptions such as the 'low cost' estates built in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The other essential advantage of tenancy has been that tenants qualify to purchase their own house, usually at a discounted price. The combination of reasonable accommodation and a subsidised route into home ownership has proved to be very attractive, as is evidenced by the large-scale take-up of tenant purchase schemes. However, there are certain problems from a tenant viewpoint. These relate to the level and degree of anti social behaviour on some estates. Moreover, tenants were highly dissatisfied with the quality of maintenance of houses and the estate more generally. A product of the late 1980s and 1990s, the multi-

faceted phenomena of anti-social behaviour was considered very problematic by many tenants. The problem of drug dealing, drug using and associated behaviour was clearly a problem for many tenants.

This generalised account of tenant perspectives has been augmented significantly by the research produced by a team headed by Fahey (1999a). Using a primarily qualitative methodology, seven local authority estates were selected across Ireland, which were representative of different types of estates with different problems. Approximately 400 interviews were undertaken with tenants, local authority housing managers and other local officials. This work is perhaps the most comprehensive piece of research yet produced on the local authority housing sector in Ireland. It is primarily an attempt to portray the living conditions and quality of life of local authority tenants and to place local authority housing in some rational context. It is at pains to emphasise the positive aspects of life on social housing estates. Given the generally unrelenting negative publicity attracted to social housing, this emphasis is a needed corrective. Public debate on local-authority housing is often dominated by sensationalist perceptions of problem estates which feed the sometimes fevered imagination of the media and make rational debate on the sector difficult, often to the extent of precluding any possibility of serious support for the tenure. Indeed, Fahey argues in the book that there is a general perception, even within central government, that local-authority housing has in some way fundamentally failed.

Norris (1999) examined the relationship between the built environment and quality of life on estates and concludes that while the quality of the physical environment is important, it is not a fundamental factor determining quality of life. Indeed, there is no clear correlation between local demand for estates and environmental quality, with ostensibly poor quality estates having high local demand. In describing the social structure on estates, Corcoran (1999), suggests that a key factor in determining quality of life is the presence or absence of what tenants perceive as troublemakers. Such groups, often small in number, are seen as generating a myriad of problems such as:

‘joyriding, vandalism, drinking and drunkenness in public, open drug dealing and drug use, harassment of settled individuals and households, or noisy quarrels between neighbours..’ (Fahey, 1999c, p242).

Such trouble is seen as aberrant in terms of what is generally perceived as a strong community spirit and activism in estates, which is often sustained by familial bonds. Corcoran also points to the dominance of women with respect to community activism. However, despite these positive elements, anti-social behaviour is seen to be deeply pernicious and to have a double effect. First, it directly impacts on the living conditions of tenants in an entirely negative manner. Second, it reinforces external images and prejudice about local authority housing, which tenants feel stigmatises them and their locales. O' Higgins (1999) further explores the issue of anti-social behaviour, focusing in particular on the severe problems generated by drug dealing and drug use on estates, especially in Dublin. In Fatima Mansions, an inner city flat complex, the severity of the drugs problem made life particularly intolerable. This example serves to demonstrate the relative nature of social order problems across the different estates. Nonetheless, it is worth emphasising that issues of anti-social behaviour and social order problems dominate tenant perspectives on estates; the severity of problems generated by such phenomena, as is oftentimes graphically illustrated in the book, clearly demonstrate the often unbearable conditions on estates where fear, intimidation and harassment are common.

Although the research described above makes a point of stressing that life on local authority housing estates is varied, both between and within estates, and that many estates are characterised by high levels of community spirit and community activism, it does not seek to play down the harshness of poverty or the often extreme difficulties of living on estates which are beset with drug problems and other anti-social behaviour. Corcoran (1999) points out that the tenants are part of communities which endure, sometimes against enormous odds. Together, these thematic chapters convey, vividly in some cases, a sense of the harshness, difficulty and sometimes hopelessness of living on some estates.

Research by Layte *et al* (2000) and Nolan and Whelan (2000) confirms the work by Fahey. It revealed that ‘.. local authority tenants display levels of fatalism that are close to twice that of their urban counterparts.’ (Layte *et al*, 2000, p214). On average over 50% of tenants considered crime, graffiti, vandalism, and drunkenness to be a problem, whereas in other urban areas on average only 10% of households felt their was a problem. According to Fahey (1999c, p243), ‘Residents consider that they suffer doubly from the actions of the

troublemaking few – first, because they are often the direct victims of those actions, and second, because the troublemakers undermine the reputation of the estate and give rise to a stigma within the wider community, which affects all residents equally’. In other words, there is clear evidence that in key respects there are specific problems associated with living in local authority housing, and it is these specific problems that oftentimes are used to justify area-based interventions and policies. They speak of the degree to which local authority tenants are ‘.... becoming increasingly fatalistic, disillusioned and detached from social and political institutions, and the extent to which any such detachment is a consequence of polarisation between different social groups or locations... (Nolan *et al*, 1998, p104). It is in ‘our understanding of such processes, and the role which empowerment of local communities can play in counteracting them, that we are likely to find a justification for community development’ (Nolan *et al*, 1998, p105).

In summary then, the relative and absolute reduction in the tenure has meant that the sector has become essentially a welfare housing sector (Murray and Norris, 2002; Nolan *et al*, 2000; O’Connell and Fahey, 1999). The available statistical evidence shows clearly that the sector is comprised predominantly of economically marginalised and welfare-dependent tenants. Recent research revealed that eight out of ten local-authority tenants were welfare and benefit-dependent (Nolan *et al*, 2000). Moreover, it is estimated that a local-authority tenant is up to thirty times more likely to be in poverty than an owner occupier. This remarkable concentration of poverty and economic marginalisation in the sector is clearly the result of the shrinkage of the sector, in combination with increased demand for housing from low-income households. Additionally, this tenant population is perceived to be socially problematic and there is a clear public perception that many local authority housing estates are characterised by a high concentration of social problems and anti-social behaviour. However, the policy of privatisation and cutbacks has limitations, and local authorities have consistently retained in management approximately 100,000 dwellings over the past 15 years. Put differently, the sector still caters for an economically marginalised population which is predominantly welfare-dependent and to which homeownership is an unrealistic option, even with generous right-to-buy discounts. With escalating housing costs, and a crisis of affordability, demand for local authority housing has increased dramatically over the past 6 years (National Economic and Social Forum, 2000; Memery, 2001). However, with low levels of new development and continuing sales

to tenants, the local authority sector has had a reduced role in alleviating housing problems. Given the decline of the sector and its increasing welfare nature, what is the quality of life like for local authority tenants?

V CONCLUSION

In summary then, it seems clear from the evidence that the 1980s was the crucial decade whereby the residual nature of the local authority sector was firmly established, and this trend continued into the 1990s. The evidence shows that the residualisation of the public-housing sector became established, indeed entrenched, in the mid to late 1980s, and that the sector has not since recovered. This period was, in short, the key turning point for local authority housing. This chapter has highlighted the concept of social exclusion and how economic and social change in the past twenty years has sifted certain households to a position of economic and social marginality. Most pertinently, it showed how these marginalised populations are increasingly concentrated in certain neighbourhoods, often on estates which are comprised of social rented housing. In more recent years, much of the commentary has focused on how such neighbourhoods lack social cohesion or social capital and are the milieu for anti-social behaviour. The more detailed evidence from Ireland supports, in a general manner, the social exclusion literature emerging from the EU.

CHAPTER 4

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON REGENERATION AND PARTICIPATION

I INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade or so a vast literature has emerged on the regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods and on the role of participation as an element and strategy of regeneration. One might expect that some key empirical demonstrations of the efficacy of participation would have emerged from this research. However, as a number of recent comprehensive reviews conclude, there is limited robust empirical evidence which demonstrates the supposed benefits of area intervention generally or citizen participation in particular (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1998; Dabinett *et al.*, 2001; Chapman and Kirk, 2001; Carley, 2002; Burton, 2003; Taylor, 2003). What evidence that does exist tends to be either partial or generally agnostic about the impacts of regeneration and participation. The continued faith in the efficacy of area intervention policies and community participation thus seems to be based on engrained ideologies, political expediency or perhaps a misunderstanding of the causal mechanisms of spatial concentrations of poverty. The case-study literature on regeneration and participation can be reviewed for example in Power and Tunstall (1995) and Taylor (1995, 2000a, 2000b, 2003) and one of its consistent messages is that area-based policies never quite fulfil expectations. The general lesson taken from this is not that they do not work, but rather that more innovation is needed to make them work. We see, therefore, over the past two decades policies changing from single-issue approaches to policies seeking to solve multi-dimensional problems through an array of multi-agency organisational types (Taylor, 2003).

Thus, rather than examine in detail this case-study material, the strategy adopted in this chapter is to take an overview of this literature and to then focus on some of the more critical perspectives which arise. Section II provides a brief overview of the manner in which area and neighbourhood deprivation have most commonly been framed in recent years, namely the debate about social cohesion and social capital. Section III provides an overview of the evidence regarding regeneration and participation. It first reviews some comparative EU literature, then focuses on developments in tenant participation in

England and analyses the move to a more comprehensive neighbourhood management in England. This selection of evidence is representative of a wide variety of approaches to regeneration and participation.

II SOCIAL COHESION AND DISADVANTAGED NEIGHBOURHOODS

As was seen in Chapter 3, the problem of poverty and social exclusion generally, and social housing estates in particular, has been defined in a variety of ways. The problem of poor neighbourhoods has been variously described as one of poverty, of marginalisation, of social exclusion, a lack of social cohesion and a lack of social capital (Bartley, 1998, 1999). While there are undoubtedly differences between these descriptions, there seems also to be a common irreducible core which refers to individual and household poverty and various types of community stress. However, the distinctions are important as the manner in which poor neighbourhoods are described and explained generally also contain the seeds of a regeneration policy. As can be seen from Table 4.1, which provides an excellent overview, differing explanations of poverty neighbourhoods generate quite different regeneration policies. For example, the culture of poverty argument, which was popular in the 1960s, emphasizes the pathology of individuals as contributing to their poverty. Solutions, therefore, emphasise individual treatment. This type of explanation, along with the cycle of deprivation theory, has a tendency to blame the victim and the solutions stress social support, therapy and self-help. In the literature on social capital and social cohesion there are clear echoes of this approach with a stress on the lack of cohesion in social housing estates for example. It may be dressed up in a seemingly sophisticated language but individuals and communities are argued to have less individual capacity to rise above their circumstances which seems very similar to the argument about individual and collective pathology. For some reason, the circumstances seem to be absolved and the citizen blamed. Another common explanation is that of institutional malfunctioning. This has clear and direct relevance to this work and as we shall see in Chapter 6, one of the primary explanations for the development and persistence of poor social housing estates is the malfunctioning of local authorities. By definition then, solutions revolve around fixing institutions, making them more efficient and effective and so on. Explanations to do with maldistribution of resources and structural class conflict clearly stress the more objective or structural causes of poverty and in forwarding solutions either stress the need for direct positive interventions, from which area-based policies arise, or stress the need for more

fundamental changes in power structures. The social polarisation argument, listed separately by Bartley, seems very much to be located in the argument regarding maldistribution of resources although there is more of an emphasis on the political inclusion of the excluded through participation and governance structures.

Table 4.1 Explanations of Poverty and Exclusion

<i>Theoretical model of the problem</i>	<i>Explanation of the problem</i>	<i>Location of the problem</i>	<i>Key concepts</i>	<i>Type of change aimed for</i>	<i>Method of change</i>
Culture of poverty	Problem arising from internal pathology of deviant	In the internal dynamics of deviant groups	Poverty	Better adjusted and less deviant people	Social education and social work treatment of groups
Cycle of deprivation	Problem arising from individual psychological handicaps and inadequacies transmitted generationally	In the relationships between individuals, families and groups	Deprivation	More integrated and self-supporting families	Compensatory social work, support and self help
Institutional malfunctioning	Problem arising from failure of planning, management or administration	In the relationship between the disadvantaged and the bureaucracy	Disadvantage	More total and co-ordinated approaches by the bureaucracy	Rational social planning
Maldistribution of resources and opportunities	Problem arising from an inequitable distribution of resources	Relationships between the underprivileged and the formal political machine	Underprivilege	Reallocation of resources	Positive discrimination policies
Structural class conflict	Problems arising from the divisions necessary to maintain an economic system based on private profit	Relationship between the working class and the political and economic structure	Inequality	Redistribution of power and control	Changes in political consciousness and organisation
Social polarisation	Problems arising from marginalisation of weak groups	Relationship between marginalized groups and the political and economic structure	Exclusion	Inclusion of marginalized groups in political, social and economic decision making processes	Creation of forums and structures to secure involvement of marginalised in decision making processes

Source: Bartley, 1998, p147

Of course, these explanations are not mutually exclusive. Because of their social, economic and cultural circumstances social-housing tenants may well lack a range of capacities

compared to the more affluent in society. There may well also be intergenerational transmission of attitudes leading to problems of intergenerational joblessness and so on. The institutions of the state may be clearly deficient in terms of the policies they implement. Finally, structural economic and political factors may ensure that no matter what local policies and programmes are implemented that tenants on social housing estates may be locked in to a situation of poverty and exclusion. However, with regard to policies of regeneration and change, what tends to happen is that at certain times, because of the political and ideological situations that prevails, certain causes are deemed to be primary and therefore certain types of solution are preferred by governments. Generalising, but not unfairly, the past two decades have seen poverty and exclusion defined primarily with respect to the arguments about social polarisation, institutional malfunctioning and the individual and collective pathology. Consequently, the solutions proffered by government have tended to focus on creating governance structures to involve the excluded, on institutional change and on improving the capacities of the excluded (Taylor, 2003).

Many of these policies come together in a variety of area-based interventions which seek to regenerate neighbourhoods (Allen *et al*, 2001; Andersen and Van Kempen, 2001, 2003; Atkinson, 2000; Atkinson and Cope, 1997; Atkinson and Lejeune, 2001; Cameron, 2001; Cars *et al*, 2002; Forrest and Kearns, 1999). The interventions tend to be dominated by three interrelated themes. First, there has been an increased stress on transforming the nature of governance. The essence of this stress on new governance is that the state itself cannot and should not seek to solve public policy problems. Rather, a variety of stakeholders, which could include business, the state, the community and voluntary sector and so on, are to be involved in seeking solutions. The primary mechanism for the implementation of this new governance tends to be some form of partnership arrangement. The literature on partnership and the ubiquity of the language of partnership is such that it is now seen as the mainstream method of governing, especially at a local level. The second theme is that of institutional change. This is captured to an extent in Table 4.2 which seeks to distinguish between local government and local governance. In moving towards a partnership form of policy making and policy implementation, the state itself is supposed to transform from being a bureaucratic and centralised institution, to being more flexible, enabling and entrepreneurial. The third theme that dominates this discourse is that of capacity building. This tends overwhelmingly to refer to the need to

improve, upgrade or change the capacities of local communities, particularly disadvantaged communities, in order that they can participate effectively in this new partnership arrangement (Kearns and Forrest, 2000; Kearns and Paddison, 2000).

Table 4.2 Local Government and Local Governance

Local 'government' is	Local 'governance' is
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bureaucratic ▪ Democratic ▪ Centralised ▪ Collectivised ▪ Municipal ▪ Pursuit of social/welfare goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Flexible and responsive ▪ Post-democratic ▪ Decentralised ▪ Privatised ▪ Entrepreneurial ▪ Pursuit of market goals
Source: Vranken and De Decker (2002)	

However, perhaps the most pervasive contemporary definition of problem neighbourhoods refers to the lack of social cohesion and social capital present in deprived neighbourhoods which, in many EU countries, effectively means social housing estates and neighbourhoods. Putnam (2000, p19) has, famously, defined social capital as the 'connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them' and argues that civic engagement is one of the core generators and enablers of such social capital and social glue. The literature on social capital is already so vast as to be unmanageable. However, issues of partnership, participation and empowerment are implicit and explicit in the idea of social capital. By defining the problem as the absence of social cohesion, the solution presents itself as the creation of this illusive commodity of cohesion and social capital (Taylor, 2000a; 2003). In an excellent overview, Forrest and Kearns (2001) attempt to define both the problem to which participation is meant to be the antidote, as well as the eventual end state that participation will lead to - the promised land of social cohesion and positive social capital. As they argue, there is implicit in much of this literature a harking back to a golden time:

'There is a common belief that there is less social cohesion now than in some (usually) unspecified period in British history and that disadvantaged areas suffer particularly from a lack of the qualities and elements which produce and sustain social cohesion – that the poor in poor neighbourhoods are increasingly dislocated from mainstream society (Forrest and Kearns, 2001, p2126).

Table 4.3 shows and describes the various dimensions or domains of social cohesion. A society, or in this case a neighbourhood, which was socially cohesive would have a number of qualities. First, it would possess common values and a civic culture. Second, social

order and control would pertain. Third, social solidarity would be either achieved or be desired with respect to income disparities for example. Fourth, there would be high levels of social interaction and a high degree of associational activity. Finally, there would be a strong sense of attachment to place or neighbourhood. As they point out:

‘... social cohesion can emphasise the need for a shared sense of morality and common purpose; aspects of social control and social order; the threat to social solidarity of income and wealth inequalities between people, groups and places; the level of social interaction within communities or families; and a sense of belonging to place. By implication, a society lacking social cohesion would be one which displayed social disorder and conflict, disparate moral values, extreme social inequality, low levels of social interaction between and within communities and low levels of place attachment’ (Forrest and Kearns, 2001, p2128).

Table 4.3 Domains of Social Cohesion

Domain	Description
<i>Common values and a civic culture</i>	Common aims and objectives; common moral principles and codes of behaviour; support for political institutions and participation in politics
<i>Social order and social control</i>	Absence of general conflict and threats to the existing order; absence of incivility; effective informal social control; tolerance; respect for difference; intergroup co-operation
<i>Social solidarity and reductions in wealth disparities</i>	Harmonious economic and social development and common standards; redistribution of public finances and of opportunities; equal access to services and welfare benefits; ready acknowledgement of social obligations and willingness to assist others
<i>Social networks and social capital</i>	High degree of social interaction within communities and families; civic engagement and associational activity; easy resolution of collective action problems
<i>Place attachment and identity</i>	Strong attachment to place; intertwining of personal and place identity
Source: Forrest and Kearns, 2001, p2129	

If all of these points seem to be a criticism and indictment of problem housing estates, then this is probably the case for most of the literature stresses the absence of social capital in deprived social neighbourhoods. Although they argue that ‘.. neighbourhood is being progressively eroded with the emergence of a more fluid, individualised way of life’ and that ‘Social networks are city-wide, national, international and increasingly virtual’ (Forrest

and Kearns, 2001, p2129), the empirical emphasis has been overwhelmingly on disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The focus on the neighbourhood stems from the view that 'it is these residentially based networks which perform an important function in the routines of everyday life and these routines are arguably the building blocks of social cohesion – through them we learn tolerance, co-operation, and acquire a sense of social order and belonging' (Forrest and Kearns, 2001, p2130). Glaringly absent is any detailed analysis of the absence or presence of social cohesion in affluent neighbourhoods (Kintrea and Atkinson, 2001). This may be because there is a difference between neighbourhood and neighbouring. In disadvantaged areas the quality of neighbours may be more important than in an affluent areas, whereas for the affluent the quality of the neighbourhood, in terms of the residential milieu, may be more important. This seems to imply that in affluent areas there is no need to develop trust and belonging, whereas there is such a need in disadvantaged areas. Indeed, there is a recognition that '... romantic notions of active vibrant communities with spirit in poorer areas are misplaced – most residents in most council housing areas do not consider there to be a lot of community spirit in their areas..' (Forrest and Kearns, 2001, p2131). Neighbourhoods are an important source of social contact through spatial proximity. In poor areas, residents necessarily associate with people like themselves, a tendency reinforced by physical and spatial isolation and the quantity and cost of transport. People's beliefs, attitudes and expectations are closely tied up with those of others who reside in their social world. According to Forrest and Kearns (2001) social isolation reinforces inequalities through four mechanisms: residents are excluded from networks which provide information, such as on employment; people 'get by' (i.e. to survive daily life) without necessarily them 'getting on' (i.e. to move beyond their current situation). Socialisation is also influenced through peer groups and role models. This reinforces low self-esteem and aspirations in poor areas. Moreover, isolation encourages stigma and discrimination by outsiders based on address and location and residents' sense of isolation and low self-esteem are intensified as poor areas become 'neighbourhoods of exile'. According to Carley (2002, p10), 'The difficulties of surviving economically and socially in a deprived neighbourhood, and residents' reaction to social exclusion, stigma and discrimination, may mean that there is adjustment to "deviant" social norms such as petty crime and substance abuse. This, in turn, is harmful to social inclusion'.

Table 4.4, again taken from Forrest and Kearns (2001), illustrates the kinds of neighbourhood policies that should feed in to developing social cohesion and social capital.

Table 4.4 Domains of Social Capital and Associated Neighbourhood Policies

	Description	Local Policies
<i>Empowerment</i>	People feel they have a voice which is listened to; are involved in the processes that affect them; can themselves take action to initiate changes	Providing support to community groups; giving local people 'voice'; helping to provide solutions to problems; giving local people a role in policy processes
<i>Participation</i>	People take part in social and community activities; local events occur and are well attended	Establishing and/or supporting local activities and local organisations; publicising local events
<i>Associational Activity and Common purpose</i>	People co-operate with one another through the formation of formal and informal groups to further their interests	Developing and supporting networks between organisations in the area
<i>Supporting networks and reciprocity</i>	That individuals and organisations co-operate with one another for either mutual or one-sided gain; an expectation that help would be given to one received from others when needed	Creating, developing and/or supporting an ethos of co-operation between individuals and organisations which develop ideas of community support; good neighbour award schemes
<i>Collective values and norms</i>	That people share common values and norms of behaviour	Developing and promulgating an ethos which residents recognise and accept; securing harmonious social relations; promoting community interests
<i>Trust</i>	That people feel they can trust their co-residents and local organisations responsible for governing or serving their area	Encouraging trust in residents in their relationships with each other; delivering on policy promises; bringing conflicting groups together
<i>Safety</i>	That people feel safe in their neighbourhood and are not restricted in their use of public space by fear	Encouraging a sense of safety in residents; involvement in local crime prevention; providing visible evidence of security measures
<i>Belonging</i>	That people feel connected to their co-residents, their home area, have a sense of belonging to the place and its people	Creating, developing and/or supporting a sense of belonging in residents; boosting the identity of a place via design, street furnishings, naming

Source: Forrest and Kearns, 2001, p2140

Residents or tenants should feel empowered and that they are positively participating in society. Thus, they should be given 'voice' and be empowered and participate through a variety of associations, groups or networks. In line with the terminology of social capital, they should act reciprocally, possess common values and trust each other and state organisations. Finally, they should feel safe and have a strong sense of belonging to their locality. While these are the obvious converse of the domains of social cohesion, the local policies proposed to bring them about are fairly general and in some cases vague. They

argue that this general framework seems to fit the general *zeitgeist* in some governments in the EU.

‘At the societal level, ‘third-wayers’ argue that self-governance through mutual institutions fits the spirit of the times and can replace the decline in trust in traditional institutions, while boosting a sense of belonging at the same time. This approach offers an attractive (and cheaper?) alternative for tackling social exclusion and regeneration .. (Forrest and Kearns, 2001, p2139).

While the solutions proffered by Forrest and Kearns may be quite vague, they are not unduly optimistic about the possibilities of ‘turning around’ poor neighbourhoods. They argue that ‘Networks are disrupted and weakened, population turnover erodes familiarity and trust, and policies and initiatives aimed at reversing the decline are being implemented in a context of community disengagement and disillusionment’ (Forrest and Kearns, 2001, p2139) and that ‘Coping with social problems is not the same thing as overcoming them and renewing neighbourhoods will not necessarily reform society’ (Forrest and Kearns, 2001, p2141). From this pessimistic, though perhaps realistic analysis, the next section reviews the evidence of the impact of regeneration schemes and the role of participation.

III REGENERATION, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND PARTICIPATION

This section presents an overview of conclusions regarding the variety of regeneration policies and initiatives that have been employed to ‘turn around’ excluded neighbourhoods and estates across the EU in the past 20 years. Regeneration is defined here as meaning any of the variety of physical, environmental, social, economic or political measures taken to rejuvenate estates and neighbourhoods. It first reviews some of the literature of a comparative nature, then examines the available evidence on the role of tenant participation in England and then closes by examining the move to more comprehensive neighbourhood management in England since the turn of the century.

Comparative Evidence

Most studies of regeneration and participation tend to be country specific. However, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) undertook a major review of policies in OECD countries in 1998 and published the results in a report titled *Integrating Distressed Urban Areas* (OECD, 1998). The report argues that the rise in concern regarding disadvantaged urban areas has developed because of a general rise in sustainable

development concerns, because of rationalisation and decentralization of public administration and the increase in the level of public concern about the intractable nature of the problem. According to the OECD 'countries have developed specific sectoral interventions in areas such as housing, education, employment, business development, family and income support, and social integration that focus on disadvantaged areas' (OECD, 1998, p.75).

In seeking commonalities about the policies which have been utilised to renew such areas they detect a number of common threads. First, there is a concern with improving public policy by means of a more flexible, coordinated use of mainstream policies. Second, there is a concern to involve non-governmental actors from the community and associated sectors. Third, there is a concern to involve the private sector. Fourth, there is a tendency to formulate and implement policy through institutions based on partnership and finally, there is a move towards policy learning, through monitoring and evaluation.

How then has the OECD evaluated such policies and in particular what is their view of the role of community involvement and participation? As the quotations below indicate, the OECD take an overwhelmingly negative view of the impact of community involvement. They argue that:

'In theory, the main advantage of involving community organisations in policy planning and implementation is that everyone becomes mobilised. Thus far, the practical reality has often been that small voluntary associations lack the human and financial resources, the management skills and the scale to provoke change in a local area.The problems of distressed urban areas are severe enough that the solutions are beyond the capacity of most community groups working alone or with piecemeal funding' (OECD, 1998, p105).

Moreover, they stress that:

'There have been, over the past two decades, numerous policy initiatives designed to promote empowerment, associative democracy, stakeholder democracy, and so on. The overwhelming conclusion from the large body of evaluative research on these programmes is that the institutional framework has rarely delivered the kind of balanced, participative and inclusive governance that they promised' (OECD, 1998, p106).

A number of more recent studies of a comparative nature, which examine the issue of social exclusion and neighbourhoods in the EU, reach broadly similar conclusions, though are not perhaps as heavily critical as the OECD study (Kesteloot, 2002; Allen et al, 2001; Mustered and Murie, 2002; European Commission, 2000; Kovacs, 2001; Skifter Andersen,

2002, 2003). Is this overall negative conclusion warranted with respect to the policy of tenant participation that has been pursued in England over the past twenty years or so?

Tenant Participation and Estate Management in the UK

Tenant participation as a formal relationship between tenants and social housing landlords has been established for over 20 years in the UK (Riseborough, 1998; Pinto, 1993, 1995). While in the late 1960s and early 1970s tenant participation was primarily an activist, grassroots and protest movement, from the early 1980s it transformed into a fairly formal relationship with local government. Cairncross *et al* (1997) and Goodlad (2001) argue explicitly that the development of tenant participation policies was a deliberate attempt by government to accommodate and co-opt direct protest and, that in this they have been successful over the years. Indeed, Goodlad argues that the level of activism by tenants has decreased at the same time as a plethora of formal arrangements has increased.

Gilroy (1998) provides a succinct overview of tenant participation policies in the UK from the 1980s until the mid 1990s. Her categorisation uses the concept of exit and voice to place the various different policies. Table 4.5 below adapts and updates the main developments in tenant participation policy. As can be seen, many of the options for local authority tenants in particular were exit options, either through purchasing the dwelling, self management organisations or alternative landlords. As Gilroy makes clear, the favourite exit option was the right to buy. However, other exit options were far less popular and options such as the Housing Actions Trusts were seriously opposed by organised tenant groups. More popular have been a variety of voice options emanating from attempts to the 1980s to regenerate estates, such as the Priority Estate Projects. From a comparative perspective, the main point to emphasise here is that tenant participation policy has been enshrined in legislation. So, for example, tenants have a legal right to be consulted and have legal rights to pursue tenant management. As will be seen in Chapter 6, the legal basis for tenant participation in Ireland is limited and rather flimsy.

Table 4.5 Tenant Participation Policies in the UK

<i>Legislation</i>	<i>Details</i>	<i>Voice/Exit</i>
Housing Act 1980	Obligation on local authorities to consult with tenants	Voice
	Right to buy	Exit
Housing and Planning Act 1986	Right for tenants to take over management via co-ops or Estate management boards	Exit
	Section 16 grants to help tenants move to takeover	Exit
	Rights for landlords to assign their stock (large Scale voluntary transfer)	Exit
Housing Act 1988	Tenants choice	Exit
	Housing Actions Trusts	Exit
Local Government and Housing Act 1989	Annual report with performance indicators given to tenants	Voice
Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993	Tenants right to manage	Exit
Housing Act 1996	Right to acquire for housing association tenants	Exit
Tenant Compacts 2001	Signed, but not binding agreements between tenants and the Council	Voice
Source: adapted from Gilroy, 1998, p25.		

The most recent development in tenant participation has been the advent of what are termed Tenant Compacts in 2000. Tenant compacts are detailed written agreements between tenants and local authorities and can be at an authority-wide level and/or at neighbourhood level. Extensive guidance on what might be contained in a compact has been published (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 1998, 1999a, 1999b). According to the *National Framework for Tenant Participation Compacts*, they are part of the Government's agenda 'to improve local services, increase local democracy and strengthen and sustain local communities' (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 1998). Compacts should generally contain what are called core standards. That is, they should specify first what housing services are to be included in the compact and then set standards for resources for tenants, standards for the holding of meetings, standards with regard to information, standards for the organisation and functioning of tenant group and standards for monitoring and performance measurement. While tenant compacts are written agreements, they are not contractually enforceable and, according to Carr *et al* (2001), imply voluntary partnership and collaboration.

Goodlad (2001), Riseborough (1998) and Gilroy (1998) all report on developments in tenant participation. They report that the formal compliance with the legislation concerning participation has increased significantly since the early 1980s. They paint a picture of general non-compliance in the early 1980s with increasing compliance since then. However, as Goodlad (2001) in particular points out, this compliance measures such things as the number of authorities who provide information and says little on the actual substantive question of how effective tenant participation is.

The most recent comprehensive empirical evidence on progress in tenant participation is provided by Cole *et al* (2001). They find that there is now a diversity of strategies and organisational structures for implementing tenant participation. According to the research, the advent of tenant compacts, with its promotion of common core standards of service and approach, serves to balance local needs with the needs for some uniform standards. The research also reveals that tenant participation has become more integrated into mainstream local authority service delivery, and is no longer just confined to special neighbourhood initiatives. Crucially, in the case studies undertaken for the research, most respondents believed that the development of tenant participation had helped to improve the quality of local authority housing policy and provision. Indeed, in some cases the tenant involvement in local authority housing services has been transformed and that tenant involvement has started to impact on all aspects of service delivery and management throughout the local area. Importantly, and in contrast to the Irish case as shall be seen, in many councils tenants have been increasingly involved in discussions about housing strategy and resource allocation. However, this role still tended to lag behind involvement in the usual service delivery issues such as maintenance and allocations. With respect to political involvement, the research showed that elected councillors rarely played a prominent role in the development of a strategy for tenant participation. Overall, according to Cole *et al* (2001) evidence of the research case studies showed unequivocally that tenant involvement had a positive impact on service quality.

With regard to participation and the quality of housing services the research demonstrated that tenants are increasingly involved in housing management service specifications and reviews and are also involved in developing anti-social behaviour strategies. However, there

is less involvement by tenants in activities such as voids management, arrears management and allocations and lettings and that there was very little evidence of tenant participation in rent setting and in other issues of revenue and capital finance. As has been illustrated in previous research, it was found that repairs and maintenance issues generally generate the most interest from tenants and there was some limited evidence of an increasing devolution of budgets to neighbourhoods and estates. Very interestingly, it was found that neighbourhood regeneration is widely utilised as a means for developing tenant involvement across the local authority. However, it was difficult to transfer such structures and processes to neighbourhoods elsewhere. This supports the contention in the introduction to the thesis that participation is inherently easier in situations where there are clear prospects of environmental and physical regeneration, but less so in more mundane cases of estate management. In some cases of neighbourhood regeneration it was found that tenants had some influence on the spending of environmental budgets, but these usually amounted to only a small proportion of the total budgets for neighbourhood renewal. With respect to the internal organisation of local authorities, tenants were rarely involved in staffing issues or reviews of organisational structures. There was often a lack of 'fit' between the way the housing service was structured and the parallel structures devised for tenant participation. In some cases, tenants suggested that they were more excluded than before, while in others they felt they had a more direct line than before to the centre of local authority decision-making; that the development of tenant involvement was still primarily reactive in character rather than strategic or pro-active.

The evidence gathered by Cole *et al* (2001) about the resourcing of tenant participation suggests that a third of all local authorities had spent money to assist in developing tenant compacts through appointing staff to promote participation. However, the published policies on participation tended to be 'top-down' documents, rather than the result of consultation and negotiation with tenants. With regard to tenant groups, the research found that there were difficulties about representation on such bodies. Perhaps as a consequence, there has been a move away from local authorities using established tenants' groups in favour of more fluid and individualist forms of consultation with representatives. Almost half of the local authorities surveyed funded some form of tenant training in which estate officers were sometimes involved. However, elected members were only rarely involved. There was little evidence of coherent strategies being developed to aid the

organisational development of tenants' groups, although a few councils were taking major steps forward in their support for groups.

The National Assembly for Wales (2001) also carried out an extensive survey of progress in the implementation of tenant participation. They present a more mixed picture than the results of the survey by Cole *et al* (2001). With regard to the commitment of local authorities and housing associations a number of organisations had not yet produced written statements of policy on participation and a number were not complying with various statutory requirements. With regard to communications by landlords with tenants, there was general compliance, although a number of organisations interpreted consultation rather narrowly. With regard to decision-making, there was a concern that some authorities relied too much on the existence of formally constituted tenant groups. The report recommend that they be more pro-active in seeking ways to engage tenants. Finally, the support and resources provided to tenant groups is seen a patchy and uneven.

Critical Perspectives on Participation

Before examining in more detail the more critical literature on tenant participation it is useful to delineate some of the often confusing terminology that surrounds the debate on participation, much of it often used interchangeably. Chapman and Kirk (2001, p2) make the obvious distinctions between different types of community: 'The term community can have a specific geographical meaning with a clearly defined spatial boundary - an area, a neighbourhood or an estate. The term community can also refer to groups of people with a common interest, or "communities of interest", in describing groups which are vulnerable or prone to experiencing social exclusion'. Table 4.6, derived from Chapman and Kirk, provides useful definitions which seek to distinguish between different aspects of community participation. The most important definitions are those of community participation, community empowerment and community capacities. Participation refers to active involvement in local structures, empowerment to the actual transfer of control and influence to communities and capacities refers to the processes of strengthening community knowledge and expertise so that they can participate on an equal footing with other stakeholders.

Table 4.6 Definitions and Parameters of Community and Participation

<i>Community</i>	A term often associated with existing formal and informal community networks and local community organisations. It applies to both geographical communities and communities of interest. The notion of community does not necessarily imply homogeneity and there are likely to be competing and conflicting interests.
<i>Community Involvement</i>	includes all activities designed to inform the community or to involve it in decision-making processes and covers a range of activities from informing people through to the delegation of responsibility to community-based organisations.
<i>Community Participation</i>	the mechanism for active community involvement in partnership working, decision-making, project delivery and representation on formal partnership structures.
<i>Community Empowerment</i>	the processes by which individuals and communities gain control and have a say over the decisions which influence their day-to-day lives and the communities in which they live, and implies the transfer of skills, knowledge and resources to individuals and communities.
<i>Community Capacity Building</i>	the term used to describe the process by which the capability of the community is strengthened in order that it can play a more active role in the economic and social regeneration of their area through long-term ownership of the regeneration process
Source: Chapman and Kirk, 2001, p3.	

Riseborough (1998, p221) began her review of tenant participation in England with the following observation, 'While it may provide citizens with more choice and control over their destiny it may also be little more than an illusion which offers only the semblance of involvement in their landlord's decision-making processes'. Moreover, Cooper and Hawtin (1998a, p324) after an extensive review, contend that: "while tenant participation may have led to some improvements in people's lives, it has not led to a shift of power between the principal stakeholders in the housing game'. In other critical reviews of the genesis and impact of tenant participation, Cowan and March (2001, p155) state that 'in the latter part of the 20th century, the essence of tenant participation shifted away from tenant-led active protest against the state towards a more politically acceptable model which sought to encourage and facilitate it'. Carr *et al* (2001) and Goodlad (2001) review developments and trends in tenant participation and broadly agree with this stance. Carr *et al* (2001) in particular emphasise the argument that tenant participation is a form of social management or social control of tenant populations. They point to the links between the moral agenda of communitarianism and the moral agenda implicit in tenant participation; 'Participation has become a management tool stressing community rebuilding based on communitarian ideas' (Carr *et al*, 2001, p162). Moreover, it 'contains a very strong element of moral regeneration based on personal responsibility and obligation to others, with overtones of

social control and crime reduction' (Carr *et al*, 2001, p162). Haworth and Manzi (1999) also stress this moral agenda and its links with the debate on the underclass where the purpose of tenant participation is to improve tenant behaviour through encouragement or to penalise it through sanction if necessary. Carr *et al* (2001) also identify what they see as the main constraints on successful participation. The first such constraint is that tenants already suffer extreme levels of disempowerment by virtue of their socio-economic deprivation. Consequently, the level of participation may be quite low, with only a small cadre of activists being involved. The second constraint they identify concerns the institutional and managerial workings of local authorities. Local authorities are primarily accountable to central government and, moreover, operate relatively impenetrable bureaucracies.

In one of the most recent reviews of community participation in regeneration, Burton (2003) assesses the evidence regarding the impact and efficacy of participation in regeneration strategies. Despite the substantial literature on participation he concludes as follows:

'But there also appears to be a significant gap in our knowledge about the effectiveness of public involvement. There have been few attempts to analyse systematically the impact of public involvement in different settings. In part this is because it is difficult to design studies of involvement in ways that allow meaningful comparisons to be made between suitably contrasting cases. For example, few studies have been designed as robust experiments with suitable control cases' (Burton, 2003, p6).

This is a rather startling conclusion in some respects. The huge stress in policy formulation and implementation on the supposed efficacy of community participation is not confirmed by the available evidence. This may in large part be because of the difficulty of measuring whether participation leads to successful outcomes. In another wide-ranging review of the literature on community participation, Carley (2002) takes a more negative view. He concludes that, 'With exceptions, good community participation is yet to be embedded in partnership or governance. Many residents feel disenfranchised, having little control over renewal or service delivery. Renewal policy could be made more community friendly by reducing the bureaucracy of partnership and emphasising community-led evaluation of partnership processes and outcomes' (Carley, 2002, pvi). Furthermore, he concludes that 'Community groups and community leaders can feel disenfranchised from partnership processes and, at best, 'junior partners' in such arrangements'. The contribution of

community leaders, with “much responsibility but little power”, is found to be consistently undervalued by policy makers and public service managers (Carley, 2002, p33). This feeling of disempowerment arises when:

.. residents feel disenfranchised particularly when institutional stakeholders set both the agenda of regeneration and the rules of participation, hold the purse strings, and take real decisions before they interact with residents. In terms of neighbourhood policy, professional interests can dominate because of the ease of communication between regeneration professionals and civil servants, and because professionals have the resources and skills to respond to funding opportunities in a manner recognised as acceptable by the civil service (Carley, 2002, p33).

He also finds plentiful evidence of community participants achieving little or marginal returns for the expenditure of enormous time and effort. This in turn often leads to what is termed participation fatigue. The same small band of community leaders and representatives achieve little and become frustrated and cynical of the seeming unending rounds of participation.

Communities and their representatives can also be demoralised by the fact that their time is undervalued, often requiring many tedious meetings to achieve standards of local service delivery taken for granted in prosperous areas. Too often, participation programmes fail to lead to a productive, systematic plan for neighbourhood improvement, but rather to uncoordinated requests for yet more participation, often from agencies working within diverse funding streams.. (Carley, 2002, p33).

This participation fatigue and cynicism can be particularly apparent among residents in neighbourhoods with a history of unsuccessful renewal who may, quite justifiably, react in an apathetic or cynical manner about new initiatives. Another key problem identified by Carley is that whereas communities ought to be involved at the beginning in establishing development priorities for their neighbourhood, very often they are only involved at a late stage of the process when agendas and priorities have already been set. In that respect he stresses ‘the need to create opportunities for long term, less intensive participation which puts local people in charge of neighbourhood renewal rather than responding mainly to the interests of institutional stakeholders and short term funding mechanisms’ (Carley, 2002. p34). In addition, there is a need to create opportunities for all community members to participate rather than a small band of community leaders. However, the evidence for this kind of approach is limited. One of the core themes which emerges from Carley’s review is that many participation exercises are short-term and that such short-sightedness will ‘never

substitute for longer term participation in democratic processes, which should be the participative framework for neighbourhood regeneration (Carley, 2002, p35).

However, Carley does not just criticise the approach of the state but also argues that communities themselves can be the subject of a number of criticisms or weaknesses. In relation to the legitimacy of participation there are a number of critical questions which can be asked of communities themselves. To what extent, for example, are community-based decisions representative of the wider community or neighbourhood? Are decisions which seem to have the imprimatur of the community really just the views of a select minority of community representatives? If that is the case, then to what extent are decisions made through community participation methods accountable, and to whom? Carley also poses a set of general questions which point to the potential conflict between representative approaches to decision making and participatory approaches. To what degree do community-based decisions complement or displace the state? In particular, community decisions can directly challenge statutory policies. Related to this, to what extent does community participation at the local level complement or undermine the work of the elected local authority?

The other major area relating to the community itself refers to the whole issue of capacity building. According to Chapman and Kirk (2001, piv), 'Community capacity building supports individuals, community groups and community organisations through the development of skills, knowledge and expertise to manage and continue the development process'. Capacity building may involve: building the capacity of individuals; training; supporting community leaders; identifying information needs and testing community opinion; networking; building the capacity of partner organisations; identifying training needs of partner organisations; supporting intermediary organisations; and creating a financial framework for community capacity building (Chapman and Kirk, 2001, pv).

Carley points to the long-term need for communities to have the organisational capacity to participate effectively:

Organisational development in the community is also important because regeneration and social inclusion is invariably a long term task, requiring investment, institutional action and community management over ten or even twenty years. To participate fully in this long process, which can span generations, local residents need an organisational infrastructure

to enable them to be fully represented in the processes of regeneration: strategy deliberation, identification of key priorities, 'bending' of human and financial resources to the regeneration task, and so on (Carley, 2002, p36).

Chapman and Kirk (2001) re-iterate this point:

To maximise the benefits of community involvement, communities will require the right balance of support to help them gain the knowledge, skills and expertise to put them on an equal footing with other regeneration professionals. For this reason, emphasis is now being placed on 'community capacity building' as a process to develop the abilities of individuals, community groups and community-based organisations to manage and revitalise their own neighbourhoods (Chapman and Kirk, 2001, p4).

However, they also point to the rather obvious patronising assumptions inherent in the notion of community capacity building:

Local people may find the assumption that they need to increase their "capacity" insulting and patronising. Regeneration professionals often believe that providing training and capacity building will automatically strengthen community participation. However, such an approach often neglects the wealth of knowledge, skills and expertise that already exists within a community. This expertise needs to be 'tapped' and utilised in a constructive way. Over the long term, community capacity building is a process that seeks to ensure that communities gain influence, control and ownership over the regeneration processes (Chapman and Kirk, 2001, p4).

Burton (2003) develops this argument, although in a manner which is uncomfortable to those who are advocates of community participation. He contends that lay people may lack essential knowledge or be ignorant of complex or difficult policy issues; they may be highly likely to be subjective and self-interested and unable to see the wider public interest; they may be biased or prejudiced in a variety of ways and they may be too emotive and thus be incapable of rigorous and rational analysis. This devil's advocate argument is rarely seen in the literature. However, as Carley (2002, p34) points out, 'In areas of physical regeneration, decisions by professionals can even determine whether long-standing communities survive, or are incrementally eroded by decanting of tenants, demolition and onward sale of housing or cleared land to promote tenure diversification, a regeneration strategy now being questioned'. Thus, while local communities may indeed lack, at least initially, 'professional' knowledge', the application of such professional and technical knowledge has often had devastating impacts on local communities.

While the idea of capacity building may sound neutral and harmless, from a community perspective it contains inherent dangers. The utility and efficacy of such capacity building

will depend on who undertakes the capacity building and what precisely is being imparted to communities. It does not take any great critical acumen, or to be a cynical and wizened leftist, to point out that if the state or its agents undertake this capacity building that the agenda may well be one which stresses the need for consensus rather than conflict, and that community groups and community leaders may well be incorporated and co-opted to a state agenda through such methods. Radicalism and conflict, in short, can easily be nullified by capacity building.

Tenants, Rationality and the Free-Rider Problem

One of the major underlying assumptions of the entire literature on participation is that there is a natural demand and inclination of citizens to participate. However, Bengtsson (2001), arguing from a rationalist perspective, claims that the expectations of local authority managers and other professionals of tenant participation are highly inflated, a product more of hope than any realistic expectation. This is a powerful argument that brings a sense of realism to the debate. It suggests that the underlying conditions for extensive tenant involvement are going to be rarely met and that the expectations of the professionals are really a product of their own ideologies.

‘Advocates of residents’ involvement in housing management are often disappointed. The activities of real tenants seldom live up to their expectations, and the expected positive effects of participation, such as improved relations between neighbours, strengthened social control and diminished costs of maintenance and repair, are seldom found to be more than moderate at best’ (Bengtsson, 2001, p175).

However, he argues that:

‘From a rationalistic perspective, however, there is no cause for disappointment. Quite the opposite; we should be surprised that tenants care to co-operate at all. According to Manur Olson’s free-rider theorem, collective action will neither be initiated nor sustained by rational actors, unless found profitable by every single participant’ (Bengtsson, 2001, p175).

Bengtsson (1998, 2001) presents an interesting case relating to the rationality or irrationality of tenant participation. Following game theory approaches to social action, he asks whether it is rational for individual tenants to participate. Theoretically, it would make rational sense for tenants to engage with local authorities regarding potential service improvements. However, this ignores and discounts the current service delivered by local authorities (often poor) and also misses the complexity of the decision on whether or not to participate. Tenants are in a fundamentally different position to local authorities. They are relatively powerless, they are often in poor environments, and under stress. There can

be a predisposition not to get involved in participation mechanisms. Moreover, from a purely theoretical perspective, it has been argued that engaging in participation is irrational as it is an engagement in a collective act and may not reap any individual benefit. What are the rewards from potential collective benefits to an individual. The rational calculation may be to let the few who are participating deliver the benefits, enjoy them, but not participate. This is the so-called free rider problem. Put more harshly, this problem can be restated. From tenants' viewpoint, where there has been a history of little or no engagement from the local authority, there may be a rational calculation that collective action will not deliver any benefits. The rational calculation here may be that collective engagement is a waste of time, delivers nothing and is thus futile. There is no free-rider problem as there is no participation and no benefits have been delivered (Bengtsson, 1998, 2001; Birchall, 1997; Bengtsson and Clapham, 1997).

Herein lies a crucial problem at the heart of tenant participation. There is a clear need for discernible benefits and outcomes to emerge from the process of tenant participation. If the process is about delivering a better service, the starting point has to be some measurement of current service and a subsequent monitoring of changes. Tenant participation will thus depend on the local authority housing management service changing in response to the input of tenants. However, there is a further difficulty that revolves around the difficulties of measuring certain aspects of the housing service and making such measures meaningful to tenants.

Neighbourhood Management in England

Tenant participation is quite specifically linked with local authorities and registered social landlords in the UK. However, increasingly, such policies have to be located in the wider context of area-based or what are now generally termed neighbourhoods policies. In reviewing the literature on regeneration in England, one of the core messages that emerges is one of constant change, almost revolution, in the number and range of area-based initiatives (Lee and Murie, 1997; Taylor, 2000a, 2000b, 2003; Allen et al, 2001). Most of the initiatives have three elements in common. First, we can see a constant striving towards ever more multidimensional approaches to tackling deprivation. Second, we can see attempts at achieving multi-agency approaches to tackling deprivation with greater horizontal and vertical integration. Third, there has been a consistent emphasis on the

need to involve the local community in such interventions. Table 4.7, adapted and developed from Taylor, lists some of the many local initiatives which have operated over the past few decades in England. Taylor (2000b) provides an overview of the many regeneration initiatives and in particular the lessons to be learnt from them. Many of these initiatives 'which looked good on paper have failed to translate into effective practice' (Taylor, 2000b, p7). By this she means that disadvantage persists and that many areas have been through a revolving door of initiatives. There is no clear evidence of any easy solution despite decades of attempts to solve the problems. A report by the Social Exclusion Unit (1998) in the UK concluded that despite many renewal programmes many deprived estates have either not improved or indeed got worse.

Table 4.7 Area-Based Programmes in England

1960s/1970s	1970s/1980s	1990s	2000s
Education Priority Areas	Inner City Partnerships	Estate Action	Neighbourhood management
Housing Action Areas	Local Authority Decentralisation Initiatives	City Challenge	Local strategic partnerships
General Improvement Areas	City Action Teams	Single Regeneration Budget	
Area Management	Task Forces		
Community Development Project	Urban Development Programmes		
Inner Area Studies	Priority Estate Programme		
Urban Programme			
Comprehensive Community Programme			

Source: adapted from Taylor, 2000b, p7.

The justification for area-based interventions and for a neighbourhood management approach is provided by Carley:

The figure of about one-third, or just a little over, of socially excluded persons concentrated in a small number of neighbourhoods is important, because it provides a **rationale** for neighbourhood renewal policy as a potentially effective means of both reaching a significant number of deprived households and restoring run-down neighbourhoods to social inclusion. It does not imply however that neighbourhood renewal will necessarily be successful, particularly in urban areas...(Carley, 2002, p8).

Dabinett et al (2001, p44) concur with this view:

They do however provide evidence that area-based programmes do work, in part, for certain reasons: the need for intensive, focused approaches; greater impact than thinly spread resources; and the neighbourhood as an appropriate size for effective management of regeneration, assessment of service delivery and for integrated economic, social and physical regeneration programmes.

However, in a major review of regeneration programmes in England, Dabinett *et al* (2001, p44) conclude as follows:

Ultimately, robust evidence would need to show that targeting at the neighbourhood level generated larger, more favourable and sustainable outcomes for the most severely socially excluded groups than schemes of the same expenditure spread across cities or sub-regions...Currently, the evidence to demonstrate this is not available.

Carley (2002) reinforces the critique presented by Dabinett *et al*.

Despite thirty years of effort, achievements of neighbourhood renewal are patchy. While there has been much physical regeneration, and some good examples of communities taking the lead in improving their neighbourhoods, there is little hard evidence of higher rates of social inclusion for the most disadvantaged households. Indeed, a striking finding is the degree of economic inactivity of households in deprived neighbourhoods, set against an increasing concentration of deprived households in social housing in deprived areas. (Carley, 2002, pvii).

In another wide-ranging review of neighbourhood management Taylor (2000b) lists a number of reasons as to why they have not worked. First, economic decline outstrips attempts to regenerate. This seems to be saying that the depth and scale of the economic problems in deprived areas were such that intervention programmes had only a minor impact. Second, special initiative funding was not in fact additional to mainstream funding but tended to conceal overall reductions in public expenditure. Third, public sector and professional cultures are highly resistant to change. According to Taylor, the available research emphasises that the routines and practices of public service organisations tend to thwart innovation. Fourth, where there has been decentralisation of services this has been either counterbalanced or reversed by the introduction of excessive regulation and performance measurement from the centre. Fifth, partnerships have been dominated by the need to obtain funding. Moreover, partnership tends to be formed because of the funding availability rather than any necessary intrinsic advantages of working in partnership. Sixth, lead in times to neighbourhood interventions tend to be short and much shorter than is necessary to establish sustainable initiatives. Seventh, and crucially from the perspective of this work, communities tend to remain marginal. The complexity of bidding for funding and operating partnerships can force community organisations

themselves to adopt a bureaucratic mode or involve professionals in order to link in with partnerships. Communities '...involved in partnership find that there is an enormous imbalance in power and resources and the rules of the game are usually dictated by public authorities... (Taylor, 2000b, p9). Moreover, accountability is to funders rather than to the community and 'the result is that many initiatives remain dependent on the usual suspects, with the result that they get burnt out, their experience is undervalued, public sector agencies question their legitimacy, the most marginalised sections of the community remain excluded and the wider community is not engaged' (Taylor, 2000b, p9). Eight, there is a lack of co-ordination at central government level and often at local level. Finally, market policies have introduced not only fragmentation but also a competitive as opposed to collaborative ethos into the process of local governance. Carley (2002) also reviews the literature on partnership and area-based programmes and found that in the case of partnerships in Scotland, for example, that 'they were generally effective in developing visions and formulating strategic objectives but less successful in translating objectives into deliverable activities. While most participants believed partnership generated added value, measuring the 'partnership effect' was found to be difficult' (Carley, 2002, p18).

This list of nine reasons provided by Taylor (2000b) seems a fairly damning indictment of the effectiveness of local-area interventions and clearly also presents a major challenge to overcome. Undaunted, however, UK government policy in the past few years has set out a comprehensive area-based programme centred on neighbourhood management. The election of the New Labour government in the UK in 1997 saw the establishment of the Social Exclusion Unit, the production of a raft of reports by Policy Action Teams, resulting in the publication of a strategy for neighbourhood renewal (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001). The main elements of this approach comprise a neighbourhood renewal programme focused on 88 deprived neighbourhoods, the development of neighbourhood management and the creation of Local Strategic Partnerships. These local partnerships are to be comprised of the usual stakeholders to some extent but must also include representatives of business and commercial interests. The Social Exclusion Unit (2001) argues that neighbourhood management is the key vehicle, at the local level, that could provide the focus for renewal. Neighbourhood management comprises four main elements: maximum involvement from communities, voluntary organisations and local businesses; 'someone in charge' in the neighbourhood, a neighbourhood manager;

reorganised public services as the main instrument of renewal; and targeted assistance from government (Carley, 2002, p23.) It remains to be seen whether this approach will yield more effective results than previous incarnations of area-based programmes, or whether in ten years time a new review will conclude that area-based poverty and associated problems stubbornly remain.

Carley (2002) points to the rather obvious conclusion that neighbourhood and area-based approaches are not sufficient in themselves to regenerate local areas. There is evidence that 'neighbourhood renewal and the social inclusion of deprived households is dependent, in part, on the achievement of economic regeneration at higher spatial levels, that is, on the achievement of economic regeneration at the level of the local authority or the travel-to-work sub-region' (Carley, 2002, pvii). In addition, 'Neighbourhood renewal initiatives, in combination with national 'people policies', must be sufficient to this magnitude of the task of social inclusion, or ... another thirty years of neighbourhood initiatives could go by without resolution of the fundamental nature of the problem (Carley, 2002, p5). In other words, area-based programmes and neighbourhood approaches are of only limited value unless there are national policies and structures which seek to not only ameliorate social exclusion but to tackle its fundamental causes. Neighbourhood management policies may, in other words, only be addressing the symptoms of social exclusion.

IV CONCLUSION

This review of regeneration and participation policies highlighted the shifting nature of regeneration policies over time, from simple physical renewal of estates to attempts at more holistic socio-economic regeneration, the latter being pursued through multi-dimensional strategies of renewal and more co-ordinated action by the central and local state (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001). The current conventional wisdom on regeneration centres, at least in the UK, on the need for regeneration to be holistic in nature, that it not merely be area-based, but seek to mainstream policy, and that policy implementation be co-ordinated vertically (various hierarchies) and horizontally (between agencies). However, as was pointed out, a major criticism of the welter of best practice guides and related policy prognostications is the relative absence of any serious analysis of the structural causation of place or neighbourhood poverty. Much of the literature seems to operate on a set of benign assumptions regarding the nature of social exclusion and about

the supposed efficacy of area-based policies as an antidote to area deprivation. This absence of a critical perspective manifests itself in different ways. It can lead to a generally uncritical acceptance of the potential of the various initiatives to regenerate an area. In a related manner, many of the policy initiatives are vague regarding the specific outcomes that might be expected, leading to evaluations of policies which are overly optimistic and sanguine. The evidence on the role and efficacy of community participation is particularly instructive. After more than thirty years of various area-based programmes, in which community participation has been an important element, there is little convincing evidence which demonstrates the effectiveness of participation. Indeed, the evidence that does exist suggests that communities have been participating but have not been empowered.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

I INTRODUCTION

The objective of the thesis is to investigate the genesis, development and implementation of tenant participation in the local authority housing sector in Ireland. In particular, it seeks to analyse the impact and efficacy of tenant participation in empowering tenants in decision making regarding the management of their estates. This chapter describes the research methodology used to assess the development of tenant participation. Section II outlines the broad research approach, section III describes the nature and quality of secondary sources, Section IV describes in detail the approach to the primary research while section V presents some of the methodological limitations of the approach.

II RESEARCH APPROACH

The overall research strategy of the thesis comprises of two main elements. The first is to provide a theoretical and empirical context for an examination of the operation of tenant participation in Ireland. This was undertaken in chapter 1 to 4. Chapters 1 and 2 examined the different conceptual perspectives on participation while chapters 3 and 4 examined the empirical background of social exclusion and attempts at regeneration respectively. The second element of the research approach is to examine empirically the development and implementation of tenant participation. In attempting to achieve this critical examination the overall aim is to end up with an appreciation and critical understanding of the following:

1. The degree of progress or development in implementing tenant participation
2. The level and degree of engagement of tenant groups
3. The level and degree of engagement of local authorities
4. The level of empowerment of tenant groups with regard to decision-making at estate level
5. The overall potentialities and limitations of tenant participation

Arising from this general approach, below are a series of detailed research questions which arise from the examination of the theoretical literature and the empirical context. The first set of questions focuses on the experiences of tenants in the process, while the second set focus on the role of the local authorities in the process. The overall purpose of both these sets of questions is to gain an in-depth qualitative understanding of the experience of tenant participation. Conversely, the aim is not to obtain some kind of quantitative assessment of the impact of tenant participation on quality of life. The focus is on the policies, structures, experiences and perspectives of participation.

The tenant experience

1. What are tenants participating in or about when engaged in tenant participation? Who sets this agenda and controls it? What is not on the agenda?
2. What does participation mean? Is it mere routine involvement? Is it about influence, voice or empowerment?
3. Who is involved in the tenant population? What are relations like between tenants and tenant groups?
4. How are tenants involved? What are the processes whereby tenants organise themselves? Are there problems?
5. What are the structures whereby tenants get involved with the local authority? How do they operate and work? What resources are provided by the local authority?
6. What do tenants expect to gain out of it (quality of life improvements? political power?). What do they actually achieve in terms of outcomes? What are the limitations? How are outcomes to be measured and evaluated? What criteria can be used?

The local authority experience

1. What do local authorities see as the remit of tenant participation? What's on the agenda? What's not on the agenda?
2. How is tenant participation organised and managed in the local authority. Dedicated officers? Committees? Are there extra resources or a redeployment of existing resources?
3. What resources are given to tenants and tenant groups?
4. What is the level and degree of tenant participation across estates?
5. What do the local authority hope to achieve with tenant participation? An aid to improving their service (that is just a customer device), or to involve tenants in influencing decisions whereby tenants have an actual say?
6. What are the actual outcomes of tenant participation from the viewpoint of the local authority?

Given the almost complete absence of research on tenant participation in Ireland, the only way to answer the above questions is through some form of detailed empirical analysis of the operation of tenant participation. The core approach taken was to undertake a series of empirical case studies of the operation of tenant participation in a number of local authorities. Before explaining the approach to conducting the primary research the next section examines the availability and utility of secondary sources.

III SECONDARY SOURCES

In undertaking the research for the thesis a comprehensive search of all secondary sources was conducted. This section reviews the available secondary material, both published and unpublished, and comments on its utility. It comments on material available on the national policy background, the local authority background, the local authority estate management contexts, the availability of specific information on tenant participation and closes by assessing the overall utility of the available information.

National Policy Background

As will be seen in more detail in Chapter 6, the background to estate management and tenant participation has been relatively well developed from a policy viewpoint. Table 5.1 details the key sources available. The legislative base, which is relatively minor, is contained in the 1992 and 1997 Housing Acts. Section 9 of the 1992 Housing Act required all local authorities to produce a 'Statement of Policy on Housing Management' which had to specify policy on tenant participation. Policy on estate management and tenant participation is first developed in two national policy documents on social housing in 1991 and 1995. More detailed policy developments, which contain detailed prescriptive comments, are contained in two reports by the Housing Management Group, an ad-hoc group set up to develop good practice guidelines. One of the most important documents on tenant participation is an unpublished Memorandum from 1993 by the Department of the Environment which contains guidelines on how to produce the statements of policy on housing management. This document is a seminal one in that it is both a devastating critique of local authority practice as well as being prescriptive regarding what the statements should contain. In 2001 the Housing Unit, an agency funded by central and local government to develop best practice and training programmes, produced detailed best practice guidance on tenant participation.

Table 5.1 Sources on National Policy Background

Legislative background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1992 Housing Act ▪ 1997 Housing Act
Policy documents on social housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A Plan for Social Housing (1991) ▪ Social Housing: The Way Forward (1995)
Policy documents on estate management and tenant participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Housing Management Groups Reports (1996 and 1998) ▪ unpublished Memorandum on the Preparation of a Statement of Policy on Housing Management (1993)
Best Practice Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Housing Unit (2001)

Thus, from a national policy viewpoint there is a significant amount of published and unpublished literature on the origins and development of policy.

Local Authority Policy Background

While the national policy background is reasonably well developed, the same cannot be said of the local authority background. Table 5.2 lists the available published information. On foot of the 1992 Housing Act, all local authorities had by 1994, produced 'Statements of Policy on Housing Management'. However, as an analysis by Redmond and Walker (1995) shows, these statements tended to be very vague and aspirational and contained little if any performance information for example. Local authorities tend to publish very few other records apart from annual reports which, generally, tend to have little information of use regarding management and participation.

Table 5.2 Sources on Local Authority Policy Background

Source	Comment
Statements of policy on Housing Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Available for all local authorities; produced in 1994 but not revised since
Local authority records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very limited published information available
Annual reports of the local authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Contain little of use regarding estate management and participation

Local Authority Estate Management Contexts

There was some limited published information available relating to housing and estate management as shown in Table 5.3. Information is available on local authority house completions, sales of dwellings to tenants, lettings of new dwellings, casual lettings and housing management and expenditure accounts. Most of this information is available from about 1991. However, the major deficiency is that the information is only available at the local authority level and there is no published information available at an estate level. Local authorities either had not got information at such a level or were unwilling to collect and collate it after requests¹. While local authorities were quite forthcoming with respect to agreeing to interviews, there was a major resistance to supplying detailed estate-level information. This is primarily because of the lack of computerised systems and the clear fact that many authorities do not collect key information such as voids, maintenance times and so on.

Table 5.3 Secondary Sources on Estate Management Contexts

Data	Spatial Level
Local authority housing completions	Local Authority
Sales to tenants	Local Authority
New lettings	Local Authority
Casual lettings	Local Authority
Housing management and expenditure accounts	Local Authority

Tenant Participation Information

There was almost no available published information available dealing specifically with tenant participation. The Statements of Policy on Housing Management produced in 1993-94 have not since been updated and the level of published policy development is very limited. With regard to collection of performance information on tenant participation, such information is non-existent.

Data deficiencies

Clearly, the primary and crucial data deficiency was that there was no systematic sources on estate management or tenant participation. The absence of published or easily available unpublished information at an estate level was clearly problematic. Consequently, there

¹ A standard computerised system for information collection and analysis of housing management will only be available to local authorities between 2004 and 2006.

was a clear need to undertake significant primary research in order to investigate and analyse the efficacy of the implementation of tenant participation. The next section develops the argument for the undertaking of primary research.

IV PRIMARY RESEARCH : RESEARCH DESIGN AND STRATEGY

Overall strategy

Given the dearth of available secondary sources and the aims of the thesis, it was necessary to undertake significant primary research. A key decision regarding the research was whether to attempt a complete survey of all local authorities in order to gain an understanding of the overall patterns of development of tenant participation or whether to take an alternative strategy which was to take a sample of local authorities and undertake a more in-depth qualitative examination. After examining the merits and demerits of each approach, it was decided to take the latter option. However, rather than take a very limited number of estates and examine them in depth the approach sought to obtain a reasonable overview of policy and practice at a local authority level. Table 5.4 presents the primary research strategy .

Table 5.4 Research Strategy and Design	
Steps	
1	Sampling: Selecting the local authorities and estates
	Urban local authorities only
	Broadly reflective of current stock distribution
	Sampling estates in local authorities
2	Local Authority and estate context
	Socio-economic background
	Remedial Renewal
3	What is being researched?
	Define the subject of tenant participation
	Define estate management
	Set delimiters
4	Who is being researched
	Tenants and Tenant Groups
	Local Authority housing managers
	Central Government officials
5	Obtaining information
	In depth Interviews
	Semi-structured interviews
	Interview schedule
	Recording interviews
	Analysing the interviews

Step 1: Sampling of Local Authorities and Estates

Sampling of Local Authorities

Having made the decision to undertake the research using a sample of local authorities the next stage was to select the local authorities. This sampling was undertaken with two constraints in mind. First, it was decided that the research would focus on tenant participation in large urban authorities. The reasons for this are quite simple. Previous research on social housing indicated quite clearly that local authority housing estates in large urban authorities were clearly more prone to high levels of socio-economic distress than any in rural areas (Fahey, 1999a). In addition, as Table 5.5 makes clear, the distribution of the rented local authority stock is heavily skewed towards urban local authorities. The distribution of rented stock has remained fairly constant for the past decade and has changed little if at all since 1997. It is precisely such urban areas, and the problems in such areas, which provided the rationale for the introduction of tenant participation policies. Other factors which were borne in mind in choosing the sample areas were as follows: the age of stock and type of stock where known, whether renewal schemes have occurred and knowledge of the existing level of tenant participation.

Table 5.5 Distribution of Local Authority Rented Stock by Type of Location, 1997

	1997	
	N	%
Cities	53434	54
Other urban	15824	16
Counties (rural)	29604	30
Total	98862	100

Source: Department of Environment and Local Government

The sampling strategy was based on selecting local authorities in the major cities, therefore excluding all rural areas and smaller towns. This is partly pragmatic but mainly because of the degree of problems on social housing estates in the large cities and the probable greater degree of development of tenant participation policies. Table 5.6 shows the selected local authorities. The authorities chosen were Dublin City Council², South Dublin County

² Dublin, Limerick and Waterford changed names from Corporation to Council in 2002.

Council, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, Limerick City Council and Waterford City Council.

Table 5.6 Local Authority Rented Stock in Sample Areas

Local Authority	2001		
	Rented local authority stock N	% of national rented stock	% of sample
Dublin City Council	24262	24	59
South Dublin County Council	7414	7	18
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council	3942	4	10
Limerick City Council	3068	3	7
Waterford City Council	2306	2	6
Total	40992	40	100

Source: Department of the Environment (various) *Bulletin of Housing Statistics*, 1998.

The justifications for choosing these areas is relatively straightforward and is summarised in Table 5.7. Dublin City Council alone accounts for 24% of the national local authority rented stock, while all four Dublin authorities account for just over 40% of the national stock. Apart from having the largest rented stock, Dublin City Council also contains a unique type of housing stock. Of the 25,000 dwellings in management, approximately 16,000 are flats (including Ballymun). Apart from the high-rise complex in Ballymun, most of these flat complexes are located in the inner area of the city. They have suffered particularly from social order problems (Fahey, 1999a) and also have the distinction of being 100% rented as legal complexities preclude their being sold to tenants. South Dublin County Council has the second largest social rented stock in the country. It was chosen because it has very large low density estates located on the periphery. Two of the largest spatial concentrations of social rented housing in the country are located in the so-called new towns of Tallaght and Clondalkin. Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council is one of the most affluent local authorities in the country but nonetheless has a number of small local authority estates. Moreover, it was clear from a preliminary reading of the literature that the County were in the process of experimenting with a model of estate management and tenant participation (Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, 1999). Limerick City Council has some of the more notorious social housing estates in the country and, in theory at least, a developed policy on estate management. The local-

authority rented stock in Waterford City Council accounts for about 20% of all housing in the city, making it twice the national average and thus of interest.

Table 5.7 Rationale for Case Study Areas

Local Authority	Rationale
Dublin City Council	Largest local authority stock in Ireland; mixed stock of flats and houses
South Dublin County Council	Large peripheral estates with significant problems
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council	Pockets of estates in a largely affluent area
Limerick City Council	Twice the national average local authority stock; familiarity of author with the estates; nationally prominent estates with severe problems
Waterford City Council	Twice the national average national stock

Figure 5.1 shows the location of the three main cities selected while Figure 5.2 shows the local authorities in the Dublin area.

Sampling of Housing Estates

Having selected the sample of local authorities it was necessary to select a number of local authority housing estates in each authority in order to examine the implementation of participation. The estates were selected on the basis of the following criteria:

1. Location of estate
2. Type of estate
3. Age of estate
4. Current levels of problems on the estates
5. The degree of initiatives on the estate
6. Whether the estate has been the subject of similar or related studies.

Table 5.8 shows the estates that were selected in each authority. As can be seen from the Table, the estates selected are quite mixed with respect to their age, location, type of dwelling and size of estate. It must be said that the approach was not necessarily to examine each estate in exactly the same detail but at least one tenant representative and one local authority estate officer was interviewed for each estate. The overall approach

was to obtain an overview of tenant participation for the authority and then to obtain detailed information from across the local authority estates.

It is immediately obvious that Ballymun has not been selected as part of the study. This is primarily because of the exceptional nature of Ballymun. It is the only high-rise development in Ireland but also the largest single local authority estate with approximately 3,000 units. Moreover, it is exceptional with respect to the nature of its redevelopment. A separate Act of the Dail (Parliament) was passed which formed an independent company, Ballymun Regeneration Ltd., and created a separate budget for the complete redevelopment of the area. Ballymun is to be completely demolished and redeveloped. Thus, Ballymun is exceptional on a number of counts. It is in essence a flagship project with major resources for redevelopment and for participation. As stated in the introduction to the thesis, one of the main purposes was to gain insights into estate management and tenant participation in cases where there will not necessarily be any additional financial resources thus allowing comparison between and within authorities. Apart from the unique nature of Ballymun and its redevelopment, it would in reality require a separate study.

Table 5.8 Sample of Local Authority Estates

Local Authority	Location	Estate(s)/Area	Dwelling type	No. of dwellings Approx.	% rented	Period built
Dublin City Council	Suburb – north east	Darndale	Low rise low density	910	80	1970s
	Suburb - south west	Cherry Orchard	Low rise low density	1200	80	1980s
	Inner City	O' Devaney Gardens	Flats	276	100	1950s
	Inner City	Teresa's Gardens	Flats	300	100	1950s
South Dublin	New Town, West Dublin, Tallaght	Killinarden	Low rise low density	1740	65	1970s & 1980s
	New Town, Clondalkin	North Clondalkin	Low rise low density	2400	75	1980s
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown		Ballyogan	Low rise low density	200	60	1980s & 1990s
		Mountown	Flats	200	100	1960s
		Rathsallagh	Low rise low density	640	30	1980s
Limerick	Suburban Southhill	O' Malley Park	Low rise low density	600	85	1960s
Waterford	Suburban	Ballybeg	Low rise low density	900	80	1970s
Sources: Interviews and Observation						

Figure 5.1 Location of Local Authority Case Study Areas



Figure 5.2 Location of Dublin Case Studies

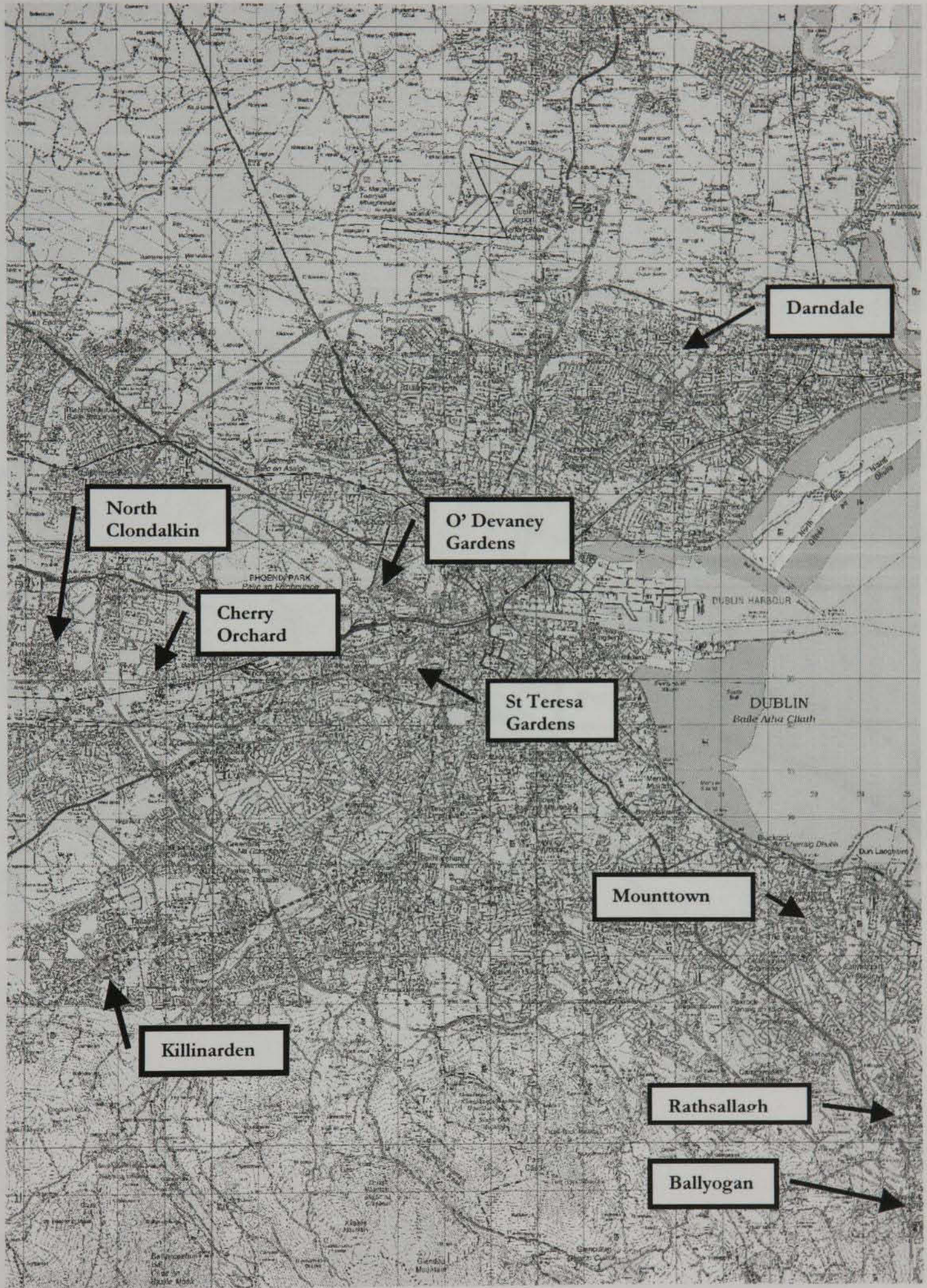


Figure 5.3 Location of Limerick Case Study

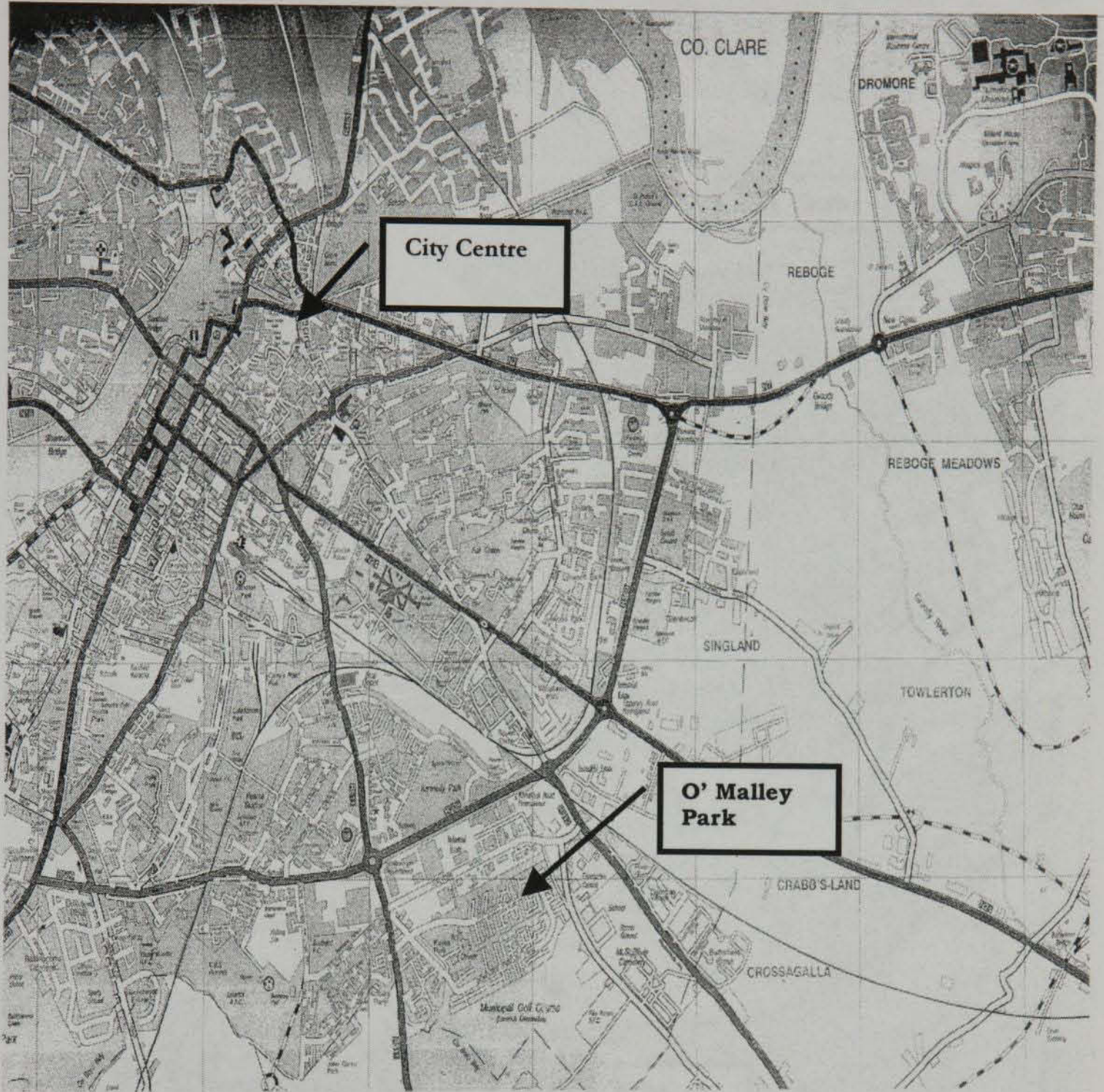
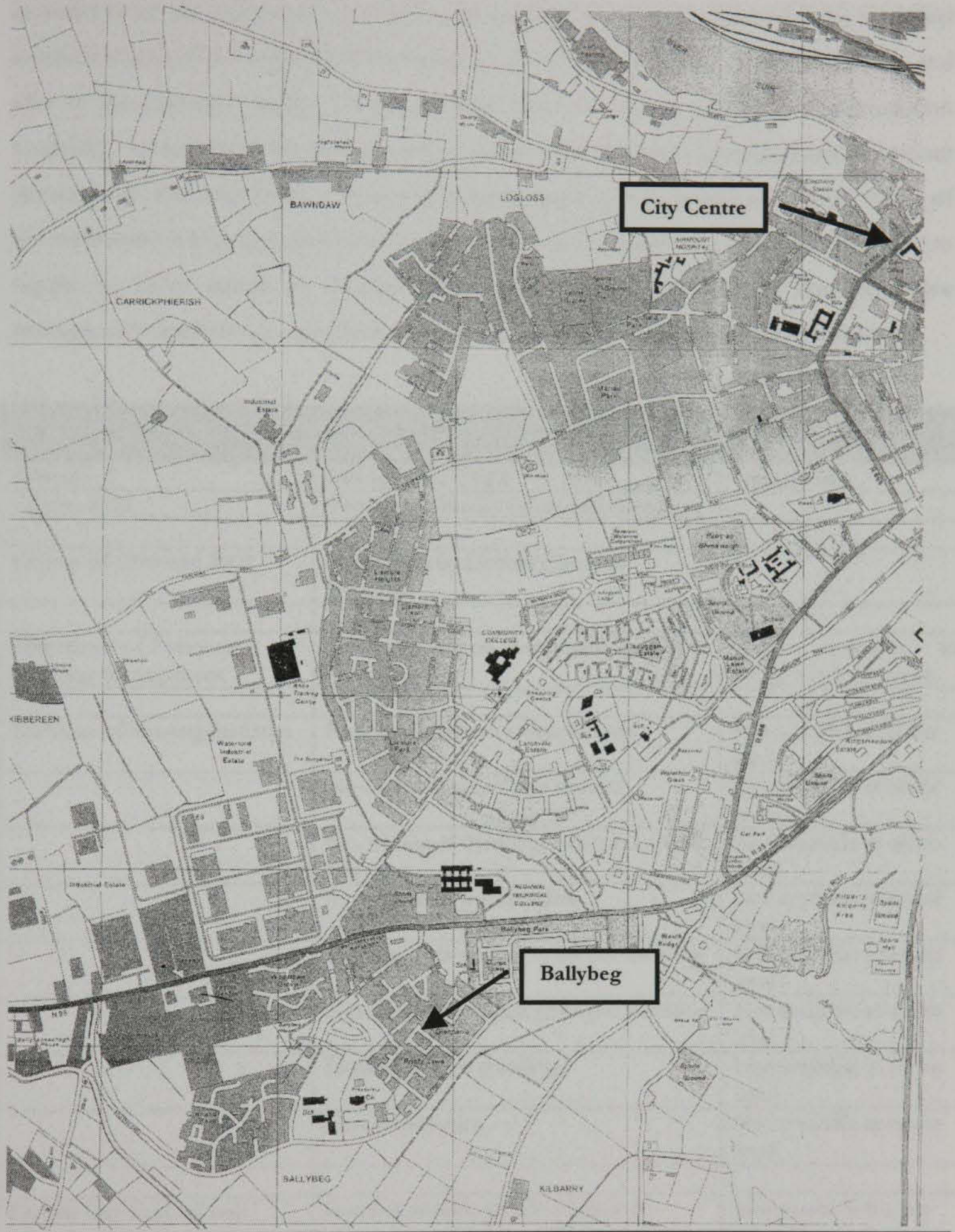


Figure 5.4 Location of Waterford Case Study



Step 2: Local Authority and Estate Context

In order to set the assessment of tenant participation in context it was necessary to collect as much information on the rented housing stock in the local authority as was possible and also on the selected estates. Table 5.9 summarises the sources and kinds of information available. In overview, the available information regarding estate management and tenant participation was very poor. It was particularly poor at a housing-estate level. Most of the authorities had only paper-based records on estate management and were unwilling to supply or allow access to detailed information. Indeed, the lack of comprehensive management databases is a problem in planning for and undertaking estate management.

Table 5.9 Information Sources on Local Authorities and Estates

Source	Information Type	Limitations
Census 1991	Tenure by District Electoral Division	
Census of 1996 and 2002	Population by District Electoral Division	
Statements of Policy on Housing Management	General policy on tenant participation	Only produced in 1993/4 and not since
Bulletins of housing Statistics	New local authority completions	Not available at estate level
	No of dwellings sold to tenants	Not available at estate level
	No. of rented dwellings occupied at end of year	Not available at estate level
	Average rents per dwelling	Not available at estate level
	Average maintenance costs per dwelling	Not available at estate level
	Average management costs per dwelling	Not available at estate level
	Lettings of new dwellings	Not available at estate level
	Casual vacancies	Not available at estate level
Dublin City Council only	Socio-economic profile of tenants	Not available for any other local authorities
Generally Not Available	Rents arrears	Transfers
	Voids & Re-let times	
	Evictions & Exclusion orders	
	Satisfaction surveys	

One of the most serious deficiencies regarding the availability of information was the almost complete absence of management information at an estate level. Officially-published sources, such as the Bulletins of Housing Statistics, only provide information at a local-authority level. Despite several requests to local authorities to provide information such as lettings, voids, rent arrears and turnover on an estate level, this information was either not available or was available only in paper form so as to be almost impossible to get access to. Very few local authorities in Ireland have comprehensive estate management information systems, although there are plans to introduce a pilot system from the start of 2004.

Step 3 Defining Tenant Participation

The third step was to define, in an operational manner, the subject of study. In seeking to elucidate the experience of both tenants and local authorities a number of key criteria were used. First, following the definition of tenant participation by Somerville and Steele (1995) as the collective action of tenants, the research only considers the relationship between tenant groups acting on behalf of (or purporting to do so) the larger tenant population on an estate. It is not, therefore, concerned with the individual actions of tenants. Second, it primarily concerns tenant groups' links with the local authority primarily and not with other statutory and non-statutory agencies. Third, the study confines itself to the services that local authorities provide to a housing estate (primarily the housing department but not only that). Fourth, for the purposes of the research, the main services that were considered were the following:

1. Dwelling maintenance
2. Estate maintenance
3. Refurbishment
4. Redevelopment and infill
5. Allocations and lettings
6. Void management
7. Rent setting, rent collection, arrears management
8. Transfers
9. Tenant participation policy
10. Anti-social behaviour
11. Tenant purchase

The definition of tenant participation used is where tenants interact with local authority housing managers with regard to housing issues. It is not, therefore, about broader community development, although this does come in to the equation.

Step 4 Who is Being Researched

In examining tenant participation, and therefore the relationship between tenants and local authorities, it was necessary to be precise regarding how this was to be operationalised. The categories of interviews were as follows:

1. Tenant Activists

The first category of interviews was with tenant activists who were members of or associated with formal tenant groups. They may work voluntarily or may be paid for their work, but the key point is that they represent, or purport to represent, the body of tenants on a housing estate. In interviewing tenant activists the aim was not only to obtain their experience of the participation process and its outcomes, but also to learn about the manner in which tenant organisations themselves were organised and operate.

2. Estate Officers and Senior housing officers

In order to obtain an overview of policy across the local authority a senior housing officer was interviewed in each of the local authorities. These officers would not work at estate level but generally would be in charge of overall policy and the duties of the estate officers. However, the main focus was in interviewing estate officers. The emphasis was on interviewing estate officers who were working 'on the ground' on estates for two reasons. First, they operate on the frontline of tenant participation and experience its actual operation. Second, they may possess more critical views of the local authority itself and its performance than a senior officer. The estate officers who worked in the selected estates were interviewed.

3. Central Government Officials

In order to supplement the central government policy documentation, two senior civil servants responsible for the development and operation of policies relating to estate management and tenant participation were interviewed.

Step 5 Obtaining Information

Qualitative Interviews

The approach taken was to undertake in-depth semi-structured interviews with all categories of interviewees listed above. All of the interviews were conducted face-to-face and where possible, recorded and later transcribed.

Interview Schedule

The interview schedules used were designed bearing in mind the avowed aims and objectives of tenant participation policy. Table 5.10 shows the interview schedule used for interviewing tenant activists while Table 5.11 shows the schedule used for interviewing local authority housing officers (senior and estate officers). The interviews with civil servants was semi-structured and revolved around the implementation and monitoring of policy. The interviews with tenant activists covered the following broad areas: estate history and background; the history and development of the tenant organisation; its structure and operation; resource availability; the role of the group in estate management and the issues and agendas of importance, and an evaluation of the costs and benefits of participation in estate management. The interviews with estate officers covered the following general areas: the estate profile and background; the role and function of estate officers; local structures of participation; information on tenant groups; resources for tenant groups; key issues and agendas' relationships with senior officers and others in the local authority and an overall evaluation of outcomes. Overall, therefore, the interviews were designed first to obtain as much objective factual information as was possible on structures of participation and then to obtain views of a qualitative nature on experiences of the process.

Table 5.10 Interview Schedule for Tenant Activists

Location:	Interviewee:
Position	Organisation:
Date:	
Estate background	
No of houses	Other info (Initiatives etc.)
Renters v Tenant purchasers	
History of organisation	
When formed	
Reason for formation	
Structures	No of meetings
No of members	Constitution/procedures
No of tenants?	Links with other agencies
No of Local authority officials	Opening hours?
No from other agencies?	Changes in group composition
Elections?	Other tenant groups in area
Resources	
Finance from local authority	Offices and equipment
Other finances	Training for tenants
Paid staff	
Role in estate management	
House maintenance	Anti-social behaviour
Estate maintenance	Allocations and lettings
Other areas	Policy
Views	
Positives	Negatives
Future	

Table 5.11 Interview Schedule for Estate Officers

Estate profile: (stock; waiting lists; transfers; voids; etc)
Policy on estate management
Internal local authority organisation of tenant estate management
Roles and functions of estate officer
Structures of participation: Local offices/ estate boards/other structures
Tenant /Resident groups (numbers; level of organisation; activism)
Resources for tenant groups and activists (material; financial; training etc.)
Key issues/agenda with tenants (allocations; estate maintenance; anti-social behaviour; social order)
Relationships with local authority HQ
Evaluation of estate management/tenant participation (costs and benefits)

Scoping and Selecting Interviewees

The general approach in obtaining interviews was to approach the local authority in the first instance and obtain the names of senior officers with responsibility for estate management and also of the individual estate officers responsible for various estates. Names of tenant activists were also, in the first instance, obtained from the local authority. However, in order to avoid any bias from local authority officers, a number of different community organisations were also approached in order to obtain the names of tenant groups and tenant activists. The overall aim was to obtain a minimum of 30 interviews with tenant activists and 20 interviews with estate officers. Table 5.12 shows the number of interviews conducted across each category. Overall, a total of 69 individuals were interviewed, 25 local authority officials, 41 tenant activists and 3 central government officials. The interview numbers are used in Chapters 6, 9 and 10 in sourcing quotations and are referenced in the following manner – e.g. I55.

Table 5.12 Distribution of Interviews

	N	Interview Numbers
Tenant Activists	41	I1 to I41
Local Authority Housing Officers	25	I42-I66
Central Government officials	3	I67-I69
Total	69	

Table 5.13 shows the distribution of interviews across the different local authorities.

Table 5.13 Distribution of Interviews by Local Authority Areas

	Senior officers and estate officers	Tenant Activists
	N	N
Dublin City Council	8	13
South Dublin County Council	6	8
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council	5	7
Limerick City Council	3	7
Waterford City Council	3	6
Central Government Officials	3	
Total	28	41

Recording and Length of Interviews

Of the 69 interviews undertaken, 49 were recorded on tape. The average length of each interview was over 2 hours. Detailed contemporaneous notes were taken for those interviews which were not recorded on tape. All the interviews which were recorded were fully transcribed. All of the interviewees remain anonymous for the purposes of confidentiality for later analysis. While many of the tenant activists were happy to be identified, most of the local authority personnel were not and so all identities are treated confidentially.

Analysing the Interviews

As in any qualitative work, the collection of information is relatively straightforward. However, the analysis of the responses is less so. The approach to analysing the interviews is divided into three parts. The first part was to obtain all objective and factual information. One of the core purposes of the interviews was to establish the policies and structures that

existed in each local authority area and how such structures wither operated on or influenced individual estates. Establishing this information is relatively unproblematic. Moreover, any differing accounts could be reconciled. The second part of the analysis focused on analysing the interviews with the tenant activists. Their aim here was to obtain a balanced assessment of the views of the activist views. The third part of the analysis focused on analysing the interviews with estate officers. Likewise the aim was to obtain a balanced assessment of views. The essential method of analysing the interviews was to undertake close readings of the texts of the transcribed interviews as well as close analysis of the interviews which were recorded with notes. In accordance with the idea of grounded theory, the contents of the interviews were categorised according to certain criteria (Blaxter et al, 1996). For this analysis, the categories used in the interview schedules were used to analyse the interviews. For both categories of respondent all the interviews were analysed on a local-authority basis and, where possible, on an estate basis. This allowed comparative analyses between local authorities.

V METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

As in most research there are limitations to the methodology employed which vitiate the work to various degrees. While the research methodology used in this thesis is believed to be sufficiently robust to sustain the analysis and conclusions that follow in later chapters there are, nonetheless, a number of obvious limitations. First, the work takes a sample of local authorities rather than surveying all authorities. This is partly for pragmatic reasons to do with time and resources but, more importantly, to do with a preference to examine the participation process in some depth. Nonetheless, by selecting some of the major urban local authorities the results, while not representative in any strict manner, do provide grounds for legitimate comparison and contrast.

Second, the work is primarily qualitative in nature and thus there is no attempt to try to quantify in any great detail the changes in local authority estate management practices. In other words, there is no attempt to undertake an evaluation of the detail of internal management changes in local authorities. This can be defended as the primary aim of the thesis is to examine the nature of the process of participation and in doing so the research mainly focuses on the interface between the local authority and the tenant. The thesis is

about the ability of tenants to have an influence in management rather than being about the detailed operational structures of each local authority.

The third limitation is that the research focuses on the relationship between the executives of the local authority and the representatives of the tenants. Thus, it ignores in the main the role of local-authority elected councillors. This can be defended on two grounds, first that the actual development of policy and its implementation is almost wholly an executive function of management and second, that in undertaking preliminary research it was discovered that most tenant groups explicitly excluded local councillors from the process. From the tenant side, the research focuses on the experience of tenant representatives and does not examine the experience of the tenant body as a whole. Again, this is considered justified on the grounds that the research was about the process of participation and negotiation between the tenant representatives and the estate managers. Admittedly, additional insights could have been gained by surveying the tenant population regarding their views of the estate management structures, the role of their representatives and their own views on volunteering and participation. However, this would have necessitated a substantial amount of additional work which in the context of this research was not considered feasible and would perhaps have given limited returns. Secondly, it does not seek the views and experiences of agencies other than local authorities. Although other agencies, such as Health Boards, have been involved in estate management structures, the primary relationship is between the tenants and the housing department of the local authority.

The final methodological qualification concerns the representativeness of the interviews. With respect to tenant activists there is an obvious problem as to how representative the respondents were of the entire tenant group. Many of the tenant activists interviewed were clearly the most active in the group and although efforts were made to interview activists who were not as involved, it is likely that there is a bias here. Thus to a degree some of the complexities of tenant views may be missing. There is less of a problem with respect to the estate officers as over 90% of the estate officers identified in the local authorities were interviewed.

VI CONCLUSION

Given the absence of any detailed research on the implementation of tenant participation, the overall strategy adopted in the research was to attempt to strike a balance between breath of coverage and in-depth understanding of individual estates. Brennan *et al* (2001), for example, have undertaken a detailed analysis of community participation with respect to the renewal of one estate in Dublin. While this is a valuable piece of research, the approach in this thesis was to gain an appreciation of policy across a number of authorities in order to compare and contrast approaches and then to examine a number of estates to compare the manner and level of implementation of participation. To this end, the primary research strategy was the undertaking of a series of in-depth semi-structured interviews with key participants, namely tenant activists and local authority estate officials. While there are clearly alternative research strategies that could have been adopted, this method is sufficiently robust to stand up to scrutiny.

CHAPTER 6

ESTATE MANAGEMENT AND TENANT PARTICIPATION POLICY IN IRELAND

'In most cases, however, it appeared that, even if housing management could not cure or prevent those causes of failure, it did have the potential to mitigate and ameliorate their worst effects, particularly if it drew in a creative way on the resources of both residents and other initiatives or agencies involved in the areas' (Fahey, 1999c, p.253).

'Enabling the participation of tenants in the management of local authority estates is a key aspect of achieving good practice in housing management. Evidence from the tenant participation schemes which have been established around the **country indicates that investment in this area will often pay for itself in decreased housing management costs**, by reducing vandalism, anti-social behaviour and rent-arrears, helping to improve the efficiency of estate services such as repair and maintenance and void management'. (Housing Unit, 2001a, p7, my emphasis).

I INTRODUCTION

The quotations above illustrate the emergence of the view that better estate management, and in particular resident involvement, can significantly ameliorate the problems on social housing estates. It must be said at the start, however, there is no published evidence in Ireland which demonstrates that tenant participation leads to decreased management costs. This chapter centres on an analysis of the development of policy on estate management and tenant participation over the past decade. Section II examines the various regeneration contexts, by which is meant the types of social inclusion policies and area-based policies of relevance to the regeneration of social housing estates. Section III analyses the critique of local-authority estate management policies and practice advanced by central government while section IV describes the development and specification of new policies on tenant participation in response to that critique. From the sparse literature available, Section V gives a brief overview of the implementation of regeneration policies in Ireland. Section VI concludes the chapter thus sets the context for the remaining chapters which examine the implementation of tenant participation policies in practice.

II REGENERATION CONTEXTS IN IRELAND

Since the mid to late 1980s, a series of policies have been developed and implemented which could broadly be categorised as social inclusion measures, some of which are directly relevant to the regeneration of social housing estates, others less so, though all of them

having an area basis to some extent. It is worth noting that there has been no logical progression from simple interventions to more complex or holistic actions. Policies have been developed from different pressures and at different times, often in an ad-hoc and un-coordinated manner. For example, the advent of a National Anti-Poverty Strategy is in part an outcome of new EU policies on social inclusion and the need to follow EU policy on exclusion and inclusion (Government of Ireland, 1997b). Environmental and housing renewal policies, on the other hand, have been driven by more nationally and locally specific issues (Norris, 2001a). Nonetheless, broadly there are direct parallels with the development and implementation of policy at EU level generally and the UK in particular. This should not be unexpected for a number of reasons. First, as was demonstrated in chapters 3 and 4, there are similarities across the EU regarding the nature of the problem of social housing estates and, in consequence, policy across the EU on social inclusion is increasingly similar. Second, the Irish local authority system is derived in the main from the British system and there has been a tendency to examine the UK system first for what might be termed policy-poaching. Table 6.1, using the social exclusion/inclusion framework summarises the variety of social inclusion measures taken since the 1980s. It should be borne in mind that any individual measure can have a variety of different objectives, thus impinging on and influencing economic, social, housing and governance spheres.

Table 6.1 Social Inclusion Policies in Ireland

<i>Axes of Inclusion</i>	<i>Social Inclusion Policies</i>
Economic and Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Area-based Partnership programmes (1990-) ▪ National Anti-Poverty Strategy (1997-) ▪ Local employment services (1995-)
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ EU URBAN Program (1997-) ▪ Local Drugs Task Forces (1997-) ▪ Community Development Programme (1990-)
Housing and Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Estate Renewal and refurbishment (1985-) ▪ Comprehensive redevelopment (1997-) ▪ RAPID [area renewal programme] (2001-)
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tenant participation and estate management policies (1992-) ▪ Integrated Services Programme (1997-2000) ▪ City and County Development Boards (2000-) ▪ Strategic Policy Committees (2000-) ▪ Community and Voluntary Sector Development (1990-)
Source: Author	

Economic and Market Interventions

Regarding economic and market inclusion, the primary policy development has been the establishment of area-based partnership programmes since the late 1980s (Craig, 1994; Walsh *et al.*, 1998). Emerging out of the EU Poverty 3 programme, these urban partnerships were organisations independent of local authorities, funded through the EU, whose primary purpose was the economic and social renewal of deprived urban areas (National Economic and Social Council, 1990). Such areas were defined in very broad spatial terms and were not necessarily co-terminous with social housing estates. As organisations dedicated to economic and social renewal, their main programmes have centred on labour-market initiatives, with an emphasis on generating employment, as well as developing training, retraining and education initiatives to reduce early school leaving and ease long-term unemployment (Craig, 1994). In the early 1990s, twelve pilot partnerships were developed under the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness*, a national economic agreement¹, and subsequently increased to a total of 38 partnership areas and programmes between 1994 and 1999 as part of the EU-funded Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development (OPLURD).

This area-based partnership programme, which continues in operation under the recent National Development Plan 2000-2006 (Government of Ireland, 1999), has been considered relatively successful and is often mentioned in EU documentation as a good example of how partnerships should work (Geddes, 2000; Turok, 2001). The partnerships comprise a combination of state representatives (local and central), community representatives and other social partners (business and trade unions). This tri-partite organisational structure, which operates independently of local government, is seen as innovative and successful. According to the recent review of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy, 34,000 people either set up their own business or were placed in employment between 1994 and 1999 under the area-based partnerships (Government of Ireland, 2001). Over two thirds of this group were long-term unemployed. Area partnerships are clearly a new form of local governance and, in by-passing local government structures, are the subject of some controversy. Although the primary response to such partnerships has been

¹ National economic agreements, in essence national wage agreements, have been in operation since 1987. They are agreements between the Government, Business, Trade Unions and more recently, the community and voluntary sector (Allen, 2000).

positive and generally uncritical, some critics have questioned not only their democratic credentials but also their effectiveness (O' Cinneide, 1999; Duggan, 1999). Partnership and participation, have become the dominant discourse in social policy and have, according to some analysts, incorporated dissent and criticism to such an extent that alternative critical thinking and practice is almost disabled (Loughry, 2002).

Social Inclusion Interventions

On the axes of social inclusion, the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS), which is a ten year strategy adopted in 1997, sets out principally to reduce what is termed 'consistent poverty', which is defined as those who are below 50%-60% of average household income and experiencing enforced basic deprivation (Government of Ireland, 1997b). Given the rapid economic growth in Ireland since the mid 1990s, the initial targets have already been met and the target now is to reduce consistent poverty to below 5% of the population by 2004. Naturally, from the point of view of the Government, the reduction in poverty is seen as a significant success. However, such success is dependent on a consensus political view of the adequacy of income, effectively ignoring the conceptually and politically different issue of equality and inequality (Cantillon et al 2001). The National Anti-Poverty Strategy, aside from its principal aim of reducing poverty as defined above, also addresses poverty across different themes: income adequacy; unemployment; educational disadvantage; rural poverty and disadvantaged urban areas. The NAPS is thus now the overall policy framework for reducing social exclusion and promoting inclusion. It therefore sets out policy and targets for every relevant policy initiative. With regard to disadvantaged urban areas, the National Anti-Poverty Strategy states:

'Public policy has increasingly recognised that there are **spatial concentrations** of unemployment, poverty and exclusion where individuals, families and communities suffer a form of **cumulative disadvantage**. Communities in these areas tend to have high concentrations of low-income families – particularly the long-term unemployed and lone parents. They tend to live in a **poor physical environment** as local authority tenants, with **poor infrastructure and service provision** and to **experience isolation** from the wider social and economic network. Such areas often have high levels of crime, anti-social behaviour, vandalism and drug misuse. Persistent intergenerational educational disadvantage contributes to a cycle of low education levels, illiteracy and poor employment and income prospects. (Government of Ireland, 2001, p71, my emphases).

This succinct statement on area-based or place poverty encapsulates official thinking regarding the nature of what is seen as a key aspect of poverty, namely its spatial

expression. Areas with high concentrations of poverty and associated problems are seen as suffering from cumulative disadvantage, transmitted intergenerationally, have a poor environment, infrastructure and services and are isolated from the networks and norms of the rest of society. This description of poverty neighbourhoods in Ireland hits all of the key themes and issues associated with the social exclusion and social cohesion literature. As the umbrella policy for all social inclusion measures, almost all of the measures in Table 6.1 are now within the remit of NAPS. Thus, there is no specific NAPS policy for dealing with disadvantaged urban areas outside of those already listed.

Housing and Environment Interventions

With regard to inclusion policies on the axes of housing and the environment, there are a number of initiatives which, apart from estate management and tenant participation, are of direct relevance. The URBAN initiative, which is directly funded through the EU, funds a mix of training, educational and physical programmes in a number of pilot areas. This project operated from 1994 to 1999 in four areas in Ireland, while a new form of the initiative, URBAN II, is now in operation in just one area (Ballyfermot, Dublin) for the period 2000-2006. In the past, the URBAN initiative has provided some funding for training in estate management and tenant training/participation. In addition, as part of the *National Development Plan*, the Government has started the RAPID (Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development) programme, which aims to target investment at the 25 most disadvantaged urban areas across the country. This programme is broad in scope, and aims at social, physical and economic renewal, as well as integrated service delivery (www.pobail.ie/en/RAPIDandCLR).

Regarding specific housing programmes, national policies have been in place for a number of years. Under the Remedial Works Scheme, in operation since 1985, central government has funded physical and environmental refurbishment of run-down local authority estates (Norris, 2001a) and this is examined in more detail later in this chapter. The remedial works scheme to enable local authorities to improve their existing stock, was amended in 1989 to ensure that local authorities which received such funds involved tenants to a much greater extent in specifying the housing improvements needed. The explicit premise was that tenant involvement in refurbishment resulted in sustainable improvements to estates.

In more recent years there has been funding for more comprehensive redevelopment (demolition and redevelopment) of certain local authority estates. To date this has focused on Dublin, with the total redevelopment of the Ballymun high-rise complex in North Dublin to be completed by 2006 (Prichard, 2000). Funding is also committed for the redevelopment of other flats complexes in the inner area of Dublin, Fatima Mansions, St. Theresa's Gardens and St. Michaels estate, being prominent examples (Dublin Corporation, 2000, 2001). This emphasis on physical renewal is, in theory at least, to be complemented by estate-based strategies to ensure the sustainability of the investment (Department of the Environment and Local Government, 1998b).

Governance Interventions

Closely linked with the housing and environment measures are those which are related to governance. In line with the trend across the EU, most inclusion type measures and policies are to be implemented through partnership arrangements with service users and other relevant agencies. Regarding housing, tenant participation is, again in theory, supposed to be at the core of housing and estate management. Central government has insisted in policy developments that local authorities develop an equal partnership with their tenants in managing estates, a policy development which is examined in detail later in this chapter.

Local Governance

Broadening out from housing, there is increased emphasis on delivering services (local government; welfare or voluntary) in a more co-ordinated and integrated manner. To this end, local government is undergoing a major transformation which emphasises the need for better and more efficient service delivery, a better customer focus and enhanced democracy (Government of Ireland, 1996). This programme, called *Better Local Government*, also seeks to integrate the wide variety of local development and voluntary agencies into a more coherent and less fractured service. A pilot programme, called the *Integrated Services Process*, which sought to co-ordinate local service delivery in four pilot areas, is to be incorporated into the work of the new City and County Development Boards which have only been established since 2000. Every local authority now has one of these Boards which are developing integrated local plans which covers economic, social, cultural and physical development.

This national framework has enabled a radical restructuring of governance at a local level, which has witnessed a changing landscape with a bearing on participatory policy processes. The traditional local government system in Ireland, compared to other European states, is relatively weak with a more limited range of functions and powers. The principal services provided by the local authorities include: housing and building; road transportation and safety; water supply and sewerage; planning; environmental protection and recreation and amenities. The weaknesses of local government have been well documented and centre on the limited range of functions provided compared with other EU states, the fiscal dependency on central government in the absence of a local tax base, the limited role for elected representatives, an insular bureaucratic culture, with little orientation towards the general public or community groups and a lack of a performance culture (Redmond and Walker, 1995; O'Connell, 1999).

Within traditional local government structures, citizen participation has been limited, and has been primarily through the planning process with statutory provisions for public involvement. However, the local government has been significantly altered through the emergence of local partnerships in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Partnerships have become widely established as a delivery mechanism for some aspects of local development policy. By the end of the 1990s, Walsh (1999) estimated that there were approximately 100 officially recognised local partnerships in operation. However, during the mid-1990s a number of tensions emerged concerning the relationship of local development partnerships and local government. The issue of citizen participation in local government, the relationship between local government and local development partnerships, and the lack of coordination of local development activities, has led Government to introduce a number of measures to address these concerns. The commitment for reform of local government was set out by the Department of the Environment and Local Government produced White Paper, *'Better Local Government, A Programme for Change'* (1996). A core aim of this report is to enhance local democracy ensuring that local communities and their representatives have a real say in the delivery of the full range of public services locally; that new forms of participation by local communities in the decision-making processes of local councils are facilitated; and that the role of councillors in running local councils is strengthened.

The reform measures included the establishment of Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) within the local-authority system, mirroring the major functions of local government. The aim of the SPCs is to assist local authorities in the formulation, development and review of policy relating to strategic statutory functions. The committees are chaired by elected members, however, a minimum of one third of their membership must be drawn from sectors relevant to the SPC's work, such as public sector agencies, business, Trade Unions and the voluntary/community sector. The Better Local Government Programme was further enhanced with the establishment of County or City Development Boards (CDBs). These boards are comprised of a partnership of local government, local development bodies (Area-based Partnership Companies, ADM-supported community groups, County/City Enterprise Boards, and LEADER Groups), the social partners including the community and voluntary sector, and representatives of relevant State Agencies at local level. The primary function of the CDBs is to develop and implement a strategy for economic, social and cultural development, and will operate autonomously but under the local government umbrella.

Voluntarism, Active Citizenship and Participatory Democracy

In addition to the changes in local government and local governance, the Government issued a White Paper on community and voluntary sector involvement in 2000 which emphasised the concept of active citizenship (Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, 2000). The voluntary and community sector in Ireland has a long history. In general, the sector has had a very loose relationship with the state and the state's policy towards voluntarism has been underdeveloped (Powell, and Guerin, 1997; National committee on Volunteering, 2002; O' Sullivan, 1998b). However, a Green Paper on the relationship between the voluntary sector and the state was published in 1997 and this was followed by a white paper in 2000 (Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, 2000). These papers, especially the White paper, set out a fundamental philosophy with respect to voluntarism, active citizenship and participatory democracy. In the White Paper the Government recognises that the Community and Voluntary sector plays a crucial role in a mature democratic society, quite separate to and independent of the institutions of Government. The Community and Voluntary sector has a special role and potential to:

1. Help create a vibrant civil and active society in which individuals are encouraged and enabled to participate fully. This is an essential component of a mature democracy;
2. Respond to pressing social needs quickly, directly and effectively;
3. Pioneer new approaches to service provision and local and community development;
4. Improve the effectiveness of services through feed-back and monitoring of services by consumers and users;
5. Provide opportunities for volunteers to participate and develop skills;
6. Create employment opportunities through the provision of services and through the activities of community development projects, thus contributing to community infrastructure;
7. Foster self-help and enable people to become active participants in shaping their future;
8. Identify needs and appropriate responses tailored to the specific needs of local communities and neighbourhoods and specific communities of interests;
9. Offer new solutions where conventional approaches have failed;
10. Enable people who are excluded to become involved in the regeneration process in their own communities and at a wider societal level.

The White Paper has a number of core statements which support the development of a more participatory democracy and the promotions of active citizenship. Some of these statements are so fundamental to this work that they are worth quoting at length. One of the threads running through the paper concerns the promotion of active citizenship:

'Democracy is not just about getting a day out to vote at elections every few years. It is also about participating in society and making one's own personal contribution to social life, to the development of local communities, or to the welfare of society as a whole or particular disadvantaged groups within it ' (Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, 2000, p5).

The following quotation indicates an explicit commitment to partnership modes of governance and a direct inference that the state cannot be responsible for all services.

A strong democracy enhances and protects the capacity of citizens to participate. In a strong democracy people regard the State, not as the answer to every problem, but as just one player among others. All the others - the private Sector, trade unions, religious organisations, nongovernmental organisations, sporting organisations, **local community and residents' associations** – play a pivotal role in democratic life and in continued economic and social progress (Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, 2000, p9, my emphasis).

This commitment to active citizenship is also explicitly linked to the pursuit of a more pluralist society and to greater decentralisation and participative structures.

In the Government's vision of society, the ability of the Community and Voluntary sector to provide channels for the active involvement and participation of citizens is fundamental. An active Community and Voluntary sector contributes to a democratic, pluralist society,

provides opportunities for the development of decentralized and participative structures and fosters a climate in which the quality of life can be enhanced for all. (9-10)

The mechanism or method of achieving this goal of a more participative society is the encouragement of active citizenship through greater voluntarism. More generally, as seen in the next quotation, there is a commitment to a more directly participatory democracy which will lead in theory to more social cohesion.

Active citizenship refers to the active role of people, communities and voluntary organisations in decision-making which directly affects them. This extends the concept of formal citizenship and democratic society from one of basic civil, political and social and economic rights to one of direct democratic participation and responsibility. In this sense, citizenship is a political activity which gives citizens the opportunity to shape the society in which they live. Groups are given the opportunity to become involved in identifying local needs and developing strategies to meet these needs. Active citizenship is also about the strengthening of Community and Voluntary organisations. In modern society this process is particularly important in combating the potentially negative effects arising from centralisation of both economic and political decision-making, and the consequent alienation of significant numbers of people, such as the long-term unemployed (Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, 2000, p65).

Thus there is a need to support communities and in particular to support disadvantaged communities which may lack the necessary capacities and infrastructure to contribute adequately.

There is need to support and strengthen informal neighbourhood networks and community organisations which help people not only to cope effectively with everyday life situations, such as looking after children and the elderly, coping with bereavement and illness, or the debilitating effects of unemployment and rural poverty, but also to participate in developing and implementing solutions to social and economic issues. Disadvantaged communities need, however, to be resourced to build on the infrastructure of informal neighbourhood networks and local organisations (Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, 2000, p66).

This new participatory form of governance should lead, it is clear from the next quotation, to greater citizen involvement in specifying policy and that such participation should lead to successful outcomes.

Participation in this context can be defined as an exchange between citizens and government, between those who make policy and people affected by policy choices. Participation and dialogue allow greater public involvement in governmental action. To be meaningful, participation **should lead to more successful outcomes**. Its precise form is shaped by the problem at hand. However, such participation must be balanced against the democratic base of elected governments, since no group other than elected representatives has a mandate to speak for the whole of society. Participation is a way of sharing responsibility for policy choices and hence represents a wider and more participatory democracy. While retaining ultimate responsibility for decision-making with elected representatives, participation is essential in the achievement of a wider consensus (Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, 2000, p91, my emphasis).

In order to operationalise this programme, the Government commitment to fostering and supporting volunteering. There are a number of specific comments on the role of voluntary activity in social housing estates and in working class areas.

Local groups have the local knowledge on which to base plans and to prioritise actions. **The participation of tenant groups in local authority estate management**, emergence of local home work clubs and out-of-school services and neighbourhood responses to drug use and drug dealing (through the local Drug Task Forces), are examples of the increasing recognition by the State of the merit of bottom-up responses (Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, 2000, p63).

It is recognised that this process of participatory democracy and voluntarism has already begun in large social housing estates.

The process of providing a voice for all our people poses challenges both to the State and to the Community and Voluntary sector. The process of responding to the challenges has begun, particularly in **large urban working class neighbourhoods**, but also in rural areas and small towns (Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, 2000, p64, my emphasis).

Indeed, policy development with regard to tenant participation has been underway since long before the publication of the White Paper and the next section explores the development of policy on estate management and tenant participation.

III GENESIS OF TENANT PARTICIPATION POLICIES

By the late 1980s, the residualisation of the local-authority housing sector had been effectively established. High levels of sales to tenants, combined with low levels of house building and a historical neglect of management and maintenance, had resulted in a sector that had been transformed rapidly into a welfare housing sector. Against this background, a series of government policy initiatives on social housing were developed. It is the proposition of this thesis that these policy initiatives were a reaction to the residualisation of the sector and, more particularly, the perceived problems that have been generated by the creation of a welfare housing sector. While this was never made explicit by central government, the policy themes that emerged in the 1990s have mainly concerned the control and management of the sector. The principal policy changes can be summarised as follows: a commitment to increasing the supply of new housing for those in housing need through local-authority direct provision and through the voluntary sector; a commitment to improving the physical condition of the existing stock, ranging from full-scale refurbishment of entire estates to specific programmes such as window replacement

in old flats complexes; a commitment to improving access to homeownership to tenants, through shared ownership schemes and mortgage allowance and a commitment to improving the quality of service, through improved management and customer care (Department of the Environment, 1991, 1995). These policy changes were announced in two major documents, *A Plan for Social Housing* (1991) and *Social Housing: The Way Forward* (1995). Although there was a policy proposal to increase social housing supply, in reality this merely meant the enlargement of the voluntary sector as a contributor to social housing provision, but no significant increase in overall provision. The main policies of relevance to this research have been the refurbishment and renewal of estates and the improvement of the housing service through better management and tenant participation. In a critical statement of policy in the *Plan for Social Housing* (1991) local authorities were directed to 'improve their existing management and maintenance procedures and adopt a more devolved approach towards the running of their estates' (Department of the Environment, 1991, p13). Furthermore, '.. the authorities have been requested to develop more localised management systems involving increased tenant responsibility and participation. Good management practice encourages tenant involvement and helps counteract tenant alienation' (Department of the Environment, 1991, p13). This is the first statement of policy which quite strongly and clearly directs local authorities to develop estate management and tenant participation policies. It pointed to a forthcoming Housing Act which would enable devolvement of housing management functions. For the remainder of the 1990s and up to the present, the development and implementation of policy on estate management and tenant participation has been a defining feature of social housing policy.

One of the principal contexts for the housing and estate management policies described above has been the emergence of what has been termed across the OECD area as 'new public sector management' (Hardiman and Mulreany, 1991; Boyle, 1998, 2000). In the 1990s there have been attempts to introduce reforms into the ways in which central and local governments operate (Government of Ireland, 1996; Department of the Environment, 1996a, 1996c). First, public sector organizations have been pushed to become more economic, efficient and effective in their operations. The attempt has been to instil some kind of market philosophy and practice into central and local government. Secondly, and linked to the first policy thrust, public-sector organisations have been urged

to become much more customer focused. Interestingly, local authority housing was the first of any public services to be subject to these policy changes. The impetus for changes in public sector-management has, in the Irish case, come almost entirely from central government. The intention was to compel local authorities to become more economic, efficient, and effective in their operations.

Critique of Local Authority Estate Management Practice

This development of policy on estate management and tenant participation was accompanied by a detailed critique of local authority policy and practice. The National Economic and Social Council (1988) was one of the first to criticise local authority landlordism. In what was a broad analysis of housing policy, they argued that local authorities had a deeply ingrained culture of paternalism towards tenants, that management should become much more decentralised and that tenants should have greater involvement in the running of their estates. In specifying policy changes in estate management, the NESC (1988, p263) recommended:

‘Concentrating on management – taking account of design, and emphasis on the delivery of a more efficient and prompt service through accessible, locally based managers and repairs staff, and resident caretakers; prompt, locally decided (and often locally allocated) reletting of vacant stock; improvements and minor capital works inside and outside the houses planned in close consultation with the tenants; prompt, personal follow-up of neighbour disputes, rent arrears, breakages etc. – and more generally a policy of involving local people in every way possible and supporting their efforts.’

Given that this was written in 1988, it was an accurate diagnosis of the problem as well as pointing towards most of the policy recommendations that were to follow in the 1990s. The emphasis on a good service and tenant involvement recurs through the 1990s and continues to the present. A decade later, O’Connell (1998, p42) reiterated the view of the NESC:

‘One of the promises of estate management is that of giving tenants a say in how estates are run and how the housing service is delivered. By any criteria this is a sign of progress from the **virtual serfdom** which prevailed in the past when the concerns of tenants were completely ignored or were mediated through a local political system based on clientelism whereby the tenant was completely dependent on the local representative’ (my emphasis).

These quotations cut to the heart of the critique of how housing management was practiced. It focuses on the poor record of local authority landlords and the effective neglect of housing and estate management in general and tenants in particular. This points

to a critique of local authorities as organisations. The second element focuses on a critique of the local political system, with the implication that tenants were effectively excluded from proper local representation, a critique of the traditional representative form of local government. As policies were developed to overcome the problems identified, they focused predominantly on efforts to change local authorities as organisations and to try to effect participation of tenants as users of a service through interaction with the service provider. This was seen as by-passing the local political representatives and inducing a form of participatory democracy.

This critique found official expression in the passing of the Housing Act, 1992, which required each local authority to develop a *housing management plan* for its jurisdiction (Government of Ireland, 1992). In order to assist local authorities in preparing such a plan, the Department of the Environment (1993) issued a *Memorandum on the Preparation of A Statement of Policy on Housing Management*. Although this has a seemingly innocuous title, it in fact contained a devastating critique of local authority housing management policies and practices (Redmond and Walker, 1995). The Department considered the following areas to be major weaknesses of local authorities: there was little medium or long term planning; housing and estate management was remote from tenants and administratively oriented rather than dealing with the well-being of estates; tenant participation was inadequate; management activity was uncoordinated; local authorities did not demonstrate policies which sought value for money; and there was an over reliance on centrally-funded refurbishment schemes and maintenance was response dominated.

The nature and implications of the central government critique were profound for local authorities. It was nothing less than a call to change fundamentally the housing management service. At its core, it comprised two key changes. First, local authorities were required to improve radically their efficiency and effectiveness as organisations in the delivery of their service. Indeed, for the first time, they were being required to specify what service they actually provided. Second, there was a demand that the service they provide be more responsive to tenants either through the development of local offices, estate-focused management or tenant involvement. This virtually amounted to a shock tactic by the Department of the Environment to shake up local authorities.

The genesis of the Department of the Environment critique arose in part because of the existence of 'problem estates' found across the country. Indeed, it is from these estates that some of the pressure for changes in housing management originated. In some of the worst problem areas in Dublin, such as the Ballymun high-rise complex and Darndale, tenants began organising effectively in the early and mid 1980s, putting pressure on the local authority to devise policies for estate renewal (Kelleher and Whelan, 1992). In so doing, these tenants' organisations insisted that they should have a key role in any plans for renewal. While renewal policies for problem estates were implemented from the mid 1980s, local authorities were not the prime movers in establishing such policies. Redevelopment and refurbishment of Ballymun and Darndale respectively, two of Dublin's worst problem estates in the past, is continuing, and tenants' groups are having a significant role in determining the kinds of changes being made. An allied criticism of the local authorities related to their poor record on estate maintenance, the Department of the Environment claiming that there was undue reliance on the centrally-funded Remedial Works Scheme for estate renewal, which is seen as testimony to poor management in the past. Another core criticism of housing management refers to the lack of direct estate management by local authorities; housing management was viewed as remote from tenants and overly concerned with the administration rather than the well-being of estates. Moreover, the participation of tenants in running estates was viewed as inadequate and insufficiently encouraged.

However, another of the central reasons for the concern of central government related to value for money, the memorandum presenting an analysis of housing management and maintenance expenditure from 1982-1991 (see Table 6.2). In the years from 1982-1991, annual expenditure on management and maintenance increased by 54 per cent, from £54.3m to £82.18m. This increase in expenditure occurred at a time when the number of dwellings under management decreased by 22 per cent.

Table 6.2 Local Authority Housing Expenditure and Revenue Figures 1971 -2001

	Receipts			Expenditure							Total Income less total expenditure £m
	Rents £m	Net proceeds of sales £m	Misc. £m	Total Income £m	Maintenance £m	Other Management £m	Total Expenditure £m	No of dwellings occupied	average expenditure dwelling £		
1971	6.1	1.3	0.932	8.3	3.8	2.6	6.5	106000	61	1.8	
1972	7.9	1.4	0.332	9.7	4.5	2.5	7.1	106000	67	2.5	
1973	7.5	1.9	0.493	9.9	4.9	3.7	8.7	107000	82	1.1	
1974	5.4	1.7	0.28	7.4	4.8	3.2	8.1	108000	76	-0.6	
1975	8.3	3.8	0.545	12.7	9.4	6.7	16.2	105000	155	-3.5	
1976	8.8	6.4	0.95	16.1	9.9	7.5	17.4	101000	173	-1.3	
1977	12.3	6.2	0.3	18.8	10.0	7.8	17.9	99000	181	0.93	
1978	13.8	6.6	0.35	20.8	12.4	9.7	22.1	101196	219	-1.3	
1979	16.3	5.8	0.2	22.3	16.7	10.1	29.9	102922	291	-7.5	
1980	21.2	6.7	0.2	28.1	20.7	16.2	37	103272	358	-8.8	
1981	24.2	7.7	2.77	34.7	25.7	20.2	45.9	104810	438	-11.1	
1982	30.5	8.7	3.3	42.5	27.0	26.2	53.3	107103	498	-10.8	
1983	31.9	11.4	3.16	46.5	29.9	31.3	61.3	108110	567	-14.8	
1984	38.2	10.5	4.22	53	32.9	26.5	59.4	112800	527	-6.4	
1985	41.2	10.8	4.35	56.4	35.8	28.4	64.3	114364	562	-7.8	
1986	38.6	10.9	5.03	54.5	38.2	32.6	70.9	118951	597	-16.3	
1987	45.4	10.3	3.18	59	36.0	30.1	66.1	120241	550	-7.1	
1988	51.9	12.3	4.28	68.5	32.6	33.1	65.8	116270	566	2.6	
1989	46.9	20.2	4.05	71.2	30.9	33.4	64.3	98497	653	6.8	
1990	45.4	20.0	1.8	67.3	33.9	33.3	67.2	94399	713	0.05	
1991	47.5	22.6	1.91	72.0	35.4	46.6	82.1	93128	882	-10.1	
1992	49.1	23.5	5.93	78.6	38.8	48.9	87.6	93283	940	-9.0	
1993	52.1	21.3	6.31	79.8	39.6	48.5	88.0	93660	940	-8.2	
1994	58.1	21.8	8.16	88.1	41.7	50.7	92.4	95735	966	-4.3	
1995	63.7	22.6	8.6	94.9	43.7	56.1	99.9	97219	1028	-4.9	
1996	68.1	20.1	9.11	97.4	46.7	58.7	105.4	98394	1071	-7.9	
1997	74.7	14.3	5.27	94.3	51	57.5	108.5	98862	1097	-14.1	
1998	79.9	12.7	8.7	101.3	55.3	69.5	124.8	99259	1257	-23.4	
1999	86.3	0	8.8	95.1	60.5	74.3	134.8	99163	1359	-39.6	
2000	97.7	0	12.12	109.8	66.0	78.9	144.9	99683	1454	-35.1	
2001	111.5	0.00	8.85	120.4	74.8	85.1	160.0	102789	1557	-39.6	

Source: Department of the Environment (various) *Annual Bulletins of Housing Statistics*

Table 6.2 examines the trends in housing management and maintenance costs since the publication of the memorandum. It reveals a steady rise in overall expenditure costs from £87m to £145m over the period, an increase of 66%. While income also increased, from £78m to just £109m, this represented an increase of only 40%. While rental income has increased steadily, the income from house sales has decreased steadily, such that the overall

deficit between income and expenditure has increased from £9m to £39m in 1999. The average cost of management and maintenance per dwelling has also risen, from £939 in 1992 to £1,454 in 2000, an increase of 54%. This may reflect in large part the greater attention to housing and estate management over the decade, although there is no analysis available of the composition of these figures.

Table 6.3 shows the costs of management and maintenance per dwelling in twelve of the largest local authorities. The substantial divergences in costs between different authorities was also a cause of concern for the central government. However, the concern of central government went beyond a narrow concern with value for money. The Department of the Environment stated that:

'serious questions arise about the systems and procedures being operated, their effectiveness in conserving the housing stock, the value for money being obtained, the level of service being provided to tenants, and so on' (Department of the Environment, 1993, p6).

However, it must be noted that while there was clear evidence presented of rising management and maintenance costs, and evidence of disparities in costs between local authorities, there was no attempt by central government to explain these trends. The rising costs are interpreted as *de facto* evidence of local authority inefficiency. The figures on income, which encompasses rent receipts, net proceeds of housing sales and other miscellaneous items, were not disaggregated or explained. The differential rent system, which sets rents in relation to household income, is clearly affected by the changing nature of the tenant population, but this was not factored into the analysis. On the expenditure side, no attempt was made to account for differences in the location or age of the housing stock of each local authority or to account for the very different management issues that arose between urban rather than rural authorities. This absence of detailed analysis reveals in part the political nature of the attack on local authorities, and a genuine belief current in central government that the inefficiencies of local authorities were so glaring and obvious that further analysis was not required. This detailed analysis has not been undertaken to date.

Table 6.3 Housing Management and Maintenance Costs by Local Authority, 1991

Local authority	Number of units	Management costs per unit (£)	Maintenance costs per unit (£)	Total costs per unit (£)
Dublin Corporation	32,600	715	546	1261
Cork Corporation	7,406	315	415	730
Dun Laoghaire - Rathdown Borough	3,449	253	444	698
Limerick Corporation	3,209	125	374	499
Donegal County Council	2,574	200	84	284
South Dublin County Council	2,741	788	331	1110
Waterford Corporation	2,245	137	300	437
Fingal County Council	1,611	788	331	1110
Galway County Council	1,606	60	140	200
Wexford County Council	1,214	563	255	818
Kilkenny County Council	1,099	451	348	799

Source: Department of the Environment, 1993, pp21-22.

Overall, the Department of the Environment argued that resources were not being put to best use, that the stock was not being adequately managed, that tenants were often dissatisfied and alienated and that dwellings were being allowed to become rundown through poor maintenance. It concluded that:

'housing authorities need to identify deficiencies in their management systems, to develop objectives and strategies for improvement of these systems and to decide on specific proposals for providing services in an effective, efficient and economical way' (Department of the Environment, 1993, p7).

How then were these glaring deficiencies to be remedied?

IV POLICY PRESCRIPTIONS FOR ESTATE MANAGEMENT AND TENANT PARTICIPATION

Despite the lack of empirical analysis of the supposed failings of the local authority housing management function, central government was not shy in forwarding preferred solutions. Section 9 of the 1992 Housing Act (Government Ireland, 1992) obliged local authorities to prepare a 'Statement of Policy' regarding their housing management role. Following the legislation, a detailed Memorandum was issued to authorities which not only contained the critique described above, but also outlined government requirements for the 'Statement of Policy' (Department of the Environment, 1993). The Department had clear views on each of these areas and these are summarised below. Authorities were required to set management objectives, describe strategies, identify specific measures for achieving objectives and arrangements to monitor and assess performance against targets. Specific areas requiring authorities intentions included: the overall housing management structure,

tenant involvement, dwelling maintenance, provision of general estate services, lettings and rents.

It advocated estate-focused or estate-based management and recommended that authorities examine the possibility of creating local offices which would have responsibility for a range of landlord services. To achieve this, it was suggested that authorities examine the case for training their staff. Importantly, it also strongly favoured tenant involvement in housing management, clearly indicating that this might involve the devolution of some, or all, management functions to tenants in Estate Management Boards. The Department recommended a planned rather than response based approach to housing maintenance which would be also cost effective and there was a general exhortation to authorities to improve public lighting, maintenance of common areas, open areas and landscaping and to effect policies which reduce opportunities for crime and vandalism. One of the prime concerns of the Department was with respect to lettings in its role in counteracting social segregation in housing and improving social mix. They thus hoped to slow down the creation of socially deprived estates and reduce the high turnover of tenancies. Authorities are also told to improve transfer arrangements and the speed of re-letting thus avoiding problems of voids. Finally, local authorities were requested to give consideration to policy on rent setting, rent arrears and rent collection methods. The implementation of these recommendations would involve a fundamental transformation of the ways in which local authorities manage their housing stock.

Focusing more specifically on the policy on tenant participation, the rationale for tenant involvement is encapsulated in the following two quotations, which emphasise the need to deliver a service that tenants demand on the basis that the user (client) is best positioned to determine demand and that this will in turn lead to an improved service from the service provider.

‘Greater involvement of tenants in the running of their estates is essential to ensure the delivery of the type and quality of housing services which tenants want. Tenants know better than anybody else, the strengths, weaknesses and problems of their estate. The involvement of tenants can lead to improvements in the standard of an estate. can help to prevent the deterioration of an estate into a problem one, and can assist in “turning around” a problem estate.’Persuading tenants that they have an important role to play and that their views count is not a quick or easy task. Tenants will have strongly held, and sometimes divided, views on the problems of their estates and how these should be tackled. Notwithstanding the difficulties, it is clear that a more effective,

responsive and acceptable housing service can be provided by a housing authority where tenants play a constructive role and are active participants in the running of their estate'. (Department of the Environment, 1993, p12)

The memorandum acknowledged that there were different types of tenant involvement, ranging from informal contacts, the provision of basic information, to partial or full delegation of authority and responsibility to formally constituted tenant groups.

'Different levels and types of involvement by tenants are possible. These include the most basic of informal meetings with tenants, more structured processes for consultation with tenants, and the more highly formalised arrangements under which a legally constituted grouping of tenants takes over specified management functions of the housing authority. It appears likely that the promotion of tenant involvement in any estate will involve starting at the informal stage and moving, as quickly as possible, to more advanced forms of tenant participation which may ultimately take the form of estate management committees or boards representative of the tenants and the housing authority tenant management co-operatives etc'. In moving towards putting tenant involvement on a more structured footing, it is important that housing authorities respond positively to, and build on, any existing organised tenant groups or, where these do not exist, actively promote such groupings. Where there are informal groupings of tenants who aspire to move on to more formal arrangements for involvement in the management of their estates, it is imperative that the housing authority encourage and facilitate these developments within the shortest possible timescale. (Department of the Environment, 1993, p12)

The 1992 Housing Act contains specific provision for delegation of authority to a tenant group, although this has not to date been used by any tenant group. The Memorandum concludes:

'It is evident that the simple provision of housing to good physical and space standards is insufficient to ensure that neighbourhoods and communities thrive as they should. Effective management of housing estates – to ensure that tenants' views are reflected, repairs are done, rents are collected, tenancy problems are dealt with, open spaces are kept clean and attractive etc. – is just as important as the standards to which the housing is built. ...Generally the role given to tenants in the running of estates has been minimal. ...Tenant consultation and participation in the running of their estates is now regarded as crucial to securing the best return from scarce resources available, to safeguarding the investment in the provision and improvement of the housing and to contributing to the quality of life in estates. **Housing which is well managed with the real and active participation of its tenants is the surest way of defeating the many social problems and anti-social behaviour which can beset housing estates that are poorly managed and lacking a stable community spirit'** (Department of the Environment, 1993, p19, my emphasis).

This final quotation from the Memorandum points to two key rationales for tenant participation. The first is the desire to improve the quality of life on estates, principally through the improvement of the housing management service, a key mechanism of which

is the establishment of user-participation mechanisms (tenant participation) to specify the changes that are to be sought. The criticism implied here is that quality of life on certain estates is poor, that the housing management service is poor and that user participation is crucial in improving the service. Linked to this is the second rationale, the need to sustain any improvements and achieve value for money in any investments. The experience of wasted regeneration money in Fatima Mansions, for example, clearly focused the attention of government on sustaining any investments (Norris, 2001a). The *Plan for Social Housing* and the *Memorandum* expressed central government's views on how local authorities should progress in terms of housing and estate management and represented not just the desire for change in management style but for a fundamental change in policy and practice. The concluding statement of the Department of Environment's review of housing management sums up the urgency of the need for change:

'Clearly, the approach of the past will not suffice for the future and there is an obligation on all local authorities to radically examine their whole approach to housing management. They must identify the deficiencies in their housing management systems, develop objectives and policies for the improvement of these systems and implement them' (Department of the Environment, 1993, p19).

The poor standard of the housing management plans produced by the local authorities led to the government's establishing a number of groups to develop best practice in housing management (Redmond and Walker, 1995). The Department of the Environment formed a *Housing Management Group* whose task was to formulate best practice guidelines for local authority housing departments. Two reports were produced which had detailed recommendations on various aspects of housing management (Department of the Environment, 1996b, 1998b). The first key proposal was that local authorities reorganise their housing management service into a single housing department, rather than have it spread across a number of different departments. Such a change would mean responsibility for core housing services such as rents, repairs and estate management coming under a single management structure. The second proposal related to the need to adopt a performance management system which would allow proper monitoring and corrective action to be taken if needed. Moreover, a common performance indicator regime across all local authorities would allow benchmarking against other local authorities. However, the second report concluded that, as of 1998, there was no systematic use of performance indicators in Irish local authorities, partly because of serious deficiencies with respect to information systems but probably also because of a resistance to performance

monitoring. The third key issue was the need to develop properly trained and professional housing managers. This work is now being undertaken in part by a newly created (1999) Housing Unit which is state-funded. The fourth emphasis was on estate-focused management. Local authorities were encouraged to designate individual housing officers to specific estates or groups of estates and to establish local estate offices should be set up where possible, mainly on larger estates. In addition, they were encouraged to undertake detailed assessments of the needs of estates in conjunction with tenants. The final emphasis was on the need for tenant participation. Local authorities were required to produce a detailed strategy regarding tenant participation and to demonstrate how this had been negotiated with tenants. Since 1999, the remit for developing these best practice guidelines has fallen to the Housing Unit. This Unit has, to date, produced best practice guidelines on rent assessment and on repair and maintenance, a considerable feat given the limited resources devoted to it, having just one housing professional on its staff (Housing Unit, 2000, 2001a, 2001b). More recently, the National Economic and Social Forum (2000), which advises government on social policy matters, has produced a report on social housing which emphasises the need for local authorities to engage in strategic planning and to promote estate management and tenant participation.

Table 6.4 summarises some of the key proposals of the Housing Management Group as they pertain to estate management and tenant participation. A key proposal was to create a comprehensive housing section. The essential thrust was to ensure that local authorities undertook organisational reform internally in order to deliver improved housing services. Where the size of an authority did not permit a single housing section or department, it was recommended that the housing section negotiate service agreements with other sections of the local authority in order to ensure delivery of services to estates. Moreover, and importantly, there was a clear recommendation to establish agreements with other relevant agencies such as Health Boards, the police, education authorities, and development agencies. These core recommendations regarding internal re-organisation and inter-agency co-ordination and co-operation should be borne in mind when examining the actual implementation of estate management and tenant participation.

Table 6.4 Estate Management Proposals

Comprehensive Housing Sections

- In many authorities the housing service is spread across a number of different sections and departments. The report recommends the creation of a comprehensive housing section where possible.
- This would entail responsibility for core housing services such as rents; repairs; estate management; under a single management structure but not necessarily in the same physical location.
- Where this is not possible, internal agreements between different sections of the local authority should be made and such service agreements should be published
- Furthermore, inter-agency agreements should be developed between the local authority and external agencies. Agreement should specify the service to be provided regarding volume and standards.

Estate focused management

- International evidence suggests that management systems which on estates are more efficient, which in turn can improve the quality of life of tenants.
- Local authorities should designate individual housing officers to specific estates or groups of estates
- Such 'estate officers' would perform generalist duties, actively promote estate committees, respond to tenant queries and have appropriate power/responsibility.
- Local estate offices should be set up where possible, mainly on larger estates.
- An estate based strategy should be taken which involves an examination of an estate to identify problems and to develop proposals leading to improvements living conditions.
- This would involve assessing social, recreational, environmental and employment needs in order to develop a holistic response to the needs identified, in other words the development of a comprehensive estate plan
- In this respect, it is necessary to involve not just tenants and the local authority officials but also the various statutory and voluntary agencies working locally.

Performance management

- The government are committed to performance management systems under the Strategic Management Initiative
- Identify key objectives for the organisation
- Set standards in relation to the objectives (i.e. performance indicator)
- Set targets in relation to the standard/indicator
- Measure actual performance against the target
- Such a system would help manage the housing system properly. Performance can be monitored and corrective action taken if needed.
- A common performance indicator regime across all local authorities would allow benchmarking against other local authorities.
- There is no systematic use of performance indicators in Irish local authorities
- There is evidence that some local authorities are finding it difficult to develop performance measures either because of a lack of information or a problem with resources.

Source: Department of the Environment, 1996a

More specifically, there were very clear recommendations regarding how to undertake estate management, which warrants more detailed examination. As can be seen from Table 6.4 the proposals for change were radical and fundamental with respect to traditional practice. Key recommendations related to the need to establish estate officers who would have responsibility for liaising with particular estates and the need to decentralise certain decision making powers through the establishment of local offices. Another core

recommendation concerned the need to establish estate-specific regeneration plans and to devise clear methods for their implementation. Thus, there was a clear emphasis on decentralisation of functions, the devolvement of some powers and the crucial importance of actually developing and implementing action plans to improve estates. This stress on internal reorganisation of the service and estate management and strategies was supported by a strong recommendation that performance management be instituted which would measure and track performance across all aspects of the housing management service.

Table 6.5, adapted from the first report of the Housing Management Group, summarises the detailed prescriptions for the implementation of tenant participation at a local authority and estate level. The recommendations cover such areas as methods of communication with tenants; standards for meetings with tenants; the extent and structure of tenant involvement; the development of an estate based strategy; the agenda for tenant participation; the organisation and constitution of tenant groups and the resources for tenant groups. The quotation below summarises the approach to tenant participation which centres on consultation between tenants collectively organised and the local authority.

‘...effective tenant involvement must be a two way process involving sharing of information and ideas which enables tenants to deal with local authorities on an equal basis and to influence decisions which affect them. Inherent in the process of participation is the fact that tenants have skills and knowledge which must be availed of. This process is essentially one of negotiation between the local authority and the tenants as a body to discover ways in which a new partnership involving the sharing of some management/maintenance responsibilities can be forged’ (Department of the Environment, 1996a, p23).

The Housing Unit (2001a) has recently produced a set of Best Practice Guidelines on tenant participation, which go into even more detail regarding implementation. All of this demonstrates, at the very least, that there has been detailed policy and practice recommendations which have been available to local authorities, and that this guidance has become progressively more detailed.

Table 6.5 Tenant Participation Policy Proposals

Communicating with tenants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ formal meetings ▪ informal contacts ▪ newsletters ▪ feedback to tenants ▪ make available information to tenants ▪ friendly verbal communication
Meetings with tenants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ convenient to tenants ▪ adequate notice ▪ suitable venues ▪ structure should encourage active participation ▪ agenda prepared in advance
Extent and structure of tenant involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ must be decided in conjunction with tenants ▪ must take account of stated needs and capacity of tenants ▪ pace dictated by tenants ▪ needs support and encouragement of all levels of management in the local authority ▪ staff training needed
Estate based strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ assign a member of staff to act a liaison office for an estate ▪ after identification of issues, enter into negotiation with tenants re model of tenant participation and 'what internal local authority arrangements or reorganisation is needed to enable this involvement' ▪ Establish a joint agreement between the local authority and the tenants on the goals and targets for the particular estate ▪ Formalise the agreement by putting in place any new structures or arrangements, including a related work programme, as necessary ▪ Involve other state, semi-state, voluntary agencies as appropriate in supporting/developing the estate strategy
Matters open for tenant involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Refurbishment of estates ▪ Provision of new facilities ▪ Management and maintenance ▪ Environmental matters, general estate services ▪ Allocation of houses ▪ Anti-social behaviour
Tenants associations and groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Valuable role in communicating with the local authority and other tenants; identifying problems and areas of concern; suggesting solutions ▪ The tenant group should have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Statement of aims and objectives ○ Definition of membership ○ Democratic elections ○ Provisions and procedures for meetings ○ Procedures for liaison with local authority
Support for Tenants groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Practical support needed if tenant groups are to deal on an equal basis ▪ Tenant training ▪ Meeting places ▪ Financial support
Source: Department of the Environment, 1996a.	

The second report of the Housing Management Group, which re-iterated much of the first report, attempted a definition of estate management, which is broad in scope. 'Estate management is, in essence, a collaboration between the statutory agencies and the community that identifies and solves community problems. (Department of the Environment and Local Government, 1998). The importance of interagency and multi-dimensional strategies were emphasised, as is the need to have quite specific estate-level regeneration plans. In addition,

'there is a clear need for a co-ordinated, inter-agency approach, with strong community involvement, which ensures that the resources, plans, and programmes of the main statutory agencies in areas such as health, youth, education, employment, community development and policing are deployed to the advantage of the community' (Department of the Environment and Local Government, 1998b, p15.)

They also recommended the formation of estate management task forces which would determine needs of an estate through consultation and survey. It would identify the resources, plans and programmes which each statutory agency can deliver in response to the identified need and implement the strategy, seeking feedback from tenants and evaluating responses. This would be achieved through inter-agency actions with the police, schools, training agencies, commercial agencies and development agencies (Department of the Environment and Local Government, 1998b).

Anti-Social Behaviour and the 1997 Housing Act

Apart from the 1992 Housing Act, which set the basis for tenant participation, the most important other legislative development has been the passing of the Housing Act 1997 (Government of Ireland, 1997a). The 1997 Act focuses exclusively on the issue of anti-social behaviour. The severity of the drugs problems on many estates, especially in Dublin, came to national prominence in the mid 1990s with high profile opposition by anti-drug coalitions (Punch, 2001; Memery and Kerrins, 2000). In partial response the Government passed the Housing Act which legally defines both anti-social behaviour and estate management. Table 6.6 and Table 6.7 give the legal definitions of anti-social behaviour and estate management respectively.

Table 6.6 Definition of Anti-Social Behaviour

(a) the manufacture, production, preparation, importation, exportation, sale, supply, possession, for the purposes of sale or supply or distribution of a controlled drug.
(b) any behaviour which causes or is likely to cause any significant or persistent danger, injury, damage, loss or fear to any person living, working or otherwise lawfully in or in the vicinity of a house provided by a housing authority, or a housing estate in which the house is situated and, without prejudice to the foregoing includes violence, threats, intimidation, coercion, harassment or serious obstruction of any person
Source: Government of Ireland, 1997a (Housing Act, 1997)

As can be seen, the definition of anti-social behaviour centres firstly on drug dealing and on the general issues of harassment, intimidation and threat. Estate management is defined as securing the interests of tenants in the enjoyment of their dwelling and the avoidance of anti-social behaviour.

Table 6.7 Definition of Estate Management

(a) The securing or promotion of the interests of an tenants, lessee, owners or occupiers, whether individually or generally, in the enjoyment of any house, building or land provided by a housing authority.
(b) the avoidance, prevention, or abatement of anti-social behaviour in any housing estate which is situated in a house provided by a housing authority
Source: Government of Ireland, 1997a (Housing Act, 1997)

The Act creates, for the first time, what is termed an ‘excluding order’. An excluding order is essentially a mechanism whereby those found guilty of an offence, whether or not they are residents of the dwelling in question, can be forced to leave the house and prohibited from being in the vicinity of the house or the estate. A tenant may seek an excluding order from the District Court against somebody they believe to be engaged in anti-social behaviour whether or not they are residing in the dwelling concerned. Alternatively, the housing authority may, on good estate management grounds, seek an excluding order from the District Court against somebody they believe to be engaged in anti-social behaviour on behalf of a tenant, provided they believe that the tenant is afraid of pursuing the order themselves for fear of intimidation. If granted, an excluding order can force the person to leave the house and, whether or not a resident of that house, prohibit the person from being in the vicinity of the house, or prohibit the accused from causing intimidation. An excluding order can last up to three years initially and may be renewed for a further three years. Breach of an exclusion order carries a fine or a maximum prison sentence of 12 months and the police may arrest the person on sight.

This new policy development has clearly defined estate management centrally as dealing with anti-social behaviour.

V NATIONAL POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Although there is very limited published evidence regarding the implementation of tenant participation policies, the existing evidence suggests that policy is being established in a patchy and uneven manner (Redmond, 2001a, 2002; Norris and O'Connell, 2002; Brennan *et al*, 2001; Galligan, 2001; Conway, 2001). This section reviews the evidence with respect to estate refurbishment, comprehensive renewal and estate management and tenant participation

Estate Refurbishment

'Local authorities in particular had – and in some cases, perhaps, still have – a strong tendency to rely on building projects as a response to problem estates. While that kind of response was sometimes justified and useful, it was often excessively narrow and insufficiently focused on housing management services, directed as much at people as at buildings' (Fahey, 1999c, p253).

Fahey's observation on the reliance of local authorities on physical regeneration is confirmed by the available evidence. One of the most obvious areas where there have been increased levels of tenant participation has been in the refurbishment of estates. The Remedial Works Scheme, which funds large scale refurbishment of local authority estates, requires tenant involvement as a condition of funding (Norris, 2001a). The Remedial Works Scheme has been in operation since 1985. It is important from a number of perspectives. First, it was official recognition that many estates were in bad repair and in need of renewal and refurbishment. Second, it was, from almost the start, tied in with tenant participation. Funding for estate refurbishment schemes was conditional on evidence of tenant involvement. Third, it marked official criticism of the local authorities' performance in managing their estates. Fourth, the estates selected are the nearest proxy-measure to what could be termed 'problem estates'.

The scheme has funded renewal on approximately 150 estates containing roughly 16,000 dwellings, which is approximately 16% of the local authority rented stock (Department of the Environment, 1995; Norris, 2001a). This programme was initiated by central government after concluding that many estates had reached such a low point that

intervention was necessary. Local authorities were viewed as either incapable of, or unable to fund, such renewal. This programme of renewal was linked to the beginnings of a tenant participation policy by the Department of the Environment. In allocating funding to local authorities for estate renewal, such funding was made conditional on a degree of tenant involvement in how the estate was to be renewed. However, Norris (2001a, 2001b), who has undertaken some useful analysis of this programme, argues that in general the programme has been narrowly focused on the physical and environmental improvement of estates and it has not been linked with an integrated approach to estate regeneration. Table 6.8, derived from the work of Norris (2001a), details the expenditure on the scheme from its inception in 1985 until 1999. By 1999, IR£245m had been spent on the scheme, with funding split evenly between central government and the relevant local authorities. Over half of the funding went to the County Borough Corporations (Dublin; Cork; Limerick; Galway and Waterford), reflecting the age and condition of the stock. The scheme is still in operation, with substantial demand remaining from local authorities.

Table 6.8 Expenditure Under the Remedial Works Scheme, 1985– 1999

Year	Central Funding IR£m	Central Funding %	Local Authority Contribution IR£m	Local Authority Contribution %	Total Funding IR£m
1985	0.8	-	-	-	0.8
1986	1.5636	-	-	-	1.5636
1987	7	-	-	-	7
1988	9	-	-	-	9
1989	13.5	-	-	-	13.5
1990	3.756	23.5	12.244	76.5	16
1991	8.729	54.5	7.271	45.5	16
1992	7.593	45.7	9.019	54.3	16.612
1993	9.7	56.4	7.5	43.6	17.2
1994	15.2*	65.4	8.06	34.6	23.26*
1995	9.943	54	8.5	46	18.443
1996	9.9	54	8.5	46	18.4
1997	10.468	55	8.518	45	18.986
1998	11.024	36	19.524	64	30.548
1999	11.079	36	19.570	64	30.649
Mean		48		52	
Total	119.513		125.688		245.201

Source: Norris, 2001a

Comprehensive Redevelopment

More comprehensive renewal programmes, such as those in Ballymun, Fatima Mansions and St. Michaels estate in Dublin, have seen tenants involved in influencing renewal or in

plans for renewal (O' Gorman, 2000, 2001; Norris, 2001a, 2001b; Brennan *et al*, 2001; Prichard, 2000). However, there has been no official evaluation of the effectiveness of such tenant involvement. A number of larger redevelopment programmes are either underway or planned. The largest is in Ballymun, in Dublin, which is the most extensive high-rise local authority estate in Ireland, with approximately 3,000 dwellings. Built in the 1960s, the estate has had a poor reputation for over two decades. However, partly resulting from long-term pressure by tenant groups, a redevelopment programme is in process, at a cost of IR£320m, which involves the demolition of the high-rise flats and the development of medium to high-density traditional dwellings (Community Action Programme Ballymun, 2000; Prichard, 2000).

Most recently, Dublin City Council, the largest public-sector landlord, which owns 25% of the national local authority stock (24,000 dwellings), has produced plans for the demolition and redevelopment of an inner-city flat complex called Fatima Mansions, which has been known for drug-related problems (Dublin Corporation, 2001). Over 65% of the Council's stock is in such inner-city flats complexes, which were never available for tenant purchase because of legal difficulties regarding purchase and subsequent management. According to Norris (2001a), the Fatima Mansion estate was refurbished in 1989 under the Remedial Works Scheme, at a cost of IR£5m, though she concludes that it was focused purely on physical and environmental aspects of the estate and that tenants now conclude that the programme was a failure. In addition, she contends that local-authority housing managers tacitly agree with this conclusion. O' Gorman (2000, 2001) summarises the contention and conflict regarding the plans to regenerate Fatima Mansion's. While tenants have been heavily involved in the proposed redevelopment of Fatima mansions, it is clear that there were very different conceptions of how the estate should be redeveloped. The local authority plan to sell off some of the land to private developers for private apartment development. It is no coincidence that the land is located in direct proximity to a new light rail transit line which will be in operation within the next year or so, thereby increasing the desirability and value of the land. Ballymun was also subject to the estate renewal programme in the early 1990s, suggesting, at the very least, serious weaknesses in the operation of that programme (Ballymun Regeneration Ltd, 1998). Dublin City Council is also planning the demolition and redevelopment of a flats complex in the inner city called St. Michaels estate, and plans to build a mixture of social, affordable and private housing

on the site, a move again towards the policy of tenure mix on predominantly social-housing estates (Dublin Corporation, 2000). A similar plan has been unveiled for a flats complex in the North-West inner city, O' Devaney Gardens.

Brennan *et al*, 2001 have undertaken some good research on the proposed redevelopment of St. Michael's estate in Dublin and adopt a similar methodology to this thesis in that they interviewed representatives from tenant groups and from statutory agencies. Built in the early 1970s, the estate is a flats complex in the inner area comprising 346 units. By the late 1980s and early 1990s it was environmentally degraded and suffered from a serious drugs related problems. A tenant group, called the Blocks Committee was formed in 1986 and initially pressurised Dublin Corporation for better estate maintenance and for the establishment of an estate office. Such an office was established in 1992. While initially the Department of the Environment agreed to fund some refurbishment through the Remedial Works Scheme, this never came to fruition. By 1997, problems on the estate were so bad that a Task Force was established which comprised tenants, the local authority, other statutory agencies and local community groups. In response to this the research shows that tenant groups acknowledged that there were significant positive changes in Dublin Corporation's policies. The establishment of the estate office was reinforced by the appointment of two estate officers and a pro-active approach to renewal. According to the research, 'Corporation officials welcomed the changes within the organisation and generally expressed an enthusiasm for the move towards a more participatory model of working with communities' (Brennan *et al*, 2001, p37). From the viewpoint of the local community, representatives expressed the view that 'the successes in working in partnership with the Corporation were attributable to the personal relationships established with local personnel' (Brennan *et al*, 2001, p37). Moreover, those community representatives 'who had been involved in lobbying campaigns...over the past 10 years were particularly impressed with the fact that the Corporation openly acknowledged criticisms of its previous approach to the management of flat complexes and actively sought to address these shortcomings' (Brennan *et al*, 2001, p39).

The research included interviews from a small number of statutory and community representatives. These interviews reveal a number of issues which were highlighted in the critical review in Chapter 4. With regard to the local authority itself, there was a clear view

that the move to implementing estate management and tenant participation would not only be a long and protracted one, but that it needed to be embedded in the senior hierarchy in the Corporation. There was also some scepticism regarding the demand for participation from tenants and negative comments regarding tenant capacities and the accountability of tenant representatives. From the community viewpoint, it was clear that after years of neglect that trust in the local authority would have to be earned and not assumed. Moreover, there was a significant degree of frustration with the timescales imposed by the local authority. There was, however, a positive response to the role of the local area partnership, which was seen to be a good intermediary between the tenants and the local authority. The authors conclude that 'fostering links with the community, and developing (even modest) arrangements for tenant participation requires considerable resources, time and effort from residents, resource workers, Corporation officials and Partnership personnel' (Brennan et al, 2001, p67). At the time of writing (summer 2003) the plan for the redevelopment of the estate has been agreed but construction work has not started.

However, while it is perhaps too early to make any definitive judgements regarding the impact and efficacy of this regeneration and participation, some recent research on participation in Dublin has taken a critical view (Punch, 2000, 2001, 2002a, 2002b). In the case of Fatima Mansions, for example, the process of participation has been fraught with difficulties because of the often conflicting plans of the local authority and tenants (O'Gorman, 2000, 2001; Dublin Corporation, 2001). To a degree, it is to be expected that tenants would be heavily involved in such projects. In a situation where there are significant financial budgets available for renewal and the prospect of often dramatic physical and environmental transformations, it is perhaps easier to generate the interest and involvement of tenants. Less easy by far, is the involvement of tenants in the more mundane day-to-day routine of estate management, where there may be no extra financial resources and the prospects of change are less visible. It is perhaps here that the long term efficacy of tenant participation will be tested.

Estate Management and Tenant Participation

There is even less research on the impact of the introduction of estate management and tenant participation policies. However, early research by Redmond and Walker (1995) on the first set of housing management plans (the only set to date) showed that there was deep

resistance by the local authorities to the changes sought by central government. Eleven of the *Statements of Policy on Housing Management* were selected for analysis, representing the larger local authority landlords. Broadly, the Statements did not meet the aims and objectives outlined in the Memorandum. The majority of Statements failed to adopt a business planning approach, discuss the applicability of the 3'E's to their landlord role or display characteristics of strategic planning. In the main, they were retrospective documents highlighting what had been achieved and in some instances what they aimed to do. There was a noticeable absence of performance criteria, current levels of performance and no mention of targets for service delivery at an operational or strategic level.

The research showed that authorities broadly recognised the benefits of tenant participation, though very few authorities actually identified the number of groups with which they worked. Overall there appeared to be a misunderstanding of the stages of tenant participation that exist. Generally these appeared polarised between the two extremes - non-involvement and full delegation. Authorities did not seem able to conceptualise the role for tenants in the general day-to-day management of estates or in the process of establishing policy for housing management issues. This was reflected in the lack of discussion about training for tenants. Thus, only Dublin City Council discussed the possible establishment of Estate Management Boards whilst most other authorities stated that they did not anticipate doing so in the near future. The reference to the role of tenants in the management of estates tended to focus on certain limited issues, such as the appearance of estates and involving tenants in the Keep Dublin Tidy Competition. Unsurprisingly, there were numerous references to the role of tenants in estate refurbishment where tenant involvement is necessary to secure Remedial Works Scheme funding. However, it must be noted that authorities were working from a historically low base in terms of tenant participation and a number of authorities made positive responses in their statements of policy about developing tenant participation.

The performance culture, strongly promoted in the *Memorandum*, appeared alien to most authorities. For many authorities, the language and processes of performance measurement was not addressed - that is specifying objectives, identifying performance criteria, setting targets and monitoring and reviewing the process. In relation to three of the detailed areas of management practice to be addressed - maintenance, lettings and rents

- very few authorities identified necessary information such as maintenance costs, re-let times, numbers of empty homes, levels of arrears etc. Indeed, Dublin Corporation was one of the few authorities where it was possible to derive arrears levels, which stood at 22% in 1994 (Redmond and Walker, 1995).

More recent research, by McAuliffe and Fahey (1999), depicts the responses to social order problems which have come from the police force, from internal policing by residents and from local authority housing departments through estate management. They reported high levels of tenant dissatisfaction with the efforts of the police force to curb and control anti-social behaviour. This has, in turn, often led to internal policing by tenants and tenant groups, with mixed results. More recently, the local authorities have taken on the role of controlling anti-social behaviour through evictions and through allowing existing tenants a limited role in allocations and lettings, in order to vet potential applicants. This latter point is followed up by Guerin (1999) who investigates, more generally, the relationship between tenants and local authorities. Unsurprisingly, he found that tenants were dissatisfied with the maintenance service, which was unresponsive and inefficient. More contentiously, tenants were beginning to have some influence in lettings policies, although lettings are strictly an executive function of the housing department. However, as Guerin points out, many local authorities do not operate a quantitative points-based scheme and allocations and lettings is thus highly discretionary. In this context, allowing tenants an influence is easy but leads to accusations that discriminatory and illegal practices may be institutionalised in the lettings system.

There have been a number of important developments with respect to central government policy on estate management and tenant participation. With regard to the professional development of housing managers, the Housing Unit is responsible for developing the best practice guidelines and, in this capacity, has been involved in developing and delivering training programmes for housing officers. However, this is currently at an early stage and has very limited resources. Under the aegis of the Housing Unit, in the past 2 years a *Network of Housing Practitioners* [Senior Housing Officers] has been formed which meets periodically to share experience of policy and practice, although this is a fairly loose organisational arrangement. Again, organised by the Housing Unit, a network of Tenant Liaison Officers has recently been organised which meets to share information and best

practice on how to implement effective tenant participation policies (Dublin Local Authorities, 1999).

In addition, the Department of Environment and Local Government has, through the *Housing Management Grants Initiative*, funded projects in housing management, many of which have related closely to tenant participation (Brooke and Norris, 2002). Many of the initiatives have related to the provision of information to tenants in the form of tenant handbooks, the provision of tenant training and, importantly, the employment of tenant liaison officers. These officers, who are now employed by over 40 per cent of local authorities in the country, play an important role in linking tenants and the local authority, though they are as yet not firmly established in the local authority housing service (Norris and O'Connell, 2002). In a recent analysis of this scheme, it was found that the bulk of the funds allocated was spent on tenant training or tenant participation of some sort (Brooke and Norris, 2002). As can be seen from Table 6.9, to date the scheme has been a modest one, reflecting its intent at achieving innovation, with total expenditure in 6 years reaching just over £1m (€1.36m).

Table 6.9 Housing Management Grants Scheme Expenditure

	Applications received	Agencies which submitted applications	Projects approved	Total approved expenditure	Average expenditure per project
	N	N	N	€	€
1995	55	34	15	115,445	7696
1996	57	34	22	172,304	7832
1997	51	26	21	195,503	9310
1998	37	24	27	318,071	11781
1999	35	15	26	284,359	10936
2000	32	22	23	277,121	12060
Total	267	155	134	1,362,803	9936

Source: Brooke and Norris (2002)

Anti-social behaviour

‘While social order problems in local authority estates can be considered the consequence of broad social structural factors, they are amenable to intervention by local authorities. Good estate management can reduce the incidence of such problems and ameliorate their effects, even without general improvements in the living standards and social circumstances among the majority of residents’ (Fahey, 1999, p257.)

Perhaps the most developed aspect of policy implementation is that dealing with anti-social behaviour. Memery and Kerrins (2000) have recently reviewed the new power arising from the 1997 Housing Act and point out that its instigation was primarily in response to the level of drug dealing and drug-related crime on some local authority estates, especially the flats complexes in Dublin. To date, local authorities have been reluctant to use this power extensively as it is viewed as heavy-handed intervention. Nonetheless, estate management is officially defined for the first time in the 1997 Act and it revolves around maintaining social order. Strategies dealing with anti-social behaviour have tended to focus on exclusionary measures such as evictions. However, there have also been a series of physical and environmental measures which seek to redesign estates so that there is more defensible space. This may include closing off of laneways and alleyways or the introduction of CCTV cameras on estates, such as in Moyross in Limerick. It is also planned to place CCTV cameras in Darndale in North Dublin. Some local authorities now employ dedicated housing officers who specifically deal with the gamut of behaviour that is termed anti-social behaviour. However, there is a notable absence of comprehensive multi-dimensional approaches to dealing with anti-social behaviour.

VI CONCLUSION

This seemingly random or fragmented selection of policy developments is testimony to the lack of information regarding the implementation of the various policy developments and best practice guidelines. There is no systematic information available which details developments which have occurred in different local authorities, the degree of implementation or the nature of their impacts. This chapter has demonstrated that the push for estate management and tenant participation has come almost exclusively from central government. Even prior to the legislative reaction to the drugs crisis in 1997, central government had developed a critique of local authority housing and estate management. However, one of the primary motivations for the changes, and this is confirmed through interviews with central government officials, has been a concern with value for money and effectiveness (I68 and I69). Despite this concern central government have not introduced a centralised performance measurement system, thereby leaving the implementation of policy to the discretion of local authorities. The remainder of the thesis turns to such local implementation.

CHAPTER 7

TENANT PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICE: HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONTEXTS

I INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the housing management contexts for each of the five selected local authorities selected. Most of the information is at local-authority level because of the paucity of material available on individual estates. Section II, primarily using published statistical information at the local authority level, seeks to give an overview of key trends over the past decade. Section III examines comparative information on housing management costs and revenues across the five authorities, while Section IV concludes the chapter.

II HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONTEXTS

This section examines some key trends in each of the five local authorities. For each authority the following information is described:

Tenure structure (1991)

Data on tenure at a local authority level is only available for 1991. The figures from the 2002 Census will only be available from early 2004 at the earliest. Figure 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3 illustrate the proportion of local authority rented housing in each District Electoral Division

Trends in local authority house completions and in sales to tenants

In 1994, South Dublin County Council, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council and Fingal County Council were formed from the former Dublin County and Dun Laoghaire County Borough. Therefore, figures for these three counties are only available for the period from 1993.

Trends in new lettings and in casual vacancies

Data on lettings and casual vacancies is available on a local authority basis and is thus of limited value as it tells us nothing about what happens at estate level.

Housing Management and maintenance costs

Data on housing revenue and expenditure were published for the first time in 1991. According to central government (interviews) these figures are produced on a standardised basis and are thus comparable. However, in attempting to ascertain the reasons for radical differences between local authorities, many local authority officers opined that the figures are not strictly comparable. Thus, these figures have to be treated with some caution.

Dublin City Council

Local Authority Rented Stock 2001: 24,500

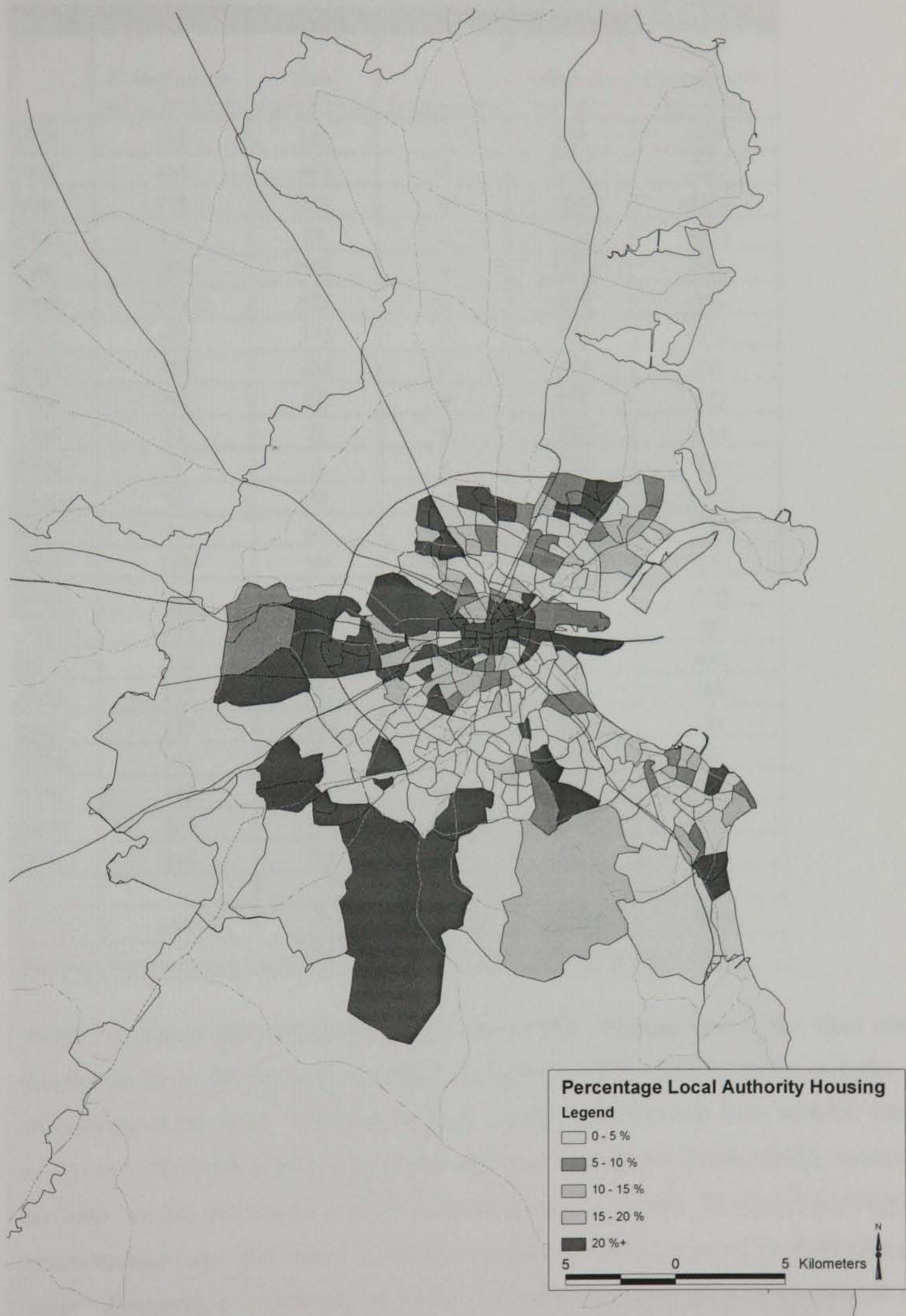
The tenure structure of Dublin City Council differs from the national average in having twice the rate of local-authority housing. While this is likely to have reduced somewhat since 1991 given the boom in private housebuilding, it is still likely that the proportion of local authority housing will be higher than the national average.

Table 7.1 Dublin City Council Housing Tenure 1991

	No.	%
Owner Occupied	103246	68.6
Private Rented	21172	14.1
Rented from local authority	26088	17.3
Other		
Total	150506	100
Source: Central Statistics Office, (1991), Small Area Statistics		

With a local authority rented stock of c.25,000 dwellings, the authority is the largest local authority landlord in the country, having three times the next largest. As Table 7.2 demonstrates, the pattern of development since the late 1980s mirrors the national picture. In the late 1980s and early 1990s development almost came to a standstill. However, in the past few years development has increased, although an increasing proportion of the new stock is being obtained through acquisition of dwellings on the open market rather than being developed directly by the local authority. However, the development trends must be compared to the patterns of sales to tenants. Over the period from 1979 to 2001, over 17,000 dwellings were sold to tenant purchasers. There has thus been a net loss of over 9,500 dwellings over the period.

Figure 7.1 Local Authority Housing Tenure in Dublin Authorities



Source: Central Statistics Office, Census of Population, 1991

Table 7.2 Dublin City Council: Local Authority House Completions and Sales

	Completions and acquisitions	New completions	Acquisitions	Sales to tenants	New Completions less sales
1979	181	181	0	838	-657
1980	463	463	0	1164	-701
1981	413	413	0	1649	-1236
1982	55	55	0	1310	-1255
1983	595	595	0	1335	-740
1984	684	684	0	1025	-341
1985	533	533	0	725	-192
1986	433	433	0	166	267
1987	297	297	0	418	-121
1988	71	71	0	285	-214
1989	6	6	0	962	-956
1990	35	35	0	1943	-1908
1991	95	95	0	2393	-2298
1992	101	101	0	984	-883
1993	148	71	77	282	-134
1994	379	289	90	76	303
1995	700	390	310	249	451
1996	702	372	330	516	186
1997	299	175	124	331	-32
1998	391	270	121	190	201
1999	482	202	280	143	339
2000	504	143	361	118	386
2001	816	311	505	113	703
	8383			17215	-9535

Source: Department of the Environment, (various) *Bulletins of Housing Statistics*

Table 7.3 depicts the patterns of lettings since 1992. Perhaps one of the most notable trends has been the decrease in casual vacancies in both absolute terms and also as a proportion of the stock. This is most likely a result of two factors. First, with the crisis of access and affordability particularly acute in Dublin (Drudy and Punch, 2001), tenants will not take the risk of losing a tenancy. Second, however, it might be argued that improved estate management and tenant participation policies have succeeded in stabilising some estates. However, it is difficult, especially in Dublin local authorities to disentangle these two issues.

Table 7.3 Dublin City Council Lettings

	Lettings of new dwellings	Casual Vacancies	Total Lettings	LA Dwellings occupied	casual lettings as % of total occupied sock
1992	101	1416	1517	31362	4.5
1993	113	1289	1402	31042	4.2
1994	372	1246	1618	31230	4.0
1995	567	1452	2019	30929	4.7
1996	624	1662	2286	31104	5.3
1997	349	1032	1381	24455	4.2
1998	292	905	1197	24300	3.7
1999	360	770	1130	24315	3.2
2000	335	567	902	24259	2.3
2001	224	650	874	24262	2.7

Source: Department of the Environment, (various) *Bulletins of Housing Statistics*

Table 7.4 shows the trends in housing management finances over the past decade. The key trends are obvious and very stark. Over the decade, there has been a major mismatch between housing revenue and housing expenditure. The average deficit per dwelling was £500 in 1991 and this has risen to £1,285 in 2001, an increase of 157%. The overall deficit almost doubled from £16m to £31.5m.

South Dublin County Council

Local Authority Rented Stock in 2001: 7,500

The tenure structure in South Dublin County Council in 1991, shown in table 7.5, again shows double the national average amount of local authority rented housing. With significant levels of private housebuilding occurring in the past decade and relatively little new social housebuilding, these relativities will have changed somewhat. However, with a stock of 7,500 the authority is the second largest local authority landlord in the country.

Table 7.5 South Dublin County Council Housing Tenure 1991

	No.	%
Owner Occupied	44079	80.9
Private Rented	1700	3.1
Rented from local authority	8712	16
Total	54491	100

Source: Central Statistics Office, 1991, Small Area Statistics

Table 7.6 depicts the trends in completions and sales in South Dublin. Once again, the sales to tenant purchasers is greater than new completions and acquisitions thereby leaving the authority with a net loss of stock over the period.

Table 7.6 South Dublin County Council Local Authority Housing Completions and Sales

	Completions and acquisitions	New completions	Acquisitions	Sales to tenants	New Completions less sales
1993	0			37	-37
1994	91	61	30	8	83
1995	128	78	50	24	104
1996	112	82	30	103	9
1997	55	33	22	97	-42
1998	181	166	15	286	-105
1999	199	147	52	396	-197
2000	147	86	61	230	-83
2001	195	140	55	178	17
	1108			1359	-268

Source: Department of the Environment, (various) *Bulletins of Housing Statistics*

Table 7.7 shows the trends in lettings and casual vacancies. The major feature here is the high absolute level of casual vacancies in 1997, a time when there were major problems with regard to drugs on the large peripheral estates in the County. This has subsequently decreased, again partly to do with some stabilisation of estates, but also because of the increased demand for social housing.

Table 7.7 Lettings in South Dublin County Council

	Lettings of new dwellings	First time lettings		LA Dwellings occupied	casual lettings as % of total occupied stock
		Casual Vacancies	Total Lettings		
1992	12	117	129	2740	4.3
1993	34	98	132	2742	3.6
1994	90	112	202	2863	3.9
1995	127	130	257	2930	4.4
1996	103	136	239	2949	4.6
1997	43	309	352	7996 ²	3.9
1998	124	229	353	7907	2.9
1999	124	241	365	7645	3.2
2000	116	210	326	7523	2.8
2001	119	164	283	7414	2.2

Source: Department of the Environment, (various) *Bulletins of Housing Statistics*

Table 7.8 shows the housing revenue and expenditure figures for South Dublin. These show a much more varied pattern than Dublin City Council with sometimes alternating years of surplus and deficit.

² The rise in stock is because of the formal transfer of dwellings which has originally been developed by Dublin City Council, but which were on South Dublin's land.

Table 7.8 Housing Management and Maintenance in South Dublin

	Receipts		Expenditure				Average income per dwelling	Average rent per dwelling	Total	Management	Total	Average expenditure per dwellings	Surplus/Deficit	av income less av exp per dwelling
	Rents	Net sales	Misc.	Total	Average income per dwelling	Maintenance								
	N	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
1993	2742	1564774	939633	3091867	587460	3091867	1128	571	1186413	1809370	2995783	1093	96084	35
1994	2863	1722920	1052964	3305233	529349	3305233	1154	602	1605277	2093528	3698805	1292	-393572	-137
1995	2930	1855108	963240	3355572	537224	3355572	1145	633	1288589	2177460	3466049	1183	-110477	-38
1996	2949	2001846	1089699	3640606	549061	3640606	1235	679	1319913	2250230	3570143	1211	70463	24
1997*	7996	6275725	1118352	8109437	715360	8109437	1014	785	3205051	5066757	8271808	1034	-162371	-20
1998	7907	7637018	1049265	11126563	2440280	11126563	1407	966	3790098	5633228	9423326	1192	1703237	215
1999	7645	8266211	0	11068591	2802380	11068591	1448	1081	4992906	6672215	11665121	1526	-596530	-78
2000	7523	9254535	0	12561058	3306523	12561058	1670	1230	6580741	7395841	13976582	1858	-1415524	-188
2001	7414	10134098	0	13326642	3192544	13326642	1797	1367	6704834	7228603	13933438	1879	-606796	-82

Source: Department of the Environment, (various) *Bulletins of Housing Statistics*

* This increase represents the transfer of dwellings previously managed by Dublin Corporation

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council

Local Authority rented Stock 2001: 3,942

As Table 7.9 shows the tenure pattern in Dun Laoghaire Rathdown is more akin to the national one. However, there is an even higher rate of homeownership and a lower rate of local authority renting. Nonetheless, with a rented stock of almost 4,000 dwellings, it is the fourth largest local authority landlord in the Country.

Table 7.9 Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Housing Tenure 1991

	No.	%
Owner Occupied	46946	84.3
Private Rented	4888	8.8
Rented from local authority	3847	6.9
Total	55681	100

Source: Central Statistics Office, 1991, Small Area Statistics

Table 7.10 shows the level of local authority completions and sales. Uniquely of the five selected authority's it shows that completions have surpassed sales in the period from 1993. Dun Laoghaire has some of the highest house prices in the Country so that the cost of tenant purchase is most likely out of the reach of most sitting tenants.

Table 7.10 Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council: Local Authority House Completions and Sales

	Completions and acquisitions	New completions	Acquisitions	Sales to tenants	New Completions less sales
1994	86	64	22	14	72
1995	134	90	44	14	120
1996	149	109	40	50	99
1997	175	132	43	54	121
1998	117	109	8	23	94
1999	53	38	15	34	19
2000	30	11	19	7	23
2001	98	63	35	9	89
	842			205	548

Source: Department of the Environment, (various) *Bulletins of Housing Statistics*

Table 7.11 shows the pattern of lettings and casual vacancies. The number of casual vacancies peaked in 1999 but has begun subsequently to decline.

Table 7.11 Lettings in Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council

Dun Laoghaire		First time lettings			
	Lettings of new dwellings	Casual Vacancies	Total Lettings	LA Dwellings occupied	Casual lettings as % of total occupied sock
1992	40	94	134	3360	2.8
1993	52	97	149	3380	2.9
1994	61	104	165	3440	3.0
1995	129	126	255	3475	3.6
1996	135	84	219	3470	2.4
1997	141	162	303	3752	4.3
1998	147	118	265	3834	3.1
1999	42	204	246	3848	5.3
2000	35	156	191	3897	4.0
2001	90	115	205	3942	2.9

Source: Department of the Environment, (various) *Bulletins of Housing Statistics*

Table 7.12 depicts the housing management finances of Dun Laoghaire Rathdown. The overall pattern here is similar to that of Dublin City Council, with escalating management and maintenance costs. The overall deficit has increased from just £250,000 to £4.8m in 2000. The deficit per dwelling has increased from £66 in 1993 to £1,250 in 2000.

Table 7.12 Housing Management and Maintenance in Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council

	Receipts				Expenditure				Average expenditure per dwellings	Surplus/Deficit	Av income les av exp per dwelling		
	Rents	Net sales	Misc.	Total	Average income per dwelling	Average rent per dwelling p.a	Maintenance	Management				Total	
No of dwellings occupied	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£		
1993	3380	1393194	487122	145045	2025361	599	412	1326136	922067	2248203	665	-222842	-66
1994	3440	2231078	328510	0	2559588	744	649	2159193	1339819	3499012	1017	-939424	-273
1995	3475	2451149	1114794	0	3565943	1026	705	2455963	2064965	4520928	1301	-954985	-275
1996	3470	2781283	1170052	0	3951335	1139	802	2827898	2231194	5059092	1458	-1107757	-319
1997	3752	3065576	598623	0	3664199	977	817	3280145	2773260	6053405	1613	-2389206	-637
1998	3834	3358412	390428	0	3748840	978	876	3303103	3027780	6330883	1651	-2582043	-673
1999	3848	3567073	0	0	3567073	927	927	3447588	4403647	7851205	2040	-4284132	-1113
2000	3897	3972360	0	0	3972360	1019	1019	3677159	5166261	8843420	2269	-4871060	-1250
2001	3942	5840963	0	0	5840963	1482	1482	4859138	4561032	9420170	2390	-3579207	-908

Source: Department of the Environment, (various) *Bulletins of Housing Statistics*

Limerick City Council Profile

Local Authority rented Stock 2001: 3,068

The tenure structure of Limerick City Council in 1991 differed from the national average in that there was twice the national average proportion of local authority dwellings. With a rented stock of 3,068 units, Limerick is the seventh largest local authority landlord.

Table 7.13 Limerick City Council Tenure 1991

	No.	%
Owner Occupied	10801	70.6
Private Rented	1525	10
Rented from local authority	2980	19.4
Total	15306	100

Source: Central Statistics Office, 1991, Small Area Statistics

Table 7.14 depicts the trends in local authority house completions and sales to tenants. Sales to tenants have exceeded completions and acquisitions by 1,000 dwellings over the period from 1979 to 2001.

Figure 7.2 Local Authority Housing in Limerick



Source: Central Statistic Office, Census of Population, 1991

Table 7.14 Local Authority House Completions and Sales Limerick City Council

	Completions and acquisitions	New completions	Acquisitions	Sales to tenants	New Completions less sales
1979	40	40	0	374	-334
1980	214	214	0	170	44
1981	71	71	0	112	-41
1982	79	79	0	306	-227
1983	45	45	0	214	-169
1984	139	139	0	261	-122
1985	53	53	0	85	-32
1986	202	202	0	14	188
1987	35	35	0	5	30
1988	5	5	0	17	-12
1989	8	8	0	86	-78
1990	29	29	0	628	-599
1991	12	12	0	55	-43
1992	11	6	5	21	-10
1993	36	27	9	3	33
1994	78	66	11	12	66
1995	74	57	17	17	57
1996	77	66	11	103	-26
1997	72	62	10	89	-17
1998	64	56	8	47	17
1999	59	56	3	47	12
2000	46	35	11	21	25
2001	172	153	19	31	141
	1621			2718	-1097

Source: Department of the Environment, (various) *Bulletins of Housing Statistics*

Table 7.14 illustrates trends in lettings and casual vacancies. What immediately stands out is the very high levels of casual vacancies in Limerick when compared with the other authorities. Casual vacancies as a proportion of the total rented stock has averaged about 7% per annum, which is double the average of other authorities.

Table 7.15 Limerick City Council Lettings

	Lettings of new dwellings	Casual Vacancies	Total Lettings	LA Dwellings occupied	casual lettings as % of total occupied sock
1988				3977	
1989				3863	
1990				3243	
1991				3209	
1992	11	269	280	3120	8.6
1993	32	223	255	3157	7.1
1994	75	235	310	3193	7.4
1995	79	253	332	3161	8.0
1996	69	221	290	3199	6.9
1997	61	270	331	3155	8.6
1998	47	209	256	3044	6.9
1999	33	207	240	3047	6.8
2000	13	197	210	3009	6.5
2001	148	137	285	3068	4.5

Source: Department of the Environment, (various) *Bulletins of Housing Statistics*

Table 7.16 illustrates the trends in housing revenue and expenditure. From 1991 until 1997, the Council ran a surplus on its housing revenue account. However, from 1998, it has mainly run a deficit. In 2001, the overall deficit was over £1m with an average deficit of £389 per dwelling.

Table 7.16 Housing Management and Maintenance in Limerick City Council

Limerick City Council		Receipts		Expenditure		Average income per dwelling		Average rent per dwelling		Average expn. per dwellings		Surplus/Deficit		av income less av exp per dwelling	
		Rents	Net sales	Misc.	Total	Average income per dwelling	Average rent per dwelling			Total	Management				
	No of dwellings occupied	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
1991	3209	1470810	595372	92227	2158409	673	458	1198994	401027	1600021	499	558388	174		
1992	3120	1581109	603484	140341	2324934	745	507	891925	1106829	1998754	641	326180	105		
1993	3157	1743447	553166	333712	2630325	833	552	1105675	1220479	2326154	737	304171	96		
1994	3193	1820017	564260	148571	2532848	793	570	1162997	1195527	2358524	739	174324	55		
1995	3161	2144089	606907	192879	2943875	931	678	1284331	1311175	2595506	821	348369	110		
1996	3199	2121122	252016	207190	2853328	892	663	1412859	1241469	2654328	830	199000	62		
1997	3155	2417296	301537	323784	3042617	964	766	1306708	1435965	2742673	869	299944	95		
1998	3044	2302118	205441	256382	2763941	908	756	1423400	1428022	2851422	937	-87481	-29		
1999	3047	2361224	0	0	2361224	775	775	1587219	1784795	3372013	1107	-1010789	-332		
2000	3009	2562016	0	18707	2580723	858	851	1691114	622319	2313433	769	267290	89		
2001	3068	2705199	0	0	2705199	882	882	1994925	1903991	3898915	1271	-1193717	-389		

Source: Department of the Environment, (various) *Bulletins of Housing Statistics*

Waterford City CouncilLocal Authority Rented Stock 2001: 2306

As can be seen from Table 7.17, the tenure structure in Waterford is similar to that of Limerick with double the national average of local authority rented stock. With a stock of 2306, Waterford is the tenth largest local authority landlord.

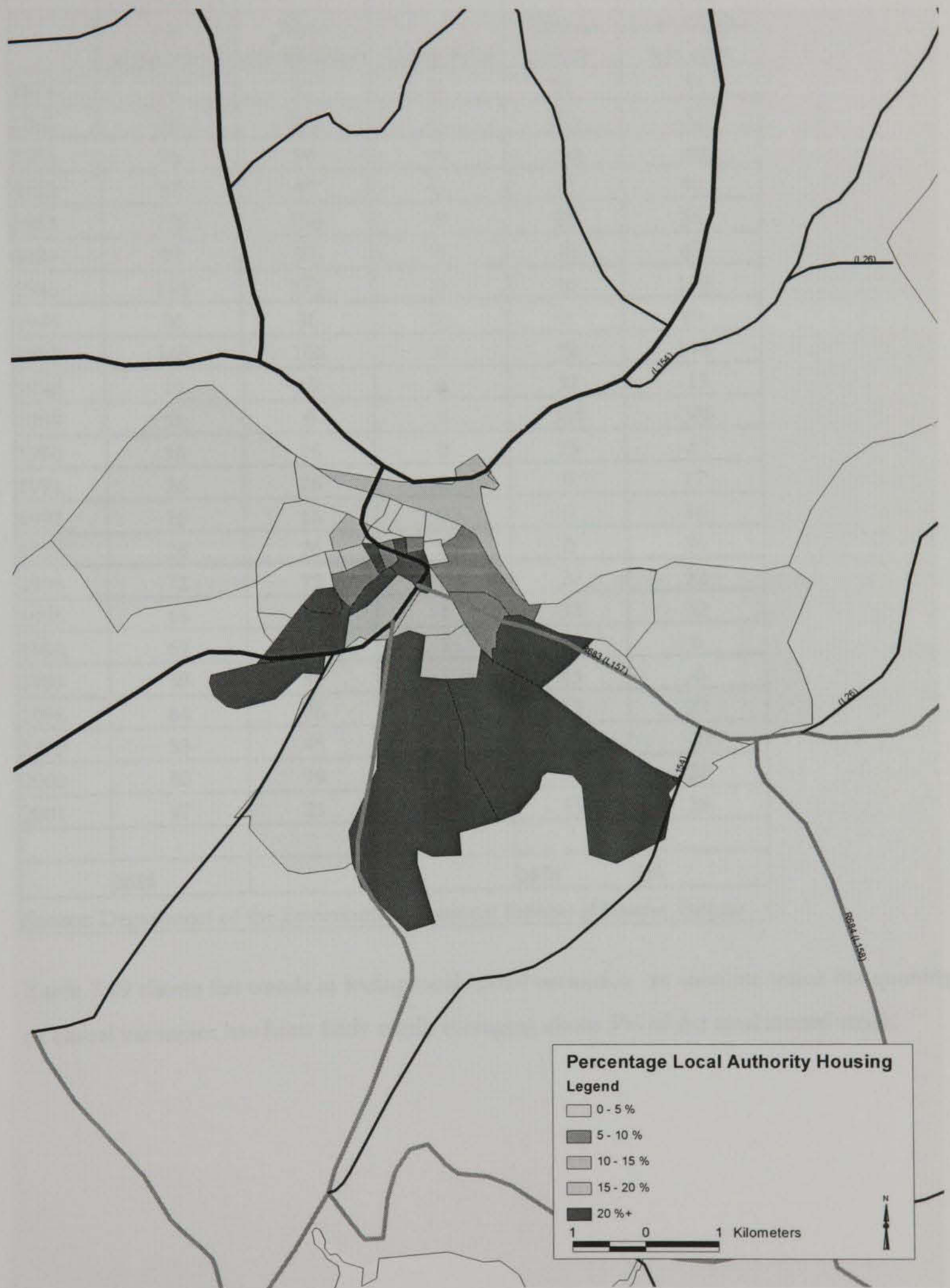
Table 7.17 Waterford City Council Housing Tenure 1991

	No.	%
Owner Occupied	8389	72.4
Private Rented	988	8.5
Rented from local authority	2210	19.1
Total	11587	100

Source: Central Statistics Office, 1991, Small Area Statistics

Table 7.18 illustrates trends in development and sales to tenants. Like Dun Laoghaire, new completions and acquisitions exceed sales, albeit only marginally.

Figure 7.3 Local Authority Housing Tenure in Waterford



Source: Central Statistic Office, Census of Population, 1991

Table 7.18 Waterford City Council Development and Sales

	Completions and acquisitions	New completions	Acquisitions	Sales to tenants	New Completions less sales
1979	47	47	0	90	-43
1980	102	102	0	155	-53
1981	96	96	0	136	-40
1982	87	87	0	47	40
1983	136	136	0	81	55
1984	97	97	0	30	67
1985	175	175	0	26	149
1986	86	86	0	0	86
1987	166	166	0	22	144
1988	19	19	0	32	-13
1989	0	0	0	388	-388
1990	16	16	0	73	-57
1991	26	26	0	9	17
1992	16	16	0	0	16
1993	26	26	0	0	26
1994	72	72	0	20	52
1995	65	64	1	33	32
1996	62	57	5	56	6
1997	58	57	1	63	-5
1998	84	76	8	59	25
1999	53	45	8	80	-27
2000	80	79	1	55	25
2001	47	21	26	19	28
	1616			1474	114

Source: Department of the Environment, (various) *Bulletins of Housing Statistics*

Table 7.19 shows the trends in lettings and casual vacancies. In absolute terms the quantity of casual vacancies has been fairly small, averaging about 3% of the total rented stock.

Table 7.19 Waterford City Council Lettings

	Lettings of new dwellings	Casual Vacancies	Total Lettings	LA Dwellings occupied	casual lettings as % of total occupied sock
1992	16	47	63	2261	2.1
1993	26	60	86	2283	2.6
1994	64	71	135	2349	3.0
1995	65	80	145	2384	3.4
1996	40	92	132	2367	3.9
1997	88	79	167	2270	3.5
1998	82	100	182	2402	4.2
1999	42	79	121	2358	3.4
2000	57	88	157	2289	3.8
2001	52	92	144	2306	4.0

Source: Department of the Environment, (various) *Bulletins of Housing Statistics*

Table 7.20 illustrates trends in housing management costs. Overall, the housing revenue account has been in deficit over the past decade. While the average deficit per dwelling has been relatively low, it increased dramatically in 2001 to £770 per dwelling.

Table 7.20 Housing Management and Maintenance in Waterford City Council

Waterford City Council		Receipts		Expenditure		Average income per dwelling		Average rent per dwelling p.a		Average expenditure per dwellings		Surplus/Deficit		Average income less av exp	
	No of dwellings occupied	Rents	Net sales	Misc.	Total	Average income per dwelling	Average rent per dwelling p.a	Maintenance	Management	Total	Average expenditure per dwellings	Surplus/Deficit	Average income less av exp		
	N	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
1991	2245	843944	324211	36919	1205074	537	376	673384	307811	981195	437	223879	100		
1992	2261	911779	265317	48711	1225807	542	403	706026	463140	1169166	517	56641	25		
1993	2283	959958	120214	3520	1083692	475	420	841087	496591	1337678	586	-253986	-111		
1994	2349	1151061	249690	3778	1404529	598	490	786043	522014	1308057	557	96472	41		
1995	2384	1190493	387984	68212	1646689	691	499	816292	646449	1462741	614	183948	77		
1996	2367	1269756	263051	62017	1594824	674	536	956798	740617	1697415	717	-102591	-43		
1997	2270	1361072	131509	124833	1617414	713	600	1026375	695615	1721990	759	-104576	-46		
1998	2402	1418538	102945	4237	1525720	635	591	1157959	331843	1489802	620	35918	15		
1999	2358	1546690	0	3080	1549770	657	656	1129172	780810	1909982	810	-360212	-153		
2000	2289	1670159	0	359926	2030085	887	730	1248991	904212	2153203	941	-123118	-54		
2001	2306	1848829	0	179200	2028030	879	802	2178097	1626646	3804743	1650	-1776713	-770		

Source: Department of the Environment, (various) *Bulletins of Housing Statistics*

III COMPARISONS AND CONTRASTS

The Tables in this section draw together information from the individual authorities to compare revenue and expenditures. Figures are on a per annum basis. Table 7.21 compares the average revenue received by the local authority per dwelling since 1991. Revenue per dwelling comprises both rents and revenue from sales of dwellings to tenants, which ceased in 1998. The calculation of rents in each local authority is based on what is termed the 'differential rent scheme. This is completely different to the UK system. In the differential rent scheme, rents are calculated on the ability of tenant households to pay. In other words, the local authority directly subsidises housing costs. Put differently, the rents charged by local authorities are substantially below the economic rent of providing and maintaining the dwelling (Dublin Corporation, 1993). Rents are thus set with respect to tenants' incomes and to the size of the dwelling.

Table 7.21 thus highlights quite significant differences between the three Dublin authorities and Limerick and Waterford. For example, the average income per dwelling of South Dublin is over twice that of Limerick and Waterford.

Table 7.21 Average Revenue Per Dwelling

	Dublin City	South Dublin	Dun Laoghaire	Limerick	Waterford
	IR£	IR£	IR£	IR£	IR£
1991	760	Na	Na	673	537
1992	845	Na	Na	745	542
1993	855	1128	599	833	475
1994	916	1154	744	793	598
1995	1014	1145	1026	931	691
1996	895	1235	1139	892	674
1997	932	1014	977	964	713
1998	933	1407	978	908	635
1999	903	1448	927	775	657
2000	1266	1670	1019	858	887
2001	1283	1797	1482	882	879
Source: Author					

Table 7.22 shows the average rent per dwelling across the five authorities. Once again, we can see differences of the same magnitude. It is also clear that while income from other sources apart from rent account for some of the differences, that the main differences are accounted for by rental charges.

Table 7.22 Average Rent Per Dwelling

	Dublin City	South Dublin	Dun Laoghaire	Limerick	Waterford
	IR£	IR£	IR£	IR£	IR£
1991	576	Na	Na	458	376
1992	573	Na	Na	507	403
1993	583	571	412	552	420
1994	606	602	649	570	490
1995	685	633	705	678	499
1996	726	679	802	663	536
1997	830	785	817	766	600
1998	844	966	876	756	591
1999	902	1081	927	775	656
2000	1083	1230	1019	851	730
2001	1283	1367	1482	882	802

Source: Author

Table 7.23 examines the average cost of maintenance per dwelling across the authorities. Clearly in the decade between 1991 and 2001 average maintenance costs have at least doubled and in one case trebled. Given the differences in incomes and rents per dwelling it is not surprising to also see differences in maintenance costs. Maintenance costs have been consistently and significantly higher in the Dublin authorities.

Table 7.23 Average Maintenance Per Dwelling

	Dublin City	South Dublin	Dun Laoghaire	Limerick	Waterford
	IR£	IR£	IR£	IR£	IR£
1991	546	Na	Na	374	300
1992	635	Na	Na	286	312
1993	648	433	392	350	368
1994	650	561	628	364	335
1995	679	440	707	406	342
1996	689	448	815	442	404
1997	881	401	874	414	452
1998	909	479	862	468	482
1999	923	653	896	521	479
2000	981	875	944	562	546
2001	1105	904	1233	650	945

Source: Author

Table 7.24 shows the changing pattern of management costs across the authorities. Again, there are significant differences between the management costs of the Dublin authorities and those in Limerick and Waterford. In Dublin City Council, average management costs

per dwelling have doubled in the past decade. In Dun Laoghaire they have increased by a factor of four.

Table 7.24 Average Management Per Dwelling

	Dublin City	South Dublin	Dun Laoghaire	Limerick	Waterford
	IR£	IR£	IR£	IR£	IR£
1991	715	Na	Na	125	137
1992	679	Na	Na	355	205
1993	680	660	273	387	218
1994	685	731	389	374	222
1995	791	743	594	415	271
1996	781	763	643	388	313
1997	692	634	739	455	306
1998	1076	712	790	469	138
1999	1195	873	1144	586	331
2000	1438	983	1326	539	395
2001	1462	975	1157	621	705

Source: Author

Table 7.25 combines the maintenance and management figures to examine average expenditure figures per dwelling across the authorities. Dublin City Council comes out clearly as having the highest costs for overall management and maintenance of dwellings. This should not surprise to much given the size of the stock, its age profile and the fact that almost two thirds of the stock is comprised of flats.

Table 7.25 Average Expenditure Per Dwelling

	Dublin City	South Dublin	Dun Laoghaire	Limerick	Waterford
	IR£	IR£	IR£	IR£	IR£
1991	1260	Na	Na	499	437
1992	1313	Na	Na	641	517
1993	1327	1093	665	737	586
1994	1335	1292	1017	739	557
1995	1469	1183	1301	821	614
1996	1470	1211	1458	830	717
1997	1572	1034	1613	869	759
1998	1984	1192	1651	937	620
1999	2117	1526	2040	1107	810
2000	2419	1858	2269	1101	941
2001	2567	1879	2390	1271	1650

Source: Author

Table 7.26 examines the overall surplus or deficit per dwelling across the authorities. Given the differential rent system, where local authorities cannot charge an economic rent

for their properties, it is hardly surprising that generally authorities run a deficit on their dwellings. Dublin City Council runs by far the highest average deficit per dwelling with, quite surprisingly, South Dublin running the lowest deficit. What is also surprising is that on occasion some authorities have managed to run a surplus. However, the overall picture is of the average deficit per dwelling increasing rapidly over time.

Table 7.26 Average Surplus/Deficit Per Dwelling

	Dublin City	South Dublin	Dun Laoghaire	Limerick	Waterford
	IR£	IR£	IR£	IR£	IR£
1991	-500	Na	Na	174	100
1992	-469	Na	Na	105	25
1993	-472	35	-66	96	-111
1994	-419	-137	-273	55	41
1995	-455	-38	-275	110	77
1996	-575	24	-319	62	-43
1997	-640	-20	-637	95	-46
1998	-1050	215	-673	-29	15
1999	-1214	-78	-1113	-332	-153
2000	-1153	-188	-1250	89	-54
2001	-1285	-82	-908	-389	-770

Source: Author

IV CONCLUSIONS

The data presented in this chapter revealed a number of broad trends. The first is the fact that most authorities sell more dwellings than they either build or acquire. The second is that the costs of maintaining and managing their dwellings has increased rapidly over the last decade. The third is that the cost of management and maintenance of their stock significantly outweighs income received from rents. While these losses are absorbed in the overall local authority budget, there are clear implications arising. With respect to the management of their stock, the housing revenue and expenditure system clearly militates against any rational or effective management. In addition, given that costs are far greater than incomes from rents, it makes it difficult for local authorities to acquiesce to the demands of tenants for increased and better maintenance.

CHAPTER 8

TENANT PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICE: POLICIES AND STRUCTURES OF PARTICIPATION

I INTRODUCTION

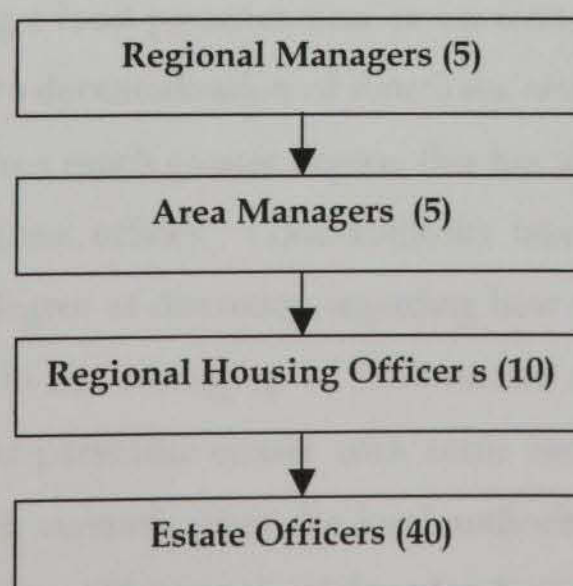
This chapter draws almost wholly on interviews with local authority officials and tenant representatives to describe the varying policies, levels and structures of tenant participation being implemented across the case study areas. Of itself, this is a valuable contribution to knowledge regarding the implementation of this locally-based policy. In addition, it provides important context for the next two chapters which examine the varying perceptions of implementation. Section II describes the overall structure of participation for each local authority and then examines local structures in some sub-areas or estates. Interviews were conducted with local authority estate officers and tenant representatives in each of the sub areas identified. Section III derives some comparisons and contrasts between the different case study areas and Section IV concludes the chapter.

II LEVELS AND STRUCTURES OF TENANT PARTICIPATION

Dublin City Council

Dublin City Council is the largest local authority landlord in the country. It has a housing stock of c. 24,500 dwellings of which approximately 16,000 are flats (including Ballymun). Over the past 5 years, the Council has been in the process of a major decentralisation of its services. The City Council has been divided into 5 sub-areas for the purposes of administration and management. Figure 8.1 illustrates the structure currently in operation.

Figure 8.1 Estate Management Structure in Dublin City Council



A regional manager is in charge of all services, not just housing, for each area. Below them, there are area managers who have responsibility for economic development issues. The third tier in the hierarchy comprises 10 regional housing offices all headed by a senior housing officer. These regional housing officers are in turn responsible for all housing services in their area, including estate management. Thus, in the process of decentralisation, housing allocations officer, officers in charge of rents etc. are now based in regional offices. Estate officers are also located in these regional offices or in local estate offices. The ten regional offices are listed in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1 Regional Housing Offices in Dublin City Council

	Regional Area/ Office
1	Ballymun
2	Ballyfermot
3	Darndale
4	Finglas
5	Kilbarrack & Donaghmede
6	Kilmainham & Inchicore
7	North East Inner City
8	North West Inner City
9	South East Area
10	South Inner City
	Source: I45

The City Council has made significant progress in organising the housing service into a regional structure, with ten regional offices being established. Moreover, a number of local estate offices have also been established. This decentralisation, and in part devolvement of functions, represents one method of improving services to tenants. Put differently, for Dublin City Council the organisation of tenant participation and estate management is firmly about establishing a local presence near or on estates. While the establishment of regional offices has led to decentralisation of functions, with tenants able to access housing services at a local level to a much greater degree, this has also led to a certain devolvement of powers to these regional offices. Local-authority housing officers in charge of such regional offices have a degree of discretion regarding how they deliver services locally. For some, this has resulted in the setting up of local estates offices with estate management officers taking charge of particular estates with some limited budgetary discretion. This more hands-on approach certainly gives the local authority greater local information and contacts in managing estates. While some of these local estate offices are run on a part-time basis, others are operated full-time. In the City Council, the housing and community

department has a dedicated staff of estate management officers who work in regional and local estates offices, whose function is to deliver services and to liaise with tenant groups. There are also dedicated community development workers in the department whose function is to form, develop and train local tenant groups. It must be said that within Dublin City Council (excluding Ballymun) there are few examples of separate estate boards where the local authority and the tenants come together in a formal manner. The model of estate management in Dublin City Council is of an interaction and consultation between tenants and the local authority primarily through regional or local offices or directly through meetings with estate management officers.

Although there is no written statement of policy on estate management, the push to develop an estate management policy was started in late 1997 early 1998 and it was at that time that the Council decided to decentralise some of its functions. The first stage in this process was the designation of estate officers to particular estates and this process has continued until the present. The estate officers work on the ground in the regional offices and/or in the local estate offices which are often located on the estate.

The history of tenant activism in the City Council is little known. While there has been some study of community action in general, there has been none of tenant activism (Kelleher and Whelan, 1992). From the research undertaken for this thesis, it can be concluded that tenant groups have ebbed and flowed. While in some of the estates studied there are well developed local groups, these often predate formal tenant participation policies and also deal with a wider array of issues. Dublin City Council do not directly fund any tenant advocate workers. However, it is true to say that there are significant numbers of community development workers employed by local area partnerships and community development projects who feed into tenant groups. Perhaps more importantly, the housing department in the Council also has a community section and the Council uses its community officers to help form and sustain tenant groups. These community officers are distinct from estate officers, in a colloquial sense the soft side of estate management.

Estates

O' Devaney Gardens

O' Devaney Gardens is a deck-access flats complex in the inner city area, located on the north side of the river. It was built in the 1950s and currently has c.276 flats and a population of c.900. Plates 8.1 to 8.3 show the nature of the complex which is typical of many inner-city flats complexes across the inner area of Dublin. Compared with Teresa's Gardens, for example, the complex has had a very low level of tenant organisation over the past decade. However, it has had similar problems in terms of anti-social behaviour, drug dealing, drug use, alcohol abuse and so on. During the 1980s and 1990s, when the estate suffered from severe problems, the level of collective tenant activity was extremely low (I48). Moreover, as is acknowledged by Dublin City Council, direct estate management was almost non-existent. This lack of estate management, and subsequent social and environmental degradation of the estate, is well captured in a survey undertaken on behalf of the residents by an independent consultant (Community Development Forum, 2001a). With a 92% response rate, the survey is reliable. Over half of the population is under 18 years of age and the typical household is a single parent with two or three children.

The foreword to the report states that the complex was 'once a very vibrant area' and that 'you were not afraid to let your children out to play' (Community Development Forum, 2001a, p2). However, the survey reveals high levels of dissatisfaction with life on the estate over the past few years, with very high levels of dissatisfaction with the level of anti-social behaviour and intimidation on the estate. Over 60 per cent of tenants wished to leave the estate. Over 70 per cent described the state of the housing as either poor or very poor. Half of all tenants thought that the estate should be demolished with another half believing it should be refurbished. Ninety per cent thought the environment was either poor or very poor. With respect to views of the statutory authorities, three quarters of tenants said that the service provided by the City Council was either poor or terrible. The attitude towards the police and the health service was equally negative. Over 90 percent of tenants said they were not involved in any local, community, youth or voluntary group and three quarters of tenants said that community spirit was either poor or non-existent. All in all, the survey paints a depressing picture.

In the past two years, however, the level of tenant activism and organisation has increased from its low base. This was partly organic, in that from 1998 there was an organised Community Development Forum which was seeking to have some community facilities built (Community Development Forum, 2001a, 2001b). This Community Development Forum is comprised of tenants and representatives of statutory bodies and voluntary organisations. However, it could be argued that what has generated most of the recent activity has been the emergence of a plan by the City Council to redevelop the complex. At the time of writing, the tenants and the council are still locked in intense discussion, not to say conflict, over the nature of these plans. The essence of the redevelopment plan is to demolish the existing flats, sell some of the site to a private developer for development of apartments for private sale, and to use the proceeds of the land sale to build new dwellings (apartments) for the tenants.

This proposed plan has been the subject of intense conflict between the local authority and the tenants. This derives in part from the fact that, according to the tenants, the plan appeared from 'out of the blue' without any discussion with the tenants. It also derives from the very nature of the plan. The site of O' Devaney Gardens is 13 acres in extent and is located very close to the city centre and is thus, in the current housing market, seen as a prime site. The local authority argues that the only way in which the flats can be redeveloped is for the authority to realise the value of the site as there is no funding either centrally or locally for redevelopment. From an economic viewpoint, this means redeveloping to a far higher density with a reduction in the number of social housing units.

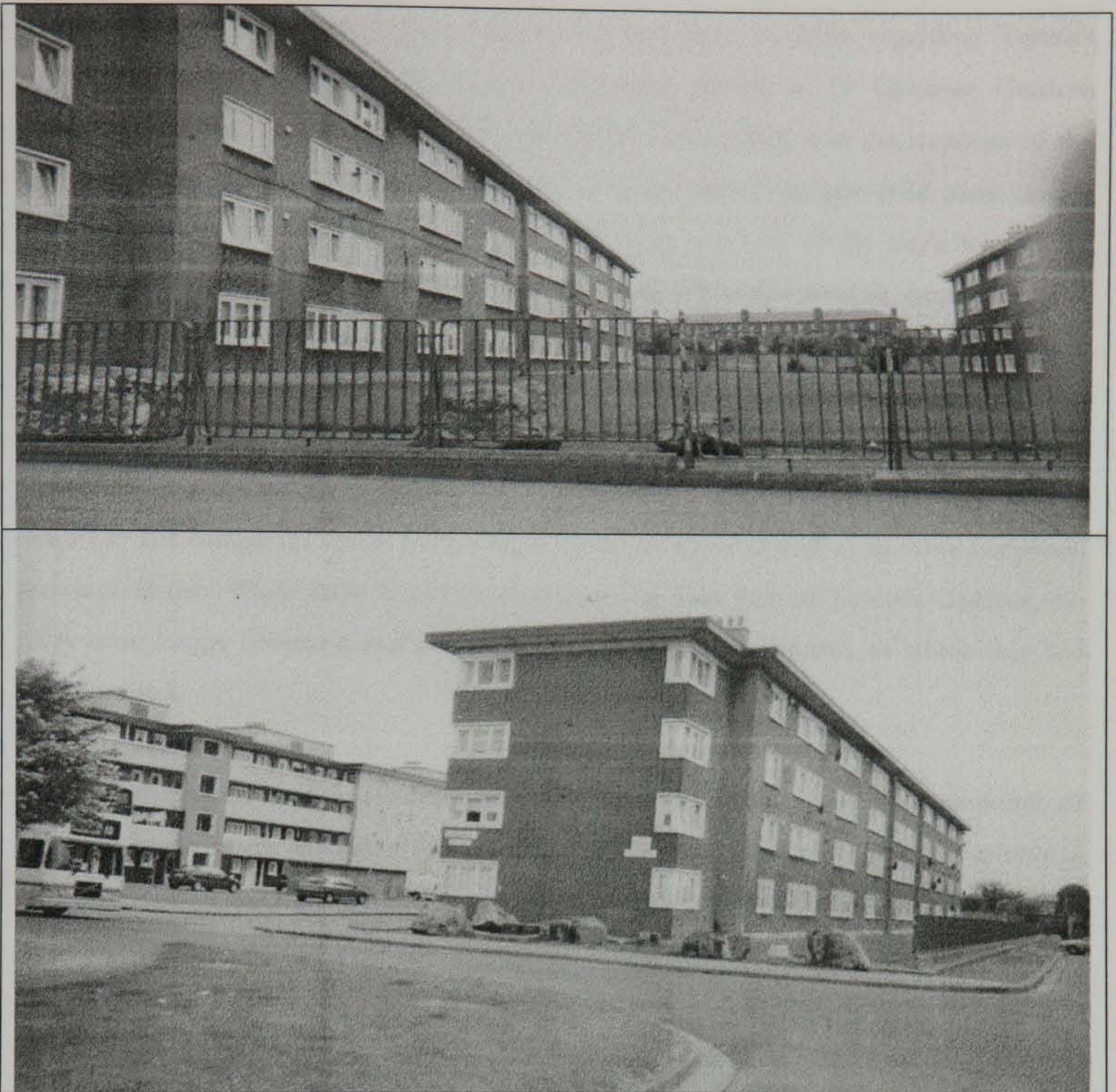
Another key change in the complex has been the development of an active estate management policy. In the past two years, the City Council has established an estate office on the complex with a full-time estate officer. The primary functions of the local estate office are to improve general estate maintenance, to deal with the anti-social behaviour, to liaise with the tenant group and develop tenant structures. The Community Development Forum still operates and is independent of what is an emerging tenant structure based on the various blocks in the area. Thus, the structure of tenant participation on the estate comprises mainly of *ad-hoc* negotiations between tenant representatives and the local estate office.

This development of a local estate management presence has been generally welcomed by the tenant representatives, and the results have been seen as positive in many respects. From the tenant viewpoint, it has benefits as it gives tenants a direct point of access for information and demand for services. The estate management office has taken a direct interventionist role in dealing with anti-social behaviour and has taken a number of high profile evictions. Given the community view of anti-social behaviour, this move has been generally welcomed, at least by the tenant representatives. However, there has been some disquiet at attempts of the estate office to develop a tenant structure of their liking.

O' Devaney Gardens thus presents an interesting case. Classically deprived, and subject to the problems of anti-social behaviour, collective tenant organisation and activity was very low over the past few years. However, the area has begun to change. The development of a localised and activist estate management policy, the emergence of a more organised tenant group and the emerging conflict over redevelopment, crystallise some of the key issues in the implementation of tenant participation.



Plate 8.1 - O' Devaney Gardens, North West Inner City, Dublin



Plates 8.2 to 8.3 - O' Devaney Gardens, North West Inner City, Dublin

St. Teresa's Gardens

St Teresa's is a flats complex of approximately 300 units which was built in the 1940s and 1950s and is located in the south west inner city (See Plates 8.4 to 8.6). Once a notorious complex for drug dealing and anti-social behaviour, in the past few years the area has quietened significantly, in part because of the high demand for local authority housing in Dublin, which reduces tenancy turnover for example, but also because of the development of a strong community and estate management focus. The presence of Sinn Fein activists on the complex has also contributed to the relative quietening of the estate.

Although there is less published empirical information available regarding Teresa's Gardens, the broad socio-economic and community profile of O' Devaney Gardens applies. However, where Teresa's Gardens differs considerably is in the response of the community. The complex suffered the same social problems, perhaps even more severe, than did O' Devaney Gardens, developing a reputation as one of the city's worst drug dealing and drug use estate. However, from the early 1990s the level of community and tenant activism increased significantly. This activism had a distinctive political edge as it was in large part led and dominated, at least in its early stage, by Sinn Fein activists. Sinn Fein was prominent, though by no means dominant, in a variety of anti-drugs movements across the city. Given the nature of the drugs problem, they were active in some of the inner city flat complexes where the problem was at its worst as well as in some peripheral housing estates. While there is still some activism by Sinn Fein in Teresa's Gardens, the party is no longer dominant and nor is there much hint of vigilantism, of which they had been accused.

One of the most interesting developments in Teresa's Gardens has been the negotiation of an estate management agreement between the City Council and the Resident's Committee which was facilitated by an independent community development organisation. After a period of internal conflict among tenant activists, elections by secret ballot were held in November 2000 and a residents committee formed as the recognised group for the complex. Discussions began on an estate agreement in April 2001 and were concluded in January 2002. There were three phases; consultation, negotiation and implementation. The final agreement covers allocations, anti-social behaviour, maintenance, community development and accountability. On allocations, there is agreement that the Council will consult over all nominees but that the final decision will be made by the council. On anti-social behaviour, the Council agree to take firm action, including eviction, where there is persistent anti-social behaviour, while the residents committee accept that it is up to the statutory authorities to enforce any action against tenants who engage in anti-social behaviour. On maintenance, there is a commitment by the Council to comply with a series of timescales on repairs, from emergency to routine, and on community development there are a series of commitments on both sides to develop and enhance community structures and community services. Finally, with regard to accountability, as part of the agreement an 'Estate Agreement Evaluation Committee' was formed which

would meet quarterly and would be comprised of the regional housing officer, the estate officer and two tenant representatives.

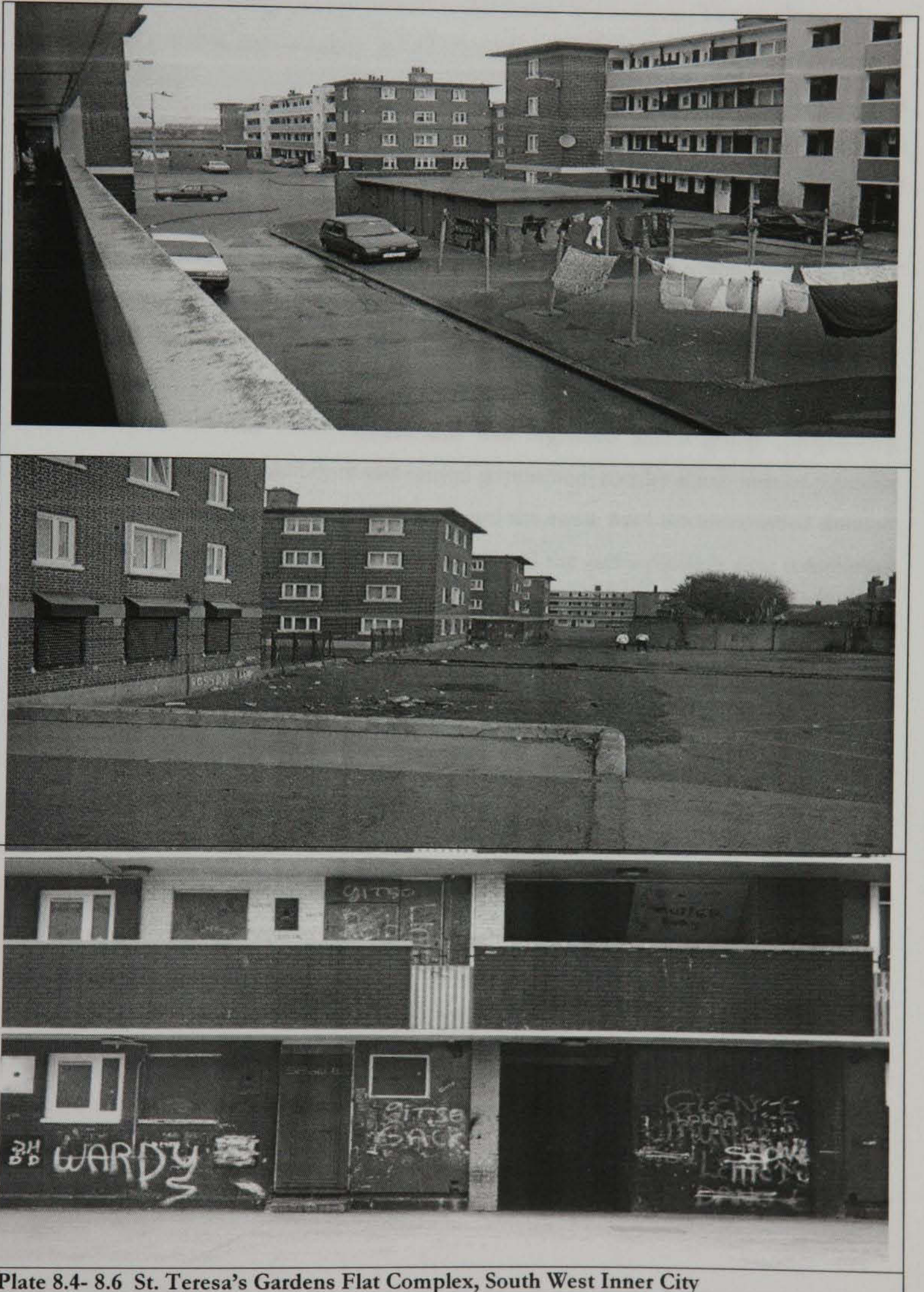


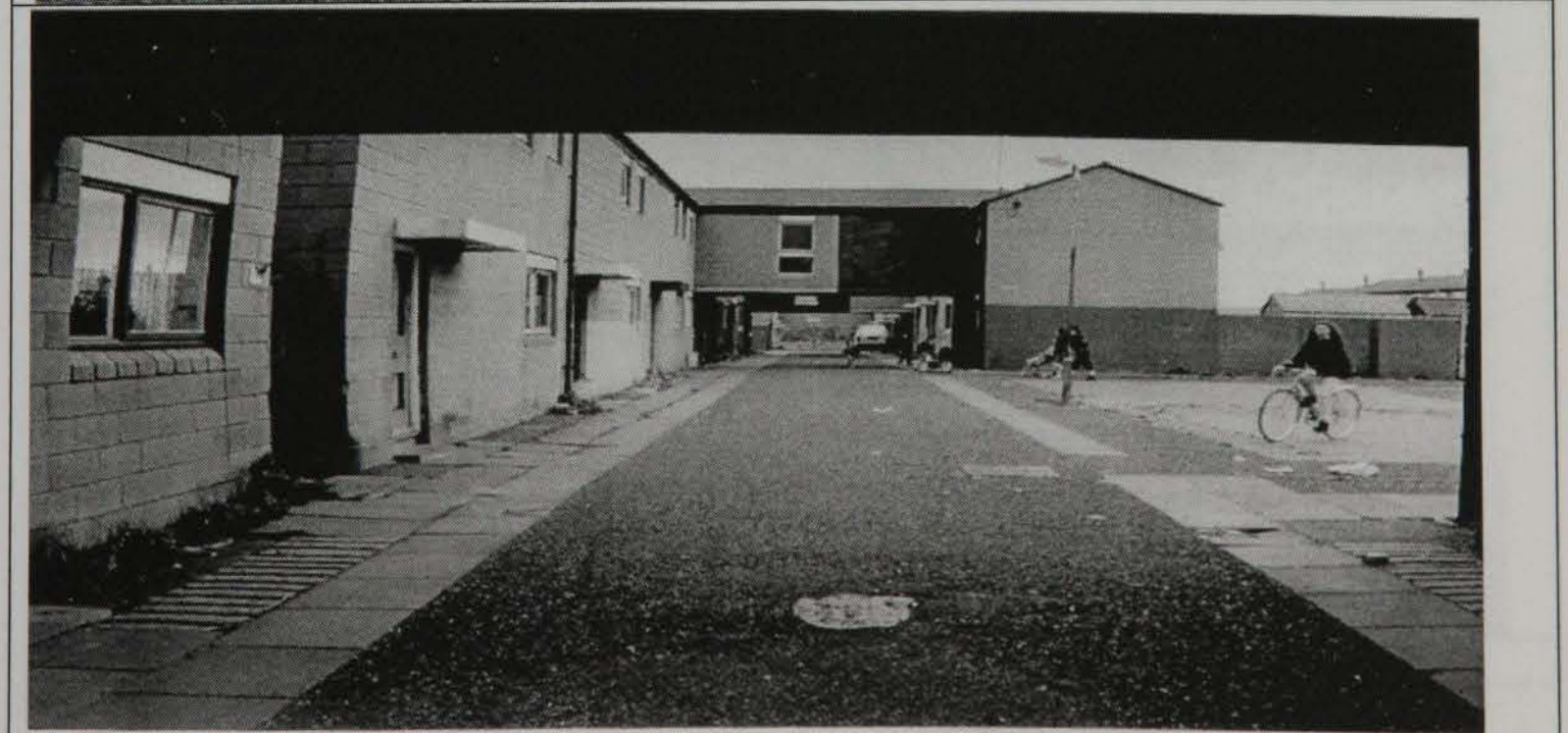
Plate 8.4- 8.6 St. Teresa's Gardens Flat Complex, South West Inner City

Darndale

Darndale is a large local-authority estate on the Dublin's northern periphery. It was built in the early 1970s to a unique design based on defensible space ideas. The resulting scheme is of high-density low-rise housing. Based on both the Radburn principle of separation of pedestrians from traffic and on defensible space ideas of territoriality, the scheme is a warren of close and interconnected units. By the early 1980s, just a decade after the scheme had been completed and occupied, the estate was severely physically and environmentally degraded (see Plates 8.7 to 8.9) and suffered from major social problems and anti-social behaviour (Redmond, 1986). The estate became a notorious 'problem' estate nationally in part because of its serious socio-economic problems but also in part because of its unique design. In effect it became a stigmatised estate.

However, from the mid 1980s onward and well organised tenant group continuously pressurised both the local authority and central government to take some sort of remedial action on the estate. From the early 1990s onward the estate has been refurbished through funding from the national remedial work scheme and the entire estate is now refurbished (see Plates 8.10 to 8.12). There has been a significant increase in satisfaction as a result of the refurbishment and the estate has stabilised to a significant degree. According to both the estate officers and the tenant activists, the area is now an area sought after by tenants with a waiting list to move into the estate. In the 1980s the majority of tenants wished to leave the estate (Redmond, 1986). However, there are still serious problems with joyriding on the estate.

In the past two years a new neighbourhood centre has been built and the City Council have located one of their regional housing offices there. This office comprises a senior housing officer and allocation and estate officers. With regard to tenant groups, Darndale has traditionally had strong and active groups, in part a legacy of the group which, from a grassroots origin, pressured to refurbish the estate in the late 1980s, and in part because of the political presence of Sinn Fein. However, in the last few years the tenant group has been reduced to a small number of activists (all women).



Plates 8.7. to 8.9 Darndale Prior to Refurbishment



Plates 8.10 – 8.12 Darndale Refurbished

Cherry Orchard

Cherry Orchard is a suburban estate on the south west side of Dublin built in the late 1970s and the early 1980s. It became notorious in the mid 1990s as almost a 'no-go' area because of the level of drug-related problems and the consequent severe degree of anti-social behaviour. One particularly serious incident became known as the 'Gallanstown Riot' (Bartley, 1998; Bartley and Saris, 1999; Saris *et al*, 2002). Apart from its association with drug dealing and anti-social behaviour, the estate is also synonymous for the number of horses which roam freely about the area. Indeed, a number of interviewees told of how dealers use the horses to deliver drugs around the estate. Plates 8.13 to 8.15 give an impression of the estate.

One of the regional housing offices is in the Ballyfermot area which is contiguous to Cherry Orchard. In late 1997 and early 1998 a number of council officers were assigned as estate officers for the Ballyfermot area, including Cherry Orchard. Their purpose was to begin an estate management process in the area by establishing contact with existing tenant and community groups. Thus, estate management began as a pro-active policy. Interviews with estate officers who were the first to work in Cherry Orchard reveal that the Council and its policy of estate management was greeted with deep suspicion for the first year. Estate officers recount the 'hatred' with which tenants and tenant groups treated them. They also reveal a situation where tenant groups were either non-existent in certain estates, poorly developed in terms of their organisation and structure or waxed and waned over the years. Even now, the vibrancy of tenant groups, according to tenant groups themselves, is weak. In large part this underdevelopment has been rooted in a culture of intimidation that exists on some of the estates. It is clear from the interviews with both tenant activists and estate officers that tenant groups and community activists have been the subject of threats and intimidation from other tenants linked or associated with drugs in some fashion.

According to the estate officers, because of the level of problems on estates in the area, the initial strategy adopted in Cherry Orchard was to take a hard line with problem tenants. To that end, within the first year, approximately forty houses were repossessed by the Council. Some of these were through evictions and others were handed back after pressure by the Council. This tactic was seen as a method of gaining the community's trust. The

role of estate officers, while initially heavily focused on dealing with anti-social behaviour, is now more focused on dealing with other aspects of estate management such as maintenance, proposals for infill development and linking with tenant groups.



Plates 8.13 – 8.15 Cherry Orchard, South West Dublin

South Dublin County Council

South Dublin County Council came into existence in 1994 as part of the local authority restructuring of what had been Dublin County and Dun Laoghaire Borough. The County was split into three separate County Councils: South Dublin, Fingal and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown. The Dublin area is now comprised of these three councils and Dublin City Council. During the 1970s and 1980s, Dublin City Council built a large amount of local authority housing in the administrative area of the former Dublin County and was also responsible for its management. When South Dublin was created in 1994 it was proposed that approximately 2,500 dwellings in the ownership and management of Dublin City Council be transferred to South Dublin. After prolonged negotiations these dwellings were transferred in 1997. Some of the estate officers interviewed opined that between 1994 and 1997 the City Council effectively abandoned management of their estates. Thus, by the time South Dublin took over management of the estates and the estate management policy was started, many of the estates had severe social and environmental problems.

In South Dublin, an estate management policy (unwritten) was launched in 1997. To this end, an estate management section was formed in the housing department as well as a related allocation support unit which deals mainly with anti-social behaviour. What was termed the 'Resident Participation Initiative' was first piloted in five areas, three in West Tallaght and two in North Clondalkin and the initiative remains confined primarily to those areas. At the start, five estate officers in total were appointed to take charge of different areas, although on only one occasion has there been a full complement of officers.

In addition to the employment of estate officers, South Dublin County Council is the only authority of the five selected which has such a large anti-social behaviour team, although Dun Laoghaire Rathdown has recently employed two anti-social behaviour officers. Table 8.2 shows the policy on anti-social behaviour. There is a combined budget for these sections totalling approximately €500,000 per annum. This budget is primarily used for various physical and environmental improvements which arise as a result of the tenant participation process. There is also a dedicated estate management staff. With a rented stock of approximately 7,500 dwellings, there are five estate officers and eight allocation support officers.

Table 8.2 Anti-Social Policy in South Dublin County Council**The Allocations Support Unit**

“The Allocations Support Unit was established in 1997 following the enactment of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1997. Anti-social behaviour has been identified by residents of Council estates as one of the main areas of concern.

As part of the Estate Management Initiative it is Council policy to provide a fast and effective response to such problems and to reinforce the message that the Council will not tolerate anti-social behaviour.

The role of the Unit is primarily the investigation of complaints of anti-social behaviour and taking appropriate remedial action. The remedial action may ultimately involve the initiation of legal proceedings against offending tenants and the carrying out of evictions where no other solution can be found. The Unit maintains close contact with the Gardai and Health Boards. The Unit also has a role in the carrying out of pre-tenancy checks on prospective tenants to ensure that there is no history of anti-social behaviour. The Council also consults with approved residents groups regarding prospective lettings. “

Source: www.southdublin.ie

Tenant participation in South Dublin is primarily organised through the estate officers. These officers have regular meetings with tenant groups in the estates for which they are responsible. Moreover, regular estate clinics are held in local offices. These estate clinics are attended by the estate officer, allocation support staff and oftentimes by the police.

Tenant groups are assisted in some cases through the employment of tenant advocate workers, in this case funded through the Local Drugs Taskforces. The rationale for funding from the local drugs taskforces is that local authority estates are still subject to major drugs problems and that a major part of a tenant workers function would revolve around issues generated from drug-related activity. Moreover, tenant groups are also assisted through provision of some offices space, although mainly they use existing community facilities. Small scale funding is also provided to cover office administration expenses. While there are long established and well developed local community structures these in many cases predate the formal establishment of an estate management policy. Nonetheless, the estates officers are involved in these local community structures to an significant extent. Community groups are relatively well organised in the Tallaght area, largely because it is older than Clondalkin, but also because the anti-drugs movement was very well organised in the Tallaght area (Punch, 2002a). It is clear from interviews that

tenant groups are not so well organised in the North Clondalkin area. The estate officers interviewed made it clear that the community department had very little involvement in estate management generally and in developing tenant groups in particular.

Estates

North Clondalkin

North Clondalkin is an outlying suburb to the west of Dublin. North Clondalkin is not so much an estate as a number of large local authority housing estates with approximately 2000 local authority houses. Plates 8.16 to 8.18 illustrate the typical type of housing in the area. The estates are comprised typically of sprawling low-density low rise dwellings. The level of tenant purchase in the area is low and the area continues to suffer from a host of socio-economic problems. In the early 1990s parts of North Clondalkin, such as Neilstown, developed a notoriety based on drugs problems and mini-riots.

The manner in which estate management and tenant participation operates in North Clondalkin is revealed through interviews with estate officers as well as through the analysis of one of the estate officers, who is responsible for the North Clondalkin area, who attempted to codify the purpose of estate management in the area in an unpublished document. The purpose of estate management is:

‘To further encourage the involvement of tenants/tenant purchasers in the development of structures in their communities and to facilitate the evolution of organisational supports to enable tenants to participate in the management of their estates’ (Unpublished internal memorandum, South Dublin County Council).

The function and role of estate officers is to: encourage and facilitate participation by residents groups in the management of their estates; to channel requests and concerns of tenants; to participate in meetings of residents groups; to act as facilitator to statutory agencies; to maintain effective communications with the Council and to ensure local residents groups are informed and consulted on proposals affecting their estate (Unpublished Memorandum, South Dublin County Council, 2002).

Table 8.3 shows the estates for which one of the estate officers is responsible for in North Clondalkin. In the officers own analysis of the main problems of the area he identifies environmental degradation, allocations and transfers and ‘drug abuse, gangs loitering and

causing disturbances, joyriding and neighbourhood disputes' as being the most serious issues. In attempting to deal with these problems he identifies one of the core obstacles, quite interestingly, as 'Getting responses and action from some other Council Departments' (Unpublished Memorandum, South Dublin County Council, 2002). In addition, he refers to a lack of administrative support in the Council, the lack of organisation of tenant groups and the lack of civic pride on estates.

Table 8.3 Estate Officer Responsibility in North Clondalkin

Estate	No. of Dwellings
Foxdene	225
Moorfield	200
Neilstown	217
St. Ronan's	285
Rowlagh	320
	1247

Source: Unpublished document, South Dublin County Council



Plate 8.16 North Clondalkin



Plates 8.17 – 8.18 North Clondalkin

West Tallaght (Killinarden area)

Tallaght, one of the so-called 'new towns', is located to the south west of Dublin. When speaking of West Tallaght, we are referring to huge tracts of low-density local authority housing estates. Plates 8.19 and 8.20 give a good impression of the nature of the sprawl while Plates 8.21, 8.22 and 8.23 illustrate some of the estates in the Killinarden area. Even Killinarden itself is comprised of four estates, Killinarden, Knockmore, Donomore and Cushlawn. Tallaght was the first new town to be developed to the West of Dublin in the 1970s and 1980s and it now has a population of approximately 90,000.

What is clear from the interviews and from secondary sources is that the level of community development is relatively strong in Tallaght compared with Clondalkin (North and East Housing Association, 1995). In Killinarden itself, a Community Council has been in existence for over twenty years. So, when the local authority started its estate management policy there was an existing community structure which could be utilised. Indeed, well before the advent of estate management in 1997, the Community Council in Killinarden had what they term a 'very good' relationship with Dublin City Council. By this they meant that they had a significant influence over allocations policy and individual lettings. However, when South Dublin County Council took over the management of the estates in 1997, this relationship changed and the Community Council's influence was reduced considerably.

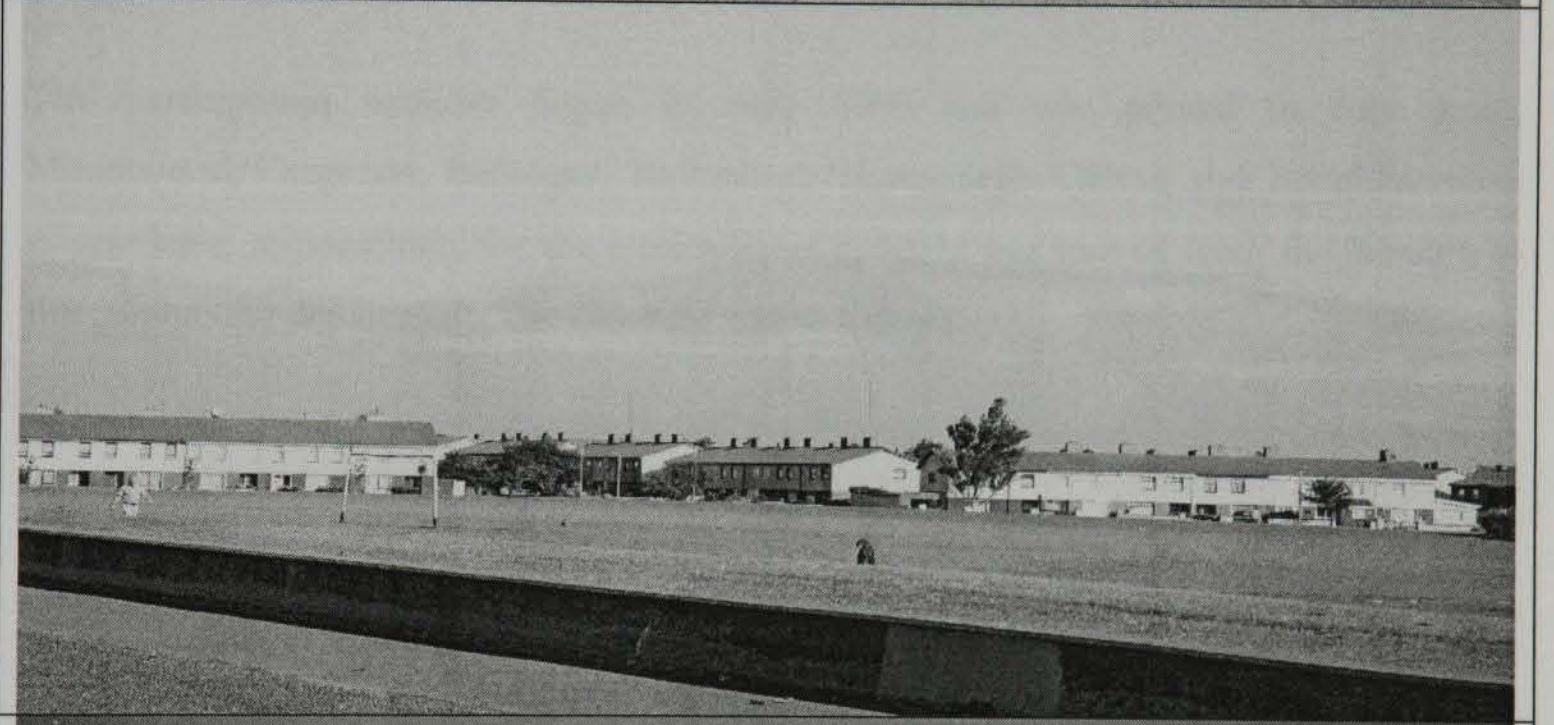
The primary mechanism for estate management now is the activities of the estate officer who meets informally with tenant groups but who also holds weekly 'estate clinics' in an office on the estate. This clinic is usually also attended by an officer from the anti-social behaviour team as well as a member of the police. In addition, the estate officer is also a member of an 'estate management group', which is a sub-group of the Community Council. This estate management group is in effect a tenant group and it receives funding from the Local Drugs Task Force for employment of an 'estate worker', a tenant advocate in other words who in this case is also a tenant on the estate.

The long-established Community Council has adapted to the emergence of a formal estate management policy by forming an estate management group which reports back to the main Community Council. It seems that this Community Council has both extensive

experience and a broad overview of a range of community development issues and see estate management as something which is additional to other community activities and which should be integrated into a coherent approach to solving local problems.



Plates 8.19- 8.20 Low Density Local Authority Housing in West Tallaght



Plates 8.21 – 8.23 Killinarden, West Tallaght

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council

Estate management in Dun Laoghaire Rathdown presents an interesting contrast to the other authorities selected. First, the authority has a written policy which was developed in 1999. Second, responsibility for estate management was moved from the housing department to the community department. Third, there has been a genuine attempt to pursue significant internal restructuring of authority operations and practices.

The overall aim of the tenant participant policy is to:

To develop a partnership approach between the Council and tenants/residents at both local and policy/co-ordination levels in the design, implementation and review of estate management policies, to develop a better sense of community and to create a better physical, social and economic environment for people living in these local communities. (www.dlrcoco.ie)

The participation initiative began in early 2000 and was piloted in four areas, Mountwood/Fitzgerald, Ballyogan, Rathsallagh/Shanganagh/Clifton and Loughlinstown. A year later, responsibility for the participation initiative was moved from the housing to the community department. The rationale was as follows:

This was due to the belief that Estate Management is, in essence, a collaboration between statutory agencies and the community that identifies and solves community problems. It is more than a housing issue. In other words, Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown County Council decided that Estate Management would work best from a community development perspective as this perspective recognises that housing estates are more than somewhere to live. Estate Management is also about creating vibrant communities, sustainable neighbourhoods, pride of place and a new form of local governance where people can share in the benefits and rewards of their community (www.dlrcoco.ie)

The structure of the tenant participation initiative is shown in Figure 8.2. As can be seen, the base of the initiative is that an Estate Management Forum was formed in each of the four areas. The membership of these fora is comprised of elected or self selected tenant representatives, a community worker from the County Council's community department (in effect an estate officer) and what is termed a 'link worker'. A link worker is in effect a tenant advocate worker who is funded independently by the Local Drugs Task Force. The funding for these workers started in early 2002 and all the workers are local-authority tenants. These fora generally meet once a month and occasionally other statutory agencies, such as the Health Board or the police, attend. Each forum is allocated €25,000 per annum as a dedicated budget over which the tenants have some discretion. The

spending has to be approved by the Council but may be used for such things as training or undertaking minor work on the estate. Each forum must produce an annual service plan which sets out the priorities for spending the allocated €25,000. In addition to the individual estate forums, there is a county forum in which tenant representatives from each of the four pilot areas, the estate officer and the link workers, meet on a regular basis. The purpose of this county forum is to address common issues and to attempt to arrive at common solutions.

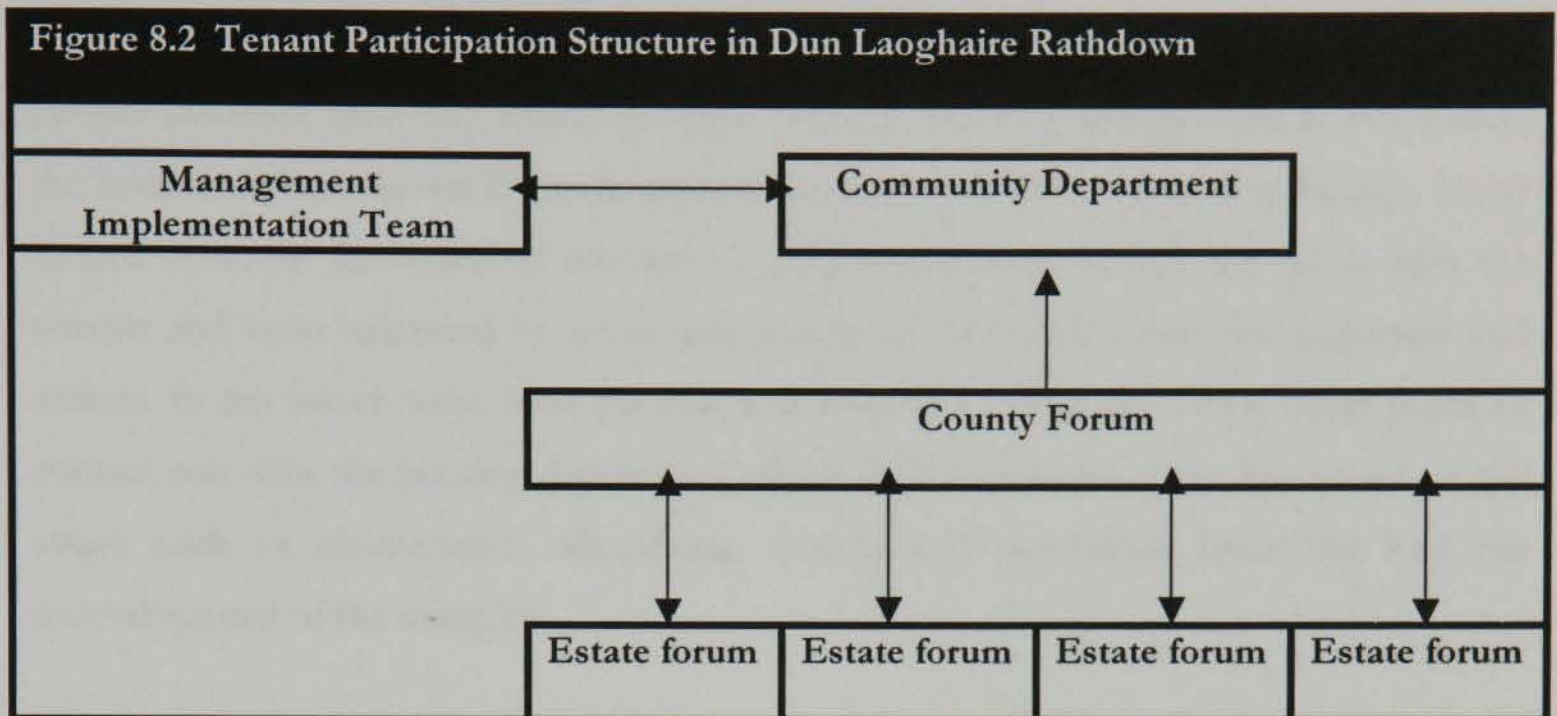
Perhaps one of the most innovative aspects of the structure is the formation of what is termed a 'Management Implementation Team' (MIT). Chaired by a Director of Services, the MIT comprises either heads of all departments in the Council or senior officers. Its avowed function is to ensure that the estate management process is implemented and in particular to see that the service plans are implemented. The overall philosophy and approach of the authority is as follows:

This team is made up of the Heads of all departments who will co-ordinate the various departmental service plans, monitor the carrying out of these plans, ensure that Estate Management/Tenant Participation is the new ethos and way of working within Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown County Council, etc. Estate Management challenges our policy-making and approach to communities. It calls for a new ethos that delivers services effectively with a particular focus on customer care. On the other hand, it challenges the dependency culture quite often found in local authority areas as a result of the creation of ghettoised, unserviced areas with poor community facilities. Estate Management encourages ownership, which in turn should lead to the overall improvement of an area.
www.dlrcoco.ie

On paper then, this structure sounds promising, especially in its attempts to make internal changes. Apart from the radical decentralisation of Dublin City Council, this is the only example of attempted change of internal structures. It could be argued that the creation of estate officers, which is clearly innovative, does not necessarily alter the fundamental manner in which the authority operates.

This initiative is clearly a top-down one and it can be seen in the level of development of tenant groups. In three of the four pilot estates tenant groups have effectively been set up from scratch. After the launch of the strategy a series of public meetings were held on estate to inform tenants and to generate interest in the proposed estate fora. From these meeting, tenant representatives came forward to join the fora. The approach to the tenant

composition of the fora is to have an open approach to membership. In other words, any tenant can be a member of the estate forum. As will be seen, this has had variable results.



Estates

Mounttown

Mounttown is a small flat complex of approximately 280 dwellings located about one mile from the centre of Dun Laoghaire harbour. It is in effect an island of poverty in the midst of some of the most affluent neighbourhoods in the Dublin area. It clearly suffers from environmental degradation and a severe drug-dealing and drug-using problem¹. Mounttown is currently being redeveloped with all of the flats are to be demolished and medium density housing to be put in its place. Plates 8.24 to 8.26 show the old flats and the new housing while Table 8.4 shows the structure of participation on the estate.

Table 8.4 Membership of Mounttown Estate Forum

Tenant representatives	6
Tenant link worker	1
Local Authority estate officer	1
Senior community department officer (observer)	1
Source: Interviews	

¹ When undertaking some of the interviews for this research a number of times I witnessed open drug dealing in daylight hours.

The tenant representatives on the estate are highly critical not only of their lack of influence on the redevelopment programme but also of the change in the estate management structure from the housing department to the community department. The tenant activists are savagely critical of the new arrangements and claim that they now have far less influence than they had in the past. Prior to the new arrangement in 1999/2000, the tenants of Mounttown had a structure of participation which worked as follows. Every month or so all the heads of relevant Council departments walked the estate with the tenants and were informed of issues and problems. They assert that the responses and actions to the issues were both prompt and effective. Moreover, their main point of contact was with the housing department which dealt with most of the key issues on the estate such as maintenance, allocations, dealing with anti-social behaviour and the redevelopment of the complex.

However, the new structure has in their view a number of serious defects. The first is the problem of communicating their problems. The heads of departments or sections no longer meet directly with tenants or visit the estate. The new line of communication is now, in their view, so extended that nothing gets done. All issues now have to be discussed first at the estate forum, in turn these issues have to be conveyed in written form to the community officer, who in turn conveys them to a senior community officer. Only then are they forwarded to the Management Implementation Team. The tenant activists are savagely critical of this extended method of communication. In addition, they cannot understand the placement of estate management into the community department which has no direct power or influence over the key practical issues that tenants are concerned with. The county forum is equally viewed with cynicism.



Plates 8.24 – 8.26 Mounttown Flats, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown

Ballyogan

Ballyogan is an estate of approximately 330 houses mainly built within the last 16 years. It has a high proportion of rented houses (over 80%). Plates 8.27 and 8.28 illustrate the type of dwellings on the estate. Despite being a modern estate, as can be seen from Plate 8.27, the boarded-up house demonstrates that it suffers from some similar problems to other areas. The estate management structure in Ballyogan is familiar to the other estates. It comprises an estate forum with links to the county forum. In addition, there is an ad-hoc task force which deals with anti-social behaviour as the estate forum will not deal with the issue.

In interviews with the estates officers and tenant representatives across the authority, Ballyogan is seen as having the least interest among the tenant population. When estate management was initially developed in 2000, a number of public meetings were called on the estate. While initially there was a very good response to meetings, with over 50 tenants attending, the number attending subsequent meetings declined quickly. Although there is a policy of openness as to tenant membership of the forum, whereby any tenant who attends forum meetings regularly can be a member of the forum, in the past two years the number of tenant representatives has declined to 4 (see Table 8.5).

Table 8.5 Membership of Ballyogan Estate Forum

Tenant representatives	4
Tenant link worker	1
Local Authority estate officer	1
Senior community department officer (observer)	1
Source: Interviews	

In interviews with estate officers and tenant representatives the main problems on the estate were the issues of void management, allocations and anti-social behaviour. The tenant activists argued that the estate has been fairly stable until the summer of 2002. Problems began with the allocation of a number of what they term 'problem' families which have created problems of anti-social behaviour. In direct response, a task force on anti-social behaviour was formed which has members of the local authority the health

board and the police. Unlike many other tenant groups the Ballyogan forum had no desire to become involved in influencing allocations.



Plates 8.27 to 8.28 - Ballyogan Estate, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council

Rathsallagh/Shanganagh

Rathsallagh is an estate of 640 houses, half of which was built about 25 years ago and the remainder in various period since then. Plates 8.29 and 8.30 show the nature of the estate. A high proportion (55%) of the houses are on tenant purchase and this may be part of the reason why the estate is relatively stable. Unlike nearly all the other estates examined in this research, Rathsallagh suffers from very little anti-social behaviour and what does exist is of a minor variety. The issue that does exercise the tenant representatives most is allocations. Despite the stability of the estate, tenant representatives are anxious that what they see as a bad allocations policy does not result in the estate 'going downhill'. In the past two years, there has been tension between the tenants and the local authority over a number of allocations. Tenants have been concerned that certain lettings have been given to potentially 'problem' families and so have sought to have an influence over allocations policy and individual lettings. However, this has been refused by the local authority.

Table 8.6 shows the membership of the estate forum. Although similar to the other fora, Rathsallagh is different because of the high level of interest in the forum. At a public meeting in 2002 to select the tenant representatives for the forum, over 50 turned up and ten were elected. So, despite its stability, the forum manages to generate considerable interest.

Table 8.6 Membership of Rathsallagh Estate Forum

Tenant representatives	10
Tenant link worker	1
Local Authority estate officer	1
Senior community department officer (observer)	1
Source: Interviews	



Plates 8.29 to 8.30 – Rathsallagh- Shanganagh. Dun Laoghaire Rathdown

Limerick City Council

Limerick City Council, with a rented stock of 3,048, has a well developed estate-management and tenant participation structure. In 1999, the Council produced a reasonably comprehensive written estate management policy. The aim of estate management policy is as follows:

The City Council is committed to principles of good estate management and in 1999 adopted a City Wide Strategy in partnership with the Community Sector. A number of new initiatives have been undertaken since the adoption of this strategy including the employment of an additional community liaison official and the funding of eight Estate Management groups in the City. (www.limerickcorp.ie, 2003)

The essence of the policy is the creation of dedicated estate officers. Since 1999, the Council has created three estate management officer positions (called community liaison officers). These positions, like many such positions across the local authorities are generally internal appointments and, in the case of Limerick, were given to former rent collectors. In addition to these staff positions the Council has, since 2001, a dedicated budget of c.€120,000 for employment of tenant advocate workers and for contributions to office expenses of tenant groups. This budget funds eight tenant advocate workers in various tenant groups across the city. All except one of these workers is a tenant of the Council. Although the Council funds the posts, the funding is allocated to intermediary organisations and the advocate workers are thus not directly employed by the Council. In addition, on two estates the Council provides office accommodation for tenant groups. The function of the estate officers is as elsewhere to liaise with and develop tenant groups and to liaise with departments back in the Council offices. Apart from liaising with tenant groups, the estate officers are also members of a number of estate management boards which are formally constituted groups which comprise tenant representatives, estate officers, members of the health board and of the police.

On the tenant side, the tenant advocate workers are organised through a city-wide estate management forum. This group solely comprises of the tenant advocate workers and was organised on their own initiative as an attempt to forge common positions in negotiations with the Council. It is an attempt, in other words, to see that the Council is taking a common position with all tenant groups across the Council's area.

Estates

South Hill (O' Malley Park)

South Hill is a series of large local authority estates in the southern suburbs of Limerick. O' Malley Park is the largest of these estates with approximately 600 dwellings with about 80% still rented from the local authority. The estate has a reputation for being a serious 'problem' estate within Limerick and even nationally (McCafferty, 1999). In the early 1990s, according to interviews with estates officers, there was a turnover of 6 houses per week, or about 250-300 per annum. This high level of tenancy turnover made the estate very difficult to manage. Plates 8.31 to 8.33 give an impression of the estate.

A tenant group, named O' Malley Park Estate Management Group, was formed in 1992 with the assistance of the local partnership (PAUL Partnership). From 1992 until 2000 the partnership provided funding of IR£5,000 per annum for administration support and office expenses. There was no funding for tenant advocate workers and all the work was voluntary. On paper the structure of the tenant group is that there is one tenant representative from each of the 10 sub-areas on the estate. Elections and an AGM are held every year but, according to the tenant activists interviewed, there is a major problem in attracting or persuading tenants to work on the committee. Thus, two to three of the original members still effectively do most of the work. The group has a constitution and meets at least 10 times per annum. In 2001, the local authority took over funding of the group from the partnership as part of the development of an estate management policy. The funding strategy of the authority now provides for the funding of 8 tenant advocate workers across the city in different local authority areas. The O' Malley park group has now one such worker who in this case is a tenant and was one of the voluntary activists. This pattern has been replicated across the city. Moreover, while the group had some use of office space, in the past year they have been allocated new office space as part of a refurbishment programme.

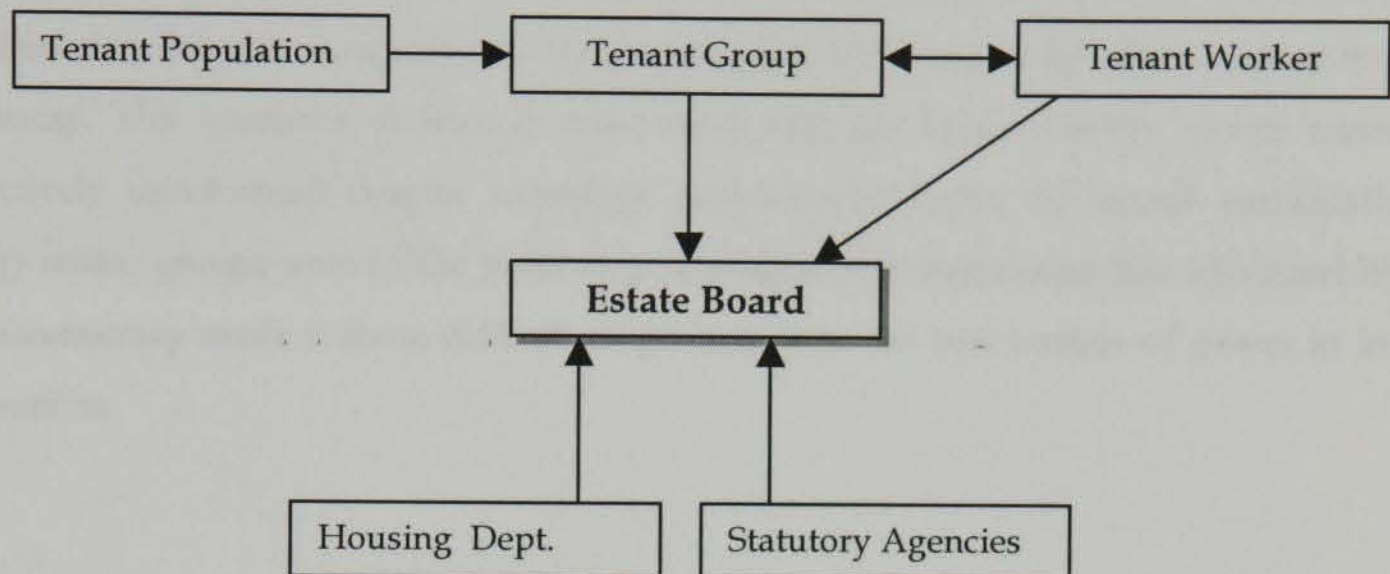
With respect to tenant participation structures, in O' Malley Park there were a clearly emerging formal structure for tenant involvement. The structure for O' Malley Park is illustrated below in Figure 8.3. An estate management board was formed which had 10 tenant representatives, housing department representatives, statutory agency representatives (police; health boards) and a tenant worker, who worked for the tenants.

This was essentially an extension of the existing tenant group with the statutory agencies asked to participate. Tenant representatives on the board were part of the local tenant group, a group which was not particularly representative of the local tenant population, primarily because of the difficulties of interesting tenants in such structures. This difficulty in persuading tenants to become involved in the local tenant group stemmed partly from the usual reasons of disinterest and cynicism, but also in part from a reluctance to be seen working with or for the local authority. This latter reluctance stemmed from a mixture of intimidation from allegedly criminal elements on the estate and to a more general concern over collusion with the authorities. Also representing the tenants was a tenant worker, in this case also a tenant of the estate, whose function was to develop the tenant group and to liaise with the housing department. The housing department representatives were dedicated estate officers whose sole function was to develop and liaise with local tenant groups (Norris, 2000). The health board representatives tended to be social workers and the Garda representative tended to be the local community Garda. It is clear in the case of Limerick, with a rented stock of about 3,000 dwellings, that there have been significant organisational developments with respect to tenant participation. At estate level there are a number of estate boards as described above; there is also a network of tenant workers, that is a tenant advocate or community development type workers, who attempt to co-ordinate their activities at a city-wide level. From the local authority viewpoint there are three dedicated tenant participation officers as well as a dedicated budget for estate management, which funds the tenant workers. Thus there are clear structures in existence and in development.

With respect to the example in Figure 8.3, estate board meetings, which were held monthly, tended to be purely consultative, acting more as a forum for views than as a decision-making body. The estate board had no formal decision-making powers at all. In this example, the tenant group had been provided with a local office on the estate, which was staffed by the tenant worker. This tenant worker, funded at arm's length by the local authority, performed a role as an advocate for the tenants and as a conduit for day-to-day business between the tenant group and the local authority. As was the case across most of the authorities and estates, the core agenda for this estate revolved around issues of anti-social behaviour, allocations and lettings and the physical and environmental maintenance of the estate. In theory the estate board was a forum where actions to deal with these issues would emerge.

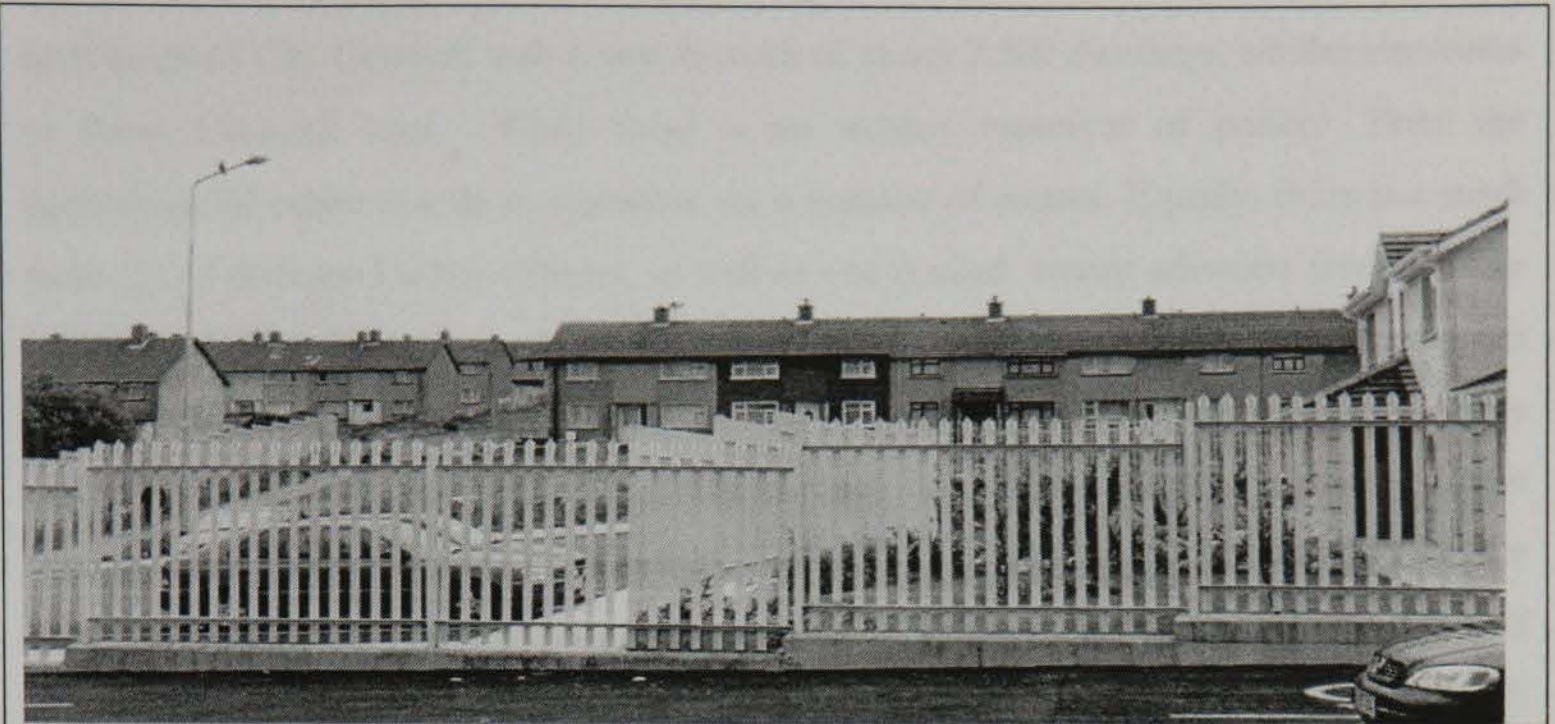
As on many estates, the key issues identified by both the tenant activists and the estate officers was anti-social behaviour. In O' Malley Park, this was often a severe problem with the issue really being one of criminality alongside serious problems of threat and intimidation.

Figure 8.3 Estate Management Structure - O' Malley Park



With regard to the effectiveness of this structure, there were two core issues which are worth noting. One of the problems with this structure was that many tenants came to view the tenant group office as being a local authority office, using it as a first port of call for maintenance complaints and other issues, which should rightly have been directed towards the local authority. This confusion of roles suited the local authority, which was content to have a *de facto* local office, but it was not in the interests of the tenant group which was viewed in some respects as synonymous with the local authority. A second more generic problem related to the nature of the estate board. The board lacked any powers of decision, even of recommendation, and therefore was not particularly effective from the tenants' viewpoint. Although the tenant representatives were clear that communication with the local authority had improved considerably, they were more cynical regarding the ability of tenant participation to improve the estate. While recognising that the estate board provided a formal mechanism to raise all sorts of estate and neighbourhood issues, there were no mechanisms to ensure that issues raised would necessarily be dealt with. In other words, there was no necessary connection between the increasingly sophisticated structures of

participation and the actual delivery of services. However, one of the positive steps taken by Limerick, as well as other local authorities, has been the employment of Tenant Liaison Officers. These officers take an active role in estate management at a local level. The feedback from tenants is generally quite positive on their role as it gives tenants a point of contact and the tenant liaison officer develops detailed local knowledge of the estates. Interestingly, these officers, when interviewed, were often critical of the lack of co-operation and co-ordination from other departments in the local authority. As front-line workers they felt that their role was seen as marginal and a buffer by other sections in the authority. This confirms, at least in some cases, that the local authority service remains effectively unreformed despite seemingly sophisticated forms of tenant participation. Many tenant groups were of the same view, arguing that in some cases this additional layer of bureaucracy made it more difficult to get access to the real centres of power in local authorities.

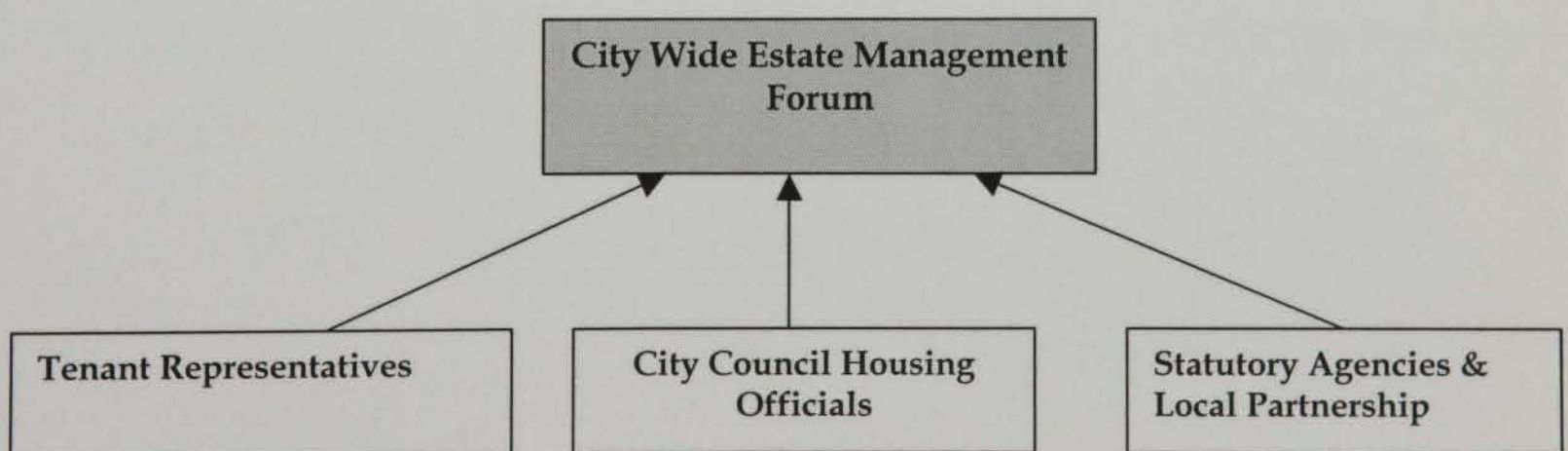


Plates 8.31-8.33 O' Malley Park, South Hill, Limerick

Waterford City Council

In Waterford City Council, with a rented stock of about 2,200 dwellings, similar structures to those Limerick exist. While there is no written statement of policy, there are equivalents of estate boards in operation on a number of estates. Equally, there is a small team (2) of dedicated estate officers, as well as one funded tenant advocate worker. The tenant advocate worker is funded through the local partnership and has a city-wide remit rather than one particular estate. Where Waterford differs is that tenant participation is organised primarily on a city-wide basis through the existence of a city-wide estate management forum. Figure 8.4 illustrates the city-wide structure. Membership of the forum is made up of six tenant representatives from tenant groups across the city, a tenant advocate worker, a senior housing officer, two estate officers, health board representatives, Garda representatives as well as a representative from the local partnership board. This city-wide forum is at all times chaired by a tenant representative. What also distinguishes Waterford is the existence of an Amalgamated Tenants' Group, which is in effect a combined tenant group which meets independently of any local or statutory authorities. It seeks to draw from the experience of the various estate-based tenant groups, to formulate common positions and to strengthen the position of tenants through a united voice and common position. While this sounds fine in theory, it is also the case that there are differences between some of the tenant groups and between the various statutory agencies.

Figure 8.4 Waterford City-Wide Estate Management Structure



As in Limerick, the role of the estate officers is to liaise with tenant groups on estates and feed back issues to the local authority head quarters for subsequent action. The estate

officers are members of a number of local estate boards or forums and also hold estate clinics once a week on the larger estates.

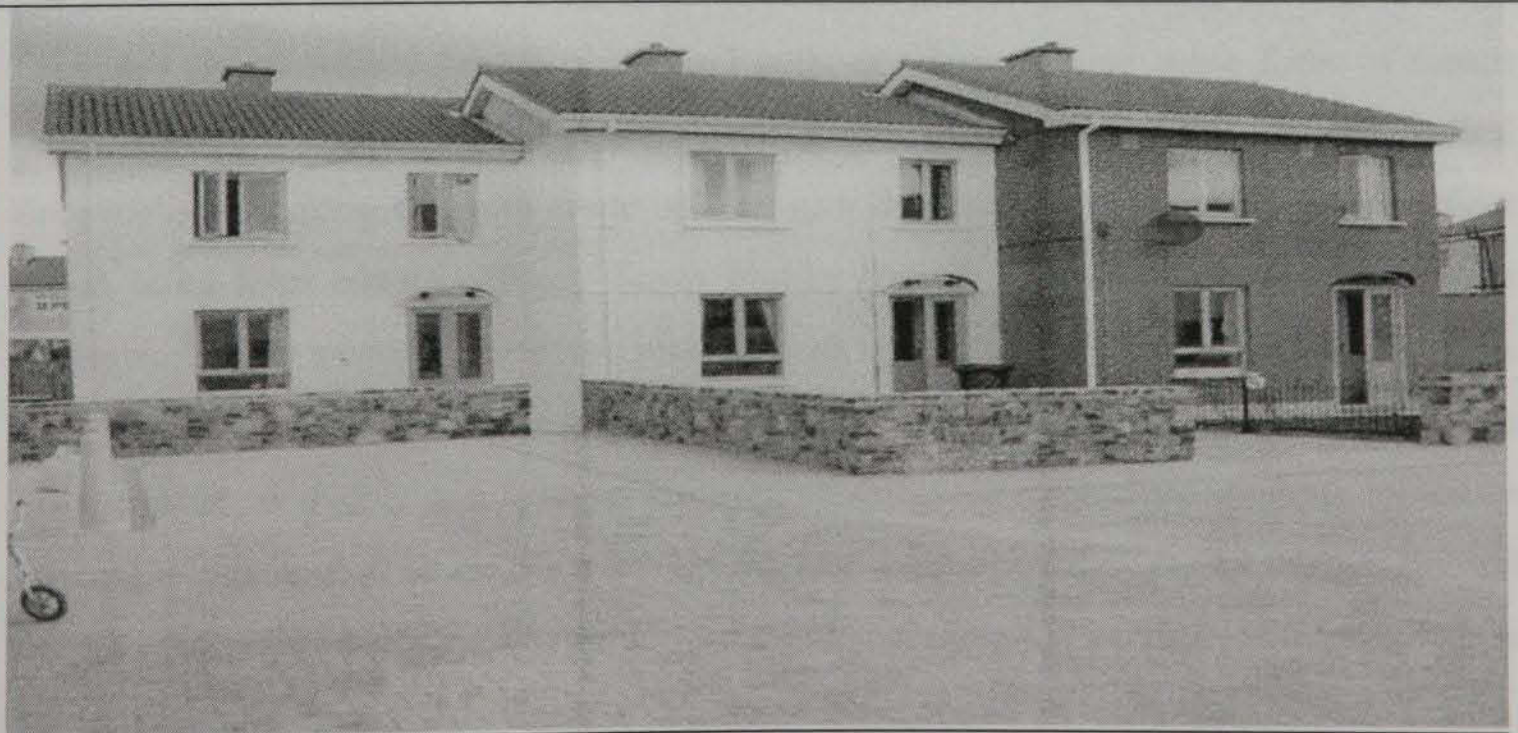
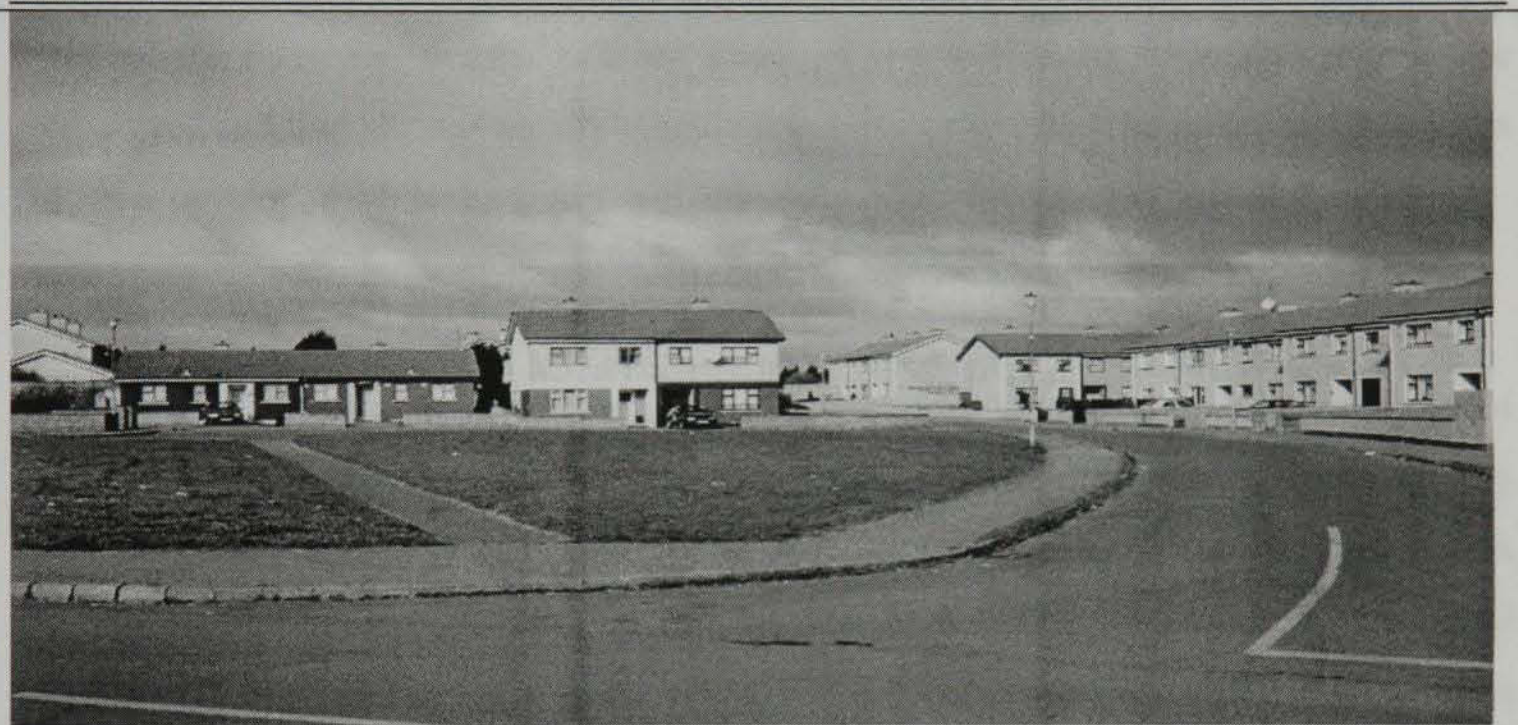
Estate

Ballybeg

Ballybeg is a large suburban local authority estate of approximately 900 dwellings built in the 1950s and 1970s. It is typical of many such estates across urban areas in that it is located on the periphery of the city and is a low-rise low-density scheme as can be seen from Plates 8.34 to 8.36. Also, like many such estates it suffers from serious problems of environmental neglect and from social order problems. Given the estate is a large one, there are a number of different sub-areas on the estate each with a variety of problems. Clonard Park, for example, has some of the worst social order problems and is also undergoing refurbishment as part of the Remedial Works Scheme. Each of the sub-areas has a tenant group of its own. There is also, however, a combined group called the Ballybeg Forum which has representatives of all the groups as well as estate officers and the Council social worker.

While in theory this is a fine structure, the reality is, as was revealed in the interviews, that there is serious division between the various tenant groups in Ballybeg. Thus there is general consensus among the tenant activists that the forum does not function too well. The basis for these divisions revolves around local political party politics².

² There is no Sinn Fein presence on the estate



Plates 8.34 – 8.36 Ballybeg Estate, Waterford City Council

IV COMPARISONS AND CONTRASTS

The chapter has so far presented a range of different empirical material dealing with each local authority and various selected estates. This section seeks to draw some comparisons and contrasts regarding key dimensions of participation.

Tenant Participation Policy

Apart from Limerick and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown, none of the other authorities had a detailed written policy on tenant participation. Consequently, policy in the other authorities is essentially made and implemented in an *ad-hoc* manner. While all local authorities produced a housing management plan in 1993-1994, these plans were so inadequate that the local authorities themselves no longer refer to them. Even in the two cases where there are written policies many of the statements contained therein are aspirational and they do not set any specific standards or targets. The policy in Limerick is the most developed while the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown document is limited in its scope.

Structures of Participation

It is clear that there have been significant advances in the development of tenant participation structures across the case study areas and that the types of structure vary significantly between local authorities. Table 8.7 draws out some of the chief similarities and contrasts in structure between the different authorities. This chapter has demonstrated that, from a base in the early 1990s when the level of estate management and tenant participation was minimal, from the mid 1990s to the present the level of development has increased significantly. Across every local authority there is now some form of tenant participation structure. Dublin City Council is characterised chiefly by its radical decentralisation program, with estate officers now operating in a series of regional offices or on more local estates offices. South Dublin County Council is characterised by its dedicated budget available for estate management and its large anti-social behaviour team. Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council is characterised by the fact that estate management is mainly run from its Community Department and its attempts to secure internal reorganisation to improve service delivery. Limerick City Council is characterised by its dedicated funding for tenant advocate workers. Waterford City Council is characterised by the fact that estate management is organised on a city-wide basis.

Table 8.7 Comparisons of Participation Structures

	Lead Department	Dedicated estate officers	Chief distinguishing characteristic
Dublin City council	Housing and Community (Joint Department)	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Radical decentralisation of functions to local offices
South Dublin County Council	Housing	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dedicated budgets for estate management ▪ Large anti-social team
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council	Community	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Run from community department ▪ Attempt at internal management restructuring
Limerick City Council	Housing	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dedicated funding for tenant advocate workers
Waterford City Council	Housing	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ City wide estate management forum

Levels and Degree of participation

The research has also demonstrated that the main level of participation in evidence was consultation and dialogue, with only very limited degrees of formal shared decision making. Such formal decision-making structures tended to come in the form of a very limited number of narrowly conceived estate agreements which tend primarily to cover physical and environmental matters. Overwhelmingly, the form of participation is consultative in nature with tenants having almost no actual power or rights of decision-making in any authority. Even in the case of St. Teresa's Gardens in Dublin, where there is an estate agreement in operation, this agreement is in effect an agreement regarding consultation procedures on certain estate issues. While the specific structures vary between estate management boards and estate agreements, the end result is either dialogue or consultation.

Tenant Groups and Resources for Tenants

There are clearly a number of active tenant groups on all of the estates. In all, there were a total of 22 tenant groups identified in the areas studies. However, it must be concluded that very few of these groups are representative in the strict sense of the term. While most had proper constitutions and held AGMs, there were few examples of elections.

Local authorities also provide some resources to tenant groups, primarily in the form of office accommodation and office expenses. However, some also fund the employment of tenant workers who are either advocates for tenants or development-type workers. In general, tenants from the concerned estates have been given these jobs, thus turning a voluntary activity into a paid (very lowly paid) position.

Local Authority Re-Structuring and Resources

It is clear that local authorities are engaging with tenants groups on estates. The primary way in which they have approached tenant participation is the creation of dedicated estate officers who are responsible for estate management and tenant participation issues. The role of such officers is to deal directly with tenant groups either through being members of local structures or liaising with tenant groups. While some of these officers still remain based in headquarters, some also are located in decentralised offices on estates or else hold estate clinics where they are available to the general tenant population. Table 8.8 compares the number of estate officers with respect to the local authority rented stock. While this should be treated with some caution, it does give a rough comparison

Table 8.8 Number of Estate Officers by Local Authority

Local Authority	Number of estate officers	Local Authority Stock	No. of houses per officer
Dublin City Council	40*	24262	606
South Dublin County Council	13**	7414	570
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council	3	3942	1314
Limerick City Council	3	3068	1022
Waterford City Council	2	2306	1153
* the designation of what constitutes an estate officer has changed several times in the last few years so this should be treated with caution			
** includes 8 anti-social behaviour officers			
Source: Interviews			

V CONCLUSION

This chapter has revealed the emergence and development of a variety of different tenant participation and estate management structures in the different local authorities. While the level of formal policy development is limited, it is clear that local authorities have reorganised their structures to some extent, mainly in the form of creating estate officer

posts to engage directly with tenant groups. They have also begun to provide some resources to tenant groups. The essential lesson, however, is that no matter what kind of structure has emerged that the level of participation is firmly that of a consultative nature. Nonetheless, it is clear that from a position of being completely outside the structures of the local authority in the late 1980s and early 1990s, tenant groups now at least have some information and knowledge about how local authorities work. Creating structures for participation does not of course mean that they actually work or are effective. In order to ascertain how such structures operate, the next two chapters turn to the views and analyses of tenant activists themselves and local authority estate officers.

1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this book is to provide a critical analysis of the structures of participation in housing policy. The book is written for a wide range of those who are interested in housing policy, including the local authority estate officers, the housing activists, and the general public. Given the complexity and ambiguity of housing policy, it is clear that there are a number of views about the structures of participation in housing policy and how they operate. The book is written to provide a critical analysis of the structures of participation in housing policy and to provide a critical analysis of the structures of participation in housing policy. The book is written to provide a critical analysis of the structures of participation in housing policy and to provide a critical analysis of the structures of participation in housing policy.

2 TOWARD ACTIVIST PARTICIPATION

This chapter provides a critical analysis of the structures of participation in housing policy and the role of the housing activists. The chapter is written for a wide range of those who are interested in housing policy, including the local authority estate officers, the housing activists, and the general public. Given the complexity and ambiguity of housing policy, it is clear that there are a number of views about the structures of participation in housing policy and how they operate. The chapter is written to provide a critical analysis of the structures of participation in housing policy and to provide a critical analysis of the structures of participation in housing policy.

CHAPTER 9

TENANT PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICE: TENANT ACTIVIST PERSPECTIVES

'The local authority may engage in extensive consultation with residents without having the capacity to deliver appropriate follow-up action. The risk here is that consultation can generate false hopes among residents, lead to disillusionment when hopes are not realised, and tend to undermine rather than promote community effort' (Fahey, 1999c, p264.)

'All of the people thought that estate management would take care of everything'
(I-4)

I INTRODUCTION

The quotation from Fahey correctly anticipated one of the problems of establishing a tenant participation policy. The second quotation from one of the tenant activists reveals quite clearly the high expectations of tenants on many of the estates where the research was conducted. Given the severity and complexity of problems on estates, it is clear that there was a ready and strong demand for tenant participation in estate management and high expectations that problems would be addressed and perhaps even resolved. This chapter analyses the interviews that were conducted with tenant activists in an attempt to answer the question posed by the quotation, that is whether tenant participation provides a genuine and demonstrable influence over decision-making or whether it is a game of participation where there is no real empowerment of tenants and the local authority still decides. In short, have the expectations been justified?

II TENANT ACTIVIST PERSPECTIVES

This section presents a detailed analysis of the interviews conducted with tenant activists and tenant representatives. For the purposes of analysis it constructs a thematic narrative of the key issues in tenant participation. Individual estate names and the names of tenant representatives have been removed from the quotations. However, broad comparisons and contrasts between the different local-authority areas are made in section III. The detailed analysis of the interviews has resulted in the identification of the following five main themes:

- Theme 1: Living on estates and quality of life
- Theme 2: Tenant organisations

- Theme 3: Agendas and issues
 Theme 4: Relations with local authorities
 Theme 5: Outcomes

In giving a voice to tenant activists, it uses direct quotations from the recorded and transcribed interviews. The considerable volume of material from the interviews is such that quotations had to be used selectively to illustrate the analysis (there being almost 80 hours of tape-recorded interviews with tenant activists as well as interviews recorded in writing). The commentary and analysis in the chapter also utilises interviews which were not recorded on tape. The relatively liberal use of quotations is necessary to convey the richness of the experience of both the tenant activists and the estate. They present an oral history of an important moment in public policy development and implementation.

Theme 1: Living on Estates and Quality of Life

As expected from the work of Fahey (1999a), the message regarding life on estates is overwhelmingly negative. There are quite graphic descriptions of the level and degree of anti-social behaviour and of the hardness of life on estates. What is also remarkable is the relatively precise pinpointing of when estates began to run into major trouble. Many of the representatives refer to two key factors, the first being the £5,000 surrender grant in 1987 and its devastating impact on many estates (Threshold, 1987), and the second being the arrival of drug dealing and drug use on estates, especially in Dublin in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The severity of the drugs problem on Dublin estates is graphically conveyed in the interviews. As was noted in Chapter 3, a major consequence of the surrender grant was that many of those tenants who were in employment at the time left the sector and the estates to purchase a private house. This left many houses empty and the local authorities began to house more vulnerable households such as single parents. The social structure of estates thus began to deviate even more from the national average in terms of household type and socio-economic background. The net effect and impact of these changes was the rapid destabilisation of estates and the emergence of pronounced social problems.

From Good Days to Bad Days

The quotation below illustrates the perception that prior to the mid 1980s there was a better social mix and greater stability on estates.

My father was a white collar worker, but that was years ago, but that's how they housed you years ago, there was a very good mix in social housing and when they housed here, the lower end here, there was still a very good social mix. You would still have here, white collar workers and labourers, and contractors and painters and builders of all descriptions (I-30)

However, there is plenty of evidence that severe problems now exist on many estates, making quality of life very poor. The quotation below illustrates a key change in local-authority housing from the mid 1980s onwards. It was clear that the social and economic composition of households changed very rapidly as a result of changes in lettings and allocations policy from the mid 1980s to the late 1990s.

You see between '94 and '97 you could have put Bin Laden in a flat. You could have given him a flat in xxxxxxxx and he'd have argued his case that he's a nice bloke and he's this and he's that (I-8).

The speed with which this change occurred is something which most tenant activists commented on, as the next series of quotations demonstrate.

Yes I remember that, a surrender grant. Well that devastated xxxxx Park. Did it that's interesting, it devastated a lot of places. Well it devastated xxxx Park where as the lower end only lost about ten families, the top end actually had a glut of empty houses. Then they finished xxxxxxxx Park, xxxxxxxx Park was one of the best laid out at the time, it was the best laid out local authority estate in Waterford City at the time it was built. It had lovely people in it and they proceeded to move a particular family into the lower end of it which literally ran everybody else out of it (I-29).

I think how we actually started was in the early 80's when we were under Dublin Corporation at the time and gave the key money [surrender grant] for anybody that wanted to buy their house which meant you got I think five thousand at the time. *Was that to leave?* Yes to surrender your house and put towards the deposit for a house wherever you wanted to go. And at the time an awful lot of people opted for it and it meant, now I would have said at the time I'd sell every second house would leave them which meant that they only ones that could actually afford it was the ones who had a good job, a good paying job. The ones that weren't working, unemployed, low paid workers they were all left. So it meant that like every second house was becoming vacant, everybody and anybody was getting houses then. Things got out of hand at that time then (I-16).

Another key message which emerges is the view of the transitory nature of some estates and the lack of community spirit which emerged from the mid 1980s on. This is captured in the following two quotations.

I think they're not willing to accept this as their home. So there's no community then I find. Like people say I couldn't be bothered I'll be out of it soon, that kind of attitude then comes in. But I feel that is one of our biggest issues in it that people are not committing to the place. They don't mingle with the old tenant's that have been brought up in it. And they've a different outlook on it completely (I5).

There's no community spirit here now because they put in so many of the problem families. It's just totally disadvantaged. I think its dreadful (I27).

Drugs and Estate Life

One of the principal messages regarding quality of life, especially though not exclusively in the Dublin area, refers to the devastating consequences of the emergence and persistence of drug dealing and drug use on estates. The following quotations graphically illustrate this condition.

Was it really bad, I mean the drugs thing? Oh yes it was. Oh yes, it was done on street corners blatantly right in front of you. And you'd be standing at bus stops with kids and that, and cars would pull up and they'd deal in front of you. They just didn't care. You'd be walking down the road and they'd be taking the drugs, it went totally out of control. *And then of course you'd the users causing problems.* House break-ins in particular, because the users had to have money to get the stuff. We had an awful lot of house break-ins, handbag snatching, women going over to pay their rent on a Monday morning were being attacked in the Park, and things like that. I think if everybody had of been able to afford it they would have left the areas (I15).

Then things got out of hand with drugs. '93/94 was bad. *Around the whole area?* Around the whole west Tallaght area (I16).

But they met with the Corporation and sat down and spoke about all the houses that were vacant, the houses were getting burnt, in most places houses were getting burnt at the time, the anti social element that was coming in at the time, the drugs problem that was in the area. (I16).

Clearly, the evidence from these quotations, and from earlier research by Corcoran (1999) for example, shows that the quality of life on many social housing estates is still poor.

Getting Out

Given the quality of life that pertained on many estates it is hardly surprising that when opportunities came to leave, many tenants did so. The quotations below are illustrative of the desire of some activists to leave. In some estates, for example in Limerick, the local authority have suspended transfer lists because the numbers seeking to leave are so high. In effect, there is no exit mechanism or choice for many tenants.

Every time you ask anybody, no matter who you ask, oh I'm on that transfer, how many point have you got and how have you got that many and your not here as long. And that would be the general topic of conversation when women get together (I5).

I would be gone tomorrow, definitely yes. It's a depressing place to be honest (I37).

The only thing it does do for you is that you get three points for every year you're in it, so you'll eventually get out. You might be on a walking stick, but you'll get there! It's too late then. But that's the system (I5).

Theme 2: Tenant Organisations

These areas were left without articulate advocates or effective means of expressing their grievances. Decent citizens found themselves frustrated and powerless. Thus there was a breakdown in personal and community self-esteem. It was not until the Department of Social Welfare's Community Development Programme got under way in the late 1980s that the issues of local leadership and resources began to be addressed in these areas. (Mick Rafferty, Community Activist, Irish Times, 11/8/1997).

The following section distils the key results with respect to development and function of tenant organisations. The quotation above from Mick Rafferty, a well-known community activist in Dublin's inner city, indicates that many estates were left bereft of articulate leaders as a consequence of the surrender grant. Indeed, the evidence from the interviews confirms broadly that between the early 1980s and mid 1990s many estates had fairly low levels of tenant activism and tenant organisation. This is perhaps less true of certain parts of Dublin where community activism was highly organised in the form of anti-drugs organisations. However, from the mid 1990s onward, a pattern can be discerned of greater tenant activism and organisation. This can be attributed in part to grassroots responses to the intensity of problems on estates but also to a more pro-active effort by local authorities to develop tenant organisations as part of their estate management policies.

Formation and Organisation of Tenant Groups

The reasons for the formation of tenant groups on most estates are fairly clear cut. For the most part they were formed in order to seek improvements in the quality of life on estates. From the evidence of the interviews it would seem that over half of the groups were already formed prior to the introduction of formal tenant participation and estate management policy. The others were generally formed in response to the introduction of such policies or in some cases directly with the help of the local authority. In all cases, however, it would seem that the local authority has had some influence on the continued development of tenant groups through training programmes or general interaction over estate management issues. Thus, in very few cases are we dealing with any pure form of grassroots independent movement. The local state is thus deeply involved in the formation and continued existence of many tenant associations. This of course is truer of some authorities than others. For example, in the case of Dun Laoghaire, the majority of the

tenant groups in their present form owe their existence almost wholly to the actions of the local authority.

Top-down formation

There is some evidence of local authority attempts to form tenant groups going awry. The next set of quotations shows that some attempts by local authorities to form new tenant groups foundered. This was in part because they failed to take into account existing tenant organisations and partly because of the clear top-down nature of such attempts which sought to impose a heavy representation of state officials on estate management groups. Tenants clearly reacted negatively to the attempts at this form of top-down approach.

At the time I think we were discussing estate management because the corpo was still involved and county council were involved also in these discussion. And there were two pilots, there was an estate survey was conducted to find out peoples views and opinions and there was a number of meetings held around the establishment of estate management groups around '95. Basically there was a big row, they were talking about setting it up and xx xxxx from the housing department was representing the council and we're going ahead with this whether you like it or not and we're setting two pilots up. **They went ahead and did it and both collapsed** (I14, my emphasis).

Actually it was one of the nuns that would have set up the women's group approached me and asked me would I meet with someone from the City Council. So I met the guy and we started initially at the beginning stages really trying to get people on board but I didn't like the way he was going with it because **they were all statutory agencies and not enough tenants** (I13, my emphasis).

The way it was structured in the start, it was structured terrible wrong, **the residents groups weren't really represented on it**. We had three from the corporation, the city council as it's now known. We had the estate officers, the social worker and some of the housing office sitting on it and then you had people who had done the course basically, not really representing anyone (I30, my emphasis).

And what the corporation wanted to do at that stage was to just throw out all tenants' groups and start afresh, which you can't do if there's a solid group there. They're not going to allow themselves to be squashed. Well they didn't, they actually tried to destroy this and try to ignore this resident group for a while and then this residents' group yes well fuck you, you can have **your fucking Forum, but we won't take an active part in it** (I41, my emphasis).

Bottom-Up Formation

The formation of tenant groups is often fraught because of tensions between existing tenant groups and grassroots efforts to join or transform these groups. Pre-existing groups are often self-selected and not necessarily representative. The following quotations, referring to a period in the mid 1990s in a peripheral Dublin estate, show the process of a

tenant group being revitalised through new elections and new personnel. This is a good example of local renewal from the bottom-up. However, it does not mean that such new groups did not in turn become a self-selecting local elite. It is also worth pointing out that there is not a great deal of similar evidence which shows groups being renewed in such a fashion.

There was tenant participation for years with Dublin Corporation, but on the ground you'd see nothing, or directly here myself I could never say that I'd seeing anything that was happening in the area. I remember at one stage in '91 asking to join that group because I was interested, I'd lived in the inner city and wouldn't have been happy in the inner city, I prefer being out here. Moved out here, had asked to join the group and it was a shut shop, you couldn't get in. **There was a gang there that held that position who had done absolutely nothing** (I16, my emphasis).

So we got together and we went to see the residents council that was in operation in xxxxxxxxxx which was just down to three people. There hadn't been an AGM for over four or five years and three people were just running this. *And were they linking with the council all the time?* They were linking with the Corporation. Five or six of us got together and said look we'll go and see them and see what can be done or what they're going to do. They didn't want to give us any access to the local hall or anything like that. And as far as they were concerned they were negotiating with the drugs task force. They had come on stream, they were working with them and they were getting funds of them to set up a clinic to treat the addicts. But they weren't dealing with main problem and that was the dealers and the supply of it. So we said well who's this drugs task force, we need to meet with them as well. So then we said look, its time an AGM was called and its time more people came along (I16).

We called that AGM and packed the hall so much that you couldn't get in the doors, it was jammed. *When was that around?* That was around '95. Out of that we elected twelve people on the floor that night and one of them would have been of the old residents council who stayed on and then we co-opted on the Drugs Task Force, South Dublin County Council and Tallaght Partnership on to our management committee. And from that we started working (I15).

It is also quite clear from the interview evidence that tenants groups have a tendency to be formed, split, cease to exist and reform. There were relatively few examples of groups in existence for long periods. The following two quotations show the flux of some groups.

A new committee was formed. It took them the best part of two years to get reorganised and continue on. From '97 to '99/2000 they worked, they reorganised the committee, they had people on and off it, it changed over a period of time. Then the corporation kind of stepped in and last year, the year before, it would have been November 2000 the Corporation decided following a lot of meetings and discussions with the new committee then to set up a forum to bring in the other agencies (I8).

So when they decided that when it was estate management then came about I was approached by the community workers and asked would I go to a public meeting about it. **There has been residents associations for different areas in the estate but they've never actually lasted very long** (I21, my emphasis).

More recently, on foot of the formalisation of estate management policies in local authorities, the development of estate management policies has meant that many groups are formed as a result of the local authority taking a pro-active, even determining role in the formation of new groups. This is illustrated in the next set of quotations.

To go back to the estate management, that's what happened they rang me and said to come along to the meeting and I went along and there was 20 odd residents. *It was an open meeting? Yes. That would have been 1998. Were there many at that meeting?* There was an incredible turn-out for this place, there was about 20 or 30, which is a phenomenal turnout for a public meeting in xxxxxx I can assure you (I21).

Now what had happened, just before the public meeting there was talk that estate management was taking off and the council paid for some of the residents to do training. They went away for a weekend. Now I don't know anything about that because I didn't go, I didn't do that training. But an interesting point is that not one of the residents that did that training became involved in the estate management group in the end (I34).

I went to the public meeting and personally I as said I had stepped back for my own reason from community development or from voluntary work on the estate, but I liked the sound of this. **I liked the notion, I liked the way it was being put across, relative to being actually asked what they wanted to happen in their estate as opposed to being told so I think I might stick around for a little while and see what happens.** Truly intending to go to a couple of meetings and not go any further than that. So it took a long time (I21, my emphasis).

Organisational Development

With respect to the organisation of tenant groups, while the majority of the tenant groups were properly constituted in terms of possessing a constitution and having an AGM, a significant number did not observe these proprieties. More centrally, the evidence suggests strongly that they were not necessarily representative of the tenant population. As was seen in Chapter 4, the evidence from the UK is that local activism tends to be undertaken by small numbers of individuals. From the case-studies undertaken, there is clear evidence that only a small number of activists tend to be involved in tenant organisations. The same people tended to be involved over a long period with little turnover of group membership. Moreover, a majority of the activists are women. Most groups stated that it was difficult to generate interest among the tenant population to become involved in local community organisations. This is mainly because of a lack of interest among the general tenant population. However, in one estate there was clear

intimidation of the estate management group by allegedly criminal elements on the estate which had a clear impact on membership.

Division and Tensions

The literature on good practice in tenant participation tends to have an assumption that tenant groups will have few divisions within or between other groups. However, as the interviews revealed, this is not necessarily the case. While it should not be overemphasised, there has been division in some tenant groups, most often because of political party differences. The next quotation shows that some of this division was generated because of the activities of Sinn Fein on some Dublin estates. However, there was also evidence of broader political divisions with tenant groups tenant groups or factions of groups being involved with a host of different political parties.

In '97 there was division, there was internal politics took place in xxxxx. Sinn Fein at the time had representatives who were looking to develop a basis for their reps at that stage and division split the committee in half and one thing led to another and half the committee walked (I8).

However, other divisions are often of the basis of personality and differences regarding policy and practice.

And the xxxxx Forum then, I'm a member of the xxxxxx Forum. I don't particularly get on with everybody on it. I'm a very straight person, I work very well with the local authority and because I do that I don't get on very well with everybody else (I18).

The xxxx Forum meeting every month and every time you try to push it a step forward there's a couple on it will pull it back ten steps so you wont move forward. Its not really successful as an estate management group at all (I30).

There is also evidence in some estates of tensions and conflict between tenant groups and with other community groups such as Community Development Projects. This level of division clearly fragments local community effort and may well result in less effective outcomes. From the viewpoint of the local state, the fragmentation of local community efforts may well make it easier to manage local areas. The next quotation reveals the existence of rivalries over the terrain of community development. However, such evidence should not be overstressed as there is equally compelling evidence of tenant groups being strongly linked to community structures.

One of the problems with the xxxxx Forum is that the Community Development Projects from the very start didn't want it to go forward in case we encroached on any of their territory (I29).

There is also evidence from across many of the estates of tension between some elements of the tenant population and the tenant group arising because of the problem of anti-social behaviour. As one of the main agenda items relates to anti-social behaviour, tenant groups increasingly have a role in liaising with the local authority and the police in seeking solutions. This, however, has led to tensions between tenants who may be responsible for perpetrating anti-social behaviour and tenant activists who are seeking to control and reduce it. Many tenant representatives report that the tenant group is seen as being responsible for pinpointing possible suspects, thus leading to tension. In some cases, this has translated into threats and intimidation of tenant groups and activists. One of the clearest reasons for this arises because of the large number of undeclared tenancies. Many local authority officers declared that there was a clear problem of individuals living in local authority houses but not being declared on the rent book. This most often occurs in the cases of lone parents where partners end up living in the house but not paying any rent. The role of tenant groups in influencing allocations brings this to the surface. In investigating prospective tenants, from lists supplied by the local authority, the tenant group will not only examine the background of the nominal applicant but will also examine whether the applicant has in fact got a 'hidden' partner with a record of anti-social behaviour who would end up being a *de facto* tenant. This role of the tenant group clearly leads to suspicion from certain tenant households and potential tenant households as the next quotation shows.

They'd be looking at us, they'd be looking at the residents association, they'd be looking at me because they know I put in the anti social and I'd have to sign the letter on behalf of people. Because no one would put their name to it, because of the freedom of information (I24).

The other difficulty that we have as well is where they are registered as lone parents, but when they move in to the house you see this fellow going in. But that would be part of our job to do is to try and suss out these. We never approach a resident, we work through the different departments and the family units. The only time we would actually go out to the residents is when we have new tenants, we will go out and we will welcome them into the area and we have a booklet that tells them what is going on (I40).

What we find is that when a resident is being evicted that they're being evicted on good estate management grounds, so you can see where that puts us as a group (I38).

Inexperience

Interestingly, the evidence from the interviews suggests that many tenant groups are not linked with other local community groups and that the activists are in many cases separate. To some degree tenant participation and estate management is another addition to the variety of local community development activities and organisations. In many of the estates it seems that tenant groups have been formed only in the past few years in response to the development of estate management policies by local authorities. To the extent that such groups are relatively new and unrelated to other local community organisations, they tend to draw activists who have had relatively little community development experience. However, this point should not be exaggerated too much. In some Dublin estates it is clear that many activists have been involved since the mid to late 1980s and that they are linked into a broader network of local community activism. Given that a significant number of tenant groups and tenant activists have only been involved since the mid 1990s, and that they had little community experience elsewhere, a number of activists declared that they were inexperienced, naive or gullible regarding the workings of community development and of local authorities.

It was actually '96 before we really got ourselves together because **none of us has any experience in community development, none of us really knew what we were doing**, all we knew was we were in an estate with very poor public services, no school, no shop and the people felt very isolated. Because they were housed up here, the majority of us have never even heard of xxxxx, didn't know where it was until we were offered the houses. So it was literally a case of you know trying to get some sort of focal point for the estate, that's what we felt was very important (I33, my emphasis).

As I say **we were all totally inexperienced and all so gullible** about it and we thought this will all be wonderful and this will all happen so quickly for us. Eventually you learnt that there are ways and means about going about everything (I10, my emphasis).

These latter two quotations indicate that when estate management was being introduced it was not seen as being part of broader community development policy. Indeed, it is noticeable that there are very few references to community development in the Irish policy and good practice literature. This may account in part for the separation on some estates between estate management groups and community development groups.

The first few meetings we had the same numbers quite a few people, but it took quite a while for people to get the notion of what estate management was in to their head. People were coming with their own issues and you know my neighbour did and what's going to happen and it took quite a few months to try and get across to people. Look that is not what you're here for, that's not the estate management and being on the estate management forum is not somewhere for you to come with your own issues. We've to look at the estate in the general, the problems we have in general and how we can go about trying to look at the policy around dealing with whole thing. So eventually the numbers dwindled and dwindled and we ended up with other than myself, there are four people on the estate management forum here in xxxxxx (I7).

Voluntarism

One of the defining features of tenant activism is that it is a voluntary activity, a fact often either forgotten or neglected by state authorities. The quotations below show clearly that there are strains on voluntarism. There is a clear problem in general terms in enticing tenants to become voluntary activists.

We were dependent quite a lot on volunteers which is difficult. It was hard to sustain that (I3).

It was very slow to get going here much slower than the other areas. I think the council were starting to throw their hands up in the air at xxx. It seemed to take ages for the whole thing to get going. xxx, xxx and xxx were up and running long before we were. The other ladies on the estate forum have never been involved in any sort of group prior to this (I2).

What you also have to look at to its changed so much in the last five or six years. When the residents council was set up we had a lot of people who didn't work, but now people are working and they're out, so they basically just like their monthly meetings. They don't have the time to dedicate anymore during the day voluntary work, that's gone. **Voluntary work is definitely gone without a shadow of a doubt.** *And originally it would have been primarily voluntary?* Oh yes for years and years and we would have been voluntary because we wanted to see something happening to improve where we lived. We wanted to bring up children in the area, so we wanted it to be a better place (I16, my emphasis).

We'd tried to get the people involved in neighbourhood watch and that didn't happen. People wouldn't take it up. There were things we tried to get the people involved in but they wouldn't, **they just didn't want to know**, the less hassle they had was better for them, to get on with their lives (I15, my emphasis).

In addition, there has been a specific problem at times in getting committee or group members to attend meetings.

When we have no problem there is a committee consisting of a chair, a treasurer and a secretary there all the time. There's three of us there the whole time. And if there is a problem people will come to us and we call a meeting and sometimes we would have ten on a committee, **but they all drop off once the problem is solved** and the three stay there. We don't even call AGMs down at this end because there no point unless there's a problem (I3, my emphasis).

The thing that happens is this that the monthly meeting is over and they go away and I'd don't seen them until the following month, **so I'm left with all the donkey work and I have to follow up.** And I'm always saying this that if you deal with the Corporation or you're dealing with any statutory body you have to follow them up because if you leave it go then it won't get done (I38, my emphasis).

Now we gave up holding public meetings. I find at public meetings if you call a public meeting to elect members of a committee you spend four hours talking about something else and by the time you're finished with that you still haven't your committee elected and then there all saying well why aren't you doing this. I mean we're all voluntary, it's a voluntary organisation (I38).

This often leaves much of the work to a small number of dedicated activists. There is thus strong evidence of the strains on voluntary activity. There has been a clear move for tenant activists to move from voluntary action to being paid as tenant workers or tenant advocates. Such funding can come from the local authority or other agencies such as the Local Drugs Task Forces. While in many cases this funding is welcomed, there is also evidence that some tenant activists see it as linking too closely with the local authorities. Indeed, in one estate in Dun Laoghaire Rathdown the tenant activists fought hard to receive the funding through an independent channel and not through the local authority. The same is also true of an estate in Limerick. Much of the work is now being done by paid tenant workers. In nearly all cases where tenant groups had a paid worker these workers were also tenants on the estate in question and had previously worked voluntarily. The next quotation describes the typical work of a paid tenant worker.

Xxxxxxxx on a day to day basis will deal with those issues as the worker. She will liase obviously with xxxxxxxx. Xxxxxxxx obviously liases with the different departments run by the council. Xxxxxxxx will deal directly with housing. Housing would be a lot of the issues that she deals with. She'll deal with anti social, complaints on anti social behaviour, there might be complaints, local people might bring in on outstanding repairs that the council should be conducting, environmental issues as well, street lighting, all the normal stuff she'll deal with. She does deal with the allocations issues. The allocations take up a lot of time. So obviously she would liase with other groups (I14).

This quotation raises, in a stark manner, the issue that either volunteer or paid tenant activists may in fact end up undertaking work which may more properly be the responsibility of the local authority. Where local authorities have given tenant groups office space and have funded a tenant worker, the general tenant population have often used the office as a place to submit maintenance requests, complaints about anti-social behaviour and so on. This clearly puts tenant groups in an ambivalent position while giving local authorities a kind of quasi-presence, indeed a very cheap one, on some estates.

Theme 3: Agendas and Issues

There is clear evidence that tenants thought estate management would be a panacea for the ills of estates. Estate management and tenant participation was, in a sense, sold by local authorities as the solution to estate problems and there was a clear understanding from tenant activists that tenants collectively would have influence over decision making. The evidence overwhelmingly and incontrovertibly points to tenants being concerned with anti-social behaviour, allocations and lettings and house and estate maintenance as the core issues for tenants and tenant groups. The dominant problem, even outside the Dublin estates, was the problem of anti-social behaviour in its various forms. This ranged from serious criminality related to drugs to general nuisance. However, what is absolutely clear is that the range of anti-social behaviour is a blight on the lives of many tenants. The simple demand of tenant groups is to be able to live peaceably without constant fear and intimidation. Thus, for most tenant groups there is a demand for direct action to reduce anti-social behaviour. In estates in Dublin, the problem of drug dealing, drug use and the gamut of anti-social behaviour that results is the clear priority for all tenant groups.

Great Expectations

The following quotations, which are representative of many tenant groups views, illustrate that there were very high expectations of the potential of estate management to solve problems on estates. This should not surprise. Given tenants had a minimal role in estate management historically, an invitation to the negotiating table inevitably generated high expectations. Moreover, as will be seen in Chapter 10, in some cases tenant participation was marketed to tenants by local authorities as solving their problems.

I think the reality of it was when the estate management was set up first **we thought we just had to ask and everything was going to be done.** But we have learnt that it's not and the red tape that's involved in the local authority is unbelievable at times (I30, my emphasis).

So I think people were very hopeful when estate management was mentioned to them as I was. At I said it was the first time communities were going to actually be asked about what they wanted in their estate. But people are becoming frustrated and jaded with the whole thing because its taking so long to actually happen (I33, my emphasis).

Anti-Social Behaviour

The degree to which tenants had high expectations is primarily because of the severity of problems that existed on many estates. The quotations below illustrate the common views of most tenant groups. Anti-social behaviour, in all its complexity, clearly emerged as the most important issue to tenants.

But the main issues became allocations, drug dealing and anti social behaviour and maintenance. They would be the three top issues in most estates that you come across, and getting those issues addressed (I18).

They're the classic ones, anti social behaviour is a big one at the minute. It's a big one on all estates. *Across the city. And is that just in the last year or so?* The last two years I'd say. *So its got worse for some reason?* It has, what you have is nine and ten year olds quoting the law at you. You can't touch me I'm only nine. They're doing stuff and they know the cops' hands are tied. Things like burning cars, stealing cars, breaking windows, putting paint all over properties, that type of thing you know. They're not even little bitty things. They're big things (I30).

Is there a lot of joyriding still? We still get a lot, there's a whole army comes in, and when the police come after them, they move on to the next estate, they do a full circle, it's the way the estates were built and that's the way they work. In the last few weeks things have calmed down a bit, but I would have actually got two cars a day taken out of the area (I37).

Yes xxxx now would have a big problem. They've actually set up a task force to deal with the problems they've had up there. They've everything, you name it they have it up there. They've had the drinking on the corner, they've had the drugs, they'd have the dealers and crowd that take it, they have the joyriders screaming through the estate there, the burnt out cars, the horses flying through the estate, they have the travellers, they've everything (I22).

But the amount of anti social behaviour is after increasing since '94. And if we meet up with the guards on a monthly basis or every six weeks we give them the black spots. Our worst anti-social behaviour at the moment is the cars (I31).

There was a variety of views regarding the provenance of anti-social behaviour. The next quotation shows that the lack of parental control is seen as one of the major causal factors in generating social disorder on estates.

As I said, a couple of families have moved in and also there would have been a couple of families whose kids, smaller kids who would have been a bit disruptive. But when they're small you'd chase them away, but now they're not small anymore and the crimes have got more serious. *Is it drugs or is it more drinking?* It's more drinking. I'm not saying there's no drugs. It's lack of parental control or interest. It's kids who are now 14, 15 and 16 and have been allowed do whatever they want since they were 3 and 4 and started off at 3 and 4 climbing into peoples gardens and nick knocking and that sort of thing. And ten years on have progressed because they would never have been corrected or checked and it would never have been families that you could approach about it. Plus we do have a couple of families where the adults would be as disruptive as the children but certainly two or three of these families have only moved into the estate in more recent times (I21).

The robbed cars, all that element came in then, society really had took a turn for the worst. *Did it get very bad quickly?* Yes it did, it was kind of an over night thing. You know, there was major damage getting done to the flat's complex. Like I know as a kid grown up in it there was, the Corporation, you couldn't do nothing in them. You know you were made clean that up after you, they were run very well. Not only that then, there would have been people then, 21 mothers and 21 fathers and anyone would pull you up and that was allowed, very acceptable. But definitely I would say in the last seven to eight years that's when xxxxx slipped and it just seems to slipping and slipping and slipping and really no one addressing the problems that are in it (15).

Influencing Allocations

As a consequence of the severity of anti-social behaviour and the ensuing social disorder problems, one of the major demands of tenant groups in all estates is to have an influence over the allocations of casual vacancies on estates. Tenant groups see this as a central issue. In their view the allocation of dwellings to 'problem' families can quickly undo work which has stabilised estates. There is clear evidence of tenant groups having a direct influence on allocations and lettings policy, especially in the period prior to 1996. In some cases this took the form of the tenant group interviewing prospective tenants, though this was mainly in the Dublin region. However, this practice seems to have effectively ceased over the past few years. From the mid 1990s onwards, as local authorities have begun to develop estate management policies, they have reasserted their authority in determining allocations. Nonetheless, tenant groups still generally receive information regarding prospective tenants and have a low to moderate influence on lettings. This procedure where tenant groups informally receive information from the local authorities on prospective tenants acts in part as an intelligence gathering mechanism for the local authority and in part assuages the demand of tenant groups for influence over lettings.

Although anti-social behaviour is a complex issue and is recognised as such by many tenant groups, the area which tenants feel they can have most direct influence on such behaviour is on the allocation of dwellings. As a consequences of the severity of social disorder problems, there is a demand from many tenant groups that they either have an influence on the allocation of dwellings or that the local authority have a policy of housing only suitable families. This amounts to a demand from tenants to exclude known or potential trouble-makers from access to dwellings. This is a highly controversial area. In legal terms the allocation of dwellings is a purely executive function of the local authority and should be undertaken solely on the basis of housing need. However, this legal imperative has been muddied and compromised by the advice in policy documents and best practice guidance

that allocations be part of the agenda of tenant participation and be open to tenant groups to influence. This tension is being worked through in a variety of ways in local authorities.

One of the more prominent examples of tenant influence is from the Dublin area. In the early 1990s tenant groups in a number of estates had very strong power and influence over allocations. In this case, remarkably, lists of prospective tenants were given to tenant groups and the tenant group subsequently interviewed prospective tenants regarding their suitability for tenancies. The local authority were not involved in these 'interviews' or 'vettings' and in most cases accepted the views or recommendations of the tenant group. The context for this direct influence on allocations was the extraordinary severity and consequences of the drug problem in Dublin in the early 1990s (Punch, 2000). The set of quotations below demonstrate the clear influence that tenant activists had in some Dublin authorities¹.

We used to have great relationship with Dublin Corporation. **They used to refer every prospective tenant to the local housing committee, to meet with the local housing committee. We never like using the term vetting, it wasn't a term used in our groups. I think it was a term local authorities developed, maybe not even local authorities but councillors** (I28, my emphasis).

We would have got negotiation rights, we would have been told straight from the start that at the end of the day we're the landlords. It's our final say. But we'll give you the flexibility once you don't abuse it and that's what you had to work with. **They would have given you the names in advance, they would have been sent to you, so you'd check them out. How they would have been checked out would have been through the anti drugs network across the city** (I8, my emphasis).

So they would have interviewed for flats? Oh they would have yes, **they would have had a lot of power.** So they would have a list from the Corporation. Well they used to, I know one of the kids that was looking for a flat within it, they had to go before this committee (I36, my emphasis).

We interviewed everybody that came in here since 1994 (to 1997). That was part of our meetings with the council. It usually works that way but the council have by-passed us once or twice lately. They've put in one or two problem people that we didn't know anything about until you see the shutters coming off and they're in you know what I mean. You can't do anything. *So they would give you the list of people would they?* They could ring tomorrow and say I've two people xxx xxx and xxx xxx for allocation can you do an interview tomorrow. And I'll ask questions like did you do a Garda clearance check or is there any and you get oh no they're grand and all this stuff and they'd be only in the door here **and the community are down on you** (I27, my emphasis).

¹ This influence occurred on a number of estates in the suburbs and the inner city of Dublin.

If you take xxxxxx as an example every vacancy that would come up, they would have all gone through the housing sub committee? Yes. So you would have got the names from the corporation list? Yes. It took years to establish that relationship with the Corporation, we would have had a relationship with all the different elements of housing, if it was the rents section, rent arrears section, the eviction officers, the social worker in particular, and there was a social worker who was based in xxxxxxxx, a corporation social worker and she would have liased on a weekly basis, the estate manager and they were only developing estate management as such, he would have come out and met on a regular basis, sometimes fortnightly, maybe - sometimes twice a week and he would take particular issues of complaints and so on or outstanding arrears and he would deal with those. And we would often then make our own arrangements if something went to the wire, we'd one eviction case, any others we would have been successful in dealing with (I14).

What we do is we communicate between one another. The council fax us up a list of tenants who are ready to be housed between four and five on a Monday. And just say there's a tenant from Mary's area on it, I'll be onto Mary and have a chat with Mary about them and vice versa. We have contacts nearly all over Dublin anyway. So we can ring around and have a chat about the tenants (I9).

However, the interviews showed that across all the local authorities, but especially in the Dublin area, the increase in demand for social housing resulted in the local authorities tightening their control of allocations in the late 1990s. Whereas they had ceded some control and influence on allocations on a number of estates, they began to take back control. The motivation for this was also political, in that there was a clear agenda to take back estates from the control of Sinn Fein. The next quotation captures the change from a tenant activist view.

*But realistically following '97, from '97 to '99 there was a big shift, around the time of the Celtic tiger, there was a huge upsurge in the waiting lists and demands for housing. People that were forced out of being able to buy a house had to go on to a waiting list for a house and that tighten up the whole mechanism across the board. Where you could if you had a good working relationship a nod and a wink with the allocations officer, and you might go out for a drink, and you could have got this family in or that person out or this girl in. **The whole regime went out the window and everything was tightened down** (I9, my emphasis).*

But how are the allocations now has it changed, did they try to pull back out of it? They did try and pull back. We never got to have the same rights in a sense of meeting with prospective tenants and it took a lot to get them to supply us with the names of people that they were intending to house. Was that straight away from when they took over in '97 did it happen quickly? We would have tried to get a good transition. Were you involved in that change over trying to have a saying in what was going to happen before they actually agreement was signed? We were, but they gave promises and the various different departments in the corporation would have written to them explaining and outlining the relationship that we have and the good relationships, but it was never fully implemented by South Dublin County Council. So we had to argue all the way for our rights as we saw them. That has changed now, they do supply us with a list well in access of the number of vacant houses so your well in advance (I26).

In some Dublin estates the direct control of the allocations process was primarily to do with controlling drugs-related problems. Indeed, it was not just in relation to allocations that some tenant groups had influence. They also sought and achieved influence in dealing with drug-related anti-social behaviour of existing tenants. The actions taken, such as direct demonstrations outside suspected drug-dealers homes and public interviews and meetings with suspected anti-social tenants, created much controversy in the early and mid 1990s. A typical strategy was, as shown in the next quotation, to call potential tenants or existing tenants to tenant group meetings.

Bring people to meetings and telling them, people who were suspected of being involved in antisocial behaviour. **It would have brought people to the meeting who were anti social** causing trouble, on the stairs, hanging around, being abusive to people, or young people who were involved in joy riding. These would have took place at our committee meetings (I12, my emphasis).

Needless to say, such tactics were very controversial, often being tagged with the label of vigilantism. They were defended by community activists on the basis that the drugs problem was devastating communities and that statutory agencies were effectively doing nothing. This interpretation was indeed broadly correct although it was clear that such direct methods would soon meet a response from the authorities. Apart from meetings in front of tenant groups, there were broader public meetings at which those accused of anti-social activities gave commitments (previously agreed through unknown methods) to cease their activities.

And would you have opposed eviction? Generally, except maybe in some cases if there's somebody involved in drug dealing we probably would have asked, after going through a process of consultation with the ones involved and so on. There was a whole process in which people would have thought that someone was accused of drugs **and they appear in front of a public meeting in the community centre.** There's a lot went before that which wouldn't have been public as such because it was probably dealt with through a process in which some of these people who were dealing with drugs who gave a commitment to a community to give it up (I14).

According to tenant activists this direct control and influence on allocations had a number of benefits, the main one being the attempt to pre-emptively stop anti-social tenants obtaining tenancies.

But we would have local people coming up, the reason we would like to meet with prospective tenants and in terms of being recommended for housing in the area was for a number of reasons. **One would have been to safe guard the community against those who were perhaps involved in drug dealing and previous anti social behaviour and that wouldn't necessarily mean we would stop anybody coming in.** The final say was naturally enough with the local authority, however if we weren't happy well then we would make it known. And in some cases it gave an opportunity to let any prospective tenants meet with local people, putting a face on local people rather than moving in and not knowing anybody. They were informed at those meetings about the local schools, about clubs and groups, have they any skills if they wished to assist, if they did move in (I13, my emphasis).

Just on allocations, in your view did it work, what was the benefit of having that power? I think there were benefits not just to the local community, there were benefits also to the local authority. Because we were in the position, through working with other community organisations to get a clear picture and not that we would reveal all the circumstances to the council or the corporation. But where a prospective tenant you know you might have Mary and no partner and two kids, when some of these would have met they would say well I do have a partner but I don't want to say, again we're not going to say providing we know that they're ok and the partners not a drug dealer and so on, we'd be happy with that because we understand that maybe circumstances financially weren't great and that was fine with us (I14).

So if Dublin Corporation had a tenant that wanted to live in the area they would send them to meet the committee. *Of course you were still under Dublin Corporation then?* At the time yes. They would send them to meet the committee. When they'd come you'd explain what's in the area and were everything is and the problems that's in the area as well. And if they really wanted to live here they'd come back, if they didn't you'd never seen them again. So there was a great working relationship with Dublin Corporation at the time (I16).

The sanction of the community in these cases was the threat of eviction if an existing tenant or the threat of not being allocated a tenancy if an applicant.

The sanction was going to be that if you don't sort the situation out we're going to be on to the Corporation and the eviction process is going to take place and it's your ma that's getting put out of her home because of something stupid you've done. Now there would have been a lot of bluffing took place as well, and common sense a lot of the stuff, because you didn't actually have the power. In some sense they see it on the outside as you having power and when I say they I'm talking about the residents. So on the inside you would have been as much nervous as about dealing with them, but it couldn't be left, something had to be done. And at that stage there was no real response from the guards at all, the relationship was dire to say the least (I19, my emphasis).

However, the demand to get involved in allocations is not universal. Some tenant groups were in fact vehemently against such wielding any influence on allocations, as the next two quotations demonstrate.

The forum wouldn't have wanted to be involved around that. I think when we were originally shown the slides from all the different estate forums around the place, the amount of control some forums have around the country was actually quite frightening to some of the residents here. That includes me and I've been involved in community development since I've moved into the estate, it was actually quite frightening to me as well the amount of control some residents actually have (I18).

And I actually have to say that really frightened me, and to be told that some of them organise the payments of rents, that sort of frightened me. I said, no I don't think we want to go quite that far. So at the time it was more so that some houses were being left empty as opposed to allocations (I34).

However, this initial reluctance changed when anti-social behaviour started to arise on the estate in question.

We had specifically decided not to get involved in anti social but it is now an issue. It wasn't a major issue when they started. It was decided not to get involved, but I should say not to get involved in individual cases. I think this task force are going to get involved in individual cases (I34).

The evidence suggests that across all the case study areas that tenant influence on allocations has declined considerably and no tenant group either interviews prospective tenants or has a veto. However, it is clear that one of the reasons that estate management was put in place, especially in Dublin, was because local authorities had ceded control of their estates to tenant groups and in particular anti-drugs organisations. As the next quotation shows, things have changed in the past five years.

What happens then is we would check it out and we would inform them whether we're happy or not with them and then you inform the Council. In most cases they'd be aware if we're not happy and they will always say they have to check it out with the guards, the guards have the final word, but the guards know less than the people living in the community anyway (I2).

Did it stop then in '97? What happened was when the council was taking over the houses they didn't want anybody to be dealing with that, it was their housing and it was their problems and we had no rights. **The council at the time I don't think wanted us to have a foot in the door. They'd let us in but not really** (I15, my emphasis).

In wresting back control, or some semblance of control, on Dublin estates, the local authorities in the Dublin area would only meet with organised tenant groups and not with anti-drugs groups. As the following quotations indicates, anti-drugs groups were making limited inroads with the local authorities but recognised that the authority would deal with properly constituted tenant groups. Thus, at least in parts of the Dublin area, anti-drugs groups were transformed, not wholesale, into tenant groups.

And what it was, it came together, seeing that the anti drugs weren't having any luck with the corporation there was a need to focus on the tenants groups and developing the tenants response. And the Corporation would deal with tenants groups so, most of the anti drugs group and the members were made up of residents from the different flat complex's, so it was only a natural process that they would get involved in developing tenants and residents groups (I3).

Thus, anti-social behaviour is now dealt with primarily by the statutory agencies. In South Dublin, for example, the anti-social behaviour team now deal with problems of anti-social behaviour and the tenant group would link with this group.

Do you link in with this anti social-team? ? I think they're half afraid at times to approach some of the tenants you know, and you can't blame them can you. So effectively nothing gets done, because they will say they need the evidence, they need to interview the tenant and then they won't go and interview the tenant. What happens is for example someone might come in to xxxxxx in the community centre and complain that there's drug dealing or whatever, or their next door neighbours are causing mayhem , so xxxx will ask them to put that in writing. They don't have to state who they are or xxxx will take the complaint and write it down. We would never reveal who the complainant was. Some of them might come down and confront xxxx and say someone was complaining about me and they can be near enough to actually who's complaining, we're not going to tell them, but in some cases the council may have slipped up. So that would be our attempts at the anti social, but we can't deal with a lot of it. We may offer on occasion if we don't think its very serious, mediation and whatever (I25).

In South Dublin at any rate, there is a fairly positive view of the impact of the anti-social behaviour team and even a view that tenants, because of the fear of eviction, are more afraid of them than of the police.

We have great people working on the anti social team in South Dublin. *Is that a useful team?* Oh yes. **It's amazing really if you listen to people out there, they don't mind the police knocking on their door, but don't let the anti social team from xxxxx County Council come to their door, that's a different ball game** (I17, my emphasis).

How does that happen? The fear of losing a house, the roof over the heads. But they're just prepared to carry on. They stay quiet for three or six months and everything goes grand and then all of a sudden its back up again. But I have to say the anti social team have made an effect and they've been very good. The only thing we haven't actually seen is any evictions. It's supposed to start now in September (I16).

What they do is they would call them in to the office and they will explain the problems there and they will say to them right your getting your first warning, a verbal warning. Then there brought in for a second verbal warning and then the third one is a written. Things seem to quieten down after they get that for a good while. It could be about six or seven months, then it blows up again and because there such a big estates in between them its starts all over again. The same process happens again the two verbals and the written (I17).

Moreover, part of the functions of some of the paid tenant workers, across all the local authorities, would be to deal with the drugs issue and its consequences. As the next set of quotations show, the most common response now to anti-social activities is to liaise with the statutory authorities or to form a task force of tenants and other agencies.

Part of our work would still be to be working on the supply of drugs, stopping the supply coming into the area and that would be working with the council who have new tenants coming in, that they wouldn't be convicted drug dealers from other areas (I41).

The residents are going to go and look for an undertaking from each of those agencies that there will be a task force set up with representatives from themselves as well as residents to try and look at these issues. I know they're going to ask that sort of a hold be put on emergency allocations being sent up here (I10).

Theme 4: Relations with Local Authorities

While anti-social behaviour and allocations are two of the most important issues on which tenant groups and local authorities interact, the interviews also revealed more general perspectives. Tenant groups consistently pointed to the lack of knowledge and information they possessed regarding the structures and processes that operate in local authorities. Such knowledge and information that they do possess has been hard won through struggle and the process of participation rather than through any formal information-giving process. The provision of information to tenant groups and tenants generally is regarded as very poor in most cases. There is clearly no policy within or between local authorities on the provision of information.

Structures and Personnel

A clear and consistent message which comes across is that changes in local-authority personnel are frequent and, more importantly, that such changes inevitably disrupt or stall any negotiations that tenants have been involved with. Given the immediacy and urgent nature of many issues, tenant groups are heavily critical of such changes and the lack of a structure which provides continuity. In simple terms, if estate officers change on a frequent basis, tenants groups have said that the replacement may take months to learn the basics of the job. In short, it is clear that the local authority structures are not geared to smooth transitions and are heavily dependent on a small number of individuals. Nonetheless, some tenant groups are positive about the contributions of individual estate officers who work with groups and on estates, who are seen as helpful. However, this should not be overstressed as some groups are deeply critical of the estate officers they work with.

There is now a wide recognition that estate officers have only limited power and that major decisions are made by more senior personnel in head quarters.

In the case of Dun Laoghaire Rathdown, some of the tenant groups are savagely critical of the hand-over of estate management from the Housing to the Community Department. They see this as a retrograde step where they now have less access to senior officers who have decision-making power. They are deeply frustrated with the increasingly cumbersome decision-making process and see it as the local authority distancing itself even more.

Is it a problem to not have housing on the Forum It does create another, in that you've to go another step before you get to housing (I34).

This cynicism regarding structures is fairly widespread. There was no structure or model of participation which stood out as being superior. The estate agreement in St. Teresa's Gardens in Dublin did evince much positive comment, although the tenant activists said that it took continuous effort to ensure that the agreement was adhered to and that the timeframe for agreement had been breached.

Relationships with the Local Authority

Overall, while views of local authorities are inevitably complex they do tend towards the negative. The next set of quotations give a representative flavour of general views of local authorities. A clear picture emerges from the interviews regarding the perceived ineffectiveness of local authorities, the inordinate time to achieve minor results and the fragmented nature of the service.

From our point of view **we were very naive about their structures and how their structures worked.** It took a couple of years for me to realise, going to meetings and meeting various different people **actually how their structures work and how ineffective they are.** And the other thing you find as well, once you start meeting with Corporation officials it becomes fragmented (I7, my emphasis).

So they like to **use the divide and conquer technique,** working with some groups who are stronger. And some groups that are stronger will get a lot more done than groups that are weaker because it's like they have one eye and ear closed to the weaker groups and they don't do as much work with them (I9, my emphasis).

Our understanding of it was that this MIT² was to have representatives from every department, either the heads or their nominated person. And they were to have answers for the estate on absolutely everything, from the condition of your estate to the maintenance of your houses and that was definitely the understanding when the whole thing started. **But that has not materialised, that has not happened. I think each group you talk to will be totally frustrated that it is not happening** (I21, my emphasis).

.....they're illusive, you hear of the magic MIT but there's been no contact. **Now I am very aware of the workings of the county council and that it's going to take an awful time to get the people who are up on top to actually turn around and change their ways and change their way of thinking and change the way of doing things. But I'm also very aware that a lot of people on the four forum are becoming incredibly frustrated with the fact that it is taking so long** (I28, my emphasis).

One of the core criticisms of the local authority is that it takes an inordinate amount of effort to even achieve minor changes, as the following quotation shows.

Have relationships got much better with the Corporation? I think our relationship has. To me its kind of from an overall point of view if I had meeting and I'd come in and say look there's no one has a magic wand, when your dealing with xxxxxx City Council **you have to be patient. I mean as I said we were three and a half years getting those bollards done** we were another two or three years fighting for the traffic calming measures but we've all of them in place now. And if we weren't here those things wouldn't be done (I38, my emphasis).

More positively, there is also significant evidence that the establishment of partnership structures such as estate boards, has resulted in some tenant groups being given a platform and recognition which might not have existed previously.

The task force had a fair bit of effect. To put it on a platform, **it actually, it gave us recognition within the corporation** and this is a big thing the corporation use and xxx probably spoke about this, the recognition between tenants groups and anti drugs groups. Where an anti drugs group could be more active in an area than a tenants group and more on the pulse of what's actually happening but not be recognised by the local authorities. Even though the people who are on this group are actually residents in that estate (I8, my emphasis).

However, one of the strongest messages to emerge which comes across in a number of ways, is the need for tenant activists to develop personal relationships with local authority officials, especially in headquarters. The implied, and often explicit, criticism here is that structures in local authorities are not developed to a sufficient extent that procedures operate regardless of the personnel involved.

² Management Implementation Team, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown, see Chapter 8.

... the only thing you would get as a tenant shall we say from the council, **or the only way you'll get something done is if you happen to build up a relationship with the individuals in each department and that's it.** *And they can change as well?* They frequently do, I know myself I've rang and spoke to somebody and the following week rang to speak to them over something and I got he or she has moved to whatever department or something or other. But people also say to me, tenants in general feel its like another conspiracy that they don't want you to get to know anybody in there (I35).

There are also, in some structures, clear problems regarding communications with the local authority. The next set of quotations show that whether it is communications with individuals in the local authority or obtaining information and results through the structures of participation, that there is considerable frustration among most activists. This is perhaps one of the most negative findings. A whole raft of new structures have been created and estate officers deployed, however, it is clear that certainly many of the structures are not working well as far as the tenant activists are concerned.

But what I used to do if I wanted to follow up and even to day it still works, I get no response to letters, no response to phone calls, I go up and I land into the office and wait for someone to swipe their card and walk in behind them' (I14).

We've met with xxxxx xxxxx and its been two months before we can get an answer with their new set up. We report on our estate management to xxxxx. xxxxx goes back and does a report for his boss and his boss reports to xxxxx and all these managers, how estate management is going. It was handed over to community which was stupid because they can't get the answers off housing. *Is housing more important though to you?* Yes because how in gods name does community know of people's housing needs and they don't want to deal with anti social in the community section. They're trying to reshape the Council and unfortunately we get the bad end of the stick because some of the staff are there for years and are stuck in certain ways (I27, my emphasis).

Occasionally we would have to write to the particular department. The council departments aren't great for responding and never have been and that would be the experience in any local authorities or answering phone calls. **And then they might have or be in the position to use the excuse well you have to go through your estate manager** (I11, my emphasis).

We had all the managers there, everything. The council used to come out and meet with us, we'd have the head of housing, environment, roads, maintenance, we had them all, so they could ask each other, like they were at the table. And we could say we had ten maintenance complaints went in last week, he could say why haven't they been done (I24).

As part of the new structures all the authorities have provided training for tenant activists, either directly or through funding. The type of training that is sometimes offered by local authorities stresses, as seen in the next quotations, the need for tenants to avoid conflict. While there is a pragmatic dimension here in that meetings need to be conducted in an

effective manner, one could also interpret such training as an attempt to soften the opposition of tenants.

Because there was a lot of screaming and banging on tables and I said no way they won't listen to that, you need to have a proper report formulated, a proper way of putting it to them, because these guys will just glaze over. You start raising your voices and banging tables, you may forget about it. (I33).

What does the training involve, what are training to do in other words? Well **how to behave at meetings** and how to run meetings and all that. Like you could have people on committees that just roar and shout, that's no good, you get nothing done. Now we meet with the Corporation on a regular basis (I39, my emphasis).

Relations with Estate Officers

One of the clearest messages to emerge from the interviews is the generally positive view of the role of estate officers. However, as was indicated earlier, this is modified by the problems created by frequent personnel changes in local authorities.

They've had so many people promoted and changed and swapped around and its coming from the top down that your only dealing with someone for six months to a year and they're gone... (I7).

In four years we have dealt with seven reps from the Corporation and every time we got that bit nearer another representative from Dublin Corporation came and it knocked the whole thing back six or seven months at a time for each of the individuals that was on board. We've never ever had any continuous person. And that's the hardest to have to work with I find. And then someone that doesn't have a clue. Even if whoever takes over after them if they'd fill them in on what has previously gone on (I5).

Nonetheless, most of the tenant activists were positive about the impact of estate officers on estates. The advent of estate officers as the front line of estate management has been welcomed by most tenant activists. They not only give a direct link to communicate with the local authority but they are seen to have had direct and positive impacts on the quality of estate life. The set of quotations below show the very positive views and perceived impacts of estate officers on estates.

...we did have an estate officer here and he was absolutely brilliant because xx didn't wait for red tape to be cut, he busted through it. *I've seen his name on various documents.* Yes and he then did his thesis and jumped about four or five steps up the Corporation ladder... (I40, my emphasis).

Yes I would think that if there is a problem and take for instance that the estate officer will report a problem back into maintenance or housing or where ever. **They do follow it up** (I41, my emphasis).

The estate management officers that we had have been sound, they've been very good people, co-operative and helpful, but I know exactly when they go inside what you have said is quite true. *So it's the internal structure really isn't it?* Yes that's it really and certain individuals of course. I don't know I think an awful lot of their attitudes have changed. They have mellowed (I16, my emphasis).

The estate officer comes to all the meetings, now he won't come to the monthly ones but he comes to the sub group ones. Any discussion then we have with xxxx, now you have the bollards, you have the lighting, you could be talking about the soccer clubs as well. **I'd meet xxx xxx everyday. xxxxx is always present on the estate. And he's very good, because he understands the problems of the area and he understands how we work** (I20, my emphasis).

It's very early, because as I say he's only in the last 18 months but I can see improvements in the three estates, in regards to the cleanliness. There's a cleaner comes in each Tuesday morning, like a contractor and they clean the whole lot, now whether that's because its under development and they're trying to sell off the land I don't know. But that's all new, that's only being happening over the last few months (I5).

In the last year, I have to say, since xxx came on board, this has quietened down. Yes, I'd have to give him his due on that one, definitely. And that's because he used the anti social behaviour, the new law that was put in, and that was in it. The only thing is we don't have much co-operation with the Guards. We don't see enough of them in around when problems happen. But since they put the boulders in, I know they're unsightly and the whole lot, but they have done the job, there's no cars on the pitch (I40, my emphasis).

Yes at this stage he really has made an impact. And he moved on anybody that was dealing in the flats. He used the law to get rid of people. There was actually three evictions in one morning here (I36, my emphasis).

Relations with Police and Statutory Agencies

The picture that emerges regarding relationships between tenant groups and other statutory agencies such as the police and health boards is a mixed one. Many of the comments about the police and health boards are very negative.

A big problem with the guards over the years was with communities. While they'd have huge distrust and didn't get on wherever there was agreements made or a relationship started to form six months, twelve months down the road you've built up a working relationship between you and he's gone, he's transferred to the drugs squad or some other section. **And then there's no structure to replace him and the one that does come in to replace him has to spend the best part of a year getting to know the structure and getting to know the people.** Then you come across a situation where if they don't get on or if it starts off with a bad working relationship at the start you're fucked (I8, my emphasis).

South Inner City for years had a dire relationship with the guards. The one thing that they focused on, they changed their policy around how they deal with communities. Before they were seen as outsiders, now they want to be in the middle of everything going on, they might as well be social workers as well as guards. You've community guards dropping in all over the place now only for a space of time and they're gone again (I5, my emphasis).

Between '94 and '97 there wasn't any real contact between the guards, who were the ones responsible for the crime issue (I7).

One thing that is actually consistent across the country the guards to some extent have not abandoned authority but to a greater extent have abandoned some estates, you get no response orthey say they've no power to deal with teenagers or.....And I think that maybe they're frustrated that they can't deal with it (I14).

Well you see them coming in selling them, at least four or five times a day. The police were here one day and I could see they were selling tablets at the corner in front of the house, but the police don't even care. I was shocked. And then again there was a motorbike and it was in everyday and you could see, he never took the helmet off and he was always going up and down with bags of stuff. We told the police he's there between half nine and eleven o'clock every night we can guarantee it. He came in at half ten got his stuff and the police came in at twenty past eleven after we say between half nine and eleven. He was long gone and they had the number plate. I gave the number plates to the police, but not a thing happened. So that's why people don't bother (I24).

However, there is some, albeit more limited evidence, of more positive attitudes towards the police.

And are the links with the guards crucial? Definitely, you couldn't go on without them. The community department is fabulous from the top to the bottom in Tallaght Garda Station, they're great people (I39).

It's the same problem we have with say young girls, with social workers and the social workers are fighting and fighting for this girl to be housed, once they're housed they don't care. They get them on the priority list, they fight all the way, as soon as they're housed they walk away and they don't care. The eastern health board is not coming in the way they should be (I17).

Theme 5: Outcomes

The quotations below reveal mixed views on the impact and outcomes of estate management and tenant participation. There is convincing evidence across a number of estates that individual estate officers are perceived to have had a positive impact in terms of dealing with anti-social behaviour and maintenance. However, there is also evidence which suggests that the impact has been but marginal. Those activists who have been involved over the longer term, take a more critical stance. They emphasise the difficulties in achieving relatively small gains and the tendency of local authorities to want to control the process. Some tenant groups are wary of the increasing links with local authorities and

other statutory agencies. They see the statutory agencies as stifling their independence and learning about the operations of community groups.

Co-option

There was a significant difference of views between those tenant activists who have been involved for many years and those who have only been involved for a shorter period. The veterans tended to be more cynical and critical of the whole process. Some, indeed, as in the next quotation, have a very sophisticated political analysis of the impact of tenant participation structures.

Where for years they were on the outside looking in now they shifted to a state where their actually involved in near enough everything that's going on to some extent in communities. And they think then that by being involved so much that it gives them a right to actually start saying how things should operate. **They've actually become a lot cuter, they've actually learnt, they've spent so many years on the outside looking in, in the last few years they've moved the goal posts and started to come inside and started to learn about how structure works. They're sitting around the table and picking up all sorts of stuff and learning and looking at how a community operates. In my mind, I don't think its necessarily a good thing in the long run, because you're going to have a situation where, and it's happened in some cases with the local authority, they're coming in and telling you that they're doing this and they're doing that whether you like it or not. The community has to be one step ahead** (I31, my emphasis).

They want a handy job at the end of the day and they don't want to be going out into communities and getting lifted out of it across the table or being verbally abused by tenants or residents. There is a policy there but it's not actually a printed policy. They seem to make up the policy as they go along (I8, my emphasis).

There is a clear distinction in some activists' minds regarding the general interpretation and emphasis on estate management. The next quotation illustrates an activists view that the local authorities interpret estate management as being primarily about achieving better value for money rather than improving quality of life on estates.

But their whole concept of estate management was different because really they were talking about rather than resident participation in estate management in its broader concept it was in relation to managing their housing stock really and how could they get better value and if you go back to that document it speaks about value for money. **As far as we would be concerned we talking about the type of value for money and we would be talking in terms of that would be the quality of life of the residents who live within estates, but there's never any mention of that** (I19, my emphasis).

There is also some cynicism regarding the overall attitude of local authorities, with some activists viewing local authorities as attempting to control the activities of tenant groups and not being dedicated to providing a quality service.

The County Council want to control everything to be honest with you. I don't think the council honestly see themselves as being a service provider. And if you speak to any of them its as if it's all theirs, they control everything, they know best, with the exception of one or two people. But a lot of the good relationships with the residents or residents groups are based on who you know individually (I14, my emphasis).

Some of the veteran activists stress what they see as the policy of the local state to undermine and community groups. Moreover, in an interesting interpretation, the next quotation implies that local authorities are seeking to channel all problems through the structure of estate management. However, as indicated, an individual tenant does not need to go through the estate management structure.

What I find extraordinary is that they'll go out of their way sometimes to undermine certain groups and these groups are trying to deal with the crap that's going on in some of the estates. You wonder about how genuinely committed they are but as you say it all boils down to that they don't understand that they are there to provide a service and if you go back then to those housing bills or the inclusion of residents or tenants then they're obligated whether its through a structure or a group you know a constituted group, yet they're obligated to dealing with me as an individual tenant or resident living within that local authority estate. So I don't have to go through the estate manager, if I want to raise an issue as an individual I will go to the relevant department head and they're obligated to dealing with me (I14, my emphasis).

Nonetheless, there are some positive general appraisals of the impact of participation and estate management.

From '97 up to the current situation xxxxx has had a very stable community. Once a committee started to get established and structures started to get in place, people then started realising maybe it is worth living here, staying here. The numbers coming in and numbers going out reduced (I14, my emphasis).

III COMPARISONS AND CONTRASTS

This section attempts to synthesise much of the material presented above and of the large body of evidence from the interviews which was too voluminous to use.

Tenant Activism

With regard to tenant groups and tenant activism, there are quite differing levels of interest among tenants in becoming involved in tenant groups, ranging from enthusiasm, disinterest, to cynicism, depending on the profile and history of the estate as well as the history of tenant participation on individual estates. As is the case generally, becoming directly involved in local community action or development can be a time-consuming affair and may often yield limited results. This general point holds also for local-authority tenants,

although perhaps more so. Involvement in tenant organisations, which is a voluntary activity, necessarily requires confronting many of the negative aspects of estate life. The motivations for such voluntary activity are clear; most tenant activists have been driven to action through the sheer need to try and to improve the quality of life on estates. For many of the tenant representatives interviewed for this study, the process of involvement in tenant participation structures, primarily structures of consultation, was generally a frustrating one. In the context of the severity of social and economic problems on estates, what amounted to small gains and achievements tended to take a disproportionate effort from a small number of tenants. Tenant participation may at first have seemed alluring and promised change but has been slow to deliver.

While many of the tenant organisations had formal constitutions and sought to elect tenants on a regular basis, very often the level of interest in joining a tenant group or an estate management board was lacking. Consequently, many tenant groups comprise a small number of dedicated individuals who have been involved for a number of years and it is hard to resist the impression that the underlying strength of such groups is therefore weak. In strict terms then, very few groups are representative of the estates in terms of the age profile or household type that predominates. In particular, it is striking that very few groups have significant numbers of men or of younger persons who are active.

What has helped tenant groups is that some authorities are funding, through arms-length mechanisms, estate or community workers who work with tenants in a form of tenant advocacy. It is also the case that tenant groups have in recent years been the recipients of small-scale resourcing which makes it possible to operate in a more sustained manner. The provision of training for tenant representatives has become more common as has the provision of limited finance to run local offices. In some cases, tenant organisations are closely linked with the broader community-development infrastructure available on some estates. However, it is also clear that some tenant organisations are also in conflict with other community development organisations over the small-scale of resources available and over local agendas for community development.

Tenant groups thus find themselves in a complex and ambivalent position. On the one hand they have to work with the local state in order to try and effect change while on the

other they must negotiate the complexities of anti-social behaviour on their estates. Another element of this ambivalent and perhaps even contradictory position revolved around the changing nature of voluntarism. Although voluntary work is essential tenant activists are being employed through a variety of means on a part- or full-time basis.

Table 9.1 seeks to compare tenant activism across all the estates surveyed. It examines when the tenant group was established, gives an assessment of its strength, comments on its links with other community groups, assesses the severity of anti-social behaviour and the influence of the group on allocations. These observations are based on a close reading of the interviews but necessarily contain an element of subjectivity. However, as they are comparative, the relativities are important. In Dublin City Council the level of activism varies quite considerably across the different estates. In Teresa's Gardens, for example, there is a very active tenant group, heavily political, which has negotiated an estate agreement. However, O' Devaney Gardens, a very similar estate physically and socially, has had a very weak structure. Indeed, until 2002 it had no organised tenant group at all.

In South Dublin County Council, there are again quite distinct contrasts. In Killinarden, really a series of large estates rather than one estate, there is a long-established Community Council, of which the tenant or estate management group is a sub-section. Historically at least, this group had a strong influence over allocations. It is also worth pointing out that the origins of these groups is strongly related to grassroots movements against drugs and that the more political analyses of tenant participation emerged from these groups. In North Clondalkin, again a series of large estates rather than one estate, tenant groups are not nearly as active or strong and are not as closely linked in with broader community-development efforts. There is no overt political presence on the tenant groups in the area. Nonetheless, the problems of anti-social behaviour are as bad or worse than anywhere in Dublin. In Dun Laoghaire Rathdown, the tenant groups have been predominantly formed through the direct actions of the local authority, although the group in Mounttown existed from the early 1990s. While such groups seem strong, they are being heavily nurtured and developed by the local authority.

In Limerick, the tenant group in O' Malley Park is quite active and works from an office on the estate. However, it is heavily dependent on a small number of dedicated activists. These

activists are all the more remarkable as the group has been subject to intimidation from recognised criminal elements on the estate. In Waterford, the large Ballybeg estate has three tenant groups representing different sub-areas all with different degrees of social problems. These groups are generally quite strong and, to some extent, there are divisions among them. They are all represented on an overall estate forum. There is clear evidence of division with other community groups, particularly with Community Development Projects.

Consultation

Perhaps one of the clearest patterns to emerge from the research, irrespective of formal structure involved, was the very different expectation of tenants and local authority officials, a divergence which derives from the very nature of consultation. A major problem with the nature of consultation is that it is very elastic and open to varied interpretation. The interviews revealed that for tenants, consultation is almost invariably interpreted as meaning that the local authority would not only take their views into account but also act on them. However, for local authorities, consultation may mean just listening to tenants' views yet failing to do anything about them. The benefits of participation are seen as the improvement of communications between the tenants and the council. The role of estates officers in particular comes in for quite strong praise. Generally, such officers are seen as being helpful and positive and of making a difference in terms of dealing with communications and with anti-social behaviour. However, there is strong criticism regarding the frequent changes in personnel which often interrupts progress on estates. Activists across the case-study estates refer to having to train any new estate officers, indicating that there is no structure which facilitates personnel changes.

Table 9.1 Comparison of Tenant Activism Between Estates

Local Authority	Estate	When established	Comment on strength	Links with other community groups	Severity of anti-social	Influence on allocations
Dublin City	Darndale	1980s-	Strong; long history, but low no. of activists	Limited	Major 'joyriding' problem	Limited
	Cherry Orchard	2000-	Quite weak; constant change	Links with Local development council	Severe; drug-related	Very limited
	O' Devaney Gardens	2002-	Weak; only recently established	Limited	Moderate to severe; drink and drug related	Very limited
	Teresa's Gardens	1994-	Strong; politically well organised	Good links with local community organisations	Was severe; has moderated	Moderate
South Dublin	Killinarden	1970s-	Strong	Tenant group is a subset of the Community Council	Moderate to severe	Moderate
	North Clondalkin	1990s-	Weak to moderate	Some links to local development forum	Severe	Very limited
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown	Ballyogan	2002-	Weak; low no. of activists	Limited	Quite moderate	Very limited
	Mountown	1993-	Strong	Links with local development forum	Severe; drug dealing	Limited
	Rathsallagh	2002-	Strong	Limited	Minor	limited
Limerick	O' Malley Park	1994-	Weak; 2-3 activists only; intimidation	Moderate	Severe; criminality	Limited
Waterford	Ballybeg	1993-	3 tenant groups ; generally strong	Conflict between tenant groups and with other local groups	Variable	Limited

Sources: Interviews and Observation

The agenda

Broadly speaking, the tenant participation agenda has emerged in an unplanned or organic manner in the various case study areas, primarily in response to the immediate needs of tenants on particular estates. The issues that are on the agenda are not narrowly defined housing issues. The agenda is one which deals with a series of neighbourhood or estate issues, from housing and the general physical environment to social-order issues. Nonetheless, despite variations in estates with respect to location, size and age, it is safe to conclude that certain themes keep recurring on tenants agendas and that the issues are not narrowly defined housing issues. The four key issues which consistently appear are housing maintenance and repairs, general estate maintenance and repairs, allocations and lettings policies and social order issues. The social functioning of estates and the maintenance of the physical environment were continually stressed not only by the tenant representatives but also by local authority officials. Although it is important to avoid hyperbole regarding anti-social behaviour, it is also important to stress that the tenant representatives themselves identified these issues as the key priorities for estate management and tenant participation structures.

The issue of anti-social behaviour is clearly seen as the most important. Its diversity, complexity and persistence have a very detrimental impact on quality of life. Dealing with this scourge makes it impossible to deal with many other issues. Moreover, because of the complexity of its origins and impacts, it requires multi-dimensional responses. What emerged clearly from the interviews is the severity of social problems on estates, thus confirming the work of Fahey (1999). The tenant representatives interviewed were of one voice in emphasising the problems generated by the complex variety of anti-social behaviour that occurs. This ranged from general nuisance to a more serious range of intimidating behaviour associated with criminality of various sorts, including vandalism and drug dealing. In some estates there is clearly an atmosphere of intimidation and fear, making daily life difficult and harsh. Problems with respect to anti-social behaviour have immediate and often devastatingly negative impacts on estates and on the quality of life on some estates. Although it is the case that such problems vary considerably in terms of incidence and degree across the sample of estates, it is still true that the problems associated with anti-social behaviour of whatever type were often seen as the primary issue. Estates where such problems were particularly prevalent tended to have high vacancy rates

and high turnover of tenancies. One of the implications for tenant participation is that solutions are not just to be found through housing departments but through multi-agency approaches. While there is inevitably a desire and demand for quick and effective solutions, such as influence over allocations, evictions and exclusion orders, many tenant groups also have a more complex understanding of the nature of the problem. While calling for immediate responses from the police for example to deal with the direct effects, there is also a recognition that preventative measures are also needed. However, living on an estate requires, in the first instance, that some form of order be established to improve the quality of life on estates. Tenant activism is about coping with extremes.

Allocations

Although there is a variety of potential responses to the issue of social order problems, it emerged from the interviews that organised tenant groups were increasingly demanding a role in lettings and allocations policies as a means of vetting and policing new tenant households. This demand arises from a belief that influence over allocations and lettings can contribute to a reduction of anti-social behaviour, thereby stabilising estates. One indicator of instability comes in the form of tenancy turnover, with a turnover of thirty per cent per annum in some estates surveyed. Given this high turnover rate in some estates, the demand for an influence over lettings is understandable. However, as allocations and lettings are an executive function based on housing needs, a conflict immediately arises between tenant groups and the local authorities. Nonetheless, it became clear from the various interviews that many local authorities were informally collaborating with tenant groups in what amounted in some cases to a *de facto* vetting process.

The level and nature of this informal collaboration has varied over the past few years and has ranged from the local authority taking soundings from tenants' groups regarding households on the waiting list to a more pro-active system where tenant groups have had a strong degree of influence, even veto, over housing allocation. While there is a danger in relying on information from tenant groups, as it may be either hearsay or deliberately prejudicial, there was significant agreement among local-authority officials that information from such groups tended to be more up-to-date and reliable than that held by the police or the local authority. Nonetheless, local authorities were quite clear that any information received was always checked and verified and that this procedure was used only in a small

minority of cases. Tenant groups are strongly of the opinion that local authorities have contributed to the problems on certain estates through an allocations policy which houses unsuitable households or problem households, thereby contributing to the continued instability of estates. Tenant groups have thus sought to have a policing role with respect to lettings and to exclude what they perceive as problem households.

This process is inevitably fraught with conflict, with tenants often desiring strong powers of veto and local authorities attempting to steer a course between stabilising estates and dealing with housing need. It must also be said that there may be some legitimate basis for such negotiations since the Housing Act of 1997, which established anti-social behaviour as a basis for eviction. In response, some authorities have amended their tenancy agreements to reflect this change. The *de facto* situation where local authorities are attempting to balance catering for housing need with the need to try and stabilise some estates has found formal expression in the UK with experimental community lettings schemes (Brooke, 2001; Goodlad, 2001). In summary, tenant participation as currently practiced is intimately bound up with issues of social management, social control, indeed, social surveillance of estates. It could be argued that tenant participation has emerged and developed as a mechanism for ameliorating the more extreme aspects of anti-social behaviour on estates.

Maintenance

More straightforwardly, the second clear agenda item which emerged comprised the range of housing and estate maintenance issues, from the response to requests for individual repairs to the general upkeep of estates. Tenant groups were generally heavily critical of the performance of local authorities in this regard and were critical of the inability of tenant participation structures to improve matters. While it can certainly be argued that issues of social order are inherently complex and not amenable to easy solutions, the same cannot be said with regard to improving maintenance services. Such improvements do not necessarily need extra resources but do generally need significant improvements in internal practices and procedures. It is the relative failure to improve such seemingly technocratic procedures which is perhaps one of the more negative comments on the efficacy of tenant participation. Indeed, many estate management and tenant participation officers opined that it was extraordinarily difficult to effect change in internal procedures and were often critical of the their own authority for its failure to achieve genuine change with regard to

internal procedures.

IV CONCLUSION

The positive rhetoric of empowerment, which resonates with active citizens pursuing morally virtuous goals, is belied by the reality of many social-housing estates. The reality is of tenant activists struggling to contain the worst excesses of anti-social behaviour. The development of tenant participation policies has been responded to by tenant groups and tenant activists, initially with great hope of quick solutions to the problems in and of estates. However, the relationships with the local authorities have been complex and at times ambivalent. Although activists report favourably on the role of estate officers, ultimately they point to a difficult relationship with local authorities with long and arduous effort required to produce minimal results. Tenants collectively, therefore, are participating in the new structures but they are not being empowered in direct and demonstrable ways. Consultation gives some influence but no direct decision-making power.

CHAPTER 10

TENANT PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICE: LOCAL AUTHORITY PERSPECTIVES

‘Since empowered deliberative democracy targets problems and solicits participation in both issue and geographic space, its institutional reality requires the commensurate reorganisation of the state apparatus’ (Fung and Olin Wright, 2001, p21)

I INTRODUCTION

The above quotation catches the essential reciprocity needed if tenant participation is to work effectively. In other words, in the Irish context, the local authority needs to reorganise internally in order to meet the demands of tenant participation. Put in the language of economics, local authorities can be viewed as the suppliers of the structures and services that tenants demand in tenant participation. Chapter 8 has shown that there has been significant, although not radical or fundamental, change in the functioning and organisation of local authorities in order to deliver on tenant participation. However, as was also seen, to a major extent, such reorganisation has been at the interface between the local authority and the tenant rather than a fundamental restructuring of the internal operational modes. Nonetheless, it is clear that there have been significant changes in the manner in which local authorities organise their estate management services. Given this context, this chapter explores the views of local authority officials, mainly estate officers who work on the ground at estate level, of the changes in practice and the outcomes experienced. As with Chapter 9, a number of key themes have been identified from an analysis of the interviews. These are:

- Theme 1: Estates and Quality of Life
- Theme 2: Purpose of Tenant Participation
- Theme 3: Perspectives on Tenant Groups
- Theme 4: Dealing with Allocations
- Theme 5: Internal Organisation and Service Delivery

II LOCAL AUTHORITY PERSPECTIVES

Theme 1: Estates and Quality of Life

Estate officers were asked to give their perspective on quality of life on the estates for which they were responsible and this section reports on their views. In general, the officers confirm the perspectives of the tenant activists. Officers confirm the accounts of tenants regarding the problems encountered on estates which ranged from drug-related problems, to joyriding, problems of voids and general maintenance and the particular role of juveniles in perpetrating anti-social behaviour.

General Impressions of Estate Life

The quotations below give an overall impression of the problems on estates. Interestingly, apart from the expected identification of drug-related issues and the consequent high level of transfer applications on some estates, there is also a recognition of the causation of such problems, which some officers put down to poverty.

xxxx xxxxx was getting out of control right, a) because of the drug situation, drug and criminal situation, b) because of all the unused lands up there and c) because we weren't managing our estate effectively and I suppose d) because let's be honest because of the economic condition at the time (I49).

It was, there was a lot of say horses and joy riding and general graffiti and miscellaneous anti social behaviour, from intimidation to drug dealing. It was fairly rampant. We realised at that early stage that we had to be very, very strong and make a sudden impact (I54).

My view realistically is that you look at the areas and profile the areas, what people want, you nearly always can divide it into two anyway, its generally environmental which is litter, cleansing, the state of houses, the state of gardens and then you have the other element which is the anti social element which is lack of facilities, youth and its hard when you have bring these things together and say well look this is how we're going to address this, this is how we're going to address that (I56).

The problems on some estates are so severe that there is a high level of transfer applications to move to more stable areas. However, it proved difficult to obtain any statistics on such transfers.

There would be particularly in parts of the xxxxx estate there would be quite a high level of transfer applications coming in, in certain parts of the estate. Again it's localised. The older part of, xxxxxxxx would have been built in stages over a number of years, and the older part of the estate would now be quite settled and would be relatively desirable in terms of a tenancy location and it is relatively easy to let houses there (I63).

A number of estate officers recognised that some of the problems that occur on estates stem from real poverty.

So I would kind of have an idea and I worked with xxxxxx in the rents in town and there you see poverty as well. Like you see people coming in to you and they can't afford to pay rent. And already you're knocking at the doors of people who can't afford to pay rent. So you see real poverty and you see the problems an awful lot (I52).

Drugs

The severity of the drugs problem comes across very strongly from the estate officers. The next quotations are typical of the responses of many estate officers who witness the open dealing and using of drugs on estates. While it is said by local authority personnel and the police that heroin is confined to the Dublin area, it is evident from the interviews that estates in all the authorities studied have some sort of drug problem. The impact of drinking, and especially underage drinking, are common on all estates studied, though vary in severity.

There still is a problem, its openly sold to be honest with you in front of the shopping centre. I've had meetings with the guards in relation to the whole thing. It's not as bad as it was in a way. Coke has been creeping back into the estate, it's more and more available and cheap. The drugs task force projects have improved it in north central but there still is a problem. I could pretend there isn't but I wouldn't be attending a drugs task force meeting in relation to the whole thing. It's certainly not as bad though as it was in the mid 80s (I46).

No its widespread all over the estates, I won't say every estate but most of our estates have problems. But again it tends to be more pronounced in larger estates. I mean if you look at xxxx, its more open and that's next to xxxx. And then we have the usual drinking parties late at night. We've had a few problems in the last couple of years with joyriding and we still have. There are days when you could find ten or twelve burnt out cars burnt out in a green area. We picked something like thirty-two about a month ago and that would be over a period of three to four weeks (I69).

The next quotation demonstrates that there is a clear problem of hidden tenants, temporary partners of the official tenant, who are sometimes identified as probable drug dealers. This problem of 'hidden' tenants was one of the reasons for the introduction of exclusion orders in the Housing Act of 1997 which gives powers to exclude non-tenants.

Obviously the drugs would be the biggest problem. *And what is that heroin or hash?* No it would be the lower end of the scale. For some reason we don't seem to have a major hard drugs problem in xxxxxx. The drugs cannabis and ecstasy is what tends to sold on the estates, that's what they deal with. *So you've problems then with dealers and users?* Yes, mostly users because the knock-on is the behaviour after. **The problem with the dealers is evident, they might not even live here, they're not officially there.** That one is very hard to nail down, the guards when they don't see them how are they going to act on it (I63).

Another key finding which emerges from the interviews is that there is a confusion of roles between the local authority and the police with regard to who deals with anti-social behaviour. It is only since the Housing Act of 1997 that local authorities have a central role in dealing with what would have been considered either public order issues or criminal issues, normally the domain of the police.

So the anti social would be a major problem, litter would be a huge problem. There are areas like xxxxx, I'm not sure if you know these places, there are two particularly bad pockets for dealing like any hour of the day you can get any drug you want really if you're interested. They're two particularly bad areas, but the individuals at the upper end of xxxx there would be serious dealers living in these houses. **From the Council's point of view, a lot of these are police matters again, but we kind of get sucked in** (I57, my emphasis).

The first thing that comes up is anti-social all the time. It would be people directly impacting on their lives for want of a better word. It would be people actually doing anti-social stuff in the area. Gangs hanging around and who they are, that type of stuff and not co-operating with the guards when they try to move them along and that. There is intimidation, what I would call indirect intimidation, in so far as you have people dealing drugs say and people in the area are afraid to do anything about it for the simple reason that they may not be threatened but if the word got out they're goosed. So there's that indirect fear (I52).

Presumably the drugs thing is huge? How complex is that? Its extremely complex for the simple reason, it's a moving event for want of a better word. It moves from here to xxxxxxxx, to xxxxxxxxxxxx, to xxxxxxxxxxxx, it just keeps moving. There has been a good few strikes in the past few months, like as far as raids and all that concerned the guards have got a good few. At one time it would be more in your face. It's not now (I52).

Joyriding

The hugely detrimental and corrosive impact of so-called 'joyriding' remains a major problem on some estates, as the quotation below indicate.

Joyriding is a big problem out here, there's a joyriding task force and all that. Now it has subsided somewhat in terms of the tragedy with the two guards. There was a lot of community meetings about it and we adopted a very different approach to it and I think we have had an impact on it. We're constantly trying to address it in terms of traffic calming and that type of thing. There's currently five notices to quit on families where joyriding has been recognised as a factor (I46).

Voids and Maintenance

From the perspective of estate officers, the issues of void dwellings and dwelling and estate maintenance is constant on all estates. However, there are clear differences between local authorities. In Limerick, for example, constant voids is a major problem but because of the higher demand for social housing in Dublin it is less of an issue. Tenant groups always see

voids of any sort as a problem as empty dwellings can often become the focus of gangs loitering or breaking into such dwellings. In addition, tenant activists are always concerned with the type of household that will be allocated the house. Thus, estate officers are often under pressure to ensure that empty dwellings are let quickly and to appropriate households. This can be made difficult as the evidence collected indicated that most voids are never formally reported by departing tenants and the local authority is often left with expensive maintenance tasks to bring the dwelling back to proper habitable standards.

The issues that come up all the time mainly is void housing management. It's a big problem, not that there's a huge amount of them, there might be two or three in the whole estate, but they're left for ages. So there's a whole thing to be done there with allocation around that, like why they're being left so long and perfectly good houses that are in very good condition (I62).

Yes, but our big difficulty at the moment is that **houses are being abandoned or being given back to us in an appalling state**, where people have decided to move on and have gone off to live elsewhere or whatever and they abandon the house. And again we have no way of getting some recompense or any payment for damages. It comes up under our maintenance team because it takes up so much time dealing with abandoned houses rather than concentrating on the routine stuff. You can see the difficulty; they're dealing with the resident association and trying to get the message across to them and trying to get them to understand the situation. And in fairness to them in xxxxxx I think now there is a great appreciation out there of the problems that we are facing (I60, my emphasis).

We would have and again in the newer part particularly in the xxxxx estate is were we'd have the most problems, the most voids, the most numbers of transfers and so forth. The void problems again is quite localised. We've been actively working with tenants groups over the last while to try and correct some of the void problems we had in parts of our estates and it's working to a degree. We still have an average say, I mean there's a housing stock of 2,600 and on an average week we'd have about thirty or so voids. Not thirty occurring every week but thirty vacant, void houses at any one time (I65).

They could be vacant for periods of several months down to a week or two, again depending on the area and the condition the house has been left in by a previous tenant. Where I would have a residual problem, two particular parts of xxxxxx, where **I would have twenty of my voids might be in the one area and be long-term voids. We're having great difficulty letting them because of intimidation, vandalism, you name it** (I64, my emphasis).

Apart from voids and their management, general maintenance is also acknowledged to be a major issue. As the second quotation below indicates, many estate officers, and in particular senior housing officers, acknowledge that they have problems in running an effective maintenance service.

Xxxxxxxx didn't need a lot of remedial works on the roads and streets and that, but it did need a lot of work from our cleansing department, because **basically it was turning into a ghetto** and we were afraid to go into it and even in our housing and maintenance section they were afraid to go up to some houses because of fear of attack or allegations being made (I54, my emphasis).

Yes the usual lighting, windows and doors. That's what comes out generally during the location report, that type of a list. **And given the amount of problems out there then, we'd have a problem in responding to it, to actually deal with it.** *Is maintenance under housing?* Yes, technically. We are doing some work on renovations and improving things in the houses. We have a big back log of repairs (I66, my emphasis).

On of the problems that many estate officers complained of was that they had little or no power over the maintenance sections or staff and were beholden on good personal relationships.

Any meeting you go to whether its in the inner city or out here, maintenance is always on the agenda because, I'm not going to slag off our own maintenance people, it's a problem let's be honest. They would have separate chiefs, this is one the things I have out with xxxxx all the time, I have a very close working relationship with the area maintenance officer, but I'm not directly his boss. That's the way it has been set up, now having said that I have a good working relationship and we would meet and get things done, but I'm not his direct boss (I61).

Juveniles

The estate officers, overwhelmingly, locate a significant amount of responsibility for anti-social behaviour on the shoulders of juveniles. Moreover, they often argued that the lack of parental control is a significant factor in the problem of juveniles causing problems. The extended set of quotations below give some graphic descriptions of the problems generated by youth on estates ranging from minor nuisance to serious threats and intimidation. Interestingly, many tenant activists would concur with this general description and analysis, though perhaps not wholeheartedly.

Well it probably would be gangs of youths concentrating, again that is kind of the general anti social problem, which you can identify with all areas. There is the other anti-social thing where you have anti social families, where the families are bringing in or causing havoc with their neighbours and that. Members of certain family would be intimidating or would be connected to gangs in the area. Joyriding, robbing cars, drinking that type of thing, where certain estates, **corner-house families especially old people would be victims of intimidation by youths and gangs, concentrating at the side and giving people a dog's life and things like that** (I56, my emphasis).

On the whole there were very few disparaging or explicit comments which denigrated tenants. However, there was some evidence, albeit limited, that officers viewed social housing estates and social housing tenants as being different, that estates had a different culture or set of norms.

What I would say is that the leaders of the anti-social might be provided by a small number of families, but on the margins and the edges you've a lot of kids who are coming from not only families with social problems. **And I'll be honest with you, and it's not publicly correct to say this, there can be a different culture** (I49, my emphasis).

The lack of parental control and guidance was seen as the principal cause of youth being out of control.

Now again just to say one of the major problems we have in relation to the estate is youths and youths causing trouble. And that is quite a difficult one to deal with because when you get behind it you find that a lot of youths come from a particular type family. **While on the one hand its easy to say that the mother or father should have control over them, then when you see the condition and the state of the mother or father you understand that that's not going to happen.** And whether its appropriate in that case to be seeking an eviction is another argument. It's extremely difficult to deal with the gang of youth thing and realistically its a public order matter (I29).

Not necessarily, alcohol would be more taken, **you're talking about 10 year olds upwards causing serious social problems, no parental guidance, no control and nobody really cares to be honest.** There's only so much separating kids can do. **There are people living out there decent people having serious problems and we're not addressing them.** We're not in any position at the moment to address them (I57, my emphasis).

In addition, there was general concern that there was little that could be done legally to deal with juveniles engaged in ant-social activities.

Some of our problems are coming from **juveniles who are both dealing and using.** Some of our worse problems in some estates are being caused by under eighteen year olds and we went to take action and we were advised by our legal people that law couldn't be enforced against an under eighteen year old. **So it's a loop-hole and even in xxxxx most of the gangs that are operating out there are all juveniles and they're intimidating other people in the estates** (I58, my emphasis).

The issue of juveniles intimidating and threatening neighbours on estates repeatedly arose as indicated in the next two quotations.

They're hanging around at the end of terraces, sitting on the walls, drinking cans of cider or whatever and doing there drugs at the same time. That's the general trend. **We've had a few serious cases where relatively young groups of people for whatever reason have targeted vulnerable individuals living in the community and they're breaking their windows on a regular basis and hanging around outside the houses and threatening.** I mean I'd one case were a woman, she'd two daughters who were currently in university, which would be exceptional for the area and because she was a little bit different they targeted her. And the sad thing is that one of the people targeting her had been in court three times and nothing has happened (I65, my emphasis).

Well you see intimidation, harassment is very broad, joyriding, domestic violence, our big problem now is juvenile gangs, 13/14/15 year olds drinking their heads off and then going on the rampage. **They've no fear, you can't touch me,** they're reading it in paper or hearing it on the new everyday, judge so-in-so can't do anything here, there's no place to hold them (I55, my emphasis).

Some of the estate officers made the general point about the skewed population and household structure, with a preponderance of young people, very few elderly and a general 'adolescent buzz' permeating estates.

But when you go from here and go up into xxxxxxx there's 90-95 per cent young people with a very small percentage of elderly and that's a problem. **The demographics overall – lovely, but in reality you've all the kids in one area and only a sweeping throughout the rest of the estate, and that's a problem** (I61, my emphasis).

Yes you see again what you do get on these estates and I'm concerned about it, **you get this kind of buzz of adolescence**, because you don't have the whole balance of youth against say men is turned on its head, the norm where you have two adults for every one sixteen year old, now you kind of have four sixteen year olds for every adult, **there isn't enough males to challenge the delinquent behaviour**, that's just common, you know what I mean, and that's one of problems really (I46, my emphasis).

Theme 2: Purpose and Origins of Participation

The range and severity of problems identified under Theme 1 give a clear rationale for the development of some public policy response to estates. The evidence presented under this theme focuses on some of the more general perspectives as to the background and purpose of estate management.

Estate Management Failures

Estate officers of all ranks are quite explicit in acknowledging that one of the core rationales for the development of estate management was the historic failure of local authorities to manage properly their estates in both a physical and social sense. The quotations below give a flavour of these sentiments. The first quotation not only acknowledges such failure, but points to another rationale, which was that control of estates on some areas had transferred to anti-drug activists and in other cases to vigilantes.

We facilitate as much as possible, but we're usually there to be attacked. At the outset it was very, very bad. **When you'd go to a council meeting you'd be savaged by the tenants 80-90 per cent of time, but I must say we deserved to be savaged.** But we weren't savaged as housing officials, we were being savaged as corporation officials and we learnt very, very easily that you couldn't say well I'm housing, it wouldn't work. It just didn't work, it just didn't wash, you're a Corporation official and that's it, we're going to have you on a plate. So we stopped pretending and started giving them answers, that's what we started doing. **Trying to defend the undefendable was a ridiculous waste of my time and everyone else's time and it destroys your credibility totally and utterly, it undermines you**, you know you're only a waffler, you're only talking, you're producing nothing, show me what you can do for me. That's what they want. **Show me the money, that's all they wanted to know** (I53, my emphasis).

...the Corporation failed many estates by ignoring their management. The void was filled by drugs and by the citizen response, vigilantism, concerned parents and Sinn Fein. **The Corporation had ceded the ground on estates to these forces'** (I45, my emphasis).

xxxxxxx is probably the lowest demand complex we have in the whole area simply **because we've never managed it properly** (I47, my emphasis).

Getting Started

Given the dearth of activity by local authorities on estates there was a large deficit of trust with the tenant population. How then, was estate management to be developed? In some cases, as shown in the first quotation, the local authority in question adopted a tough strategy with regard to drug-dealing with anti-social behaviour on particular estates. Either through evictions or the threat of exclusion orders, about 40 dwellings were repossessed on one estate in order to deal with serious anti-social activities and to stamp their arrival with some authority.

Really, I was looking at the records and people were heading towards, **38 people evicted in the first year we were here.** The majority of those would be on anti-social grounds. **So that would be the initial impact.** (I52, my emphasis).

Yes I think we had something like, in the first two years I think we had 40 recovered properties, over a two year period of time. A lot of them would have been surrendered to us **and the methodology we were using at that stage was that if we were to take people to court on antisocial issues, it didn't matter what issue it was, once it was anti social, that the prospect of them being in the near future or re housed in the near future by us would be very, very slim** (I53, my emphasis).

As the next quotation indicates, the overall aim of estate management was to improve the physical and social environment through working with tenant groups. To that end, a key function of estate officers was to help develop individual associations and groups and to bring these together in wider forums. As the quotation, which is from South Dublin, makes clear, this did not happen in certain cases.

But in 1999 we set up with five estate officers. We were designated five estates each and we had a structure of say a senior officer and an administrative officer again, so there was seven people in total say. In its infancy we were unsure where to go with it. **Basically the definition of it was our role was to improve the physical and social environment of the estates in conjunction with residents associations.** And our goals were to initially work on the ground with groups, build it up to forums in relation to certain areas, then bring them to an area forum with higher-level people involved. That never really worked out (I57, my emphasis).

In Dun Laoghaire Rathdown, the estate management role was transferred from housing to the community department on the basis that estate management had more in common with community development principles rather than being a service-related exercise.

Why was it transferred? But we found that it was more than just housing issues and therefore it was about community development and it was about linking in with agencies and it was about linking in with what was already there and trying to expand it and just housing was only a small part of it. So that's why we took that approach and to run it from a community development point of view (I62).

From the next quotation it is evident that, in some local authorities, estate management was launched with a great degree of fanfare and publicity. This was definitely the case in both South Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown. Inevitably, such high-profile launches generated a mixture of high expectations and caution from tenant groups but also from the individual estate officers themselves.

Yes, we had five to start, **there was a bit of fanfare, there was press releases, the council actually pushed this initiative, they were the ones that drove it.** There was an actual civic reception in relation to it and all one night. So there was a good bit of contact to start, it was well publicised, there was meetings with groups, the areas soon afterwards letting them know, setting out what we proposed to do and getting feed back from them. **They were cautious about it which was fair enough, they'd been promised a lot before** (I57, my emphasis).

In the early stages some estate officer saw their role as essentially a message carrier between the tenants and the local authority.

So we were working on a weekly basis having meetings and looking at where we were going with this and there was a shape to it and there was structures and it was in its infancy and we were trying different things. Basically from the start the way I'd see it we all worked like in a sense with groups **but as messengers, kind of feeding back concerns, doing a lot of running around for people** (I57, my emphasis).

Developing and Advising groups

One of the core functions of estate management is to advise and help develop tenant groups. As the next quotation makes clear, the role of estate officers involved working with tenant groups, holding clinics in some cases and linking back with different departments and sections in the local authority.

Well initially there was a kind of criterion **where basically you worked with residents' groups, you were involved in the clinic here, you were basically the liaison with different departments,** you would identify projects in your area that would be estate management based or anti socially based. But I believe our roles might be changing (I56).

In addition, another function was to create what, from the viewpoint of the local authority, were realistic expectations of the level of service that could be delivered by the Council.

Yes, that would be my strongest, absolutely. I'm a support to the group, I'd advise them and I can fill them in on council policy and how things work, **what you will get them to do and what you won't get them to, like you can forget that, that will never be done, and telling them what's realistic and what's isn't.** But definitely you know when it comes to liasing and that, I'm there (I62).

And there's also a tendency that the tenants are setting the agenda and the tenants can have unrealistic expectations (I66, my emphasis).

And they would have been sent out here to develop the community itself and to guide the community through forming committees, forming residents groups and that would have been his brief. What we came out with was an agenda looking at the physical environment and how we could best input into it. On our original arrival here xxxxxxxx was not looked on favourably by the media or by the police (I53).

xxxxxxxxxxxx had problems with the residents' association that was there, it had been there for a long time. So what we've done now is we have had an election within each block in xxxxxxxxx, so that we have two representatives from each block representing that particular block. So out of thirty flats in each block we have two reps sitting on the board and that makes up the residents association of the area, because it's total representation. That was only done late last year. **And the way we can do that is that we have an estate project officer on the ground that know everybody, that talks to everybody, that build up credibility and therefore we can do that and its absolutely democratic and nobody can knock it** (I47, my emphasis).

The functions of estate management, as illustrated next, in effect combine positive and negative roles. While in some authorities there is now a division between estate management and anti-social behaviour, some officers saw the role of estate officer combining the positive elements of community development with the negative function of social control through evictions and exclusion orders. However, certainly in South Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown, there is now a division between these functions. As Chapter 8 showed, South Dublin has separate estate officers and anti-social behaviour support officers. In Dun Laoghaire Rathdown, whereas estate management is a function of the Community Department, the anti-social function is in the Housing Department.

Estate management staff cover the whole estate management area. If someone comes to me tomorrow and says will you try and organise a residents' association in your area, I try and organise one. I would consider it part of my brief as xxx would consider it part of his brief. I don't see the purpose of having an estate management for evictions, for the bad end of things, for want of a better word (I50).

Purpose of Tenant Participation

In more general terms, there is a variety of views as to the purpose of estate management and tenant participation. The first quotation catches the essential understanding of many

estate officers, which was that they were to normalise estates, which in essence meant reducing the level of anti-social activities.

I presume the whole objective of estate management and community development is to **normalise areas** whatever that is (I49, my emphasis).

In that respect, there is a recognition among many officers that it is essential to deliver some form of result and not just indulge in endless rounds of consultation. As a previous quotation said, tenants want to see the 'colour of their money'.

'... it is pointless consulting and not delivering' (I4).

There is a broad recognition among most estate officers that it was important to gain the trust of the local community and to actually deliver some results.

So what we had to do was first **off was gain the community's trust**, that was very important for us. That we couldn't be seen coming out here and doing nothing and walking away (I48).

Others have taken on board the language of partnership and participation and argue that tenant participation is a two-way process between the local authority and the tenants. There is a clear recognition, especially among the estate officers who work on estates and directly with tenant groups, that genuine participation needs the long-term commitment and partnership of tenants.

I look on estate management as a partnership. I try to push it as a partnership. **If we don't help the tenants, the tenants won't help us. That's the way I look at it, one actually depends on the other. Estate management to me would be trying to get to the root of the problems.** It's not just good enough to say, "well look your son is causing hassle or your daughter's causing hassle we're going to evict you", for the simple reason there might be six or seven people in that family getting evicted over one. There might be a problem where a young fellow like that maybe he's suspended long-term out of school which is the term we use now for actually expelling a young person, so they're not getting an education, sometimes the parent just don't have control of the house. There's loads of different aspects to it, they're just some of them. But to be viable long term you must tackle problems now and get rid of the problems now, so what we can understand, are the roots of the problem now (I52).

With regard to proposals for refurbishment or redevelopment, there is a general commitment to consult tenants as part of the pre-planning process. However, the evidence from across the local authorities suggests that this is very unevenly implemented.

Oh yes, **everything is done in consultation with the people. Gone is the day where we can just go in a build something, we need the people on board at all levels.** (I47, my emphasis).

To me estate management isn't black and white. It can't be because your dealing with people, it's as simple as that, your dealing with people and people aren't black and white. The rules and regulations are there to guide, and if you have to work around those, you have to work around those and that's it (I53).

But the only thing about it is if things are going to work you need to have participation by people on the ground if you want it to work long term. If you don't want it to work long term ok, you can go in and you can basically do remedial work. But if people are not claiming ownership of their own areas it doesn't make any difference what you do. **So really if you want to get value for money you have to make the efforts meaningful and sustainable** (I56, my emphasis).

Theme 3: Perspectives on Tenant Groups

What then are the views of estate officers of their relationships with tenant groups and tenant activists? This relationship is clearly a crucial one if tenant participation is to have any success on the ground.

Information and Knowledge

One of the first points that emerged is that estate officers need and value the amount and type of local information that is gained from local activists. Some go so far as to opine that they could not do their job properly without access to local information.

I always feel that you have got to harness the associations; like they will always know things that we won't. Local knowledge is a great thing(I46).

The xxxxxxxxxxxx area we have no real contact there, we have a few people that we meet ad hoc. There isn't a group per se. We have another group who we meet *ad hoc* again, they're trying to come out of the closet. But we did have an election up there about two years ago and had a committee elected, but again once the self serving individuals who put themselves forward discovered that there was no grading on this they quickly disbanded and we wrote to them on numerous occasions trying to get the back together again, **because we need locals' information, we can't survive without local information** (I53, my emphasis).

The idea is that as I said all ready, **we can't survive without information and the only people that can give us information, unglossed information, is the people living in the estate.** The guards, like ourselves, can dress it up anyway they want to suit their own agenda. But generally people living in an estate won't (I53, my emphasis).

As the next quotation indicates, local information is now seen as important in pre-planning situations in order to ascertain whether there will be potential opposition or trouble. This commitment to ascertaining the views of tenant prior to major regeneration for example is sometimes practised but even within individual local authorities the practice varies.

It was necessary for us to have the development council in place because at the time we were pushing and still are, of course, local community input into the development. **That we needed to know what sense in the area – is there going to be outrages, and what their problems were, and if there was a problem could they resolve it before we start putting big money into a housing development in the area and wasting it and having protests and marches and demonstrations and works being blocked, you know the usual type of thing.** If you don't tell people, you just arrive with a dirty big truck, of course they're going to kick their heels, naturally, you know I wouldn't like it (I66, my emphasis).

Representativeness of Tenant Groups

One of the core messages that emerged from the interviews was the widespread view among estate officers that many tenant groups were unrepresentative of the general tenant population on estates. The set of quotations below indicate clearly that estate officers view many of the tenant groups as unrepresentative.

My experience over the three years is that **these groups have been in existence for a long time, older people, mostly female, 99% female, have been working on it for years.** It's kind of a status symbol at this stage, they're not very active, **they're not always representative,** meaning that they wouldn't have had AGM. So of late I've kind of pulled back from some of these groups because they're going nowhere (I57, my emphasis).

Most associations are insular, they're not representing anybody. Ok, most of those that we've gone into we can see faults that are there and so what they tend not to do is have elections, you know what I mean, we'd be observing this. Somebody might be asked on, somebody else might be thrown off, **but there's never an election.** There's no constitutions or anything else. And so what we are doing is an emphasis on elections on a yearly basis, your constitution, etc, etc., and it makes everything above board and it also makes them perform better, because they know if they want to stay on the association they have to do something within the year (I47, my emphasis).

Going back to the groups again, are there any active ones? There is, they vary as I say from, you're talking number wise even you could be talking about two people for eight hundred houses to twelve people for three hundred houses. And not necessarily the twelve would be the better group by any means, it depends on the area and who's in it (I66).

There's an estate in xxxx, four or five hundred houses and there's a woman on the so called committee that hasn't had an AGM in three or four years, but she'd still see herself as representative (I57).

I soon discovered that the xxxxxx Environment Group started about ten years ago and again they were reasonably representative of most of the areas. They had members from xxxxx Estate and xxxx and xxxx and xxx. But as the time progressed some people went off and did their own things and that and basically they retained the name but my experience was that you could divide the membership into two estates (I57).

One of the clear messages from the estate officers, confirmed by an analysis of the tenant groups, is that there is a very small number of younger residents who are members.

Well the community council would say and if you look at the people on the community council they do have people from the areas all right but the problem as I say is that they've been there for so long and if you look at the age profile of these people, **you don't get young people coming in, you just don't.** For a community council to function or operate effectively in an area like this you need strong residents' groups actively on the ground (I56, my emphasis).

So the community council in the early stages did represent people from the different estates and it was very strong. But what has happened over the last three years is that **the same people are there and the younger people are not coming in** (I57, my emphasis).

You get the usual few and they from time to time might rope in one or two more people, especially if they've a particular issue that's effecting them. But then the problem is you see they might focus on the one issue and we would be trying to promote that you can't focus on the one issue, there's more residents associations and we say the way we operate with them (I43).

Another problem perceived by many officers was that some tenant groups were in the control of or dominated by certain political parties. In most cases the accusation was that the tenant groups concerned were controlled by Sinn Fein. This is, of course, a controversial area. There are several points worth mentioning. While it seems undoubtedly the case that some tenant groups, especially in the Dublin area, were dominated by Sinn Fein, it is also the case that these activists were also tenants of the estates in questions. Also, in one case where the local authority insisted that new elections be held because they were concerned about the representativeness of the group, elections returned many of the same activists and the local authority now works with the group. Much of the worry about this issue arose from the time of the anti-drugs movements. It must also be said that local authorities effectively had abandoned most of their estates for many years and it is not surprising that the void was filled by certain types of political movements.

Now there is a problem and this is more off the record in a sense that **because of the community centre's links with one political group in the area** there's a concept within the areas that the community council and the building and the structure is more representative of one political group. Now my experience is that that's not necessarily true, **actually the people up there are very good. But the problem is that there hasn't been new blood coming in over a long period of time and the people who tend to be there would be there for a while.** I brought this up at meetings where I do believe they need to change (I56, my emphasis).

Some estate officers worry that the unrepresentative nature of some groups will lead to a situation where the actions taken by the local authority may merely reflect the specific interests of a small number of activists and thereby ignore the interests of the overall estate. While this may be a legitimate worry, it is perhaps overstated. The general comparative

work by Fahey and his colleagues (1999a) and by Layte *et al* (2000) confirm that issues of anti-social behaviour, allocations and maintenance are the issues which are the priorities on most estates. Nonetheless, there is still some merit in the misgivings of estate officers.

I suppose one issue we'd have in relation to getting a more representative body from the community, **as I said you tend to be dealing with the same two or three people all the time, and we'd have a worry that there'd be times when we might be doing things that might suit the interests of an individual but not the community as a whole.** The danger would be too in relation to the overall estate there interest might be only in that particular area where they live, we've come across that aspect of things where as they wouldn't be looking after the interests of the overall estate (I66).

Now committees come and go. There's is a perception among the general populace that if you're on a committee you have access to information that you wouldn't normally have access to and you can get favours done, that you won't normally get done, which we don't encourage. There are times of course that you do look favourably on someone with a bit of outside input. But generally speaking we don't encourage that and when people come on the committees and see that that's not happening they have a tendency to fall away (I47).

There is also the reality that many tenants simply do not want to get involved. As discussed in Chapter 4, in a general sense this should not be surprising given the contentions of the free-rider argument. With regard to local-authority housing in Ireland, there are additional factors which conspire to reduce volunteerism. The first is the household composition of many estates. As demonstrated in Chapter 3, local authority estates are populated by economically marginal households with low educational levels. Moreover, on many estates there is a preponderance of young single parents. In short, many households are primarily concerned with getting by on a day-to-day basis. While tenant participation may seem to promise some way of transforming estates this is complicated in some cases by distrust of authority as tenant groups may be seen to be allied with the local authority. It is also complicated by the fact that tenant groups in some estates are subject to intimidation by criminal and anti-social elements on the estates. Finally, it is impossible to ignore that fact that a good proportion of the anti-social activity on estates is of course perpetrated by tenants or members of their households.

There are a lot of people living in estates that don't want to get involved and we're quite happy with that unless there's some major problem that would effect them and it really has to effect them personally before they'll really become involved (I46, my emphasis).

While there are reservations about the representativeness of tenant groups, generally estates officers are content to work with most established groups. Indeed, as is clear next, it

is often suits estate officers to have some group whereby they can validate their actions and policies.

No this is a big issue to be honest with you. They don't have an official mandate either of them to be perfectly honest with you. **Sometimes this suits us** in terms of you know what I mean, I want to liase with the community anyway and there are representatives in both cases. If something else was to arise or other people wanted to set up a separate residents association then at that stage you might have to set up official elections, you know what I mean (I46, my emphasis).

And again really when you talk about committees, to a large degree some of them are the same individuals; what I call the key opinion makers (I59).

Resources

The next quotation is from an estate officer in the Dublin area. It confirms what was concluded in Chapter 8, namely that there are sufficient community-development type workers in the Dublin area who are funded from a variety of sources to negate the need to fund specific tenant advocate workers. In addition, as the quotation makes clear, some estate officers have mixed views about the employment of advocate workers and community development posts in general. However, as was seen in Chapter 8, some authorities do fund such workers, Limerick being the best example.

Just to say you get quite a bit of local development funding going into xxxxxx so in terms of us having to fund workers for the organisation, you've community development programmes here. **So I suppose we haven't been under the same pressure to actually fund workers to represent the community and I have mixed views about that as a practice as well to be honest with you** (I49).

The resources that are often supplied, at least the direct financial resources, tend to be fairly small scale.

If they want small projects undertaken, like if they're looking for finance to set up a gardening club or something like that, our community section have various funds that you can access for that type of development, you can access it on a yearly basis if need be. **It's very small money, it's not huge money**, a couple of hundred a year, just to cover the expense of renting a room, pens, paper (I66, my emphasis).

I have access to funds, not great funds. *But there's a limited amount?* Oh there is of course, yes. Like if I want to throw a few hundred into some group, if they want to hire a bus or something. It certainly helps and its beneficial two ways. I think a lot of it is good will, between how we deal with our residents association, good will and common sense. There's so many things that we can do. But when we were in the civic offices we just didn't want to know. And it's the small things that make a difference and I think that's the difference now that we are doing those things (I58).

However, in the case of South Dublin for instance, where there is a relatively large budget of €500,000 per annum for estate management, although some of this goes on environmental improvements there is also money for supporting organisations. However, as is shown next, there is a view among many of the estate officers in South Dublin that there is no proper structure through which to allocate this budget.

We sometimes give grants to some groups, we give them money basically to support them. We've a lot of money, **how do you spend it properly, especially if the structures are not put in place for us to spend that money properly?** (I51, my emphasis).

Back in the early days they were involved in a number of projects like there were a couple of courses that we organised with the Institute of Technology for tenant training and so forth. They also got involved again in a Partnership arrangement between ourselves and themselves in the introduction of a tenant handbook. So there were a number of projects like that a number of years ago. We're currently reviewing those with input from the residents (I63).

You'd have problems where you have people inexperienced and we tend to find what happens is for instance if ourselves are involved where we were trying to sort the people in to doing things for themselves, like taking over secretarial roles, they tend to throw the secretarial roles back on to us ourselves and an issues came up last week at the xxxx Forum which again is another spin off estate management was in relation to the training for secretarial, to train someone to do the secretarial work on the committees and that's something we're going to look at and bring in somebody to do training for them (I64).

Another way in which tenant groups are resourced is through either tenancy courses or tenant training. With respect to tenancy courses, which are generally aimed at new tenant households, while most estate officers take a positive view of their impact, there are also more critical views. The next quotation demonstrates a view that such courses generate unrealistic expectations of the local authority and are thus problematic.

Tenancy courses, as far as I'm concerned, and we've run a couple of them out here have a tendency by their very nature to mislead people, not intentionally, as to what to expect of the City Council. Ordinary joe-soaps have a tendency to read a little bit too much into that. **They are led to believe or form the belief that we are going to be the answer to all their prayers, that it doesn't matter what the problem is, that we have the answer, which is not the case.** We try our best to support them in the early stages and direct them in to how best they can access us and how best we can deliver services and how best we can support them in any project they want to undertake in their estate. And rather than just being a talking shop, or a whingeing shop and a moaning shop, which a lot of them end up being. They should be looking at proposing something for us to do to better their quality of life. That's what they should be doing (I60, my emphasis).

There is also clearly a general suspicion of independent community development activists who are perhaps seen as giving the wrong kind of messages and information to tenant

groups. Prior to the establishment of estate officers, local community development workers would have been one of the few resources that were available to tenant groups.

Look, a professional community development person of a certain type will look in an area and see the lack of an association as a problem. Now that could be corrected if it turns out the area is riddled with drugs or anti social behaviour which could indicate that the people are apathetic or afraid. On the other hand it may mean that people are dead happy (I59).

I have reservations about professional support at times, it can be very good or very bad, depending on the individual. **A lot of them involved come with their own political, psychological baggage, which they should leave outside the door** (I48, my emphasis).

There is also the view that the resourcing of tenant groups is inadequate and in particular that insufficient attention is paid to the long term sustainability of such groups.

Again there was talk about setting up this structure, of coming up with a formal amount of how much we could give each estate to spend, but we never really brought it to fruition. Again, it was just an idea. But certainly there is kind of local arrangement made that groups would be covered for their stationery costs, you know we've given computers, a couple of hundred euro cash per year, when I say cash we put it in an account for them. **A lot more could be done in relation to supporting them and sustaining them** (I47, my emphasis).

Working with Tenant Groups

Much of the day-to-day work of estate officers involves working with tenant groups or with individual tenant activists. The first quotation confirms the view of tenant activists about the negative impact of the 1987 surrender grant.

Basically for the first say five to ten years it was slowly building up they were getting the leaders involved. There were community leaders emerging, they were getting involved in the community council. And the government brought in a surrender grant in the 80's and that devastated xxxxx Park (I55).

In many cases the role of the estate officer is not defined in any precise way. Consequently, in a number of cases the estate officers has a free role within fairly general parameters. In the case below, the estate officer found his work was helped by previous close relationships with sections such as maintenance which he relied on to get basic things done on estates.

I was lucky in a sense I have people to work with and initiatives that I can go on my own, it didn't hugely effect me in many ways. *Are you very much left to yourself then?* **Yes, basically you're a free agent in many ways**, you have your area, you have your groups, but as I say I was lucky in a sense that I had a good year with reasonably good support behind me, and guidance. And because the people I've been generally working have a history of being involved. *Are they locals?* Yes, it wasn't that hard, people would come looking for me to support them. But the only thing I found was they did lack proper kind of training and I think they lacked a sense of where they were going (I56, my emphasis).

Basically when we go to areas we get all the problems with them. I'm lucky in one sense that nearly all the areas I deal with there is in some shape or form groups involved. There is people involved in like in xxxxx there's a very strong environment group. I'm involved with an estate management group which is a sub committee of the community council. The only thing about them is we meet them regularly but they're not very pro active. One of the problems there is that the estate management group the people on it are all in some shape or form working up in the community centre (I60).

It is abundantly clear from much of the interviews that estate officers take a very pro-active role in meeting with tenant groups. Indeed, many estate officers are in effect *de facto* members of many groups to such an extent that in some cases the distinction between independent tenant groups and more formal estate boards are no longer in existence. The quotations below show this clearly.

I would actually probably arrange their meetings and arrange the venue for their meetings. We would try to ensure that every group is serviced by someone from within the office whether it be somebody from the community section or somebody from the estate management section (I52, my emphasis).

Every month, most of them have two or three meetings a week, evening meetings. *Your estate officers?* Yes and I'd always go to some of them. I'd have meetings three nights a week as well. I'd split myself between the five areas. I like to keep in touch and it's good to keep your hands on. Now they do have their own meetings, but very seldom (I46).

The relationships with some groups are made complex by the perception in some estates that tenant activists either receive preferential treatment by the Council or, more commonly, that tenant groups feed information on anti-social behaviour to the local authority. In the example from the quotation below, the existing tenant group was taken over by tenants who were suspicious that their sons and daughters were being reported by the long-time tenant activists. They took over the tenant group but it then collapsed.

When I came here the group was existent, but it was still kind of it wasn't out on the face because of intimidation. They were afraid for want of a better word to come out of the closet. **But what happened was residents in the area got the feeling that this group was feeding us information about their young fellows** and all this and the problems were there. So the people that were in the group were anxious to have an AGM and didn't feel comfortable about what they were doing. People in the area started screaming for an AGM so I said grand, perfect excuse for more to balance it out. So I got an independent chair for the night, had an AGM. **The people whose kids were causing problems got elected on to the committee. The only reason they wanted to get onto the committee was to try and find out the information that was coming from that committee. They had two meetings and that was two years ago. It died a death** (I52, my emphasis).

There is also a fairly self-interested and utilitarian agenda on some estate officers' part. In the next case it is clear that tenant groups are formed at times in order to serve the

particular purposes of the local authority. Working with a tenant group may thus lend legitimacy to policies and actions that may otherwise cause problems.

It's still run by the tenants though? Oh yes, but we're there all the time, **basically we're the guiding light, we're actually directing in one certain direction is what we're doing**, and you can really feel that because some of these meeting you go to could last two hours and you talk about nothing and you get nothing done. *Would your people be at those meetings?* Oh yes, on a regular basis. *So they wouldn't be a member but they be invited in maybe to part of it?* Oh yes, for a lot of it, and for a lot of the xxxxx we actually organise meetings for them, and with every association we meet them once within the month and even if there is no problems **we'll meet them anyway because in that way you head off problems**. I don't think we'd be waiting for the residents to look for a meeting with the Corporation or the City Council, because when they look for a meeting with us they have a problem (I56, my emphasis).

Once we made initial contact, with these people, **we started forming them into groups that would be of service to us**, because our agenda at that time would have been slightly different to the communities development agenda. Our agenda was to approach the problems of anti social behaviour (I47, my emphasis).

In relation to the representativeness of tenant groups, while there is obviously concern about it, there is also a recognition of the impacts of the hard work of many tenant activists who can easily become exhausted and worn out from their endeavours. There is also a recognition that all this work is in fact volunteer work for the most part.

Usually you put in some sort of stipulation that they would be in a temporary group to represent the community and then at a reasonable early stage maybe a year, an election would be held to have other leaders or officer brought on. **The thing we have in xxxxxxxx, unfortunately, is that we have the same people helping all the time and these people are just worn out, they're getting old now. They're the activists who operate to the best intentions in the world, that come on full of beans and everything else, eventually get worn out with people whinging and moaning at them. These are local people who aren't getting paid one penny.** It's their time and everything else and they come in and speak to me about various issues and sometimes have to say no, not all the time, thank God, but sometimes I have to say no. And they have to go back and deal with this individual or individuals, and I can understand where they're coming from, like you're getting paid, I'm not (I60, my emphasis).

So xxxxxxxx I suppose has gone from a situation were they've had that reputation in 1995 and people would have been, certainly some people were extremely active, but the main bulk of the people wouldn't have been active in community development. Now that the place is getting better, people are working and that's the reality. We do our best to set up and we've various committees we work with up there but and we try and regenerate them every now and again and go on a recruiting campaign with locals. **But unfortunately you tend to end up with the same old soldiers** (I49, my emphasis).

There is a thing called the xxxxx xxxxxxxxxxxx Development Council, which the corporation helped to set up which is like a forum representative of all the associations and agencies working in xxxxxxxxxxxx. Now it was extremely active up until a couple of years ago and really its managed by the local community development programme, but mainly to be honest with you it was active simply because a lot of issues were Corporation issues. In my view it hasn't moved on to a great degree from that. **It still meets once a month to discuss issues but a lot of the heat and passion was taken out of it when the corporation started getting their act together** (I60, my emphasis).

There is a clear recognition also that those groups which are linked or associate with political groups are both more politically aware, but also generally more organised and effective.

I've worked in xxxxx all the time, but I can see there's a huge difference between xxxxxxxx and xxx in a sense that the xxxxxxx groups are **much more organised** from the start. There ex corporation houses as well. **They were much more politically aware, probably a Sinn Fein influence over the years as well.** The were much more organised compared to say what I was dealing with they were very disjointed but basically that was what we were doing, we were breast feeding all these groups. We were running after them, eager to please basically (I57, my emphasis).

A number of estate officers opined that while initially they were greeted with great anger and suspicion and that meetings would be highly charged and conflictual, that once an element of trust had been established and some results achieved, the relationships began to become more positive.

Well some of them would do better than others. The one in particular in xxxx would seem to be the best organised at the moment. They came together because of a particular issue but they're now expanding it they're working with us and they're working very well with us so far. The opposite to that is that we had one tenants' group out there that we had a relationship with which was grand and cosy, the next thing they were opting out and we got this very active, diligent group in. **Now initially going out there it was blood and guts and they'd be on the radio slating the corporation and the guards but after twelve months of working with them and working with them on things like tenant allocations, and closing of alleyway here and there and addressing some of the particular issues out there we're now in great store out there** (I66, my emphasis).

Yes but say for example the previous twelve months **we would have been the enemy out there effectively, but that has improved and if you work with them and get a result it improves your relationship.** It might not even be a huge thing you know, but even to deal with something for an individual tenant who has a problem, if you get somewhere with them, you have to appease them to get the thing. They almost view us as anti the tenant. **Their view of us is not in a good light, but that perception is starting to change the fact that we're actually out there working with them, this is new to them** (I66, my emphasis).

It used to be just a slagging match that was going on, you know the council's useless they don't do anything, and there'd be games playing, there'd be winking going on around the room, you know like. *Between tenants?* Tenants trying to wind us up you know but we weren't falling for it, but all this sort of thing went on for ages. **That's sort of calmed down now and it's looking at policy**, its looking at things like insurance, its looking at the negotiation between MIT and that. It very much a policy thing looking and they get to share ideas at it as well. It's very hard to do, yes, but that last meeting I was at and apparently the one before it, I wasn't at that particular one myself, but the two of those meetings were very good with the sharing of ideas (I59, my emphasis).

You were just being torn asunder and that's what was happening to you. **But now the committees are very, very good with us. They understand. You can talk to them easily, its not a personality thing. They've gotten to know us as individuals, they know our strengths, our weaknesses, they know if we say we can do something, we'll do it**, you know that's it, if we say we can do it that we have to go somewhere else they're ok (I52, my emphasis).

Theme 4: Allocations

While estate officers deal with all manner of issues, one of the most complex and controversial is that of anti-social behaviour and allocations.

Dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour

There is a variety of policies among the local authorities towards anti-social behaviour. As seen in Chapter 8, South Dublin has the most explicit policies with eight anti-social behaviour officers employed, together with official procedures for dealing with individual cases. However, policy is less well developed elsewhere. Waterford for example, has no official policy and admit to effectively not having the resources to deal with it. The next set of quotations are mostly taken from officers in South Dublin and they explain the manner in which the policy is implemented.

June '97 the act came in and by the end of '97 they had two people working at it and then they got two more so that was four around the middle of '98. And then a proper look was brought in and estate management per se was put in place with the estate officers and the anti-social teams, and a clear demarcation between the anti social teams and the estate officers (I55).

The anti-social behaviour team deal exclusively with issues relating to such behaviour. Theirs is seen as a specialist job with requisite training given to the team members. Given the potential dangers associated with calling to the homes of possible perpetrators, the team always operate in pairs.

The estate officers feed us in any bit they get but because of the level of intimidation that you would expect the policy was not to have the estate officer as a target. He would be in the estates a lot on his own and all that. **The anti-social teams work in teams, no calls on their own, they've a mobile phone each both for communication and for safety.** They've been given basic training in communication skills, basic training in situations, where to go and where not to go, where to park your car when you come, all this kind of basic stuff (I55, my emphasis).

Given the inherent complexity of anti-social behaviour and the serious consequences of evictions or exclusions, there has developed a standard procedure for dealing with all cases. Every complaint is categorised as indicated next.

Complaints come in three categories, we've category one, two and three. Category one is drugs, drug dealing, two is intimidation/harassment and three is general nuisance. We also put any complaint from the community council or the tenants' associations up in category one to try and appease the tenants as much as possible and to show them that we are interested and that we are listening to them (I55).

Investigations of complaints initially involve obtaining information from the police, other statutory agencies and the community itself. This is then followed up by visits to the house of the tenant accused of anti-social behaviour and they are interviewed there.

Well we have a very detailed policy on taking a complaint, investigating the complaint, investigating it through the guards, investigating it through other sources and having the community involved. We would then call out and have a look at the house, in the meantime you'd check the tenancy agreement, you'd check the rent account, the rent account is always a pretty good indicator, and when you get up to the house then you can tell by the condition of the house on the outside. After that we have a little talk there and you'd make a decision then. Depending on the seriousness of the complaint we would adjudicate at the house interview whether to invite them in or you're satisfied (I55, my emphasis).

This may be followed up with interviews on the premises of the County Council in which tenants are warned that it is an offence to threaten or intimidate an employee of the Council and that the interview is being video-taped.

When they come in for interview we have a full procedure where I put a section of the act in the interview room and the section says, if you harass, intimidate a member of the County Council you will be charged, and before we start the interview it is our policy to get them to read this section. "I'd like you to read this and as the one says 'smile you're on camera', and the effect that has, 99 times out of a 100 that brings them right down (I55).

The interview is followed up by a team meeting where action is decided upon.

After the interview, then the interview is written up. We have a team meeting, usually once a week to decide on what tack to take. If it's not that serious or it's serious enough and again the opinion we have is you have to be seen to be fair, you have to have procedure, so we'd write out to them and warn them, further to your interview I wish to point out that you are in serious breach of the tenancy agreement. Further breach will be taken with a severe view (I55).

It is becoming more common across the local authorities that prospective tenants are being required to undergo police clearances and, in some cases, also agreeing formally or informally, to background checks by tenant groups.

They also when they sign, when they apply to us, **they have to sign a release form, that we can check with the guards, which is only right.** That would be a long time in place, the release form would be two years official I'd say just of the top of my head (I55, my emphasis).

These detailed procedures are particular to South Dublin County Council. However, a number of other authorities are in the process of developing detailed anti-social behaviour policies and the Housing Unit is to publish a set of good practice guidelines on anti-social behaviour by the end of the year.

There is also some recognition of the dangers inherent in the whole area of anti-social activity in not taking at face value the kinds of accusations that are thrown at individuals on estates. It is entirely possible, as the next quotation makes clear, that the so-called accused may in fact be a victim themselves.

When we make first contact we would have an interview form which would be completed by who ever was interviewing the person, a record of the time the interview started, the time the interview finished, who attended the interview and what general comments were made and what decision was made, if any. We tend on first contact, not to make any decisions at all. The right to reply is always there, we have to be very careful on that that we do show fairness and transparency when we are dealing with people. **That we can't just because the person may have bad name in the area, doesn't mean there automatically guilty of anything. They might be the victims more than anything else** (I53, my emphasis).

One of the policies in South Dublin at least, but also in some of the other authorities, is if a tenant is evicted because of drug-related anti-social behaviour, that in order to be rehoused they have to produce evidence that they have sought treatment for their drug problems.

Yes and we'd have to have proof of improved behaviour before we'd re-consider. And that would involve the tenants themselves doing a lot of back ground work in contacting various other groups, the Eastern Health Board and whoever else may be actually dealing with their case after they have left our little realm (I52, my emphasis).

A much less common, even rare approach to dealing with anti-social behaviour, is revealed in the next quotation. Here, there was an attempt to develop a preventative approach to anti-social behaviour which concentrated on getting parents to regain parental control and to channel the efforts of anti-social perpetrators to more productive ends. There are, of course, a number of public-policy approaches to dealing with the drugs problems on

estates such as that by the Local Drugs Task Forces, which this thesis did not investigate. Nonetheless, it is true to say that the interviews revealed a high level of dissatisfaction with the interventions of statutory agencies to tackling the drugs problems.

The way I was looking at it was, as I said to you earlier, if the family has one problem kid as we call it breaks up the whole family, if you evict the kid first off, so you've a lot to evict, what do you do. So we brought the other agencies on board, like the health board, probation, schools, we'd an advisory group the start of the BSII, and we've an advisory group now of about 30 agencies. Our advisory group we brought 30 agencies together to me that was an achievement (I52, my emphasis).

Linking with Tenant Groups

As was seen in Chapter 9, tenant activists revealed the manner in which they influence allocations. While the estates officers present a much more cautious tale, they do confirm that there is a dialogue between the local authority and the tenant groups regarding prospective tenancies. Many of the estate officers are quite explicit regarding the manner in which they seek the opinions and information of the local tenant groups.

The resident associations themselves they like to get involved in the allocations with regards to discussion taking place with them. That's a major issue (I64).

Now I've set a thing up there recently, what we will always do is we will run people by the xxxx and we would do our own checks on it obviously, police checks if we're considering allocating a house to someone. **But I insist on going through the residents' association and often they would have more information than we would.** Now sometimes my hands are tied because they are not on the application, but you can do exclusion orders and that type of thing. When we notify them that we're considering allocating to them or that they're getting close to being housed, **I would get them to sign that they are aware that I have notified them** because that came up before with an estate that you never told us such and such. That would annoy me so I insist that they know (I56, my emphasis).

The next quotation gives a clear impression of how the such consultation works. The names of prospective tenants are indicated to a tenant activists for information or views as to their suitability. This usually revolves around whether such individuals have a history of anti-social activity or whether there is a hidden partner who is not declared and who has such a history.

Our approach would be very informal. **We would flag a number of names maybe. Now it wouldn't be a formal committee, it could be one of ourselves to trust a person to ask with so-in-so is there a problem** because sometimes people on the ground know more about connections. **What we're saying is its on an informal basis and we would particularly operate it in our more difficult estates** (I64, my emphasis).

Thus, the process of informal consultation is used in order to either obtain names of suitable prospective tenants or to obtain intelligence about somebody on the waiting lists.

Well we do on two levels, one we'd approach them and say listen do you know of anybody in the area who qualifies or who's interested in being housed in the area and on the second level then if we have people we're thinking of allocating out to the areas on an informal basis the lads will flag them, we're looking at John and Mary whatever (I62).

There is also a clear relationship between the estate officers and the tenant groups whereby in many cases the estate officer will recommend that prospective tenants meet with the local tenant group.

Now the applicant doesn't have to present themselves to the association. If they want to they can. Now they don't have to, if they want to they can, but say if you refuse, if I was considering housing you in the xxxxxx Estate and I said would you mind going over to the xxx and you said I will in my eye go over, you make the decision. Now I can't force you to go over but I can let them know (I54).

Most estate officers are comfortable with the *ad hoc* informal arrangements that exist over allocations. They can utilise the information and intelligence of the tenant groups while also placating the group to some extent through the act of consultation. This *ad hoc* arrangement suits as the estate officers and the local authority generally can be flexible regarding the degree to which they use it. It can clearly be useful when there is concern regarding the political composition of certain groups.

I'd have a small difficulty with formalising it. Because again when you're dealing with the local tenants group they can have very specific interests **and at times you can have political agendas behind some of our estates or tenants groups.** We do make it clear to them that we will take your opinion on board (I63, my emphasis).

There is a clear emphasis that tenant groups are not being given any kind of veto through the process of consultation and dialogue.

And our liaison committee let us know as to any back information on this people. When we liaise we liaise in the correct sense, we'd be strong about this, **that we're not giving people a veto over prospective tenants.** We're in the business of housing people, ok but there's obvious reasons with some tenants, but there's also people who have problems, that's the business we're in. **But I mean allocations are involving the locals to some degree in allocations has proved very successful** (I66, my emphasis).

Despite the overwhelming tone of sanction and exclusion that emanates from talk of controlling allocations, one estate officer makes the interesting, perhaps correct, observation, that social housing tenants are generally more tolerant than those in more

affluent areas for example. For the most part, the aim of tenant groups in seeking influence over allocations is to prevent severe anti-social behaviour.

Locals are a lot more charitable and accepting than people would suspect. I find generally local communities particularly in these areas despite their presentation, maybe when they don't want this or that, when it comes down to an individual case they're far more charitable and accepting than a lot of other communities would be (I50).

Intimidation of Tenant Groups

The theme of intimidation of tenant groups crops up consistently and the estate officers confirm this. They are clearly aware of the dangers to tenant groups and tenant activists inherent in co-operating over allocations.

I deal with residents associations and most of them wouldn't like to be seen as reporting say people in relation to anti social problems so in that estate we would request a separate meeting say with the anti-social team, just get names. Normally I would pass them on. They try which is fair enough they try and distance themselves from that kind of areas (I54, my emphasis).

The fear of intimidation excluded a lot of the tenants themselves and the residents from taking any hand, act or part in it. They wouldn't be in a position to give evidence or to forward themselves to appear in a court of law or to be seen in our company (I55).

More generally, as in the case of Dun Laoghaire Rathdown, one of the reasons for moving estate management out of the Housing Department was to divorce it from action against anti-social behaviour. However, many of the tenants think that this policy simply does not work. Dealing with anti-social activities is integral to estate management in their view. The positive elements of community development cannot flourish if anti-social behaviour prevails.

Yes and that another one of the main reasons to take estate management out of housing was to totally remove it from anti social behaviour. **And we insist on all the forums that we do not discuss individual cases of anti social behaviour.** You know we talk about policy, we talk about what we can do about gangs hanging around, but we will not talk about specific incidences (I62, my emphasis).

Any time we would interview someone here is on estate management grounds we would ask them if they minded if we passes their name by the guards or the local community group or the people of the local community. Very rarely you get an objection from a person looking for a house (I55).

Theme 5: Internal Organisation and Service Delivery

One of the essential propositions of the good practice literature on tenant participation is that the local authority must make significant changes to its internal organisation in order to deliver a better service to tenants. While this thesis did not undertake a detailed organisational analysis of the different local authorities, some fascinating insights about organisational change and service delivery were obtained from the interviews.

Localisation

One of the most important findings from the interviews was that there has been significant decentralisation of functions to a local or estate level and an element of devolution of powers as well. This is especially apparent in the Dublin City Council area which, as seen in Chapter 8, is undergoing radical decentralisation of its services. However, it is also apparent in other local authorities in that the estate officers often operate on estates on a daily basis, sometimes by holding estate clinics or often simply by liaising daily with tenant activists. It is clear from the interviews that many estate officers spend less and less time in head quarters.

At one level, at least in Dublin City Council, there are a number of regional offices where many housing functions are located.

I have in the office about 12. I'm over about thirty overall, because you have outdoor staff, and staff based in the parish hall. You've everything from basically a general operative cleaner to the deputy regional manager. What we have essentially, the breakdown that we have, you have allocations staff, I'd have estate management staff, I would encourage people to be multi purpose where possible. **They do everything from calling people in on anti social behaviour, everything from dumping to replacing windows.** They're the two main things allocations and estate management. What we tend to have also is senior community workers who report to myself and they would be involved in the nicer side of things in terms of working with the associations, communities, summer projects, things of that nature, environmental groups, senior citizens (I46).

We would primarily work from this office. I suppose loosely I'd be referred to as the Housing Regional Manager, because I'd be over all the allocations. I'd be over all estate management issues. I'd also be over the community issues, but because of the nature of the regional set and the area based management I would get involved in much more (I46).

They should be one-stop shops. This is as close as you will get at the moment to your one-stop shop unless other departments are willing to contribute to the staffing and the various bills that are associated with running an office. Unfortunately the housing department are lumbered with the overall costs. The other departments, like the parks, water works, all the departments that I would normally access should make a contribution of some description to the running of an office, if they're getting a service off us, which they are (I54).

The development of a local presence is often undertaken through the holding of local clinics or the day to day visiting of estates by estate officers. The set of quotations below capture the many changes that have occurred with respect to day-to-day estate management.

Now we also have a number of clinics to be honest with you. There what we call Clinics where the estate officer might be up in the xxxxxx Centre. They're mainly for a couple of hours a week. We don't really get much demand for them. **They're as much there to be flying the flag** there, because the reality is most people in xxxxxxxx would be either coming down to the shops or coming down to the school (I55, my emphasis).

There is a demonstrable commitment to localisation on the part of many senior officers. Certainly in the case of Dublin City Council, there is an enthusiasm to let estate officers take responsibility and control for their particular estates.

So this pushing it more out, more decentralisation. I don't think that's happened in other regions yet, I think this is the first one, this is the first region if you like that will be sub divided which means I can float between the lot of them. You know, supervising, the one with the overall call, but they manage their areas, small areas, but I have six officers that are capable of doing it (I45, my emphasis).

I have five project estate officers and that are all operating from this office. **What I've done is I'm sending them out to the areas, so my idea now is to sub divide my area into five, because the project estate officers I have, and I've had meetings with them and informed them that I want them to manage their areas. I don't want them in a regional office, I want them in their area offices.** They've computers, fax machines, there fully equipped (I45, my emphasis).

The impact of such local offices is that estate officers and other housing officials gain first-hand knowledge of local estates. In addition, it gives local officers more responsibility, this being a low level form of devolution. They also, according to some senior officers, begin to make better decisions because of such local knowledge and become known in and on the estate.

One of the important things about the local office is not just managing the services and the office. It's very important the officers know the area in which their decisions are impacting. So an allocations officer knows where their houses are, where they're sending people to. You know what I mean, that's really important, local knowledge, but not only that, they are also known. It's worked both ways. **It's worked that they're actually making better decisions and better information.** But even when they're giving a no decision, they're actually being respected for it because they're there to say why (I49, my emphasis).

So I think it is a **case of giving people more responsibility if you wish**, we have project estate officers, and really they are managers in their own right and so your giving them the responsibility of their own area. I don't want them operating from this office, or the civic offices, I want them out there (I47, my emphasis).

But it has worked very well also in terms of being here and being available, being at the end of the phone or being available to community associations or knocking around the community centre. **You become a normal part of life here in terms of being a human being, as well you can kill a lot of rumours, its amazing the rumours that go around** (I49, my emphasis).

According to a number of officers, the demand on such officers from the local tenant population is high.

And you would find once you open an office in a place like that, no matter if it's one morning and one afternoon a week, **you will find that there's a bigger demand and once you're in there, your expectations from the people are huge, because they know you're the man that can get this done and so they start using it more, word goes around, and everybody uses the office then.** It's not just on housing issues, we deal with every issue, if somebody has a problem with rents, cleansing, parks, they come to our office. We're the face of the corpo out there (I47, my emphasis).

Positive Lessons

Apart from the developments with regard to localisation, there are also other more positive lessons. The first two quotations below show that some estate officers attribute the stabilisation of estates to the presence of a local office.

The number of houses we would have let in xxxx this year is 13/14 maybe. The estate has stabilised enormously, partly because of house prices nobody can go anywhere, but also it has stabilised and its not a bad place to live. **Yes I think it has stabilised, due to our own presence and the village centre, I think has settled things** (I56).

But our own regional set up, I mean we're out here four years, **that has had a wonderful impact.** People don't have to go several miles in to the civic centre, you know yourself (I46, my emphasis).

The lessons of team working are also apparent. The following quotation has an estate officer expressing amazement at the positive impact of working collectively with colleagues in the local authority. Unfortunately, this finished with the completion of a refurbishment project.

When the refurbishment project was on, when I had started in estate management, it had been up and running for about nine months to a year. And what we used to do was every two weeks, we used to have a meeting with architects, litter wardens, technicians, anti social and **we looked at the area collectively and it was amazing how when somebody was talking about a problem you began to see the whole picture and we collectively began to do things. And the information was passed, and I thought it was a very worth while project. It finished, that was it and it was over** (I58, my emphasis).

Another lesson which emerges from the interview evidence is the need for estates officers to establish personal relationships with the likes of maintenance staff and so on. Where this

is successful, they can obtain a reasonable service. Of course, the obvious retort is why should a good service have to rely on personal relationships.

We would tend to try and talk to people on the ground and say look what are the problems in your areas and that, can we address it. I know when it started off the concept was good but because it tends to be a parks or a roads problem we tend to be kind of duplicating the work of other departments and other departments are will for us to pay. **Over a period of time I've built up contacts with people on the ground and you know there is a willingness there in a lot of these people there to come half measure in other words if we say we've identified a project can you provide the personnel** (I60, my emphasis).

I think it's a number of things, **its seeing things being done, its seeing estate management having a profile in the area.** Like a lot of people are delighted with this kids thing now, the kid's project you know. **Not that its going to change xxxx in to a wonderful place or anything like that, but its something that's happening,** its another service for the kids, something to get the kids involved in (I62, my emphasis).

but the area maintenance officer also comes under my remit. Now we have a situation in place were the foreman calls in to each office, the foreman for each area would call on a daily basis to take the complaints, so those complaints are logged at the local office and when the jobs completed the local office is informed so they can scratch it off their list, then the outstanding jobs eventually come to me and I can inform the inspector that this job has been here for two or three weeks what the story. **It's basically making them more accountable. Maintenance has improved** (I47, my emphasis).

The following quotation shows that in one authority (Dun Laoghaire Rathdown), efforts have been made to inform all sections of the local authority about the nature and purpose of estates management. This positive development, however, was one of the only such proactive exercises that was found.

We set up all these structures and they were all great, but the council itself wasn't ready for it. It was kind of good, they want this in place. And even things like, I remember I rang up and we were looking for roads signs out in xxxxx and one of the, now I was only talking to one of girls in the office, but her immediate attitude was well the engineer will go out and he'll decide were the road signs go. But they're not like that anymore. **That kind of thing has all broken down now and because we've had these information sessions that's very, very good and like people were talking about what they thought of it, and like some people hadn't thought of if at all like you know. Weren't aware of it, some people were very cynical about it obviously, other people thought it was a great idea and that. So it's all about changing attitudes** (I59, my emphasis).

There is in many quarters an appreciation and understanding that the process of change in local authorities is a slow and arduous one, but that in some cases that they are 'on the right track'.

Well that was the problem for a good while in xxxxxxxxxxxxxx that you know they all loved us as community workers and they all saw us having the best of intentions but really we were useless. Because you know we couldn't influence engineering, we couldn't influence water works and roads and all the rest of it. **So hopefully, and as I said its not fully changed yet anything with local authorities is slow to happen but you know its getting there, it's on the right track alright** (I62, my emphasis).

Criticisms of Internal Structures

Perhaps one of the more surprising responses to the interviews has been the extensive criticism made by estate officers of the internal organisation of local authorities. The extensive set of quotations below contain general criticisms of the effectiveness of authorities with respect to service delivery. They also contain numerous criticisms of the lack of internal re-organisation in headquarters and of the lack of responsiveness of many sections to their requests. In particular there is heavy criticism of the inability for the many departments and sections to work collectively.

There is concern among many estate officers that while they are working directly on estates with tenants and tenant activists, that they are doing so in something of a policy and organisational vacuum. The following two quotations reveal this view quite starkly.

I suppose to sum it up the structures aren't really here at present within xxxxxx County Council, not just xxxxxxxxxxx. **But my view is that we've no game plan, we've no coherent approach, we're not working with any strategy in mind or anything, it's just fizzled out and a lot of the enthusiasm is gone.** The individuals on the ground would still be, I still think the concept is good and it can work. I've argued this with the assistant manager and I've brought this up at every opportunity, but the will is not there (I57, my emphasis).

You see the problem is with estate management in a sense that it started off basically as a PR commitment initiative with money and instead of having a long term plan or view, saying look this is what we're going to do for five or six years. I think what happened in fairness, when there was a change of management structure there last year, I think a lot of the guidance and structure left in many ways (I54).

The other general theme and one of the most important from the point of view of service delivery, is the problem of delivering services in an efficient manner. There is a general sense that local authorities are still incapable of delivery services adequately.

I started, as I say, to step back somewhat over the last couple of year and go into the realms of service delivery. This is a problem. **In all our estates service delivery is a problem** (I52, my emphasis).

One of the core reasons for this inadequacy is, according to many officers, the inability to work collectively. In other words, while estate management has been instituted in all

authorities to some degree, there has been no corresponding change in the key internal structures. Each section or department still operates to its own rules and agenda. The next set of quotations show this clearly from the viewpoint of estates officers. There are a number of hard-hitting quotations which refer to the lack of collective working in authorities.

Which requires, first on our side **to have our own house in order**, our community department for example have never, ever officially been involved with us in relation to this. So we've never had them working with community groups. It's absolutely dreadful. There's a lot of problems in community, I think they've always been the poor relations in the over all scheme of it. One of the reasons possibly for this was that I think the Community Department didn't like when we were set up we were given all this money, and we were all given mobile phones and lap tops and they were being left behind a bit, so that might have been a factor in it, **I don't know but the facts are that we never really worked together** (I50, my emphasis).

You do need to get people involved on a local level in this day and age, to get volunteers on board, to get people to go to meetings, to get people to have an interest in the area, its hard work and basically you have to have,.....**because sometimes as an organisation basically we don't talk to each other enough internally**, and so estate management is something other departments use when they've a problem as opposed to looking at you know where can we run with this (I56, my emphasis).

And unfortunately that's the trouble with estate management that if it's a case that we don't **get our own house together and we don't get things moving together that you're left out to dry really and that's a problem really**. I think it has great potential (I58, my emphasis).

Service delivery segments are from maintenance, from general housing maintenance, to public lights, parks, roads, streets, water supplies, sewerage. It covers all parts. *Do you have a link man between the estate and all the sub-sections?* **Yes we are as you know away from head office now and we always want to maintain a distance from them, but there is the central control of services still remains in town. It's not out here, which is a problem for us** (I53, my emphasis).

I'm lucky in a sense, I knew a lot of people on the ground, because of my background, especially the likes of water and drainage and roads. I knew good people on the ground and I've got to a lot of great people on the ground as well and there's some good people inside, **but there's not a climate or history of us working together collectively looking at problems. We don't do that and we're not encouraged to do it in many ways and in fairness to estate management I know there has been from management level historical briefings and letters, this is the way we're going forward, but it never actually happened in real terms** (I56).

Initially we had plans about a year and a half ago. I remember xxxxx had this idea that we work very closely and I thought it was a great idea at the time, we would work as closely as we could with the community department, looking at training, looking at the respond course that we were actually doing at the time and saying look can we adapt this, **but it never actually happened** (I54, my emphasis).

As the next quotation makes clear, estate officers and even senior officers, rarely have any real control over key sections like maintenance and are reduced to relying on positive personal relationships in order to expedite plans. In short, there is no internal structure which would ensure an integrated response to estates.

You rely heavily on other departments coming on board. *Probably even personal relationships?* Very much so. If you don't get on with a person, which I've been very lucky, touch wood, I haven't crossed anybody. **There's a way for dealing with people; I'm not in a position to instruct, and I'm not in a position to demand outside the housing department, so therefore when looking for work to be done as soon as possible, if I was speaking to the inspector or the engineer in the area, I would approach it on a personal basis,** that it would be a favour to me and maybe further down the road I would be able to reciprocate. And the way I'd be able to reciprocate that would be that if they were looking for extra funding for completion of works I'd put my oar in the water then and go sourcing, to see is there money in our development cabinet say for example that would be able to be used, and they appreciate that (I50, my emphasis).

This lack of internal co-ordination reaches slightly farcical proportions in the next case where an estate officer spent over a year introducing himself to key players and officials in head quarters. Apparently phone calls and letters produced no responses and he took it upon himself to educate key officers of different sections so that he would get a response in future. Indeed, a number of estate officers recounted anecdotes of personnel from other departments hiding from them in order to avoid responding to service requests.

One of the problems I had when I came out here first, and I started broadening my scope was actually finding the individual who would be responsible for making the decision. *Even within the area?* **It meant a lot of time going back into Civic Offices and sitting in reception for various engineers and principal officers and sitting there waiting patiently to speak to them and they'd be looking out and say who is that fella out there and what does he want.** And then I'd have to go in and dutifully tell them what it was about and it would be a small request I'd be making and they'd be looking at you saying why are you coming to me. The reason I was going to these people was to let them know who I was and what I was about so if they got a phone call from an inspector or a foreman saying so-and-so, so-and-so down in your office and he's asking to do such a thing, that at least the principal officers know who so-in-so was and he'd either say yes he's ok go ahead do that or its not, whatever I was asking for, some times you ask for too much in the hope you'll get a little (I52, my emphasis).

But we went about building relationships, you know estate managers had to build relationships with the residents, with the local guards **even our own sections**, you know with the foreman and all the rest of it (I47, my emphasis).

In addition to the problems of internal co-operation, there are clearly also some problems of internal conflict or internal turf wars. In the cases where there are separate budgets for estate management, this has generated some conflict with other departments. Sections like

maintenance, for example, attempt to obtain proportions of such budgets which, in theory re over and above standard departmental budgets.

That's a problem within the council now about this €25,000. I'm not saying it's happened but there's talk and there's been hints at it you know, **suddenly parks that have given a service for years are suddenly not giving that service anymore and sure "you've money in estate management" so you can use that money to spend on it.** So there's always that fear, so we have to be really careful about that, because this is specific money for the estate management forums and its surplus to what is in the service plans, what's in the estimates there for the areas, the surplus money (I62, my emphasis).

I think it's five hundred thousand now. What happened with that was, that other groups like departments like parks, where they're and quite tight with the money, **they would be looking to us to carry out some of their work.** So a lot of the money was drained initially on projects like that (I57, my emphasis).

Relations with Statutory Agencies

The views of most estate officers were heavily critical of the health boards but generally supportive of the police.

And to do that we had to involve ourselves with the local guards, which specifically now would have been the drugs task force, the drugs force themselves, the drugs unit, we had to make ourselves known to them and that took a while for them to become trusting of us (I60).

We needed a more steady consultation with them. For two reasons, one to know what action they were actually taking in the area and two to know how we could actually access that information. It is not easy to access information, if you're not known to the guards. But after a while, it didn't take too long, a couple of drinks and general socialising, helped to break that barrier, and it's a good thing that should be used (I47).

However, despite the generally good relationship between estate officers and the police, there are serious and genuine concerns about the danger the local authority taking on too large a role in dealing with such activity. There are real concerns across many local authorities that a fundamental error has been made in effectively letting the police transfer responsibility for much criminal behaviour to the local authority.

Like the anti social scheme would work in those areas. **Yes and unfortunately they are replacing the guards in xxxxxxxx as far as we can see or that's the perception people get. People are totally apathetic towards the guards so they see it as a solution for policing the estate which is dangerous. xxxxxxxxxxxx in particular is a very poor station** (I61).

One of the consistent messages from all levels of local authority officer was the generally very poor relationships and links with Health Boards. There is a perception that Health

Boards in some cases actively work against the local authority when it comes to issues to do with allocations and anti-social behaviour.

The links with the health board are very, very poor and we tend to end up rather than working with the health board, they tend to work against us. They tend not to want to deal with the harder cases. Like we've had cases coming up of child abuse, horrific stuff coming up and the health board washed their hands and walked away from it (I65).

What we found is that you could have a family with four or five different agencies working with them and none of the five agencies are aware of the other agencies input. We were saying, we're all out doing a job, but we're all attacking from different angles and we're confusing the people we're trying to help, because if I turn up and give x y and z advice and then you turn up and give completely different advice (I61).

Future

What then do estate officers think the future holds for estate management and tenant participation? The quotations below reveal a number of viewpoints. First, there is a strong view in many local authorities that the recourses available to operate estate management are very limited. In practical terms there is a demand for more estate officers to work on a smaller scale basis. Many officers felt that they were responsible for areas that were far too large and that they could only make a minimal impression on them.

Now my view is that instead of, here they're talking about now getting bigger and bigger and becoming PR, that **we actually go back to the basics and say look instead of giving us more estates lets get smaller.** Lets go back and say look, look at xxx, look at xxx, look at xxxxx and we'll go in there and we'll decide with the community department what level of representation we require, how we're going to go about it, what are we prepared to give, where are we going, lets have an exit policy. Now do it in an honest way in other words say basically we're going to work as a team and have a team approach (I56, my emphasis).

The second perspective recognises the need for co-ordinated multi-agency approaches. As the next quotation says this has not been attempted.

If you sat down with the guards, public health nurses, the Corporation officials and the social workers, they could within a half an hour draw up a list maybe of twenty or thirty families, but yet it's not done. Now I'm being realistic. **What impact that integrated service might have, we don't know, we haven't tried it. I mean I don't believe you can save everybody unfortunately, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't try** (I50, my emphasis).

We're of the same mind on this that unless we have control of local service, i.e. delivery of local service to people, we can't really be anymore progressive. **We can throw as much money as we want into the estate in construction but if the service for that construction can't be provided or can't be maintained or can't be established long term, well then we're in trouble.** We're in trouble, we're in big trouble and you'll find that if you, you'll probably be talking to other estate officers in the estates and you'll find that they restrict themselves solely to housing issues (I53, my emphasis).

Interestingly, there is also a general perception that there are underlying socio-economic causes for the persistence of problematic estates and, in some cases, a weary view that estate management can only ever have a minimal or limited impact on estates.

You still get the sense that the dysfunctional, the marginalised, use whatever term families you like are still up there and are still problematic and their younger brothers are going to cause trouble or the younger sisters you know. And I'm not for sure that as a society we've got to grips with how we deal with those type families and the Corporation is certainly limited. **We can do our best, we can threaten them, cajole them, we can try and get the state services in, but I think there's a fundamental problem here with health and welfare support being integrated and directed at particular type families** (I51, my emphasis).

But what it does mean is unfortunately **while the underlying social problem is still there its always going to be vulnerable to an economic down turn and then you're back to the cycle again.** But to what degree are we as a local authority responsible for co-ordinating the next level, ok we got our management down, I'm not saying perfect but reasonably ok. It's a local management interacting with local people but the degree to which we as a local authority stimulate action on the other social issues, I mean we work with partnership, drugs task force, try to work with the health board, **but largely a lot of it is out of our hands. It depends really on state support and how it re-organises itself** (I49, my emphasis).

The reality remains that we perpetuate the cycle by the nature of things. You get estates, like xxxxx is one of the biggest housing estates in Ireland if not the biggest and what you do is you keep taking off the housing list you put someone in so this cycle of lone parents, unemployed, you know what I mean (I46).

III COMPARISONS AND CONTRASTS

This section makes some basic comparisons and contrasts between the different local authorities.

Levels of Compliance with Good Practice

Table 10.1 draws some general comparisons between the five local authorities. The table is taken from Chapter 2 and contains the essential good practice points. It uses a scale of compliance which interprets the evidence analysed in the interviews in here and in chapter 9. On the scale a score of 1 indicates little or no compliance, 2 indicates that there is limited

compliance, 3 indicates moderate compliance and 4 indicates high compliance. This table is merely intended as an aid for comparative discussion. Without delving too much into the detail of the Table, it can be seen from nearly all the authorities have fairly low levels of compliance. While different authorities have different levels of development across different aspects of estate management and tenant participation, none really stands out. It might be argued legitimately, however, that the decentralisation programme of Dublin City Council is a clear example of a strategy of estate management being planned and implemented.

With regard to policies and agendas, while there are clearly all manner of developments in tenant participation, it is also true to say that the level of formal, written policy development is in fact weak. Specifically, the agenda for participation deals with the most immediate estate issues. This is understandable, but there is a need to move beyond such immediate issues. With regard to decision making, while the evidence shows the level of decision making is very clearly that of a consultative nature, nowhere is the decision making process made clear. Likewise, the parameters of participation are generally not made clear. The variety of structures of participation have tended to develop in reaction to particular circumstances and there seems to be no real assessment of how appropriate or effective particular structures are.

With regard to implementing decisions, this area is the least developed. There was almost no evidence which shows that local authorities have set targets or standards with respect to the delivery of services on estates. Moreover, while there is an injunction to have estate based management, and clearly lots of new structures and developments, it is hard to find any detailed empirical analysis of the problems and issues on individual estates. Given the lack of targets and standards, there is no evidence of any detailed evaluation or monitoring of the success or otherwise of estate management policies. While there have been clear and positive developments with respect to resources available to allow tenants participate, again, such developments tend to have occurred in a piecemeal fashion. Put differently, it would be difficult for a tenant group to find any simple written guidance on the level of resources that are available to them.

Table 10.1 Compliance with Good Practice Guidelines

	DCC	SDCC	DLR	LK	WT
1 Policies and Agendas					
There should be a tenant participation policy and strategy	1	1	3	3	1
All aspects of the housing service on the agenda	2	2	2	2	2
Tenants should be involved in determining the agenda	2	2	2	2	2
Estate profiles and plans are needed as a planning base	1	1	1	1	1
2 Decision Making					
level of participation should be made clear	2	2	2	2	2
The Parameters of participation should be clear	2	2	2	2	2
Structures should be made clear	2	2	2	2	2
3 Implementing Decisions					
Clear outcomes from meetings and consultation.	1	1	1	1	1
Responsibilities for taking action should be clearly outlined.	2	2	2	2	2
There should be consistent monitoring and evaluation.	1	1	1	1	1
Clear service standards and targets for should be set.	1	1	1	1	1
Outcomes should be measured.	1	1	1	1	1
Satisfaction of tenants should be measured.	1	1	1	1	1
4 Enabling Tenants to Participate					
Standards for tenants' groups	2	2	3	2	2
Independent training advice should be available to tenants	2	2	2	2	2
Resources for tenant participation	2	2	2	2	2
Standards on information and meetings	1	1	1	1	1
Meetings should be open, accountable and efficiently run.	2	2	2	2	2
<i>Level of Compliance:</i>					
<i>1 = none; 2 = limited; 3 = moderate; 4 = high</i>					
Source: Author					

IV CONCLUSION

This chapter has displayed a wide range of evidence from estate officers, moreover, evidence which allows us to appreciate the key issues of implementing estate management. There are a number of core messages which come across, however. The first is that they recognise the severity, complexity and durability of some of the problems on estates, thus confirming the views of estate activists. There is no gulf to bridge in this aspect at least. The second core message is that estate officers have a complex and often ambivalent relationship with tenant groups. They are concerned with the lack of representativeness of many groups. Nonetheless, they must and do work with such groups. This work comprises developing and liaising with tenant groups and, in particular, dealing with them over the controversial issue of allocations. The third core lesson is that there have been significant developments in terms of the manner in which estate management is practiced. In essence,

this comes down to a program of localisation with the development of local offices, the holding of local estate clinics and the daily presence of estate officers on estates liaising with tenant groups and activists. While all this is very positive, the fourth and final lesson is that estate officers are heavily critical of the lack of change of internal structures in local authority head quarters. They complain of the inability to provide a service mainly because of the almost complete absence of internal co-ordination and integration. In short, estate officers, while they represent a significant and positive development with regard to policy implementation, it would also be fair to argue that they are but a fragile outer layer of the local authority organisation and there has not as yet been a fundamental re-ordering of internal relations and structures in local authorities.

CHAPTER 11

CONSIDERATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

I INTRODUCTION

There should be no expectations raised that estate-management initiatives on their own are a panacea for all the ills of these areas, particularly the heroin problem. It will take time to address the legacy of years of bad estate management. (Mick Rafferty, Community Activist, Irish Times, 11/8/1997).

Has the legacy of bad estate management of which Mick Rafferty speaks been overturned by the development of tenant participation policies? It might be contended, at least on the basis of policy pronouncements, that the local-authority sector is moving towards a new management ethos and management system which seeks to achieve sustainable regeneration of estates (Redmond, 2001a, 2002). The reality, as this thesis has shown, is more complex, with implementation of estate management and tenant participation being subject to all manner of barriers. As such, this conclusion considers some of the more general issues regarding the empowerment of tenants and concludes with some reflections on the implications for theory.

II SYNTHESIS

'On many issues, the problem is not so much to identify good practice as to implement it: local authorities and other observers know what has to be done but have difficulty organising themselves to do it. In other cases, good practice is implemented, but its basis may be insecure – in that, for example, it may be carried out by certain individuals without the organisational change necessary to incorporate new approaches into the normal workings of the system' (Fahey, 1999c, p256.)

Fahey points to a core potential problem with tenant participation, which is the possibility that local authorities may lack the capacities actually to implement it. What then, does the evidence reveal across the five local authorities? Overall, the interviews with tenant activists and local authority officials revealed a situation where there are valid attempts being made to develop a tenant participation policy in many local authorities and on individual housing estates. However, while the research has revealed noteworthy progress with regard to the development of tenant participation structures, it must also be concluded that this is often conducted in the absence of a clear and agreed strategy which sets out the level of participation being sought, what is to be negotiated, the methods and structures to be used or of specific outcomes sought. Inevitably, this lack of clarity can

lead to frustration and cynicism, especially among tenants, but also among estate officers. Tenant activists concur that inordinate effort is required to achieve limited results.

From a policy viewpoint, all local authorities completed *Housing Management Plans* in 1994 as part of the Housing Act 1992. Although these were considered inadequate at the time, they have not since been reviewed. Since then, there is limited evidence of any written tenant participation policies in any of the case-study areas. However, one large urban authority had produced a written strategy on tenant participation, although tenants had a minor role in determining that strategy. With regard to the agenda of tenant participation, it is dominated by the understandable need to solve immediate estate-based problems. These problems are very often related to the prevalence of anti-social behaviour resulting in a demand from tenants to have an influence over the allocation of dwellings. Indeed, the severity of anti-social behaviour and its corrosive effects on estate life are highlighted not just by tenant activists but also by estate officers. In addition to this issue of social order the other core issue which emerges is the maintenance of dwellings and of estates.

The structures which have emerged for tenant participation have tended to comprise *ad-hoc* estate boards or, more commonly, communication between tenant groups and local authority estate officers. Tenants have been resourced in a number of ways in order to participate in these structures. Local authorities have provided offices, funded offices expenses, funded training for tenants and, most importantly, in a number of cases have funded tenant advocate workers. With respect to the level of tenant participation which has emerged, the main level of participation was consultation and dialogue with little evidence of tenants having a formal role in decision making. A major problem with the nature of such consultation is that it is very elastic and open to various interpretations. For tenants, consultation is frequently interpreted as meaning that the local authority will take their views into account. However, for local authorities, consultation may mean just listening to tenants' views but not doing anything about them. Local authorities, indeed, are quite content with such consultative structures and there are no attempts to give tenants a formal decision making power over any aspect of estate management. Tenants, for their part, are stuck in a consultative structure whose boundaries are blurred and where they have only minimal influence over services. Thus we can conclude that while tenants

are participating in estate management they have little or no empowerment.

Nonetheless, one of the major positive steps taken by local authorities has been the employment of estate officers. These officers take an active role in estate management at a local level. The feedback from tenants is generally quite positive on their role as it gives tenants a point of contact with the local authority and allows the estate officer to develop detailed local knowledge of the estates. The review of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (Government of Ireland, 2001) calls for all authorities to employ such officers. The other major trend has been the localisation of services for estates. While estate officers are part of this process, some authorities have also begun to decentralise through the creation of local offices on estates, which allows a local point of contact for tenants and, presumably, a better understanding of estate issues by the local housing officers. However, estate officers are heavily critical of the lack of internal co-ordination and collective working within local authorities and argue that this significantly limits their effectiveness. They are also critical of the lack of representativeness of many tenant groups, pointing out that many are comprised of a small number of activists who have been involved for many years.

One of the major thrusts of the new policy is that local authorities have to become more businesslike in their operations. The implication is that they should shake off their bureaucratic, hierarchical and inefficient structures and become more flexible, responsive and lean organisations which respond to their clients needs and demands. Local authority cynics would argue that the new language could be used by central government as a means of reducing expenditure, rather than forcing local authorities to specify how services are purchased and delivered. However, there is scant evidence of any specific customer-care codes in operation, or of specifications of service standards. In other words, tenants have little idea of precisely the service to expect. This requires in the first instance the local authority to specify the service that it provides, to set standards and targets and to measure outcomes. This is a major task, though one which should be made easier by the series of Best Practice guidance on housing management that has been issued by the Housing Unit. At the most basic level, there was limited evidence of a formal and systematic approach to the provision of information to tenants by local authorities, although increasingly local authorities have provided tenant handbooks to tenants. Moreover, there is negligible evidence of local authorities obtaining formal feedback or satisfaction ratings from tenants, clearly important with regard to monitoring the housing and estate management service.

This lack of specifics with respect to targets and outcomes may in part be reflective of a reluctance by local authorities to examine fundamentally the service that is provided and of setting standards by which they can be measured. However, there is limited evidence of fundamental shifts in the internal organisation of housing management services in response to tenant involvement. This entails a shift in culture and organisational practices across local authority departments, for which there is only limited observable evidence.

III CONSIDERATIONS ON TENANT EMPOWERMENT

This section gives some general consideration to the issue of tenant empowerment. The question that lies at the heart of the thesis is whether tenants have been empowered through the process of tenant participation. As the extensive evidence has shown, it is very hard to conclude that they have been empowered in any meaningful way. Sure enough, consultation is a form of influence and therefore a form of empowerment but, as any glance at the various ladders of empowerment will testify, such consultation is very much at the lower end of the scale. What then, are the main barriers and constraints that obstruct such empowerment? This can be examined in any number of ways. However, three general sets of circumstances have been identified which can be said to obstruct or constrain greater tenant empowerment. These are external constraints, institutional constraints and constraints relating to tenants and participation structures. Given these constraints, the section concludes by examining some policy implications.

External Constraints

There are a number of obvious external constraints on the development of an effective tenant participation policy, namely the inadequacies of central government policies, the structural socio-economic position of tenants and the limitations of area-based interventions.

Central Government Policy and Resources

With regard to estate management, O'Connell (1999) has argued that the 'dead hand' of the Department of Environment in reducing local autonomy and responsibility is apparent, while the potential benefits of strong central co-ordination and strategic leadership have been absent. The Department only began to take an interest in performance measurement in the 1990s, testimony to its narrow auditing culture prior to

that. Even in its policy framework for housing management it fails, for example, to define the standards it seeks, to deal with the question of funding, to specify how it will force local authorities to implement its policies or to define a time frame for implementation.

One example of this is that when compared with the UK system, the Irish legislation is very poorly developed, indeed might be considered minimalist. There is no statutory right for tenants to enter into participation with the local authorities. While local authorities are exhorted to have tenant participation policies and structures, this is significantly different to ensuring the right of tenants to participate. The Housing Act 1992, through the requirement for housing management plans, and the Housing Act 1997, through provisions on estate management and anti-social behaviour, impose a general responsibility, though not necessarily an obligation, on local authorities to pursue tenant participation. This, however, is fundamentally different to granting a statutory right to tenants, which could be defined as a positive right, to participate.

In relation to the criticism surrounding the ineffective provision of services, the model of revenue support to local authorities from central government does not encourage a search for effectiveness. Local authorities in Ireland operate in a context of strong administrative and financial control by central government. The differential rent scheme obliges local authorities to set rents in relation to tenants' incomes and ability to pay, rather than in relation to the costs of service provision. Thus, local authorities have a social welfare role and effectively subsidise rents. Any shortfall between rental income and running costs are met either by cross-subsidisation in the local authority or by central government subsidy (Redmond and Walker, 1995). As a consequence, they cannot charge economic rents with regard to management and maintenance costs and the housing function of local authorities therefore tends to be cross-subsidised from general local-authority finances.

In a number of different ways then, the central government critique of local authority housing management has to a significant degree been disingenuous in omitting any acknowledgement of the impact of spending cutbacks, sales of dwellings to tenants and the inadequacy of local-authority finance as elements which have contributed to the decline of the sector and its poor management. Moreover, while various best practice guidelines have emerged, central government has not yet set any national standards against which performance can be measured. So far, performance measurement is still in its infancy and

local authorities are being allowed to set their own standards. However, even with this degree of central control, local authorities do have major influence on their housing management function with respect to estate management, tenant participation, maintenance policies, allocations and so on. In other words, local housing departments cannot absolve themselves of all responsibility for the poor management and regeneration of estates.

Therefore, it is disappointing to reflect that almost a decade on from the 1992 Housing Act, which signalled radical changes in housing management, there has been no official monitoring or evaluation of the various policy developments. Although this may be reflective of a general lack of public policy evaluation in Ireland, it is increasingly indefensible, and there is a sizeable gap between the rhetoric of new housing management and regeneration and what we know of the reality. Indeed, there is only a limited amount of available evidence and this suggests that the various policy developments are but partially and insecurely established in actual procedures and implementation at estate level. It is difficult to understand the position of central government which, on one hand, enthusiastically promotes change but, on the other hand, seems unwilling to ask simple questions as to the progress and impact of that change.

Socio-Economic Structures and Area-Based Interventions

There is a recognition in the first report of the *Housing Management Group* that estate management on its own will not lead to sustainable estates:

‘Large single-class estates often lack the necessary infrastructural supports and services e.g. schools, shops, medical and social services, affordable transport, commercial and industrial opportunities etc. This renders these estates vulnerable to major problems of drugs, crime and vandalism which present particular difficulties and challenges for local authorities. Housing/estate management provisions will not achieve the necessary improvement in the redevelopment of sustainable estates unless they are accompanied by the targeting of adequate economic and development resources to them’ (Department of the Environment, 1996a, p8).

Despite this explicit acknowledgement by the central state of the crucial importance of the need for increased economic and development resources, perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the debate about regeneration and participation is the effective sidelining of any serious engagement regarding the structural socio-economic position of tenants. Indeed, it is accepted that housing management policies and regeneration policies are essentially

about ameliorating the worst aspects of estate life (Fahey, 1999a). Such aims are, of course, entirely valid and worthwhile and any attempts to improve the quality of life of tenants are welcome. However, it seems that the long-term impact and implications of structural poverty are not fully assessed, especially with regard to the sustainability of the new policy agenda. It is striking that in the UK, the Social Exclusion Unit, set up by the Prime Minister Tony Blair to tackle deprived neighbourhoods, began its analysis of the problem by remarking that all the previous policy initiatives had failed (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998). The lessons taken from this were that more co-ordination and 'joined up thinking' were needed in order for regeneration policies to succeed. Perhaps another lesson might be taken. That is that irrespective of physical regeneration or housing management there remains a core and irreducible problem regarding poverty which is structural in origin (MacLaran, 1999; Duggan, 1999).

In this vein, Geddes argues convincingly that 'the available evidence also suggests that the positive impacts of local partnership are marginal. They bear no relationship to the scale of contemporary problems of poverty and social exclusion across the EU' (Geddes, 2000, p797). In Ireland, tenant participation can be construed as a local estate-based strategy and thus as part of the gamut of area-based policies used to improve disadvantaged urban areas. While the policy interest in promoting area-based solutions remains tenacious, evaluations regarding the efficacy of such policies has tended to be critical. For example, a wide-ranging review by the OECD takes a particularly harsh line, arguing that most area-based programmes in disadvantaged urban areas have had at best a very limited success. Indeed, they argue that the severity and structural nature of the problems is generally beyond the ability and resources of local communities to overcome (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1998). It is worth stressing here that the tenant participation agenda in Ireland focuses on a fairly narrow range of immediate estate-related issues and nowhere intrudes on key issues of economic or political power and thus has a limited impact on the wider project of moving estates from socially excluded to socially included places. Nonetheless, it is clear that tenant participation can have some influence on quality of life on estates. In that context, the key test of the efficacy of tenant participation is whether tenants have a real influence on the local authority in making decisions and changing their service. While there are many issues, such as anti-social behaviour, which are inherently difficult to deal with and to resolve, issues such as the

organisation of the housing and estate maintenance service are essentially within the remit of local authorities and can be reorganised to produce improved service.

Institutional Barriers

The principal institutional barriers identified relate primarily to the operations of local authorities themselves and secondly to multi-agency interventions by statutory agencies.

Local Authority Constraints

In Ireland, local authorities have responsibility for a narrow range of services such as roads, water, sanitation, social housing and planning and development with little or no role in policing, public transport, social services, health or education (Meldon *et al*, 2001). Moreover, much of the funding for most of these limited services is from central government, thus constraining what they do and how they do it. Thus, local government:

‘has evolved into a mechanism for the delivery of a narrow range of centrally directed services with little role in policy formation or integrated, locally determined responses to local issues. ... It has delivered these services through highly bureaucratised procedures, which have placed an emphasis on punctilious administration (obedience to rules), rather than on effective management (pursuit of useful outcomes)’ (O’Connell, 1999, p68).

There is thus an administrative ethos which is reinforced by the staffing structure which places value on non-specialist and generalist administrative skills over professionalisation and technical specialisation. Moreover, it seems that there is a problem with respect to internal co-ordination and in co-ordinating with other statutory agencies. Although the *Better Local Government* program is supposed to deliver fundamental change in the internal structures of local authorities, there is as yet no evaluation of the changes that have taken place or of their effectiveness (Government of Ireland, 1996).

However, there are obvious constraints on local authorities which impact directly on their ability to implement estate management effectively. It seems probable that local authorities do have genuine resource problems with regard to overall funding and specifically with staffing. Indeed, one of the central-government officials interviewed acknowledged that resources available to local authorities were substantially below what were needed in order to run a proper service (I69). More specifically, as dwelling allocation is an executive function of the local authority which has a responsibility to house those in need, there is a real problem in acceding to the demands of tenants over this function. These constraints

are reinforced perhaps, by a reluctance to engage fully with the estate management agenda. The advancement of a tenant participation agenda is itself an explicit criticism of the manner in which local authorities exercise their power and functions. The necessity to engage with citizens in a deliberative and participatory mode must at first make officials baulk. In order to counter participatory processes, it is not necessary to oppose it totally as there are a variety of other means of obstructing such processes. The format and structure of participatory mechanisms can be organised to make real deliberation and influence difficult; a variety of stalling mechanisms can be used to wear down participants; small concessions can be given to appease participants and to let them stay in the process.

Multi-Agency Constraints

While it was not in the remit of this thesis to examine the efficacy of multi-agency approaches, the evidence suggests that such interventions are very limited. Indeed, one of the more interesting findings was the severe criticisms of Health Boards by senior housing officials and estate officers. While in theory the development of City and County Development Boards is supposed to tackle the issue of integrated local development, in reality such boards will have little power over agencies with responsibility for such crucial issues as policing, health or education. Unless the resources of all relevant agencies are co-ordinated and used to bring integrated responses to bear on estates, it is unlikely that estates will see fundamental improvements in the provision and effectiveness of statutory services.

Tenants and Participation Structures

Although there have been many positive developments, the basis for full tenant participation is being laid in an uneven and *ad-hoc* manner between and within local authorities. However, at the risk of over-generalising and despite the clear evidence of some positive tenant influence in estate management, the experience of participation for tenants has been frustrating. In what is generally a consultative process, tenants have found it difficult to achieve significant results from the process. From the survey evidence, therefore, it is difficult to conclude that tenants are equal partners and to some extent this should not surprise. There is a pre-existing disparity in power before reaching the negotiating table. Local authorities determine, through force of law and resources, how the housing management service is to be provided and there is a significant degree of resistance

to change in local authorities. In simple terms, in a process which is predominantly consultative in nature, tenants have little leverage against a reluctant or recalcitrant local authority. One of the clearest demands from tenant groups and tenant activists is that the state, through the local authorities or the police, tackle the issue of anti-social behaviour. Given the level and impacts of anti-social behaviour on some estates this demand is entirely understandable. However, one of the problems of this is that tenant participation has to an extent been reduced almost solely to the issue of anti-social behaviour and the policy responses have focused mainly on exclusionary and punitive measures, with little evidence of multi-dimensional approaches which seek to prevent or manage it. While anti-social behaviour is a serious problem, it is important that the tenant participation agenda does not exclusively focus on this or on narrowly exclusionary and punitive solutions.

The Limitations of Participatory Structures

The formation of a participatory structure inevitably gives the impression that one will have a certain amount of power and leverage at the negotiating table. However, this may not necessarily be the case. The policy discourse in Ireland on partnership, participation, democracy and citizenship is pervasive and ubiquitous and applies to national and local structures. Indeed, the underlying assumptions of many of the policy pronouncements reveal a clear attachment to pluralist and managerial assumptions regarding the nature of power and governance which imply that disadvantaged groups can have a real and effective influence over policy. Yet there has been but limited critical analysis or evaluation of the implementation of such policies (Healy and Reynolds, 1998; Allen, 2000; Kirby and Jacobson, 1998; McCashin *et al*, 2002). Regarding local level structures, although there is a consensus that the voluntary and community sector is well developed in Ireland, there is a shortage of substantive research and critical analysis, as opposed to best practice guidance and policy formulation, of which here is a large amount. However, some recent commentary has taken a more critical view of the achievements of community development, voluntarism and partnership (Duggan, 1999; Punch, 2001, 2002a, 2002b; Pringle, 1999; Pringle *et al*, 1999; Loughry, 2002; Collins, 2002; Murphy, 2002; Broaderick, 2002; Lee, 2003; Varley, 1998).

In a recent issue of the *Community Development Journal*, a number of papers devoted to Ireland take a critical line. Broaderick (200, p103), for example, points out that the

'discovery of the distant relationship between participation and power was a bitter pill for many community groups'. She also refers to the 'smothering embrace of partnership' (2002, p107). Murphy (2002) is even more critical. She asks the following pertinent question: 'Is the participation of the sector in social partnership actually reinforcing and legitimising existing power differentials? Are we allowing ourselves to be used as a smoke screen within a process that is perpetuating inequalities?' (Murphy, 2000, p83). Her answer to this question is a qualified "yes". She further criticises the emphasis on partnership as closing off other avenues for achieving change and in particular the potential for taking conflictual approaches. Moreover, she argues that this emphasis can lead to the stifling of any ideological debate with consensus the overriding priority. In this respect, Murphy (2002, p84) comments that 'There is an illusion of consensus at the negotiation table because there is an absence of ideological debate and this gives the appearance of consensus and that victories tend to be 'tokenistic and symbolic'. It would seem that these critical comments can be equally applied to the operation of tenant participation structures.

The very term partnership implies that there should be no conflict between people or institutions; it in effect seeks to take the potential for disagreement out of the process, implies in fact that there really is little conflict between groups over resources or services and that a process of partnership will resolve any superficial differences that exist. Moreover, it suggests that any group which comes to the table is essentially an equal partner and can leverage meaningful results from the process. Its entire intent is thus to assuage potential conflict and it presupposes the maintenance of existing resource distribution and power. To this end, a whole lexicon has emerged which purports to demonstrate how to engage in partnership and participation and community and local groups thus become submerged in the miasma of procedure, partnership and process. This resonates with Mouffe's (2000) more general criticism of third-way and communitarian approaches which, she argues, seek to eradicate the idea of conflict and impose the comforting notion of consensus.

The reality is that a level playing field does not exist for local authority tenants and it might reasonably be concluded that tenant participation is primarily about assuaging the worst effects of severe place poverty and its social consequences. While this is not a negligible

aim, many tenant activists opined that they saw tenant participation as a means whereby they managed their own problems, that responsibility was being thrust on them to solve deep-seated structural and institutional problems. In this regard, one of the new phrases in the participation lexicon is 'capacity building' and it refers to improving the capacities of local communities to help them participate in the various participatory structures that exist. This seems both worthwhile and fairly innocuous. However, there is an assumption that locals do not have the appropriate capacities, which may or may not be true. Moreover, there is the issue of what capacities are being taught and by whom. There is evidence that much of the 'training' that tenant activists receive is determined by the local authority rather than by independent advocates for tenants, and that it has an emphasis on conciliation and consensus. There have been exhortations that tenants should not 'shout and roar' across the table at local authority officials. This is not just about proprieties but about setting the agenda and the manner in which it is to be dealt with.

In summary then, tenant participation is mostly being directed in a top-down manner by the local authorities and tenants generally have to accommodate themselves to that and to negotiate within those confines. Tenant participation as a form of new urban governance thus has little or nothing to do with grassroots protest from below. Indeed, it may be interpreted as a means of diverting and diluting such protest. In other words, it is quite possible to set up an array of new structures of participation but this may not necessarily deliver better services or real empowerment.

Policy Implications

In the broadest terms, therefore, what are the policy implications of the findings of this thesis. There seem to be four general sets of policy implications that immediately stand out. In the first place there is a need for changes in central government policy. There is a need for central government to involve itself more in setting national standards for estate management and participation and especially of monitoring and evaluating those standards. At present, despite formulating the critique of estate management, central government has no real idea of how it is being implemented in local authorities. There is also a need for central government to establish robust legal rights for tenants. For example, one such simple right would be a right to information for tenants which does not exist at the moment. Moreover, one could conceive of central government instituting something akin

to tenant compacts which would give tenant groups a more formal role in estate management. As it stands, tenants are dependent on the attitude of individual local authorities in implementing estate management policies generally and in determining the role of tenants in particular.

The second obvious area where there are major policy implications is for local authorities. Here, the best place to start would be to simply insist that the local authorities implement the best practice guidelines produced by the Housing Unit (Housing Unit, 2001a). If local authorities were to implement the guidelines it would potentially transform estate management. One specific area that could be developed is to professionalise further the housing management service by insisting, for example, that housing and estate officers have a professional qualification and that, more broadly, a performance culture be implemented. However, it is probable that to so do would require major organisational change and in addition would have serious resource implications. Moreover, the development of a professional elite carries its own dangers with the potential that such an elite would develop practices and policies which made it even more difficult to achieve real participation by tenants. It might in fact lead to further exclusion from local power structures. The third obvious area of policy implications concerns the need for a genuine multi-agency approach which would achieve real integration in terms of service delivery by statutory agencies on estates. This is particularly the case with the issue of anti-social behaviour. Exclusionary and punitive measures will only have a limited effect and there is a need for complex interventions which seek to prevent such behaviour and deal with its causes. As seems apparent from the literature on neighbourhood management in England, for example, this is no easy task. Nonetheless, with little prospect of any structural change in tenants' socio-economic circumstances, such an approach seems necessary. Finally, the fourth area where there are obvious policy implications concerns tenants themselves. The institution of change by central and local government, as indicated above, would strengthen tenants in their relationships with statutory agencies by giving them more formal roles in structures of participation. In short, statutory bodies would become more accountable to tenants. In addition to this, however, there is a need for tenant groups to receive independent training and advice and not be reliant solely on the local authorities to provide training. This is all the more important in the cases where local authorities are redeveloping social housing complexes. In a number of cases local authorities are seeking

to completely redevelop estates by demolishing the estate, selling off part of the land to private developers and using the proceeds to produce new social housing alongside private and affordable housing. The strategy, in sum, is to produce a better tenure and social mix (Redmond, 2003). In these cases tenants need independent advice so as not to be steam-rolled by the combined forces of the local state and private developers.

IV THEORETICAL REFLECTIONS

The thesis began with some theoretical overviews of the relationship between the state and its citizens. Having undertaken some grounded empirical research into tenant participation, this section reflects on the implications for the theory of the research results. All the theoretical positions contribute in some manner to the understanding of tenant participation and this section examines the findings in the light of the main theoretical propositions.

Tenant Participation and Pluralism

Despite the severe theoretical criticisms of the liberal-pluralist position, it nonetheless is perhaps still the most influential of explanations, in as much as it seems to denote a commonsense or pragmatic position. Thus, tenant groups are an interest group which appeals to the local state to seek changes in resource distribution and policies. However, how does the reality of tenant participation compare against the four moments of democratic decision making as set out in Chapter 1? With regard to agenda setting, while tenants have an influence on the agenda, in that the immediate estate-level issues inevitably arise, it is interesting that even in this case they have only limited influence on the issue of allocations. Indeed, it is clear that local authorities have over the past few years regained control over allocations that they had ceded previously. As the agenda is so dominated by the immediate issues of anti-social behaviour, allocations and maintenance, there is little evidence of tenants having any influence over other issues, although theoretically this is possible. It is also worth pointing out that while issues such as anti-social behaviour are on the agenda, what is not on the agenda are the demands of tenants to have a multi-dimensional approach brought to bear. With regard to the second moment, that is the discussion of options, the mechanisms are rather limited. One of the most serious obstacles is that the level of information supplied to tenants is abysmal. In the context of an academic thesis this may seem an overly harsh judgement. However, it is clear from the

evidence presented that neither individually nor collectively do tenants have any basic rights to information. Moreover, it is also clear that tenants receive very little information from local authorities. Information tends to be supplied verbally, if at all, and there is a marked reluctance for local authorities to commit anything to writing. The absence of such a basic precondition makes discussion of options problematic. Information and communication is clearly very much controlled by the local authorities.

With regard to the third moment, which is the type of decision-making procedures that pertain, the evidence overwhelmingly points to tenants having a quite low level consultative role. Even where formal structures do exist, such as estate boards, tenants have a purely consultative role in these fora. This is not to say that they have no influence, but it means that they have no formal role in decision-making. The evidence collected from the interviews suggests that while tenant organisations do have an influence it is limited and uneven both between and within local authorities. Where tenants have managed to have a moderate level of influence it has generally been through hard-fought campaigns, struggle and conflict. In short, local authorities have not willingly ceded power. Finally, with regard to the final moment, that of decision implementation, formal power to implement decisions rests almost solely with local authorities. In so far as there are little or no formal decision making procedures in existence it is thus not possible to comment on whether decisions made are actually implemented. However, with regard to the demands of tenants that anti-social behaviour be dealt with, that tenants have power over allocations and that dwelling and estate maintenance be dealt with, then the record is mixed to say the least. Underlying all of this, however, there is a more fundamental problem. Hyland (1995) argued that the necessary precondition for what he terms equality of political influence was that there be an equality of material and cultural resources between participants. As Chapter 3 makes obvious, this is clearly not the case. The pre-existing socio-economic inequalities preclude tenants having an equal seat at the table. In an academic climate where modish and fashionable postmodern explanations hold a certain sway, this may be seen as a deterministic and reductionist statement. However, it is offered here unapologetically with the added comment that postmodern ideas of power and empowerment are not only naïve but politically retrograde.

Tenant Participation, Social Democracy and Communitarianism

The communitarian perspective implies that tenants should be more actively involved in the decision-making processes regarding the services provided by the landlord. There is an assumption that tenants are, in some collective fashion, involved in decision making-procedures and this in turn implies the potential ceding of some power by the local authority landlord. In this perspective tenants are seen as being 'active citizens' directly involved in making decisions about their housing and neighbourhood circumstances. The outcomes of such a process are practical in that tenants may see improvement in their quality of life through their input into decisions. In addition, tenants are seen to develop capacities as citizens through their involvement in decision making which is not possible if they are merely being treated as consumers. This latter is a democratic or political good in terms of outcomes.

If the pluralist idea of citizen empowerment is flawed both theoretically and in this case empirically, how then does the communitarian version fare? Table 11.1 revisits the version of empowered deliberative democracy forwarded by Fung and Olin Wright (2001) in order to compare with tenant participation in Ireland. By and large, tenant participation conforms to the three core principles. It focuses on specific tangible problems, it involves 'ordinary' people and reflects in part a grassroots movement. There is some element of a deliberative approach, though this is not particularly about deep deliberation or about a broad consensus. Tenant participation fares less well with regard to the three design properties: there is little evidence of actual devolution of functions or power; there are some limited linkages to higher power centres in that estate officers provide links back to the local authority; there is some limited evidence, for example the city-wide forum in Waterford, that new structures have been created, although these are not strictly speaking new state structures.

With regard to the three desired outcomes again there is a mixed picture. There has been some problem-solving in that certain anti-social behaviour has eased. There is, however, much less compelling evidence of equity in terms of outcomes or broad and deep democratic outcomes. However, it is clear that the development of tenant participation structures has created a new and specific form of local involvement. In assessing the experiment of tenant participation in this case, how does it fare? The assessment arrived

at comes to much the same conclusion as those for the pluralist version. Essentially, tenant participation is a form of low level consultation over very specific and immediate estate issues which produces limited and variable outcomes.

Table 11.3 Empowered Deliberative Democracy Revisited

			Compliance in Ireland
Principles	i	a focus on specific, tangible problems	Yes
	ii	involvement of ordinary people affected by those problems and by the officials responsible (bottom up participation)	Yes
	iii	deliberative development of solutions to the problems (deliberation, consensus building)	Low level deliberation
Design Properties	i	Devolution to empowered local units	No devolution
	ii	Formal linkages to higher power centres	Limited linkages
	iii	Generation of new state institutions	Some new partnership structures
Enabling Condition	i	'rough equality of power'	Does not exist
Desired Outcomes	i	Problem Solving	Yes
	ii	Equity	No
	iii	Broad and Deep Democracy	No
Assessment of experiments	i	How genuinely deliberative are decision-making processes	Limited
	ii	Do decisions translate into action	Variable
	iii	Are decisions monitored	No
	iv	Is there co-operation with higher power levels	Very limited
	v	Is deliberative democracy a 'school for democracy'	To some extent, but varies
	vi	What are the actual outcomes	Limited
Criticisms of the model	i	Participants will have very unequal power relations	True
	ii	External forces and institutional contexts impose severe limitations on decision and action	Clear obstacles
	iii	Free rider problem	A clear problem
	iv	Fragmentation of local efforts	A clear problem
	v	Political and civic disengagement	Some evidence
	vi	Stability and sustainability of experiments	To be determined

Source: Adapted from Fung and Olin Wright, 2001.

More generally, Fung and Olin Wright (2001) propose a set of criticisms of their model of deliberative democracy. The proposition that participants will have differential power is clearly the case here. External structural forces and institutional contexts do indeed impose severe limitations on the ability to make decisions and take action. The socio-economic

position of local authority tenants, when allied with the institutional qualities of local authorities, mean that there are quite entrenched structural obstacles to successful participation. The free-rider problem is in evidence in that tenant activists are few in number and there are serious difficulties in getting tenants to join tenant groups. There is also significant evidence that there are a multitude of local community and development groups which naturally fragments local efforts. Tenant groups and estate management structures add another layer to the complex local mix. With regard to the sustainability of tenant participation, this has yet to be determined. The evidence collected in this thesis is at a particular point in time and it is difficult to predict the long-term outcomes. However, it is apparent that tenant participation is not firmly embedded as a local participatory structure. The optimism inherent in the communitarian perspective is, unfortunately, not replicated in the reality of tenant participation. With regard to the impact of local partnerships across the EU, Geddes (2000, p797) takes a rather critical line

‘With a few exceptions, local partnerships studiously avoid engagement with the question of ‘who are the excluders’?, and with the structural social, economic and political implications of a thoroughgoing assault on social exclusion, preferring easy assumptions about the possibility of an inclusive society. The dominant practice of local partnership - as opposed to its rhetoric - enshrines elitist, neo-corporatist or neopluralist principles, and excludes or marginalizes more radical egalitarian and solidaristic possibilities’.

Moreover, Castells (1997), in a review of local community and urban social movements concludes:

‘..urban movements, and their discourses, actors and organizations, have been integrated in the structure and practice of local government, either directly or indirectly, through a diversified system of citizen participation, and community development. This trend, while liquidating urban movements as sources of alternative social change, has considerably reinforced local government, and introduced the possibility of the local state as a significant instance of reconstruction of political control and social meaning. ‘(Castells, 1997, p62).

Tenant Participation, Neo-Liberalism and Choice

In the neo-liberal perspective, tenant participation is seen as being a mechanism or instrument through which local authority landlords can improve their service delivery and their customer care. Tenant participation has two interconnected purposes, firstly to improve the service delivery of landlords and secondly to improve the quality of life of tenants in their home and neighbourhood. Essentially, this is a consumerist perspective, and participation does not necessarily involve any empowerment of tenants or ceding of power by landlords. It can involve landlords reorganising their service through estate

management practices by the institution of local offices and gaining feedback from tenants through surveys and meetings. Such an approach does not necessarily mean that tenants will be actively involved in any participation mechanism. Tenants may be given information and be consulted in some form but essentially the landlord determines policy and practice. The outcomes here are managerial in that landlords become better at providing a service and consumerist in that tenants reap the benefits of that improved service. One of the major implications for local authorities is that tenants have to be considered as either consumers or clients and this, certainly in the Irish context, would imply a significant change in the culture of local authorities. Apart from the practical and policy import of such an idea, there are complex conceptual issues involved. For example, there is a clear difference between a consumer and a client as there are difficulties in arguing that local authority tenants are consumers in any proper sense as they are in a non-market system.

The evidence presented in this thesis has pointed to a shift of sorts by local authorities to regard tenants as clients. This is particularly evident in Dublin City Council with its decentralisation programme which has an explicit client-centred focus. However, tenants are not customers in any meaningful sense of the term. They cannot, certainly in the Irish context, be said to have any real choice or exit from the local-authority sector. The possibilities of exit for a tenant are first, to transfer to another estate, secondly to purchase the existing dwelling and thirdly, to exit from the tenure altogether. In many of the estates studied, these are not realistic options. With respect to treating tenants as clients, there is no evidence of local authorities' specifying service standards or detailed customer codes. Consequently, there are no attempts at detailed performance assessment or measurement. As customers or clients, local-authority tenants have no formal or legal right of sanction. This right would, of course, be premised on compliance with tenancy conditions such as paying rent and so on. There are many tenants in this position but who, as clients of the local authority have no available set of rights. As one of the tenant activists argued, the local authority should be obliged to deal with him as an individual tenant. However, while there are now mechanisms, not rights, to tenant participation, the local authorities are attempting to steer all complaints and problems through these mechanisms. While it is true to argue that there is little evidence of narrowly defined neo-liberal practices being put into operation, this does not necessarily mean that tenant participation policy has nothing to do with neo-liberalism in the broadest sense. The residualisation of the social housing

sector can indeed be clearly interpreted as part of a broader privatisation of housing, with access to housing increasingly being determined by market as opposed to social need criteria. In that sense, tenant participation policy can be seen as a managerial policy response to the consequences of the continued shrinkage of the social housing sector.

Tenant Participation, Marxism and Social Control

One of the core messages of the Marxist position is that citizen participation is of little value unless structural factors which cause social exclusion are also transformed. This seems almost self-evidently true. Citizens in affluent neighbourhoods are empowered primarily because of their economic position and not because of some abstract entity called social capital. Thus, it seems a truism that social housing tenants are primarily disempowered because of their structural socio-economic position. However, apart from this rather obvious, but curiously neglected, viewpoint, the Marxist position also points to the potential ideological function of citizen participation. Although the intent and motives of tenant participation seem to be broadly socially progressive, some theorists have expressed concern that it may impose additional burdens, namely self-management of poverty and associated problems, on communities which are already deprived and vulnerable (Stewart and Taylor, 1995; Somerville, 1998; Cooper and Hawtin, 1997, 1998; Punch, 2001, 2002). Some of the arguments which stem from this position stress the potential for formal structures of tenant participation to co-opt and incorporate potential conflict. It is, in other words, urban governance as a means of diluting and weakening legitimate grassroots protest and of ultimately legitimising unequal power relationships.

In this respect the local-authority housing sector in Ireland provides an interesting case of the social and political management of poverty. In the past decade the sector has become synonymous with poverty and welfare. However, it has also become closely associated with attempts to generate tenant participation and citizen involvement. Viewed optimistically, this could be interpreted as a positive development in local participative democracy. Viewed more cynically, it could be viewed as a sophisticated and calculated attempt by the state to manage and control spaces of visible poverty, while doing little to alleviate the poverty of tenants. The Marxist perspective takes a less benign view of the reasons for the emergence of tenant participation. It explicitly recognises that local authority tenants are economically impoverished and that many local -authority estates are subject to a variety of 'anti-social' behaviour. Tenants are thus seen as marginalized or socially excluded from

mainstream society and this marginalisation is highly visible in terms of the location and physicality of local authority estates.

Such policies are methods of trying to induce some form of social control through getting tenants to manage their own problems. Given a realistic assessment of the socio-economic circumstances of tenants, such programmes are focused on a fairly narrow and limited range of issues and do not begin to deliver real economic and social empowerment. At best, such programmes deliver some limited improvement in quality of life. At worst, they are illusory, generating false expectations and making tenants responsible for dealing with serious social problems. Thus, for example, it could be argued that the forms of tenant participation we have seen represent a means of getting tenants to manage their own poverty and/or problems (Somerville, 1998a, 1998b). In a rather old fashioned Marxist style, but convincingly, it could also be contended that that tenant participation represents a diversionary tactic by the state so tenants will ignore real issues of the distribution of economic power. Nominal participation, or even actual transfers of power to tenants, cannot automatically or necessarily be interpreted as characterising an increase in democracy as the material, economic and organisational resources of tenant populations may be insufficient to make the democracy real (Hyland, 1995). Moreover, it could also be argued that it represents a return to paternalism, albeit in a more sophisticated guise.

In immediate policy terms at least, there is a danger that policy on public housing management has as its primary focus the management of social issues (Fahey, 1999a, 1999c; Clapham, 1997; Franklin, 1998; Haworth and Manzi, 1999). The recent Housing Act (1997) gives local authorities the power to seek evictions for issues related to 'anti social' behaviour. Memery and Kerrins (2000) have recently reviewed this new power and point out that its instigation was primarily in response to the level of drug dealing and drug-related crime on some local authority estates, especially flats complexes in Dublin. Local authorities in the Dublin area have also been involved, in a limited manner, with allowing existing residents to have a voice in new housing lettings or allocations. This has been justified on the basis of preventing known drug families or other problem households onto estates and destabilising the estates. It seems clear, in the Irish case at least, that housing management and tenant participation are in part about lessening 'social order' problems on estates. Addressing drug-dealing, drug-use, vandalism, graffiti and other social order issues are part of the agenda for estate management. At one level, this is understandable, as life

on some estates became unbearable and the demand from tenants for statutory authorities to combat anti-social activities is entirely legitimate. However, current legislation and policy in Ireland (the 1997 Housing Act) gives social landlords very wide powers to evict tenants suspected of 'anti social behaviour' (Memery and Kerrins, 2000). It is in this context that housing management has been seen to be taking on a wider social control and surveillance role. As the broader structural context of residualisation remains the same, these policy responses can be interpreted as reactions to residualisation within a framework that could be described as 'managing welfare housing', or 'managing residualisation'.

Social Cohesion, Social Capital and the Displacement of Conflict

The extensive literature on deprivation in social housing estates has generated a substantial vocabulary which purports to either diagnose the problem or to suggest solutions. For example, in the latest twist in the vocabulary, such estates are implied to be devoid of something called social capital (trust etc.) which keeps communities cohesive and in solidarity. Hence the solution is to generate social capital. The term has a wider resonance than to issues of disadvantage and links to a general notion that community life is diminishing in modern societies. There is an ethical, moral and judgemental tone to much of this vocabulary, which implies that tenants lack these many positive attributes of social capital. There is also a hankering after an implied past of community bonding although there is no analysis of how much social capital there was in the past.

It could be contended that the condition which underlies many terms, such as social capital, community empowerment and so on, is economic and class marginalisation. However, the purpose of many such terms is to elide and obfuscate this main point, which is that these communities are economically devastated. This whole vocabulary implies that social-housing tenants are deficient in community cohesiveness and organisation and that the solution is to regain this cohesiveness. Increasingly, the solution to the travails of the poor seem to reside not in improving material conditions or in changing structures of power but in the more diffuse arena of participation and empowerment, though not economic empowerment. While the idea of social capital has proved to be enormously popular and generated a gargantuan literature, thankfully a critical literature has developed in response (DeFilippis, 2001; Fine, 2001; Maloney *et al*, 2000; Mayer, 2003).

Mayer (2003) has developed an extended critique of social capital as it is used in urban policy research. She argues that while:

‘..policy-makers of all stripes apply not only the rhetoric of grassroots participation, but also a variety of programmes addressing urban problems that seek to incorporate and harness community-based interests and local activism’, that ‘what might appear as the fulfilment of earlier grassroots empowerment claims is actually part of a new mode of governance that has emerged in and for neglected and disadvantaged areas and communities’ (Mayer, 2003, p110).

Crucially, she argues that it avoids any discussion of traditional categories of class and power and that ‘... new types of urban activism and movements involving protest and other forms of disruptive repertoires do not appear on the radar screen of most social capital scholars and never on that of policy discourse.. (Mayer, 2003, p117). Furthermore, ‘The ‘social capital’ and ‘capacity building’ discourse deals almost exclusively with the rather institutionalised community-based organisations that have routinized their collaborations with local as well as other levels of government .. (Mayer, 2003, p119). Consensus and collaboration dominate at the expense of conflict. The point is not that such consensus is wrong, but that very often it masks real processes of exploitation and blunts any form of potential direct or grassroots protest. She thus argues that the turn to social capital and social cohesion is a deliberate state project to shore up the problems and dislocations produced by the neo-liberal project.

The implications of all this for communities in disadvantaged areas are profound. Although communities may gain ‘more voice and representation in the new structures of governance, the movement and other third sector organisations find their input restricted to local capacity building and productivity competition’ (Mayer, 2003, p125). Such approaches focus ‘not on the causes of their inequality and marginalisation’ but by defining them as agents of their own survival (Mayer, 2003, p125).

V FINAL THOUGHTS: TENANTS, CITIZENSHIP AND EMPOWERMENT?

A question that has been implicit throughout this thesis is how can one define successful tenant participation? One way of answering this is to argue that tenant participation will have been successful when there is no more demand for tenant participation. Or, put differently, tenant participation will be successful when the conditions which give rise to the demand for such intervention are no longer in existence. Those conditions are structural in the sense that tenants are filtered into social housing because of their socio-

economic and educational position, and institutional in the way that local authorities manage their estates. In the specific circumstances of the residualisation of local authority housing in Ireland, the need or demand for tenant participation structures derives from a need for the state to intervene to manage troublesome places and spaces and also from the demand from tenants for places to be managed and quality of life improved. This demand is likely to continue, so the conditions which require tenant participation and estate management will remain for the foreseeable future. However, as the core empirical sections of this thesis have made clear, local authority-housing tenants have not been empowered, in the sense that they have no demonstrable and direct influence on the management of their estates. Low level consultation, which does exist, is not the same as a direct and clear power of decision-making.

Therefore, we can see the relevance and resonance of Somerville's elementary but crucial distinction between participation and empowerment. He argues that 'Participation without empowerment is therefore a confidence trick performed by the controllers of an activity on participants in that activity. To the extent to which the trick works, it must be disempowering rather than empowering' (Somerville, 1998a, p234). Is tenant participation in Ireland a confidence trick which effectively disempowers tenants? The answer to this, on the basis of the evidence to date, has to be a qualified "yes", in the sense that it is difficult to argue that tenants have been genuinely empowered, but it is also clear that tenant groups do have some influence on the manner in which their estates are managed. Real and genuine empowerment, which is implied by more radical interpretations of citizenship, would encompass economic and material empowerment. After reading and analysing substantial amounts of literature on participation and empowerment it is striking that there is little or no mention of wanting to empower the affluent through participation processes. The affluent are, of course, already empowered economically, educationally and culturally. This simple lesson could be transferred to policy on the disadvantaged, but to do so would perhaps require structural change. This obvious point puts the whole debate on participation and empowerment of the disadvantaged in a sober and clear light and suggests ultimately, that while improving services and the development of participation structures may go some way towards empowering the poor, that it will always be insufficient to bring about real transformative empowerment.

In that respect it is useful to be reminded once more that the local-authority housing sector accommodates a predominantly poor and welfare-dependent population and thus there is a structural problem which stems from the operation of education systems, labour markets and the housing system, which filters the poorest households into local-authority housing. Nonetheless, a properly implemented tenant participation policy, with an improved and co-ordinated estate or neighbourhood service, can make a difference to quality of life. Tenant participation can, theoretically at least, empower tenants with regard to estate management services. Nevertheless, it is well to remember that tenant participation became official government policy through the Housing Act in 1992 and, over the course of a decade, one would have expected quite significant progress in the implementation of these policies. In that context, it must be concluded that progress has been but partial and disappointing. From the narrative of tenant participation to date, it would be very wrong to conclude that tenant participation actually empowers tenants. Institutional inertia and recalcitrance, alongside the weak position of a resource-poor tenant population, combines to ensure that progress has been limited with respect to both service improvements and citizenship levels. The orthodoxy that partnership and participation are inevitably effective needs to be treated with some scepticism. However, while it is easy to be cynical about community empowerment, there is a necessary utopian dimension to many of the arguments about empowerment. It contains both a critique of the current reality of market-dominated societies and a vision of a kind of freedom and empowerment. The idea of citizen participation and empowerment is thus deeply appealing. It is associated with positive values and virtues and promises not only to deliver constructive public outcomes but to make us better citizens. Achieving these goals is the problem.

Finally, the core lesson of this research, at least on a personal level, is not a strictly academic one. It is more concerned with the reality of social exclusion and disempowerment and the real and inspiring struggles by many activists to improve quality of life against what must often seem like insurmountable odds. If there is an academic lesson to be learnt, it is that the power of academic and intellectual analysis should be guided by a progressive and emancipatory vision. Then again, that in itself is a political issue.

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