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unpacking the global-local nexus in Dublin's inner city*

Michael Punch, Declan Redmond and Sinead Kelly

CONTACTS:

Michael Punch  
Lecturer  
Departments of Geography and Sociology  
University of Dublin  
Trinity College  
Dublin 2  
IRELAND  
[mipunch@tcd.ie](mailto:mipunch@tcd.ie)

Declan Redmond  
Lecturer  
Department of Regional and Urban Planning  
University College Dublin  
Clonskeagh  
Dublin 14  
IRELAND  
[Declan.Redmond@ucd.ie](mailto:Declan.Redmond@ucd.ie)

Sinead Kelly  
Postgraduate Researcher  
Department of Geography  
University of Dublin  
Trinity College  
Dublin 2  
IRELAND  
[sikelly@tcd.ie](mailto:sikelly@tcd.ie)

# **Uneven development, city governance and urban change: unpacking the global-local nexus in Dublin's inner city**

**Michael Punch, Declan Redmond and Sinead Kelly**

## **Introduction**

The city can be read as the nexus of global change and daily life – a site of contestation in the flux of economic imperatives, urban policymaking and local needs and values. Just as importantly, the key general processes working through – economic restructuring, flows of capital through the built environment, and the like – have proceeded most unevenly, as reflected in local problems of job loss, displacement, poverty and a whole range of attendant urban struggles and social tensions. The inner city of Dublin (Ireland), having undergone rapid and intense transformation over recent decades, generating considerable economic opportunities, but also deepening patterns of inequality and conflict, offers an important case study of these complex global-local processes. Notable trends include the erosion of the traditional economic base, the emergence of new commercial and financial spaces, the large-scale construction of private apartments and enclaves for middle/upper income households and the adoption of an increasingly flexible approach to urban policy by the local state. The inexorable logic of these trends has been the exclusion of local populations from access to both jobs and housing and the emergence and continuation of an inner city crisis.

This paper first explores some critical theoretical readings of uneven development, city governance and the global-local nexus. It then offers an empirical exploration of the recent reorientation of urban planning systems in Dublin under conditions of entrepreneurial governance. Particular emphasis is given to the resultant pressures in a number of working-class locales, drawing from recorded experiences and unfolding resistances that have emerged at grassroots level. These local experiences are more broadly instructive, providing insight into the progress and contradictions of urban social change in the city under conditions of global economic pressure, the neoliberal realignment of urban governance and deepening social and spatial inequalities.

## **A note on sources and methods**

In the main, this paper is based on primary data (interview material, documents, participant observation) from various research studies, which the authors have undertaken since the late 1990s, as well as a number of ongoing action-oriented projects. This work revolves around a common, if broad, theme about the changing relationship between capital, the state and the grassroots in the city, examining in particular the socio-economic and political impacts of economic development processes and public policies on disadvantaged urban communities and the emergence of bottom-up responses and resistances. While set within the established parameters of academic discourse, some of the more recent research has also involved active involvement in community research programmes and oppositional movements to neoliberal urban policies and thus eschew the traditional and flawed notion of total academic objectivity.

More specifically, this paper draws on the work of Punch (2000, 2001, 2002a, 2002b), who has undertaken extensive qualitative research on uneven development and

grassroots organizations in Dublin. It also draws from Redmond's (2002, 2003) explorations of the issue of tenant empowerment on social housing estates and his analysis of the relationship between the local state and tenant movements. The more recent action-related research has involved all three authors in a community research project, which is examining the issue of urban regeneration and exclusion in an inner area of Dublin (Punch *et al*, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). All three authors are also involved to varying degrees in a number of oppositional movements to local state regeneration strategies, which seek to privatise social housing areas. One notable example is *Tenants First*, a citywide movement seeking to halt the dismantling of a number of disadvantaged areas by a policy of state-sponsored redevelopment and privatisation and to promote instead a more just and egalitarian form of renewal. Overall, this paper draws on what is in effect a series of in-depth longitudinal research projects as well as more recent ongoing research, which is best described as committed action-oriented research.

### **Theoretical context**

This first section constructs a theoretical framework in order to contextualize the detailed explorations of a changing city entered into later. The simultaneous processes of globalization and localisation have been important themes in recent work in critical social and spatial theory, raising many complex problems. These include, for instance, concerns with local "rootedness" and identity, the global mobility of capital, the (uneven) power geometry of time-space compression, the upwards and downwards shifts in power presaged through the "glocalisation" of political economy, the global restructuring of capitalism and Fordist/post-Fordist regimes of accumulation and the implications of all these processes across different social and spatial locations (see, for instance, Harvey, 1989a; Massey, 1995; Amin, 1994; Bauman, 1998; Beck, 2000; Swyngedouw, 2000; Perrons, 2004).

The problematic of inequality and uneven development is central to many of these critical readings of the global and the local, both with regard to questions of culture and political economy. For example, taking a lead from Bauman's (1998) work on trans-local cultures and lifeworlds, Beck (2000: 55) argues that globalization and localization are not simply two moments or dimensions of a single phenomenon, but "...driving forces and expressions of a new *polarization and stratification of the world population into globalized rich and localized poor*". In a recent formulation, Eagleton (2003: 21-22) makes a similar point, which has considerable resonance for the empirical and experiential analysis presented in later sections of this paper:

*The problem at the moment is that the rich have mobility while the poor have locality. Or rather, the poor have locality until the rich get their hands on it. The rich are global and the poor are local – though just as poverty is a global fact, so the rich are coming to appreciate the benefits of locality. It is not hard to imagine affluent communities of the future protected by watchtowers, searchlights and machine-guns, while the poor scavenge for food in the wasteland below.*

In a related vein, political-economy explorations of the global-local nexus frequently emphasise the mode of integration/disintegration of different places/social groups within the broader structure of capitalism through processes of uneven development (see, for example, Smith, 1984; Massey, 1995; Harvey, 1996, 2000). This dialectical approach

involves a reading of the dynamic restructuring of economic space and the general processes and forces generating change, while also allowing for the specificity of place (Massey, 1993). It brings to the fore the central facts of economic power and the spatial organization of social relations, reflected in class, gender and ethnic divisions as well as regional, urban and local differences and variations. Importantly, these general and local dimensions of society and space are not seen as a static or fixed (as, for example, a received or “finished” urban system), but as dynamic and contradictory, constantly unfolding and subject to change or, at times, violent disruption.

For Neil Smith (1984, 1996), these uneven patterns and rhythms of socio-spatial change are underpinned by a simultaneous process, the equalization and differentiation of levels and conditions of development. General processes like capital accumulation (reflected in the uneven spatial and temporal patterns of investment and disinvestment) impact more or less everywhere (equalization), but the outcomes vary dramatically across a diverse existing landscape of resources, earlier rounds of investment and socio-cultural characteristics (for instance, levels and traditions of labour organization, the role and strength of civil society, ‘local’ trade skills, etc.). This emphasizes the important point that it is not just a matter of the general (or global) acting on the local, but a complex dialectical tension between particular places (at whatever scale – regional, urban, local) and the broader structures and processes of economy and society. As Massey notes “the point is that there are real relations with real content, economic, political, cultural, between any local place and the wider world in which it is set” (1993: 66). And this is a two way street – the global and the local are mutually constitutive, and the differences between places can be disruptive of general economic processes, thereby impacting on the outcome. This is a central tenet of economic geography – the importance of difference, place, locality, unevenness, etc. (Massey, 1995). In other words, increasingly global forces are working through at every geographical scale, but constantly coming up against the obstinate variation of place, context and resistance. In a globally interdependent system, economic activity is embedded in and disrupted by the geographies through which it takes place; practice and instance matter (Lee, 2002).

Of particular importance for this paper is how these formulations can be applied to urban analysis. At a general level, the movement of capital through the built environment in search of surplus value (either through investment in industrial production or in real estate) is a primary general force underlying the restructuring of both the urban economy and the urban environment. This tendency towards equalization is offset by the highly differentiated outcomes across a variable physical and social landscape. For instance, the general processes of investment and disinvestment, boom and slump cycles, stop-go development patterns, growth and decay can be recognized in every city, but the effects across a highly variable and dynamic surface of ground rent and land uses are unpredictable and sometimes surprising. The well-recorded cycles of inner-city under-development and disinvestment (creating a rent gap) and, at a later point, re-investment and re-commodification lead to the local social effects of middle-class colonization and working-class displacement. However, the patterns vary and the end product is far from certain. For example, the nature and level of involvement of central and local state as an agent of such development cycles (e.g. by providing tax breaks or necessary collective consumption, which is beyond the logic of capital to provide) can vary temporally and spatially. Moreover, all of these projects are subject to contestation and resistance, and

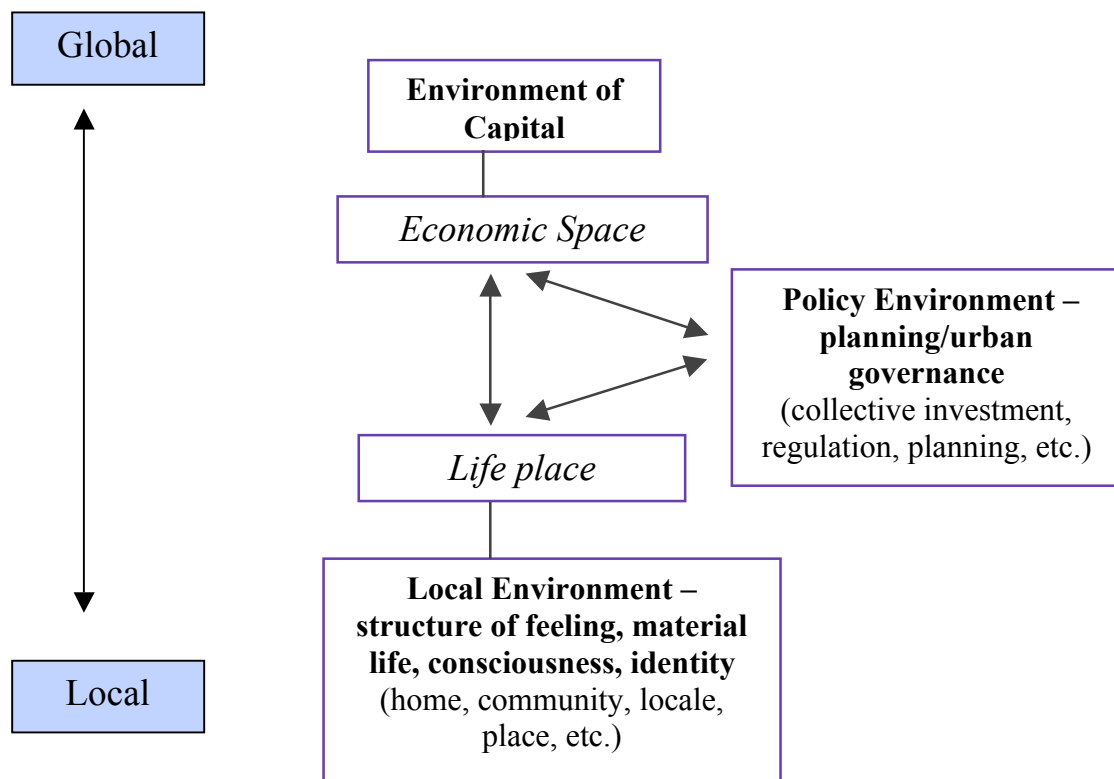
therefore remain, at least in theory, radically evitable. However, in many respects, the possibility of proposing and implementing alternative strategies seems ever more remote in a globalized era of inter-place competition and neoliberal orthodoxy. Nevertheless, on the margins or beyond state and capital, resistances occur, and very local and contextual urban struggles complicate the story, depending on the balance of power and levels of militancy evident between different interests (city boosters, local development capital, neighbourhood councils, grassroots coalitions, etc.). The narrative of urban social change is not simply scripted by the top-down, general forces and imperatives of capital in the built environment; rather it may also be coloured and re-directed by a complex of contextual factors, historic built forms, and the relative balance between resistance, consensus, indifference or despair emerging at local level.

This raises the important analytical question of the role of the state – and more specifically in recent years, the shifting tendencies and practices of urban governance – in regulating or influencing the broad patterns of uneven development and responding to the most overt contradictions and conflicts. Urban governance regimes variously emphasize economic priorities like growth, competing for investment, city boosterism, etc., or social priorities like public-housing programmes, social protection, services for vulnerable residents or the marginalized and amenity provision. Thus a central question for the analysis of urban change and globalism relates to the balance of priorities, strategies and policies adopted by city authorities to deal with the complexities and challenges of globalization at a local level. Perhaps more importantly, we must ask what are the consequences of all of these tendencies for different communities and locales (or ‘these people in this place’, to use Raymond Williams’ formulation)?

In this regard, particular attention has been paid in the recent literature to the influence of neoliberal ideologies and practices in the arena of urban governance. Deriving from the conservative Anglo-American policies which gained momentum through the 1980s, affecting everything from welfare provision to the structural adjustment programmes imposed on the poorest, under-developed countries, the neoliberal orthodoxy is the doctrine of privatization, market approaches, de-regulation, reducing social protection and, effectively, promoting the interests of capital. At the city level, this has often translated into a withdrawal from an (essentially Keynesian) urban project based on considerable collective consumption provision (public services, social housing, etc.) and a re-orientation towards marketized urban policies and entrepreneurial planning. In essence, this latter concept denotes a strategy of ‘selling the city’ under conditions of radically mobile (global) capital, whereby the neoliberal local state acts as agent rather than regulator of the market (Smith 2002). Spatial policies like urban renewal, fiscal incentives, micro-area planning and flagship projects are among the typical initiatives deployed, often allied to a conscious attempt to re-imagine run-down areas for high-grade functions and bourgeois consumption. In this manner, the local state becomes locked into a pro-growth agenda, while privatizing many social services and retreating from direct public action as a means of influencing city futures and promoting more equitable outcomes. The new politics of urban governance and the role of planning within this institutional setting have been explored by a number of commentators (e.g. Brindley et al., 1996; Newman and Thornley, 1997). Key concerns include the disempowerment of the local state and the reorientation of policy priorities within entrepreneurial urban regimes, characterised by public-private partnerships,

appointed quangos, alliances with non-government actors, and “commercialized” public initiatives (Peck and Tickell, 1994; Lovering, 1995; Wilks-Heeg, 1996; Edwards, 1997).

The analytical challenge, then, is to engage with the operation of a number of global processes, principally capital accumulation (the apparently ceaseless drive to make money out of money) and the related imperative constantly to seek out more profitable forms and patterns of investment (Harvey, 1989a). It is equally necessary to explore the interpenetration of such processes with different places, as well as the resultant inequalities, contradictions and responses (in the shape of formalized governance regimes and in-formalized grassroots resistances) that unfold at a local level. These main dimensions of the theoretical discussion can be summarised diagrammatically (Figure 1).



**Fig. 1 The global-local nexus**

### **Changing urban governance regimes: entrepreneurial planning in Dublin**

The rest of this paper offers an empirical and experiential exploration of uneven development, governance and conflict in Dublin’s inner city, with a particular emphasis on the entrepreneurial realignment of planning and the contradictory results of this shift. The broader economic backdrop to this narrative can be sketched briefly. Arguably, Ireland’s integration into an international capitalist system only approached maturity in recent decades, which witnessed a rapidly changing political economy, as global influences worked their way through various regions and urban areas with differential socio-spatial effects. These changes were linked to (and in some respects actively

facilitated by) a development model founded on neoliberal export-led industrialization, which emphasized principles of free trade, free enterprise, foreign direct investment and low levels of taxation on capital (O'Hearn, 1992). The well-publicized economic boom of the late 1990s was driven by such policies, allied to a social partnership model of negotiating wage agreements (thus engendering some typical aspects of both American and European modes of regulation). This period also saw the reinforcement of Dublin, the country's capital city, as the main population and commercial centre and as an emergent global site for back-office functions (particularly financial services), electronics and computer software manufacturing, and personal and professional services. At the same time, much of its older manufacturing base eroded rapidly, traditional, indigeneous industries generally going into decline. In part as a result, the boom years involved a process of deepening uneven development, characterized by rapid economic growth, considerable dependency on multinational (predominantly US) capital and social polarization (O'Hearn, 2001; Kirby, 2002).

A number of analysts have traced the development of an entrepreneurial approach to planning in Dublin since the mid 1980s against this general backdrop of global economic restructuring, neoliberal macroeconomic policies and local problems with urban decline (McGuirk, 1994, 1995, 2000; McGuirk and MacLaran 2001; MacLaran and Williams, 2003; Bartley and Threadwell Shine, 2003). This research seeks to update these accounts with specific reference to the impact of entrepreneurial strategies on the regeneration of disadvantaged inner-city areas which have high levels of social housing present. In doing so, this research also aims to make a contribution to the broader international debate on entrepreneurial cities as exemplified by the recent work of Ward (2003).

Most of the above accounts are in general agreement with regard to the evolution of entrepreneurial planning in Dublin, its rationales and its impacts. They develop a similar narrative showing the emergence of fairly crude market-led approaches to urban renewal in the mid 1980s and the early 1990s, based essentially on the introduction of tax incentives applied to a number of designated areas. The rationale for the introduction of this approach centred on a critique of existing local government policy and practice, which, it was argued, was reactive and had an anti-development ethos. Consequently, the new urban renewal policies sought to bypass established procedures through a mixture of fiscal incentives and the establishment of special purpose planning and development bodies, which would operate outside the local authority structures. The net effect of such measures was to introduce significant risk reduction for private-sector development interests, ensure far greater certainty in obtaining permission to develop, and fast-track bureaucratic procedures. The main consequence has been large-scale property development, the physical renewal of the inner city and significant transformations in social geography. By early 1997, some 6,000 dwellings had been developed in the designated areas with a further 2,700 units being developed on non-designated inner-city sites (McGuirk and MacLaran, 2001).

After a decade of tax-led development from 1986 onwards, this market-led approach was strongly criticised because of the absence of any local or community input into policies and the consequent negative social impacts, particularly for poorer city residents (Department of the Environment, 1996). Indeed, this intense development has led to rapid land price increases, stimulating speculation in property, and has led to a

local crisis of access to housing and the displacement of valuable low-grade community functions. Moreover, such an approach also substantially lessened the level and degree of local democratic or political accountability. The result, as McGuirk (1994, 1995, 2000) demonstrates, was the effective enfeeblement of the local authorities and the erosion of their powers and legitimacy. Indeed, evidence from McGuirk's research demonstrates that planners themselves became increasingly facilitative of development interests and began to assume a more entrepreneurial attitude to development proposals. While this approach certainly delivered some very substantial results in terms of extensive residential and commercial investment, official evaluations were critical of this marketized approach to planning as it was almost entirely property-led and either ignored or sidelined the need for socio-economic renewal of local communities (Department of the Environment, 1996).

As a reaction to this criticism, central government instituted, in 1998, collaborative or integrated approaches to urban regeneration which, it was argued, would address community demands and thus generate local benefits and planning gain (McGuirk and MacLaran, 2001). Five integrated area plans (IAPs) were formulated for inner city locales, which had a strong community emphasis with, in some cases, specific community gain targets (MacLaran and Williams, 2003). On the face of it, these plans were a significant reversal of earlier urban regeneration policy and suggested a new approach, which would deliver elements of social renewal as distinct from purely physical property renewal.

The more recent work of McGuirk and MacLaran (2001) and Bartley and Treadwell Shine (2003) is generally positive with regard to the *potential* of integrated planning and the possibility of community gain accruing. However, they also argued that local integrated planning could be manipulated as part of a neoliberal agenda and practice. In this regard, Bartley and Threadwell Shine (2003) argue that Dublin City Council has in fact become an enthusiastic advocate of neoliberal entrepreneurial approaches, to such an extent that it is seen as being more enthusiastically pro-business than the Dublin Docklands Development Authority (one of the special purpose agencies responsible for the redevelopment of the docklands area). McGuirk (2000) has claimed that the entrepreneurial approach to planning, which necessitated fluid relations among a variety of stakeholders, might allow the local authority room to generate positive social outcomes by taking a more central role in the new governance regime, whereas previously they had been excluded. However, while it seems that the local authority has become a stronger player in the new paradigm of urban governance, it is by no means clear that it has used this new situation to pursue social inclusion aims. Rather, as the remainder of this paper seeks to demonstrate, the local authority seems to have embraced a pro-development agenda, which looks likely to dismantle a number of social housing estates and transform them into overwhelmingly private enclaves, displacing a working-class population with a long historic connection to the city in the process.

### **Results: Urban change, governance and social conflict in inner-city locales**

In distinction to previous phases of urban renewal, the current "integrated area planning" has specifically focused on the revival of a number of social housing estates, all primarily flat complexes (apartment blocks) in the inner city with significant levels of poverty and other social distress. The changes affecting most of these areas in inner Dublin since the

late 1990s have followed a broadly similar pattern. First, many social housing estates were in a socially and economically devastated position as communities were badly affected by industrial job loss and restructuring, while the social housing sector generally had become increasingly residualized (Fahey, 1999; Redmond, 2001, 2002). Secondly, regeneration plans for some of these estates were developed in conjunction with local communities, plans which were, on paper, comprehensive, integrated and socially and community-centred. Thirdly, and most significantly, these plans were then effectively abandoned by the local state and new plans drawn up with a heavy emphasis on the privatization of what are now social housing areas. Fourthly, these new private plans are being resisted by local communities individually and by a citywide tenants movement (Tenants First). In short, the promise of a community-oriented planning has been abandoned by the local state with a strong pro-growth and development agenda taking over with potentially calamitous impacts on local disadvantaged communities. What has gone wrong? The next section explores the process in detail through a number of case study areas. It first examines some aspects of the Liberties-Coombe Integrated Area Plan, which covers a broad geographic territory in the south inner city, before looking more carefully at the interaction of urban social decay, flows of capital and urban policymaking within two specific social housing estates earmarked for regeneration schemes.

### *The Liberties-Coombe*

The Liberties-Coombe area takes in, broadly, the southwest quarter of Dublin's inner city and is renowned for its rich historical, architectural and archaeological heritage, as well as its complex and vibrant social fabric. There has long been a close organic interconnection between the indigenous working-class communities and the local industrial economic base. Traditional local industries included textiles (woollen and silk), iron works, brewing, distilling, printing, baking, shoe making, tanning, and furniture making and restoring. Until the 1970s, the Liberties area was a labour-intensive industrial locale with closely-knit working-class neighbourhoods serving as a cheap and reliable resource for manufacturing (Aalen, 1992; MacLaran, 1993; SWICN, 1999). However, the area was particularly adversely affected since then by economic restructuring (closures, decentralisation, technological change), resulting in the loss of labour-intensive indigenous manufacturing jobs. These trends resulted in the spectre of mass unemployment and the serious fracturing of inner city communities who were becoming increasingly marginalized, demoralized and welfare dependent. Over the same period, urban policies favoured peripheral residential development rather than inner-city regeneration, and public and private disinvestment, along with road-widening schemes, created considerable urban blight. Such conditions created the typical environment for problem drug use, and a heroin crisis, which took hold in the early 1980s, has further devastated many neighbourhoods (Punch, forthcoming).

Nevertheless, the area has seen considerable levels of vibrant grassroots organization and opposition to the contradictions and negative local impacts of economic change and urban policy priorities and the changing "place" of such inner city locales within the broader structure and processes of capitalist globalization. The community sector of the southwest inner city has a tradition of drawing up local plans that are sensitive to the needs of inner city residents and neighbourhoods. These bottom-up community-based plans include the 'Back to the Streets' initiative developed by the

South Inner City Community Development Association in the early 1990s and the “Area Action Plans” (1995, 1999) devised by the South West Inner City Network (SWICN), an umbrella network involving over 50 local community groups. The 1995 Plan provided much of the basis for the 1998 Liberties/Coombe IAP. This local area plan initiated by Dublin Corporation (the local authority changed its name to Dublin City Council in 2002) was developed in close consultation with SWICN, local representatives, local businesses, schools and voluntary and statutory agencies. The IAP seeks to achieve sustainable urban regeneration through a three-pronged approach of economic, social and physical renewal (Dublin Corporation, 1998). The stated vision of the plan is to “reinstatement the dignity of the Liberties/Coombe as a living working locality fully participating in Dublin’s entry into the next millennium”. The objectives and renewal strategies contained in the IAP seek to attract significant investment to underpin this renewal (through the development of new industry locally), encourage the provision of a range of housing types and a variety of housing tenures, improve educational and recreational facilities and improve the quality and appearance of the built environment (through a mixed land-use policy, infill development, reinforcement of the coherence of streetscape and the restoration of the civic character of number of key urban spaces).

In line with the formal commitment to ‘integration and equity’, the structures for implementation required the establishment of a cross-sectoral steering group (now the Monitoring Committee) “to guide the implementation” of the IAP (Dublin Corporation, 1998). The Monitoring Committee comprises nine members, three from the local authority, three from community organizations (representing over ninety groups), one business representative, one trade council representative and one representative of architectural, historical and conservational interests. A multi-disciplinary project team and a project manager, in consultation with the monitoring committee, are responsible for the implementation and administration of the IAP. A key issue for the monitoring committee and for the community sector in particular is the securing of community gain.

In order to qualify for tax incentives on designated sites, each development must contribute “community gain” to the IAP area. The Liberties/Coombe IAP stated that “a development levy of 15 per cent of the site value would be attached to key development sites [exceeding 350 sq. m. in gross floor area] designated for tax relief”. To date, a total of 100 sites have been designated for tax incentives in the plan area. Types of community gain include the allocation of a percentage of residential development for social and/or affordable housing, a financial contribution based on a percentage of the current site value, provision of facilities/ opportunities within the physical development (e.g. play areas, youth club facilities, etc.) and/or the development itself, as in, for example, the preservation or restoration of a building of historical or architectural merit (Dublin Corporation, 1999).

However, the amount of revenue generated through the tax incentive mechanism and the imposition of the community gain levy had by the end of 2003 yielded only 352,000 (less than the cost of a new 1-bed apartment!). To date, the acquisition of social housing units for community gain has not been realized. There is also some evidence to suggest that some developers are not availing of the tax incentives provided under the IAP, in order to avoid involvement with a ‘community gain’ clause. The failure to realize significant community gain and key social and economic objectives outlined in the IAP, is a source of considerable frustration amongst community representatives on

the monitoring committee and is undermining the credibility of the project team in the implementation of the plan as agreed.

Another serious source of contention surrounds the recent granting of planning permissions for mixed-use developments on a number of sites. The design of the developments frequently runs contrary to the Urban Design Framework for the Liberties/Coombe IAP and, in some cases, also contrary to the recommendations of planning appeal inspectors. This seemingly contradictory outcome of micro-area planning is explained by a senior planner in DCC who suggests that “the potential of the entrepreneurial approach to enable planners to implement the social dimensions of planning schemes is compromised by a pro-development local authority corporate vision at the managerial level” (interview quoted in McGuirk and MacLaran, 2001). This contradiction is manifested in the confusion surrounding the precedence of conflicting guidelines and plans, with the IAP guidelines, the Dublin City Development Plan (1999) and central government’s Residential Density Guidelines (1999) causing particular discord.

Criticism has also been directed at the implementation and monitoring mechanisms established by the local authority. There is a lack of clarity surrounding the agenda, with a blurring and confusion of roles and issues to be negotiated by the monitoring committee and the project team. No detailed guidelines or terms of reference have been devised as to the role and decision-making power of the various groups involved in the implementation of the plan. SWICN (2000) suggested that the “precise provision and power vested in community representation should be formalised, if such representation is to extend beyond token”. Other inadequacies with the implementation and monitoring mechanisms of the IAP, identified by SWICN, include the weak links between the Monitoring Committee and the Project Group, the failure to ‘inform’ and to ‘resource’ the community representatives and the insufficient frequency and duration of meetings of the monitoring committee. One community representative highlighted the broad frustrations in describing his experience of the Monitoring Committee as “the only group that I have ever been a part of that I feel excluded from” (Personal Interview).

The lack of progress in achieving the social and community aims has generated considerable conflict between the state and the community, leading to the resignation of one of the leading local representatives from the monitoring committee. At time of writing, the remaining two community representatives refuse to sign-off on the *Annual Report* of the IAP, as dissatisfaction and frustration with the manner in which the regeneration is being implemented – and the failures of the monitoring mechanisms to address these issues – continues to grow. Repeated appeals have been made to the City Manager, the Minister for the Environment and Local Government and to the European Commission to review and rectify the implementation structures and mechanisms. In his letter of resignation, the community representative illustrates the level of frustration and discontent with the manner in which the plan is being implemented:

*Little did I, or my community, realise that the IAP would be implemented in a manner which would attribute wholesale precedence to market interests over the legitimate social and economic rights of the resident community. Little did we realise that...the maximum benefit of the urban renewal of a heretofore ‘unfashionably’ deprived area would accrue not to the deprived inhabitants of such areas but to the representatives of private capital who are moving in and reclaiming that land in their droves on the back of Government*

*approved tax incentives. I am sorry to have to say that the last opportunity to do something helpful for the Liberties/Coombe area has been lost forever, in order to pander to the avarice of the private sector in the shape of developers.*

This letter of resignation points not only to the general lack of progress on the social inclusion aims of the IAP, but to the production in fact of opposite and exclusionary effects. This can be seen, for example, in the changes in the land market in the Liberties with dramatic increases in local property and land prices since the mid 1990s. The IAP policy seems to be contributing to inflated property and land values with further pressure emanating from a proposed 'Digital Hub' - a new cluster of digital media activity.

While this research is at an early stage, it can be argued that the regeneration that has occurred in the Liberties so far, through the promotion of private capital as the sole motivator for regeneration, has proven insensitive to a pro-community agenda. Gentrification and social segregation have been facilitated and encouraged through past urban renewal schemes and are now being legitimised via quasi-participatory micro-area planning mechanisms under the guise of 'encouraging a variety of housing tenures'. Where before, in terms of the structural requirements of capital, the most important local resource was a local pool of low-skilled labour, now the prime resource of the Liberties area is the land itself.

While the shortcomings of the social agenda within this IAP has generated grassroots unrest and emerging opposition, more recent events with regard to governance and regeneration in a number of specific inner-city housing projects are perhaps even more instructive – and alarming.

### *Fatima Mansions*

Fatima Mansions is a social-housing flats complex in the south inner city (within the current Liberties-Coombe IAP), which was constructed between 1949 and 1951, comprising 15 four-storey blocks and 394 flats. It was constructed as part of a general slum-clearance policy, providing good-quality housing for working-class and marginalized families living in decaying and overcrowded tenements, and in this respect it can be seen as a component of a mid 20<sup>th</sup> century physical renewal endeavour. Indeed public provision of this kind had been a central and important component of urban policy since the foundation of the Irish state (1922), particularly in Dublin, a city with a reputation for some of the worst slums in Europe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The importance of this policy is reflected in the fact that from the 1930s to the 1950s, the state was the major provider of housing in Ireland, the market playing a minority role.

The Fatima Mansions development housed a successful working-class community for a number of decades, forming a small part of the complex social fabric of the inner city with close organic links to the industrial economic functions of the immediate area. However, since the 1970s, the negative effects of economic restructuring begin to hit the area, as local industries either closed or relocated and unemployment grew rapidly. The heroin crisis also took root in Fatima in the early 1980s amid general conditions of social dereliction and urban decay. The situation was compounded by the actions of the local state, including poor allocation policies (many local people argue that the complex became a "dumping ground" for people on the housing lists with social or psychological problems and in need of support), and the ill-conceived "surrender-grant" of the mid-

1980s, which offered a cash bonus (IR£5,000) to tenants who relocated to private housing, giving up an existing local authority tenancy. Communities such as Fatima almost did surrender, being faced with an out-flux of tenants in employment, to be replaced by more marginalized people, sometimes with complex social difficulties. For much of the 1980s, a long period of disinvestment ensued, with almost no maintenance or public investment, leading to considerable physical degradation. In short, the community endured not only decades of exclusion and disempowerment, alongside policy neglect and state indifference, but also a number of urban policies that actually exacerbated the situation. As a result, this locale rapidly became perceived as almost paradigmatic of the inner city crisis and a veritable “no-go area” associated only with a decayed living environment, problem drug use, mass unemployment and low incomes. The population also declined as these multiple problems intensified and many households who could get out, did.

It is a typical narrative, well rehearsed in the literature, of industrial restructuring and social disintegration, disinvestment and physical decay. Such concerns were weakly responded to within an urban-governance regime that seemed broadly unsympathetic and distant to the problems of everyday life and placed little emphasis on social development concerns or positive policies for economic regeneration. Although a refurbishment programme was attempted in the mid 1980s, this only improved some aspects of the physical condition of the estate and proved an insufficient response to the more deep-rooted social and structural processes of decline that had worked through this locale over many years.

In this context, the community mobilized at various junctures, generating a complex grassroots infrastructure and a range of bottom-up responses aimed at changing the conditions of everyday life, challenging state inaction or damaging policies and impacting on the key processes and forces generating change in the local area. Key developments included the creation of the Fatima Development Group in the late 1970s and numerous cooperative service initiatives and youth groups, involvement in the citywide anti-drugs movement from the 1980s onwards and the creation of Fatima Groups United (FGU) in 1995 as an umbrella organization for local groups with the aim of increasing the community’s capacity to shape its own future (see O’Gorman, 2000). In 1999, after attempting for several years to find ways to deal with the effects of social exclusion and marginalization and an inconclusive end to negotiations with the city council, FGU mandated a Community Regeneration team to deliver a strategy for social as well as physical regeneration. This resulted in the publication of the landmark community-planning document, *Eleven Acres, Ten Steps*. The local authority responded to this with a draft master plan, *Regeneration/Next Generation* in 2001. After an intensive consultation process, a revised master plan was produced in June 2002. This proposed the demolition of the existing complex and its replacement by an entirely new development, as well as setting out detail on urban design, housing, open space, community, enterprise, training, education, the social agenda and organizational structures and the consultation process

At this point there was considerable hope locally that the area was finally going to see an up-turn in its fortunes, and relations with the local authority, for long antagonistic, had improved notably and some level of trust had painstakingly been built up. In September 2003, however, the community was informed that funding for the Master Plan

had been withdrawn by central government and that regeneration would instead be delivered through a public-private partnership. The announcement was completely unexpected and was greeted with alarm and anger locally, as people came face to face with their own (deepening) disempowerment

In December 2003, a “request for proposals” outlining a new regeneration brief (importantly, there was no local input into the detail of this brief) was issued to a select number of private developers. Meanwhile, as a rearguard action, the Fatima Regeneration Board produced a fully costed *Social Agenda*, highlighting, as bottom lines, the areas of social and community regeneration that must be delivered on, namely a safe and sustainable community, education, health and wellbeing, employment, training and enterprise, arts and culture, environment and good planning and design. Most recently, the Council has selected its “preferred” bidder from the submissions received. At the time of writing (April 2004), a new battle has started over a number of glaring discrepancies between the accepted bid and the agreed Master Plan, notably a much more intense private component (see below), the startlingly bad quality design apparent in the newest plan and the continued absence of a clear social regeneration plan (Fatima Groups United, 2004).

The changes and re-positioning that have occurred, from the initial community-planning document through the Master Plan to the current plan for a PPP, highlight the real priorities and implications of entrepreneurial planning. At the heart of the first FGU document was the concept of “10 Sensible Steps to a Flagship Fatima”, setting out a range of principles and actions for a successful, holistic regeneration, notably the need to retain the site for social provision and amenity, facilitate full local participation and improve the holistic wellbeing and spirit of the community. In early negotiations with the City Council, however, different pressures began to come to bear:

*What the people in Fatima are saying is we want to make Fatima a better place to live, that's the slogan. But they (the City Council) say that they want consultation, but then they still go back to horse-trading, that's the only way I can describe it. You know like if we sell off a piece of land, maybe if you give up a piece of private land you could have enough houses. Several times during a meeting yesterday wasn't Gay Mitchell (a local politician with the conservative Fine Gael party) and others, everybody saying continuously that we were sitting on eleven acres of prime development property. The Luas (light rail) stop beside Cork Street redevelopment, the Integrated Area Plan for this area, and it's going to be amazing when it finishes and all that crap. They really don't give a shit about the people in Fatima (Community Activist, Personal Interview, 2000).*

In the (eventual) re-negotiated Master Plan (2002), the key policies were to include demolition of the existing complex and its replacement with good-quality new homes for existing tenants, community facilities, a sports complex, enterprise and retail spaces, and affordable and private housing (in order to introduce a “sustainable social mix”). The Plan also recognised in principle the importance of participative consultation and the social agenda. In total, between 220 and 250 homes were to be provided for social housing, while the private element was to consist of 270-280.

Since funding collapsed for the earlier proposal, a dramatic shift in policies and priorities has quickly been revealed. In place of a scheme with considerable public investment, as well as some income-generating elements (mainly the private housing),

the current plan is to be driven by the private sector, and the outcomes will largely depend on market forces. The private housing will be an intense development in the context of a low-rise urban environment, with densities of about 120 units to the acre, and it is predominantly to be located adjacent to a new light rail station, which opened at the end of June 2004. It is entirely possible that the social housing, to be located on a discrete corner of the site, will be quite clearly segregated off. More striking still is the dilution of the social housing element and the escalation of the private through the process of negotiation, agreement and collapse of various plans outlined above. Originally, there were 364 social housing units in public ownership in Fatima; over the course of the planning and negotiation, this has been steadily diluted by 59 per cent to a mere 150. In its place, the site is to take an intense infusion of private dwellings. Table 1 below from FGU's most recent response to the latest proposal for regeneration makes the slippage quite clear.

In short, the observed process has been one of a long-term rundown of a working-class locale through broad processes of economic restructuring and state neglect over many decades, effectively undermining the stability of the community. More recently, a long consultation process has been unable to prevent the eventual re-orientation of regeneration plans from an initial emphasis on social concerns to a market-driven approach, which, notwithstanding continued vigorous local resistance, looks likely to lead to the re-commodification of a majority of the area for private capital and high-grade consumption.

<b>Housing type</b>	<b>Original Master Plan (2001)</b>	<b>Revised Master Plan (2002)</b>	<b>Request for Proposals (2003)</b>	<b>Preferred Bidder's Plan (2004)</b>	<b>% change</b>
Social	250	220	150	150	- 32%
Private Market	Not specified	226	290	381	+ 67%
Private Affordable*	N/A	54	70	70	+30%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>601</b>	<b>+ 20%</b>

\*Housing units to be sold at a subsidised (below-market) price for first-time buyers  
Source: Fatima Groups United (April, 2004) *The value of a promise. The promise of value*, Dublin.

### *St Michael's Estate*

Built in the early 1970s, St. Michael's 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 problem. 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 extreme that a Task Force was established which comprised tenants, the local authority, other statutory agencies and local community groups. During this period, tenant groups acknowledged that there were significant positive changes in Dublin Corporation's policies (Brennan *et al*, 2001). The establishment of the estate office was reinforced by the appointment of two estate officers and a proactive approach to renewal. According to one research report, "Corporation officials welcomed the changes within the organization and generally expressed an enthusiasm for the move towards a more participatory model of working with communities" (*ibid*: 37). From the viewpoint of the local community, "the successes in working in partnership with the Corporation... were attributable to the personal relationships established with local personnel" (*ibid*: 37). Moreover, those community representatives "who had been involved in lobbying campaigns...over the past ten 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" (*ibid*: 39).

In this context of a more open relationship between the tenants and the City Council, three years of negotiation yielded a comprehensive regeneration plan in 2001, and by the summer of 2003, the Council had received detailed tenders. While this plan did require the demolition of the existing flats and development of private and affordable housing to introduce tenure mix on the estate, it also promised the development of 320 replacement dwellings for social housing and a series of promises about social inclusion measures and new and improved community facilities.

However, as in Fatima, in September 2003, central government refused to fund the redevelopment on the grounds that the costs were too high. In response, the agreed plan has been abandoned, and the City Council has now turned to a PPP to redevelop the estate. In reality this means that the social housing element of the estate will be reduced to approximately 40 dwellings and the private increased to 400. This has been characterized by city officials, not as a u-turn, but as taking a "different direction". The site of St. Michaels is close to the city centre and is located beside a new light rail route, which is to open later in 2004. In short, like Fatima, after years of being perceived as a ghetto, this site is, at least from a developer's perspective, a prime location. It is also crucial to note here that in anticipation of the demolition of the existing flats that the area has been progressively de-tenanted over the past few years so that, as of spring 2004, there were approximately 40 households remaining on the estate. Remarkably, however, this is being used by the City Council as one reason for reducing the amount of social housing to be built. The City Council has taken to promising the replacement of existing tenancies rather than dwellings. What this amounts to is that the land on which the social housing stands, which was a social asset (use value), is now being seen purely for its market (exchange) value. If, as seems likely, the new plan goes ahead, it would be a complete misnomer to call this regeneration or integrated planning. This new plan is a form of social clearance of social housing tenants and the new plan will be almost entirely a private development, most likely a gated community.

## **Considerations**

A clear pattern has emerged across the inner city with regard to urban renewal and the regeneration of social housing. Initially, there was significant consultation between tenants and the City Council, leading to the development of agreed regeneration plans, which promised the replacement of the majority of social housing dwellings, the introduction of a degree of tenure mix, and the provision of much needed social and community facilities. However, increasingly these plans are either being significantly changed or effectively abandoned. In all cases the promise to replace the social housing element is either being reduced significantly or substantially and the introduction of tenure mix is being transformed into a takeover of estates by private housing. At one level the rationale for these changes is pragmatic in that the City Council claim that public expenditure cuts have forced them into abandoning plans, which entailed significant public investment. They have, they claim, been forced to increase the private sector component of these developments to secure the financing. However, the long-term wisdom of either selling off or giving away such public land in the interest of short-term accounting has to be questioned.

At another level the rationale for these changes is much more ideological. In recent correspondence with the Tenants First group (a cross-city coalition of community organizations that has emerged to share information, campaign and challenge the new directions in housing and renewal policy), the local authority has claimed that part of the justification for redeveloping social-housing areas into areas which will be predominantly private is to reduce “undue social segregation”, in line with government policy. However, this remains undefined and is, thus, a highly elastic idea and in some cases seriously problematic. It is currently being interpreted by the City Council as meaning that any concentration of social housing constitutes “undue social segregation” and has to be in some way diluted or, as we have seen, neutralized by private owner-occupiers. Thus, one could argue that “integrated planning” has been turned into an outright attack on social housing, leading to potential privatization of these areas rather than their social renewal. Not entirely facetiously, it could quite logically be argued that overwhelmingly private housing areas should be subject to dilution by social housing. This merely shows that the idea is, first, open to a very wide variety of interpretation and, secondly, currently being interpreted in a singular manner, which may have quite negative impacts in existing social housing areas and on the ability of poorer communities to find accommodation in the city. As it stands, uncertainty, overcrowding and displacement appear to be the most obvious direct implications for such people. A further interesting reflection of the underlying, neoliberal ideologies at work is also worth noting at this point. In the same correspondence, the Assistant City Manager challenged critiques from Tenants First of these various policies by questioning the importance or even the reality of local, class- and community-based identities: “what close-knit working class communities are being broken up?... What do you mean by the local community itself?” (Brendan Kenny, Letter to Tenants First, March 22, 2004).

The case studies presented here represent only a sample of a general shift in urban governance priorities and strategies in Dublin with potentially far-reaching consequences and many risks and unknowns. It would appear that much more is to come. For example, in the case of another estate in the north-west inner city, O’Devaney Gardens, a “regeneration” plan has been developed entirely by the local authority with no input

whatsoever by the tenants – it seems now that even the idea of an agreed plan, however illusory in practice, is not going to be entertained from the outset. At the time of writing, the tenants and the council are locked in intense and conflictual discussions over the nature of these plans. In this case, it seems as if the Council are in effect marketing the site as a prime development opportunity. Such grassroots experiences shed light on the real intent behind comments from a recent conference paper from the Assistant City Manager: “...there are several large (*social housing*) estates still existing from the ‘60s and ‘70s and we need to strategically consider their long-term sustainability” (Kenny, 2004).

In a broader sense, experiences in Dublin provide a telling insight into many dimensions of the uneven development of the contemporary city. The most important aspect of this is the movement of capital through the built environment driven by the accumulation imperative (the global motive force at work), and this paper has shown how urban policies have been reorientated away from social priorities and towards the “enablement” of this economic process. The effect has been to disadvantage and disempower working-class communities in the city, in the first instance through the loss of the older industrial base as the city’s role in the global division of labour changed, laterally through the recommodification of non-market spaces for bourgeois consumption. In short, the local state is now heavily involved in preparing and selling the city for capital. These processes of economic and urban restructuring have engendered a critical change whereby, formerly, the most important local commodity was a cheap industrial labour force but, laterally, the most important commodity is the land itself. In short, the inner city and indigenous working-class communities are under severe pressure from powerful economic forces and the increasingly neoliberal priorities of urban policymakers, which are translating into a revanchist strategy of land and class clearance.

On a more hopeful note, tenants in communities across the city have recognized these threats and have started to look beyond ineffectual consultation processes for ways to influence the conditions of their lives and city redevelopment more broadly. For the first time since the Housing Action campaigns of the 1970s, tenants and communities have organized into a cross-city coalition to share information, analyse the processes at work and build a committed, vocal and strong resistance movement. This struggle may well be decisive in shaping the future trajectory of the city’s housing and planning priorities, as well as shedding considerable light on the nature of global problems of uneven development and local conflicts around resources and power in inner-city locales.

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