

Integrated Urban Renewal in Ireland: Constraints to achieving integration in the H.A.R.P. Project Dublin.

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Introduction

Over the past ten years regeneration strategies pursued in many European Countries have utilised the concept of partnership as a means of providing a conduit for community participation in the process of regeneration. That is not to say that during the 1980s partnerships did not exist, indeed as Atkinson (1998b) points out the regeneration of that era, involved a form of partnership between public and private sectors. The public sector generally had a role in supporting the investment and activities of the private sector as evidenced in the work of Turok, 1992, and Imrie and Thomas, 1993. Thus, even during the most strident times of property-led regeneration, local authorities played a significant role as enablers and facilitators.

What is qualitatively different about the regeneration during the 1990s and the beginning of the new century is the role afforded to the community - at least in the rhetoric of regeneration. This turn to community (Duffy and Hutchinson, 1997), in part stems, from the recognised deficiencies of the property led approach, and the failure of benefits to trickle down to local communities. Major reviews of urban policy such as that carried out by Robson et al. in the UK (Robson et al. 1994) and that carried out by a consortium of consultants headed up by KPMG in Ireland (KPMG et al. 1996), clearly outlined this failure. In Ireland the recent development of urban renewal partnerships which involve local communities, takes place within a local context in which partnerships are now commonplace as one Irish commentator pointed out - its partnerships with everything (Ó Cinnéide, 1998-1999). Thus, the local partnerships which have formed in an urban renewal context in Ireland are influenced by those developed in other policy areas, (notably those formed to tackle social exclusion at a local level), by the model of national social partnership, which has been crucial to developing economic and social policy in Ireland since the middle of the 1980s and by European policy (many of the partnerships have developed in programmes initiated by European funding). The following paper looks at one specific urban renewal project in Ireland, the Historic Area Rejuvenation Project (HARP) and the partnership, in the form of a steering group composed of elected representatives, social partners, community representatives, representatives of various state agencies, business organisations and a conservation body, which was put in place to oversee the project. The research focuses on the extent to which this model actually achieves positive outcomes and the challenges which exist from both within local authorities and, local communities to achieving successful partnership.

Partnership in the Regeneration Process

Partnership usually refers to a formal organisational framework for policy making and implementation which mobilises a coalition of interests around a common agenda. However, this is not to negate the role of informal networks which have been recognised as often being vital to the success of more formalised partnerships (Harding, 1997). Informal, negotiative networks between central government, local government and development interests, have been identified as existing in Dublin during the property led regeneration of the late 1980s and early 1990s (McGuirk, 2000). These informal policy networks have been influential in shaping urban renewal policy and the practice of urban governance in Dublin. As pointed out by

McGuirk, such policy networks were not all embracing, in that Dublin's corporation's planners played a limited role in these powerful networks. While not specifically referred to by McGuirk, these networks did not provide a role for local communities. The more formal organisational frameworks put in place in more recent approaches to urban renewal in Ireland may provide the possibility for the development of more inclusive networks. However, the role played by national government, local government and by development interests in informal networks may continue to provide a challenge for the more formal renewal partnerships which involve local communities, as the research in Dublin outlined later in the paper illustrates.

There is a growing literature which attempts to understand and analyse the reasons why partnerships have become ubiquitous in the urban renewal process, the rationale behind their formation and the key processes which are operating within them (Mackintosh, 1992; Hastings, 1996; Atkinson and Cope 1997; Hastings and McArthur, 1995). Bailey 1994 and Atkinson 1998a, both drawing on Mackintosh have identified a number of principles as being central to the rationale of partnerships, These are outlined table 1 below. The processes which were identified by Bailey (numbers 1 -7 in table 1) are relatively positive and uncontentious. A number of the processes notably unlocking land and development opportunities, place-marketing and promotion, and confidence building and risk minimisation were particularly appropriate for the public private partnerships which developed in the 1980s - although they still remain relevant in the current urban renewal context. Atkinson, broadens these processes to reflect the increased emphasis on community involvement and to also reflect a number of less sanguine processes which may provide some of the rationale for partnerships. These include the legitimisation role of partnership which may mask the continued dominance of property led forms of renewal and, the use of partnerships as a means of managing the local community.

Table 1: Processes at Work in Partnerships

	Processes	Authors Referring to the Process
1.	Synergy	Mackintosh, 1992; Bailey, 1994; Hastings, (1996); Atkinson, 1998a
2.	Transformation	Mackintosh, 1992; Bailey, 1994; Hastings, 1996; Atkinson, 1998a
3.	Budget enlargement	Mackintosh, 1992; Bailey, 1994; Atkinson, 1998 a
4.	Unlocking land and development opportunities	Bailey, 1994
5	Place marketing and promotion	Bailey, 1994
6.	Co-ordination of infrastructure and development	Bailey, 1994
7	Confidence building and risk minimisation	Bailey, 1994
8	A method of avoiding the failures of 1980s style market led physical regeneration	Atkinson, 1998a
9	A form of legitimisation or symbolism which masks the continued dominance of property led forms of renewal.	Atkinson, 1998a
10	A method of making regeneration more relevant to the needs of marginalised or excluded groups	Atkinson, 1998a
11	A method of insertion/ integration acting to create social solidarity and cohesion.	Atkinson, 1998a
12	A way of creating a culture of self help, (social entrepreneurship) within marginalised communities.	Atkinson, 1998a
13	A means to coordinate and manage the disparate elements deemed necessary for successful urban regeneration including the management of the community.	Atkinson, 1998 b

While integrated renewal based on partnership may be officially premised on the idea that it will lead to synergy, greater funding, a more entrepreneurial approach by communities and local authorities, greater credence paid to the needs of the marginalised and a cohesive and consensual renewal process, much of the published research questions the reality of many of these claims. As Jewson and MacGregor point out crucial questions on partnership include: which interests, and which players, will be included in partnerships and which will be left outside? Who will be the leaders within partnerships and which will be left out?(Jewson and MacGregor, 1997:9) Research has shown, the questionable capacity of local partnerships to involve key actors, for example key economic actors and, in partnerships with a remit to tackle social exclusion the failure to adequately involve the excluded themselves (Geddes, 2000). There is evidence of the limitations of representation on local partnerships, particularly the extent to which local communities are involved. Studies have shown instances where local communities are actively involved in partnerships in the arena of service provision but have little power over strategic policy (Hastings and McArthur, 1996). Other studies illustrate how the role of community representatives may be constrained, as the style of working within a partnership may be alienating for those used to working in voluntary community fora, leading community representatives to fail to find their voice at the table (Davoudi and Healy, 1995).

There is also the thorny issue of who represents the community? (Atkinson and Cope 1997). This can hinge on the exclusionary nature of community and the extent to which communities may become dependent on a few key activists. (Atkinson and Cope, 1997) Other difficulties stem from attempts to resource and formalise community involvement through the appointment of professional community development workers or project staff. Local groups or activists may be displaced by this process as community activity becomes dominated by professional outsiders (Duffy and Hutchinson, 1997). The creation of community elites, may mean that the more marginalised members of the community do not become actively involved in partnerships which are being managed and operated by employed professionals (Bartley and Saris, 1999). The extent to which some of these issues and processes are evident in the HARP steering group are explored in the case study research outlined below which draws on interviews with steering group members, corporation officials and key community activists in the area.

Irish Urban Renewal

The HARP project was one of five urban renewal projects co-financed by Structural Funds from the European Union over the period 1995-1999. The projects followed a new model from that previously utilised in Irish Urban renewal policy. Known as Major Initiatives, the projects were carried out in each of Ireland's five Cities; Dublin Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford. Table 2 below fits the renewal model into the overall chronology of Irish renewal policy. As is indicated by the table, the project was a predecessor of the more recent 1998 urban renewal scheme, with which it shares a number of features. These models of urban renewal marked an important turning point in Irish urban policy as they represented an opportunity for the local authorities involved, to reassert their position as the lead agencies in urban renewal, a position which had been eroded throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. The marginalisation of the local authority had occurred through the centralisation of urban renewal and the creation of a number of new agencies which were involved in physical and social renewal.

Table 2: Evolution of Irish Urban Renewal Policy

Modl	Representative Projects	Documents Legislation	Changing Relations Central and Local Government	Democratic Accountability
Mark 1	Designated areas (1986) Initially areas in 5 cities, subsequently extended to 17 provincial towns and the Dublin suburb of Tallaght. Custom House Docks Development Authority CHDDA (1986)	Urban Renewal Act, 1986	Local Authorities by-passed Planning control to CHDDA	Minimal
Mark 2	Temple Bar (1991)	The Temple Bar Area Renewal and Development Act, 1991.	Local Authority retains planning control for the area. Property development company drives renewal process.	Increased co-operation between development agency and local authority but little public involvement.
Mark 3	Urban Renewal Schemes (1994)		Local Authorities given greater role in designation of areas to receive tax incentives	Greater co-operation between central and local government, but little public involvement
Mark 4	Major Initiatives 1995 (5 projects one each in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford)	Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development		Fledgling Partnership – communities as partners Steering Groups
Mark 5	Integrated Area Plans IAPs (1998)	Urban Renewal Act (1998) DOE Guidelines		Building on Partnership approach – communities as partners Monitoring Group

Adapted from Bartley et al. 1999

During the 1980s and early 1990s in the arena of physical renewal policy Central Government had effectively marginalised local government by establishing a number of single focus independent development agencies to drive major urban renewal projects. The Custom House Docks Development Authority established in 1986, which was responsible for the redevelopment of part of the city's dockland area, resembled the British Urban Development Corporations, and had been allocated significant planning powers. Under the provisions of the 1986 Urban Renewal legislation the CHDDA in effect

became the planning authority for its functional area. This was the first time that the planning authority's role had been usurped by an independent agency and there was some concern regarding this curtailment of the planning process and public participation (Bannon, 1989)

Temple Bar Properties, which was the property development company established in 1991 to spearhead the development of the Temple Bar Cultural Quarter was not awarded planning powers, but was provided with other powers including the ability to acquire, hold manage and dispose of land for redevelopment either by itself, or by others and, it was allocated considerable financial resources. In other precincts of the country's cities which were designated as renewal areas under the provisions of the Urban Renewal Act, 1986, but which lacked specific renewal agencies, local authorities were also reduced to a facilitating role. Central Government, in the form of the Department of the Environment, played the key role in decisions relating to the designation of areas for the purposes of availing of urban renewal provisions. The nature of the renewal prompted by this Act which was centred on the provision of attractive tax incentives, meant that the local authorities were largely dependent on private sector developers, to ensure development occurred in the areas designated. Local authorities acted as a facilitators and enablers of private sector development, rather than as the key drivers or implementing agencies of urban renewal (KPMG et al., 1996; Prunty, 1995 and Society of Chartered Surveyors 1993).

In the arena of social renewal Dublin Corporation and other local authorities, were being challenged by the work of the independent Area Based Partnerships¹ (ABPs) and Local Development Groups, which had been established in disadvantaged areas and which were playing a pioneering role in the social renewal of their respective areas (Parkinson, 1998, Walsh, et al., 1998). These were increasingly viewed by local authorities, particularly by elected representatives, as a threat to their own position and role in local areas.

For the elected members of local authorities the establishment and institutional recognition of ABPs and local development groups, was viewed with particular suspicion. They were seen as being untrammelled by the bureaucracy of the traditional local authorities and were enviously viewed by some local politicians as having significant amounts of money to disburse at local level, which seemed to threaten the clientistic nature of Irish local politics.² Elected representatives began to see the brokerage role which they had with local communities and individuals being eroded:

“as communities gained new mechanisms of accessing decision makers and funders through the local partnerships” (Walsh 1998:337).

Just as past efforts at local government reform which suggested allowing community representatives a role in local governance had raised the ire of elected representatives, who regarded their own standing as public representatives to be superior to all others, local politicians now began to see the partnerships as rivals. At a wider level there were real concerns

¹ Under the national social partnership agreement, The Programme for Economic and Social Progress (PESP) in 1991, twelve Partnership companies (legally constituted under the Companies Act and limited by guarantee) were set up to pilot an area based response to long term unemployment over the period 1991-1993. In 1992 a EU Global Grant for local development – provided funding for the 12 Partnership companies and for an additional 28 local development groups. The Global grant placed greater emphasis than the PESP on community development and on building capacity in local organisation so that they could participate in an effective manner in the local development process. In 1995 under the Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development a further 26 Partnership Companies were created.

² This was largely a mistaken view as Partnerships, had only limited funds when compared with local authorities and many acted as agents or brokers rather than delivering services or directly disbursing funds.

regarding the democratic legitimacy and public accountability of these partnership companies.

For local authorities as institutions, the opportunity to work in partnership with other agencies under the auspices of the ABPs was possible, as they were represented senior administrative staff on the boards of the ABPs. However, as pointed out by Craig and McKeown (1994), in common with the other statutory agencies represented³ on the boards of ABPs they were defensive of their own roles and were cautious regarding calls for changes in their means and methods of service provision. This feeling of defensiveness was exacerbated for local authorities, who unlike many of the other statutory agencies, saw themselves as having a local development remit⁴, the appropriate administrative structures and comprehensive geographical spread, for playing the role allocated to the partnerships. However, local authorities, particularly in their role as housing providers, were viewed by many as key authors of the social problems which were being tackled, particularly problems which arose from the spatial concentration of poverty (Fahey and Williams 2000). This was enhanced by the view that local authorities had subsequently failed to respond to the problems such as deprivation and long term unemployment which existed in their functional areas and particularly within the housing estates and flats complexes which they managed. As pointed out by Bartley et al:

“area partnerships were set up because local government was not using targeted area based local development to tackle issues of social inclusion and poverty along the lines of many other EU countries” (Bartley et al, 1999:15).

What must be made clear is that, Irish local authorities had a much more limited array of functions⁵ than those which local government performed in other European countries. The constraints of an outmoded “ultra vires rule” (which was removed by the Local Government Act 1991) also limited the level of discretion which local authorities had to act innovatively outside the remit to which they were statutorily assigned. This together with their reliance on central government for funding, particularly since the abolition of rates on domestic property in the late 1970s, meant that local authorities had neither the statutory responsibility nor the finances to encourage local development in a proactive manner or to tackle the growing problems of unemployment and marginalisation that had developed in their functional areas (Department of the Environment, 1996: 7-8).

While it is difficult to deny that local authorities clearly had failed in their role as managers of social housing (Fahey 1999), only with far reaching local government reform would local authorities have been placed in a position to play the multifaceted role required to tackle social exclusion. Thus, the establishment of ABPs, just as with the establishment of single focus regeneration agencies can be viewed as an element of a centralising government and an effort to bypass ineffective local government. The ABPs were a means of overcoming recognised deficiencies in the centralised nature of policy and delivery, without initiating the difficult process of concerted local government reform. Sabel evaluating the ABPs for the OECD identified their establishment as an effective means by which the Department of the Taoiseach broke “the log-jam of administrative

³ Agencies represented on the partnerships’ Boards include, FÁS (the State training agency), the Education Sector, the Health Boards, Probation and Welfare Service, Forbairt (Industrial development agency), National Rehabilitation Board, Social Welfare, CERT (The state tourism training agency), Udaras na Gaeltachta (Development agency for Irish speaking areas) etc.

⁴ The Local Government Planning and Development Act 1963 – specifically empowered local authorities to act as developers but this role was never resourced.

⁵ The local authorities’ remit was primarily focused on physical and environmental areas including housing, water supply and sewerage, environmental protection (waste disposal, pollution control etc.), planning, some public health functions and, recreation and amenity.

reorganisation” (Sabel, 1996:42)., without having to engage in difficult reform. However, in the absence of this reform, the issues of accountability and democratic legitimacy of the partnerships was to become increasingly contentious

The Major Initiatives Renewal Projects 1994 -1999

By 1993 when the negotiations regarding the National Development Plan 1994-1999 were underway, in the light of the above challenges, Irish local authorities were anxious to begin reclaiming a central role in the regeneration process. The opportunity for local authorities presented itself in the form of the Sub-Programme for Urban and Village renewal of the Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development 1994-1999 (OPLURD). The Operational Programme itself was a significant innovation, providing an official (if EU inspired) recognition of the role of local development. It consisted of three sub –programmes, one which provided financing for County Enterprise Boards, the second, which provided financing for an increased number of ABPs and Local Development Groups and the third for urban and village renewal which provided funds for local authorities, to initiate renewal projects in villages, towns and cities across the country.

For the 5 cities in Ireland the Major Initiatives measure provided funding for a key flagship renewal project. Unlike previous area based renewal (such as Temple Bar and the Custom House Docks) the local authority was to play the leading role. The renewal would be based on an integrated action plan and the availability of funding for investment in physical renewal measures, would mean that the local authorities would not be completely dependent on private sector financing as they had been in the mark 1, 2 and 3 models of renewal. In contrast to the tax based, property led renewal which had largely brought with it physical benefits, the renewal outlined in OPLURD would have to have “a major impact on the economic and social regeneration of the central areas of these cities” (Government of Ireland, 1995: 85). Reflecting the wider commitment of the Operational Programme to local development and its ethos of ensuring a comprehensive approach by encouraging the involvement of a wide range of interests, the OPLURD required that a steering group comprising, social partners, community groups, Area Based Partnerships, County Enterprise Boards and Conservation groups be established to oversee implementation of the Major Initiative Projects.

The actual role of the steering group is not defined in either the Operational Programme or, in the subsequent guidelines produced by the Department of the Environment and Local Government. In both documents it is merely stated that such a group is to be established to “oversee” the plan (Government of Ireland, 1995:85) (Department of the Environment, 1995:7). This typifies the Department of Environment and Local Government’s commitment to being non-prescriptive with regard to the role of such groups, leaving detailed operational decisions to be made by individual local authorities, in response to local circumstances.

A study of the Major Initiatives in Limerick and Cork by the author, revealed that this is a somewhat precarious situation which, without requisite checks, is open to very different interpretations by the local authorities who may choose, as in the case of Limerick Corporation to largely put in place a paper partnership, without any commitment to outlining a role for the group (Goodbody Economic Consultants, 1999). The role of the steering group in HARP was outlined in the framework plan and is outlined below.

HARP

Overview of the Project

The HARP plan was published in 1996 as the Major Initiative project for Dublin City under the Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development 1994-1999. The area to which it refers stretches from O'Connell Street to Collins Barracks, an area of 110 hectares (270 acres). The area itself possesses significant strengths, such as a rich historical and architectural heritage and a number of hubs of activity, a retail centre focused on Henry St. /Mary St., a markets area, and a legal hub focused on the Four Courts, the Law Society and Bar Council. However, the area was also characterised by pockets of deprivation and a significant incidence of unemployment, particularly among residents of Dublin Corporation's flat complexes. Physically this sector of the city suffered from poor environmental quality in many areas with tracts of vacant and underutilised land and a poor quality public domain. The key strategy of the plan was to provide an integrated approach to the renewal of the area, based on building up the individual identity of four local cell areas: the retail cell focused on Henry Street, the Markets Cell, the Smithfield cell focused on the urban space of Smithfield and the Museum Cell based around the new National Museum at Collins Barracks. Based on the HARP plan the area received a total of £6 million pounds (7.6 million Euros) under the OPLURD programme, which was matched by Dublin Corporation resources of a further £6 million pounds (7.6 million Euros).

The Plan

The integrated plan produced by Dublin Corporation for the HARP area is generally acknowledged as being an exemplar of integrated planning. The plan, reflecting the considerable consultation which took place with local community groups, the Dublin Inner City Partnership, the City Enterprise Board, Dublin Chamber of Commerce, An Taisce and a wide range of public, semi-state and voluntary agencies working in the area, incorporated the concerns raised by these various stakeholders. As one of the Steering group members pointed out:

"I think the plan was, it is a good plan. Maybe it's the best plan, certainly it was groundbreaking and a very, very, very progressive and exciting plan." (Steering Group Member)

The planners involved in drawing up the plan were viewed as open and progressive by the stakeholders. It was believed that these local authority officials were genuine in their attempts of trying an new approach, dealing with a new challenge and in attempting to introduce new practices to the traditional approaches of Dublin Corporation.

The HARP Steering Group

The partnership which was put in place to oversee the implementation of the HARP plan expanded the membership suggested in OPLURD (see figure 1 below). The membership of the steering group mirrors the membership of the ABPs and the model which is adopted by national social partnership. This is reflected through the involvement of the social partners - the employers and business representatives and community and voluntary organisations.

Figure 1: Composition of the HARP Steering Group

Membership Drawn From	Members
Local Authority	Local Authority Officials - Project Manager Assistant City Manager Elected Representatives 5 councillors from the local constituency
Social Partners	Unions – ICTU Employers - IBEC
State Agencies	FAS Enterprise Ireland Dublin Tourism ¹
Local Development Agencies	Dublin Inner City Partnership Company Dublin Inner City Enterprise Board
Local Businesses	Henry St. Mary St. Partnership Capel St. Traders Association
Local Community	4 Community Representatives 1 drawn from each of the four area cells
Conservation	An Taisce

1. The Dublin Tourism representative resigned from the steering group and was not replaced

As the impetus for developing a steering group, came from external sources and is thus a top down model of partnership formation. Although there was no necessity to compete for funds, the steering group was a stipulation of a European structural funding Programme from which the project was to be financed. In this regard, part of the rationale for the formation of the partnership was budget enlargement, the necessity of obtaining EU funds (Mackintosh, 1992). A number of interviewees, took the cynical view that the local authority would not have set up this group if there had not been such direction from the EU.

The HARP framework plan produced by Dublin Corporation, outlined the role of the steering group which would be put in place to oversee the development and included its terms of reference. Perhaps the most important element in the role outlined for the steering group was that :

The Steering Group will provide an ongoing evaluation of the implementation of the Plan, with particular reference to its effects on the physical, social and economic development of the H.A.R.P area. (Dublin Corporation, 1996: 89)

While it is clearly stated in the plan that the steering group is to provide an ongoing evaluation of the implementation of the plan, once the group was established, the members were advised that their role was confined to overseeing the spending of EU funds. It was little wonder, given the discrepancy between the role outlined in the plan and, the manner in which the steering group was operationalised, that members would be disillusioned about the situation and mistrustful of the Corporation. The reference in the HARP plan to an implementation group, also signalled a division of power between the Corporation as implementers, and the steering group as a relatively powerless rubber stamping agency. Given the limited role outlined for the steering group in the HARP plan it is clear that the Corporation did not envisage this as an active partnership that would lead to, synergy and transformation or a means of better addressing the needs of marginalised communities living in the area⁶. However, once established the steering

⁶ The failure to grasp the potential of the steering group is unusual, given that in the HARP plan's chapter on socio-economic issues, the Corporation commits itself to forging strong linkages between

group, largely due to the strength of individual members, used its position to ensure that they could influence the direction taken by the Corporation and made every attempt to ensure that the wider objectives of the plan were kept on the agenda. Through the interactions of the steering group positive synergy was created and although transformation as understood by Mackintosh and Hastings did not occur, there was a sense of a learning process for local authority and community groups alike.

The Positive Outcomes of the Steering Group

The key positive outcomes of having a steering group in place were identified as follows:

- Pushing the agenda of the local authority so as to attempt to achieve wider social impacts.
- Resource synergy (Hastings, 1996) evident in the funding of joint projects.
- Policy and service delivery innovation(policy synergy (Hastings, 1996) in employment initiatives
- A learning process for local authority and local community.

While the steering group in HARP was primarily viewed by the Corporation as having a role in overseeing the EU expenditure and ensuring that the appropriate projects were completed, many of the members of the group believed that if their role was to be meaningful it should involve steering the Corporation to achieve the overall objectives of the plan. As the plan was wide ranging and contained social and economic as well as physical objectives, it was to these social and economic objectives that the group turned its attention. Steering group members spoke of “pressing out”, “stretching” and “broadening” both their own role and the range of projects pursued by the Corporation. There was a sense that without the cross sectoral steering group the issues of most importance to the local community might not have been addressed.

“If the steering group wasn’t there, the issues of most concern to the local community groups, namely: What were the existing, indigenous communities getting out of it by way of physical improvements, like Ormond Square and so on, by way of local employment and local labour? . . .Issues that concerned them would not have been trashed out and not have been forced to the same extent at all. So from the point of view of at least having a direct line of communication and a role that to some degree appeared to have some influence on what was happening and what was going to happen I think the steering group was very valuable”. (Local elected representative)

One of the benefits of a number of the actors coming together in such a forum was that joint projects were formulated and what Hastings (1996) has termed resource synergy was realised. The key physical project in HARP which benefited from a cross sectoral approach and financing from a number of the member organisations of the steering group, was the construction of new Enterprise units in the area. These were jointly financed and developed by Dublin Corporation, the City Enterprise Board, Enterprise Ireland and by SPADE (St Paul’s Area Development Enterprise Ltd.). The units were aimed at providing space for light industry both to accommodate light industry which might have been displaced due to redevelopment and to allow the expansion of an existing enterprise centre in the area.

The most valued innovation deriving from the steering group, and which resulted from the efforts of the steering group members was the establishment of an employment and enterprise sub-committee (described variously as “very positive”, “effective”, “enormously successful”, “fruitful, positive and dynamic” by members of the steering group. This sub-committee facilitated the creation of a network between, the local authority, the state training agency FÁS, Local employment initiatives and local employers. The network then attempted to link school leavers and local residents who were disadvantaged in the labour market, to training institutions and employers. While all of the agencies involved had been working in the area independently, the steering group provided a forum for creating the links with each other and in particular for creating a direct line of communication to businesses in the area. The Forum that was created allowed the identification of job opportunities within the local area, identifying the training that local people required to avail of such opportunities, and the potential to match local residents to the opportunities created. This represents the type of policy synergy which Hastings (1996) has identified.

The mutual transformation model of partnership identified by Mackintosh (1992) is not apparent in HARP, as the private sector members of the steering group did not actively view their role as a means of transforming the culture of the local authority. What was apparent was a sense of mutual learning as the actors in the steering group came to terms with working in such a forum. A number of steering group members suggested that the Corporation was learning that it was in their own interests to have local people on board in the renewal process. They believed that the Corporation were beginning to see that their job was made easier and greater progress could be made if they were open to involving communities. Others pointed out that while there had not been a radical change in the Corporation’s way of working, the corporation had begun to engage in areas in which they hadn’t had a role heretofore. A key example of this was that for the first time the Corporation began to play a role in the area of enterprise and employment. There was also a sense that the local communities represented on the steering group, learnt from their participation and began to build greater organisational capacity within the community. Their participation in the process thus stimulated action. As one community activist pointed out :

“it prompted people into doing things...we had to start doing things at this end, and we had to get our act together” (Community Activist, HARP area).

The Limitations of the Approach

While it is useful to outline the positive outcomes which have resulted from the existence of a quasi partnership approach in the HARP Major Initiative project, it is perhaps more informative to look at some of the limitations of the approach and the constraints which prevail within local government, within the community and within the informal networks of government.

Local Government Constraints

The Irish local authorities are only coming to terms with the challenges of working in partnership with other agencies, but due to the recent reforms in Irish local government it is a challenge which they must embrace as partnership working is now recognised as being crucial to enhanced local democracy and more integrated local government and local development (DoELG 1996; DoELG, 1999). The research carried out on the HARP project illustrates some of the constraints that exist to this integrated

partnership approach to working from the perspective of the local authority. These constraints include, a lack of trust between local authorities and other organisations, the extent to which a compartmentalised approach to working is embedded in local authority culture, and the persistence of a clientalistic approach among local politicians.

The lack of trust and the degree of suspicion which exists between local authorities, the local community and others involved at local level was identified as one of the barriers to a more meaningful partnership process developing in the HARP project. This stems from the historical failures of local government, but has been exacerbated in this instance, by the restraints imposed on the steering group from the outset. This lack of trust was also recognised as a barrier by the Project Manager:

“There has to be trust, I think that the big thing is that people outside don’t trust the Corporation, and the Corporation would tend to be distrustful, based on past experiences in dealing with organisations which aren’t within the remit of the Corporation.” (HARP Project Manager).

As outlined above the HARP project was the first time the local authority was entrusted with a major renewal project, and Dublin Corporation was thus critically aware that it had to successfully achieve the objectives of the EU funding. Procedural efficiency was therefore extremely important. The HARP manager felt that his primary task was to complete the physical projects within the requisite timeframe. Although he was at pains to stress that he had tried as far as possible to ensure that other objectives were achieved. Now that the Corporation has essentially proved that it can undertake and manage a major renewal project, a greater amount of effort may be expended on nurturing partnership and building trust.

One of the more practical challenges for the local authority, is the need to overcome the constraints of the departmental system which characterises its organisation. The tendency for departments to only feel responsible for issues directly within their own departmental remit is only beginning to be broken down. As the project manager of HARP pointed out:

“You would have.. inherent difficulties in-house, because you may not get full co-operation because it wasn’t done through, like demarcation. Because it wasn’t done through their department so why should they care? That’s something that is ongoing, it’s not as bad as it was. I think there is a greater degree of understanding that we are all working towards common objectives. There is a realisation by most departments that they are going to have to change their work practices, become more area oriented, and if that means working inside Integrated Area Plans then so be it. But it is a much better way of doing business than the old system of kind of fiefdoms” (HARP Project Manager)

In addition to these organisational challenges, the HARP project illustrated some of the challenges which exist for elected representatives in this partnership process. While being mindful of the needs of their constituents, elected representatives need to come to terms with more strategic role they have been asked to play. A more strategic focus would concentrate on the achievement of the wider objectives of local renewal rather than, the parochial concerns of specific small scale physical issues which tended to be the experience in the HARP steering group. As the Project Manager pointed out:

“I understood where the elected members were coming from, in a sense, that they felt that they were there to ensure that the community there, were beneficiaries of all of this, and that was fair But I think at times it became very parochial, we were down to dealing with

nuisances, potholes etc. etc.. The broader aspects were rarely discussed in respect to the implementation process, the difficulties encountered in the implementation process". (HARP Project Manager)

The tendency for the elected representatives to concentrate on these local issues, was seen by a number of the members of the steering group as a misdirection of the energies of the group and an impediment to the potential of the group to achieve more wide ranging and strategic changes in the area. Notably leveraging significant gain from private sector development.

"You had councillors who were somewhat cynically pursuing parochial parish pump issues and wanted to switch issues away from issues of principal or policy, into issues of particular matters that they wanted to resolve, so that they could send around letters to all their constituents, to the 50 constituents who would be affected by those particular measures. And so we never got round to appropriating for ourselves as big a role as we might have, had we pushed it. Which goes back to what I was saying earlier, that I think that we finished up with most of the development being, if you scrutinise it, being done entirely in the interest of the developer. There were opportunities for us to ensure that the development was driven by the agenda of the steering committee, whereby the public interest would be much more."
(Conservation Agency Steering Group Member)

"In many cases there would be long debates about particular issues on particular roads which were completely legitimate from the councillors' point of view and from the people that were living there. Because there was a problem being created for them that had to be solved. So you could say it was justified, but a lot of time was absorbed and, to a great extent I think that suits the Corporation as well. 'Cos they can spend hours and hours and hours debating about the parking rights of some street or, double parking or, access or something like that and they get reports done and sent off. Then meanwhile the whole thing is going ahead unremarked." (Local Development Agency Steering Group Member)

The interesting contrast that is portrayed between the view of the Project manager and other steering group members is that he is primarily concerned with getting on and implementing the larger strategic physical projects while the other steering group members quoted are concerned with the wider strategy of the plan itself.

Local Community Constraints

The local community representatives' focus on these localised issues, was also criticised by a number of the other steering group members, one questioned –

"whether they (the community representatives) had the wherewithal to move away from the railings and the square outside their hall door and look at the whole development of the area" (Employers Representative Steering Group)

However, it was recognised that the local community itself had been initially disorganised and that this had precluded a more strategic approach from them to the steering group.

"I would say there is two ways of looking at it, they (the community) may not have the capacity at the beginning to participate fully, but I

would say they learned by the experience.” (Employers Representative Steering Group)

The difficulties in engaging the local community which have been documented in previous research are also apparent in this renewal project. There was a lack of capacity within the community at the outset of the project which precluded them from engaging effectively with the process. As one of the community members pointed out:

“ But the weakness, and this is not the corporation’s fault, but when people are excluded from the process for so many years, people are not able to properly articulate their views or needs to people like the corporation. And they feel intimidated when they are put into that situation. So there was a period of adjustment.” (Community Representative Steering Group).

A number of community activists spoke of the intimidation felt by community representatives in the initial stages of the steering group. This was in part attributed to the more formal style and atmosphere in which matters were discussed (Davoudi and Healy, 1995). One community activist described the atmosphere as follows:

“they (community representatives) were in a room and they were playing away from home in the civic offices and, it was a big round table and you had the suits from the corporation and loads of paperwork. That’s one thing if you want to confuse somebody give them tons of paperwork and churn out reports, ...you know and basically people were undermined all the time. Then we didn’t have the technical support ourselves, apart from a few individuals.” (Community Activist, HARP area)

Over the period during which the steering group was in place, the community based organisations were able to take stock of the situation and began to provide the back up for community representatives. They did this through the provision of training and the development of networks within the area whereby information could be fed back to a wider section of the community.

It would be unfortunate if Dublin Corporation used the initial lack of organisation as a means of exonerating themselves from engaging with community representatives. The HARP project manager intimated that he couldn’t rely on the local community representatives and had to engage directly with residents himself. By following such an action the ability to build capacity in the local community may be undermined. This would be perturbing, particularly as many of the organisations working within the local community believe that over the period of the HARP project, they themselves and the community representatives have developed considerable expertise and organisational capacity as a result of participating in the steering group.

A final process which I wish to briefly explore is Atkinson’s contention that partnerships, may be a means of legitimation or symbolism, masking the continued role of market led physical regeneration (Atkinson, 1998a) and a means of managing the community in the regeneration process (Atkinson, 1998b). This brings me to the point which I raised at the outset of the paper that the formalised partnership as represented by the HARP steering group must be viewed within a wider framework of the informal networks which exist within the city. While the HARP project allowed local communities the opportunity to play at least a limited role on the steering group, their power within the wider development process in their local area, remains constrained. This is because much of the HARP plan’s implementation remains dependent on the private sector. When planning decisions relating to private sector development in the area (a critically important means of achieving renewal) are being made, local communities, as pointed out in the

introduction, are not key actors in the informal networks which private property has developed with national and local government.

The conflicts which emerged over the development of the largest development site within the area – the west side of Smithfield Square – illustrates this particularly well. Despite the existence of an integrated framework plan which had gained considerable consensus, a steering group which drew from a cross sector of those with an interest in the area, this did not preclude considerable opposition arising to this development. The proposals submitted for planning permission (a high density mixed use development which included a 24 storey tower like apartment block) were viewed by many of those on the steering group as failing to adhere to the principles and vision of the HARP plan. There was no attempt made to deal with this opposition within the framework of the steering group and the conflict was played out within the traditional planning arena. This conflict became particularly acute following the Dublin Corporation's grant of permission for the development.

A number of points may be made as to why this conflict is unsurprising and understandable. The first point is that the informal network that exists between the local authority and property interests is not really challenged by the existence of the steering group which involves a wider range of interests. The pro-growth impetus to ensure that development occurs in this area predominates thinking at management level within the corporation. One of the planners who was involved in the planning decision pointed out that there was a real pressure to ensure that development occurred on this site, and that the community's concerns were only one of the many issues that had to be taken into account:

“ the great fear was that the boom will go and that we've got to get something moving, to get this end of town going, before it collapses, ... we have to get something on this site, and we have to take this and the wider benefit of the city into account. So the community is only one thing”. (Planner Dublin Corporation)

Two of the planners interviewed stressed that the planners involved in the decision making had to balance the wider needs of the city (the potential benefits of redevelopment of the site to tourism, the requirement to increase residential density and the need to provide significant amounts of social and affordable housing to meet housing demand), with the desires of the local community. Although they also conceded that they were disappointed that the processes in HARP had not allowed a more consensual solution to the conflict and empathized to some extent with those in the local community who were precluded from playing a wider role in the decision making process. Given the nature of the planning system the only potential for greater involvement was identified by these planners as perhaps allowing the local community a role at the level of brief preparation. The nature of the conflict within the planning system is illustrative of the limitations of a partnership approach in renewal, in a situation where private sector led development continues to play a catalytic role in renewal.

Luckily, the local community did have another form of redress available to them within the Irish planning system, through their right to lodge a third party appeal with the planning appeals board. Emboldened by their role in the HARP steering group and, relying on networks formed with other communities which had fought high rise development in Dublin's docklands, the local community achieved a successful outcome to their appeal. The Planning Appeals Board granted permission for a development which was reduced in scale. This included the omission of 24 storey tower structure and a glass ship shaped feature, which was considered by residents as overscaled. This particular incident illustrates the role which the private property sector continues to play in Urban Renewal in Dublin. It also demonstrates how constrained the role offered to local communities is in the

context of millions of pounds of private sector funds. The partnership process does in this instance seem to act as a mask to the continuing emphasis on facilitating private sector development. However, the role of the partnership as a means of managing or co-opting the community, suggested by Atkinson is not so evident, given that the local community had the means to successfully challenge private sector development. Ironically the community had been given some of the impetus to mount a challenge, through the strengthening of their organisational capacity which had emanated from their role on the steering group.

Conclusions

The partnership in the form of the steering group established to oversee the implementation of the HARP plan, despite its limited remit as outlined by Dublin Corporation, has, due to the dynamic nature of those participating in the group managed to result in a number of positive outcomes. While the initial rationale for its establishment by Dublin Corporation was the possibility of budget enlargement, through drawing down EU funds, a number of the more positive approaches identified within the literature on partnerships, such as policy and resource synergy have become evident (Mackintosh, 1992, Hastings 1996).

The research outlined in the paper does however, illustrate the challenges which exist to the development of more meaningful partnership in Irish urban renewal. Some of the constraints identified, such as the lack of organisational capacity in the community, are already being tackled by community organisations in the HARP area. As the reforms of local government and new institutional arrangements are put in place there is evidence that Dublin corporation is becoming less departmentalised, more committed to an area based approach⁷ and more willing to trust other organisations and to work in partnership with them⁸. However, the real challenge will be the extent to which communities can insert themselves into the informal and powerful networks (McGuirk, 2000), which shape development in the city. The powerful interests of the property sector, and the greater emphasis in the recent planning legislation (The Local Government (Planning and Development), Act, 2000), on procedural efficiency, together with the emphasis in local government reform on performance criteria, may preclude the development of the type of partnership or collaborative fora as envisaged by Healy where, “through collaborative, inclusionary, consensus-building practices... the stakeholders... can discuss their common, concerns, get to know each other across their divisions and conflict and develop strategies that most can ‘own’ and abide by” (Healy, 1996:207). Making the space for such processes seems as yet, a long way off in the Irish urban renewal context.

⁷ Five new area committees have been established to deal with day to day issues in the Corporations functional area.

⁸ Strategic policy committees with membership drawn from elected representatives and outside organisations have been established to develop Corporation policy. A City Development Board (CDB) with a strategic and co-ordinating role drawing members from, local government, local development, state agencies, and the social partners (including community and voluntary organisations) has been set up to draw up a comprehensive strategy for economic, social and cultural development within the county/city and to oversee the implementation of the strategy (Department of the Environment and Local Government, 1999). The CDB and the strategy for economic, social and cultural development are seen as the framework for providing horizontal linkage and strategic co-ordination of all of the existing groups active at local level.

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