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Neighbourhood Regeneration: Facilitating Community Involvement

Abstract In this paper, the courses of action taken to facilitate residents' participation, in developing community action plans, in two Australian public housing estate regeneration projects are examined. The findings are placed within the context of changes, over the past twenty years, to the operation of housing authorities that were antecedents to the newly emerging partnership models of regeneration between the public and private sectors and communities. Three major findings are highlighted. First, the government role, in terms of providing support positions and allowing adequate time for residents to participate is critical to the success of community participation activities. The second finding is that the ever-increasing privatisation of public sector activities and pre-occupation with developing a more efficient, effective and lean public sector, essentially defined in economic terms, is in conflict with meeting government's social goals of community participation. Third, much of the rhetoric used in neighbourhood regeneration projects of 'rights and obligations' and 'sustainability' is not well defined and is sometimes implemented in contradictory ways. In applying these terms, the housing authorities and their regeneration partners need to elucidate the principles they are promoting. In light of the findings overall, it is concluded that we should question the capacity of market oriented regeneration policy to lead to resident inclusion.

Key Words: Neighbourhood regeneration; community participation; urban regeneration; social housing; community regeneration

Introduction

In contemporary Australian estate regeneration policy increased emphasis is placed on involving residents in estate regeneration processes. The housing authorities' regeneration guidelines expound the importance of working in partnership with the community in the planning processes for regeneration, drawing on traditional public sector values of "social justice" (New South Wales Department of Housing 1999; Queensland Department of Housing 1999a). Current directions to support resident involvement in regeneration appear positive, especially given past criticisms that Australian projects did not actively facilitate community participation in regeneration planning and development (Peel 1993). Indeed, it is a basic democratic right for people to have the opportunity to speak to issues that directly affect their lives and where they live. Aside from this, there are also good practical reasons, identified in the international literature, for policy makers to involve local communities in the processes of estate regeneration, which include:

- Providing residents with some ongoing commitment and a sense of responsibility for projects (Power 1996);
- Residents experience at first hand the problems of the neighbourhood and, consequently, have an in-depth knowledge of local priorities, which often differ from the preconceived ideas of agencies providing the funding for regeneration (Medoff & Sklar 1994: 255; Donnison 1998; Forrest & Kearns 1999); and

- The long-term success and sustainability of changes made through urban regeneration are inextricably linked to the level of community involvement and ownership of the strategies (Fordham 1995; Taylor 1997; Carley 1998; Larsen 1998).

However, the renewed emphasis on community involvement in regeneration emerges within the context of contemporary reforms to the public sector and new forms of regeneration partnerships that involve an increased role for the private sector in the funding and administration of projects (Arthurson 2003). There is a lack of Australian research that explores resident participation processes in this contemporary context and the challenges, which might arise for housing authorities and others implementing community regeneration projects.¹ Consequently, this paper compares and contrasts the processes around the development of community action plans on two public housing estates undergoing regeneration. In setting the context for regeneration, the first section briefly outlines the recent reforms to the housing authorities in South Australia and Queensland where the two case study projects, The Parks and Manoora, are located. The second section considers issues of partnership and power in regeneration. The major characteristics of the case study estates are then considered before examining some of the courses of action taken in these two projects that aim to increase residents' access to decision-making processes.

New Public Management and Market Based Solutions to Regeneration

During the past two decades, a series of reforms that are generally associated with the adoption of the principles of new public management have transformed the Australian public sector. In attempting to combine elements of private sector management operating standards with the traditional ethics and principles underlying the public sector, the major changes have included:

- A key focus on achieving efficiency and effectiveness in policy implementation;
- Applying private sector management techniques, such as entrepreneurial methods;
- Greater accountability;
- Decentralised decision-making; and
- Creating markets and competition within the public sector through the contracting out of service delivery and public sector employment.

Responses to these public sector wide reforms have been mixed. Proponents argue that the changes improve the quality of policy advice and reinforce the importance of social values (Paterson 1988). Conversely, others question whether the managerialist and pro-market reforms have gone too far and are undermining the traditional role and ethos of the public sector in achieving social justice. From this perspective, inevitable trade-offs are made between achieving efficiency and equity and social justice is depicted as achievable only at an excessive economic cost (Stilwell 2000: 53).

Restructuring State Housing Authorities

For public housing authorities, the impact of managerial reform has been to implement commercial directions, with an increased role for the private sector, in meeting government objectives in the provision of housing for low-income people. A major catalyst for reform was the Industry Commission Inquiry into Public Housing (IC) (Industry Commission 1993). The Inquiry found that public housing, as compared to the private rental sector, was still the best

option for low-income tenants, in terms of overcoming problems of security of tenure, tenant discrimination and achieving better targeting. However, criticisms were made of the housing authorities' management and in view of these findings, the IC proposed a series of changes that included:

- Separating the property and tenancy management functions in housing authorities in order to achieve transparency in operations;
- Improving coordination between agencies;
- Implementing an asset management and customer focus; and
- Encouraging a greater private sector role in the provision of low-income public rental housing.

Whilst, there was undoubtedly room for improvement, arguably it was possible to implement measures to increase accountability and efficiency without radical reorganisation of housing authorities based on the implementation of commercial operating principles (Orchard 1999). Nonetheless, in the early 1990s, the South Australian Housing Trust was reorganised to separate property management functions from tenancy operations and the position of General Manager was abolished. In this administrative arrangement, the tenancy manager leases properties from the property manager or private landlords at market rents and is responsible for the selection of tenants and administration of leases. The property manager operates on a commercial basis and is responsible for ensuring the supply and maintenance of public housing. However, difficulties were encountered with the new structure in attempting to balance the competing objectives

between meeting social responsibilities and achieving a commercial return on social housing. A focal point was lacking where the overall costs and benefits to the government and community of decisions taken by the two separate entities could be considered as a whole. Consequently, in late 1996, the position of General Manager was reinstated with the mandate to re-establish “integration” and “coherence” between the two divided entities (Orchard 1999: 308).

From the mid to late 1990s, the Queensland Department of Housing underwent a series of similar organisational restructures. The restructures culminated in the setting up of two separate entities, a Public Housing Program Unit and a Property Portfolio Management Unit. The Public Housing Program Unit had responsibility for strategic policy issues, needs based planning and all aspects of tenancy management, except for service delivery. The Property Portfolio Management Unit was made responsible for the supply of public housing, including purchasing new properties and redevelopment and maintenance of existing stock (Queensland Department of Housing Organisational Review Task Force 1998).

Simultaneously, as the organisational reforms to the housing authorities were implemented, government assistance for public housing provided under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement (CSHA) declined in real funding terms by almost 15 per cent, in the decade from 1989 to 1999 (Steering Committee for the Review of Commonwealth/State Service Provision, 1999: 1079). By the 1990s, the results of tighter targeting coupled with the processes of economic change, which commenced in the 1970s, resulted in public housing becoming the repository for the most complex and disadvantaged tenants. The estates with high levels of public housing increasingly became characterised by concentrations of residents with low

incomes, poverty and high unemployment rates (New South Wales Department of Housing 1999; Queensland Department of Housing 1999a).

The important point is that overall, the housing reform agenda and economic imperatives have set the scene for regeneration partnerships that involve increased private sector influence in both the funding and implementation of regeneration projects. In South Australia, for instance, it is acknowledged that due to the deficits in government funding the private sector will play a much greater role in financing regeneration than previously (Jackson 1999). Hence, as argued elsewhere, contemporary partnership models of regeneration reflect managerial change in the public sector, a de-emphasis on the role of housing authorities in the delivery of services and provide a mechanism for allowing greater power and influence of the private sector over state functions in order to attract private funding (Malpass (1997; Geddes and Urry 2000).

Regeneration Partnerships and Power

Clearly, as the literature details, regeneration partnerships are permeated by power differentials (Mayo & Taylor 2001). Whilst Australian partnership approaches between housing authorities and the private sector are not new, past projects were largely government controlled with the problems of urban change perceived as solvable through state action. In South Australia, for instance, public housing estates were originally constructed in the post-war period not only to house low-income earners but to attract and service the growth of manufacturing industry in the regions. The rationale being that if the State provided housing for workers, wages would be kept lower than they would otherwise be, thus encouraging expansion of the industrial base and bringing new jobs to the State. However, in contemporary regeneration partnerships, government

is increasingly devolving greater power to the property market with market-based responses viewed as the solution (Arthurson 2001, 2003). This latter situation entails a fundamental reorganisation of the roles and balance of power between public sector agencies and the private sector in regeneration partnerships.

At the same time, the housing authorities' role encompasses enabling disadvantaged residents to participate more fully in regeneration processes and partnership approaches are often advocated (New South Wales Department of Housing 1999; Queensland Department of Housing 1999a). The claims made for community participation include engendering community self-help, empowering communities, building social networks and developing neighborhood entrepreneurs to tackle local problems (Taylor 2000; Balloch & Taylor (2001: 7). An important issue is that there are substantial power differentials within these partnerships that involve inherent tensions in the way community participation is implemented in practice. Large well-funded partners are in a greater position of power than residents, which means they can control agendas and timeframes that may assist or detract from community involvement (Robinson & Shaw 1991).

There are numerous ways of exploring community involvement in regeneration and much of the policy documentation on urban and community regeneration in Australia is couched in the rhetoric of capacity building and strengthening communities, which is often associated with the concept of 'social capital'. However, in regeneration practice the concept does not appear influential.ⁱⁱ In this paper, community involvement is considered within the contemporary context of managerial reform to the public sector and the inherent tensions arising between the roles of the State, private sector and community in regeneration partnerships. As such, the analysis is not about providing prescriptions for how to do community participation better or

identifying ‘good practice’. Rather, in examining the empirical findings, the basic question posed is how these regeneration partnerships serve the least powerful stakeholders, the residents whose voices compete to be heard (Taylor 2000). The broad approach taken in reporting the findings is to compare and contrast the processes around the development of the community action plans at Manoora and The Parks, to ascertain what is working well and not so well, and to identify some of the major challenges and tensions arising in the two regeneration projects. Before turning to this task, a brief description is provided of the two public housing estates constituting the case studies for the research.

Background: Manoora and The Parks

As shown in table 1, Manoora is a rural public housing estate located in far North Queensland five kilometres west of Cairns. The estate was constructed between 1975 and 1990 on farmland subdivided in 1974, from which the Housing Commission initially purchased 34 blocks. With 90 per cent public housing, Manoora contains the largest concentration of public housing outside of the Queensland metropolitan area. Residents are socially disadvantaged, with low incomes and declining levels of educational attainment, and the estate is characterised by high crime rates (Queensland Government and Queensland Department of Housing 2000).

Manoora represents one of thirteen disadvantaged communities with high levels of public housing that are currently targeted for regeneration across Queensland under the Community Renewal Program (CRP). The incoming State Labor Government introduced the Program, which forms part of the State Government’s Crime Prevention Strategy, in 1988. The principal features of the renewal program are coordinated across government and agency partnerships and include

community involvement in identifying solutions to problems. Specific aspects of the regeneration project, as summarised in Table 1, incorporates tackling unemployment and crime and implementing education and training initiatives. From this perspective, the Community Renewal Program is much broader than past approaches on the estates, which largely focused on undertaking physical changes to the housing and surrounding environments. The Community Renewal Program is complemented by the Department of Housing's Urban Renewal Program, which focuses on upgrading public housing and implementing design improvements (Queensland Department of Housing 1999b). The housing authority in conjunction with the Premier's Department coordinates the various aspects of the Manoora regeneration project and the housing refurbishment is conducted through a corporatised government department (Arthurson 2001).

Insert Table 1 about here

The Parks in South Australia is a metropolitan estate located seven kilometres north-west of Adelaide (Table 1). Construction of the estate commenced in the decade immediately following the Second World War. The Parks covers the five suburbs of Mansfield Park, Ferryden Park, Woodville Gardens, Angle Park and Athol Park. Typical of the approach in South Australia at that time, the estate was constructed to attract and service the growth in manufacturing industry in the regions. Newly established industries included Philips, Tubemills and General Motors Holden (Marsden 1986: 176). Hence, in later years residents of The Parks were disproportionately affected by the decline of manufacturing industry, on which they relied for employment. The estate has 60 per cent concentration of public housing and like Manoora is characterised by residents with low incomes, poverty and high unemployment rates (South

Australian Housing Trust & Pioneer Projects Australia 1996). The Parks regeneration project formally commenced in February 1999. As shown in Table 1, the project involves a similar range of activities to Manoora. However, The Parks project is unique in the extent of the partnership approach between the South Australian Housing Trust and the private sector property developer, Urban Pacific. This partnership goes much further than previous arrangements in that Urban Pacific actually manages the project (Jackson 1999).

In both projects, community action plans were developed to summarise major issues identified in the regeneration planning processes, outline the visions for the revitalised communities, and document strategies and directions for achieving desired changes. These plans are known as community development plans (CDP) at The Parks and community action plans (CAP) at Manoora. The data, which explores community involvement in the development of these plans, was collected through a variety of methods: a survey questionnaire self administered to 13 housing authority staff; follow up informal interviews and meetings held during visits to projects in 1999; and analysis of relevant policy documents and reports.

Community Involvement at Manoora

From the start, the Queensland Department of Housing staff at Manoora acknowledged that there was no use putting a plan in place for community regeneration without ongoing community commitment and agreement to it (Queensland Department of Housing 1997: 21). The housing authority decided to develop a community action plan (CAP) that integrated physical and social issues and set out the direction for the entire project for the next seven to ten years. The processes around the formulation of the CAP were seen as major tools to include the existing

community in the evolution of the vision for Manoora and encourage a climate in which resident initiative and confidence could grow. Housing authority staff, in responding to the survey questionnaire, envisaged that involvement in these processes would help to empower the existing community and that the experience would result in increased “pride”, “self-esteem”, and “self-reliance” for residents.

Supporting Resident Participation

Initially, the process of developing the CAP, as described by housing authority staff in responses to the questionnaire, involved running several focus group meetings to identify issues of concern from the viewpoints of the Manoora community. Residents attending the consultation meetings were offered private interviews if they felt uncomfortable about speaking out at the larger forums. A random sample of residents was also visited in their homes. To provide ongoing community input into preparation of the CAP, and subsequently follow through the processes of implementation, a Community Focus Group (CFG) Committee was set up. Membership of the committee consisted of local residents and some service providers. Once the group was formed it met bi-weekly with never fewer than 20 people attending meetings.

Hence, structures were put in place early on by the housing authority to enable the community to raise issues and provide input throughout the developmental phase of the CAP. Residents were also provided with assistance in the formulation of the CAP by a number of key support workers, located on site. These included a Tenant Liaison Officer, Place Manager and a Community Renewal Facilitator. As argued elsewhere, providing the necessary resources to ensure communities have access to needed knowledge, skills and confidence to participate in

community regeneration is a powerful expression of official endorsement by authorities administering the projects of their commitment to effective community participation (Power 1996; Taylor 1997). Indeed, the Manoora project staff acknowledge that without the additional resources available through the Urban and Community Renewal Program, to fund resident participation and the development of the CAP, it could not have progressed this far (Queensland Government and Queensland Department of Housing 1999). Overall, the Manoora project illustrates that substantial effort and support by government was necessary to successfully involve the community in regeneration.

Creating a Happening Environment

Nevertheless, early on at Manoora, difficulties were encountered in gaining residents' confidence that their input into the processes of community regeneration could make a difference. The Chairperson of the CFG detailed one instance where a public housing tenant reported back to the Community Focus Group Committee (CFG), on behalf of several other residents, that they had stopped attending meetings because "they felt that what they said would make no difference to the development of the project" (Personal Communication, 20 July 1999). The issue was resolved when members of the CFG pointed out some practical examples of how suggestions by residents were in fact being incorporated into the community plan. Seemingly, this illustrates a common dilemma whereby residents who have not previously had input into decision-making often have trouble recognising when they are presented with the opportunity to participate by more powerful partners (Mayo & Taylor 2001).

Consequently, the housing authority put an additional mechanism in place in order to build confidence and demonstrate more deliberately how residents could affect the processes of regeneration at Manoora. Residents were advised that all of the suggestions made by them would be included in the formulation of the community action plan. Government staff reported observing, "the light bulbs going on" as members of the community realised that they could influence the project (Queensland Government & Queensland Department of Housing 1999: 21, 91). Moreover, this illustrates that a critical element in gaining resident confidence and maintaining their interest in regeneration processes is to create a 'happening environment' where residents' plans are brought to fruition. Indeed, although the identified issues were clarified and built upon in later developmental phases of the plan, all of the original strategies suggested by residents were included in the final plan (Queensland Government & Queensland Department of Housing 1999: 21, 91).

Community Involvement at The Parks

Housing authority staff at The Parks, in responses to the questionnaire survey, envisaged, in a similar way to staff at Manoora, that community participation in the regeneration project would support the creation of "sustainable communities", "community capacity building" and "community ownership" of the project. However, the processes of including residents in the formulation of the community development plan (CDP) at The Parks evolved differently to the development of the CAP at Manoora. Unlike the situation at Manoora, residents at The Parks were not involved from the start in identifying and formulating priority issues from the perspective of the community for inclusion in the community plan.

The process of formulating the CDP at The Parks entailed reviewing numerous existing reports and feasibility studies to summarise priority issues. A consultant in conjunction with the Community Development Alliance, which consisted of representatives of the private sector regeneration partner Urban Pacific, the housing authority and other relevant State Government Departments, conducted the process (Sharley 1999). Consequently, there was no input from the community at this crucial formative stage of devising the community development strategy, to assess whether the selected issues were representative of current community priorities. Whilst a Community Consultative Team (CCT) consisting of residents was set up, the committee operated outside of the legal agreements for the project partners involved in the regeneration project (Crafter & Halsey 1998: 199). This caused problems in seeing documents that were considered commercially sensitive. The role of members was largely concerned with relaying adequate and timely information to the community about the ongoing processes being adopted within the regeneration project, providing input to project outcomes and receiving feedback on proposed strategies (The Parks Community Consultative Team 1999: 3). This situation relegated residents to the sidelines in the regeneration partnership, supporting the findings by Balloch and Taylor (2001: 8) that these types of partnerships often largely leave “existing power relationships intact”.

A further hindrance to the community participation processes was encountered when the community plan was assembled as part of the broader ‘Parks Project Precinct Plan’. As project staff pointed out in responses to the questionnaire survey, because the precinct plan contained ‘commercial in confidence’ information, until the decision was made to release the community plan as a separate document, the public, including local residents of The Parks could not access

it. Hence, at subsequent community consultation workshops residents found themselves involved in developing action plans for predetermined priority issues for a community plan in whose development they had not participated. In part, the difficulties encountered at The Parks reflect the managerial model of regeneration and the unique nature of the partnership between the housing authority and private sector agency in undertaking regeneration, where the latter is actually managing the project. As Mayo and Taylor (2001:4) argue, in such regeneration partnerships, “the role of private sector interests and the requirements of profitability... tend to be perceived as beyond the need for justification”.

Balancing Rights and Obligations

Despite the problems encountered at The Parks with the resident participation processes, the project partners, the South Australian Housing Trust (SAHT) and Urban Pacific, express support for a reciprocal ‘rights and obligations’ approach between tenants and other stakeholders. The beginnings of this commitment, it is argued, are reflected in the partnering charter forged between the Community Consultative Team, SAHT and Urban Pacific (Thomson 1999: 118). The charter formalises a mutual commitment to project objectives, and details consultation processes, including how any disputes will be resolved, if they arise (The Parks Community Consultative Team, SAHT and Urban Pacific Ltd. 1999: 16).

Adopting a ‘rights and obligations’ model, in some measure, implies that an equal relationship exists between all the parties involved in community regeneration. However, obligations between marginalised people and more powerful stakeholders are rarely so straightforward because they always involve difficult negotiations between parties with access to different

degrees of power and resources. Obviously residents of disadvantaged communities lack the power and resources to compete on comparable terms with more powerful groups such as property developers.

Certainly, this view is supported at The Parks, where it is acknowledged that there are difficulties in accepting the community as an equal partner because they do not bring money to what is basically a commercial project (Crafter & Halsey 1998: 199). Does this mean that residents who are in a less powerful position will always lose out in the regeneration process and should this be acknowledged up front? Unquestionably, unless some profit is traded off to allow voluntary involvement in non-monetary terms, this seems likely. Hastings, MacArthur and MacGregor (1996: 262), for instance, drawing on their wealth of experience of regeneration partnerships, argue that a focus on added value in strictly financial terms devalues the role of partners who do not have access to large budgets. From this perspective, private property developers value decision-making in terms of efficiency rather than democracy, so tensions will exist in allowing residents to participate. The Parks project provides a powerful illustration of how these tensions between 'rights and obligations' emerge in regeneration practice.

Competing Objectives: Adequate Timeframes Versus Efficiency and Effectiveness

The international literature identifies the time frame for resident participation as a critical aspect in determining whether regeneration tackles relevant issues, particularly from the viewpoints of residents (Maclennan 1997; Taylor 1997: 26; Larsen 1998). On this basis, it might be expected that ensuring sufficient time for residents to participate would be part of any approach to estate

regeneration that is serious about 'reciprocal rights and obligations'. Within the partnering charter for The Parks project, assurance was given that enough time would be provided for residents to examine and respond to regeneration proposals (The Parks Community Consultative Team 1999: 16). However, as identified at meetings with project staff (Personal Communication, 19 January 2000), at the first workshop to develop action plans for the community development strategy some residents left the consultation because they felt the processes were too rushed to allow for their input. The workshop was later re-run when residents raised these issues

Arguably, what the situation at The Parks highlights is a common difficulty in reconciling the private sector partners' short-term objectives of efficiency and profit with the longer time frames necessary for proper democratic, community participation (Newman & Verpraet 1999: 489). The project also demonstrates the inconsistency in the way the notion of obligation is generally applied only to voluntary exchange and not economic activity (Jordan 1998). If a 'rights and obligations' approach to regeneration is to be a two-way street and lead to increased access to decision-making for residents, then arguably, some profit needs to be traded off to allow for more flexible project deadlines that give residents reasonable time to participate. However, it is not only The Parks project with its unique public and private partnership where there appear to be difficulties associated with the time frame provided for resident participation.

At Manoora, despite involving residents in development of the community plan, the whole process was completed in a very short time frame of 15 weeks. Local bureaucrats working on the project identified meeting this expedient time frame as problematic in the subsequent evaluation. Comment was made that from 'time to time' participants felt like a group of individuals driven by the directives of the head office, which was located 1 700 kilometres away (Queensland

Government and Queensland Department of Housing 1999: 92). Whilst this perspective reflects the experience of bureaucrats working on the project, conceivably residents who were actively involved as members of the Manoora Community Focus Group also felt these pressures and probably to a greater degree. However, residents were not asked whether they had enough time to participate so questions remain unanswered as to whether the 15 weeks provided was adequate.

Both these experiences beg the question of whether the increasing adoption of private sector operating principles within State Housing Authorities militates against the government role in working for the public good. Orchard (2001: 9-10), for instance, argues that the recent reform of Australian public institutions has resulted in a “gradual inexorable influence of market mechanisms and interests on the practices of government...in counterproductive ways”. Certainly, over the past decade the housing authorities have undergone a series of key changes to their modus operandi, which include adopting competitive tendering, a contract culture and meeting quantifiable objectives defined in particular narrow ways.

However, these arrangements are designed for the provision of standardised services in the private sector and do not take account of unique situations that arise in achieving equity and social justice principles through the actions of government and its agencies. The achievement of objectives related to product development in business are more easily measurable and do not impact on the lives of impoverished public housing residents in quite the same way as changes made through regeneration. At Manoora, for instance, the evaluation of the community plan processes identifies that the success of the regeneration project relies to a large extent upon the careful nurturing of relationships between the community and other stakeholders (Queensland

Government and Queensland Department of Housing 1999: 90-106). To undertake these processes thoroughly and achieve government social goals requires committing time, which conflicts with other goals to achieve ever-increasing efficient public administration striving to meet private sector operating principles to constantly improve efficiency, effectiveness and competitiveness.

The problem in adopting these business methods is that the balance tips too easily away from considering the important qualitative and hard-to-measure outcomes. Instead, to the detriment of tenants, the emphasis moves to quantitative aspects of regeneration whereby the focus on quicker and better ways of completing the processes, competes with the more difficult to measure aim of having the time available to use the processes to provide residents with some ongoing commitment and ownership of regeneration. The consequence is less concern with the processes of community participation and more concern with achieving the desired results within an expedient time frame. Overall, this situation raises the issue of the cost to estate residents of further moves to privatise and downsize the public sector, which will place greater pressure on achieving these sorts of processes against business principles rather than public values.

Participation and Sustainability

What the experiences of Manoora and The Parks indicate is that, typically, communities on public housing estates do not have the needed resources, confidence and skills to draw upon and that the efforts of the housing authorities are critical aspects in enabling resident participation in regeneration. In view of the difficulties encountered, there seems little likelihood that in the

short-term Australian regeneration projects will be driven from the bottom-up or that it will be possible for estate communities to be given substantial responsibility for administering projects.

Nevertheless, the visions for the communities at Manoora and The Parks are also linked to achieving 'sustainability' (South Australian Housing Trust and Pioneer Projects Australia 1996; Black 1998; Queensland Government and Queensland Department of Housing 1999). However, akin to the use of the term of 'rights and obligations', there is little explanation within the projects of what sustainability signifies. In regeneration initiatives, sustainability is often taken to mean autonomy from further special public funding (Fordham 1995). This raises the question of whether community-building strategies will be maintained if support positions, such as the Place Manager at Manoora and the Neighbourhood Development Officer position at The Parks, many of which are time limited and funded on contract, are removed from the case study communities after only short periods of funding. This point is clearly exemplified by the Manoora project where initial enthusiasm and the beginnings of a shared vision among community members and some key stakeholders were experienced through the development of the community plan. However, the consensus is that the momentum, particularly from the community, will not survive without constant nurturing. Staff involved in the project have queried how they can "continue to contribute directly to strengthening community leaders" and whether the process of formulating the plan actually developed community leaders (Queensland Government and Queensland Department of Housing 1999: 90, 92, 106). Arguably, premature removal of funding and support positions could place greater responsibility and burden on residents already disadvantaged and often ill-equipped to cope. Indeed, there is no evidence available to date of exit strategies within the two case study projects, or other Australian regeneration projects, which detail how the

capacity building activities will be maintained once paid positions and other special government funding initiatives are removed (Arthurson 1999). The mistakes of deinstitutionalisation cannot afford to be repeated, where in some measure, enlightened social policy to enable people with disabilities and mental health issues to live in the community was let down by backsliding in government resource provision. (Gleeson 1999).

The other key related issue is that while it is crucial to give the community the opportunity to have a say in decisions that affect them, it seems equally important that participation in estate regeneration continues to be seen as a 'right' rather than a 'responsibility' or burden for particular individuals within the community. Residents have different levels of interest and capabilities and some may only want information while others will want to participate actively in developing and implementing plans.

Conclusion

What does all this imply in practical terms for community regeneration efforts?

First the findings indicate that housing authorities have an important role to play in facilitating resident participation in regeneration. Hence, there seems greater benefit in a mixture of top down from government and bottom-up from community approaches to regeneration. The success of bottom-up processes relies on government provision of positions, structures and sufficient time to support residents to participate and develop confidence.

Second, another important element identified to sustain community interest and momentum is the creation of an environment where residents can observe their suggestions being put into practice.

Third, the key issue that arises is that attempts by housing authorities to involve residents in regeneration are made more difficult in the newly emerging public and private sector partnership approaches to regeneration, as exemplified by The Parks. Commercial in confidence and other clauses necessitated by private sector partnerships increase the complexity of the commitment for facilitating resident involvement.

Then again, similar tensions related to timelines for participation processes, albeit not as great, arise in the Manoora project that does not involve a public and private sector partnership approach to regeneration. In this instance, the tensions appear to relate to the reforms of the past two decades that have promoted an ever-increasingly more efficient, effective and lean public sector. The preoccupation with efficiency defined in economic terms is in conflict with the social goal of participation, in terms of it being too delaying and unpredictable and at odds with achieving more efficient public administration.

Overall, the most pressing task is a need to rethink the level of private sector involvement and control over projects in estate regeneration and further moves to privatise the public sector. Advancing in these directions will make it even more difficult for governments to achieve social justice objectives such as community participation in regeneration.

One final point, as the analysis shows, is that much of the rhetoric used in community regeneration projects of 'sustainability' and 'rights and obligations' are not well defined or

implemented in contradictory ways. For instance, at The Parks, the notion of ‘rights and obligations’ is applied more to voluntary exchange than economic activity. Hence, in applying these terms, the housing authorities and other agencies need to be clearer about outlining the principles they are supporting.

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Table 1: Major Characteristics of Manoora and The Parks Estates

| Project | Distance from cbd (kms) | Size of estate (hectares) | Public housing conc. (per cent) | Date Constructed | Reason for site selection | Major regeneration activities |
|------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|-------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| <i>The Parks</i> | 7 nw | 500 | 60 | 1945-1964 | Service local industry | Employment projects, housing improvements, resident involvement, crime prevention. |
| <i>Manoora</i> | 5 w | 60 | 90 | 1975-1990 | Large land holdings | Employment projects, housing improvements, resident involvement. |

Source: Adapted from Arthurson (2001)

ⁱ Hoatson and Grace (2003) in a recent review of the international and Australian literature on community participation in regeneration find that there is a lack of contemporary Australian research on this topic.

ⁱⁱ In responses to the survey questionnaire administered as part of the current study, several respondents were not familiar with the concept of social capital. Those respondents that had heard of the concept stated that it had little influence or effect in regeneration practice.