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In memory of my mother Neriman Fikret Uguris

Abstract

The aim of this investigation is to analyse the decision-making processes in housing in order to see the extent tenants are able to participate in these processes. Of particular interest to this examination are the ethnic and gender divisions in these processes.

Thus, this thesis deals with the question of public housing and those theoretical and practical issues that provide an understanding of the relationship between social space and physical space; the complex relationship between individuals, collectivities and the welfare state and how ethnicity and gender issues figure in these practical relationships in general and housing processes in particular. The main theoretical issues to be looked at are the social divisions of ethnicity and gender and related notions of 'power'/ 'empowerment', 'identity'/'difference', 'participation' and 'the community' socially and spatially both at macro and local levels.

The methodological approach arising out of the aims of the research was an in-depth study of three different types of housing projects where the degree of tenant involvement in their housing processes varied considerably. Each of these three types of housing projects characterised a different way and degree of participation by tenants in decision-making. These were *firstly*, council managed estates in which *all* major and minor decisions are taken by the local authority; *secondly*, tenant management co-operatives in which tenants take over the responsibility of the day-to-day management of their estate while the ownership of the estate remains with the council and some major decisions are taken by the council; and *thirdly*, self-build projects which involve tenants in the actual building and management processes of their housing and in which tenant involvement is supposed to be at its highest level.

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Introduction

This thesis looks at the question of public housing in London as a case study of the interrelationship between social space and physical space. In particular the thesis looks at the ways ethnic and gender divisions affect this relationship both in the macro level of the welfare state and the micro level among tenants and tenant organisations in particular.

The importance of such a study lies on three different levels – theoretical, political and personal. Theoretically, rapid changes in social relations in late modernity have both social and spatial dimensions. It is important to understand the ways in which these processes reflect concerns of power, participation and difference. The effects of social divisions of ethnicity, gender and class socially and spatially need to be investigated in order to respond to the problems of inclusions/exclusions that these processes give rise to. Politically, it is important to understand the ways in which policies and decision-making processes, in both the local- and macro-levels have responded to such changes. Housing policies are particularly suitable to examine these processes via the dual social and spatial lenses.

Personally, as a Turkish woman architect living in Britain, these issues concern and reflect issues that I have been involved in struggles, both in personal and in my professional life. It is important for me to study these issues in particular because as an activist I have worked with migrant workers and women, and initiated as well as participated in campaigns and projects to overcome inequalities such as ‘campaign against deportations’, ‘equal pay for equal work campaign’, ‘campaign against racism’ and ‘campaign against violence against women’. During this time I played an active part in ‘community politics’ and came to be perceived as one of the ‘representatives’ of the ‘Turkish-speaking community’ *vis-à-vis* the local authorities and other voluntary organisations.

In late 1980s I also worked as an architect. During this period I spent a great deal of time on building sites where a notoriously sexist sub-culture was dominant. However, as I began teaching Building Design in the Construction Department of Lambeth College in 1990, I found myself within a sub-culture that was not only blatantly sexist but racist

too. I had to endure racist discourse among the staff members with whom I was expected to share a room. The teaching material available such as books and videos were highly discriminatory. Even the building materials, for instance, were attributed gendered characteristics such as the ‘masculinity of concrete’ (Uguris 1992). While striving to encourage my students to adopt a non-discriminatory culture and give support to those who are subject to racism, sexism and homophobia while studying, I found myself being the target of blatant racist and sexist discrimination by some of the staff members in the Construction Department. My employers admitted that they had discriminated against me at an Industrial Tribunal. Thus, my investigation into tenants’ participation in public housing and ethnic and gender configurations in these processes is borne out of my own experience of resisting blatant racism and sexism.

The issues raised in this research also have implications for the policy-makers, such as local authorities, particularly in their attempts to respond to the needs of their constituents. Finally, it has implications for all those people, particularly women, who experience the differential effect of rapid transformations in social relations on their lives as individuals and groups despite the diversity of their social location.

Social divisions affect housing processes socially and spatially both at macro and local levels. Social divisions relate to the central issues of ‘power’/‘empowerment’, ‘identity’/‘difference’ all of which need to be examined both at macro as well as local levels. All of this relates to the whole notion of ‘the community’ and how it is constructed at these two levels.

Constructions of ‘the community’ both at macro and local levels take place within specific power relations involving inclusions/exclusions. Individual and group identities and the ways in which ‘difference’ is constructed by dominant discourses in and outside of collectivities determine who is included in ‘the community’ as well as the amount of power members have.

Housing policies in Britain have shifted dramatically over the years. By the late 1960s, in a number of large towns, councils supplied 60-70 per cent of the total housing stock (Dickson and Robertson 1993: 2). During these years welfare services were seen as impersonal and bureaucratic machinery. In 1960’s there was a growth in community

work and the ideology of 'the community' became popular. The growth of community action produced new pressure groups representing people whose interests had not been articulated before such as women, Black and ethnic minorities.

In response to the complaints against the remoteness, impersonal and bureaucratic nature of welfare services some local authorities have decentralised their services. A major change in housing policy in 1970's led to the policy of improvement of the housing stock rather than demolishing it. Hence new and more radical approaches to planning and housing problems came to the fore, and consultation and participation gained a particular significance in the planning process. In early 1980's 'popular planning' initiatives were implemented by some local authorities in an attempt to involve people actively in the formulation of their decisions. 'Community involvement', 'tenant's participation', 'popular planning' are among the wide range of initiatives that have been tried to 'empower' the local communities by involving people in decisions about their environment. Thus public consultation has been increasingly the order of the day (Cullingworth and Nadin 1994: 247).

In 1960s, thousands of tenants were re-located from inner-city slums to high-rise tower blocks and maisonettes. These poor-quality tower blocks soon developed structural defects that caused severe damp and condensation. These were combined with the effects of the recessions of the 1970s and 1980s (e.g. growth in unemployment). Alleyways and other communal areas in many of such estates became dangerous, often turning into 'no-go areas'. Michael Smith, writing in *The Guardian* in 1998, described one such an estate. It was Birmingham's largest estate, Castle Vale, which was built by the city council in the late 1960s. At present around 600 to 700 people out of nearly 11,000 residents of the Castle Vale are involved in the re-development of their estate. He cites Rod Griffin, Castle Vale's director of economic and community development, who says:

'In the past, urban regeneration was based on physical investment and it was believed that somehow the benefits would accrue to local people - "the trickle down" effect. There's enough research now to show that that does not work. Here we have a bottom-up approach, building up confidence and skills of local people' (Smith 1998).

Diana Carter, the chair of the tenants' representative board, acting for some 4,000 tenants, on the other hand, suggests that the extent tenants are empowered or consulted is not what others would like to believe. 'We are on the road but there is still a great deal more that could be done' (Smith 1998).

Involvement of tenants in these decision-making processes relates to the notion of citizenship and the ways in which rights and entitlements are constructed. Indeed all these changes are of critical importance, as they have been the cutting edge in changing the ground in decision-making and led to the emergence of new forms of citizenship. It is therefore important for me to look at the notions of citizenship, how it relates to the notion of 'empowerment' and decision-making at macro level (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1993, Smith 1985, Hill 1994, Hughes and Lowe 1995, Kautz 1995, Merrett 1979, Quiney 1986, Yuval-Davis 1994, 1997).

London is claimed to be 'the most cosmopolitan city in the world' and 'the new melting pot of Europe', because within just over 10 years one third of it will be composed of racial minorities (see for instance, Nicholas Timmins 1995). However, as reported by the London Voluntary Service Council (1998), recent research into the issues of social exclusion in London highlights that social and economic exclusion continue to be a harsh reality for many Londoners in the 1990s. The report points out that 2.5 per cent of the white households live in overcrowded conditions whereas the figure is 16.9 per cent for Black African households, 22.8 per cent for Pakistani households and 53.8 per cent for Bangladeshi households. Although these figures closely relate to poverty, the problem of discrimination that these communities experience cannot be reduced to the problem of disadvantage.

On paper, commitment to the provision of equal access to housing or decision-making structures does not automatically bring positive results. Indeed women, and Black and ethnic minority people are among those who do not have equal access to decision-making structures, even in localities where they form the majority of the population. The studies investigating public housing, on the other hand, are often either ethnic-blind or gender-blind or both (Brion and Tinker 1980, CRE 1977, CRE 1980, Roberts 1991, Wajcman 1991). Issues of public housing are often looked at as if these processes are value-free, i.e. 'neutral', tagging ethnic minorities and women onto the investigations

rather than analysing the processes through the optics of social constructs such as ‘race’, ethnicity, gender and class. It is, therefore, important to investigate how social divisions and unequal distribution of power affect participation in decision-making of individuals and collectivities with differences in their identities. Such an investigation requires an understanding of the ways in which decisions are made and how concepts of ‘power’ and ‘difference’ pan out in these processes. Finally, all of these processes of decision-making need to be contextualised in that they need to be located in the wider social economic and political environment in which they are taking place.

As this thesis elaborates, the mainstream approach naturalises the ethnic and gender characteristics of the dominant groups implying that only minorities have ethnicity. It also implicitly assumes that these minorities and women are homogeneous. Moreover gender and ethnic divisions employ inherent assumptions about the naturalness of both difference and inequalities. Subsequently, ethnic and gender divisions involve practices of exclusions as well as the structuring of disadvantage in favour of dominant ethnic and gender group (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1993).

It is, therefore, important for me to investigate the social divisions of ethnicity and gender and related notions of ‘power’, ‘difference’ and ‘participation’ socially and spatially, and both macro and local levels. Thus the main theoretical concerns of the research are: What is ‘participation’ and what is the relationship between the notions of ‘participation’, ‘power’ and ‘difference’? How do issues of participation relate to issues of ‘difference’ and social divisions of ethnicity and gender in wider society? How central is the notion of ‘difference’ to participatory processes of decision-making? What are the relationships between the social divisions of ethnicity and gender and ‘the community’ and ‘empowerment’, on the one hand, and space/place, on the other? What is the relationship between ‘difference’ and construction(s) of community? What is the relationship between the notions of ‘citizenship’, ‘the community’ and ‘empowerment’?

At the empirical level it is important to explore the levels of decision-making in which tenants participate. The six case studies that I have carried out in two London boroughs - London Boroughs of Islington and Lewisham - attempt to answer questions such as: If tenants do participate what is the degree of their influence on the decisions and outcomes of these decisions? What other parties are involved in these processes and the

degree that *they* can influence these processes? Who are the participants/non-participants in the decision-making processes and what are the characteristics of their social positionings? How do different participants in the decision-making processes construct the notion of ‘the community’?

I look at the issues both on a macro and a local level, because participation in decision-making at the local level relates to issues of participation in decision-making at the macro level. The theoretical framework I will be using is an eclectic one involving a number of theoretical frameworks - mainly feminist and post-structuralist. What underlines them all is their specific deconstructionist approach.

The theoretical framework of the research is set out in Part I. It begins with a chapter that examines the relationship between the concept of ‘the community’ and social divisions of ‘race’, ethnicity and gender on the one hand and space and place on the other. The chapter examines the key concept of ‘the community’, discussing how notions of ‘empowerment’ and ‘identity’ relate to the concept both socially and spatially. Planning is discussed as one way of participation. Concepts of space and place are taken up as social constructs and their links to the notion of ‘the community’ is discussed.

Chapter 2 analyses issues of decision-making at the *macro* level examining how questions of ‘participation’ and ‘empowerment’ relate to the notions of ‘identity’/‘difference’ and social divisions of ethnicity and gender. It discusses the notion of ‘citizenship’ and how it relates to ‘participation’ of individuals in ‘the community’ and notions of ‘power’/‘empowerment’. Thus the chapter examines how, at the *macro* level, social divisions and the subsequent unequal distribution of power affects participation in ‘the community’ and decision-making of individuals and collectivities with differential social positionings. Rights and duties are notions closely linked to the notion of citizenship (Marshall 1950) and, as Yuval-Davis (1997) points out, the overall concept of citizenship can be seen as summing up the relationship between the individual, society and the state. Arguing that ethnic and gender relations play a key role in shaping the notion of citizenship the chapter explores the notion of citizenship that combines both equality and difference.

Chapter 3 examines the question of organisations and how participation, power and difference are reflected at this level. The chapter looks at the formal/informal, and bureaucratic organisations as well as channels of communication and how decisions are made in organisations. The chapter explores the notion of ‘participation’ at the local level in order to see how social divisions, construction of ‘difference’, and corresponding power distribution affect participation of different individuals and groups in decision-making. The chapter also looks at decentralisation as a form of formal organisation at corporate level and in local organisations briefly discussing the way it relates to Fordism.

Part I concludes by setting out the problematics that relate to the theoretical issues examined in these chapters.

Part II as the empirical part of the thesis looks at public housing and decision-making processes. It begins with an overview of the historical development of housing policies in Britain. Chapter 4 examines the extent to which there is a paternalistic attitude of the professionals and state authorities. The chapter presents a number of problematics that are addressed in the following parts of the thesis. These problematics include the question of entitlement to public housing in terms of differences in identities of people; the relationship between poverty which relates to the identity category of class and other categories that also correspond to the social divisions such as ethnicity and gender; the ramifications of diverse and special household needs of people with differences in their ethnic and cultural identities (e.g. Black and ethnic minorities); the differential ways in which housing policies affect tenants with differences in their social positionings; the ramifications of gender difference with regard to the question of safety - which is of a particular concern for women - and its relationship with the division of the public/private; the extent to which tenants can participate and influence decision-making processes.

Chapter 5 discusses decision-making at central and local levels in public housing in Islington and Lewisham. The decision-making processes are gendered and ethnicised in that not only the number of women was higher than the number of men in local level of decision-making such as tenants associations and tenants management organisations but also there existed a significant representation of white women. Whereas Black and

ethnic minority men in general were under represented while women from these groups were absent altogether. Many women occupy politically subordinate position at *central* level of the decision-making structure despite their central role in organising and managing at local level. Decision-making bodies represent a highly heterogeneous, dynamic and ever shifting system of power.

Chapter 6 and 7 examine council managed *Miranda Estate*, and *Elthorne First Tenant Management Co-operative*. Decision-making processes in terms of tenants participation and ethnicity and gender configurations are analysed. Both chapters attempt to illustrate the social reality of the estates by mapping out the social organisation of space and the ways in which this is reflected in the spatial. Then particular moments of decision-making are explored by studying the relation between the tenants and the Council. Constructions of concepts such as ‘difference’, ‘power’ and ‘community’ by tenants are explored.

Chapter 6 explores the relationship between the Council and the tenants as individuals and as a collectivity, e.g. Tenants Association. Tenants’ view of the Council and consultation process and its shortcomings are examined. Chapter 7 on the other hand investigates the issues emerging as a result of tenants taking over the responsibility of the management of their estate in the form of Tenant Management Co-operative. The relationship between the Council and the Tenant Management Co-operative, the way members perceive the Council, the Council’s attitude to the management of Tenant Management Co-operative are explored. Both chapters also examine the social divisions in decision-making. It is argued that collectivities such as the tenants groups are not homogenous groupings instead individuals are positioned differently within the collectivity in terms of ethnicity, gender, class and sexuality. As a result, individuals hold different amount of power within their collectivities.

Chapters 8-11 investigate decision-making processes in self-build projects. Chapter 8 explores the views of those professionals involved in the self-build process and their relationship with the self-builders themselves. Architects describe the changing nature of the self-build process and how the power attached to the roles of the participants have shifted in recent years. Self-builders have become marginalized and less in control of the self-build process. At the same time the process has become more professionally led

and bureaucratised reducing the role of the self-builder to a mere labourer. Subsequently, self-builders are now less able to participate in the design process, which inevitably affects their motivation.

Chapters 9-11 examine two ethnically mixed projects namely *Community Self-Build* (Islington), *Greenstreet Housing Co-op* (Lewisham), and a Black-only self-build project *Fusions Jameen Housing Co-operative*. The chapters illustrate the social space and the social divisions. Then the decision-making process is explored with the questions of ‘who takes the decisions and who is in power?’ Thus the concept of ‘the community’ is examined in relation to the self-build group as well as neighbourhood. The chapters argue that what all the self-build projects had in common was the simultaneous enunciation of empowerment and disempowerment by the self-builders.

Part III discusses those issues that have been problematised in the earlier chapters and relate them back to the theoretical concerns discussed in the first part of the thesis. The conclusions of the research are demonstrated by discussing the findings of the research in the light of the theoretical framework presented in the Part I. Chapter 12 discusses the ways in which ‘difference’ and differential power relations between individuals and groups in social space are reflected in physical space. It also discusses the issues of ‘tenants control’ arguing that the category of ‘tenants’ is divided in number of ways including their ‘race’, ethnicity and gender. As a result they all have differentiated power relations between them all of which has ramifications for equal opportunities policies. Chapter 13 discusses the actual involvement of tenants in decision-making processes. The chapter argues that decision-making processes are highly ethnicised and gendered which leads to shifting power relations among the participants. Indeed experiences of tenants in these housing processes are diverse as a result of their location within the social matrix. Therefore, the issue of tenants’ participation partly relates to the question of *which* tenants participate in the decision-making processes.

The final chapter presents the conclusions of the thesis and considers the implications for the local authorities of the findings of the research. It argues that it is imperative for the local authorities to recognise the diversity of experiences of tenants. Such a recognition would require policies to be formulated in a way rejecting unitary notion of tenants and do away with the tendency to rely on fixed and unchanging notions of ‘the

community', culture and identity. Policies require to be formulated based on an understanding of the way identities are constantly formed and re-formed around 'race' and ethnicity which in turn are influenced by other forms of identity based categories such as gender, class, sexuality and age.

Having contextualised the research problem and the aim of the research, the next chapter on methodology deals with the epistemological and methodological concerns of the research, following this I shall discuss the specific methods I used during the data collection and analysis.

Methodology

Public housing continues to be the only method of housing that can yield accommodation to a large number of people at an affordable cost. Over the last two decades, however, council housing has virtually come to an end despite the growing number of people in need of proper standards of housing (Balchin 1995, Birchall 1992, Malpass and Murie 1994, Quiney 1986). In 1980's, local governments came under attack from the central government. What is more, the overall image of local government was also a 'poor one' for the people (Hodge 1985: 29). They were seen 'as anonymous, big, bureaucratic, inefficient, wasteful'. It was the Councils that were blamed for things that went wrong and 'the council has become a scapegoat for many of the ills that people experience in present times'. As a result, some councils called for change in the provision of their services and went into decentralisation. Moreover, the growing concern about the bureaucratic and impersonal nature of welfare services led many local authorities to attempt to involve people actively in the formulations of their decisions. Thus, in recent years consultation and participation have been introduced into the design and management processes of public housing by many local authorities. New and radical approaches to planning and the housing problem emerged with the intention of giving people greater control over their homes and their environment. Thus popular planning initiatives aim to democratise decision-making processes by involving residents of a particular area, and empowering groups and individuals to take control over decisions that influence their lives. Design and management of housing is a continuous decision-making process in which a series of decisions need to be taken in terms of allocation of properties, transfers, and maintenance including minor and major repairs. However, these decisions affect tenants differentially as a result of their social location and existing structural inequalities in society. There are unequal power relations between tenants in these participation processes as a result of their positioning in terms of class, gender, and ethnicity, as well as factors such as ideological positioning, and values.

The aim of this investigation is to analyse the decision-making processes in housing in order to see the extent tenants are able to participate in these processes. Of particular interest to this examination are the ethnic and gender divisions in these processes.

Decision-making in housing can broadly be divided into three levels. These are namely central government level, borough level and neighbourhood level (see Chapter 2 and 3). Questions that need answering therefore are: ‘What are the levels of decision-making in which tenants are able to participate, if any?’ and if they *do* participate in any of these levels, ‘What is the degree of their influence on the decisions and outcomes of these decisions?’; ‘What is the required or desirable level of their involvement and the degree that this is achieved?’; ‘What other parties are involved in these processes and the degree that *they* can influence these processes?’ In order to respond to questions such as these, one needs an understanding of the ways in which decisions are made; of differential power relations that come into play between all those involved while making decisions; and of the amount of power attached to the roles of those involved. There will be a particular focus on ethnic and gender divisions while exploring decision-making processes and existing differential power relations in them. Finally, all of these processes of decision-making need to be contextualised in that they need to be located in the wider social, economic and political environment in which they are taking place.

Epistemological and methodological issues and the feminist critique

There are a number of issues that need to be addressed when doing a social investigation. Among these are those that can only be tackled by dealing with issues of epistemology and methodology. Traditional foundationalist position in social research is based on an epistemological position that assumes that there exists a *single* reality existing ‘out there’. It can be investigated and observed with the special expertise of science independent of observer-effects (Stanley and Wise 1993: 6). Such a position claims that knowledge gained through a specific research situation with a specific set of circumstances can be generalised and applied to other situations unproblematically. Hence traditional epistemologies claim that the ‘neutrality’ of the research is possible and that it is possible for the researcher to be ‘objective’ by ‘distancing’ themselves and thus remaining allegedly ‘neutral’. Also claimed is the existence of the so-called truth and the researcher is expected to discover it (Acker *et al.* 1991, Kitzinger and Wilkinson 1996, Yuval-Davis 1993).

However, claims of these epistemologies that a single, unique, physical world exists independently of observers, for instance, have been criticised for ‘the process of observing it involves both conscious and unconscious interpretation’ (Blaikie 1993:

102). I share this view that formulating a research question is inseparable from the values of the researcher.

This study set out to examine the diverse experiences of tenants originating from the varying social positioning of each individual. This involves exploring differential and shifting power relations between all those involved in decision-making processes; understanding the interplay of multiple and shifting identities of people and analysing the construction of 'us and them' division and construction of 'the Other'. All of this will also include considering the social positioning of the researcher and her relation to those being researched in contrast to the traditional epistemology which dictates the methods of data collection and analysis required for a study to be 'objective' leaving out the multiple identities of the researcher. Claims of the 'neutrality' of the researcher, as if the researcher can be 'objective' by 'distancing' herself and disregarding her own characteristics, is false. On the contrary, only by recognising the subjectivities of the researcher and her relation to those being researched can the research process properly be brought under scrutiny. It is important to note that the particular knowledge, experience, expectations and language an observer brings into the research process will influence what is observed. In this way, observers are considered to be active agents and not passive 'receptacles'. Hence, contrary to the traditional stance this investigation is based on an epistemological position which locates the researcher on the same footing as those researched, and views knowledge as contextually specific (Blaikie 1993).

There are many feminist critiques of the traditional epistemology and methodology. In the following discussion I will look at some of the issues that feminist critiques have tended to pick up. In doing so, I will also attempt to clarify the epistemological and methodological base of this research.

Feminists have been inquiring into a new epistemological viewpoint and questioning the methodology in social research. Nancy Duncan argues (1996:1) that this 'new epistemological viewpoint is based on the idea of knowledge as embodied, engendered and embedded in the material context of place and space' and feminists currently are examining its ramifications.

Objectivity and 'the truth'

Traditionally methodology textbooks have required the researcher to be 'objective' and 'neutral', implying that knowledge production is a neutral activity, free from the values of the researcher (Hallam and Marshall 1993). The Oxford English Dictionary describes 'objectivity' as 'exhibiting facts uncoloured by feelings or opinions'. However, feminists argue, there is not such thing as a 'neutral' standpoint. Claiming that such a 'neutral standpoint' exists is in fact concealing the differentiated power relations and structured inequalities that exist in society (Alcoff 1996, Duncan 1996, Young 1987).

Feminists further argue that claiming that objectivity can be achieved through a 'neutral standpoint' in effect means leaving a 'significant subjectively-based knowledge' out of science, and this way keeping it also out of analysis. The personal and the subjective have an inevitable impact on various aspects of the research process and they can be a significant source of the sexist (and racist and classist) bias in traditional supposedly objective research. It is important to place the researcher on the same critical plane as those that are being researched. Only then does it become possible to critically examine the whole research process in relation to its findings, and thus see the role of the researcher in collecting and interpreting the data (Fonow and Cook 1991, Harding 1987, Jayaratne and Steward 1991: 98).

There also exists a problem, according to the feminists, of the extent to which one can generalise the so-called truth of the findings of the research. 'Objectivity' and 'neutral stand point' imply that there exists an 'objective truth' that can be discovered and that the findings of the discovery process can be generalised unproblematically. Yet there is no such thing as an 'objective truth', rather, 'the truth' is socially constructed in which the social values of those who construct it are embedded (Blaikie 1993, Yuval-Davis 1993).

When feminists stated that 'the personal is the political', they meant that it is the personal life experiences where the power also lies and that political must be examined (Stanley and Wise 1993: 62-3). Exploration of relationships and experiences within everyday life, including feelings, beliefs, behaviours, is in fact the exploration of the power and those politics. What is more, feminists rejected the traditional distinction between 'objective' and 'subjective' as false. They claimed that 'the traditional male emphasis has been on objectifying experiences and so "getting away from" the personal

into some transcendental realm of “knowledge” and “truth” (1993: 63). Yet the notion of ‘the truth’ that exists independent of us is problematic. There is not a single truth but different and competing truths, which are all social constructs. Liz Stanley and Sue Wise who reject a positivist view of social reality put it this way:

‘That there isn’t *one* true social reality “out there” to be discovered, but competing truths and realities competently managed and negotiated by members of society, is rejected by positivism. This is because positivism knows that “the truth” exists and that those people who don’t believe this are, quite simply, wrong or misguided. They may be inadequately socialized, falsely conscious perhaps, or even deluded, but ultimately they are wrong’ (1993: 113)(their emphasis).

They reject ‘the idea of “the researcher” as a god-like creature who is able to leave behind subjective involvements while conducting research’. They elaborate on this in the following quotation:

‘We also believe that there are many (often competing) versions of truth. Which, if any, is “the” truth is irrelevant. And even if such a thing as “truth” exists, this is undemonstrable. This is because “truth” is a *belief* which people construct out of what they recognize as facts. When other people reject our facts, insist that their own are the “real” facts, this doesn’t usually mean that we agree with them. Instead we use the same arguments that they do: *their* facts are wrong, *they* must be mistaken, we reject *their* interpretation’ (Stanley and Wise 1993: 113) (their emphasis).

Feminisms claim that social world is a social construction and that it is constructed differently by people who, in different social locations, have had different life experiences such as men and women. Dominant forms of science have constructed the social world from a world point of view. Hence, feminists argue, multiple realities are possible.

Feminists however have been criticised in that ‘the experiences of women as subjugated members of their society are cross-cut by race, class and culture (or ethnicity) thus making it difficult to justify *a* feminist epistemological standpoint’ (Blaikie 1993: 124).

My personal experiences and my social location played an important part in defining the topic and the whole process of my research. As discussed in more detail later in the

chapter my personal experiences arising from my own location within the context of existing social relations and my relation to these inequalities are also implicitly and explicitly embedded in my research. All of which makes any knowledge claiming to arise out of such research to be contextually specific. In other words, it would be wrong to generalise my findings beyond their context.

Throughout the research process I had to make choices that were in fact reflections of my own values based on my own social positioning. My own values are founded on being a woman from an ethnic minority (of Turkish origin). Having trained as an architect, having lived in public housing in North London, and having stood against inequalities in the society, are all values inevitably built into my study, and are inseparable from the whole research process and its findings. These and my other various characteristics put me into a particular power-relationship with other people including my respondents. My location as a researcher provided me with insights into the structures of power inequalities of race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, age and inequalities of resource distribution. As a researcher, I had an active presence throughout my research, and was operational in constructing what is actually a viewpoint. ‘A way of seeing is a way of not seeing’ (Oakley 1974: 27). Thus what I decided to look at and the choices I have made throughout the research process also reflected what I chose not to look at and did not see (Bhavnani and Phoenix 1994, Stanley and Wise 1993)

Clara H. Greed (1991), describing the subculture of the traditionally male profession of surveying, points out the concept of ‘closure’ as discussed by Parkin (1979). She notes that as a key theme it was first developed by Weber (1964) in relation to the power of various sub-groups protecting their status. She highlights that:

‘This is worked out on a day-to-day basis at the interpersonal level, with some people being made to feel awkward, unwelcome, and “wrong”; and others being welcomed into subculture, made to feel comfortable (Gale 1989a and b), and encouraged to progress to the decision-making levels within it’ (1991: 6).

She contends that viewing ‘all the “little” occurrences of everyday (i.e. encouragements and discouragements, nicenesses and nastinesses) as being trivial, irrelevant, or not

serious enough to be counted as real data' for her research into surveying. She maintains that they are 'the very building blocks of the whole subcultural structure' (1991: 6).

Thus disciplines such as construction and surveying (see also Chapter 1) are highly exclusive to those who do not fit into the dominant 'subculture' because of their ethnic, gender, cultural, sexual, class location. As discussed in Chapter 3, those professionals from these disciplines play a significant role in decision-making with regard to housing policies. The outcomes of these policies invariably reflect the exclusive nature of these and other processes that take place within the context of the wider social environment (Greed 1994). The built environment in general and housing in particular, in turn, mirror the inequalities of the society we are living in (see Chapter 1).

Subsequently my personal experiences of these and other more subtle processes of exclusion operating within society played an important part in defining the topic and the whole process of my research. As a researcher having common experiences with those being researched raises some questions in relation to whether, and how, researchers can and should represent others. Jane Haggis (1990:76) points to the danger that 'no one voice can be privileged without risking the slighting of another'. Indeed throughout the research process I had to make choices that were in fact reflections of my own values based on my own social position.

Difference and power

As discussed in Chapter 3, tenants are not a homogenous category they have diverse characteristics in terms of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, class, sexuality, age. Tenants' multiple and shifting identities locate them in the social matrix resulting in differential power relations among them. Also, as discussed in Chapter 3, decision-making often involves politicians, professionals, bureaucrats who also have multiple and shifting identities. These processes comprise a number of dimensions of power and powerlessness that constitute 'the Other'. As Celia Kitzinger and Sue Wilkinson (1996: 15) argue, 'multiple intersecting discourses of Otherness can position researcher and researched in shifting ways'. Discussing the destabilisation of the problem of 'Otherness' they refer to Kum-Kum Bhavnani's experience as a black woman interviewing young white men. Bhavnani points out that although her role as a researcher, her age, and her assumed class position may be seen as sources of potential domination, nonetheless her 'racialised and gender ascriptions suggested the opposite'.

She puts it as follows: ‘That is, in this instance, the interviewees and myself were inscribed within multi-faceted power relations which had structural dominance *and* structural subordination in play on both sides’ (1993a: 101).

Indeed, similarly, although my role as researcher and my professional background were apparent sources of power during my investigation, the characteristics of my ethnicity and gender involved shifting power dynamics throughout my research. My own social positioning as a researcher was an integral part of the investigation I have carried out and my personal characteristics and experiences have had a critical influence on the research process. They have an impact on what I see, what I do, and the way I handle and interpret the data and construct what is happening. Hence my differences and similarities with the respondents affected interpersonal relations throughout the research. These experiences cannot be separated-off from my discussion of the findings of the research.

The key dimensions of my positioning in relation to power that have influenced the investigation are as follows: (1) Ethnicity and Gender: I am an ethnic minority woman (Turkish) myself, (2) Experience: i. I have been trained as an architect and had been teaching Building Design at a college when I started my research, ii. I have been subjected to blatant racism and sexism while working as an architect in the Construction industry and as a lecturer in a Construction Department, iii. I was a member of Race Relations Committee of Islington Council ten years prior to my research, iv. I have been living in public housing for a number of years, (3) Ideological: My stance has always been against inequalities in the society.

These and my various other characteristics located me ‘across power-saturated matrices of race, gender, class and sexuality’ (Paulin 1996: 113) which enabled me to gain insights into the structures of power inequalities in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, class and inequalities of resource distribution (Bhavnani and Phoenix 1994). Thus as a researcher, my presence throughout my research process was that of an active one, and I was constructing what was actually a viewpoint. As briefly discussed earlier, my social positioning located me in the research process in a contradictory way. Power-relations existed between the respondents I have interviewed and myself as well as between the respondents themselves as tenants, officers and politicians, which were shifting throughout the investigation. These relations of power were complicated by

constructions of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality. Respondents had multiple identities in terms of ethnicity, gender, class, and the decision-making processes were racialised, ethnicised, gendered and classed. Consequently each individual was located in hierarchical relations of power that were temporal and spatial, and were constantly shifting.

Interpreting: 'An incomplete and imperfect process'

In the late 70's in Britain, as Stanley and Wise argue, 'academic feminism' that was located mainly in the discipline of sociology and feminist social science had a number of 'key concerns' including 'producing a powerful critique of mainstream theory and research; ... arguing that "male methods", quantitative methods, were biased whereas "female" qualitative ones were not...' (1993: 2) However, they maintain, a number of characteristics of this 'academic feminism' was worrying. They explain this as follows:

'Predominantly it adopted a "scientific" stance towards women as the *objects* of its study; it ignored the power dimensions of the research relationship and of writing as perhaps the key means by which academic feminists establish authority and power over "Women"; it drew a line between the lives of women, to be researched, and the lives of feminist researchers, which remained hidden from analytic scrutiny; it adopted either mainstream positivist methods or equally positivist interpretations of "qualitative" approaches (erroneously treated by many British feminist social scientists as synonymous with interviewing); and it assumed the existence of a single and unitary "Women" and ignored - or rather silenced - those who were not white, middle class, heterosexual, first world, able bodied, young (and in Britain also Londoners)' (Stanley and Wise 1993: 3)(their emphasis).

They further criticise the fact that 'most feminist criticisms of the social sciences end up adding women in to what already exists' which they call "'women and ... ' syndrome'. They argue that the 'gap-filling emphasis has led to women's studies becoming appropriated as an *area of study* by existing male-dominated social science' (1993: 42-43)(their emphasis).

Dale Spender (1978), rejecting the practices in sociology that tag women on to existing sexist knowledge, calls for development of new criteria for what counts as 'knowledge'. She suggests that dichotomies that lead to conventional, and sexist constructions of social reality have to be rejected:

'few, it appears, have questioned our polarisation of reason/emotion, objectivity/subjectivity, reality/phantasy, hard data/soft data and examined them for links with our polarisation of male/female. Yet within the dogma of science it would seem that reason, objectivity, reality - and male - occupy high status positions' (Spender 1978: 4 cited in Stanley and Wise 1993: 41).

Stanley and Wise (1993: 43) maintain that 'most existing feminist criticisms make women's experiences into an addendum to existing social science theory and practice'. They highlight their position as rejection of mere 'identification of "feminist research" with particular methods, and sexist research with others'. They suggest that "'feminist research" is fundamentally involved with, and derives from, the nature of feminist consciousness'. Therefore, they conclude, 'it involves "seeing reality differently"' (Stanley and Wise 1979).

Ann Oakley (1981: 38) argues that in methodology textbooks the paradigm of 'proper' interviewing described in such a way that appeals to such values as 'objectivity, detachment, hierarchy and "science" as an important cultural activity which takes priority over people's more individualised concerns'. On the other hand, poor interviewing comprise such flaws as 'subjectivity, involvement, the "fiction" of equality, and an undue concern with the ways in which people are not statistically comparable'. Hence 'this polarity of "proper" and "improper" interviewing', Oakley maintains, 'is [an] almost classical representation of the widespread gender stereotyping' that takes place in modern industrial societies and has been revealed in countless studies. Yet feminist researchers 'whose primary orientation is towards the validation of women's subjective experiences as women and as people' find these paradigms problematic (1981: 30). The critique of the traditional interviewing practice leads to a different understanding of the research process. As Jannet Holland and Caroline Ramazanoglu (1994: 127) comment:

'By treating coming to conclusions as a social process, we can show that interpretation is a political, contested and unstable process between the lives of the researchers and those of the researched'.

Stanley (1990: 210) suggests that ‘all knowledge is autobiographically - located in a particular social context of experiencing and knowing’. Indeed the social positioning of the researcher, and the complex ways of relating to others impacts upon the whole research process from the way initial research questions are posed to the interpretation of the findings and the drawing of conclusions. In other words, our characteristics as a person, and the multiple identities we have, affect the way we experience the research. It is inevitable that our own experiences and consciousness all have a crucial impact on the research process. What we see in our investigation, the ways in which we handle our data, e.g. selecting and interpreting and finally what we construct as the outcome of our research, are all profoundly influenced by our positioning as the researcher. Stanley and Wise (1993: 60) further argue that:

‘For feminists these experiences must not be separated-off from our discussions of research outcomes. To the extent that we do this we merely repeat traditional male mystifications of “research” and “science”, and by doing so we downgrade the personal and the everyday’.

Subsequently, as Diane Reay (1996: 60) points out, feminist researchers underlined the ‘importance of locating themselves within their research’. Reay, in her essay, elaborates the ways in which her class background, just as much as her gender, affects all stages of the research process from theoretical starting points to conclusions. She relates that she now feels her interpretive framework provides a more sensitive response to difference, privilege and disadvantage and she concludes by stressing that:

‘However, interpretation remains an imperfect and incomplete process. There are many possible readings of interview transcripts. From where I am socially positioned certain aspects of the data are much more prominent than others’ (Reay 1996: 70).

Describing reflexivity as ‘... a continual consideration of the ways in which the researcher’s own social identity affect the data gathered and the picture of the social world produced...’ Reay points out that reflexivity in this sense has been a paramount project within feminism. She further suggests that although a lot has been written about the complex process of data analysis and interpretation what is not easily found in the methods texts is ‘any elaboration of the researcher’s power in relation to, first, selecting which data to use, and second how these data are interpreted’ (1996: 62). In this process

the proximity of the research topic to the researcher's own life experience may become problematic. As Barbara Du Bois points out:

'The closer our subject matter to our own life and experience, the more we can probably expect our own beliefs about the world to enter into and shape our work - to influence the very questions we pose, our conception of how to approach to those questions, and the interpretations we generate from our findings' (Du Bois 1983: 105 cited in Reay 1996: 62).

Anne Opie, on the other hand, voices concern about feminist interpretations of qualitative research. She puts it as:

'Although at one point they are liberatory because they open to inspection what has been previously hidden, they are also restrictive in the sense that they can appropriate the data to the researcher's interests, so that other significant experiential elements which challenge or partially disrupt that interpretation can be silenced' (Opie 1992: 52).

As discussed in Chapter 1, space and place are created and defined by the economic, social and political relations including ethnic and gender and class relations, which are constructed and negotiated. In space and place these socio-economic and political relations intersect from the most local level to the most global. Re-conceptualisation of space and place this way can offer a challenge to the claims of universality of mainstream epistemology (Massey 1994, Duncan 1996).

Moreover, this investigation does not tag women onto existing gender-blind knowledge (or Black and ethnic minority people's experiences onto ethnic-blind knowledge). Instead it examines the intersectionality of categories and shifting power-relations created through them. Hence, it has to be stressed once more that the interpretation of the findings of this research is one of many possible readings of the interview transcripts. My own values and choices form an integral part of the way I have interpreted the data and 'from where I am socially positioned, certain aspects of the data are much more prominent than others'. Furthermore this interpretation remains an imperfect and incomplete process (Reay 1996: 70). It has been carried out within specific social relations and temporally and spatially specific, and therefore cannot be generalised beyond its context. However I will attempt to draw and present some

conclusions from the investigation by analysing and discussing its findings in the light of the general theoretical framework presented in Part I of the thesis.

Data collection

As stated earlier, the aim of the research was to examine the decision-making processes in public housing in order to see the extent to which tenants are able to participate in them with a particular interest in specific social divisions (i.e. ethnicity and gender). The questions that emerge from this general aim of the investigation are: ‘what are the roles of tenants in these decision-making processes?’ and equally importantly how do *they* view their role in the design and management processes of their housing? Responding to these questions necessitated a close examination of the relationship between decentralised and central decision-making bodies, and studying local neighbourhood forums and committees as well as central council committees and sub-committees. Furthermore, it was necessary to understand the ways in which tenants are involved in the decisions made by these bodies and the impact of these decisions on tenants and their interaction with other participants (e.g. council officers and elected members) and finally the differential power relations in these processes. While examining how, and to what extent, tenants are able to influence these decisions, this research also explores the ways in which these processes are ethnicised and gendered.

In order to investigate these highly complex relationships and the interaction of those participants (e.g. tenants, officers and politicians), a qualitative research was required with an inquiry into the viewpoints of those individuals who take part in these processes. Indeed it was crucial to see these processes ‘through the eyes of’ those who are most affected by them (Silverman 1993: 24), and form an understanding of the viewpoints of tenants to establish what the experience was like for them.

The methodological approach arising out of these aims was an in-depth study of three different types of housing projects where the degree of tenant involvement in their housing processes varied considerably. Each of these three types of housing projects characterised a different way and degree of participation by tenants in decision-making. These were *firstly*, council managed estates in which *all* major and minor decisions are taken by the local authority; *secondly*, tenant management co-operatives in which tenants take over the responsibility of the day-to-day management of their estate while the ownership of the estate remains with the council and some major decisions are taken

models of dealing with issues of special needs, having used specific strategies to deal with these issues - e.g. neighbourhood forums, neighbourhood committees, self-build models (Hogget and Hambleton 1987).

Projects for the case studies were selected in terms of their size and availability of access. Hence Marshall and Rossman (1995) describes 'the ideal site' as:

'where (1) entry is possible; (2) there is a high probability that a rich mix of the processes, people, programs, interactions, and structures of interest are present; (3) the researcher is likely to be able to build trusting relations with the participants in the study; and (4) data quality and credibility of the study are reasonably assured'(1995: 51).

Joan Cassell (1988: 93-5) makes a distinction between *physical* and *social access* when she describes 'a two-stage process of penetrating a closed access group': 'getting in (achieving physical access), and getting on (achieving social access)' (cited in Hornsby-Smith, 1993: 53). In situations of open access it is generally easier for an investigator to 'get in' and reach the potential respondents. Yet some organisations, though they are formally open, may still be 'decidedly closed and react defensively, erecting barriers against what they perceive as external threats from hostile intruders' (for example, some religious movements)(1993: 59). It would also be wrong to assume, Cassell argues, that only those elites with social power are able to keep situations of closed access to outsiders whilst those non-elites with no power are unable to prevent open access. Although, for instance, she argues, groups such as black minority groups, street homeless do not possess much social power, all of them would be able to resist social access. 'In practice, therefore, the distinction between closed and open access, useful for analytical purposes, is often blurred and may change during the course of research' (1988: 95).

Hence, although in the case studies of this research, situations of relatively open physical access existed, social access did not come about automatically. Some problems emerged in relation to its achievement and had to be negotiated tactfully. Thus in order to gain access, I have contacted those individuals who may have a greater role and responsibility, such as the chair of the tenant association, neighbourhood forum, and went to their meetings whenever possible in order to create trust and accessibility.

The specific projects that I have undertaken to look at as case studies are as follows:

London Borough of Islington:

- *Elthorne First Co-op*
- *Miranda Estate*
- *Islington Community Self-build Project.*

London Borough of Lewisham:

- *Greenstreet Self- build Housing Project*
- *Fusions Jameen Self-build Housing Project, Phase I and Phase II.*

Designing samples

Tenant management co-operatives were seen as a way of helping to break up the large estates into smaller units. This way the bureaucratised, remote and indifferent housing management has been replaced with a simple, local, democratic structure with possible benefits in lower turnover and greater satisfaction (Power 1988). Accordingly, they tend to be relatively smaller in their number of units than council-managed estates. For example, of the existing 27 Tenant Management Organisations in Islington 14 have less than 15 units and three have less than 50 units. Of the remaining 10 Co-ops, two have 54 and 80 units. There are only three Tenant Management Organisations managing over hundred units in Islington. Thus, Elthorne First Co-op is situated in a larger Elthorne Estate where there are four Tenant Management Co-operatives and 400 dwellings in the Council-run part of the Estate, out of a total of approximately 850 dwellings. Table 1 shows the breakdown of units each Co-op manages.

Tenant Management Co-operatives tended to have a smaller number of units for management purposes, which determined the size of the council-managed estate that I could look at, for they ought to be of a similar size in order to be comparable.

<u>Co-operative</u>	<u>Number of units</u>
Elthorne First	137
Arch-Elm	95
Brooke Park	115
Holbrook	103

Table 1: The number of units each Co-operative manages in Elthorne Estate in Islington.

Self-build projects tend to be even smaller in their number of units, i.e. less than 50 units. Consequently, the number of Black and ethnic minority tenants of these projects were also smaller. Hence all of these factors in turn affected the sample size, which tended to be smaller. Yet as Michael Quinn Patton (1990) suggests:

‘The validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information-richness of the cases selected and observational/ analytical capabilities of the researcher than with sample size’ (1990: 185).

Thus, different ways of sampling were adopted throughout the investigation. Nonprobability samples were adopted ‘in which the likelihood of selection is not actually known’ (Sommer and Sommer 1991: 228). Of the three general types of nonprobability sampling two were used that are namely *quota sampling*, and *purposive sampling*.

Quota sampling

Quota sampling ‘is specifying the selection categories according to the needs of the researcher. Within those categories, individuals are chosen randomly’ (Sommer and Sommer 1991: 228). The list of household names that I had obtained from the managers would not necessarily reflect the actual composition of the Estate. Yet it would provide a sufficient number of individuals in each part of research design to permit adequate comparisons to be made. ‘While the number of individuals in each category of a quota sample is chosen according to the researcher’s needs, the particular individuals are chosen randomly’.

Purposive sample: Snowball sampling

As Patton (1990: 169) suggests contrary to quantitative methods, qualitative approach focuses in depth on relatively small samples selected *purposefully*. Indeed, he further points out:

‘the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information-rich cases* for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term *purposeful sampling*’ (1990: 169).

Hence, *purposive sample* was used to target those individuals who are most important or relevant to the issue studied in the research (Sommer and Sommer 1991). A special type of purposive sample called the *snowball sample* was adopted where a researcher asks respondents for other persons to contact. This technique is particularly effective for studying specific groups ‘where membership may not be obvious or where access to members may be difficult’ (1991: 228-9).

As Patton (1990: 176) points out snowball sampling enables the researcher to locate information-rich key informants or critical cases. He describes it as:

‘The process begins by asking well-situated people: “Who knows a lot about _____? Who should I talk to?” By asking a number of people who else to talk with, the snowball gets bigger and bigger as you accumulate new information-rich cases. In most programmes or systems, a few key names or incidents are mentioned repeatedly. Those people or events recommended as valuable by a number of different informants take on special importance. The chain of recommended informants will typically diverge initially as many possible sources are recommended, then converge as a few key names get mentioned over and over’ (1990: 176).

One of the disadvantage of the snowball sampling type is that it can build-in the prejudices of an ‘information-rich group’ to the exclusion of powerless minorities. I have overcome this disadvantage by including individuals from these powerless minorities. Indeed, in this investigation the sample had to be large enough to include sufficient number of individuals in each of the sub-categories that were the subject of the research, namely ethnicity, gender, and the degree of their participation to enable me to interview at least two people from each sub-category.

Each technique of collecting information has its weaknesses and no research technique exists in the behavioural sciences that can be described as 'ideal' (Sommer and Sommer 1991). For example, artificiality is the shortcoming of experimentation whereas observation is limited by unreliability, and also interviews have interviewer bias. A particular technique may have the advantage of one dimension, such as economy, yet at the same time it may have disadvantages in terms of objectivity. The above described 'snowball technique', for instance, may build in the prejudices of an 'in-group' to the exclusion of powerless minorities. Adopting a multi-method approach could compensate this. The aim of researcher should not be to adopt 'the single best method' but rather have a multi-method approach since for most research problems, several procedures will be more useful than having one. This is because although each method has its shortcomings they are unlikely to be the same. In the study of highly complex issues use of multiple methods is critical 'to allow for a check on the validity of individual methods' (Sommer and Sommer 1991: 11).

One of the methods used in the research was in-depth interviewing. All of the interviews were carried out face-to-face and tape-recorded. Each interview took an average of an hour and was transcribed by me. Interviewing also has limitations and flaws. As Marshall and Rossman (1995) argue they involve personal interactions and co-operation of the respondent is crucial. Yet, they point out, respondent's reluctance in sharing all that the interviewer hopes to explore may be a problem. They further point out that:

'The interviewer may not ask questions that evoke long narratives from participants either because of a lack of expertise or familiarity with local language or because of a lack of skill. By the same token, responses to the questions or elements of conversation may not be properly comprehended by the interviewer. And, at times, interviewees may have good reason not to be truthful' (Marshall and Rossman 1995: 81).

Another weakness of interviewing as a method of gathering data is that large amounts of data obtained through interviewing are often very time-consuming to analyse. The final point made by Marshall and Rossman concerns the quality of the data. They argue that:

‘When interviews are used as the sole way of gathering data the researcher should have demonstrated through the conceptual framework that the purpose of the study is to uncover and describe the participants’ perspective on events; that is, that the subjective view is what matters. Studies making more objective assumptions would triangulate interview data with data gathered through other methods’ (1995: 81).

Triangulation of data in this research is achieved by comparing observed, spoken and written forms of data, that is to say observation of decision-making processes, (by this I mean, for example: meetings were compared to the reports and minutes of these meetings as well as to those interviews of the participants and non-participants of these processes). Hence data was taken from all sources as far as possible, among those involved such as from professional and managerial staff, tenants, tenants’ representatives, politicians. Discussions and specific issues were followed up as far as possible through observations, and all available documentary evidence was studied and crosschecked.

The data from the 1991 Population Census was used to provide information on the socio-economic and housing characteristics of the population in relation to two boroughs as well as specific projects.

This research also involved a lot of spontaneity, for one cannot anticipate everything in research of this nature, where highly complex relationships are being studied. For instance, coincidentally a self-built project in the middle of Elthorne Estate existed and I decided to include it in the case studies because it would provide a good opportunity to compare it with the other two projects in Islington, as other demographic factors remained nearly the same.

The original data

The original data of the research has been drawn from fifty-seven interviews conducted in Islington and Lewisham.

Ten interviews were conducted at the Elthorne First Tenant Management Co-op, nine of which were with the tenants and one was with the Manager of the Co-op. Ten interviews were conducted with the tenants of Miranda Estate. Six interviews were conducted with the self-builders of the Islington Community Self-Building Project, six

interviews were carried out at Lewisham Greenstreet Self-build projects and three at the now completed Fusions Jameen Self-build Housing Co-operative Phase I and two at the Phase II of the same Co-operative that is still under construction. Furthermore, three interviews took place at the Community Self Build Agency and two with self-build architects. Nine interviews were conducted with the principal decentralisation and community involvement, tenant participation officers, Estate Managers and Neighbourhood Managers and Housing Committee members. Three workers of tenant federation organisation and three neighbourhood forum members were also interviewed.

In Elthorne First Co-op a large number of houses are accessible only through intercom system, which created a particular difficulty in getting access to the residents, as it was hard to explain the nature of the research and persuade residents to give an interview without seeing them. I could have relied on interviews by the ground floor flat residents only, but this would have resulted in a possible bias. However, I was able to get the names of 33 households from the Manager of the Co-op based at the Co-op office. The list included ethnicity, gender and age breakdown as well as the information on their level of participation in the management of the Co-op. As I mentioned the name of the resident through the intercom they opened the door straight away without any questions, which then enabled me to meet them at their doorstep and introduce myself and explain the nature of my research. This proved to be the best way of getting access to the residents that I needed to interview, in terms of getting their confidence. Obviously I was limited to the list with 33 households' names, but I tried to rectify this by interviewing at least two people from each category.

I would start the interviews with the tenants of the Tenant Management Co-operative by asking them how long they had been living on the Co-op property, and where they had lived before. I would then ask them to describe how they felt about living on the Co-op property and the extent of their involvement with the Co-op management. If they were involved I would then ask why they were involved. If they were not involved I would ask them why they were not involved. I would encourage other people in the household and who were present to also take part in the interview. Consequently, when I went to interview a woman I interviewed her partner too. Yet interviewing them together rather than separately created a particular problem for the husband 'high-jacked' the initial part of the interview. I tried to rectify this by addressing my questions only to the woman for the rest of the interview, and at the end I asked the man if he had anything to

add. Subsequently, on similar occasions, I insisted on interviewing each individual separately.

While interviewing the self-builders I would start asking them how long they had been involved in the project and what they thought about it. Those self-builders building their homes at the time were behind schedule and therefore extremely busy. Their interviews took place while they were on site in other words 'at work'. The interviews of the completed project took place in their homes. Although the self-builders were extremely busy they tended to speak a lot longer than the tenants of the Co-op, who had been living in their dwellings for sometime. It seemed that since some self-builders have been building their homes over the last three to four years, they have had gathered a lot of experience and with hindsight had drawn considerable amount of lessons from this experience, and therefore had a great deal to tell. Those self-builders who have been living in the houses they have had built also had great deal to tell. They all spoke freely and wide-rangingly about their experiences.

I asked the residents of the council-managed estates the same questions as Tenant Management Co-op with some amendments in that I explored their involvement with the tenants association rather than the Co-op, and I put more emphasis on their relationship with the Council.

The questions that I had in mind while interviewing the tenants were as follows: How do tenants feel in terms of decisions made about their housing, day-to-day running of the Estate as well as more long term decisions? Do they feel part of the decision-making process? If so, do they feel in control and are they able to influence this process? Do they feel in power or powerless with regards to their relations with the Council, as well as other agencies involved in the decision-making process (for example, in the case of self-build project the Housing Corporation, Housing Association, the architects)? How do they feel in relation to other tenants? What are the existing divisions and the boundaries that they have constructed?

In these interviews it was possible for me to reach conclusions about the characters of the respondents in terms of assertiveness. At the end of the interview all respondents were asked if they had any questions for me, or whether they wanted to make any further comments.

The secondary data

The secondary data of the investigation included Council policy documents including Housing Strategy, Neighbourhood Profile Documents, minutes of the meetings, reports by various Council officers and Committees, Equal Opportunities Policies, Annual Reports of the two Local Authorities, Tenant Participation Compacts. This was collected from the relevant Council departments, Neighbourhood Offices, Tenant Management Organisation offices, and by observing the relevant meetings. The meetings that I have attended and observed centrally are as follows:

- *The Council Meetings*
- *Policy and Resources Committee Meetings*
- *Housing Committee Meetings*
- *Housing Sub-Committee Meetings*
- *Central Housing Panel Meetings*
- *Neighbourhood Services Committee Meetings*
- *Race Equality and Community Affairs Meetings*
- *Women's Committee Meetings*
- *Community Affairs Committee Meetings*
- *Tenants Liaison Forum (TLF) Meeting*
- *Tenant Council Meetings*
- *Citizens Jury Meeting.*

These meetings were open to the public therefore I did not have to obtain prior permission to attend them. Members of the public were asked to leave if and when confidential items were discussed at the end of the meeting. The volume of the agenda and the reports to be discussed made it necessary either to obtain them a few days prior to the meeting. If this was not possible then I would arrive at least a few hours before the meeting so that I had time to familiarise myself with the items on the agenda in order to be able to follow the discussion. I always noted the breakdown of those present in terms of gender, ethnicity, age, and visible disability.

At the neighbourhood level, I have attended and observed the following meetings

- *Neighbourhood Forum Meetings*
- *Neighbourhood Committee Meetings*
- *Neighbourhood Housing Panel Meetings*
- *Tenant Management Co-operative General Meetings*
- *Tenants Association Meetings*
- *Tenant Co-operative Annual General Meeting*
- *Housing Co-operative General Meeting*

I had to obtain prior permission to attend these meetings, which in the case of Neighbourhood Forum meant asking the Chair in writing for the first time and subsequently asking verbally through the Community Worker. In the cases of Elthorne First Co-op and Miranda Estate Tenants Association on the other hand, I asked the chairs verbally. For the Pepy's Neighbourhood Committee Meeting I received an invitation in writing by the Neighbourhood Manager.

I received co-operation and support from the officers of both Councils that I approached for information as well as to interview.

Whilst I observed public meetings, I compared the verbal presentation of each agenda item being discussed to the written report, and have taken extensive notes. This also included the contribution from the non-committee members present, that is: the public as well as elected representatives and council officers participating in the meeting. I later followed up certain issues being discussed throughout the decision-making structure. At the end of a meeting, if necessary, I would approach and talk to the participants either for clarification or for further exploration of certain points or the opinions of certain individuals.

Analysing the data

I have analysed the data around common themes which relate to the key theoretical concepts of the research namely: constructions of 'identities'/'differences', constructions of 'the community', 'participation' and 'power'/'empowerment'.

My reading of the narratives of the respondents involved looking into the ways in which they constructed 'the Self' (as 'I' and 'We') and 'difference' with regard to the

collectivity. This would depict how the individual members viewed the group, their differences and the existing social divisions between them. I also looked into the constructions of ‘difference’ and ‘community’ in relation to the neighbourhood in order to explore how the collectivity perceived the local people and how they were perceived by them.

My analysis of the data also included looking into the ‘participation’ of tenants in decision-making as individuals (e.g. in Tenants Association, Tenant Management Co-op) and as collectivities (e.g. in various committees of the Council). I explored power relations between the members of collectivities (e.g. tenants and self-builders) through the narratives of individuals with differences in their ‘racial’, ethnic, gender, and class identities as well as their beliefs and values. I looked into the tenants’ perceptions of the processes of ‘participation’ and ‘consultation’ and the different parties in these processes. These perceptions rendered the power relations in these processes revealing the positions of ‘power’/‘powerlessness’ as well as the notion of ‘empowerment’ of tenants in housing processes. I compared the interpretations of the problems and processes of the individual tenants with that of the officers of the Council (e.g. housing officers, tenants participation officers), professionals (e.g. architects), and politicians (e.g. councillors). I also compared these readings with my own observations of the meetings that tenants are expected to participate. This way I explored the power relations between the collectivity (e.g. Tenants Association and Tenant Management Co-op) and the Council. I looked into the responses of self-builders in order to see how they perceive their group as well as the self-build agencies/professionals. This rendered the extent to which self-builders ‘participate’ in design, building and management processes of self-build as well as the degree of ‘power’ and ‘powerlessness’ they experience in these processes.

I also have analysed the construction of difference and divisions within the group and community constructions in relation to the group. Also explored is the notion of community with regard to the locality.

As mentioned earlier, I have combined face-to-face interviews with tenants with questionnaires. Two of the questions on the questionnaire explored how the respondents perceived their role in the design and management of their housing. The responses of tenants to these questions were taken up during the interview to explore their

perceptions with regard to their participation in the housing processes. Thus while analysing the data I compared their narratives with their responses to these questions.

Part I - Situating space and social divisions

Chapter 1: Social divisions, ‘the community’, participation and how they are reflected in the spatial

Introduction

This chapter looks at the relationship between ‘the community’ and the social divisions of ‘race’, ethnicity and gender, on the one hand, and space and place on the other. It examines the notions of ‘the community’ and ‘empowerment’ and how they relate to notions of power, difference and participation. It then takes up the concepts of space and place as social constructs and discusses their links with the notion of ‘the community’.

In conditions of modernity, the effects of globalisation and space/time compression have resulted in immense changes to the lives of vast numbers of people and local ‘communities’ in highly unpredictable ways. Locales are permeated by social events taking place quite distant from them while the local ‘communities’ are influenced and shaped by changes taking place on a much wider scale, e.g. migration and dislocation (Giddens 1990, Massey 1994). These processes, their effects on the locales as well as the responses by the local institutions to the emerging issues and problems need to be examined in order to see the extent to which they are gendered, ethnicised and classed.

In the search for an alternative solution to the problems in housing, notions such as ‘the community’, race and gender have been on the agenda of the planners in most of the industrialised countries since the late 1960s. Projects tried to involve the existing and future inhabitants as attempts to offer participatory processes in order to solve housing problems exacerbated by mass-produced housing and their management bureaucracies that were widely used in response to the problems of housing shortages. A wide range of initiatives have been tried, namely ‘community planning’, ‘tenant’s participation’, ‘user participation’, and ‘popular planning’. The common objective of these projects is to offer people the means to be involved positively in affecting their surroundings and enable them to gain power in making decisions about their environment. I will examine the extent to which they make implicit and explicit assumptions regarding the notions of ‘the people’, ‘the community’, and ‘empowerment’ which are explored below.

Similarly, urban planners and architects designing for 'the local communities' often make assumptions about the notions of space and place. They may treat the production of space and place merely as physical enclosures - products - assuming homogeneity in the use of the built environment (Greed 1994, Matrix 1984, Massey 1994). They may also treat concepts of space and place as neutral - homogeneous rather than social constructs, which are the results of social processes therefore highly heterogeneous and dynamic. As Doreen Massey (1994: 154) argues, 'homogeneous' communities also have internal structures. Indeed class, race, gender, sexuality, disability, age are among the many other factors that clearly influence our experience in the use of the built environment. Women, for instance, have different experiences, needs and uses in relation to the built environment than men resulting from different gender roles in our society. What is more, women of different cultures will have a different sense of space in the same locality as a result of different gender relations in different cultures (Greed 1994, Matrix 1984, Massey 1994, Wilson 1991).

'The Community'

The concept of community, as Margaret Rodman (1993) argues, is always seen as a positive thing. She refers to the observation of Raymond Williams (1973):

'Community is unusual among the terms of political vocabulary in being, I think, the one term which has never been used in a negative sense. People never, from any political position, want to say that they are against community or against the community ... I think on the one hand we should be glad that this is so, on the other hand we should be suspicious. A term which is agreed among so many people, a term which everybody likes, a notion which everybody is in favour of - if this reflected reality then we'd be living in a world very different from this one. So what is the problem inside the term, what is it that allows people to at once respond very positively to it and yet mean such very different things by it?' (1973: 112-3).

Indeed the term community has always meant different things to different people and also changed its meaning with the changes occurring in society.

Rodman (1993: 135) makes a distinction between the *rural* community and the *industrial* community. The former is seen as based on 'mutual responsibility that grows

out of living in the same place and sharing a sense of identity'. Industrial community on the other hand is 'forged in common struggle and conflict'. The emergence of industrial capitalism meant the emergence of a new concept of community.

David Harvey (1994: 31) examines the construction of community in relation to the urban experience. In the new industrial society of the nineteenth century, he argues, a new tradition of community had to be invented by the ruling-class to counter or absorb class antagonisms. This was done on the one hand by taking the responsibility of reproduction of the labour force, e.g. health, education, welfare and housing provision for the working class. On the other hand, by employing open force as well as more subtle means of social control such as police, relative democratisation, ideological control through the religious establishments and mass media and controlling space as a form of social power. The pursuit of the working class for a new definition of community for itself, as a way of survival, also helped industrial capitalism forge new traditions of urban community out of conditions of social disintegration and class conflict.

Examining the class practices and the construction of community, Harvey argues that there is a profound disparity in the ways different classes construct their sense of territory and community. He points out the striking contrast between community construction in low income and the disempowered and in the affluent and empowered strata of the population. Low-income groups lacking the means to command space often find themselves trapped in space. Their constant pursuit of sharing use values for their survival results not only in co-operation, but also highly conflicting interpersonal social attachment in private and public spaces. In order to remain in control over space a precise sense of boundary is constructed, and unwanted elements are excluded from it. Such a process of community construction involves resorting to ethnic, religious, racial, and status discriminations. Affluent groups, on the other hand can control space through spatial mobility and ownership of basic means of reproduction (i.e. houses, cars). They are not dependent upon community-provided use values for their survival. Having abundant exchange values their construction of community is geared to the maintenance or augmentation of exchange values. It is money that provides access to the community. At the same time, it makes it less exclusionary on other grounds. Harvey claims that residential segregation on the grounds of ethnicity and even race tends to get weaker the

further up the income scale one goes. He agrees that the agency of class, gender, or other social practices give specific meanings to spatial practices. These meanings are put into motion, and spaces are used in a particular way through them. He also believes that the gender, racial, ethnic and religious components of spatial practices have to be contemplated in any full description of community formation and the production of social spaces in urban settings (Harvey 1994: 264-6).

The community is often perceived in relation to a place. Rodman (1993: 135), for instance, links community to place and claims that community 'grows out of and [is] expressed in the experience of place'. Massey (1994: 153), on the other hand, suggests that persistent identification of place with 'community' in fact is a misidentification. 'Communities can exist without being in the same place - i.e. networks of people/friends with similar interests, major religious, ethnic or political communities'. Although I agree with Massey's assertion, I also think that even among those communities there is often a reference to a specific place, which is constructed among the members of these communities - however symbolic it might be. This might be a 'holy place' for religious communities, former or future homeland for some ethnic/religious communities, or even a virtual space - cyberspace.

Discussing the concept from a feminist perspective, Sue Brownhill (1997:2) underlines the problematic nature of the term 'the community', owing to the existing variety of definitions and interpretations, on the one hand, and the fact that particular views about women are embedded in the term, on the other. She points out that the concept originates from the harsh realities of urbanised, capitalist society as opposed to an imaginary protected, warm and humanised place - community. Thus the notion implies specific 'traditional' gendered roles. Community relates to the social space associated with the whole notion of home, the private sphere involving intimacy and caring relations and a protection from the outside world. 'This is women's sphere and a "women's place"', maintains Brownhill, ' - in both social and spatial meaning of the phrase - comes to rest on the naturalisation of women's roles within society' (1997: 2).

In her feminist critique of the ideal of community, Iris Marion Young (1990a, b) points out that the critics of the welfare, capitalist society, including socialists and feminists, frequently appeal to the community as an alternative to the alienation and individualism

of modern, Western society. Feminist groups impelled by a desire for closeness and mutual identification, view community as an expression of a desire for transparency and social closeness. Community, however, denies and represses difference by positing fusion rather than separation as the social ideal. This desire for the fusion of subjects with one another in practice operates to exclude 'the Other' - e.g. those who have characteristics that the group does not identify with. Furthermore, by privileging face-to-face relations, the ideal of community seeks a model of social relations that are not mediated by temporal and spatial distancing. Rejecting the idea that social groups can be unitary in the sense of having members with singular identity, Young calls for the recognition of group differences. She argues that to achieve political equality formal mechanisms for representing group difference is needed. Stressing the fact that some groups are privileged while others are oppressed, she notes that existing mechanisms provide dominant groups with power. This way the suppression of any marginalized, disadvantaged voice is maintained. She thus calls for institutionalising forms of group representation.

Other scholars underline the importance of recognising difference and differential power relations. However, they also point out the problematic nature of Young's position. Institutionalising forms of group representation may strengthen existing socially constructed boundaries around these groups which exclude as 'the other' all those perceived as different. Thus, it contributes to the conceptualisation of these boundaries as fixed without any possibility of shifting. Subsequently the existing divide is reinforced blocking further development and change (Phillips 1993, Shapiro and Kymlicka 1997, Yuval-Davis 1994, 1997). I shall discuss Young's response to criticisms in detail in Chapter 2.

Discussing the gendered nature of town planning issues Greed (1994) suggests that with the development of capitalism, urban problems and in particular the housing problem have been seen in terms of class and capitalism. In order to legitimate their power, planners claimed that they were planning for the working class communities and for the good of the working class. However, she stresses, 'the construction of the class, of what is considered wrong with capitalism and what is perceived to be the right solution to meet the needs of the worker, are all highly gendered' (1994: 10). She refers to the existing debate around patriarchy and capitalism and the relationship between the two,

particularly as to which has precedence as the causal factor. Amongst the existing positions on the issue some give a class-based explanation to urban problems (McDowell 1986), whilst others look for explanations by theorising patriarchy (Walby 1990). Some look at the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy (Hartman 1981). There are, however, those, Greed notes, who are of the opinion that reductionist discourses based around gender or class cannot accommodate their life experiences, especially those from minority ethnic groups and other 'minorities'. They suggest that race to be viewed as a key element, alongside class and gender, in attempts to understand urban spatial structure (Cross and Keith 1993 cited in Greed 1994, Smith 1989). The latter views are increasingly gaining support. Indeed in western countries in recent years the ideology of the community has become popular in regards to planning issues with an increasing emphasis on gender, race and ethnicity (see for instance Lund 1996).

Emphasising the spatial aspect of the notion of community, town planner Patsy Healey (1997: 123) points out that 'Sometimes the word "community" is used merely as a synonym for "the people who live in an area"'. However, the metaphor, according to Healey, carries more meaning than this: 'It brings with it firstly the image of an integrated place-based social world, the *gemeinschaft* of German sociology. Secondly, it carries connotations of community in opposition to business, or government' (Williams 1976, Mayo 1994).

'The idea of the place-based community has a long tradition in planning thought' Healey notes. It captured an idea of village life, where people were assumed to inhabit a common 'habitus' (Bourdieu 1990), in which 'everyone knew their place' (Williams 1973, Wiener 1981). Within the city, this rural idyll was replaced by the image of the urban neighbourhood, in which people helped each other out and shared responsibility, for street security or for the care of children (Wilmott and Young 1960, Jacobs 1961). Nevertheless, Healey notes that 'Where such integrated place-based communities existed, they were often limiting and stifling, serving to maintain oppressions of class and gender'. Thus to turn back to this ideal of social organisation would be both impractical and unacceptable to many.

However, the appeal to 'community', Healey argues, can be re-interpreted. It could mean 'assertion of the concerns of accomplishing life strategies and everyday life in the context of the forums and arenas in which political community finds expression, and in which collective activities are organised'. While rejecting ideal types of people's lives, this emphasis relates to the recognition of social diversity in life strategies and lifeworlds. People with diverse social location in terms of their backgrounds and relational resources may want to 'collaborate with neighbours, to ease the time-space hurdles they encounter, or to overcome isolation and build new social relations, or for some other reason'. Healey maintains that 'the challenge of such activities is to find ways of collaborating which can deal with different perspectives and priorities among 'neighbours', and develop the capacity to transform wider structures of power which make everyday life difficult'. She believes that 'one of the rich areas of experience in collaborative consensus-building is in these arenas of community mobilisation'.

Yet there are inherent problems within the notion of 'the community', as it is constructed in most of the discussions. It implies certain implicit assumptions and remains problematic. As Yuval-Davis (1994) argues, the community is perceived as a 'natural' social unit. Its 'naturalness' assumes existence of boundaries around a given collectivity. It exists in its own right so that one can either belong to it or not. There is an assumption, for instance, that there exists a commonality of interests and goals amongst people living in a particular locality or those who belong to certain collectivities such as working class, ethnic or cultural minorities. According to the ideology of community, the so-called community is a more or less egalitarian and homogenous grouping. There are, however, conflicts and differences of interests among its members as a result of the differences in the power attached to the different identities of people. Many individuals are members of more than one collectivity and they occupy different positions in terms of ethnicity, class and gender within any community. As a result, specific projects are better suited to certain members of the collectivity, more so than others. Yet in the notion of community there is an assumption that there is a single sense of community, which everyone shares. Through 'the community' a sense of belonging is constructed which develops bonds between individuals and groups as well as between people and places. These perspectives of 'the community' construct boundaries which exclude as 'the other' all those perceived as different - for example ethnic and cultural minorities. They also assume these boundaries as being fixed with no

possibility of shifting - in other words, they have the potential to become extremely conservative and racist (Massey 1994, Yuval-Davis 1994).

As McDowell puts it 'Boundaries of communities are created by mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion which are the outcomes of power relations' (1999: 100). She also recognises that these mechanisms may change and therefore boundaries may shift over time. Nonetheless, she maintains, communities remain bounded entities. As a result, whatever the basis of exclusion, particular individuals or groups are unavoidably left outside.

All ethnic groups are characterised by a notion of 'community' (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1993: 8). The expressions such as 'the Asian community' and 'the Bangladeshi community' are used to define the spatial concentrations of these ethnic groups or their presumed life styles and values. Again there is an assumption here that these ethnic communities are homogenous. Implicit in notions of multi-culturalism is the stereotypical view of what a community is and what constitutes a 'typical' member of a community. Equal opportunities policies assume that the interests of all the oppressed and disadvantaged are automatically shared and reconciled - as if everyone is disadvantaged at the same level. They do not see the existing conflicting interests within these communities.

It is women who have suffered most from these assumptions of unified and homogenous collectivities. It is argued that women have different experiences and needs from men in relation to the built environment. However, despite the fact that women form the majority in Britain (women constitute 52 per cent of the population) their different specific needs and experiences are rarely expressed, their voices are not heard during decision-making processes. Furthermore they are still considered by many male as well as female planners as a minority, and are planned accordingly (Brownhill 1997, Greed 1994: 40). Cultural conflicts between minority groups are also overlooked. It is important to recognise that the Black and ethnic minority community is not a homogenous group but has a number of particular interests and a range of views on issues. Values, beliefs, and traditions may vary from group to group resulting in differences of opinion and life-styles. The so-called 'neutrality' of the planners in their approach to planning and concepts such as 'neutral planning', and 'equal standards',

may lead to indirect discrimination, as 'identical treatment almost guarantees discrimination because people are different in their characteristics ... because people vary ... policies should always vary according to their different impact' (RTPI/CRE 1983: 15).

'Empowerment' and identities

In order to address the problems of the segregated, oppressed and impoverished populations found in all urban areas, Harvey (1994) calls for ways to address the question of spatial empowerment. The notion of 'empowerment' is closely connected with the notion of 'the community' with a commonality of interests and goals. Incorporating collectivities into decision-making processes is linked with the notion of 'empowerment' (Jacobs 1992). 'Empowerment' is taking more control of one's life. It is not something that a collectivity can be given. Instead it is a process that they go through (Karl 1995). The notion of 'empowerment' of 'the community' assumes common interests and goals among its members. Community is unified by a single idea of common good. There is an automatic assumption that no inherent conflicts of interest can arise during the process of people gaining empowerment. Dylis Hill, for instance, states that 'the key to empowerment is a notion of the public ... with shared concern for the common good' (1994: 24). She further points out that:

'While empowerment ... means different things from different standpoints, there is a common emphasis on community, on a variety of definitions of localism, and on the need to generate the will to engage in action. Such motivation arises both from enlightened self-interest and from shared values and common loyalties' (1994: 28).

Indeed this common emphasis on community, with 'common good' and 'shared values and common loyalties' is problematical as communities have internal structures involving differentiated power relations through which a wide range of power positions are produced and reproduced. Within a community (such as on a housing estate) 'the otherness' may be constructed in terms of ethnicity, culture, sexuality, employment status, revealing the multi-dimensional nature of power and powerlessness. It also underlines the diversity of the ways in which disadvantaged experience oppressions, which has in turn ramifications for the notion of 'empowerment'.

Black and ethnic minority people's housing experiences may be different from the majority ethnic people's living in the same locality, in terms of access to public housing, overcrowding, and access to amenities in the locality. In Britain, for example, there exist major differences between the housing needs of minority ethnic groups and their white counterparts (Clarke 1994). The average size of minority ethnic household is larger than the average white household, and there are proportionately more black households with young children all of which underline the issues concerning the design and location of housing projects, the size of dwellings, and play facilities for children. Local authorities do not have a sufficient number of larger dwellings, and therefore overcrowding is more common among ethnic minorities¹ (Ginsburg 1992, Morris and Winn 1990).

Recently, new and radical approaches to planning and the housing problem have emerged with the aim of empowering 'the people' and giving them greater control over their homes and their environment. Thus, popular planning aims:

'to democratise decision making away from the state bureaucrats or company managers to include the workforce as a whole or people who live in a particular area ... empowering groups and individuals to take control over decisions which affect their lives, and therefore to become active agents of change'(Montgomery and Thornley 1988:5, cited in Cullingworth and Nadin 1994:247).

There can be no *political* disagreement with the above statement. It is, however, based on a specific theoretical understanding with certain hidden assumptions that are problematic. There is an assumption of a pre-given, non-problematic definition of the boundaries of 'the people'. 'The people' to be empowered are the local working-class population which is usually perceived to be white, male workers. As a result of stereotyping, Greed (1994) argues, some planners (most of them are male)² perceive men as workers and all women as non-workers. Women are forever fixed as housewives or young mothers, despite the fact that only 15 per cent of households consists of a male breadwinner, a wife not in paid employment and dependent children. Ethnic minorities are also left out of the working class by planners since they often occupy part time jobs or are unemployed and therefore are not counted as part of the working-class. This is despite the fact that certain industries in Britain are based on the cheap labour of migrant workers, i.e. catering, garment, cleaning industries. The highly gendered and racialised

nature of class is often not recognised and the range and diversity amongst the local population is not taken into account. Black and ethnic minority women are often absent in these processes. Popular planners often fail to acknowledge the specific needs and interests of black and ethnic minority women partly because they assume that these women have other identities (i.e. the identity of 'woman', or 'black') and therefore belong to other collectivities (i.e. ethnic minority groups, or women's groups), which they also assume to be homogenous.

Identity, however, 'is a slippery concept,' as Bhavnani describes, 'for it is not fixed, it is never closed and it is created through difference' (1993b: 37). Indeed identities are constructed in relation to other identities very often in terms of 'the Other'. In other words they are formed in relation to what they are not (Hall 1987 cited in Yuval-Davis 1997: 126, Woodward 1997).

Unitary notions of identity categories such as class and gender of modernity have been criticised in the last few decades. Postmodern theory's increasing focus on diversity and fragmentation in society led to an increasing attention to 'difference'. Postmodernism is useful in underpinning the different constructions of identity categories of gender, ethnicity, and challenging unitary constructions of 'woman' and 'Black'. However, it is also criticised for leading to the fragmentation and reducing social divisions to 'difference'.

Indeed meta-narratives of the modernity has come to an end by postmodern theory's 'recognition and celebration of difference, diversity and fragmentation, the rejection of a unitary notion of the subject which becomes fragmented, the specificity allocated to the local and particular (as opposed to the general and the universal) and therefore the need for the analysis of concrete instances' (Anthias 1996: 5).

Moreover, post-structuralism rejects any 'essentialist' categories, which deny the multiple and fluid nature of identities of individuals. This recognition goes much further than a simple recognition and celebration of diversity.

Identity categories such as gender and ethnicity indicate social positioning of individuals and therefore relate to power (and powerlessness). Some differences in these

positionings are more important than others for they correspond to the existing social inequalities in society, which determine the life chances of individuals. Thus 'difference' implies differentiation and unequal treatment of individuals and groups on the basis of certain characteristics such as gender, ethnicity and class (Anthias 1996, Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1993, McDowell 1999).

Identities are constructed within a specific space and time, e.g. spatial and temporal as well as relational, e.g. constructed against each other. Therefore identity is always constituted through difference and the question of identity is one of social power. Indeed it is only through the relation to 'the Other', identity can be constructed and identity categories such as gender, ethnicity and class act as markers of social difference. The act of power comes in naturalising the self and constructing 'the Other' and excluding 'the Other' from the available limited resources (Anthias 1996, Brah 1996, Grossberg 1996, Hall 1996, Yuval-Davis 1997).

Avtar Brah (1996) argues against an essentialist concept of difference. Arguing that there is a need for a greater conceptual clarity in analysing difference Brah (1996:114-5) states that the key issue is not about 'difference' *per se*, but relates to the question of who defines difference, how different categories of women are represented within the discourses of 'difference', and whether 'difference' differentiates laterally or hierarchically.

People have multiple identities, which may be internally defined or externally imposed or both. As a result, individuals become part of collectivities, which are social constructs with no fixed boundaries. Constant processes of struggles and negotiations determine their boundaries, structures and norms. They can also be the result of more general social developments (Yuval-Davis 1994).

Dichotomous thinking constructs difference in terms of 'the Other' resulting 'us and them' divisions both socially and spatially which will be discussed later in the chapter.

The concept of 'participation'

The 1960s has seen a growth in community work and the ideology of 'the community' has become popular. The growth of community action produced new pressure groups

representing people whose interests had not been articulated before such as women, Black and ethnic minorities, lesbians and gays. New and more radical approaches to planning and the housing problem emerged such as 'popular planning', 'community planning', 'community architecture', 'user participation'. However, the consensus model of 'community' participation did not bring any real change in the power relations between policy makers and citizens. This is because, as discussed below, there exists an ambiguity in the notion of participation, and participation processes often do not involve a delegated power of decision and that ultimate control remains with the authority concerned (Smith 1985, Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1993, Yuval-Davis 1994).

According to Sherry R. Arnstein (1969) power is redistributed through participation. In this way have-not citizens that are presently excluded from the political and economic processes are deliberately included in the future. Arnstein describes types of participation and 'non-participation' as an eight-rung ladder (Figure 1, in Appendix 1). The two bottom rungs of the ladder are levels of 'non-participation'. Further up the ladder are levels of citizen power with increasing degrees of decision-making clout. The top two levels (delegated power and citizen control) are the levels have-nots obtain full managerial power.

Arnstein admits that her typology is a simplification of the process, nevertheless, she argues, it illustrates that there are considerable gradations of citizen participation. Indeed, her typology highlights how central the notion of power in participatory processes. However, in my opinion, her typology remains problematic because of the way it conceptualises power. Arnstein does point out the heterogeneity of the 'power-holders' and the 'have-nots' as well as 'competing vested interest'. She is critical of power-holders who tend to view 'have-nots' as a sea of 'those people', with little comprehension of the class and caste differences among them. Nonetheless, in this view differences among the 'have-nots' are collapsed to class differences. Moreover, by treating the two groups unitary groups the complex nature of power relations among the 'have-nots' with competing interests is overlooked.

Arnstein's typology views power as hierarchical operating mainly between classes and between the officers and non-officers. Participants divided into two main groups that are based on an understanding of power as concentrated in the hands of the officers. In this

process she views racism as one of many roadblocks on the part of the powerful. Implicitly assumed in this view is that once these roadblocks are removed participation process becomes a smooth one.

However, racism is not an external factor posing a constraint to participation. Instead, it is embedded in these processes and constitutive of the social relations among the participants on the one hand, and within the wider society that these processes are inscribed, on the other (Hall 1992). It operates not as a force originating from the power-holders and being imposed upon the citizens against who are the 'have-nots'. Instead it operates at every level and every direction constructing some participants and non-participants as 'the Other'. Moreover it intersects with other axes of domination/subordination such as gender and class. Thus, as discussed later in the thesis, power in these processes operates not only hierarchically but also horizontally. Foucault (1980: 98) points out that 'power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation'. While individuals circulate between its threads they are constantly undergoing and exercising this power. 'Individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application'. Identity categories such as 'race', ethnicity, and gender are constitutive of the social relations including these participatory processes. Individuals are positioned differentially as a result of their intersecting identities. Thus differential power relations emerge as a result of differences in the positionality of individuals and collectivities participating in these processes.

Tenant participation is defined by the Institute of Housing and Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS)(1989: 19) as: 'A two way process involving sharing of information and ideas, where tenants are able to influence decisions and take part in what is happening'. They argue that participation can involve a range of possible processes including:

'Providing information to tenants; seeking information from tenants; listening to the unsolicited views of tenants; consulting tenants - asking their views; dialogue, negotiation and bargaining - where tenants are able to influence decisions to varying degrees in a two-way process; joint management - sharing decision-making and responsibility with tenants; choice - from a set of options; and control - decision-making by tenants' (1989: 57).

They suggest that ‘these processes should not be viewed as a hierarchy, as if in some ladder of participation’ (1989: 57). They argue that they may often overlap and at any one time a number of processes may occur - within a formal structure for participation or, in some cases it may happen informally.

The *Guide to Effective Participation* produced in 1994 with the support of Joseph Rowntree Foundation, on the other hand, proposes a five-rung ladder of participation ‘which relates to the stance an organisation promoting participation may take. While the first ladder ‘information’ is merely telling people what is planned, ‘consultation’ is about offering some options, listening to feedback, but not allowing new ideas. In ‘deciding together’ additional options and ideas are encouraged and opportunities for joint decision-making is provided. ‘Acting together’ on the other hand offers different interest groups opportunity to decide together on what is best as well as form a partnership to carry it out. ‘Supporting independent community interests’ is about offering local groups or organisations funds, advice and other support to develop their own agendas within guidelines.

All of the above models describe how at the lowest level of participation individuals can be placed on rubber-stamp advisory committees or boards. Furthermore, at this level of involvement participation is often distorted into a public relations exercise by power-holders. Practitioners consulted during development of the Guide for example felt strongly that information giving and consultation are often wrongly presented as participation. This may lead to disillusionment among community interests (*Findings* 1994).

Rose Gilroy points out that in Britain, since the Skeffington Report in 1968, it has been recognised that many groups are unable to participate in planning because of the existing inequalities. She highlights the importance of examining the interrelationship between equity, access and resources. She argues that a person’s ability and capacity to participate depends to a large extent on resources available to her/him. These resources may be individual (income and education) as well as organisational (links to groups, to networks of support). Social, cultural, ideological and economic factors lie behind these that ‘include social class, place of residence (tenure now plays as important a part as

locality), age, gender, ethnic group, disability and personal and collective values. All of this have a bearing on equity and increase or diminish the ability to obtain resources, as well as shaping the ability of individuals or groups to act upon them (Gilroy 1999: 71, Parry *et al.* 1992).

Gilroy maintains that planners and other professionals have to be aware of the ways in which certain groups have been marginalized and disempowered. She states that: 'They need to understand that power not only constructs a framework for dialogue but also defines what counts as knowledge and therefore what constitutes reality' (1999: 71).

Planning is one way of participating. Greed (1999: 4) argues that statutory town planning system in Britain was set up to deal with physical rather than social issues. Typically, she maintains, emphasis is put upon 'land-use' planning primarily as reflected in land-use zoning and the creation of spatially focused plans. Similarly Linda Davies suggests that land use considerations were to be the sole consideration in planning decision-making processes throughout the 1970s. The situation, however, changed in the 1980s to allow the inclusion of social issues.

Greed (1999: 3) further argues that there is not one 'town planning' but many new plannings including, for example, environmental planning; urban design planning; Euro-planning; and market-led urban renewal planning. According to Greed, one of the most dynamic, changing and controversial of the 'plannings' is what may be broadly termed 'social town planning'. She offers a broad definition of 'social town planning' as: 'any movement to introduce policies that take into account more fully the needs of the diversity of human beings who live in our towns and cities, (which many argue mainstream town planning has failed to do)'.

Healey (1997: 237) proposes a new framework for planning, which suggests a move from a narrow technical and procedural focus for spatial planning activity towards a communicative and collaborative model. It emphasises collaborative consensus-building which is underpinned by an explicit inclusionary intention. This approach, Healey suggests, is based on a number of premises. *Firstly*, collaboration, that is power-sharing, she argues, takes place in a multi-cultural context where individuals construct their own identities through multiple webs of relations including complex power relations.

‘Through these multilayered, culturally-embedded, intersubjective processes, people acquire frames of references and systems of meaning’, Healey maintains. *Secondly*, it underpins the significance of local knowledge, as well as the scientific and technical knowledge of professionals. *Thirdly*, consensus-building in collaborative processes requires ‘careful attention to the communicative context in which dialogues take place, to the routines of and styles of dialogue, since these too carry power; the power to encourage and include the participation of all stakeholders, and the power to discriminate and exclude’. Consensus-building, Healey claims, ‘can build trust, understanding and new relations of power among participants, generating social, intellectual and political capital which can endure beyond the particular collaborative effort’. *Fourthly*, consensus-building practices, Healey suggests, have the potential to transform institutional capacity and relations of power and are a powerful form of social mobilisation. Finally, it involves communicative practices in which participants can both ‘listen for difference’ while ‘making sense together’.

Healey points out that this approach is criticised for the amount of time consumed in consensus-building and argumentation. Moreover, it is argued that people do not have time to involve themselves in governance constantly (Latour 1987 cited in Healey 1997: 238). Healey, nonetheless, suggests that such critiques misunderstand the approach. Full consultation on a specific issue, she maintains, is often not possible. Therefore, areas of decision-making may be delegated to smaller groups (such as community leaders, or officials, or experts) by political the communities (I will take up the question of representation in the next chapter). Where the approach differs from the others is in the ways such delegated action is undertaken. It requires a culture that takes into consideration the diversity of people’s concerns, their ways of knowing and of valuing. This culture of sensitivity to diversity maintained, according to Healey, through the structure of rights to challenge and the language of reasoning which evolves around the exercise of such rights. All of this relates to the notion of citizenship and the ways in which the notion of ‘citizenship’ is conceptualised which I will discuss in the next chapter.

In my opinion, there are a number of issues that are important in participation. *First* is the general context in which participatory processes take place, which concerns the notions of democracy, equality and citizenship. *Second* is the local context which relates

to the question of organisations within which participatory processes take place. *Third* is the amount of power that the participants have in these processes as a result of differences in their identities and their subsequent social positioning.

Dichotomous Thinking

There can be no such thing as value free 'neutral planning', as it is claimed, nor should be. The thinking, beliefs and assumptions of the agents in the process are reflected in the planning processes. Planning, as Greed argues, is all about creating realities - or re-organising existing reality - and 'imposing these on space, often obliterating other realities and needs in the process' (D.o.E. 1972 cited in Greed 1994:11). Urban planners, through their plans and designs, transmit onto space existing ethnic, gender and class divisions of the society. Conceptualisation of these divisions as fixed is often expressed in dichotomous perceptions. In dichotomous thinking, separation is made and barriers kept between concepts such as us/them, us/the other, male/female, private/public, work/home, physical/social, spatial/aspatial, breadwinner/homemaker, majority/minority, professional/personal, suburb/city, users/ providers. Ethnic, gender, and class divisions are built into not only houses and public buildings but also the whole structure of the urban system.

People do not live according to these binary oppositions. Nevertheless the existing pervasive belief in them has an ultimate influence on decisions, policy formulations and has a major impact on the lives of those who have no say in these decisions, such as the poor, women and minority ethnic groups. There exists a range of dualisms in dichotomous thinking that is related to the political processes, which construct ethnic collectivities and 'their interests' as well as the distinction between genders in society. However, the terms 'man' and 'woman' and key dualisms and concepts (such as equality and difference, the public and the private, power and dependence) need to be questioned and re-examined. They all have specific meanings at different times and in different places (McDowell and Pringle 1992: 50).

The public and private dichotomy

One of the dichotomies that effects gender relations in our societies is based on the distinction between the public and the private. As Duncan (1996: 127) argues this distinction is embedded in political philosophy, law, everyday discourse and continual

spatial structuring practices. Through these practices, a private domain where domestic and embodied activity takes place is produced. This private space, further separated and isolated from a political sphere, which is claimed to be disembodied, is predominantly located in the public space. The public and private dichotomy is closely linked to the mind/body dualism. That being so, traditional patriarchal and heterosexist power structures are maintained through the constant use of the dichotomy 'to construct, control, discipline, confine, exclude and suppress gender and sexual difference' (1996:128). Yet, Duncan argues, women's confinement (voluntary and forced) in the private undoubtedly has an impact on the public sphere as a political site by reducing its vitality. Moreover, it hampers the ability of marginalized groups to claim a share in power. She states:

'It is clear that the public-private distinction is gendered. This binary opposition is employed to legitimate oppression and dependence on the basis of gender; it has also been used to regulate sexuality. The private *as an ideal type* has traditionally been associated and conflated with: the domestic, the embodied, the natural, the family, property, the "shadowy interior of the household", personal life, intimacy, passion, sexuality, "the good life", care, a haven, unwaged labour, reproduction and immanence. The public *as an ideal type* has traditionally been the domain of the disembodied, the abstract, the cultural, rationality, critical public discourse, citizenship, civil society, justice, the market place, waged labour, production, the polis, the state, action, militarism, heroism and transcendence' (Duncan 1996: 128).

The private/public dichotomy is based on the assumption that these spaces are homogenous whereas both of them are highly heterogeneous and no definite distinction can be made between the public and private space. As Duncan puts it: 'Both private and public spaces are heterogeneous and not all space is clearly private or public' (1996:129).

Furthermore, as Patricia Hill Collins (1997) observes, the public and private are given new meanings through racialised and classed processes. In the United States, Collins describes, as the public sector becomes more democratic, the public and the private get re-defined in terms of the value attached to each one of them and the boundaries between the two domains. The public increasingly becomes associated with the lack of privacy and overcrowding. The public space is devalued as is perceived being populated

by the underclass - e.g. the black man making it dangerous - and all of a sudden becomes privatised and thus heavily surveilled while the private gains an increased value. Privacy is equated with safety and on the whole implies racial homogeneity. Thus new definitions of the public and private spaces emerge through highly classed and racialised processes resulting in an increased subjection to public scrutiny of the racialised minorities.

Dichotomous thinking is reflected in space by agents of design and planning processes such as town planners and architects through their methods of 'zoning' according to perceived dichotomies. Among these agents there exists a firm conviction that dichotomisation is a tool to make the reality more manageable. Division has been widely used in order to control and solve a range of urban problems. Belief in public/private dichotomies, for instance, is enforced by land-use zoning policies and maintained by spatial division. Town planning, especially zoning of industry and the creation of separate, residential neighbourhoods is a way of enforcing divisions spatially between male and female. The spatial separation of work and home is based on the assumption that work takes place outside the home. Enormous distances between zones, however, make it very hard for women to combine work inside and outside the home (Greed 1994).

In the conditions of modernity the notion behind the design of urban space has been that of separation of various aspects of life. Homes, shops, workplaces and leisure places are all in separate areas. The creation of residential areas, the distances between homes and workplaces reflect the stereotyping of women's and men's work and reinforce the assumption that men work away from the home with no responsibility for its day-to-day running and for childcare. It is also assumed that women, having the responsibility to look after homes and children, do not work outside the home, e.g. full time-housewives (Fraser 1996, Greed 1994, Massey 1994, Matrix 1984). In Britain, however, only a small number of households conform to this pattern. Around a third of households consist of a husband, wife and dependent children (Greed 1994, Matrix 1984, Quiney 1986). As argued by Matrix, in more than half of the existing households the mother has a paid job outside the home. 'About one in nine of all households consists of a man with a paid job, a woman without one, and children under the age of 16' (Matrix 1984: 4). Women, as Greed (1994: 42) notes, might be combining home, childminder, school, work and

shops who may be prevented from doing this because of the distance between zones. It is clear that this separation has affected women more than men, since there exists no neat divisions in their lives with respect to work, leisure and home in the way that men have. Hence, many women's confinement to the private space and the isolated nature of their lives and their exclusion from the public sphere has been reinforced through zoning practices. Zoning restrictions in the suburbs, on the other hand may operate to separate different kinds of housing development, which may be a way of class and race segregation.

Segregation in both the city and suburbs may be informally produced or formally enforced. Thus ghettos depict racial, class as well as spatial dimensions of residential segregation. Susan Smith (1989) highlights that:

‘The important point here is that these divisions within the city are not just the result of mapping already existing, different communities onto distinct spaces. It is also that the spatial organization itself – the geography – is important in maintaining, maybe even in establishing, the difference itself’ (1989: 111).

Indeed, ghettos are expressions of power relations and animosity towards people who are different – e.g. ‘the Other’.

Space and place

Until recently, the meaning of the term ‘space’ was strictly geometrical: the idea it called forth was simply that of an empty area and hence to speak of social space would have sounded strange (Lefebvre 1974). In recent years, however, there have been attempts to formulate concepts of space and place in terms of social relations.

Henri Lefebvre (1974) argued that a ‘unitary theory’ was needed in order to discover or construct a theoretical unity between ‘fields’ which are apprehended separately, namely, firstly, the *physical* - nature, the Cosmos; secondly, the *mental*, including logical and formal abstractions; and, thirdly, the *social*. There are now an increasing number of people from various disciplines (i.e. geography, anthropology, town planning and architecture) who have been treating space as a concept that is socially constructed and contested.

Massey (1994), for instance, discusses the importance of regarding space not as some absolute independent dimension, but as constructed out of social relations. 'The spatial' is social relations 'stretched out' (1994: 2) and it can be envisaged as 'constructed out of the multiplicity of social relations across all spatial scales' (1994: 4), from the global scope of finance and telecommunications to the social relations in the locality, e.g. the town, the neighbourhood or the household. In the conditions of modernity the geography of social relations are changing and often and increasingly they are stretched out over space. 'Economic, political and cultural social relations, each full of power and with internal structures of domination and subordination, stretched out over the planet at every different level, from the household to the local area to the international' (1994:155). In conditions of modernity, the effects of global space/time compression have resulted in immense changes to the lives of vast numbers of people and local 'communities' in totally unexpected ways. Thus locales are thoroughly permeated and shaped by distant social influences (Giddens 1990, Massey 1994).

In dichotomous thinking, places are conceptualised as having a boundary around them. Such a boundary differentiates between an inside and outside which is yet another way of constructing an imagined opposing positions between 'us' and 'them' (Massey 1994).

Place is perceived as having a single, uniform and essential identity. Subsequently, in planning the built environment there has been a false assumption that there is a single sense of place that everyone shares and that all sections of the population use their environment in the same way and expect their environment to do the same things for them (Massey 1994, Matrix 1984). Yet people not only have a different sense of the same place, but they all use it differently too. One of the key factors, Greed (1994: 9) suggests, in understanding why people with the same class or gender characteristics have different life experiences in the same physical space is their 'belief'. That is, the way people 'see' the world. She argues that people occupy different social and ideological space. Their differing characteristics such as the individual outlooks and life styles, ethnicities, states of health and age as well as the subculture they adhere to within and across classes all need to be considered to understand the specificity of their experiences of urban life (Healey 1992 cited in Greed 1994).

If it is recognised that people have multiple identities, Massey (1994) highlights, then places they relate to will have different identities and their sense of place will be different. In other words the sense of space/place is not the same for everyone and because of the multiplicity of their identities people will have different sense of space depending on their specific identity in a specific situation. Sense of the same space/place of a particular person varies also according to her/his specific identity at a particular time since space is not an unequivocal independent dimension. Instead the spatial needs to be thought of in the context of space-time. It is formed out of social relations at all scales. Place is then a specific articulation of these relations, 'a particular moment in those networks of social relations and understandings' (Massey 1994: 5).

In societies where ethnicity, race, gender roles, and class are strongly differentiated, members of these collectivities, e.g. black and white, women and men, working class and middle class, will have diverse values and attitudes towards their environment. Their experience and perception of the same environment will be different. Not only do women use the space differently from men but women of a specific ethnic minority group also use the space differently than other minority and majority women. Spatial experiences of individuals vary profoundly even within the same environmental setting resulting from the combined effects of their race and ethnicity, gender, class, as well as factors such as their state of health, and stage in their life cycle. Thus an individual's experience of space is based on the specificities of the individual's social positioning. Women's relationship to domestic space is not similar to that of men resulting from the differences in the value and social power attached to their gender roles. Minority ethnic women may also have a different relationship to the domestic space from not only the men of minority and majority ethnic group but also women of the majority ethnic group. In other words the private is not only gendered but ethnicised *too*. bell hooks, for example, argues that as a result of the hostility African Americans (both men and women) experience in the public space, the home can serve as a crucial site of resistance. Underlining its radical political dimension, hooks describes 'home' as a place where 'we could restore to ourselves the dignity denied us on the outside in the public world' (hooks 1990: 42, Duncan 1996, Weisman 1994).

Furthermore the private can also be a space, which represents autonomy for those people who are not dependent on the welfare state whereas those with low incomes who rely on

the welfare state are often subject to unnecessary intrusion and scrutiny (Duncan 1996a). Thus the private space that is ethnicised, gendered and classed represent disparate meanings to people with diverse social positioning.

The same is true for public buildings and public spaces. Women, for instance, do not have equal access to streets and parks to use them free of fear for their safety although they are alleged to be open to all people. The zoning of areas for different uses such as residential/industrial, as Greed (1994) points out, also underlines the neglect of the personal safety of women in making decisions about public spaces. Some racial and ethnic groups on the other hand are even denied certain residential areas. Elizabeth Wilson (1991) in describing the lives of women in the Metropolis portrays how some groups of the population who are denied access to the public spaces in the city, have nevertheless survived:

‘... although women, along with minorities, [and] children are still not full citizens in the sense that they have never been granted full and free access to the streets, industrial life drew them into the public life and they have survived and flourished in the interstices of the city, negotiating the contradictions of the city in their own particular way’(1991: 8).

Linda McDowell (1999: 151) highlights that a range of individuals and certain social groups are discriminated against in terms of access to public spaces and excluded from particular urban spaces. She cites Nancy Fraser who argues that if these exclusions are to be taken seriously, than the notion of public space need to be conceptualised as sets of multiple and hierarchical public arenas to which some groups have access while others are excluded from.

Often the design and use of public spaces, public buildings, and domestic architecture reflects the existing social inequalities, whether it is gender, racial, and class or any other. But it is a two-way process and the built environment in turn contributes in reinforcing and maintaining the existing inequalities (Greed 1994, Massey 1994, Matrix 1984, Weisman 1994).

Alfred B. Parker (1965: 16) describes architecture as enclosing space so that beauty and utility become one. He, too, thinks that it is an accurate image of our society: 'Whatever we are is reflected by our buildings', he says. 'There is no escaping the disconcerting fact that architecture mirrors society'.

Robert Rotenberg, on the other hand, underlines that people do not merely act in the world but try to understand it. They are in a constant effort to give meaning to their world, and that this process is socially constituted which transforms space into place. People in cities impel the spaces around them to take on meaning. Thus no space is allowed to remain neutral - or homogenous (Rotenberg 1993: xiii cited in Kuper 1992:421).

Indeed, Massey (1994) highlights that, once it is accepted that social life unfolds in space and it is seen in terms of social relations it follows that space can be neither neutral nor homogenous. People have different life experiences in the same space. Ethnicity, gender, class divisions and such factors as differences in life styles, beliefs, personal outlooks, state of health, and stage in the life-cycle all influence a particular person's experience of a particular place. Places are full of conflicts as a result of their multiple identities. When place is conceptualised in terms of social interactions, then it is not static: 'Space is not static, nor time spaceless' (Massey 1993: 155). It is dynamic and it is a *process*. And by its very nature it is full of power and symbolism, a complex web of relations of domination and subordination, of solidarity and co-operation as well as of conflicting interests (Massey 1994). Housing, for instance, is not a motionless end 'product', e.g. frames standing apart from social life. They are contested, created processes, not simple products of plans. The process of public housing involves continuous decision-making in terms of design and management (e.g. allocation, repairs, and transfers) which are based on experiences and beliefs of individual architects and planners and the policies of institutions such as local authorities, housing associations, co-operatives. The housing process takes place within urban space. And urban space is constantly created and recreated as the spatial expression of economic, political and social processes at a level wider than the local. Composition of urban space reflects social relations such as those of class, gender, ethnicity and race and those inequalities embedded in them therefore can be exclusive and discriminatory. The design of the built

environment not only mirrors the existing social inequalities based on differences of gender, ethnicity and class but can further contribute towards it.

Greed (1994) points out the duality of the process:

‘It is a two-way process. The city is the product of the reproduction over space of social relations but, once built, the physical structure can, in turn, feed back its influence onto its inhabitants, by acting as a constraint on the nature of future societies living in that city because of the restrictions of its layout, street pattern, design and subculture’ (1994: 87).

Policies keep such divisions reflecting unequal relations of power in the policy-making process and reinforcing them in terms of spatial outcomes. Planning policies serve to reflect and influence the way societal divisions are reflected in space. In the existing built environment there are social and cultural values already embodied, the point is how to change them through policies and replace them with the social and cultural values we wish to see embodied in the built environment.

Conclusion

Those initiatives that attempt to democratise housing processes in an urban setting use notions such as ‘the community’ and ‘empowerment’, which have hidden assumptions. They homogenise and naturalise social categories and groupings, fix boundaries and deny internal power differences and conflicts of interests. Their members are assumed to have common interests and goals. These closely linked notions deny the highly heterogeneous nature of these collectivities with differential power relations among their members and their ever-shifting boundaries. People have multiple identities while occupying differential positions in terms of ethnicity, gender, and class within any community. Subsequently, there exists an unequal distribution of power, which result in conflicts and negotiations as well as exclusions/inclusions within ‘the community’.

A range of dualisms resulting from dichotomous thinking keeps existing barriers between concepts and their spatial expressions. Often, however, the two sides of a dichotomy interrelate and overlap in daily life while their shifting boundaries are denied by dichotomous thinking. Lefebvre (1974) calls for the reconstruction of a spatial

‘code’, that is of a language common to inhabitants and architects as an immediate task. The first thing such a code would do, he suggests, is to break down such barriers as that between private and public.

If space reflects social relations then it follows that social change needs to produce a new space, as social change and spatial change are intrinsic to each other. Intermeshing of constructs such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, ability and age determines a particular person’s experience of a particular place. Policies need to be developed which acknowledge and appreciate multiple identities of the inhabitants and aim to produce places whose full identity is a complex mix of all the multiple identities.

The chapter argued that the personal experience of space is closely linked to the identities of individuals. In other words it is based on the specificities of individual’s social positioning. Space is not an independent dimension instead the spatial is created and re-created out of differential social relations, which are full of power. The spatial, therefore, needs to be thought of in the context of space-time. Design of the built environment reflects the existing social inequalities based on ethnicity, gender and class. What is more, it can also further contribute towards it. The process has a reciprocal nature. The urban space is the outcome of existing social relations yet it also has an impact upon it (Duncan 1996, Greed 1994, Massey 1993, 1994).

¹ A recent research into the issues of social exclusion in London points out that 2.5 per cent of the white households live in overcrowded conditions whereas the figure is 16.9 per cent for Black African households, 22.8 per cent for Pakistani households and 53.8 per cent for Bangladeshi households. See, *Barriers: Social and economic exclusion in London*, Pamphlet 2, London Voluntary Service Council (LVSC).

² In Britain the planning profession is predominantly white and male. According to a 1988 profile of the Royal Town Planning Institute, only 18 per cent of planners were women. Women members are not evenly spread over the age groups whilst men are. Women comprise one third of all members among the age group of 25-34, whereas they comprise 1 in 10 among the age group of 40-50, and just 1 in 20 from 50. Women are underrepresented at the higher levels in that only 1.6 per cent of chief planning officers are women. The percentage of disabled members is less than 1 and relatively few members are from minority ethnic groups (Cullingworth and Nadin 1994, Greed 1994, Nadin and Jones 1990).

Chapter 2: Democracy and equality: ethnicity and gender divisions in political participation and decision-making

Introduction

This chapter explores questions of participation and empowerment as they are related to decision-making processes in the macro level. It is in that context that notions of citizenship in the welfare state and political communities will be examined. Constructions of identity and difference, the private and the public, the individual and the community, are of particular importance in such a discussion.

Both equality (or equal opportunities) and democracy are concepts that everybody in the political spectrum claim that they are in favour of, and all politicians seem to be striving for, or at least claiming that they are doing so. There are however contesting interpretations of principles of equality and democracy. The notion of citizenship as one of the main constituents of the concept of democracy is also a contested concept. It has had different definitions in relation to different interpretations of democracy (Held 1987, Phillips 1993).

What lies behind the different principles of democracy is related to the institutions that the power is vested and the degree and the ways in which people participate in decision-making at macro level. David Held (1987), for example, points out that underlying the history of the contesting positions on democracy is the struggle to decide whether democracy should mean a popular power that enables citizens to engage in *self-government* and *self-regulation* or a way of occasionally complementing decision-making that helps to legitimate the decisions of those elected ‘representatives’.

There are diverse positions in regards to the notion of equality, too. As highlighted by Anne Phillips (1993) and others, at the one end of the spectrum of opinion there exists the position of liberal tradition in which the legal and electoral equalities are considered as the minimum requirements. It extends through increasingly egalitarian positions and at the other end of the spectrum there lies the stance that no hierarchy should exist (Giddens 1992, Held 1987, Rowbotham *et al.* 1981).

Indeed both notions of democracy and equality are contested and need to be looked at critically. Their meanings are constructed differently both by different sections of the society, and in different societies. In Western societies the demands of social groups such as women for inclusion into citizenship have led to the construction of equality in opposition to difference (Lister 1997).

‘Ethnic and gender neutral’ democratic theory and practice reinforce the privileged position of dominant gender and ethnic groups. By denying the relationship between the notion of democracy and that of gender, ‘race’ and ethnicity the position of the dominant gender and ethnicity are consolidated. Moreover democracy becomes associated with the activities of the members of these dominant groups with regard to their class, gender and ethnicity. Democracy has often been presented as a choice between two opposing traditions namely representative and direct democracy (Phillips 1993). However, I share the position of those who challenge these binary oppositions, and stress that there is more than a two-way divide and point to the variety of forms of democracy (Held 1986, Held and Pollitt 1986). I will adopt a specific working definition of democracy in this investigation. It is a more participatory notion of democracy that is the right to take part in decision-making.

Equality, too, is a contested term and there exists immense disagreement over its meaning. Liberalism’s formal equality e.g. legal equality has limitations for many groups including women and racialised minorities. This notion of equality implies that differences between individuals should not be taken into account so that people are treated as equals. If ‘the differences no longer matter, then we have a concept of equality that abstracts from the sources and relations of power’ (Phillips 1992: 209). In recent years it is the notion of difference that dominates debate on equality. The first stage of feminist movement (the suffrage movement), Phillips argues, ‘seized on the notions of equality and civil rights to argue for formal equality and equal rights to citizenship with men’. The second stage of feminist movement emphasised the specificity of women and called for recognition (and celebration) of gender differences. They rejected the notion of ‘equality as sameness’ for, as Wendy Brown (1995) argued, it is a ‘gendered formulation of equality, because it secures gender privilege through naming women as difference and men as the neutral standard of the same’ (cited in Squires 1999: 128) The feminist theorist Ute Gerhard argued that: ‘equality is neither an absolute principle nor a

strict measure, but rather a relative concept ... The formula for sameness is $a=a$, whereas equality can be expressed as $a=b$ ' (cited in Voet 1998: 75)(I shall take up the debate on equality versus difference later in the chapter). Although it is important to note differences of individuals *and groups* as opposed to the *abstract individualism* of liberalism, there is however the danger of essentialising these differences. Identity politics, for example, bases itself on essentialised notions of difference between men and women, Whites and Blacks and ethnic minority groups homogenising these groups.

Rian Voet (1998: 75) argues that: 'there are two different meaning of social equality – material equality and social participation as paid labour'. She notes that an egalitarian position stresses equal material welfare and the importance of equal social participation whereas a pluralist position argues for different levels of welfare for citizens and different kinds of participation. Although, she maintains the first meaning of the term, material welfare, can be discussed in terms of 'sameness', the latter meaning, social participation is more complex. 'Social participation, defined here as paid labour', maintains Voet, 'can be discussed in terms of same or different *amounts* of social participation, but also different *kinds* of social participation, levels of participation and *ways* of participating' (1998: 76).

Linking social equality to the notion of difference, Philip Green (1985: 170) suggests that social equality means 'we are never able to say of anyone: he or she is statistically unlikely to ever exercise public responsibility merely because of the possession of some social attribute: being poor or a factory worker or a member of a racial or ethnic subculture, or a female, etc.' (cited in Phillips 1991: 99). Thus the working definition of the notion of equality that has been adopted in this research implies being equal along the axis of class, 'race', ethnicity, and gender (Brah 1996). In other words it entails the recognition of differences between individuals and groups, whether on the basis of 'race', ethnicity, gender or class, (or some other characteristic) while rejecting 'essentialised' notion of 'difference' which constructs hierarchies.

The notion of 'citizenship' is closely connected to the notions of equality and democracy and has widely being discussed among the scholars and political activists, over the recent years, on both left and right, both at national and international levels. It is a concept that not only is constructed differently in different societies but has also

changed its meaning within the same state and society throughout the history (Mouffe 1992, Yuval-Davis 1997). As Chantal Mouffe (1992) suggests, the way in which we define citizenship is intrinsically linked to the kind of society and political community we desire. Exploring the notion of citizenship can shed a light on some of the main issues that relate to the complex relationships between individuals, collectivities and the welfare state, as well as the ways ethnic and gender relations influence and are influenced by them. The notions of rights and duties are intrinsically related to the notion of citizenship (Marshall 1950) which also encapsulates the relationship between the individual, society and the state (Yuval-Davis 1997). Thus, this chapter explores the notion of citizenship in order to illuminate the relationship between the individuals, collectivities and the state in terms of state provisions including rights and entitlements in relation to public housing.

The chapter starts by discussing citizenship in the welfare state. The discussion takes up the debate between liberals, republicans and communitarians in relation to their different approaches to notions of participation, empowerment, difference and constructions of the concept of citizenship.

It then goes on and explores, group differences in relation to collective rights and multiculturalism. Differentiated welfare rights for racial and ethnic minorities and the collective provision of needs rather than individual rights are discussed in relation to multi-culturalist policies. Thus, the chapter explores the ethnicised and gendered character of the relationship between the state and society in terms of state provisions. The chapter then looks at the debates around group difference and representation.

Social Citizenship and the Welfare State

Rights and entitlements and the welfare service provision

In recent years, by reasserting itself, neo-liberalism has attacked welfare rights and the widening of field of equality that has been accompanied by a controversy over whether the welfare system should be destroyed or reformed. There has been a change in the meaning of welfare over the years, which in turn, has led to a change in the relationship between the individual and welfare state. Thus, questions such as: ‘what is welfare? What is the welfare state?’ need to be answered in order to explore the changing relationship between the individual and the welfare state, as well as individual and

collective rights and entitlements in terms of welfare services in general and public housing in particular.

While liberalism defines the citizen as an abstract individual whose ethnic, class and gender differences are supposed to be irrelevant to their status as citizens, T.H. Marshall (1950) and others construct citizenship in terms of social rights, which assumes a notion of difference as determined by social needs. Hence, as J. Edwards (1988: 135) described it, those people who have similar needs must get similar resources while those with diverse needs, must get diverse resources - which in short means *treatment as equals rather than equal treatment* (cited in Yuval-Davis 1997: 74).

According to Marshall (1950: 84), 'Citizenship is a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed'. Thus the construction of *social* citizenship by Marshall and others forms the basis of the notion of welfare state. When first introduced, social welfare rights were linked directly to class difference. They were aimed at improving the quality of life of the working classes under capitalism. Welfare system offers social solidarity among the working classes thereby contributing to the smooth running of capitalism. Pointing to Marshall's proposition that social citizenship constitutes the core of a welfare state, Gosta Esping-Andersen (1990) argues that the concept above all must involve the granting of social rights. Thus social rights are given legal recognition and are inviolable and are granted on the basis of citizenship rather than performance. Similarly, others pointed out that welfare was viewed as 'the institutionalized recognition of social solidarity within the political community of citizens' (Beveridge 1942, Harris 1987, Marshall 1950, Yuval-Davis 1997: 74).

The traditional welfare state is the product of an industrial era of capitalism, and therefore is a reflection of the social world of its origin. Mass production systems transformed every sector of economic life in the twentieth century. Mass production presupposes mass consumption. Thus the provision of the infrastructure of consumption - housing and roads accompanied mass production. So did the welfare systems, which was work oriented and aimed at providing solidarity among the working classes as well as to stabilise the markets of mass-producers (Esping-Andersen 1990, Harris 1987).

Also accompanying mass production was highly centralised administration with fiercely hierarchical bureaucracies. According to Max Weber (1978) the increase in bureaucracy was inevitable in rationalisation in modern society. He viewed the modern state as absolutely dependent upon bureaucracies. Weber's concept of the term bureaucracy included not only the state but all forms of large-scale organisations such as industrial enterprises, unions, political parties and universities (Held 1987). The gender regime (Connell 1987)¹ that forms the basis of the traditional welfare state is centred on the ideal of the family wage that is the male breadwinner/female homemaker model. It is based on women's economic dependency on men and thus unequal power relationship both within family and in wider society. It privileges 'wage earning citizen' (male) over 'caring citizen' (female) in the allocation of citizenship rights and participation in decision-making processes. This family wage model is based on the nuclear family, which, as mentioned earlier, does not even correctly reflect white household structures. Moreover, as Morris and Winn (1990: 102) argue 'it is particularly inaccurate for the Asian population, many of whose households consist of an extended family network comprised of a number of "nuclear" families'. Similarly, 'Afro-Caribbean family structures' they argue, 'are also more likely to vary from the nuclear family model in that there are a larger cohabitantes and female-headed, single-parent families' (Esping-Andersen 1990, Fraser 1996, Lister 1997, Murray 1992).

Over the years new social movements have developed protesting against both the discrimination and disadvantage of various marginal sectors and collectivities in society, such as women, Blacks, lesbian and gays, disabled people. Subsequently a variety of ethnic, racial, religious and sexual groupings which exist within the marginal matrix of society and which experience informal and formal discrimination, call for a different social solidarity (Evans 1993, Yuval-Davis 1997: 74). Mouffe (1993) postulates thus:

'New political subjects emerged, new forms of identities and communities have been created, and a traditional type of social democratic conception of justice exclusively centred around economic inequalities is unlikely to capture the imagination of the new social movements' (1993: 54).

As a result, in contemporary political thought there has been an increasing emphasis on the need to open up the democratic process in order to involve wider sections of the

population more directly in decision-making, and thus new forms of democracy are explored to achieve this. Grass roots resistance movements, for example, have called for 'black power', consciousness-raising for women, and community politics.

Accompanying this is 'radical extension' of rights to embrace new categories, called for by social movements, such as reproductive rights demanded by feminists. Like feminists, David Held (1989: 201-2) too argues that reproductive rights form 'the very basis of the possibility of effective participation of women in both civil society and the polity'. He suggests seven clusters of rights corresponding to key sites of power: health, social, cultural, civil, economic, pacific and political rights. These bundles of rights are, he maintains, key to the entrenchment of the principle of autonomy and to facilitating free and equal participation (Held 1995). Carol Gould (1988: 212) similarly argues that 'the right of participation in decision-making in social, economic, cultural and political life' should be included in the basic rights (cited in Lister 1997: 18).

The emerging questions of the relationship between 'the community' and the welfare state as well as how they affect people's citizenship are debated by the 'liberals', 'communitarians' and the 'republicans' (Yuval-Davis 1997).

Citizenship and 'the community'

In the liberal tradition minimum requirements that are the legal and electoral equalities are favoured. In this position, influencing outcomes in decision-making is sought after by the 'one person, one vote' rule. People are merely asked to turn up at the polling station to vote occasionally. Because of its low level of requirement it can count on majority involvement (Phillips 1993).

Phillips (1993: 112-13) argues that liberal democracy is criticised on a number of points such as the inadequacy of the vote. Voting once every few years, it is argued cannot be regarded as a significant expression of popular control. Also voting involves choosing between broad alternatives. This, on the one hand, does not provide citizens much of a choice. On the other hand, choosing between broad alternatives means a lot of decisions are left to the political elites. What is more the vote is perceived as an expression of interests with an inherent assumption that interests are pre-given. Democracy, however, involves processes in which identities are created and re-created, interests are

constructed and political views and choices are shaped. Phillips maintains that some groups such as feminists (Pringle and Watson 1992, Young 1989, 1990a) believe that these processes are of crucial importance for they provide the context for empowerment and that in democracy what matters is empowerment as well as the ultimate policy results. Voting, feminists argue, can enable women to elect a government that promises more equal redistribution of resources. However, the problems of oppression are not resolved through re-distribution alone, for they also involve an institutional context that limits oppressed people's ability to participate and the development of their own capacities. Liberal democracy does not provide this institutional context.

The liberal tradition views the individual as abstract. In abstract individualism the diversity of individuals are noted yet at the same time it is implied that these differences do not and should not count. The universal and the abstract are assumed to be neutral and objective by the liberal tradition while a unitary understanding of human needs and concerns is imposed. It is argued that all citizens should be treated the same regardless of their social differences. Differences deriving from ethnicity, gender, and class, are of no relevance and should not be allowed to count. Thus, citizens are constructed as strangers to each other rather than as 'members of the community' (Eisenstein 1994, Phillips 1993, Roche 1987, Yuval-Davis 1997).

Carole Pateman (1970: 116), for example, argues that in the liberal democracy the 'individual' is disembodied. By abstracting the individual liberal democracy denies their social, economic as well as biological characteristics. In doing this liberal democracy equates the individual with the dominant sex.

Communitarians, on the other hand, have debated liberals and emphasised that individuals are socially embedded denouncing the ahistorical, asocial, and disembodied concept of the individual. Individuals, they argued, do not exist outside a particular social context, and have pointed to the flaw of viewing individuals as free agents. For communitarians the context that freedom of all kinds have their meaning from is 'the community'. Thus they have based moral and political beliefs in the experience of particular communities and challenged the false abstractions of 'the' individual. They have also argued that the emphasis on individual claims disregards the ways in which

individuals are located within the social realm (Etzioni 1997, Jayasuriya 1991, MacIntyre 1984, Mouffe 1993, Phillips 1993, Walzer 1983).

Kautz (1995:1) argues that the conception of the individual self, on which contemporary liberalism is based, is not coherent since our identities are constituted through our membership to a community, 'that there is no "I" before there is "we"'. Such a priority of the right that liberalism advocates cannot possibly exist, communitarians argue, for rights can exist only in a specific context. This means that a person with rights can only exist within a specific type of society, with certain institutions. Moreover, it is only through the participation of people in a community that a notion of the good is defined in a specific way providing them with a particular sense of the right and an understanding of justice. There is no universal truth or justice. People's beliefs are local and specific. Thus, the communitarians' argument suggests that notions of rights and responsibilities as well as those of equality and privacy have meaning only within the context of particular communities (Mouffe 1993: 46, Phillips 1993, Yuval-Davis 1997: 70).

Thus there is shift of emphasis from liberal tradition's establishing universally applicable standards of morality and justice towards communitarians' illuminating the principles that are already present in any given society. It represents a shift from a universalistic to a 'radically particularistic' notion (Walzer cited in Phillips 1993: 59), which is expressed in 'universality versus specificity' binary.

Mouffe (1993: 43) points out that the liberal thinker John Rawls' (1971) understanding of justice is based on the idea of fairness. One of the characteristics of Justice as Fairness is that it affirms the priority of the right over good. Thus Rawls defends a type of liberalism where the right must not depend on any utilitarian concept. His understanding of rights is important because what justifies right is not the maximisation of general welfare, nor any other particular conception of the good, and the defence of the individual wants has priority in relation to the general welfare. According to Rawls' liberal view, 'the good' to be self-defined by each person on the basis of their self interests, and citizenship is the capacity of individuals to formulate and pursue their own definition of 'the good'. This way, citizens are able to use their rights to promote their

self-interest within the limits that are imposed by the need to respect the rights of others (Mouffe 1993: 61, Rawls 1971).

Charles Taylor (1985), in his communitarian critique of liberalism, rejects the idea of right over good that forms the basis of Rawls' conception of justice. He argues that rights and a conception of justice cannot exist prior to, and independently of, specific forms of political association - which by definition implies a conception of the good. The implication of this, however, is that 'there can be no absolute priority of the right over good'. According to Taylor (1985) liberalism's view of the subject is 'atomist' for it affirms the self-sufficient character of the individual (Mouffe 1993: 46).

In his communitarian critique, Michael Sandel (1982) criticises the idea of the priority of the right over the good and the understanding of the subject this implies. He argues that Rawls' conception of the self does not allow the idea of a 'constitutive' community, a community that would constitute the very identity of the individuals. As Mouffe asserts (1993: 61): 'It only allows for an "instrumental" community, a community in which individuals with their previously defined interests and identity enter with a view to furthering those interests'. Indeed the liberal approach is flawed for it implicitly assumes fixed identities of individuals, denying the socially constructed nature of interests according to their ever-shifting identities.

The alternative to this flawed liberal approach that communitarians such as Sandel propose is to appeal to the tradition of civic republicanism putting a strong emphasis on the notion of a public good. This must be prior to, and independent of, individual desires and interests. The 'common good' stands separate from the interests of individual citizens. In civic republicanism political activity is of crucial importance and associated with the pursuit of 'common good'. It is only through political activity that the potential of the Self is realised (Lister 1997, Mouffe 1993, Sandel 1982, Yuval-Davis 1997).

Some feminists such as Mary Dietz (1991) also appropriated principles of civic republicanism. She conceptualises citizenship as expressly political, participatory and democratic involving the collective and participatory engagement of citizens in the determination of the affairs of their community.

Although there are serious problems with the liberal concept of citizenship, the civic republican solution is also problematic. Underlying both liberal and civic republican formulation of citizenship is ‘the individual/community *dichotomy*’ (Frazer and Lacey 1993: 178). Lister (1997), on the other hand, observes how specific power relations are formed and maintained by constructing the equality and difference binary which lead to construction of political choices. In contrast to the dichotomous thinking of Western thought, however, these oppositions can be treated as complementary rather than as mutually exclusive alternatives.

Bock and James (1992) argue that ‘throughout its history women’s liberation has been seen sometimes as the right to be equal, sometimes as the right to be different’ (cited in Squires 1999:116). Thus, Squires notes that ‘equality and difference, both rich, complex and contested terms in their own right, have come to represent distinct and competing perspectives within feminist theory, in which they stand for two fundamentally antagonistic accounts of the nature of gender and of the feminist project’ (1999: 115). A dichotomous separation of ‘equality versus difference’ is created as mutually exclusive oppositions. Squires notes that:

‘Equality theorists argues that “gender difference” is either a straightforward myth or a contingent result of social conditioning, but in neither case needs to be transcended. Difference theorists, on the other hand, argue that “gender difference” is either a biological given or a result of social conditioning, but in either case needs to be recognized and valued’ (Squires 1999: 118).

Squires underlines that the former perspective calls for women’s integration into the existing social order. The latter perspective strives ‘to reverse the order of things: to place at the centre that which is currently marginalized, to value that which is currently devalued, to privilege that which is currently subordinated’ (1999: 118).

In relation to the gender-neutral citizenship/gender-differentiated citizenship dichotomy Ruth Lister maintains that: ‘a feminist reinterpretation of citizenship can best be approached by treating each of these oppositions as potentially complementary rather than as mutually exclusive alternatives’ (Lister 1997: 92). Lister notes that the ‘equality versus difference’ binary posits concept of difference as opposite of equality although

the opposite notion of equality is 'inequality' which necessarily comprises hierarchical relations leading to subordination and subsequent disadvantage of particular groups. 'Difference', however, is a notion that can and needs to complement equality. She further argues that this dichotomy needs to be collapsed and equality and difference 'to be reconstructed so that they open up rather than close off political choices' (1999: 97).

Civic republicanism is also criticised for the demanding nature of the citizenship it conceptualises. Citizen participation is seen as political obligation. Yet the higher the demands placed on participation, the more likely it is that participants will represent a minority. It implicitly assumes that all citizens are positioned equally to carry out this obligation. Existing social divisions on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and ability imply that this minority will be white, male, able-bodied individuals (Lister 1997, Phillips 1993).

Yuval-Davis describes how various marginal or minority groups are located in the marginal matrix of citizenship and face inhibition in practising their religious and cultural beliefs or economic needs by legal and moral constraints. These 'moral aliens' are subjected to both formal and informal discrimination through the state's practices in social, political and economic arenas. 'This is the twilight zone in between the liberal and republican construction of citizenship,' she argues, 'where religious, ethnic and sexual minorities are located - outside the national "moral community" but inside the civic nation' (1997: 85).

As Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993) suggest (and as discussed in the Chapter 1), 'community', like collectivity, is a social material construction. Its boundaries, structures and norms are a result of constant processes of struggle and negotiation, and in some cases the result of a more general development. Nowadays, as they point out, the term 'the community' increasingly is being used as a substitute for civil society.

The welfare state's role in shaping the public and private

Esping-Andersen (1990) stresses that the welfare state cannot be understood merely in terms of the rights it grants. Also to be considered, he maintains, is how state activities are interlocked with the market's and the family's role in social provision. The welfare state is not just a mechanism that intervenes in the structure of inequality; it is, in its

own right, a system of stratification. It is an active force in the ordering of social relations. Similarly Lister (1997: 10) highlights the role of the welfare state as regulator of a range of citizenship rights, including immigration, reproductive and sexual as well as social rights. This way, she argues, it can both enhance and weaken citizenship of different groups of women.

The society we are living in is divided into public male and private female domains; women have been excluded from citizenship and prevented from full involvement at the political level. Public and private are not natural divisions, but socially and historically constructed ones. The liberal claim that there can be a clear separation between 'civil society' and 'the state' is questioned by various political thinkers who argue that the boundaries between the 'state' and 'civil society' are never fixed, but always changing. The state is enmeshed in the associations and practices of everyday life. Thus, the welfare state through its policies of access to social services is unavoidably involved in the maintenance and reproduction of the inequalities of everyday life. Indeed public policies have a profound influence on shaping relations within the family and the household, which are diverse in relation to ethnicity, while the inequalities of ethnicised sexual power are reflected in relations at work and in politics (Hall 1984, Held 1986, Pateman 1988, Phillips 1991).

As Yuval-Davis (1997: 80) argues, in the modern welfare state in particular, no social sphere is protected from state intervention. Even the non-intervention of the state is the outcome of its own decisions in terms of drawing boundaries of intervention. That is to say, she maintains, the very act of constructing the boundary between the public and private is a political act itself. Political power relations with their own dynamics exist in each social sphere. Thus feminism points to the presence of power relations within primary social relations as well as within the more impersonal secondary relations of the civil and political domains.

Asserting 'the personal is political' feminists have highlighted the relationship between the public and the private and argued that they cannot be looked at as separate domains independent of each other. Pointing to the state's contribution to women's oppression, socialist feminists maintain that the male power over women is centralised through the policies of the welfare state, which make women caring for others in the home

financially dependent on men. Moreover, it is embedded in other structures of the workplace and the home that cannot be best understood as operating primarily at an individual level (Phillips 1991, Segal 1987).

The distribution of resources such as work, time and money is a function of power relationships both within family and the wider society. Thus unequal power relationship involving women's economic dependency, lack of control over resources, lack of rights as well emotional dependency and lack of self-esteem underlie the interaction between public and private. All of this undermines women's membership in the political community because the autonomy, which implies both economic and physical independence, is perceived as a prerequisite of political citizenship. As discussed in Chapter 1, women cannot move and act as freely in the public places as a result of fear of sexual violence. Therefore women's capacity to act as citizens is impeded considerably and their ability to participate in formal political action is curtailed. Subsequently women are underrepresented in the key formal channels of politics and decision-making. Indeed, the public and private division is central to women's exclusion from full citizenship (Lister 1997, Phillips 1993).

Amina Mama (1992) examines the ways in which the changing British State constructs and reconstructs the positions of black women, first as workers who contribute to the nation, its economy and its public services, and then as citizens, and as consumers of public services. Among other factors, funding policies, for instance, can contribute to the creation of exclusive identities. Race, class and gender divisions do not simply fade away or decrease with the Welfare State. Instead they are reproduced in new forms revealed in the complex mechanisms of social regulation and administration, in the allocation of resources and in the delivery of social welfare services.

The state's involvement in shaping and reproducing the existing relations is changing rather than becoming less important. One of the reasons of this recent change in the nature of the state's involvement is due to the fact that the family structure, which the traditional welfare system is based upon, has changed in some countries. As it is argued that the central idea which formed the basis of the notion of citizenship as it emerged, far from being universalistic was constructed in terms of the 'Rights of Man' (who were also white property owners), and that women were denied of citizenship rights because

citizen status was granted not to individuals as such, but to men in their capacity as members and representatives of a family (Held 1987, Pateman 1988, 1989, Vogel 1989, Yuval-Davis 1997).

The traditional welfare state is based on the nuclear family model with the male breadwinner as the head of the family and women and children as dependants. This approach does not take into account diverse family structures such as extended families, and female headed families where a male partner is absent. Yet the differences in household composition amongst the different ethnic groups in Britain are considerable and, as will be discussed below, Black and minority ethnic groups suffer from these ethnocentric assumptions (Morris and Winn 1990).

In this model, however, members of the family do not have a unitary set of interests as assumed. Husbands, wives, children and other adults in cases of extended families have diverse social positionings, differential powers and interests within the family (Yuval-Davis 1997). The family structure of this model has changed dramatically and family relations are now diversified greatly. As mentioned in Chapter 1, in Britain only 15 per cent of households consist of a male breadwinner, a wife not in paid employment and dependent children. On the one hand household formation amongst single never-married couples have increased significantly over the 20 years (Morris and Winn 1990). On the other hand, the outcome of the current divorce and separation rate is a net increase of around 80,000 households per year. Consequently the number of one-person households between the age of 30 and 44 are expected to double between 1987 and 2001. Because of the long-term trend towards more elderly people living alone in separate households there is a projected increase of 600,000 one-person households over retirement age between 1987 and 2001. However, the welfare states are failing to respond these changing needs. The traditional welfare state is not equipped to deal with situations that differ from the traditional family model.

Single mother families, for instance, have come under constant attack by the social security as well as the housing departments of the welfare state during Conservative and Labour Governments in Britain. Women's unpaid carer role goes unrecognised. Jacques Chirac has recently commented that 'why give money to women when they are sitting at home?' In Britain as soon as Blair came to power he launched a 'welfare crusade', as

The Guardian (2 June 1997) put it, 'designed to ease the workless off benefits and into jobs, issuing a bold challenge to single mothers to seek work or training'. The paper then went on explaining the plan of the Government that lone mothers will initially be encouraged to take up jobs and penalised if they don't. Yet no plan mentioned the parallel problem of childcare at the time.

David Walker, writing on Welfare Reform in *The Guardian* on 29 September 1998, pointed out that Labour has now 'recognised that childcare, including better pay and education for pre-schoolers, is integral to the project of getting people to rely on income from employment rather than benefits'. Ironically, this is largely due to the work of the now sacked Social Security Secretary and Minister for Women.

Community politics, decision-making and the welfare state

Allan Cochrane (1986: 52) suggests that the term 'community' is often defined by the boundaries of 'local authority area'. Thus community politics come to mean local politics. He explores the extent to which locally based politics can be developed asking whether this results in an increase in their participation. Community politics, he suggests, is generally concerned with the collective provision of services to a particular area or group. 'It typically involves,' he explains, 'locally (area) based groups generating demands and either setting out to meet themselves or putting pressure on state agencies to do so'. He then argues that in exploring new forms of democracy, 'community politics' can be of significance for two reasons:

Firstly, because of its local base - e.g. small neighbourhoods - it implies that local people are more likely to get involved directly in collective decision-making. Therefore it provides more opportunity to achieve active democratic politics than that of traditional forms of representative democracy. *Secondly*, community politics could be a way of encouraging the development of an alternative sector of politics, which is autonomous and independent of formal state structures. He points to those claims that area-based coalitions can be organised around the provision of public services such as housing. They can then have the potential to generate a local politics, which can mobilise wider sections of society, in contrast to class politics, and challenge the normal priorities of capitalism (Cochrane 1986: 52).

Maureen Makintosh and Hilary Wainwright (1987) point to some contradictions that arise when the state organisations form alliances with the popularly based organisations. One of the causes of these emerging contradictions is the fact that the local state is an employer as well as a provider of services. On the one hand it is an institution with interests of its own, and on the other hand it is a political body with a wider set of political commitments.

Another cause for these contradictions lies in the fact that the local state organisations do not have a homogenous constituency, as is often assumed. As discussed in Chapter 1, the notions of 'the people', and 'the community' are highly heterogeneous with shifting boundaries. Finally, despite the claims of decentralising and sharing power, the local states hold onto much of the final power in decision-making, which leads to conflicts of interest between people and the state, as the groups lose their autonomy by accepting resources.

Community politics has been criticised by many for various reasons. Young (1990a), for instance, notes that although she shares many of the communitarian criticisms of welfare, capitalist, liberal democratic theory and society, the ideal of community, she maintains, cannot offer an alternative vision of a democratic polity. For embedded in the notion is a desire for the fusion of subjects with one another which in practice operates to exclude the other - e.g. those who have the characteristics that the group does not associate with itself. The ideal of community, Young claims, denies and represses social difference. According to this ideal, the concept of the polity as a unity is possible only in so far as all participants share a common experience and common values.

Those involved in the community development projects in Britain later criticised them challenging their assumptions, and argued that it is impossible to deal with structural problems of economic and social inequality of the society at the local level (Cochrane 1986). There exists an inherent assumption in the initiatives of community development projects that the social problems that inner cities face could be corrected if there was sufficient will within the local community. Also overlooked is the fact that inner cities are the products of wider economic pressures, left over and marginalized in the process of economic and social restructuring.

Hence, Cochrane argues, community initiatives both in the USA and Britain failed in winning their demands and altering the existing politics in major ways. In Britain, the evidence suggests that existing rules in politics serve the interests of the hegemonic groups and protect established policies, while groups calling for changes are excluded through a series of devices. As and when pressure groups *do* succeed in winning their demands they are often in the form of concessions, which are on minor issues at a high cost in terms of time and effort. In the USA it is widely recognised that the extent to which weaker groups can influence policy is very limited. Bachrach and Baratz, for example, argue that those who hold the political power remove from the agenda of government any consideration of the demands of weaker groups. In this way they do not even emerge as recognised problems or issues. As discussed in Chapter 3, this is called non-decision-making and is as important as formal decision-making within the government (Bachrach and Baratz 1970, Cochrane 1986).

Thus, community politics is quite problematic, as weaker groups remain quite powerless when issues concern the interests of the hegemonic groups and their established policies. On the other hand, as both Young (1990a) and Cochrane (1986) argue, community politics and ‘community control’ can be an effective way of *excluding* ‘the other’ rather than including it, subsequently shedding doubt on the claim that they are ways of achieving more democracy.

As an example, Cochrane (1986: 70) describes how in American cities with a high level of social and ethnic concentration and segregation, community control at the level of local governments can be effectively used by some groups to *exclude* others in order to keep their existing privileged access to services. In this way, for example, black and poor children are prevented from entering the schools of middle class white children in the suburbs. Cochrane asserts that these cases do not help justify the claims ‘that calls for community control are, in fact, calls for an extension of democracy’. ‘On the contrary,’ he maintains, ‘they clearly offer means of excluding certain groups from political power. Instead of extending democracy, they are intended to limit it’.

Indeed, as also discussed in Chapter 1, the notion of ‘the community’ is quite problematic. Hegemonic groups can easily and confidently claim that they are ‘the community’. Yuval-Davis (1994: 181) describes how **perceiving community as fixed**

can lead to the creation of exclusionary boundaries of 'the community' which exclude as 'the other' all those perceived as different. This indicates their potential to become extremely conservative and racist. Tenants associations on some housing estates, for instance, mobilise the neighbourhood to exclude African Caribbeans and Asians in Britain.

'The community' is assumed to be a homogenic and harmonious grouping while competing interests within 'the community' are ignored. Different and competing interests of members of the collectivity stemming from their different positioning in terms of class, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality are overlooked. Hence certain individuals, just because they are members in certain collectivities can automatically be considered as 'representing their community' (Rowbotham 1986, Yuval-Davis 1994).

Citizenship and participation

Some thinkers link the notion of citizenship to participation in the polity and hold the view that participation is the most significant defining and central characteristic of citizenship (Jayasuriya 1991). Brian Turner (1986), for instance, states that citizenship can be defined in various ways such as in relation to civil, legal and social features. Nonetheless, 'citizenship rights are essentially concerned with the nature of social participation of persons within the community as fully recognised legal members' (1986: 134).

Held (1989) also argues that participation of people in the community in which they live is central to the idea of citizenship. Those groups that so far have been excluded from full membership strive for membership and enjoyment of all social benefits. Likewise, Dahrendorf (1975: 44) asserts that citizenship is not a legal status that is something people are given once and for all. Instead it is a social process, the nucleus of a forceful development. He further adds that 'citizenship is not mainly about where people stand, but what they do. It is about participation'. As mentioned earlier Gould (1988) considers participation of individuals in decision-making in social, economic, cultural and political life among basic rights.

Furthermore, Jayasuriya (1991: 38) argues, participation is not just about the political community but also about all aspects of being a member of a society. Referring to

Parson's concept of 'rights enabling participation', Jayasuriya underlines the fundamental distinction between 'rights *per se*, and rights which provide conditions for effective participation in a variety of social domains'. Emphasising the importance of this process of achievement of citizenship status as equal members with full participation rights, Jayasuriya maintains that on account of social exclusion ethnic minorities - some groups more than others - have been denied opportunities for effective participation. Political citizenship that is active involvement in the polity is an important feature of citizenship, especially in relation to ethnic minorities, and is central to being in the public domain. Its complete achievement is a matter of power relations between different social groups. He calls for a broadening of the sphere of the public domain, to allow ethnic minorities access to the main institutions not only of the state but also of the civil society. Whichever way we deal with the issue of power relations, he states, the concept of citizenship needs to broaden this domain. 'It is participation in this broad public sphere that is central to the operation of citizenship' (1991: 38).

Lister (1997: 43) argues that whether the focus is a nation-state or the community, or particular groups within the localities, processes of inclusion and exclusion are simultaneously at work at both at legal and sociological levels through different modes of citizenship. 'Formal' citizenship (e.g. to have a passport) signifies the legal status of membership of a state whereas 'substantive' citizenship is about having rights and duties within a state. 'Within nation-states', she maintains, 'different groups enjoy different degrees of substantive citizenship, for social divisions and poverty are corrosive of full citizenship'. As discussed earlier women's participation in formal politics, for example, is hampered by unequal distribution of power. The sexual division of labour e.g. caring responsibilities of women at home, combined with the problems of using the public space as well as the way politics is constructed (e.g. mainly for men) act as strong obstacles to their participation. Thus the private and public divide underpins women's exclusion from decision-making at macro level and from full citizenship. Racial discrimination, harassment and violence, on the other hand, impair the substantive citizenship of Black people.

In Britain, the alternative that the right puts forward constructs the citizen as an economically successful middle class, male head of the family, who fulfils his duties as citizen by granting his spare money and time 'to the community'. Subsequently, the

welfare system is turned into a system of charity based on voluntary effort while rights and entitlement are turned into gifts. The idea of 'active citizenship' that has been promoted in the British context, assumes a top-down notion of citizenship. Thus, quangos, which are appointed rather than elected, have come to be the means by which a number of public services (such as health, education and welfare) are being managed. Individuals are over-determined by their identities as consumers. Moreover, as Yuval-Davis states: 'The balance of citizenship rights has shifted, away from social rights of welfare towards civil rights of an economic kind (that is market related) such as the right to buy council houses, and shares'. This construction of citizenship is however highly class biased obliterating the construction of citizenship in welfare state that aimed at 'treatment as equals' (Edwards 1988 cited in Yuval-Davis 1997: 85, Lister 1990, 1997).

Citizenship rights of racial and ethnic minorities and multi-cultural policies

Welfare rights as well as the political rights of citizens are affected by the formal and informal practices within the society. The allocation policies adopted by many local authorities are based upon ethnocentric assumptions about what constitutes a normal family. However there are major differences in household composition amongst the different ethnic groups in Britain. These ethnocentric assumptions about what constitutes a normal family structure have a major impact on the access of Black and minority ethnic groups into public housing. Asian households, for example, are likely to be larger than white households since they are nearly four times more likely to contain more than three adults, and more than six times likely to contain over two children. The difference in household structure contributes to the higher occurrence of overcrowding in Asian households. Allocations' policies, based on assumptions that naturalise the nuclear family, do not allow for diversity in household structures. As a result, they are either excluded from council housing altogether or forced to restructure themselves so that they fit with the 'normal' pattern. Development of new housing was hampered by the national government housing finance policies, which eliminated the prospect of developing larger units of dwellings (Morris and Winn 1990).

African Caribbean family structures too are likely to differ from the nuclear family based on a male breadwinner model, for there are greater numbers of people cohabiting or female-headed single-parent families. When the local authorities have a policy restricting the eligibility of cohabiting households they are denied access to the public

housing. Local authorities may adopt a formal or informal policy of allocating smaller property to single parent families. Thus, families in both cases experience indirect discrimination. In the latter, however, where a policy is adopted informally, families are likely to experience more direct discrimination as the rule is more likely to be applied to black single-parent families than to their white counterparts (Morris and Winn 1990:102-4).

The most problematic aspect of citizenship rights for racial and ethnic minorities relates to their social rights and to the notion of multi-culturalism. The poor and working classes are constructed in terms of racial and ethnic collectivities through multi-culturalist policies. These collectivities, it is suggested, have collective needs resulting from their structural disadvantages as well as their different cultures. Countries such as Canada, Britain and the USA have officially adopted multi-cultural policies. It is argued that to overcome the outcome of racism in practical terms rather than just ideological, collective provisions and positive action, based on group membership, are the only measures to be taken that are effective (Burney 1988, Young 1989, Yuval-Davis 1997). As Yuval-Davis (1997: 77) argues, it is quite problematic when the provision relates not only to differential treatment in relation to access to employment or welfare, but also to the different cultural needs of different ethnicities. It includes the provision of interpreting and translation into various minority ethnic languages by various departments of the welfare state, including housing. However it may also include providing financial support to religious organisations. In most extreme cases, it may involve calls 'to enable the minorities to operate according to their own customary and religious legal systems' (e.g. the Rushdie Affair in Britain). Embedded in this perception of 'different cultural needs' is an essentialised notion of culture. The implicit assumption in this is an essentialised notion of culture. Culture, however, 'is a rich resource, usually full of internal contradictions, which is used selectively by different social agents in various social projects within specific power relations and political discourse in and outside the collectivity' (1997: 43).

Multi-culturalist policies are criticised by the Left on various points. These include the fact that they ignore the issues of power relations, and they accept as representatives of minority groups whose social positioning in terms of class and power are quite different from those of the majority members of that community. Also, they emphasise the

differential cultures of members of minority ethnic groups rather than their similarities and commonalities resulting from their shared experiences in a racist society. Furthermore, these policies assume ethnic minorities as homogeneous ignoring the conflicting interests and differential power relations within them. Cultures and cultural needs are not fixed and highly heterogeneous yet multi-cultural policies tend to reify their boundaries and essentialise the characteristics of these cultures (Yuval-Davis 1997).

Participation, empowerment, and group difference

Recent arguments on democracy note the existence of other differences between individuals such as ethnicity, gender, class, and age, and call for recognition of group differences. Some propose institutionalisation of group differences so that the disadvantaged and marginalized groups are provided with opportunity and mechanisms to express and exercise their differences and influence policy formation processes. However, such arguments remain problematic because they are based on assumptions that homogenise and naturalise social categories and essentialise differences fixing boundaries around them. Some argue that group-based concept of rights do not necessarily lead to more egalitarian structures and that group representation is problematic since it gives rise to questions such as: Who defines the group? Who is in and who is out? Who speaks for the community? (Benhabib 1996, Eisenstein 1984, Fraser and Nicholson 1990, Phillips 1993, Young 1990a).

Certain factors can interfere with the participation of an individual in the life of the community of which s/he is a member. Poverty, for instance, spells exclusion from full participation, as Ruth Lister (1990) argues, and diminishes the citizenship rights of a significant proportion of the community. Moreover, these rights are all too often eroded further for Black and ethnic minorities, women and the disabled.

Participation of women in national politics is very low: In the welfare states of Western Europe it varies between 2 and 10 per cent and in Britain and USA the figure is less than 5 per cent. Although the figures slightly improve as we move to local politics their relatively better position in terms of local politics only re-confirms the fact that their numbers increase as the power of the office decrease (Phillips 1993). Even in Nordic countries where women have higher rates of political representation they remain absent

in those corporations that hold the most significant and social powers that are controlled by men (Yuval-Davis 1997).

Lister (1997) argues that feminism is on the camp of strong democracy where what matters is empowerment as well as the ultimate policy results. She further maintains that the analysis of systemic inequalities - not only between women and men, but more generally between oppressed and dominant social groups - raises important question about empowering people not only as individuals but also as members of specific groups.

The notions of 'power' and 'empowerment' are central to participation and participatory processes. As mentioned in Chapter 1 (see page 50) Foucault (1980: 98) observes that there exists horizontal power not just hierarchical. Describing how power operates 'through a net-like organisation' he highlights that as individuals circulate between its threads they are constantly undergoing as well as exerting this power.

Anthony Giddens (1991: 211-4) makes a distinction between two notions of power: the 'hierarchical', and the 'generative'. The former implies the ability of an individual or group to exert their will over others, while the latter is about 'self-actualisation'.

Both Foucault's and Giddens' notion of power have been adopted by those groups striving for sexual, and racial equalities. Opposing 'shared victimisation', black feminist bell hooks (1984: 45) calls for unity of women that bases itself on 'shared strength and resources'. For Patricia Hill Collins (1991: 223), on the other hand, power is both 'energy' and 'domination'. The former implies 'creative acts of resistance' against domination. The latter represents hierarchical relations of power e.g. subordination.

Mouffe (1992) criticises the liberals for being blind to power relations. They agree, she maintains, on the need to extend the sphere of rights in order to include groups that have been excluded so far yet they perceive the process as 'a smooth one of progressive inclusion to citizenship'. Noting that this approach is problematic in that it disregards the constraints imposed on the extension of pluralism, she points to the fact that 'some existing rights have been constituted on the very exclusion or subordination of the rights

of other categories'. She suggests that the process of recognition of several new rights requires us to deconstruct all those identities (1992: 236).

Will Kymlicka (1995) calls for a distinction between two kinds of group rights. 'The first,' he explains, 'involves the claim of a group against its own members; the second involves the claim of a group against the larger society' (1995: 35). The former aims to use state powers to protect the group from the *internal dissent* of its own individual members whilst the latter is intended to protect the group from the impact of *external decisions*. He is in favour of the latter as he argues that certain external protections should be endorsed, where they promote fairness between groups and involve protection of a disadvantaged group by others. He rejects the former, which he calls 'internal restrictions' for they limit the right of group members and allow their oppression by the practices of their culture and tradition.

Although Kymlicka's argument on the whole is quite right, nevertheless, as Yuval-Davis (1997: 77) highlights, he naturalises and reifies the boundaries of the group on the one hand and does not differentiate between individuals with specific power positionings within the groups and 'the group', on the other.

Young (1990a) argues that existing democracy fails to recognise the relevance of group differentiation and suggests that representative democracy should treat people not as individuals but as members of groups, for some of them are more oppressed than others. She maintains that to achieve political equality formal mechanisms for representing group difference is needed. Stressing the fact that some groups are privileged while others are oppressed, she notes that existing mechanisms provide dominant groups with power. This way the suppression of any marginalized, disadvantaged voice is maintained. She suggests that the oppressed groups should be given a guaranteed role in policy-making through provision of public funding to promote the self-organisation of oppressed groups; making it mandatory that policy-makers take into account the policy proposals of these groups; and finally granting a veto power over the policies directly affecting the lives of these groups.

Phillips (1993) argues that there can be no serious objection to procedures that enhance group consultation with disadvantaged groups which can assure and strengthen the input

of groups into the formulations of public policy. However, giving such groups ultimate and decisive power may prove to be problematic. She stresses that granting substantial decision-making power generates serious questions about representativeness as well as accountability and democratic control.

Other theorists also argue that although recognising difference and differential power relations is important, Young's position remains problematic. Institutionalising forms of group representation may put more emphasis on constructing boundaries around these groups which exclude as 'the Other' all those perceived as different and contribute to the conceptualisation of these boundaries as fixed with no possibility of shifting. This consequently strengthens the divide as well as blocking further development and change. Furthermore, the interests of specific individuals with their specific positioning within the group will be constructed as representing the interests of the whole group. Institutionalisation group difference may mean getting legal recognition and financial and political powers which on the one hand raises questions about how to determine what kinds of groups ought to be represented in different kinds of forums and how to identify both the membership of such groups and those who speaks for them. On the other hand it may lead to a situation in which the advancement of the powers of the group may become their priority in their activities (Phillips 1993, Shapiro and Kymlicka 1997, Yuval-Davis 1994, 1997).

As mentioned earlier, responding to criticisms, Young (1997) expresses her agreement with the view that treating gender or racial groups as fixed and unitary in their interest is problematic, for it 'inappropriately freezes fluid relational identities into a unity and can create oppressive segregations' (1997: 350). Furthermore, group representation implies that 'the dominant groups within the groups suppress or marginalize the perspectives of minorities'. Young's answer to the problem is her suggestion to rethink about the meaning and functions of political representation. She argues that the implicit assumption of the representative, which is in some sense identical with those represented, is false. Representation, she maintains, should be understood in terms of *differance* in the sense that Jacques Derrida uses the term, rather than identity. '*Differance*', according to Derrida (1976: 27), 'is the systematic play of differences, of the traces of differences, of the *spacing* by means of which elements are related to each other'. This spacing is simultaneously active and passive. In this sense 'difference' is

‘positional, conditional and conjunctural’, as opposed to ‘the “difference” which makes a radical and unbridgeable separation’ (Hall 1992: 257). Young calls for a re-conceptualisation of representation, as a ‘differing relationship’ of authorisation and accountability in which constituents and representatives defer to each other’s judgement yet never assumes a unity of interests or identities. Representation of citizens has to be along three dimensions: their interests, their opinions or principles, and their ‘perspective’. She claims that while members of oppressed or marginalized groups are rarely unified in their interests or opinions, they often do share a certain perspective, which emerges from their experiences as group members. ‘Representing a social group’, she states, ‘consists primarily in representing the perspective members of the group have derived from their structured social positioning’. She claims that social perspectives arise from broad social structures that position many people in a similar way which some interests and opinions do not (Young 1997: 370).

However, in my opinion, this separation of social perspectives from interests and opinions is problematic. The differences of people in their social positionings within the matrix of social structures including their ideological locations forms the basis of their different social perspectives upon which their opinions are formed, and which also gives rise to their conflicting interests. Moreover, conflicting positionings and competing interests, together with differentiated power relations, produce competing social perspectives which in turn result in competing claims by those who hold them. Young’s separation of social perspective from the interests and opinions is essentialist and in perceiving their boundaries as fixed remains problematic.

Also problematic is the identity politics which inherently assumes social categories and collectivities as homogeneous and ‘natural units’. The boundaries of these groupings then will be assumed as fixed while, their shifting nature and internal power differences and competing interests within them will be denied. The problematic nature of identity politics is illuminated by many scholars. Gail Pheterson (1990), for instance, describes an experiment in which various groups of women (black, white, Jewish, gentile, lesbian and heterosexual women) had their present perceptions distorted by their past experiences with oppression and domination. This in turn blocked their identification with people in common political situations who did not share their history (cited in Yuval-Davis 1997: 127).

Thus, as Yuval-Davis (1997) argues, as an alternative to 'identity politics', the idea of 'transversal politics' is needed to provide the way forward. Such politics replaces perceived unity and homogeneity by dialogues providing recognition of the specific positionings of those who participate in them. It is dialogical politics, she argues, in which, unlike identity politics, 'there is a recognition that differences are important, but at the same time there is also a recognition that notions of difference should encompass, rather than replace, notions of equality. Such notions of difference are not hierarchical and assume a-priory respect to others' (2000: 6).

Nonetheless, she insists, transversal politics by no means assumes boundariless dialogue. In transversal politics there is a differentiation between positioning, identity and values. It crosses differences of positionings and identities while at the same time assuming a similarity, if not commonality of values.

Transversal politics is envisaged as opposed to the principle of delegation in which political delegates are seen as advocates rather than representatives of specific social categories and groupings, and that their message is a result of transversal dialogues. However, Yuval-Davis (2000:7) points out that it also has proved to be very problematic, politically and ethically. The fact that nobody represents nobody (for they are only advocates), gives rise to the problem of responsibility and accountability. Thus, there exists no inherent mechanism in transversal politics, as in identity politics, for internal democracy. Nor there are decision-making mechanisms inherent in the transversal dialogue. It is effective in exchanging information, gaining understanding and expressing solidarity across borders and boundaries, maintains Yuval-Davis. However, in taking common action, it is difficult to decide on the differential priorities of the different partners in the dialogue. Usually this is done through consensus politics. However, she argues, 'not only is this not an efficient way of making decisions, but also, as the participants in the dialogue are not representatives, such a consensus does not necessarily have any wider political significance'.

Similarly Giddens (1994: 113) argues for 'dialogical democracy', a public arena in which controversial issues can be pursued through a process of dialogue. The term 'deliberative democracy' is offered by some as a way of getting, or trying to get,

agreement about policies in the political arena. David Miller, for example, suggests that the starting point for the deliberative ideal is 'the premise that political preferences will conflict and that the purpose of democratic institutions must be to resolve this conflict'. He suggests that for such a conflict resolution to be democratic, it must take place 'through an open and uncoerced discussion of the issue at stake with the aim of arriving at an agreed judgement' which resonates Jurgen Habermas. The agreement does not have to be reached directly through such discussion and a vote may also be taken. The crucial point is that the participants reach a judgement on the basis of what they have heard and said. Giddens argues that both 'within a wider polity, or in relationships, the individual must have the psychological and material autonomy needed to enter into effective communication with others' which requires the development of what David Held calls a *principle of autonomy* (1994: 119). Dialogue, (that is free from the use of coercion, and occupying a 'public space'), according to Giddens, is 'the means, not just of settling disputes, but of creating an atmosphere of mutual tolerance' (1994: 119). This opens the very framework of the democratic system to 'public' discussion.

Conclusion

Traditional liberal doctrine, whose main principle is that individuals should be 'free' and 'equal' and given primacy to individual rights and freedom, claims that legal and electoral equality provides everyone with equal rights, imposing a unitary concept of human needs and concerns. Mouffe (1992) points out that by asserting that all individuals are born free and equal, liberalism contributed to the formulation of the idea of a universal citizenship. Yet, at the same time, it 'reduced citizenship to a mere legal status, setting out the rights that the individuals hold against the state' (1992: 227). The underlying assertion of the universal concept of rights is that differences between individuals are irrelevant to their status as citizens and should not count. While liberal tradition constructs citizenship in individualistic terms, T.H. Marshall's definition constructs citizen as a member of community. The key factors in this definition are membership to community, the rights and duties, which are the outcome of that membership, and equality. In this way citizenship is related to (the increasingly contested) concept of 'the community' rather than 'the state'. Included in Marshall's classic concept of citizenship are not only formal political rights but also civil and social rights (Lister 1997, Marshall 1950, Phillips 1993, Yuval-Davis 1997).

Communitarians who give priority to the community life and the good of collectivities, criticise the individualist construction of citizenship of liberalism, and argue that notions of rights and obligations, as well as those of equality and privacy, have meaning only within the context of specific communities. Criticising the individualistic concept of citizenship, communitarians argue that it is through membership to a community that identities are constituted and that society should work for the 'common good'. Republicanism, also criticises the individualism of the liberal citizenship paradigm for it implies the denial of possibility of citizenship constituting membership in a 'moral community' in which the notion of the 'common good' forms the basis for the individual citizenship choice. Thus in republicanist construction, citizenship is more than a mere status. It is a means of active involvement and participation in the 'determination, practice and promotion of the common good' (Etzioni 1997, Kautz 1995, Taylor 1995, Yuval-Davis 1997).

The chapter argued that it would be wrong to essentialise community politics as a way of achieving more democracy, since, as both Young (1990a) and Cochrane (1986) maintain, community control can facilitate exclusion of certain groups from political power. Community politics remains quite problematic also because weaker groups are likely to be quite powerless *vis-à-vis* the hegemonic groups and their established policies.

Participation in decision-making relates to political citizenship that is actively involved in the polity and is an important feature of citizenship, especially in relation to ethnic minorities, and is central to being in the public domain. Power relations between different social groups are the determining factor in its achievement. As can be seen from the above discussion, there is a widespread and increasing emphasis on the need to achieve more inclusive democracy that should be based on recognition of multiple identities that are fluid with shifting boundaries.

¹ Where a specific gendered experience takes place in a particular institution - such as home, workplace, the school, the street - Connell (1987: 99) calls the relevant 'structural inventory' (e.g. structures working together within a specific social context) its 'gender regime'. Thus the notion of the 'gender order' of a society is meant to encapsulate 'the gendered dimension of all social experience' (Maharaj 1995: 59).

Chapter 3: Decision-making in organisations

Introduction

Social divisions are linked to the central issues of 'power'/'empowerment', 'identity'/'difference' and need to be examined both at macro as well as local levels. Community constructions take place at these two levels involving inclusions/exclusions. Also, it is on a local level that tenant participation in decision-making processes of housing is expected to take place. This chapter, therefore, investigates the social divisions of ethnicity and gender and related notions of 'power', 'difference' and 'participation' at a local level. The chapter looks at the question of organisations - formal/informal, and bureaucratic organisations - and how participation, power and difference are reflected at this level.

Local authority organisations are a major component of the decision-making structure within which housing policies and other public policies that influence housing processes are made. Public policies often continue to develop at their implementation phase therefore, local authority organisations, as the main implementers of the public policies (including the housing policy), play a significant role in shaping the existing policies and thus policy-making. Thus, the following chapter examines how decisions are made in organisations. The chapter explores the notion of 'participation' at the local level in order to see how social divisions and corresponding power distribution influence participation of different individuals and groups in decision-making.

The chapter begins by addressing questions such as: What is an organisation? Who makes decisions and who can influence them? Who is affected by these decisions and who benefits most from them?

Sociologists have pointed out the fact that complex bureaucracies within organisations play an immense part in policy processes, therefore the chapter looks at the concept of bureaucracy. The questions stated earlier inevitably bring us to the need to consider the exercise of power in organisations and therefore the concepts of formal and informal organisations are examined.

The subsequent section explores channels of communication as well as leadership and its relations to the social categories of identity/difference such as ethnicity and gender. Decentralisation as a form of formal organisation at corporate level and in local organisations and the debate about it is also taken up by briefly examining the way it relates to Fordism.

Organisations need to be contextualised (e.g. they need to be seen in the economic, social and political context of their wider environment) so that their interaction with their immediate and wider environment is understood. Thus the chapter finally looks at the structure of the social environment within which local government organisations operate.

What is an organisation?

Describing a policy as a course of action or a web of decisions rather than a single decision or specific decisions implies that it is difficult to pinpoint particular instances when policy is made (Easton 1953, Ham and Hill 1984, Hecllo 1972). What is more, policies always change over time and it is a dynamic process rather than static. Changes come about either because of some adjustments to decisions made earlier or feed back into the decision-making process resulting from the implementation of the policy. Hence, policies often continue to develop at the implementation phase rather than the policy-making phase. In other words, a great deal of policies is shaped in the process of their implementation. Therefore, the way policies are made or modified in the process of implementation can only be illuminated by an understanding of the way organisations work (Elmore 1978, Ham and Hill 1984).

Commenting on 'social organisation', Peter Blau and Richard Scott (1977: 2) point out that the notion relates to 'the ways in which human conduct becomes socially organised'. These are the regularities in the behaviour of people that are due to the social conditions that they are part of rather than their physiological and psychological characteristics as individuals. Although the conduct of people is affected by a number of social conditions they can still be divided into two general groups that constitute the two basic aspects of social organisations: *First* is the structure of social relations within a collectivity. *Second* are the shared beliefs and orientations that unite the members of a collectivity and guide their actions. Structure implies a network of social relations,

which links the members and characteristics that emerges from being a collectivity and cannot be reduced to the features of its individual members. It influences the conduct of individual members.

While Christopher Ham and Michael Hill (1984) argue that we need to analyse organisations as living social structures, Sandra Dawson (1992) suggests that organisations are interactive open systems which have main parts such as: people, structure, culture, technology and strategy within the context of their environment. Change in any of these main components will lead to changes in others. While some of these changes will have an internal cause, some others will be the result of interactions with the external. Openness, she suggests, implies that their environment influences organisations and that in turn they can have an influence upon their environment.

Looking at the analytical frameworks in organisational analysis, Michael I. Reed (1992:75) describes the systems framework that sees organisations as social systems. In this particular framework organisations are viewed as social units in an effort to achieve their collective goals or to respond to the institutional needs for the wider social environment of which they are a component part. The survival of organisations depends on the realisation of collective goals or needs set by the environment and organisational structures are expected to facilitate this realisation. Structural forms of organisations that are suited to these goals or needs construct a framework of interrelated roles that incorporates people in the organisation 'into a coherent and relatively stable social unit'. This set of roles creates a pattern of norms and expected behaviour and attitudes that the members are expected to observe. Members are also expected to comply with the demands of organisation which may be perceived as constraining, which leads to a state of permanent tension with their preferred wants and expectations. This tension creates a constant source of conflict in organised systems.

Tension between the individuals and the organisations may lead to the introduction of a new legislation in a country. In recent years in North America, Europe and Australia groups campaigning for equality have called for legislations outlawing discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, sexuality and disability in the workplace and in the provision of services (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1993, Colgan and Ledwith 1996).

Bureaucracy

In sociology the term 'bureaucracy' is used to refer to the administrative aspects of organisations and bureaucratisation is defined as the amount of effort devoted to maintaining the organisation rather than to directly achieving its objectives (Blau and Scott 1977).

Max Weber (1947), who played a major role in the development of theory about bureaucracy in the modern state, has seen bureaucracy as ultimate form of modernity. Bureaucratic administration, Weber believed, is closely associated with the evolution of modern industrialised society. He regards bureaucracy as a specific way of organising. Thus, he used the term 'bureaucracy' to mean 'a complex, regulated organisation' which represented a technically efficient form of organisation. Weber describes a number of characteristics that define and contribute to the understanding of bureaucracy in organisations. According to Weber, bureaucracy is a continuous organisation having a specific function and its own rules of operation. Tasks are organised on a continuous, regulated basis and are split into functionally distinct areas. Personnel is organised on a hierarchical basis that has specific rights and duties. Members of staff are recruited by appointment rather than election and have fixed terms of employment and are paid fixed salaries. Weber viewed bureaucracies as having both positive as well as negative sides. They are positive because they lead to efficiency in administration. However, they also have a negative side because through bureaucratisation power accumulates in the hands of those who are accountable to neither politicians nor the public (Dawson 1992, Ham and Hill 1984, Held 1987).

The degree of bureaucratisation in organisations varies a great deal and is indicated by factors, such as the amount of effort given to the issues of administration, the relative number of administrative staff, the degree of hierarchy within the organisation or the rigidity in imposition and observance of administrative rules (Blau and Scott 1977).

Bureaucracy is essentially undemocratic because bureaucrats are not accountable to the mass of the population affected by their decisions. Therefore, democracy is hampered by the degree of bureaucratisation of an organisation. Weber contrasted the administration of mass structures with those small associations based on neighbourly or personal relationships. In mass organisations complexity of the administrative tasks and the

expansion of their scope gives rise to the technical superiority of those who have had training and experience. Thus, Weber, in underlining the impractical nature of direct democracy, argued that it could only function in small organisations under the following conditions:

‘1) the organisation must be local or otherwise limited in the number of members; 2) the social positions of the members must not greatly differ from each other; 3) the administrative functions must be relatively simple and stable; 4) ... there must be a certain minimum development of training in objectively determining ways and means’ (Weber 1978 cited in Held 1987: 149).

To maximise organisational effectiveness and efficiency, Weber put forward a bureaucratic model of organisation, which would create conditions for a most rapid and perfect goal achievement. Central to the ‘ideal’ bureaucratic organisation was impersonal, impartial, and strict compliance ‘to a system of abstract rules by individuals at each level in the hierarchy of authority’. Communication between departments within an organisation has to be task-related and is essential to achieving the goals of the organisation (Champion 1975).

However, as Champion (1975) and others argue, very rarely, if ever, do organisations succeed in fostering totally impersonal relations among members in any division or department or at any level of authority. Interpersonal contacts, simple verbal exchanges between individuals concerning matters or incidents unrelated to any of their tasks are inescapable which inevitably leads to associations unrelated to their work (Blau and Scott 1977).

In Britain in the mid-80s, local authorities were fiercely criticised for being ‘anonymous, big, bureaucratic, inefficient, wasteful’ (Hodge 1985: 29). The housing managers were in inaccessible, remote offices providing impersonal services.

Discussing the state bureaucracy in Australia, Sophie Watson (1992:197) observes that bureaucracies conduct their affairs ‘on a closed systems of favours, shared perspectives and values, deals, hierarchies of knowledge, and mystification’. Loyalties of bureaucrats to specific ministers or departments, Watson argues, often conflicts with policies

formulated elsewhere, such as in the women's units. In relation to the feminists working within the state organisations, she notes that 'bureaucratic languages and abbreviations are quickly learned and spoken, to the fury of feminists "outside", who feel mystified and excluded' (Watson 1992, Witz and Savage 1992).

Nowadays the term 'bureaucracy' often implies 'a rigid red-tape-bound organisation' (Ham and Hill 1984:147). In contrast to the negative word 'bureaucracy', nowadays the term 'professionals' is frequently used. Friedson (1970), for example, suggests that this term has positive connotations and that it is often used as a better alternative to bureaucracy. Ham and Hill (1984) argue that professionals may gain dominant roles within organisations and that professionalism is a source of power *within* organisations. Professional power, they maintain, may have a significant influence upon the way organisations are run. Yet, they stress, this does not necessarily mean that it will protect the public from dysfunctions of bureaucracy. It may well be used principally to protect the interests of the professionals, and to link those interests to those of other elites.

As a matter of fact, local authority management, to a large extent, is in the hands of professionals who are trained and awarded qualifications by major professional bodies. Such professional organisations include the Law Society, the Royal Institute of British Architects, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants, the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, and the Royal Institute of Town Planners. These institutions on the one hand regulate entrants to occupations by welcoming certain types of people with certain types of values and attitudes. On the other hand, they regulate the practice of professionals, which are based on specific norms and include prioritising certain issues at the expense of others. For instance, as discussed in Chapter 1, dichotomising the 'public' and 'private' that have led to zoning practices in land use is based on assumptions of the structure of the household and division of labour which are highly ethnicised, gendered and classed and reflect specific power relations (Greed 1991, Halford 1992).

It is also argued that professionals including housing managers inevitably pursue their own interests, such as prestige and stability of their jobs, and the influence of their departments. In this way, they are highly likely to develop their own aims and objectives. Similarly, in local authorities political representatives and officers can

constitute a powerful interest group or a powerful set of competing interest groups. Their main concern can be to secure particular electoral outcomes. Elected representatives, on the one hand, try to respond to the demands of specific groups in civil society, and on the other hand, follow certain political strategies that involve selecting and prioritising particular issues whilst avoiding others. By doing so, they also mobilise or undermine particular sectors of the community; promote or ignore special demands; and construct or play down electoral matters (Nordlinger 1981).

Idealisation and promotion of the family by both the Conservative and Labour governments, for example, meant increasing social provision for a specific form of family (i.e. nuclear family), which overlooks the power differences within the family. What is more it marginalizes other forms of families such as female-headed families as well as contributes to the stigmatisation of single-mothers.

The professionals in the local authority departments often do not look at the issues in their totality instead, 'each officer and department deals with them 'in a completely fragmented way'. Also, the hierarchical bureaucracy of local authorities prevents the professionals employed by the council from working with the people they are employed to provide services for. Wates and Knevitt (1987: 62) writing in the mid-80s pointed out that council architects, for example, 'rarely come into contact with the people they are designing buildings for and, sometimes, are specifically prevented from communicating with them'. What is more, often none of the professionals who make decisions on land and property in the inner city neighbourhoods live or work there. As will be discussed later in the chapter, at present the situation on the whole remains the same.

Weber has recognised that the development of bureaucracy leads to increased power for those at the highest levels of administration. Yet, as argued by Giddens (1979) and Held (1987), this increase of power is not limited to those at the highest level. Those in subordinate positions may increase their power too. It is not unusual in modern bureaucratic systems that those in formally subordinate positions get hold of control over their organisational duties, for example by hindering or blocking the flow of crucial information in centralised decision-making (Giddens 1979:147-8, Held 1987) or over the clients of the organisation.

Cynthia Hardy and Stewart R. Clegg (1996: 372), in their study of power relations in organisations highlight that: 'Information (Pettigrew 1973), uncertainty (Crozier 1964), expertise, credibility, stature and prestige (Pettigrew 1973), access to and contacts with higher echelon members and the control of money, rewards and sanctions (French and Raven 1968; Benfari *et al.* 1986) have all been identified as bases of power'. Indeed individuals derive power from an infinite number of resources. This is because 'different phenomena become resources in different contexts'. Hardy and Clegg argue that 'Without a total theory of contexts, which is impossible, one can never achieve closure on what the bases of power are. They might be anything, under the appropriate circumstances' (1996: 372).

Identity characteristics such as 'race', ethnicity, gender and sexuality can be sources of power in specific circumstances. For example, the existing structural inequalities in the wider society may be mobilised to undermine the power of those in higher positions by their subordinates; e.g. a minority ethnic woman manager by her white male subordinates.

Formal and informal organisations

The term 'formal organisations' is used when an organisation is formally established for the explicit purpose of achieving certain goals. However, as Blau and Scott (1977: 6) argue, founding an organisation formally by no means imply that all activities and interactions amongst members will strictly follow what has been officially planned. In every organisation, they note informal organisations emerge. The groups that constitute the organisation develop their own practices, values, norms, and social relations while their members work together to achieve the goals of the organisation. 'The roots of these informal systems', Blau and Scott state, 'are embedded in the formal organisation itself and nurtured by the very formality of its arrangements'.

At the time organisations are formed, Blau and Scott explain, not every specific situation can be foreseen therefore official rules must be general enough to serve as a guide. These guides should be formed so as to provide sufficient scope to cover a number of situations that may arise. When these general rules are applied to specific situations, problems of judgement may occur. Hence informal practices tend to emerge while seeking an answer to these problems. Unpredicted situations require decisions that

are not anticipated by official regulations. Particularly when an organisation undergoes a change, decisions have to be made constantly. Under these circumstances, unofficial practices are likely to provide a guide for decisions long before the formal rules have been adapted to the changing circumstances. Finally, Blau and Scott note, quite complex networks of social relations and informal status structures emerge, within groups as well as between them. Power, prestige and popularity are some of the dimensions of informal status. There are various factors that have an impact upon these complex networks of relations. Among these factors are those such as the organisational chart, differing characteristics of individuals, their abilities, their readiness to work with others as well as help them, and their conformity to group norms. However, to say that these informal structures are not entirely determined by the formal institution is by no means to say that they are completely independent of it. This is because it is the opportunities created and the problems posed by the immediate environment - e.g. the formal organisation - that give rise to informal organisations.

Looking at the formal structures alone will not reveal the workings of an organisation with all its dynamics. This means in order to understand a formal organisation and to explain particular organisational outcomes, one has to look at the networks of informal relations together with the formal hierarchy of authority and the official body of rules. This is because the formally instituted and the informally emerging patterns are intertwined. Noting that separating the formal and informal aspects of organisational life is only for analytical purposes and that it should not be reified, Blau and Scott emphasise that there is only one actual organisation (Blau and Scott 1977, Halford 1992).

Early sociologists, such as Barnard and Mayo and his associates, have identified informal organisations associated with formal organisation (Champion 1975, Ham and Hill 1984). Barnard, noting that it is often understood intuitively by managers, politicians, and other organisation authorities, pointed out that:

‘In fact, informal organisation is so much a part of our matter-of-course intimate experience of everyday association, either in connection with formal organisations or not, that we are unaware of it, seeing only a part of the specific interactions involved.

Yet it is evident that association of persons in connection with a formal or specific activity inevitably involves interactions that are incidental to it' (Barnard 1938:121-2).

Similarly, Bennis *et al.* (1958:144) made a distinction between 'formal' and 'informal' organisation. They pointed out that 'in the formal organization there resides "authority", a potential to influence based on position; while in the informal organization there exists power, the actual ability of influence based on a number of factors including, of course, organizational position' (cited in Hardy and Clegg 1996: 371).

Dalton (1959) showed how cliques and patterns of clientism develop in organisations, which create a separate informal structure alongside the formal one. Selznick (1964) also emphasised that individuals and subgroups spontaneously strive to control the conditions of their existence, and that this is reflected in the informal structure within the organisation. In every organisation, Selznick maintains, goals are modified by ways of abandoning, deflecting or elaborating and this is done through the informal structure. This is because, on the one hand, organisational rules are and have to be general and incomplete guides within which individual judgement is required. On the other hand, individuals show resistance in the face of treatment as cogs in the organisational machinery. They demonstrate their unique individualities as opposed to behaving in the 'expected' fashion as automatons (Bendix 1949, Blau and Scott 1977, Champion 1975, Halford 1992, Selznick 1964). In my opinion, formation of cliques entails construction of boundaries and subsequent 'us and them' divisions. The boundaries of these emerging cliques may correspond to identity markers such as gender, sexuality, as well as ethnicity and culture. Such cliques often construct 'difference' to exclude 'the Other' such as minority ethnic or women officers.

However, while the distinction between formal and informal organisations is highlighted, others warn us against the possible tendency to dichotomise them. Assuming that the formal organisation has a fixed nature that can easily be identified, whereas the informal one is a more blurred and obscure, would be completely false (Ham and Hill 1984).

In some organisations, such as local authorities, different sub-cultures with their hegemonic values may exist side by side, which constitutes part of the informal

organisation. Local authorities employ various professionals such as surveyors, engineers, accountants, housing officers, lawyers, town planners, architects who work in their relevant departments and have their own sub-culture. Greed (1990) describes the sub-culture within surveying profession as follows:

‘Surveyors’ professional decisions are not determined by neutral impartial “asexual” factors, but rather they reflect their own personal interests and, world-view. “Everyone has a car nowadays”, and “Everyone wants to play rugby” are common statements within the world of surveying, and if any persons are not covered by either of these descriptions it may be “because it is their own fault, as they have not tried and got on in life”, or because “they are not one of us, they are not the right type”. Therefore the personal element, far from being trivial and biased, is central in understanding how the sub-culture of surveying is maintained by making some individuals feel welcome whilst others are made to feel awkward, thus effecting professional closure’ (1990: 151-2).

So-called undesirable elements, Greed (1990) notes, are excluded before they can bring any alternative influence into the nature of the profession. This in turn severely limits the range of perspectives the profession has to employ in urban decision-making, and this ultimately shapes the nature of the built environment. She argues that women will never reach decision-making positions in male dominated professions such as surveying, and exert any influence on what is built, as long as they are pushed into unimportant areas, excluded, or not taken seriously, and ignored within the profession.

Local authorities, however, are not homogeneous institutions. Instead they are highly heterogeneous with competing interests. Diverse and conflicting sub-cultures often co-exist. Individuals or groups who may be part of a sub-culture, as described above, often have to work with those departments or units, such as equalities, who have a completely different sub-culture. While some departments may be ethnic-blind or gender-blind, or both, equalities units (such as race equality unit, women’s unit) working on particular issues of the ‘usually excluded’ sections of the community have sub-cultures that involve ethnic and gender sensitivity. In the sub-culture of departments such as surveying difference is constructed to exclude ‘the Other’ whereas departments working on issues such as racial and gender equalities construct difference in order to include.

All of this has implications for participatory schemes. Initiatives such as community consultation programmes may require resources from departments that may not be committed to the participation of the local people including tenants. Therefore professionals working for such departments may not be sensitive to the concerns of the local people. Moreover, housing managers, architects and planners may have stereotyped view of the local people, their expectations and abilities. Their perspectives on the local environment may be based on implicit or explicit assumptions that make those who are different invisible. They may have constructed boundaries between the Self as professionals and the local residents as non-professionals. What is more, resources may be controlled by individual officers who may be hostile to the idea of involving those people who they have perceived as ‘the Other’ so far.

Nick Wates and Charles Knevitt (1987:137) who in the mid-80s initiated schemes such as community architecture, planning and design, pointed out differences in the level of commitment to consultation by different local authority departments as follows:

‘... it appears that most of the main decentralization (‘Going Local’) programmes have not begun to get to grips with the requirements of community architecture and planning, concentrating instead on more superficial aspects of social service delivery. In the London Borough of Islington, for instance, the planning function was rated as the fifteenth priority service and the new neighbourhood council offices completed in 1986 do not include architects or planners’ (1987: 137).

Indeed in the late-90s, some of my respondents in Islington complained about the way they were treated by some of the council departments such as the Islington Building Services (IBS), direct labour organisation of Islington Council (see Chapters 5 and 7).

Channels of communication and channels of decision-making

Organisations can only achieve their objectives by communicating. Therefore channels of communication are of crucial importance in an organisation. ‘Communication systems’ are networks designed to facilitate transmission of information between all positions within an organisation and closely parallels the hierarchy within organisations (Champion 1975:172). They formally describe which individuals in whatever positions are supposed to send and receive what kinds of information or messages from which

other individuals. Davis and Scott (1969: 255) describe the importance of communication networks in organisations as follows:

‘Without communication, there can be no organization and, hence, no group productivity because communication is the only process by which people are tied together in a work group. If there is no communication, there can be no group. Communication is the bridge over which all technical knowledge and human relations must travel’ (1969: 255).

Furthermore, Champion (1975:173) describes *formal* communication networks as distinct from *informal* communications in an organisation. The former, he explains, is inherent in the hierarchy of authority, including both the horizontal and vertical functional relations between departments in the overall division of labour. However, he observes, formal communication networks are not the only ones that exist within an organisation. Usually grapevines or informal channels of communication exist as part of an organisational environment. It is hardly possible to limit transmission of information strictly to formal communication channels. Rumours, for instance, can spread within an organisation by individuals on the basis of something that they may have overheard or seen.

Thus such rumours can be used to undermine the authority of individuals within an organisation such as local authorities, who may be constructed as ‘the Other’ such as women or Black and ethnic minority managers. Equally these informal channels of communication can serve as a support network which simultaneously include/exclude individual members of the collectivity (such as tenants associations or tenant management co-operatives), thus determining who participates in decision-making.

Dawson (1992:195) defines decision-making process as all those thoughts and actions associated with a series of choices including the choices themselves. Thoughts and actions include becoming aware of an issue and are often the outcome of communications - that is, sending and receiving a message or information - and other decisions. Dawson argues that this information is not and cannot be neutral for it is sent and received by people who may have different interests, opinions and assumptions.

Information, Dawson suggests, is costly and is a scarce resource, which means its collection, dissemination and receipt takes up time, equipment and materials. Information can be, and often is, an important base for power and influence. As a result of communication, formal and informal communication networks and hierarchies emerge. These informal platforms can be the places where decisions are taken excluding those who are not part of them because of their social positioning. Thus, how information travels, and both formal and informal channels of communication are of crucial importance in participatory schemes. Disseminating information and getting feedback requires time and is costly. It is estimated that the involvement of tenants in a relatively straightforward refurbishment project adds 20 per cent to the architect's cost (RIBA 1978). Local authority departments on the other hand work to strict deadlines all of which pose a problem in consultation processes.

Discussing partiality, Dawson argues that people's individual characteristics have a profound impact on people's views of the world and their interpretations of information received. In sending and receiving information, therefore, stereotyping and projecting may occur. Moreover, communication between individuals suffers from omission, distortion and overload. All of this is the clear indication of how complex even the processes of merely sending and receiving information are.

In my opinion, it also indicates how crucial factor an individual's social positioning is in the processes of communication within organisations. Individuals' understanding and interpretation of the same events depend on their location in the social matrix that includes their beliefs and values.

James G. March (1994: 9) argues that contrary to the claims of the rational choice theory of decision-making, decision makers in the real world do not consider all consequences of the alternatives available when making their decisions. Instead they focus on some while ignoring others. They do not search for the relevant information, and often do not use available information. 'Instead of having a complete, and consistent set of preferences, decision makers seem to have incomplete and inconsistent goals, not all of which are considered at the same time' (1994: 9).

Describing rule- and identity-based decision-making as the general experience of modern times, March (1994) suggests that society socialises and educates individuals into rules associated with age, gender, and social position identities. Rules and identities form a basis for decision-making in every aspect of life including family life, politics, and economic activities. In organisations most people carry out their tasks most of the time by following a set of clearly defined rules that they accept as a part of their identity. Organisational rules define what is expected of a decision maker of the organisation. There are rules about which factors are to be considered in decisions; who has access to a decision process; and how decisions should be timed, reported, and justified. There are also rules controlling information flow and use, specifying how it should be gathered and who should gather it, how it should be summarised and filtered, how it should be communicated and to whom, and how it is to be stored and for how long. Organisations select individuals with pre-existing identities and rules. Organisations also define identities specific to them, train individuals in them, and socialise individuals to adopt the identities as their own. Organisations too have identities (March 1994). Moreover, as Robert Dahl (1961:164) notes, ‘leaders do not merely *respond* to the preferences of constituents; leaders also *shape* preferences’. Therefore the social positioning of leaders plays a crucial role in the formation of the identity of an organisation. Also leaders of an organisation can become a source of ‘empowerment’ for an individual or a group who may be constructed as ‘the Other’ by other members.

Identities are social constructs. They are both constructed by individuals internally and imposed upon them externally. What is more, identities shift from situation to situation as each situation highlights a different set of relations. Social policy processes involve multiple-actors who have multiple and constantly shifting identities. In these processes decisions are made without achieving agreement on preferences or consistency in identities (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1993, March 1994).

As discussed earlier, a wide range of informal practices and events takes place within the supposedly formal and rational structure of organisations leading to the emergence of informal structures. Cornell and Hartmann (1998: 158) underpin that ‘informal practices may contribute as much to identity maintenance or construction as do formal policy or constitutional provisions’. Through informal practices particular ethnic or

cultural identities may be racialised resulting in the exclusion of some individuals with specific social positioning.

Among other factors, the fact that individual judgement is required in the face of general and incomplete organisational rules give rise to these informal practices. In the absence of complete guidelines, it is the values, experiences, interests, prejudices and fears that shape the actions and practices of officials. Pointing to the presence of interest groups, Dawson (1992) stresses that when people join organisations they bring with them their own values, aspirations and experiences. Some of these people, on the basis of their common objectives and viewpoints in relation to their work, may become an interest group. There exists a conflict between human needs and the apparent requirements of a formal organisation. Organisations are platforms, Dawson maintains, in which different interest groups function pursuing objectives, which while encouraging their participation, also are divergent enough to give rise to conflict.

If it is accepted that individuals bring with them their values and experiences into organisations, then it follows that perceptions, practices and attitudes present within the organisation will inescapably be highly gendered, racialised and classed (Halford 1992, Dawson 1992). These racialised, ethnicised, gendered and classed relations will be embedded in formal and informal structures of organisations and will be closely related to the existing relations of authority and power. Thus, structures and organisational frameworks in which participation occurs are not neutral, but highly gendered, ethnicised and classed involving differential power relations.

Power and decision-making

Decisions in organisations are the results of processes of power and conflict between groups within the organisation. From this point of view, as Glenn Morgan (1990:81) argues, 'a particular decision or a particular structure is not an expression of the organisation's goals but the ability of particular groups to impose *their* definition of the situation and *their* solution onto other groups within the organisation' (my emphasis).

There are differences in the power that each individual or group of individuals holds within an organisation. Some participants in an organisation can dominate and influence structure because of their perceived indispensability. Organisations are described by

some sociologists as power systems in which structural characteristics interact with, and are influenced by, factors which make some participants more powerful than others (Crozier 1964, Ham and Hill 1984).

Dahl (1956) and other American pluralists define power as seen in an actual *decision-making* situation. Dahl puts forward his definition of power as follows: 'A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do'.

Definitions of power as an ability to influence decisions are criticised for their apparent failure to include inaction that is *non decision-making*. Criticising Dahl's definition, Bachrach and Baratz (1970) argue that the power is also present 'when A devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political processes to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to A'. Using the term 'mobilisation of bias', they assert that two faces of power exist: the first one operates, as Dahl highlights, when there are apparent conflicts over key issues; the second, on the other hand, operates through a process termed as non decision-making to suppress conflicts and to keep them off the agenda and the political process.

Contrasting his own views with the 'liberal' and 'reformist' views, Steven Lukes (1974, 1992) proposes a 'radical' account of power which is based on the assertion that power inherently exists in the structure of social relations. Power relations encompass out every aspect of social life, yet they are not always visible even to those who are part of these relations. Certain issues cannot reach the surface, not as a result of a powerful group's decision to rally against them. They are prevented from becoming an issue by the existing and taken-for-granted framework (Ham and Hill 1984, Hindess 1996, Lukes 1974, 1992, Reed 1992).

Arguing that power is not a unitary concept, Richard Hall (1982:135) points to four sources of power in organisations that are office or structural: position; personal characteristics, i.e. charisma; expertise; and opportunity or the combination of factors. Nevertheless, power is 'domain specific' in the sense that a person holding power in a specific domain does not necessarily hold in other domains (March 1994). Having multiple identities, individuals hold varying degrees of power attached to their shifting

identities and changing sets of social relations in their environment. Pointing to the fact that in large organisations decision-making involves multiple inconsistent actors, March underlines two classic metaphors of decision-making in the presence of inconsistent preferences and identities. The first metaphor views decision-making as based on a power struggle attempting to answer questions such as: Who gets what, when, and how? The second metaphor views decision-making as a coalition formation with an inquiry into the way partners are found, and agreements are negotiated and implemented. Noting that decisions are the outcome of negotiation among members of a coalition, March (1994: 195) suggests, 'Participants may share some objectives, but characteristically their coalition is a negotiated coalition of convenience as much as it is one of principle'. Yet, in my opinion, power is a key element in the second metaphor because it also forms the basis of any negotiation and coalition formation.

Decentralisation of decision-making

As Robin Murray (1992) suggests, various threads - of mass-production and consumption, semi-skilled worker and collective bargaining, of a managed national market and centralised organisation - make up the fabric of Fordism. Fordism represents a specific structure of management relations, which may be described as authoritarian relations, centralised planning, and a rigid organisation built around exclusive job descriptions. Fordist bureaucracies, Murray argues, are fiercely hierarchical, with links between the divisions and departments being made through the centre rather than at the base. Specialists do the planning and issue rulebooks and guidelines for lower management to carry out. It de-skills workers and leaves no room for initiative which result in complaints even by managers themselves.

Murray (1992) rejects the view that equates these structures and their culture with industrialism and regards them as an inevitable part of the modern age. Instead, he claims, they are related to a particular form of industrialism, one that developed in the nineteenth century and reached its most dynamic expression in the post-war boom.

In contrast to Fordism, Murray (1992) argues, the Japanese have adopted a quite different method of labour control and organisation. They have developed a core of multi-skilled workers whose tasks include not only manufacture and maintenance, but the improvement of the products and processes under their control - tasks normally done

Others object to the romanticised view of the local polity. Fesler (1965) describes how the local polity reveals existence of the unequal distribution of power, and of domination by those who have economic power. Thus, Smith (1985) underlines the importance of rejecting a romantic view of decentralisation suggesting that it is not an absolute good in its own right. Like central government, decentralised administration can be used for a variety of ends.

It is argued that as a result of neighbourhood decentralisation local authority departments and officers become more accountable to the local people and that decentralisation of service provision and decision-making result in responsiveness to the community and to the needs of local residents. However, this still remains problematic for needs are conceptualised in such a way that once the authorities tap into local knowledge and experience they can identify and address the needs of the local community. Socially constructed and conflicting nature of needs is overlooked. One way of tapping into knowledge and experience of specific groups is by co-opting individuals on to the council committees as representatives of particular ethnic groups that they may be part of expecting them to inform the relevant bodies about the needs of these groups ignoring the competing interests within these groups. As discussed in Chapter 2, the whole notion of group representation is problematic. Multi-culturalist policies assume ethnic and cultural minority groups as homogeneous seeing some individuals as the representatives of their 'communities'. Yet as discussed in Chapter 2, the question of representation by these leaders remains problematic, as individuals occupy differential positioning within these collectivities. Moreover, some departments of local authorities implicitly and explicitly assume the residents of their borough as homogeneous. A boundary is constructed around the people living within a particular locality, e.g. neighbourhood area that reinforces the existing dichotomies such as 'us and them' and potentially becomes very conservative.

Neighbourhood decentralisation, as Smith (1985) highlights, is also closely related to the idea of 'participation'. Experiments in neighbourhood decentralisation may involve procedures to consult individuals and organised interests in relation to neighbourhood projects, such as housing schemes, urban renewal and roads. These projects, however, do not involve delegating authority to those bodies representing the residents of the

community in the locality. Instead they form part of the information-gathering process in existing bureaucracies, such as planning departments of local councils.

One of the crucial elements in decision-making processes is the question of power attached to the roles of those participating in them. Contrary to the language of participation (which implies a measure of neighbourhood control), the local authorities still hold on to the ultimate power in decision-making. The idea behind the decentralisation process is to make arrangements so that decisions are made at the most appropriate level and so that local people can influence those decisions affecting their lives. Without veto rights, however, the whole process becomes a public relations exercise in that the authorities claim that those who will be influenced by the decisions have taken part in the decision-making process and become complacent. Those who are at the receiving end of these decisions feel powerless and frustrated by the fact that at the end of the day it is the central bodies that hold the power to decide what they want and their views and concerns are not taken seriously. The ambiguity attached to the whole notion of participation adds to the problem.

Meetings are often presented as the main tools for making decisions in participatory democracy and it is often through the mechanism of meetings that tenant involvement is expected to take place. Yet the major decisions that influence the lives of these tenants appear to be taken in other platforms. Some decisions for instance are the outcomes of housing policies made elsewhere. Others are taken in unofficial platforms such as the Labour Group. Whichever level these decisions may be made they are shaped by not only formal but also informal decision-making processes.

There are other problems with meetings. Tenants, for example, in general are not accustomed to meetings. They often are not familiar with the concept of agendas and are not the ones who have drawn them up or contributed to it (Smith 1992). Therefore they are unlikely to stick to the agenda but see the meeting as a forum where they can raise their complaints and search for practical answers to their day-to-day problems. Participants' views of the meetings also differ depending on their positioning. Professionals (e.g. housing officers) generally look at the issues and see the whole process within the framework of their individual job description. As a result they tend to feel they are wasting their time and find it difficult when 'non-professionals', such as

tenants, are involved in such formal meetings. This becomes quite apparent in the central committee meetings of the council when the time is limited to discuss the long items on the agenda. They also 'tend to be defensive' in the face of complaints and their main concern is to maintain structure and control over the meetings and not to over-run, or fail the objectives of the meeting. As a result sometimes officers take male tenants more seriously than female tenants in these meetings for they perceive them to be able to express their views in a more 'professional' manner than their female counterparts. Indeed there exists a division between 'professionals' and 'non-professionals' throughout these meetings the former being in control and the latter to be 'controlled'.

As discussed in Chapter 4, in 1980s Quiney, noting that the planners thought they knew what was best for the tenants, underlined socialist paternalism of the housing authorities (1986). John Park, writing in *Housing & Planning Review*, described how this mistrust between the tenants, elected members and housing professionals continued into 1990s. He observes that 'Local politicians, those who sit on local authority housing committees, have always tended to distrust the professional officers who, they think, serve them'. He then suggests that:

'It may also be fair to say that professional housing officers, the best of whom know that they are there to serve tenants, have not always found [it] easy to work with amateurs who hardly ever bother to read the reams of paper, including the latest government circulars and the research notes on best practice, that housing professionals need to assimilate' (Park 1998: 25).

Noting that in general housing systems are designed by professionals to assist them to manage a landlord business, Park asserts that: 'There is no doubt that many tenants distrust both housing professionals and the organisations which are their landlords' for a number of reasons such as the 'rents are too high, repairs are not done, properties remain un-let, rubbish and vandals have taken over estates' (1998: 25).

Organisations and their environment

As stated earlier, organisations operate within a wider socio-economic and political environment. Thus, they are inevitably influenced by their environment and can in turn have an impact on it. Galbraith (1967) and others argued how corporations create their

environments rather than 'adapt' to them. Institutions of the welfare state also play a key role in shaping their socio-economic and political environment. Organisations are embedded in an institutional matrix within this wider environment. Central to this wider environment are the state institutions with their ability to intervene into the areas, which have traditionally been considered private and thus inviolable (Dawson 1992, Ham and Hill 1984, Saunders 1980, Selznick 1949).

There are several paradigms providing different approaches for understanding the state and its role in policy-making in its wider environment. Marxism draws attention to the economic context of the political activity. When the state operates in a capitalist economy the goal of capital accumulation will be of primary importance and so will be maintaining and defending the private property. Thus major policy-making will be oriented toward the better protection of the socio-economic structure. Those who hold the economic power will have privileged access to resources and political influence. Corporatists and elitists, on the other hand, underline the role of elites, e.g. bureaucracy, businesses, trade unions, and professionals, thus emphasising the central role they play in influencing policy processes. Also emphasised is the role of interest groups who may be involved in negotiating policies with bureaucratic elites (Ham and Hill 1984, Held 1987).

Organisations have different relations with their local and wider environment. Their relation may be modified and transformed as a result of the characteristics of their local environment. Local authorities for instance all operate within the same wider environment, which affects them simultaneously. Yet the nature of its effects differs considerably according to the characteristics of their area (Stanyer 1980).

In Britain, for instance, Thatcher's economic strategy with its commitment to privatisation and reduction of the role of the public sector has transformed the environment that local authority institutions operate. As Jessop (1988) argues, Thatcherite policies promoted house-owning, pension-owning, share-owning and a private medical insurance which were subsidised through tax relief and regarded as substitutes for council housing, adequate state pensions, income support and free health service. These policies have affected inner city authorities that have large working class and ethnic minority populations, more so than those with a predominantly white,

middle-class constituency. As a result of Conservative governments policies of privatisation and under-investment in services such as public housing led to the exclusion of the most vulnerable such as the homeless, Black and ethnic minorities and single mothers. However, under these circumstances some authorities perceived tenants management as a threat to their housing.

Similarly the Labour Government's emphasis on nuclear family 'as the core of our society' (as opposed to single-parent families), and introduction of incentives in order to 'strengthen family life', for example, affect especially those inner boroughs where Black and ethnic minorities live and therefore other forms of family are dominant, e.g. female-headed families, single mothers or extended families. In fact the New Labour and the Blairites are often criticised for continuing Conservative policies under different names. Thus, in their Green Paper the government pointed out that the public investment in housing would not be enough to bring about the marked improvements in quality and management. Therefore, they put forward three approaches to be pursued, which are similar to the policies of the Conservative governments. These are a) stock transfer (to other social landlords); b) for local authority-owned stock, the creation of arms-length management companies; c) the Private Finance Initiative (DETR 2000: 59).

Thus the nature of the effects of the wider environment on the local authorities depends on the specificities of the local environment (both social and spatial), which includes ethnic, gender and class characteristics of the locality. In Britain, policies that were introduced during the 18 years of Conservative governments, for instance, have increased the structural racism and other structural inequalities that disadvantaged groups such as women, and the elderly experience.

The current Labour government (who came to power with a mandate to tackle social exclusion, which I shall discuss in detail later in the thesis), on the other hand, expects the local authorities to tackle the problem of racial harassment in housing estates as an 'anti-social behaviour'. In my opinion the Labour government's approach to the issue remains problematic for it reduces racism to the behaviour of some individuals overlooking the structural and institutional aspects of the problem.

Moreover, it is claimed that the current Labour government was elected on a radical agenda to shift power to local people and communities (Wade 2000). However, there are serious barriers to achieve this within current frameworks. Attitudes of professionals involved in policy-making have a considerable impact on the decision-making processes. The fact that they feel they are wasting their time and find it difficult when ‘non-professionals’ such as tenants are involved in the decision-making processes influences the participation of local people. Indeed paternalistic attitudes, hierarchical power structures, and bureaucracy, homogenisation of ‘local communities’ all make local authorities a formidable barrier to people participating in their own environment and trying to get their messages across. The professionals need a new attitude in their relationship with the local people who are heterogeneous in their social positioning with differential power relations. Structures are needed in which ‘consultative democracy’ based on dialogues, such as ‘collaborating planning’ (Healey 1997)(see Chapter 1), or ‘dialogical democracy’ (Giddens 1994), or ‘transversal politics’ (Yuval-Davis 1997)(see Chapter 2) can take place.

Conclusion

Policy-making is a course of action or a web of decisions rather than a single decision or specific decisions. This means that it is difficult to pinpoint particular instances when policy is made. Meetings often serve as platforms to confirm decisions or formally pass resolutions that have already been made elsewhere, rather than actually making those decisions. Policies are generally shaped at their implementation stage. Thus, policy-making processes are dynamic processes in which decisions are made invariably as a result of differential power relations and of negotiations between coalitions of various parties. Communication processes and flows of information are not neutral processes. Moreover, they are constitutive of human relations. Because of the involvement of multiple-actors with their ever shifting multiple identities in decision-making processes of social policies, these processes are highly ethnicised, gendered and classed involving different and conflicting values of participants as well as differentiated power relations between them.

Conclusion of Part I

Situating space and social divisions, chapters in Part I highlighted that the notions of ‘the community’ and ‘empowerment’ implicitly assume collectivities as homogeneous overlooking the differences of interests among their members. The chapters argued that there is no such thing as a single sense of ‘community’ or space that everyone shares. Instead the intermeshing of constructs such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, ability and age as well as interests and values determines a particular person’s experience of a particular place. Social divisions and structural inequalities are embedded in the design of the built environment. Policies need to be developed that acknowledge and appreciate the multiplex character of the identities of inhabitants. They should aim to produce places whose full identity is a complex mix of all the multiple identities.

It is also argued that policy-making processes are dynamic processes. Decisions are made constantly resulting from contestation and negotiation of existing authority and power by various parties. Processes of communication in decision-making are far from being neutral. The decision-making processes of social policies become highly ethnicised, gendered and classed, involving differentiated power relations as a result of the involvement of multiple-actors with their fluid and multiple identities. A more inclusive democracy should base itself not only on the recognition of multiplicity of identities but also their fluidity and therefore the ever-shifting nature of their boundaries. If identity is constructed across difference, then differences of individuals need to be recognised and policies should be based on these differences without essentialising them.

The theoretical issues examined in Part I raise certain problematics that need to be looked at, which this investigation deals with. These are as follows:

- How are differences corresponding to social divisions reflected in physical space? How does identity construction lead to the exclusion of those subjected to inequalities in society?

- What are the ways in which participatory processes can contribute to challenging and eventually obliterating the public and private divide?
- What is the relationship between the concept of ‘empowerment’ and equal opportunities policies?

The following part of the thesis presents the empirical work of the investigation, which examines the public housing and decision-making processes by contextualising public housing in terms of the historical development of housing policies in Britain; and by analysing three different types of participatory housing models by looking into six housing projects in the London Boroughs of Islington and Lewisham. First, however, I am going to look at the general historical development of housing policies in the general historical contemporary housing policies.

Part II - Public housing and decision-making processes

Chapter 4: Housing policies in Britain

Introduction

This chapter provides a background to the housing situation in Britain by examining housing policies historically. It explores the period 1975-to date rendering how some historical problems with regard to housing have been addressed in different ways by different administrations. This way it highlights how power, participation and differences in terms of ethnic and gender divisions in housing are reflected and dealt with in different ways. Thus, the chapter looks at the extent tenants have been able to participate in decision-making processes as a result of these policies and the amount of power delegated to them.

Beginning with an overview of the historical development of the housing policies in Britain, the chapter points out that local authorities undertook mainly demolition and re-development particularly from the 1950s to the early 1970s. There has been a shift in policies and subsequently rehabilitation has been substituted for demolition and re-development in the 1970s - early 1980s. In the mid-1970s, one third of all households in Britain were living in council houses. The housing stock diminished from the 1980s to the 1990s while the number of the unfit dwellings has increased due to a large extent to the cuts in public spending. Thus a large number of people have been excluded from the housing sector leading to an increase in homelessness.

Another major development that has taken place since 1970s concerning questions of participation and power has been the decentralisation of the provision of the welfare services by some local authorities as a response to their bureaucratic nature. With the ideology of 'the community' becoming popular, new and more radical approaches to planning and housing problems have come to the fore, and consultation and participation have gained a particular significance in the planning process.

Throughout the period examined in this chapter housing policies have changed a great deal. These changes raise certain problems. Thus the chapter looks at problems such as

the question of who is entitled to public housing with regards to the notion of 'difference'; the relationship between poverty (e.g. issues of class) and social divisions on the grounds of ethnicity and gender; the design implications of diversity in household needs resulting from differences in ethnicity and culture; the differential effects of housing policies on tenants as a result of differences in their social positioning and the amount of power attached to them; the implications of gender difference in terms of safety and the ways in which the question of safety (which especially affects women) can be dealt with and their relation to the public/private divide; to what extent tenants are able to participate and influence decisions; who decides what - popular planning and decentralisation.

'Difference' and changing housing needs

In Britain, by the early 1970s, a crude surplus of dwellings over households was achieved. It was worked out by comparing the existing stock with the number of households in the country. The crude surplus of dwellings over households reached 1,206,000 by the 1980s when it began diminishing - a pattern which continued throughout the 1980s. Thus, the surplus was reduced to 822,000 in 1991 (see Table 2, in Appendix 1).

This did not, however, indicate the true nature of the housing problem. Although claims were made that there was no longer a shortage of housing, there were still homeless people for a number of reasons. *Firstly*, the available stock was not necessarily in areas where there was a greater need for affordable housing such as in inner city areas, while there was a surplus of expensive houses in the suburbs. *Secondly*, although the number of recorded households was 22.8 million, there were around half a million concealed households among these households (in particular amongst the ethnic minorities). Concealed households are groups of people who are unable to form separate households, even though defined as being in need, which will be returned to later in the chapter. *Thirdly*, there were a lot of dwellings considered to be unfit or lacking basic amenities. The 1986 House Condition Survey found that of 22.5 million dwellings in England, 909,000 were unfit, 436,000 lacked one or more basic amenities, and 2.4 million needed major repairs. In the 1990s, over half a million dwellings out of over 23 million lack basic amenities, and over 2.5 million are considered to be in serious disrepair. *Fourthly*, a large number of houses were kept vacant by speculative developers and private

landlords. Also, some local authority houses were vacant waiting for repairs because of poor administration. Finally, there were some people who owned a second home. Therefore, there were homeless people and in fact a lot of squatting was taking place in the 1970s. In 1991, together with these concealments, the housing shortage was nearly three million in the UK (Balchin 1995, Cullingworth and Nadin 1994, D.o.E. 1993a, Malpass and Murie 1994). All of the above have implications for people with differences in their class, ethnic and gender characteristics.

Demographic differences and their implications

The number of separate households requiring accommodation continued to grow in the post-war period. The occupied dwellings no longer corresponded to the size and type of dwellings needed due to the demographic changes that have taken place, such as an ageing population. Indeed the increasing need was for smaller units of accommodation, particularly suited to the newly-married, small families, retired couples and one or two-person households. In England and Wales alone, there is a current need for an additional two million dwellings, and (depending on the size of the increase in the number of households) a further one to two million dwellings would be required by the year 2001 (Niner 1989 cited in Balchin 1995: 4).

Another significant demographic change, which had implications for the public housing provisions, was the growth of the Black and ethnic minority population and its change of composition. People from South Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean arrived in significant numbers after the Second World War in order to help meet severe labour shortages. The most recent arrivals in Britain include refugees and asylum seekers from Vietnam, Somalia, Turkey, the Middle East and former Yugoslavia (CRE 1997a).

In 1952, 0.2 million black people living in Britain were born in the New Commonwealth countries. This number increased to 1.3 million by 1981. The total number of British people of New Commonwealth ethnic origin including Pakistan (NCWP), whether born here or not, was estimated to be 2.2 million in 1981. The 1988 estimate was 2.4 million or 4.5 per cent of the total population (MacEwen 1991). In the 1991 census, the number of people who did not classify themselves as white was just over 3 million that is 5.5 per cent of the 55 million people in Britain. Half of this figure is South Asian (that is, of

Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi descent), and 30 per cent are black (CRE 1997a)(see Table 3, in Appendix 1).

In 1991, 7.27 per cent (3,991,000) of the total population of Britain were born outside of Great Britain (see Table 4, in Appendix 1). Almost half of the non-white population of Britain had been born in the UK, and about three quarters of them had British citizenship. The number of children of mixed marriages is also a significant factor. According to the PSI survey of 1994, 39 per cent of children under 16 years of age had a Black Caribbean mother or father, and 15 per cent had a Chinese mother father, whilst their other parent was White (see Figure 2, in Appendix 1)(CRE 1997a, 1998).

In the post-war period, approximately 56 per cent of people in Britain of New Commonwealth origin settled in the South East; 43 per cent settled in London, 15 per cent in the West Midlands, 7 per cent in Yorkshire and Humberside, 7.6 per cent in the North West and 6.5 per cent in the East Midlands (CRE 1985 cited in MacEwen 1991). They settled mostly in towns usually devoted to specific trades or manufacture - e.g. Leicester rather than Derby.

This comparatively uneven distribution of the population is seen at district level too. Ethnic minorities in the inner London form only 4.5 per cent of the population of City of London whereas the figure is 30 per cent of Haringey's population, and a significant number of people live in Newham and Tower Hamlets (MacEwen 1991). According to the 1991 census, Black and ethnic minorities constitute over 20 per cent of Islington's population and over 28 per cent of Lewisham's population (1991 Census Borough Profiles). There is a similar situation in the outer boroughs of London - New Commonwealth population form 3.6 per cent of the total population of Bromley whereas the figure is 33.5 per cent in Brent.

This uneven distribution has certain implications in terms of housing needs of people with differences in their social positioning. *Firstly*, Black and minority ethnic people have a relatively larger presence in some localities despite their relatively small proportion of the national population. Concentration of minority ethnic people in certain localities has often led to a false perception of their total size in specific towns and of the national figures (CRE 1988, MacEwen 1991).

Secondly, concentration of a particular minority ethnic group calls for accommodation addressing the specific need of the households resulting from their different household structure. The average household sizes among ethnic minorities are larger than amongst whites, though there exists a complex pattern of ethnic differences. The differences in the household structure between white and minority ethnic people have implications also for the design of council housing which is taken up again later in the chapter.

Residualisation of council housing

As stated earlier, by 1970s local authorities were the largest landlords in Britain, accounting for 32 per cent of the country's housing stock, compared to 13 per cent in 1947 and less than 2 per cent in 1913. In 1979, council housing amounted to 6.5 million. When a Conservative government came to power in 1979 the local authorities were still the largest landlords. House building by local authorities and housing associations fell respectively from 86,000 and 21,100 completions in 1980 to 10,300 and 19,700 completions in 1991. Homelessness on the other hand doubled over the same period. In 1976, the number of homeless households accepted by local authorities in England was 26,083. The number of households accepted as homeless by local authorities in Britain reached to 70,232 in 1979. By 1991, it had risen to over 178,000 (Balchin 1995, Hills 1991, Malpass and Murie 1994).

The percentage of permanent accommodation allocated to homeless people increased between the late 1970s and 1990s. For example, in England 15 per cent of secure council tenancies were let to homeless households in 1979/80 whereas the figure was 39 per cent in 1991/2. Yet the increase was from 26 per cent to 65 per cent in London for these years. It is claimed that the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 played a major role in residualisation of council housing (see, for instance, Malpass and Murie 1994, Morris and Winn 1990). In my opinion, this legislation contributed to the residualisation of council housing because of the broader social contexts in which it has taken place. That is to say this legislation was introduced against a background of major socio-economic changes in the country. There were severe cuts in public expenditure and housing investment, as well as growing unemployment and homelessness. While the role of local authorities in the provision and management of housing was diminishing, the Conservative government was promoting house ownership, and privatisation of

public housing. Introduced and implemented under these circumstances, this legislation reinforced the residual nature of council housing and became a major step in turning council housing into 'welfare housing'. Indeed, although until the 1970s both Conservatives and Labour viewed council housing as 'general needs', from the late 70s onwards the notion of council housing as 'general needs' effectively came to an end.

Shift in policies: housing rehabilitation policy

As mentioned earlier, in Britain, local authorities carried out massive demolition and re-development work between 1950s and 1970s, while rehabilitation took place mainly in the private sector in the 1970s to early 1980s (Balchin 1995, Cullingworth and Nadin 1994).

Local authorities have re-housed three million inhabitants in urban areas via clearance. One and a half million were re-housed in high-rise flats and hundreds and thousands in some sort of mass housing (Lowe 1991, Hughes and Lowe 1995).

As mentioned earlier, in 1970s a major shift of emphasis away from demolition and re-development towards a social policy in aid of deprived areas came, e.g. housing improvement and repairs rather than clearance. There are a number of reasons for this shift in policies, such as recognising the fact that slum clearance did not solve the problem but removed it elsewhere. These high-rise tower blocks and large estates where tenants from inner-city slums were relocated developed structural defects. These combined with effects of growing unemployment. Many estates turned into new slums, becoming 'no-go areas'. In the light of these developments, increasing attention was given to the social character and function of old housing. Also, the existence of a crude surplus of housing (as discussed earlier) led the authorities to focus their attention on the qualitative nature of the problem rather than the quantitative.

The change of administration from Labour to Conservatives meant an introduction and implementation of massive cuts in public expenditure. As mentioned earlier, across the following Conservative governments there has been a change of emphasis away from provision as well as improvement of dwellings, towards changing the tenure structure (see discussion below).

As a result of this shift (as well as cuts in central expenditure), the number of houses demolished or closed-down in Britain fell from an annual rate of 61,785 to a mere 4,187, over the period 1975-76 to 1991-92 (Malpass and Murie 1994).

The transfer of local authority housing to the private sector

Cuts in public expenditure continued throughout the 1980s. In 1980, the House of Commons Environment Committee noted that housing cutbacks accounted for 75 per cent or more of all public spending reductions. There has also been a transfer of dwellings from the public rented sector to the owner-occupied sector (through the 1980, 1985 and 1986 Housing Acts). Indeed Conservative governments in the 1980s (and 1990s) transferred as much of the local authority housing stock as possible to the private sector or to housing associations. This way not only did they reduce their responsibility for the renovation of council estates but they also contained public expenditure in the economy as a whole and privatised public assets (Balchin 1995, Hills 1991 cited in Malpass and Murie 1994, Morris and Winn 1990).

Conservative governments also increased central control of housing expenditure and functions of local authorities in their attempt to achieve their wider aim of cutting public expenditure and reducing the number of properties in the public rented sector (Morris and Winn 1990). Malpass and Murie (1994: 98) argue that when the Conservatives won the election in 1979, their manifesto viewed housing not as an area of policy to be developed in relation to evidence of need but as an area for extending home ownership and the role of the market.

The money received from the sale of the council housing was not used to build new housing, although the majority of tenants (72 per cent) wanted it to be. Capital receipts from the housing programme (mainly the 'Right to Buy') between 1979 and 1993 amounted to £31 billion representing the most important of all government's privatisation programmes in the period. This enormous flow of capital receipts, however, was not used to invest in new house building. As a result, local authority housing starts plummeted and stock diminished during this period (see Table 5, in Appendix 1). Moreover, the local authority's role became that of enabler (Balchin 1995, Dwelly 1992, Malpass and Murie 1994). Yet a significant reduction in the budget available to Housing Associations accompanied these developments. Indeed, there

existed a number of contradictions in Conservative policies one of which was preventing the local authorities from investing the money received from the Right to Buy in new house building, claiming that the council should have the role of enabler, and that enabling is empowerment. Yet at the same time, they reduced the budget of housing associations drastically. The government money for the housing associations has in fact fallen by two-thirds to £650 million over the past five years. Subsequently, in the decade up to 1991, the proportion of households in council housing fell from around 30 per cent to 21 per cent, whereas the proportion of households renting from housing associations increased only from 2 to 4 per cent (Karn and Phillips 1998, Hetherington 1998).

The housing problem in the 1980s

Balchin (1995: 14) summarises four major and interrelated problems that Britain was facing in the mid-1980s as follows: First was the housing problem in quantitative terms in that there existed a serious housing shortage manifested by high levels of homelessness. Second was the housing problem in qualitative terms in that the condition of the existing stock was deteriorating. The third problem was related to the inequalities in housing in that unsatisfactory local authority housing 'estates accommodated a concentration of the poorest tenants and minority ethnic groups in dwellings that were inappropriately designed, badly constructed and difficult to manage and maintain'. And fourth was the lack of choice, mobility and diversity, which led to increased segregation and polarisation, widening social divisions within society. And I would add to these institutionalised racism that minority ethnic groups were subjected to specifically as a consequence of the housing problem stated above. Policies such as the 'Right to Buy' were affecting ethnic minorities disproportionately by reducing the number of houses available for new comers, and reducing the already limited number of large dwellings needed by extended families. These interrelated problems raise issues regarding the relationship between poverty and other social divisions, which will be taken up later in the chapter.

In order to keep costs to a minimum, the Conservative Government abolished Parker Morris standards in 1980 though they claimed to give local authorities more freedom than before. As a result, council housing became 'meaner and smaller, with poorer heating, insulation and landscaping, fewer cupboards, fewer tiled walls and power

points' (Sudjic 1981). There was an increasing need to improve standards at least up to Parker Morris levels. Yet quantitative rather than qualitative deficiencies began to cause greater concern as the number of local authority house building plummeted from the 1980-90s.

There has been a number of riots and periods of unrest in some major towns, including London in the 1980s. Subsequently major inquiries took place such as the 1981 Scarman Inquiry in Brixton. While conservatives blamed individuals for the unrest, Lord Scarman argued that the core of the problem underlying this urban unrest was injustice, highlighting the racialised nature of the problem. Subsequently the issues of disadvantage and discrimination have been pushed even further on to the agenda of planners (see below).

Writing in the mid-1980s, Quiney (1986: 189) stressed that public housing still remained the only kind of housing that could provide accommodation for a large number of people at an affordable price. He also noted that council house building had come to a halt while the number of people in need of a proper standard of housing was on the increase. The only people being re-housed continued to be the ones suffering the worst deprivations and were in most urgent need: 'The remainder must wait and wait'.

The context in which Quiney was writing in 1986 was that of the large number of people who were too poor to afford to buy for themselves or could choose what they rented. In the mid-80s the provision of local authority housing had not yet dwindled to practically nothing, as it now has.

Housing conditions in the 1990s

By 1990 the number of local authority starts had already fallen to a mere 8,600, which fell even further to 2,000 starts in 1993. Indeed the local authority sub-sector has diminished to nearly zero in recent years. By 1991 local authorities owned only 21 per cent of the country's housing stock.

As mentioned earlier, more council houses have been sold off to their tenants than the number built (see Table 6, in Appendix 1) under the 'Right to Buy' scheme introduced in the 1980 Housing Act. As a result of the Conservative Governments' policy to reduce

public expenditure no funding was available for local authority homes in 1996/97 (Shelter 1997). The major finding of the *English House Condition Survey 1996* (this being the latest survey) is that there has been no significant change in stock condition since 1991. The survey states that 7.5 per cent of stock is still considered unfit and that families living in concentrations of degenerate housing and poor environments were much more likely to be disadvantaged and to include young children. In local authority housing, a £10 billion backlog of overdue renovation work had built up by 1996 as a result of past under-investment. The Survey also found out that there has been an increase of over 500,000 households to 19.7 million. Single people comprise 27.4 per cent of households while single parents comprise 6.4 per cent (DETR 2000, *Housing and Planning Review 1998*).

The current Labour government admits that the 'Right to Buy' led to the removal of more desirable homes from the social rented sector, leaving local authorities with a smaller stock of poorer quality properties. It has also led to many thousands facing difficulties in meeting the costs of maintaining their homes. In 1999, the government introduced some changes to the 'Right to Buy' to improve the value of the scheme and to ensure that it only encourages homeownership where it is sustainable. The recent Green Paper (DETR 2000: 36) states that 'we do not intend to make any significant changes to the 'Right to Buy' scheme but, in order to tackle some of the remaining problems which can be associated with it, will consider further options to help people on low incomes to meet the cost of maintaining their homes'.

One of the changes that the Labour government introduced is the release of capital receipts from the sale of housing for investment in housing. However, they also aim the stock transfer to the social landlords. Thus they underline that from 2001-2, they will support the transfer of up to 200,000 dwellings each year. Subsequently, they estimate that registered social landlords will become the majority providers of social housing from 2004 onwards (DETR 2000).

Homelessness

The Housing Act of 1985 (Part III) placed a statutory duty on local authorities in England and Wales to re-house homeless people until January 1997. The Housing Act of 1996, however, amended this duty so that local authorities are supposed to provide

only temporary accommodation (Shelter 1997). Local authorities have the duty to assist those people who they consider may become homeless unintentionally and those who are in 'priority need' - e.g. families with dependent children, pregnant women, the elderly, or those 'vulnerable' people such as the mentally ill, the handicapped, and those people who became homeless as a result of an emergency such as fire or flood.

The present Labour government have decided to retain the current priority need categories. Nonetheless in their Green Paper they propose to extend these categories to include homeless people who are vulnerable because: 'they have an institutionalised or care background (such as care-leavers, those who are leaving prison and ex-servicemen), or they are fleeing harassment or domestic violence'. It is also stated that the authorities will ensure that all unintentionally homeless 16 and 17 year olds are treated as being in priority need. Thus, a large number of people are left out of the statutory definition of homelessness.

According to the *Homelessness Statistics* of Department of Environment the number of statutory homeless was 56,750 in England in 1979. The number, however, increased to 125,640 in 1995 (see Table 7, in Appendix 1).

Shelter (1997) suggests that the number of households accepted as homeless represents the *official* homelessness figure. The number of households that are recorded as applying to local authorities under the homelessness legislation is in fact more than twice this figure. In 1995, for instance, the number of households applying to councils in England under the homeless legislation was 313,770. As mentioned earlier, due to the statutory definition of homelessness a large number of people are denied recognition as 'homeless' by the authorities. Indeed, 80,000 single people in England and Wales in 1992 were excluded from the homelessness list. A large proportion of this number (between 7,000 to 20,000) was sleeping rough (Edwards 1992 and Griffin 1992 cited in Balchin 1995).

Moreover, a large number of families were living in unfit housing or overcrowded conditions. Overcrowding is high among ethnic minorities. At the 1991 census, for instance, 98 per cent of white households had at least one room per person, compared with only 70 per cent Pakistani households and 53 per cent Bangladeshi households

(CRE 1997b). A recent report by the Runnymede Trust (2000) points out that 24 per cent of Pakistani and Bangladeshi households are overcrowded, compared with 2 per cent of all households (Bowes *et al.* 1998). Homelessness among ethnic minorities will be taken up again later in the chapter.

Shelter (1998) points out that 165,790 households in total were officially recognised as homeless by local authorities in England during 1997. Estimating that this represents around 400,000 people, Shelter argues that this figure is just the tip of the iceberg. Included in this number are those households that were accepted as homeless and in priority need (103,340); those found to be homeless but not in priority need (57,550); and those found to be intentionally homeless. It does not, however, include most of the 41,000 people who are living in hostels and squats. Nor does it include the 78,000 couples or single parents living in shared accommodation that are unable to afford to set up a home on their own.

As mentioned earlier, there has been a considerable increase in the number of households during the last two decades of the twentieth century. Moreover, the number of concealed households particularly amongst the ethnic minorities is higher. Despite all these developments, however, the supply of affordable rented housing decreased in the 1980s - early 1990s.

Temporary accommodation

There has been a dramatic increase in the number of households living in temporary accommodation in England since 1980. There were 4,170 households living in temporary accommodation in 1980, whereas this number reached to 44,710 in 1995, representing a 970 per cent increase (Shelter 1997).

According to a Shelter survey, having failed to find any suitable accommodation, 76,000 people placed themselves in bed and breakfast hotels in 1996. This figure however does not include those homeless families placed by local authorities in bed and breakfast hotels during the same period (Shelter 1998).

As mentioned earlier, under the Housing Act 1996, local authorities are only required to provide homeless households with temporary accommodation for two years. Since

January 1997 homeless people cannot gain access to a permanent home solely because they are homeless (Shelter 1997).

At the end of March 1998, local authorities were housing 47,080 homeless households in temporary accommodation. This number included 4,770 households living in bed and breakfast; 9,880 households that were placed in hotels, including women's refuges; 13,560 households that were placed in local authority or housing association stock; and 18,870 households that were living in other types of temporary accommodation such as private sector leased or temporary accommodation. Thus, according to Shelter, there were over 32,000 children living in temporary accommodation at the end of March 1998.

Noting that the number of households on the council house waiting lists was 1.1 million in April 1995 (of this number 831,560 were classed as being 'in need of housing'), Shelter suggests that this number is probably an underestimate of housing need for a number of reasons. For instance, people are deterred from registering because they feel they have little or no chance of ever being housed, such as single people or childless couples. Also, some local authorities have their own restrictions on those who can apply for council housing (Shelter 1997).

The 1991 Census found that 2,674 people were sleeping on the streets in England (Shelter 1997). The London Research Centre estimated the number of single people who were homeless in London was approximately 109,000 in 1995. But this figure does not include those single people living in bed-sit accommodation. There are no comprehensive statistics collected for single homeless people nationally. According to a Shelter survey in 1997, over 10 per cent of young people had been forced to spend at least one night on the street (Shelter 1998).

Minority ethnic groups are over-represented among homeless households. In a study of 2,000 single homeless people carried out in England in 1991, a third of those under 25 year olds were found to be from non-white minorities. Half of all the women in hostels and bed and breakfast accommodation were also from Black and ethnic minorities (CRE 1997b).

It is well documented that Black and ethnic minority people face discrimination in their search for housing (Karn and Phillips 1998, Rex 1986, Shelter 1997, 1998, Smith 1989). Having been accepted as being homeless, they spend a longer time in temporary accommodation. In 1996, 51 per cent of households accepted as homeless by local authorities in inner London were from Black and ethnic minority groups. Furthermore, they are often allocated the worst housing both in the public and private rented sector and suffer more from overcrowding. A nationwide survey of hostels for single homeless people found that around 26 per cent of hostel residents were from minority ethnic groups despite the fact that people from ethnic minority groups comprise only about six per cent of the population (D.o.E. 1993b).

In the following discussion I look at other dimensions of housing policies such as decentralisation of welfare services and popular planning.

Decentralisation: power relations and participation

In the 1960s and 70s welfare services were increasingly seen as an impersonal and bureaucratic machinery. In a response to the remote, impersonal and bureaucratic nature of welfare services, some local authorities have decentralised their services (see also Chapters 2 and 5).

In the 1960s there was a growth in community work and an increased interest in grass-roots politics, with the ideology of 'the community' becoming popular. There was a growing belief in the desirability of participation and the need to find ways of voicing those interests and needs that could not be expressed through party politics. Social alienation on council estates has led to local authorities' endeavouring to develop 'community spirit'. Hence, new and more radical approaches to planning and the housing problem have come to the fore, consultation and participation gaining a particular significance in the planning process. In early 1980s, 'popular planning' initiatives were implemented by some local authorities in an attempt to involve people actively in the formulation of their decisions. 'Community involvement', 'tenant's participation', 'community architecture', 'popular planning' are among the wide range of initiatives that have tried to involve people in decisions about their environment (Cullingworth and Nadin 1994, Smith 1985).

The disturbances in the 1980s and findings of the inquiries (which called for more consultation) were also among the factors that contributed to the changes. Lord Scarman, arguing that the core of the problem underlying this urban unrest was injustice, pointed out that it was related to the social and political exclusion of black people. The violent outbursts of black young people had taken place within the context of unemployment, deprivation, racial disadvantage and political exclusion. These developments urged planners to consider the issues of disadvantage and discrimination and thus public consultation has increasingly been the order of the day.

After the 1997 elections the Labour Government made it clear that they are determined to tackle the problem of 'social exclusion', and have formed the high profile Social Exclusion Unit in the Cabinet Office with a remit to work across department (*The Guardian* 22 September 1998). The Prime Minister, Tony Blair, made his first speech after the election from a housing estate in Peckham, where he promised that there would be no more forgotten people, no one left out (*The Guardian* 15 September 1998).

At the beginning of 1998, Hilary Armstrong, Housing Minister, said:

'The Government is committed to helping communities where a concentration of poor quality housing and high levels of unemployment have led to social exclusion. We want to ensure that everyone has the chance to live in a home that is modern and efficient, and in an area that is environmentally friendly where communities can grow and flourish' (*Housing and Planning Review* 1998).

Different people interpret the term 'social exclusion' differently emphasising different aspects of the concept. As far as I am concerned, there are problems with some interpretations. I take up the notion of 'social exclusion' and discuss the issues related to this in the final chapter.

The Conservative governments encouraged tenants to form tenant management organisations (TMOs), have rights to opt out of council management and to choose the landlord, and to introduce consultation processes. Nonetheless, the responsibility for lettings, rent collection and setting rent levels remained with the councils. Subsequently, in over 70 boroughs tenants voted to set up Tenant Management Organisations to

manage their estates. However, this proved to be a step in the attempts of the government to reduce the role of local authorities, cut public expenditure and pave the way for the privatisation of estates rather than genuine democratisation, which was another contradiction that existed in Conservative policies (see discussion in the final chapter).

The current Labour government continue to encourage formation of housing companies for the local authority-owned housing (that remain after the stock transfer) as well as the 'Private Finance Initiative'. In their Green Paper the government describe their aim as follows:

'We want to establish a sector in which tenants have a real choice over their housing, where they can take responsibility for their homes in the same way that owner-occupiers can; where tenants are empowered in decision-making processes that affect their homes, where tenants choose their homes rather than being pushed into them; and where there is a wider range of housing providers competing for tenants' custom and offering high quality, good value services' (DETR 2000: 56).

All of this relate to the issues of 'power/empowerment', 'participation' and 'difference', as well as structural and institutional framework and democratic culture that I have discussed in Part I.

Popular planning

With the growth of community action, new pressure groups emerged associated with those people whose interests had not been articulated before. Funds provided for the development of community organisations, and community workers were appointed. As a result of changes made in the statutory planning procedures, 'consultation and participation gradually became an important feature of the planning process' (Cullingworth and Nadin 1994: 247). Housing co-operatives were the tenants' response to the bureaucratic and unresponsive nature of the housing process and of councils. Tenant management co-operatives initiated by the local authorities, on the other hand, were a way of breaking down the large housing estates into smaller and more manageable ones. These and some other new and more radical approaches to planning and the housing problem, such as popular planning, emerged. As discussed in Chapter 1,

popular planning aims to democratise decision-making by involving residents of a particular locality in those decisions which have an impact on their lives. The philosophy behind popular planning is the empowerment of groups and individuals so that they become active agents of change (Montgomery and Thornly 1988 cited in Cullingworth and Nadin 1994).

Examples of the implementation of 'popular planning' can be found in the practices of the former Greater London Council (GLC) as well as some other metropolitan district councils. In recent years many local authorities have attempted to actively involve people in the formulation of their decisions rather than gathering their views on pre-given policies (Brownhill 1988).

Hence the notion of the 'community' was given a new emphasis, despite the ambiguity and problematic nature of the term (which I have discussed in Chapter 1). As Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993: 167-8) argue, the celebration of the 'community' as well as the confusion about it reached its peak during the 'popular planning' strategy of the GLC in the early 1980s. Having outlined its strategy as 'working for the community', the GLC strove to increase popular participation in policy-making in London and to include those sections of society who have generally been denied a voice so far. These groups were women, Black and ethnic minorities, gays and lesbians, people with disabilities, the young and the elderly, and the unemployed. Accordingly, a number of cultural activities, meetings and conferences were organised genuinely to encourage 'community participation'. Although the GLC's work led to an increased sensitivity to the specific needs of specific groups, in my opinion this was still far too generalised to meet the needs of these groups, for very often it meant homogenising these groups.

Popular planning initiatives, however, had only limited success. One of the reasons for their failure lies in the flawed assumption that the problems of urban deprivation and poverty could be solved partly by local self-help initiatives, through better communication with the administrative departments of the welfare state and technical improvements to the welfare state machinery. By mobilising the disadvantaged groups to protect their interests more successfully, their political power would be enhanced. The consensus model of 'community' participation failed to bring any real change in the power relations between policy-makers and citizens. Ultimate control has remained with

the authority concerned. Participation has not involved a delegated power of decision (Smith 1985).

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Mackintosh and Wainwright (1987) emphasise that contradictions emerge when the state organisations enter into alliances with the popularly based organisations. Describing the lessons of the GLC experience, they underline that 'Democratising state policy-making process is an inherently contradictory process: messy, unsatisfactory, necessarily incomplete' (1987: 400). One of the reasons for these contradictions is that the local state is both an employer and provider of services at the same time. As an employer, it has its own interests while as a political body it has wider set of political commitments. They also describe the GLC's hold onto the final power as follows:

'The GLC talked of decentralising and sharing power. But in general, of course, the GLC had final power - within the constraints set by government - over the use of resources. It had its own criteria for using these resources, whether for service provision or investment, and only to a very limited extent indeed did it give that power up' (1987: 401).

Popular planning initiatives are also based on the assumptions of homogeneity of 'the people' and 'the community'. The partnership of the GLC and 'the people', for instance, was viewed as a smooth co-operation. Neither the conflicting interests, demands within 'the community' nor the conflicts within the GLC itself were recognised. Therefore it was assumed that the interest of all disadvantaged people are shared and reconciled and that no inherent conflicts of interest can arise during the process of 'empowerment' (Yuval-Davis 1994).

Problematics that need to be looked at

This part of the chapter presents problematics that are going to be discussed later in the thesis, especially in the concluding chapter. Throughout the period that I examine in this chapter (since 1970s) there have been a number of changes in housing policies. The changes that have taken place raise certain issues that concern theoretical concepts as well as practical issues and implications that I address this in this thesis.

These are *firstly*, the question of who is entitled to public housing in relation to the differences in identities. Housing policies did attempt to redress discrimination by changing the criteria of entitlement to public housing. Indeed changes in allocation policies, such as the number of points tenants were expected to get in order to qualify for an allocation as well as homelessness legislation, meant changes in the criteria of entitlement to public housing which affected different ethnic groups differentially. Because of the 'care of the community' approach, families used to get points in allocation processes if they had other family members living in the same estate. Subsequently sons and daughters of the existing tenants (mostly white) would get high points required for an allocation. Newcomers (mostly ethnic minorities) were denied access under this system. Change of criteria, and not making it priority any more to have relatives in the estate, subsequently prevented families (who were entitled to public housing) from getting allocation. This issue also relates to what is considered to be 'community', which is relative both for natives as well as migrants. Moreover, legislation on intentional homelessness is claimed to be institutionally racist for it disproportionately affects Asians by preventing family re-unions.

Second is the relationship between social divisions in the form of poverty (e.g. problems concerning the social category of class) and other social divisions such as ethnicity and gender in giving rise to problems of exclusion socially and spatially. Today, Black and ethnic minorities face disadvantage and discrimination in housing. In London 53 per cent of the registered homeless in 1992/93 were from minority ethnic groups, despite the fact that they constituted only 15 per cent of all households. Similarly, in Tower Hamlets, Bangladeshi families made up nearly 60 per cent of all homeless families in the borough, although they constituted just 10 per cent of all families in the borough (CRE 1997b). As mentioned earlier the percentage of the white households living in overcrowded conditions is 2.5, whereas the figure is 16.9 per cent for Black African households, 22.8 per cent for Pakistani households, and 53.8 per cent for Bangladeshi households. There is a tendency to collapse the problem of discrimination to that of disadvantage. The present government has attempted to tackle the problem of social exclusion. But there remains an ambiguity about the term with a tendency to reduce the problem to poverty and the underclass (see discussion on social exclusion in Chapter 12).

Thirdly is the design implications of the diverse household needs resulting from differences in ethnicity and culture - e.g. diverse and special household needs of ethnic minorities. These issues mostly concern women since 'gender relations are often perceived as the most specific characteristics that differentiate on "culture" from another' (Yuval-Davis 2000). The rich diversity of Britain's minority population (see Tables 4 and 5, in Appendix 1) is also an indication of the large differences in household composition between ethnic groups. As mentioned earlier, the average sizes of ethnic minority households are larger than their white counterparts. According to the 1994 PSI survey, the largest households are to be found among Bangladeshis and Pakistanis (5.7 people), followed by Indians and African Asians (3.9 each), Chinese (3.3), Caribbeans (3.2) and white people (2.4)(CRE 1997b). In 1991 over a quarter of white and black people lived alone, whereas the figure was only 9 per cent for South Asians.

The 1997 PSI survey found that 13 per cent of white people in their 60s and 70s share a household with a son or daughter compared with 31 per cent of Caribbean and 70 per cent of African Asian elderly people. South Asian groups tend to have the highest proportions of households comprising a man, a woman and children, and households with 'other combinations'. The largest proportion of one-parent families is found among Caribbeans (45 per cent).

According to the 1994 PSI survey, single people born in Britain, aged 30, and without children are most likely to live in their parental home if they are South Asian: 70 per cent did so compared to 52 per cent Black Caribbeans and 42 per cent of White people (see Figure 3, in Appendix 1). Once married, only one per cent of White and Black Caribbean couples stay with their parents, whereas the number is 30 per cent for South Asians (CRE 1997b, 1998). These findings confirm that the number of concealed households among ethnic minorities is higher than their white counterparts and that there is a greater need for a larger - three and four-bedroom accommodation - among Black and ethnic minority groups.

This diverse and special household needs of ethnic minorities have ramifications in terms of design, which is discussed in Chapter 12.

Fourthly, housing policies affect tenants differentially as a result of the differences in their social location and existing structural inequalities in the society, which give rise to differentiated power positions. The 'Right to Buy', for instance, affected the tenants differentially for a number of reasons. On the one hand, under this legislation, tenants in the public sector were given a statutory right to buy the house they occupied. Yet this right could only be exercised by a specific group of tenants, e.g. secure tenants, and the majority of them were white. The amount of discount was worked out according to the number of years it was occupied, which again benefited the white tenants as they had longer tenancies. On the other hand, the sale of council housing led to the reduction of larger properties in the housing stock which disproportionately affected Black and ethnic minorities because of their larger average household structure. Indeed, the differences in the household structure have been a crucial factor for these groups in experiencing institutional racism as will be discussed later.

Fifthly, the design of the built environment has different implications for men and women in relation to the question of safety. There has been much public debate in relation to violence against women, which has prompted suggestions of dividing the public space, providing women-only areas, and privatising to make it more secure. Concerns, for instance, have been expressed about dead city centres and car parks, undergrounds and subways. Thus, there have been calls for an increase in the use of public areas by the mixed land-uses. The issue of safety relates to the public/private division. For the majority of women, personal safety when entering public space often seems to be of major concern.

Sixth is the extent to which tenants are able to participate and have an input to the decision-making processes - who decides what, popular planning, decentralisation and delegation of power, which I explore in this investigation.

As a matter of fact, all the above-mentioned problems in a way relate to the issues of participation in decision-making processes both centrally and at grass roots level. Part of the issue of tenants' participation relates to the question of *which* tenants participate in the decision-making processes. Indeed analysing decision-making processes in terms of the degree of participation of individuals and groups with differences in their positioning and the power relations in these processes can shed light to all other

problems. These problems have no objectively right or wrong answers. Instead, they are subject to diverse and often conflicting interests. Therefore, the whole process of decision-making needs to be looked at in order to see how gendered and ethnicised dimensions are reflected in these processes.

Conclusion

This chapter argued that the ways in which governments dealt with the problems since 1970's affect individuals and collectivities differently as a result of the differences in their identities and social positionings.

The chapter highlighted that the professionals and state authorities have always had a paternalistic (e.g. 'we know what you need') attitude to public housing. Tenants *vis-à-vis* unresponsive and bureaucratic councils constructed a strong division of 'us and them' feeling trapped and powerless in their dwellings of poor-quality design and maintenance, which developed structural defects (Quiney 1986).

Although in the 1960s more radical approaches to planning and housing problems emerged, they had limited success because of the conceptual problems embedded in them. Moreover, these 'popular planning' and 'community participation' initiatives did not involve a delegated power of decision and ultimate control remains with the authority concerned (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1993, Smith 1985, Yuval-Davis 1994).

The government's emphasis on empowerment of tenants requires structures and institutional frameworks, which are yet to be developed.

Chapter 5: Decision-making at central and local level

Introduction

In 1980's, local governments came under attack by the central government (see Chapter 4). They had a very poor image for the people. Moreover, it was the councils that were blamed for things that went wrong and as Margaret Hodge, the Leader of Islington Council at the time put it: 'the council has become a scapegoat for many of the ills that people experience in present times' (Hodge 1985:29). As a result many councils called for change in the provision of their services and went into decentralisation. Decentralisation of day-to-day services in Islington and Lewisham took place in 1980's.

According to Hodge (1985: 32), the motives of Islington Council to go for decentralisation were 'highly pragmatic, concerned with the efficiency and co-ordination of the service' that they provide. They undertook decentralisation in order to 'overcome the anonymity of services, to change them in a more sensitive direction'. Decentralisation sought to address 'practices that alienate the consumer and provide very poor job satisfaction to the producers of the services themselves'. There were also ideological reasons for decentralisation according to Hodge. Suggesting that 'in the context of Islington these are important but secondary' she points out that 'they concern the value of participation by the consumers of services in the planning and decision-making process, they concern issues of local control over services and facilities'.

There is a general view shared by all parties, e.g. tenants, elected members and council officers, that decentralisation is a good idea. Although housing services became more responsive and officers became more accountable to the tenants as a result of decentralisation, there still remain problems in terms of tenant participation in decision-making processes in terms of power relations among the participants in these processes. This chapter examines the decision-making structures at local and central level in Islington and Lewisham in order to illuminate these relations of power with regards to the notion of 'difference'.

Participation, power and difference

Decentralisation and participation

Neighbourhood Forums in Islington and *Neighbourhood Committees* in Lewisham were set up as part of the decentralisation process.

Islington launched their programme of decentralising day-to-day services in 1983.¹ By 1986 they had decentralised many of their services into 24 neighbourhood offices. Since 1991 cuts and restructuring have led to changes and some of the 24 neighbourhoods have been 'twinned'. As a result, Islington had 16 neighbourhoods until April 1995 when they were further twinned thus Islington now has only 12 neighbourhoods. This meant that while the actual buildings were retained (at present there are 24 offices) the services provided were integrated and neighbourhood managers became responsible for what were formerly two or three neighbourhoods. The Council held 'consultation meetings' at the time in order to inform the tenants of the Council's intentions. As will be discussed below some residents participating in these meetings resented the idea and opposed the plans of the Council to twin some neighbourhood areas. Yet the Council carried on the implementation of their plans.

Ali has been a member Elthorne Forum in Islington for five years. He suggested that the number of neighbourhood areas have been reduced despite the wishes of the residents underlining the power imbalance between the council and residents, the former imposing their decisions on the latter. 'People haven't actually wanted it' said Ali, 'it's been actually imposed on them'. He suggested that: 'that's an example of how, you know, once they've been decentralised and then *they* decided *they* didn't want it that way then they enforced the decision to change that, the idea of reducing the neighbourhoods ... So, that was an example really that at the end of the day *they* decide. The central Council decides how far they want to go with decentralisation' (Ali).

Erol, who is a resident and representing an environmental organisation at the Elthorne Forum believes that big decisions are still made centrally and time is a major factor in this. 'When it comes down to it with the bigger kinds of decisions they usually just go ahead and usually they have already worked it out' said Erol, 'So what happens is that the Forum gets a very little time to have any influence on that decision. Usually by the time that they get information there is very little time left for the Forum to organise

itself to have any significant say in it'. Also other factors such as cost cutting may result in the Council imposing decisions on to the neighbourhoods against the wishes of residents.

At present each Neighbourhood has a Neighbourhood Manager with overall responsibility for service delivery as well as managers with responsibility in different areas such as the Client Manager (Housing Need), Contract Manager (Estate Management), Social Services Manager, and Resources Manager.

Lewisham underwent decentralisation in 1989 and has 16 Neighbourhoods as a result, and is the only borough where homelessness unit has a neighbourhood status, which has exactly the same rights as of the Neighbourhood Committees. However not all the neighbourhoods have the same structure. A typical neighbourhood structure includes the Neighbourhood Manager, Environmental Maintenance Manager, Customer Services Manager, Property Services Manager and Housing Services Manager. Five neighbourhoods have Income and Finance teams to deal exclusively with housing benefit and rent arrears. Other neighbourhoods have environmental services managers who manage the caretaking and grounds maintenance service.

Each Neighbourhood Committee is claimed to comprise representatives of tenants associations (council tenants), mix associations (comprised of council tenants and other residents), Tenant Management Co-operatives (TMCs), representatives and observers of local community groups with a 'housing interest', and underrepresented sections in the neighbourhood for each of the following sections: young persons, people with disabilities, people with caring responsibilities - for children and/or relatives, pensioners, lesbians, gay men and Black and ethnic minorities. Thus the rules about the composition of the neighbourhood committees have an on paper sensitivity to the 'difference' among the constituents. The Committee also has the power to co-opt people either as representatives of local or underrepresented groups or as persons with particular skills or expertise beneficial to the Committee. Associations are required to be representative of the ethnic mix of the residents in their area of membership. Yet, as I discuss later in the chapter the actual composition of the Neighbourhood Committees are far from what is claimed by the Council.

According to the Councils members of 'the local community' can discuss items of local or borough-wide importance and make known their views to the Council. They are advisory bodies making recommendations to the Councils' centralised committees concerned with council services and other significant issues and policies.

The Forum/Committee meetings are relatively less formal compared to the meetings of the centralised committees of the Council. As one moves up in the decision-making structure towards the centralised committees, meetings become more formal and finally the meetings of the *Council* itself are highly formal with all traditional ceremonies attached to it.

Neighbourhood managers I have interviewed think that decentralisation works. The Manager of Elthorne Park in Islington, who is a young Black African Caribbean descent woman (whom I will call Margaret Hall) argued that 'with regard to whether or not it's working I think yes, it works and I think people appreciate the fact that the authority has come to *them*, rather than them having gone to the authority' (MH). However, she maintained there remains a problem of budget that has not been decentralised as much as it could have been. Indeed, in both boroughs there exists the problem of budget in that while services are physically decentralised the budget has not been decentralised to the same extent. There is still quite a lot of central control with regard to the budgets.

In Islington the neighbourhood managers set their own budgets and they are accountable for them. Yet one neighbourhood manager, a white woman in her mid 30s whom I will call Gillian Eden described it as:

'I don't think there has been a true letting go of the budgets ... The local budgets here are fairly small because they haven't decentralised everything. We're talking hundreds and thousands rather than millions ... something's still held centrally. And people are allowed to make decisions concerning your budget which I find a bit difficult ... So until everything is decentralised and they get rid of element of gate keeping then people won't truly feel as if they are allowed to manage' (GE).

The Budget is broken down into four headings that are set for the Neighbourhoods. 'We're not generally allowed to move money between them', Dennis Hird one of the

Neighbourhood Managers described. ‘But a lot of our budget is directed to our in house contractor. We’re not allowed to spend budget that we should spend on our in house contractor, i.e. we have to order work internally. What work we have to order is quite tight ...’ (DH).

In Lewisham, each of the 16 Neighbourhoods gets £25,000 out of the Housing Investment Allocation, which they have to spend within the guidelines neighbourhoods are given. The tenants have a *direct influence* over that, yet ‘it has to be spent directly on housing stock’. According to Gareth Dobson, one of the Neighbourhood Managers (a white man in his late 40s), the tenants have full decision-making in how much they like to be spent. ‘Last year for example’, he noted, ‘they decided that they put new windows in on the shanty housing blocks. The kind of decisions they make; they might put central heating, they might have more policing at the traffic control, ... repairs ... just small things ...’ (GD).

Rachel, (a white woman in her late 20s) works for the Federation of Lewisham Tenants and Residents Association (FELTRA) representing tenants.² She explained that each TA puts forward a bid for items such as a playground, or new flowerbeds. Then ‘they all go into the pot ... and they are prioritised, they’re costed up by officers and then the [Neighbourhood] Committee ... make the decision where that money is going to be spent’. She noted that ‘each neighbourhood does it differently’, so, according to Rachel, ‘that’s where they *have* got control on a local base’. Thus tenants have the control of a *centrally set* budget as long as they remain within the *centrally set* guidelines.

Another FELTRA worker Emily (a white woman in her early 30s) on the other hand claimed that tenants have no control over the decisions that are made centrally, which also include the decision about how much money should be given to a neighbourhood. Although tenants can have some input centrally it is about their opinions, stressed the Emily. They have no actual power. As a result they get very frustrated: ‘Tenants do not have power!’ complained Emily, ‘because the Government took that power away, they took their voting rights away, so, it’s not case of power really’. Every time, insisted Emily, ‘the Government think tenants will be able to influence anything in a different way to how they want to influence, they take away our power!’ (Emily).



Shifting power relations

The composition of the participants in decision-making changes in terms of ethnicity, gender and age as one moves from the decentralised, local bodies towards the centralised committees of the council (see Appendix 2 for a detailed breakdown).

In general it is the white, elderly women who are mostly involved as *tenants' representatives* locally and centrally. The number of white men as professionals as well as elected members increases in the central committees. At the *Council* that is the highest and the most formal level, women's presence drops substantially for the majority of councillors are white male. At the middle level of decision-making platforms such as the council committees the number of white women and men often are equal. However there occurs a shift in the power attached to their role and the degree their presence and opinions are taken seriously. White men have more self-confidence than women and automatically adopt the role of 'spokesperson' on behalf of the group as the need arises although the majority of the members often are women. Those women who do have power attached to their role are often the younger women. In other words white younger women are represented relatively more among the councillors and council officers than Black and ethnic minority women and white elderly women.

In other words the different identities of participants in central and decentralised decision-making position them differentially in these processes, which also corresponds to specific power relations in the society. 'Differences' of tenants participating in decision-making on grounds of ethnicity and gender, and their differences with the professionals on grounds of class and status give rise to highly complex power relations.

As discussed in Chapter 3, both formal and informal practices shape decisions in local authorities. Highlighting the distinction between informal and formal decision-making processes, Sue Roberts one of the Neighbourhood Managers in Lewisham (a white woman in her late 40s), argued that 'it's wrong to say that decisions are made, decisions *emerge*', often as a result of series of other decisions.

Moreover, as Sue Roberts highlighted the attitudes of the participants in Neighbourhood Committee meetings was one of the reasons for the low level of participation. 'The people who *do* participate is generally being quite strong personalities' she explained,

‘who behave in a very rude and unreasonable way’. She went on to say that: ‘you didn’t see any rude and unreasonable behaviour at the last meeting. They all behaved very reasonably. I think that tends to put a lot of people off’. She highlighted that ‘although it’s not a word, it’s the strain of racism that runs through all this in that people tend to go to local social club which is a drinking club underneath the tenants Co-op and that’s all white, all male, middle aged you know’. So, it’s not conducive to welcoming either women or ethnic minorities (SR). It is unlikely that they would wish to join either.

Characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, class and age play a significant role in the level and degree of participation of tenants. Individuals with certain characteristics seem to be absent in these processes.

Gender and participation

As far as Emily is concerned, it is mostly women who get involved at local level. What is more, it is usually older women who get involved, especially pensioners. ‘Because they’ve got time’, says Emily. What underlies women’s participation in local housing issues, maintains Emily, is the division of labour in the household that gives the domestic responsibilities to women. She depicted it in the following quote:

‘Women are used to running the home, they’re the ones nine times out of ten to be at home all the time. So, therefore they have direct contact with their environment, the community, the schools, the doctors and everything else. They’re the ones who walk through their estate, go to the shops. They’re the ones who see things. And they’re the ones who are more likely to get motivated to actually say: “I don’t want my child to run through a pile of dirt or broken bottles”, or you know, “silver file end and needles” whatever is dumped on stairs by drug addicts’ (Emily).

Each Tenants Association has got its own key individuals, according to Emily, and they are the ones who do most of the work. Usually they are the ones who will go to the Neighbourhood Committee because they have the experience. However, she argued, sometimes the gender of those attending more central meetings may change from female to male. She claimed that women’s responsibilities are the cause of it.

‘If it does change to a male it’s because, it’s yet another evening meeting and most people know that if you go to neighbourhood meeting, or if go further up the structure,

it's more meetings. To be female, young with kids, you can come to these one or two nights a month meetings of your TA but anything more than that is too bigger commitment' (Emily).

Emily noted that Neighbourhood Committee representatives to the Lewisham Tenants Council are about half male and half female. Indeed there is a substantial female presence at local - and more informal - levels of decision-making in both boroughs. Women often appeared to lack self-confidence in the formal political activity despite their perseverance and hard work locally. As discussed in Chapter 7, one of the Management Committee members of the Tenant Management Co-operative in Islington, who is a white woman in her 70s and has been active for nineteen years, claims, for example, that women are not taken seriously at the central level. She insists that they need men to 'stand for them *vis-à-vis* the Council' (Debbie). Moreover women at the Elthorne Co-op also seemed to undervalue their role and contribution to the Co-op whereas men seemed to be a lot more confident despite the fact that they lacked experience.

Indeed the delegation of tenant representatives attending the full Council meeting in February '96 (see discussion below) was composed of all white women and men. The majority were elderly except for one woman. Despite the fact that women formed the majority of the delegation, the person to speak on their behalf was a male. They were given ten minutes to address the Council, and this ten-minutes could have been equally shared by women and men by letting two people to speak for five minutes each. Instead they decided that he should speak for ten minutes. Women, in general, and elderly women in particular are the most active participants in these decision-making processes of housing, yet often they do not have power attached to their role. The chairs of the committees, for instance, are mostly men and the majority of the elected members are also men.

At more central and higher levels of decision-making the number of men increases and at these levels there exists a significant amount of power attached to the role of participants either politically or financially, whereas at neighbourhood level, where women participate in significant numbers, their role is often in a voluntary capacity.

Indeed one of tenants commenting on the women's participation at the Co-op management suggested that this is 'because it is voluntary' (Theresa)(see Chapter 7).

Ethnicity and participation

Black and ethnic minority people's participation in these meetings, on the other hand, is minimal. At the local level, meetings are white dominated in terms of tenant involvement. At Elthorne Neighbourhood Forum, while Black and ethnic minority women are represented among the Council employees, tenants participating these meetings are predominantly white.

At the central committees, Tenants Association representatives are also all white. The *Women's Committee* with its chiefly white composition also reflects this phenomenon, whereas *Race Equality and Community Affairs Committee* is mainly Black and ethnic minority men. The whole decision-making structure is clearly highly gendered and racialised. Gender and ethnicity together with other factors (such as age) remain significant indicators where tenants are involved and the degree of their involvement. Black and ethnic minority women seem to be absent most of the time in these processes.

Lewisham fares relatively better than Islington regarding the presence of African Caribbean descent Black people in general and women in particular in the positions of power in decision-making structures. At local level, Black (African Caribbean) people were well represented at one of the neighbourhoods namely Woodpecker Neighbourhood Committee of Lewisham. This was the only Committee meeting in which Black (African Caribbean) people in general and Black (African Caribbean) women in particular were the majority for most of the evening (although throughout the meeting people kept coming in and leaving the meeting hence although the total number of men was higher than women this was not the case at any particular time of the meeting). Moreover Black women appeared to be assertive in expressing their views and actively participated in the discussions throughout the meeting. Both minority and majority women over 50 years (that are predominantly present in most of the local decision-making bodies) were absent at this meeting (Appendix 2). There were two Black (African Caribbean) young male councillors and a white female councillor in the meeting.

At Pepy's Neighbourhood Committee of Lewisham, although the participation of Black (African Caribbean) people is lower than white people, nevertheless, racism *is* acknowledged as a major issue. No such discussion took place at any of the meetings of Elthorne Forum, despite the fact that the attitude of some members of the Forum towards minority community groups were racist and that several people attending the meeting did recognise it as racist.

Emily noted that there are more Black people participating now than there were five years ago. 'I'm *not* saying it's enough' said Emily, 'but we've got far more black representatives now coming through further up the structures, further up the consultation structure than we ever had before'. In regards to the participation of Black and ethnic minority women or lack of it, she commented as follows:

'Where they have problems is getting black women, Asian women specially, because of the culture. I found it very difficult in homeless families with the Turkish family. It's the husband who got involved, wife wasn't supposed to do it. That's not part of their culture for the wife to get involved. The husband takes responsibility and that's it. But soon turned it round, you know, but it takes a lot of work and what tenants find it is one they haven't got skills to do it or confidence to do it ... So, it's you often hear white tenants will say, "we've done everything, we tried everything, but"' (Emily).

The above quotation of Emily demonstrates the culturally specific e.g. religious and ethnicised nature of the public/private divide in that housing issues are considered to be part of the public domain for some ethnic and cultural collectivities (see Chapter 6). It also indicates that women of ethnic minorities are subject to two different sets of gender relations: that of the majority and minority (see Chapter 1).

The gender and ethnicity of the participants in decision-making processes have a major impact on the decisions taken and these decisions in turn have an impact on all residents. Tenant representatives at a central committee meeting in Islington, for example, complained about intrusion of their privacy by the workmen of the cable telephone/TV company and the Council's direct labour organisation Islington Building Services (IBS) working on their estate. They explained how uncomfortable they felt as they saw these men next to their bedroom windows without any prior notice. As the

representatives of the cable telephone/TV company and the Council's principal officer responsible for the Islington Building Services all white men, attended the meetings where the tenant representatives expressed their complaints in a heated exchange. It was clear that this problem of privacy had never occurred to the men taking the decisions. Yet these decisions had a major impact on the daily lives of those tenants.

One Black woman officer, whom I will call Pratibha Hope argued that '... until you can get Black and ethnic minority people in positions of power to take on board the issues, you're still going to have white people making certain decisions, without fully understanding the impact of those decisions on the users, on the recipients of the service' (PH).

Construction of 'difference' and exclusions of 'the Other'

Racial incidents in the neighbourhood

Elthorne Park Neighbourhood Manager Margaret Hall argued that racial incidents in the area are not reported. There are four or five a month reported racial incidents in the area. However, she believes, this does not seem realistic pointing also to the poor level of awareness.

'I don't believe this! I really don't believe it. What I feel is people aren't reporting it. And staff aren't recognising it ... caretaker could be on the estate and an incident could happen and he wouldn't recognise it for what it was. Not only would ... he or she would not recognise it; they wouldn't think it was their duties to do anything about it. So whilst my estate managers are saying to me "oh, well yes, there are two or three cases of harassment" ... I don't believe it ... I *really* do not believe it' (MH).

The ones that have been reported are between white groups and Black African Caribbean groups. There has been no eviction as a result of racial harassment in Elthorne Park neighbourhood although there have been in Islington.

In Lewisham there are certain areas that overt racism takes place. Pepy's Neighbourhood Manager Sue Roberts commented as follows:

‘Racial harassment, now, Bermondsey which is traditionally white working class there’s a lot of behaviour on that Estate that it’s racial. It is not racial in the extreme so, it doesn’t go to setting fires or, you know, they don’t set fire very often and it’s kind of petty vandalism rather than large scale vandalism you know, so they don’t burn cars very often, they don’t set fires to flats you may get the occasional rubbish chute fire’ (SR).

She described it also as ‘anti-social behaviour of the youth’ by around eight 12-17 year olds, all boys, ‘break in to cars, throwing sweets, throwing water bombs, verbal abuse, producing knives, it’s generally pretty nastier’ (SR). Yet Sue Roberts admitted that ethnic minority groups suffer more from such a behaviour: ‘The anti-social behaviour ... certainly impacts more adversely on people who are vulnerable anyway, so, you know, people who don’t have English as their first language...’ (SR). She then told me that a couple of years ago the Racial Equality Council ‘did door knocking down there’ noting that they ‘had a big issue about racial harassment following that and the Council would stand not to follow procedures’. As a result, a number of people were re-housed. ‘But that was Silwood, not Pepy’s’ noted the Manager, ‘and we got the single generation bid as a result of that’. They are now working on whole range of initiatives within that bid to combat racial harassment. Highlighting even more alarming incidents the Manager said the following: ‘Occasionally we got more serious incidents so, for example we have intervened police recently where a Somali boy got beaten up at school by Black Caribbean youth ... We know this group of youth, they are generally responsible for graffiti on the estate’ (SR). Hence, in my opinion, her comments reveal the importance of recognising the fact that racism is not a Black and White issue. ‘The Otherness’ is based on differences on many different grounds. What is common to all of them is the power over ‘the Other’ and that boundaries are constructed to exclude ‘the Other’ which may take the form of coercion.

Who participates? : Barriers to participation

Sue Roberts did not think that the Pepy’s Neighbourhood Committee represents the local people: ‘It’s not very representative’ she stressed, ‘it’s particularly all white’. She underlined that racialised minorities are at a disadvantage in participation processes. Noting that ‘there’s huge variety of people on the Pepy’s Estate’ the Manager argued that to come to tenants meetings, ‘it’s pre-requisite your English is fluent and I think

quite a number of people on the Estate are not sufficiently fluent in English as a first language to start with'. She noted that 'the Estate is so contrary diverse'. Nonetheless, 'the decision-making structures of the British local government are just completely beyond the comprehension of a number of people here' stressed the Manager, 'we have refugees. Somali refugees. Various structures will be very unfamiliar for them indeed. They've got so much, you know, to do to put bread in their children's mouth, participating in the decision-making structure is a long way from them really' (SR).

The Manager's above comments highlights the ways in which intersectionality of ethnicity, class and gender produce and re-produce the powerlessness that these minorities experience in the processes of decision-making that have a major impact on their lives. Their positioning in the matrix of social relations situates them with regards to the participatory processes of decision-making, causing their exclusion /inclusion.

With regard to tenants in general the more information they have and the more they understand the structure the easier it is for them to participate according to Sue, 'and understanding how things work is extremely complicated'. 'We work within extremely complicated processes, legal situations, directives from the government. So, it's difficult for them to get the grasp of that to see the full picture'. She asserted that sometimes tenants *do not* want to get involve in decision-making anyway. Sometimes, 'they don't want to know. Quite rightly they say they don't want to spend their lives being housing managers. So, you know it's up to us to present information to them in a way that is acceptable' (SR).

According to Rachel 'Neighbourhood Committees are *not* working well at the moment', because 'it's too ... big leap from being a TA rep to be a Neighbourhood Committee rep'. People can represent their Estate as block representatives. 'When you go to Neighbourhood', however, 'you're suddenly looking at all these different reports that are that thick (indicating). It's very difficult, very difficult'. Those representatives need training, according to Rachel, although it is available, 'they need encouragement to attend training'.

Omolara argued that forums such as the Lewisham Tenants' Council (LTC) are unrepresentative: 'From my observation there's a high proportion of Black tenants and

ethnic minorities in the north of the borough'. However, 'In the Lewisham Tenants' Council, out of sixteen only two I can picture are ethnic minority. So, to me it's *not* very representative' (Omolara).

The meetings of the Elthorne Neighbourhood of Islington I have attended did not reflect the ethnic composition of the neighbourhood either. According to the 1991 Census, Black people comprise 15 per cent of the population of Elthorne Neighbourhood area, around three per cent is Asian (Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi) and 0.8 per cent is Chinese. Those participating in the Forum meetings, however, were predominantly white (Appendix 2). The Neighbourhood Manager and the Resources Manager who are the Council employees were the only two Black (African Caribbean) women at the November '95 meeting. The Community Worker based at the Elthorne South Neighbourhood Office is a young Greek Cypriot man. There were only two young Black (African Caribbean) men present at the meeting who turned out to be the representatives of a newly launched drug project aiming to look at the drug related issues in the area.

Amongst the Forum members there seemed to exist a tension between the younger generation and the older members (mostly women) particularly in regards to the issues of equal opportunities. The tension reveals itself particularly when it comes to deciding on the allocation of money in the community budget and community transport budget. The money is available for local groups. Those groups operating borough-wide can also apply as long as they can prove that their activities benefit the local area. Elderly members of the Forum do not seem to appreciate or even acknowledge the contribution of the minority ethnic groups to the neighbourhood. Consequently they object their application for these funds that often do not go beyond £50. Their objection is regardless of the availability of money in the budget. In February '96 meeting, for instance, the Community Worker reported that there was money left in the Community Transport Budget and that he was going to write to all community groups in the area telling them money is available if they want to apply. This announcement however did not prevent an elderly, female member opposing the application of Islington Chinese Association (which is a borough-wide group based in Elthorne Park) for £50 from the Community Transport Budget for a Chinese New Year Outing. This particular member was complaining that '*they* seem to be applying all the time', and that '*they* already had some money' (my emphasis).

It was obvious that these members had a boundary drawn between 'us' and 'them'. They were there to decide how much 'the Other', outsiders should be given. 'They' seem to be demanding all the time to the detriment of 'us', e.g. groups such as old pensioners (white groups). These minority ethnic groups were not seen as part of 'the community' as the Council saw it. Some younger members of the Forum, however, stressed that this was what the money was for. Another elderly member argued that Islington Pensioners Group also has outings and that they should be getting money too. Younger members including the Community Worker maintained that 'this money is for the community organisations to apply and at the end of the day it is up to the organisations whether they apply or not'. They also argued that the Chinese Association was doing a lot for the local community and that the money has to be given to them. In the 'any other business' item of the agenda one of the elderly, female members requested the Community Worker to write to Islington Pensioners Group to apply for this money, while he reasserted that he would be writing to *all* the groups.

Not only do the Forums fail to involve all people living in a particular locality but those who do get involved with the Forum, which is the white majority, further construct a boundary around their neighbourhood which exclude 'the Other'. This was revealed when the Islington Council decided to twin some Neighbourhoods as a result of cuts. As one of the Principal Housing Officers explained, there was resentment by 'the Community' when the Council decided to literally re-draw the boundaries of some neighbourhood areas by joining two and in some cases three neighbourhoods. She believes that people had formed a particular 'identity of the community'. In other words they had internalised the already drawn boundaries around their neighbourhood area (however artificial it might have been at the beginning) and constructed a notion of 'community', which was based on the exclusion of 'the Other' and were resentful to the Council's plan of shifting the boundaries. This would mean making those who had been so far perceived as 'the Other' one of 'Us'. Specific social divisions such as class and ethnicity played a critically important role in their resentment. Although there was a consultation process and a series of consultative meetings were held, in the end the Council went ahead and implemented their plan against to the wishes of the majority of those people who had been participating in the process as residents of some neighbourhood areas.

As mentioned earlier, Lewisham fares better than Islington in terms of participation by Black and ethnic minorities in decision-making process. Moreover, some areas in the Borough of Lewisham are better than others. Commenting on whether Tenants and Residents Associations are representative of the local people or not, the Federation of Lewisham Tenants and Residents Association (FELTRA) representative suggested that:

‘So, on the whole, yes, they *are* fairly representative whether they actually represent every ethnic group that live on the Estate or they represent the gender on their Estate is a different thing. I think on the whole they try. In some areas’ TAs, it works very, very well. In others it doesn’t ... I think it all depends on the type of housing, the problems they’ve got, what support the TA got from the neighbourhood office itself, not necessarily us but from the neighbourhood because that’s day-to-day support’ (Emily).

Omolara sounded quite optimistic regarding the Black and ethnic minority involvement in the Tenants Associations. She described that at the Tenants Association meeting she had attended the previous night, at least 75 per cent of the people present were Black and of that percentage most of them were women. In her opinion ‘that depends where you go in the borough’ (Omolara).

However as one goes up in the decision-making structure the situation changes and when Omolara compares local to the central committees she is less optimistic: ‘Go up through to Neighbourhood Committee, ... and go to Housing Committee or any of the Sub-Committee, there’re very few Black people show their faces there’ (Omolara).

Power of Neighbourhood Forums/Committees

Emily believes that tenants *can* have their voice heard through Neighbourhood Forums/Committees. ‘Whether it is taken on board or not is another matter’, she added. ‘But that’s the most amount of power they have in the decision-making process, *to voice their concern*. That’s it! They can’t vote! They can’t vote and voting seems to be the only way your voice can be truly taken on board’ (Emily)(her emphasis).



Indeed, as will be discussed later in the chapter, neighbourhoods are ‘consulted’ on a range of things, yet the recommendations made by the tenants are not imperative. One of the Neighbourhood Managers describes it in the following quotation:

‘They are not binding. But they’re generally *are* taken into consideration ... nobody gets what they want. And that’s inevitable you know. I think in a process of tenant’s decision-making, it’s very difficult ... and you don’t argue why you’re going to do this. Because ... you could discuss it forever ... you have to listen to people’s views and make a decision’ (GD).

The Forum does not have any real decision-making power in relation to political or financial matters. They have no control of the neighbourhood budget. Margaret depicted the situation as follows:

‘When it comes to actual decision-making, the Forum can’t make decisions, they can make representations, they can make recommendations which can just easily be ignored because they have no voting rights on any Committee. That’s as result of the ‘89 or whichever Act, so that said that they had no voting rights, they could just sit in advisory capacity on Committees. So, I’m not sure where the powers of the Forums are. I think they are a good idea and I think they are essential. But I’m not so sure that they’re necessarily terribly effective’ (MH).

The only financial control the Forum has is over the Community Budget, which is around £3000. Margaret described the way the Forum makes decisions regarding the way this money is spent as follows:

‘... If they don’t like the look of the group or it’s not a group they automatically support, they will question and question and question! ... And there’s certainly an element of hostility towards ethnic minority groups applying for money. In my view and in my opinion they are always questioned far more closely than the established indigenous groups, always! I don’t know how we deal with that! I really don’t know how we deal with it but as soon as you get request from the local Chinese Association or the local African Centre or anything like that, it’s a problem. Even if it’s £50, what do you want it for, they’re almost asking for receipts’ (MH).

With its present composition the control the Forum has over the way the money is spent in this Community Budget raises questions about the use of power by the Forum. The Manager commented as follows:

‘And I think that’s where control is abused and misused really!! Control and power. Because they haven’t got a great deal of power but they have power over that little budget. And they have the ability to make people feel very, very uncomfortable! And I think we need to be looking at the way we can address that. But with the current make up of the Forum I don’t know how we can’ (MH).

According to Yasemin who represents a community group at the Forum, ‘it’s only a tiny percentage of people that get involved in these neighbourhoods’. She suggested that ‘there might be ten thousand people in the Elthorne Park Neighbourhood. And at the meetings you would get thirty, forty people. And they don’t represent really those ten thousand people. They only represent the things that they’re involved in really’.

The environmental organisation that Erol is representing at the Forum operates borough wide. They applied for the fifty-pound grant from various neighbourhood Forums. Yet Erol realised that the Forums ‘... can get very reactive and defensive about giving out this fifty-pounds grant to outside groups and a lot of them don’t actually want to give anything to outside groups or they get quite insular and defensive about the little budget that they have to projects that benefit the community’. According to Erol these people say ‘oh, we shouldn’t give any money unless these people come here and we can see them’. This is because they believe ‘all people just trying to get *their* money’. Yet ‘it’s not even *their* money and it’s not that much money really’ stresses Erol. ‘So in a way people say you must appear just you *might* get fifty pounds ... basically what they’re saying is we’re going to do as much as we can make it highly unlikely that anyone will get anything’. When I asked what happens to the remaining money, if it’s not spent, he said: ‘It’s taken back’.

Erol observed that there exists a tension in the Forum all the time: ‘it is particularly, it can be between young and old, I think that’s one aspect of it. The racism is another aspect to it’. He also pointed to the issue of the *Valentino* complex, which is a hostel where homeless people stay until they can get a council flat. At one point, a lot of

people came along to the Forum meeting with a complaint against the person who was trying to operate this complex as some kind of hotel. According to Erol, their complaint was valid. 'But then they got into expressing negative views about the fact that the people were on benefits, for instance, that they shouldn't, ... they were expressing strong views that people staying in this hotel ... shouldn't be getting benefits, for instance, so they went a step further to say that people shouldn't get benefits because they didn't like the people really' (Erol).

A white, elderly, female member of the Forum attending meetings as a private tenant thinks the Forum is most unrepresentative. There are people living in the area, she claimed, who could be very useful but are not coming to the Forum meetings. They are professionals such as lawyers but think that this is a waste of time. She insisted that most people do not know how to conduct a public meeting some are interested in their blocks only. Environmental issues, according to her, are the most important issues but the Forum does not think so.

What is more the Forums' effectiveness and power is patchy, according to Margaret Hall. Each Forum differs from one another in terms of their activeness. Elthorne Park Forum is a fairly active Forum in that 'they get 30 odd people come out on a winter's night'. There are some neighbourhoods where it is very difficult to get a Forum going. And yet in some other neighbourhoods there may be a very active Forum that in some cases are particularly hostile to officers, which does not help solve the problems. 'So you just end up having these barriers where nothing is going to be resolved' (MH).

As mentioned earlier, it appeared that Black and ethnic minority people attend the Forum meetings for a particular item on the agenda. As I asked Margaret whether the Forum is representative of the local residents she responded this way:

'Well it isn't!! Who is represented: old, middle aged white people ... It's a little unfair, we have some younger white people. And that's it. You don't have people from Black and ethnic minority groups. And when you do see a face you think: "oh this must be a new Forum member" when actually it's someone who's come because they've applied for a grant for their association ... I don't know how we resolve that' (MH).

Being a Black woman herself she said she could see why people don't come to the Forum meetings. I know I would feel 'why am I going for?' said Margaret, 'what am I going to get out of it? I'm going to be the only one there. And will they listen to me? And all of those reasons you know that people won't come out'. Moreover, Margaret added, 'during the winter months Forum starts at seven and finishes at nine. It gets darker at 5.30. If you are on a large estate and have fears about being racially attacked, you are not going to leave your house, walk through the estate to go to a meeting'. She said there are all those things she can identify with as to why perhaps there isn't the representation. She did not know that if they get the information about what comes out of Forum the attendance improves. 'Perhaps if they could see what the Forum discusses, they may feel it has something for *them* and ... something of importance to them will be discussed, and of relevance to them' (MH).

Participation in the form of consultation and its shortcomings

There lies an ambiguity around the concept of consultation, which need clarification and is concerned with the relationship between the decentralised decision-making and central decision-making. As one begins to look at the decision-making process in housing, it becomes more and more clear that not only the question of whether tenants participate in this process is important but also and even more crucial question is how much power those participants have attached to their role in this process. This implies the centrality of power in the decision-making processes of housing. Being committed to decentralisation does not automatically lead to redistribution of power and getting the right sort of balance of power between the central and decentralised bodies as well as those involved in decision-making.

The Tenant Advise and Participation Section (TAPS) in Islington believe that they still, to some extent, are finding their way in terms of this relationship. According to the Principal Officer at the TAPS, a white man in his 30s whom I will call Fred Baker, the Council needs to have clearly established borough wide policies and standards for services to be delivered to. He thinks the difficult thing is finding the right sort of balance for all those involved in decision-making (FB). It seems no one is clear about where the scope is for decisions to be made at the local level.

He also argues that one of the factors causing the problem in the decentralised decision-making is the fact that local authorities are subjected to the decisions of the central government. There are major decisions and policies imposed on the local authorities by the central government. These decisions and policies are not designed for implementing them in a decentralised structure and very often they are not easy to be implemented in a decentralised structure. 'They are often designed for what a kind of like a command structure. They are not for a local authority with local decision-making that is trying to involve local people. So that makes it difficult' (FB).

Furthermore, Fred Baker noted, the Councils have to work with a range of agencies set up to monitor and regulate local authorities, which are basically central government agencies. Their main and only concern is the efficiency and effectiveness of the services local authorities provide and the way they manage their financial affairs. He put it as:

'You still have to be able to show your (decentralised - TU) structures will deliver those things without compromising any of those things. That is why ... it is a problem for us if we start getting inconsistencies between different neighbourhoods. It is something we have to account for and which we have to be able to explain' (FB).

Fred Baker believes that one way of achieving the balance is to involve the local neighbourhood officers in the central decision-making structures:

'Officers from the neighbourhood offices are involved in the central decision-making anyway ... Just to give an example the Director's senior management team in this department is ... the two or three chief officers from the centre plus all of the neighbourhood managers. That is an attempt to ensure that the neighbourhoods are represented right at the heart of the decision-making process within the department' (FB).

According to some councillors of the opposition party in Islington, on the other hand, original concepts of decentralisation have not gone beyond Social Services. They claim that there has not been enough tenant involvement, which they believe is a failure. The relation between the IBS and Neighbourhood Services is seen as a key factor for this failure. Indeed housing repairs is an area that has been left out in the process of decentralisation. Tenants call on the Council that if the Council is serious in

decentralisation they should split repairs into twelve neighbourhood areas. What is more the nature of the relation between the Council and the Islington Building Services is seen as sceptical. Tenants representatives are not happy with this relationship and voice their concern at the relevant forums such as the Tenants Liaison Forum meetings.

One of the examples of the failure of the Islington Council in involving tenants is around the issue of rent increase of the council properties within the borough in 1996. The Council knew it was coming up. It had to be discussed at neighbourhood level such as at Tenants Associations, and Housing Panels (HP). Unfortunately however the Council was not able to get any information to the majority of the Housing Panels. Neighbourhood Housing Panel representatives attended the *Special Central Housing Panel* meeting. Seven neighbourhood representatives out of nine attending the meeting said that they did not get the information on time and that they had no time to call a meeting to discuss the issue in their neighbourhoods. For this reason they asked for the meeting not to go ahead since they were not mandated by their members and would not be able to express any opinion and vote. Council admitted that the council officers failed to inform tenants on time yet refused to postpone the meeting. Tenant representatives stressed that this was 'most unfair and undemocratic'. They insisted that they were there to speak on behalf of the neighbourhood and that they had no information what views they had to put forward and that it was not possible to take any responsibility or part in the debate.

Being unable to vote, three quarters of the tenant representatives decided to walk out. Some co-opted members also left in protest. Yet the Council continued the meeting by discussing the issue with those stayed behind who were the Chair of the Panel and a group of council officers. The Neighbourhood representatives were furious since the whole idea behind setting up a *Central Housing Panel* was to enable local people have their say on housing issues and yet the majority of them were explicitly excluded from the process as a result of the failure of council officers. Despite all this the Council was adamant to go ahead with a few members and a group of Council's chief officers in deciding the rent levels for this year in a meeting that was claimed to be not a full quorum. Proposed rent increase was 2.15 per cent for an average dwelling. The issue however was not so much rent level although it was important. Neighbourhood

representatives felt that this was yet another example of the fact that the whole idea of consultation was a sham and that tenants views did not matter in the least.

One member present at the meeting and arguing on behalf of the tenant representatives said that he was very disappointed and that he thought that the Housing Panels would improve consultation. He insisted that if they let officers get away with it this year, tenants would say why should they get involved in the Housing Panels. He argued that consultation was not just to say 'yes' or 'no', but 'why' too.

When the Tenants Liaison Forum met in February '96 at the Town Hall, Tenants Association representatives pointed out that they had been given the right of consultation but not the report. They highlighted that tenants had the right to know how their money is being spent and rent is being raised. The Council, they argued, had to give tenants a rent *rebate* not a rent *rise* for so many of the tenants were taking legal action against the Council for the repairs not carried out by the Islington Building Services. The Council was introducing the rent rise because of a £5 million overspend. However, tenants pointed out that it seemed more likely that the Council was overcharged (rather than overspent) by the Islington Building Services for repairs that have not been completed but have been paid for by the Council. Therefore, tenants insisted, they also had the right to know the inaccuracies of the Council. The only remaining option for tenants to make their voice heard was to send a delegation to the full Council meeting. To do that, they had to put it in writing and take it to the *Policy and Resources Committee* meeting. It is up to this Committee whether their request is upheld or dismissed.

The Policy and Resources Committee did accept the request of the tenants to send a delegation to the full Council meeting. Speaking on the issue of rents at the Policy and Resources Committee meeting a week later, the leader of the opposition Councillor Steve Hitchins claimed that the whole process of consultation has been a failure; 'Someone, somewhere failed the Housing Panels', said Councillor Hitchins.

In my opinion, one of the key factors in the failure of tenants influencing the decisions is the ambiguity of the concepts of so-called 'consultation' and 'tenant participation'. At the *Special Central Housing Panel* meeting, for instance, the chair of the Tenants

Liaison Forum pointed out that the Central Panel had to consult the tenants in this borough on rent increase otherwise default notices could be served on the Council. The Principal Tenant Participation Officer Fred Baker, however, said that it was not true. The Council did not have to consult the tenants. Even those who are actively involved in the housing decision-making process at central level and organisations such as the Federation of Islington Tenants Associations were not clear what the Council's responsibility was in terms of 'consulting' the tenants. According to Fred Baker, in legal terms the Council did not have to consult but *inform* their tenants - within 28 days.

Indeed tenant participation can mean quite a number of different things. As the Manager of the Elthorne First Tenant Management Co-op, whom I will call Kevin Leonard, put it:

'... It means so many different things. It could mean just informing tenants what you are going to do. It could mean informing tenants what you are going to do and asking them what they think but not changing your mind. It could be informing them about what you are going to do, asking them what they think and taking on board what they think in a minor way, some minor changes. It could be informing them what you are going to do, asking them what they think before decisions are made, and full or more fully integrating tenants' concerns. Or it could be giving them the power to run their own system like co-ops. So tenant participation has a lot of different connotations. Co-ops are actually given legal power, status and what is important control of a budget. It is they can then decide how they spend' (KL).

Thus there is no clear definition of notions such as 'consulting tenants', 'involving tenants'. On the contrary, there exist a lot of ambiguity around these notions. Tenants participate in decision-making structure, however, believing that they will be able to influence the decisions taken. Yet they are sometimes deprived of the vital information to form a view such as a report, or not given sufficient time to discuss at the appropriate body, such as the Tenants Association, and Housing Panel.

'Empowerment' of tenants

Decentralisation and democracy

Islington corporately say that they are an equal-opportunities-borough. They advocate fair and equal access to Council services for all. People from a disadvantaged group, for

instance, people with hearing or sight impairment, can come in and there are the facilities for them to access to the services. There is the translation unit within the Council for people if English is not their first language, whose aim is to ensure that those groups access all the services. Yet these provisions do not necessarily guarantee the equal access to the disadvantaged groups. For instance the translation unit is situated at the Town Hall whereas interpreters often are needed at the local neighbourhood offices. A report submitted to the Neighbourhood Services Committee in March '96 pointed out that 'many potential users are not able to gain access to the appropriate services due to language problem or due to a lack of detailed information' (Makanji and Dolphin 1996).

Moreover, providing access to the services does not automatically lead to access to decision-making by the same groups. These disadvantaged groups are absent in the decision-making platforms. This is because decentralisation and democratisation of service provision are two different things. Unless the access to the decision-making is provided and achieved, Black and ethnic minority people will continue to interpret the existing situation as 'window dressing'. Pratibha Hope, for example, argued that it seems that race equality matters are still not integral to the thinking of people who are in decision-making positions. 'There shouldn't still be a fight, not after all these years' said the officer, 'it should be accepted and things about equality shouldn't still be thought of as something separate. It should be integral to all of our thinking and the way we work. You shouldn't have to think about it twice. But *still* we have to think about equality issues twice!'(PH).

One of the aims of decentralisation and involvement of local people in decisions is to 'empower' those involved in these processes, since people gain empowerment as they are incorporated into decision-making process. Greater collective control over resources and increasing input into the decision-making process through the local platforms (e.g. the Forum) is expected to help empowerment of the local people. Yet the notion of 'empowerment' is also problematic. Bearing in mind the fact that the majority of the Elthorne Forum members are white and that ethnic minorities are absent in these meetings, there exists the potential problem that empowerment of the Forum members - who are predominantly white - is likely to operate to the detriment of the minority groups.

As discussed earlier, at the Elthorne Park Area Forum there are Black women as Council employees who are not represented in most of the platforms, and residents attending the Forum meetings are predominantly white, elderly people who have no idea about equal opportunities and indeed are resentful to. Subsequently there exists a paradoxical situation that in some cases it is through the central decisions that more equality can be achieved. One Neighbourhood Manager argued that: ‘And in some cases it’s not a bad thing ... Because if you were to be truly democratic and say “Okay, well you decide locally, whatever it is you decide locally that will become policy, we will implement it”; we’d be in a terrible state’ (GE).

To conclude, decision-making structure is less formal at local neighbourhood level both in Islington and Lewisham. It becomes more formal as one moves up towards the central bodies. Gender and ethnic composition also changes considerably as shown in the breakdown of the membership of the central committees and sub-committees in Appendix 2. The number of women participants is proportionately more than men at the neighbourhood level. In other words women’s participation increases as the meetings become more local and less formal. At the *Council*, that is the highest and most formal level, women’s and Black and ethnic minorities’ participation drop substantially, for the majority of the elected members of the both Councils are white male. Black and ethnic minority people in general, and women in particular are absent in decision-making structure of housing in Islington. Lewisham fare better than Islington regarding the number of Black and ethnic minority councillors both men and women.

Although white women do participate often more than men at local neighbourhood level as well as medium level of centralised committees, there seems to be lack of power attached to their role. In other words it is mostly white women who participate as tenant representatives yet men participating as chief council officers and councillors in these processes have more political and financial power in policy formation and decision-making (I will take up these issues in Chapter 13).

Although as a result of decentralisation, housing services became more responsive and officers became more accountable to the tenants, there still remain problems regarding the participatory decision-making processes. It has been generally admitted by both

officers and tenants that Neighbourhood Forums/Committees are not representative of their constituencies which has implications in terms of democracy and equality which I will discuss in Part III.

¹ *Islington's Housing Investment Programme: Strategy Statement 1994/95*, Neighbourhood Services Department, 1993.

² Tenants have no national organisation to voice their concerns. In Islington, Tenants Associations (TA) are organised under the organisation called the Federation of Islington Tenants Associations (FITA) and in Lewisham there is the organisation called the Federation of Lewisham Tenants and Residents Association (FELTRA). Both the FITA and FELTRA take part in the London Tenants Federation Forum which meets once a quarter and is organised by the London Housing Unit. They are also part of the National Tenants and Residents Federation, which again is a voluntary body with no funding.

Chapter 6: Decision-making on a council-managed estate:

Miranda Estate

Introduction

Miranda Estate, situated in the north part of the Islington Borough within close proximity to Archway underground, railway stations and two neighbourhood offices with 147 properties, was built nearly two decades ago and managed by the Islington Council. The following chapter illustrates and discusses the issues of decision-making process under the council management.

The chapter illustrates the social organisation of space in terms of the articulation of social relations and describe their spatial form. This way it depicts the social reality of living in Miranda Estate for people with differences in their positioning.

Beginning by examining day-to-day experiences of tenants the chapter looks into the power relations among the tenants with differences in their identities, construction of 'difference' and the exclusion of 'the Other'. I examine specific issues such as the safety on the estate, racism on the estate in order to illuminate the processes of inclusion/ exclusion. The chapter then looks at the experiences of tenants with regards to notion of 'the community', and the social divisions among tenants. I then briefly consider the design implications of differences among tenants with regards to their gendered ethnic and cultural identities.

The chapter then examines the specific issues of participation in decision-making in order to see how particular moments of decision-making are (which are interwoven into larger picture in the last chapter) in which I introduce the role of the Council.

I explore the power relations between the tenants as individuals and the council by looking into the day-to-day experiences of tenants with regards to the maintenance and repairs and the council's attitude to them and how the individual tenants perceive this relationship.

I then examine the participation of individuals with differences in their identities in the decision-making processes of the estate. It includes the attendance of tenants in the

Tenants Association (TA) meetings, women's participation in the Tenants Association, and how individual tenants view their role in decision-making process with regards to the management process of their housing.

The chapter then looks into the relationship between the Council and the tenants as a group, e.g. Tenants Association. I examine the power relations between the tenants as a group by exploring the way individual tenants view their role in decision-making process with regards to the management process of their housing. I then briefly examine participation in the form of consultation process and its shortcomings.

About the Estate

Miranda Estate was built in 1978 and is situated less than a quarter of a mile away from Elthorne Estate towards Archway (see Appendix 3). As the neighbourhood boundary has been extended westwards to Highgate Hill, Miranda Estate as well as the Archway Road and roundabout have all become part of the Elthorne Neighbourhood. Small Archway Park separates Miranda Estate from the busy Archway roundabout and Archway Road (A1) which is one of the main entrances to and escape routes from London, connecting central London to M1 to 'the North' (M1 motorway). As many as 35,000 vehicles a day including coaches and lorries pass through Archway Road on the Red Route where there are congestions and tailbacks causing a high level of exhaust fumes which is well above the European guidelines for air pollution.¹ According to a resident who was born in Archway, Red Route has divided the community and the local shops have died down as a result. Various wings of the nearby Whittington Hospital are situated along the Hampstead Hill Road and the Archway Road facing the Estate. Beyond the Whittington Hospital, more affluent segments of the population live.

Around Archway station, which is five minutes away from the Estate, there are two office towers, a post office and a medium size Co-operative supermarket. This is a small commercial centre for everyday commodities. For their weekly shopping in a larger supermarket, Archway residents take a 10-15 minutes bus ride to either Holloway Road (for Safeways) in Islington or to Camden Town (Sainsbury's). An Irish and a Cyprus bank in the vicinity tell a lot about the ethnic composition of the area. A grocery run by a Kurdish family sell variety of vegetables with Mediterranean flavour. There are showrooms of fitted kitchen, furniture and domestic appliances as well as a shop selling building tools and materials in the high road. There is also a snooker centre, a ladycab

office, pubs, Greek, Turkish and Kurdish takeaway kebab shops and other fast food restaurants providing Indian, Chinese and French cuisine. Thus, the area has a cosmopolitan character rendering diversity in its social and cultural geography and invoking a global sense of space.

A subway complex lies underneath the Archway roundabout with a 75-meter long branch connecting Archway station to the Archway Park that is adjacent to the Estate. The colourful murals on the walls of the subway are covered in graffiti. One can enter the Estate either through Pauntley Road or through the Archway Park on the West and South sides of the Estate. Other entry points are from the St John's Way (which connects Archway to Hornsey) and from Miranda Road into the Henfield Close. Major roads and non-residential buildings such as the Archway Methodist Church and the Whittington Hospital surround the Estate on the west and south side. On the East, a wall and backyards of the terraced houses alongside Miranda Road separates the Estate from two-storey terraced houses. Thus, the Estate renders a degree of segregation from its surrounding area. Alongside the St. John's Way, Miranda Estate is facing two blocks of three-storey public housing estates beyond which Elthorne Estate starts.

Although the Archway Park is adjacent to the gardens of the Estate properties it is not officially part of the Estate subsequently it is not as well lit as the Estate itself thus can be quite dark at night. Both teenagers and younger children can play in the playground, which has seesaws, slides, swings and a basketball pitch. There is a youth group and a toddlers group on the Estate as well as a pensioners' lunch club providing meals, which meets three days a week. There is also a Tenants Association of the Miranda Estate residents. They all use the community centre of the Estate, which is situated under the block at Henfield Close. Dwellings on this block are raised one storey from the ground level where rooms for services including refuse collection, and central heating are situated. Elthorne South Neighbourhood Office is only ten minutes from the Estate. So is the St. John's Day Centre where the Neighbourhood Forum meets and which is alongside the St John's Way. Because of their relatively small size, design and materials they all blend well with the surrounding terraced housing.

Miranda Estate comprise of 147 dark red brick dwellings in total. There are 105 properties on Henfield Close and 42 dwellings on Pauntley Street. Properties on Henfield Close are one and three-bedroom units only. There are also one and three-

bedroom units on the block on Pauntley Street and in addition to this there are eight houses which are four-bedroom properties. There are 45 one-bedroom units on Henfield Close and the rest are three-bedroom. And on Pauntley Street there are eight one-bedroom units and the rest are three-bedroom units and eight houses.

There is a low rise - two floors only - block on Henfield Close, which consists of one-bedroom flats and has been designated now as senior citizens only (Appendix 3). The Estate Manager, who is a white woman in her late 30s and whom I will call Betty Foster, suggested that 'It is quite popular within the area for people that want to continue to living independently but prefer other senior citizens around them rather than teenagers' (BF).

A long balcony runs on the first and third floors of the block on Henfield Close running parallel to the Henfield Close. Multi-colour metal security doors were installed in order to prevent children skating on these balconies. There is an apparent contrast in the communal areas of Henfield Close that is covered with graffiti and Pauntley Street, which seemed rather well maintained (Appendix 3).

Ethnic composition

As can be seen from the Table 10, which shows the ethnic breakdown of Miranda Estate, the majority of the tenants (51 per cent) are white British, 16 per cent are Irish and another 3 per cent are white European. Tenants from Greece and Cyprus comprise 6 per cent of the residents and those from Turkey and Cyprus comprise 3 per cent. Black tenants comprise 15 per cent (5 per cent of it are from Africa and 10 per cent from West Indies). The Estate Manager pointed out that at the time that the survey was carried out there were none Asian residents (Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi) on the Estate 'but that has since changed most definitely' (BF). The Table, however, does not provide the breakdown of mixed race families and their children, which I come across while visiting the estate and carrying out the interviews (Appendix 3).

Table 11 provides the ethnic breakdown of the people living in the Elthorne neighbourhood area. It is from the Elthorne Neighbourhood Profile prepared by the Islington Council on the basis of 1991 census in which the figure for the category of white was adjusted to include Irish, Cypriot, Turkish and Greek residents. As can be seen from the Table 10, the percentage of the white people living on the Estate is 79 per

cent and is higher than the percentage for the Elthorne neighbourhood which is 77 per cent but lower than the Islington average which is 81.1 per cent. However the percentage of Black African residents living on Miranda Estate is 5 per cent and is higher than both the Elthorne Neighbourhood, which is 4.7 per cent and Islington which is 3.6 per cent. The percentage of Black Caribbean residents living on the estate is 10 per cent which is higher than both the Elthorne average (8 per cent) and Islington average 5.1 per cent. Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi residents comprise 3.1 per cent of the population in Elthorne area and 3.5 per cent of the Islington average whereas there was none living on Miranda Estate at the time of the survey.

White

England Wales Scotland	51%	
Eire Northern Ireland	14%. 2%.	
Europe	3%.	
Greece/Cyprus Turkey/Cyprus	6% 3%	79%

Black

Africa West India	5% 10%	15%
Asian India/Pakistan and Bangladesh	0%	

Table 10 Ethnic breakdown (1992) of Miranda Estate
Source: report on Crime Survey of Miranda Estate by Middlesex University commissioned by Islington Council (The Estate Manager).

	White	Black Caribbean	Black African	Black other	Indian	Pakistani	Bangladeshi	Chinese	Other Asian	Other	TOTAL
Elthorne	77.0	8.0	4.7	2.8	1.8	0.3	1.0	0.8	1.2	2.3	15149
Islington	81.1	5.1	3.6	1.9	1.5	0.4	1.6	1.3	1.4	2.1	164668
Inner London	74.4	7.1	4.4	2.0	3.0	1.2	2.8	1.1	1.8	2.3	2504451
Outer London	83.1	2.7	1.3	0.7	6.5	1.4	0.4	0.7	1.6	1.5	3471363
Greater London	79.8	4.4	2.4	1.2	5.2	1.3	1.3	0.8	1.7	1.8	6679699

Table 11 Ethnic breakdown of the people living in Elthorne Neighbourhood Area
Source: 1991 Census, Small Area Statistics Table 6, cited in Profile of Elthorne Neighbourhood by Islington Council

Power relations among tenants

Constructions of 'difference' and exclusions of 'the Other'

There exist complex relations of power among the tenants with differences in their identities resulting in processes of inclusion/exclusion in the social space that is reflected in the spatial. Examining the issues of safety, harassment and racism on the estate can shed light on to these processes, and the ways in which 'difference' is constructed.

Safety on the Estate

In 1992 the Council commissioned Middlesex University to do a complete survey of Miranda Estate for crime. Both the survey and the lived experience of the residents described to me during interviews highlight the issue of safety on the Estate in terms of facilities as well as subjective experience of people such as women, ethnic minorities and the elderly. Betty Foster affirmed that 'in the past six years Miranda Estate improved no end' bearing in mind the immensity of trouble they were experiencing. The major problems they experienced at the time were of 'a more evident drug problem', and 'a couple of stabbings around 1990'. Despite the improved situation drug problems still persist on the Estate: 'I'm not saying that there isn't one [drug problem] at all over there now. Because I know that there is. But it's certainly not as blatant as it was then' (BF). The Estate Manager did not make it clear however whether the problem is now contained or went underground or combination of both.

Both tenants and officers of the Estate that I have interviewed described that there exists the problem of what is usually termed as anti-social behaviour by the local youths. Betty Foster described it as youths between the ages of 15 and 20 congregating in the stairwells and by their sheer presence and volume intimidating others. This reveals the contested nature of public spaces. In my opinion, these young people through their spontaneous encounters and clustering in these communal spaces enter into social relations through which they form as well as confirm certain individual and group identities. It also involves the ways in which the public space is territorialised, contested and occupied revealing the multi-dimensional nature of power and powerlessness and highlighting the diversity of ways in which the disadvantage maybe experienced. The group identities produced and re-produced in these public spaces make them exclusive to others be it other youth, women, ethnic minorities and the elderly often by inducing fear and a sense of insecurity. 'We have problems with graffiti', noted the Estate

Manager, 'that is a huge problem' (BF). Many people particularly women find graffiti threatening in its own right (Worpole and Greenhalgh 1996). What is more, graffiti that contain racist, sexist and homophobic messages usually have a particular affect on those who may be subject to discrimination and harassment on these grounds. When vulnerability coupled with the experience of persistent harassment, signs like graffiti becomes very effective in re-producing the psychological effects on those people experiencing racial and sexual harassment in their lives.

Members of the Gonzales family, Isabel and her 14 years old daughter Clara, on the other hand, feel safe in Pauntley Street but not in Henfield. I asked Clara what was going on there in Henfield Close to make her feel not so secure. She told me that it was the anti-social behaviour of the young kids. Isabel was blaming the parents of these children for not taking care of them. She pointed out that the design of the Estate also contributed to her fears in terms of safety because of the little alleys. Indeed, as pointed out by Matrix (1984) and discussed in Chapter 1, design of the buildings can contribute greatly to the inhabitants' feelings of safety. In fact there was a noticeable difference between Pauntley Street and Henfield Close in terms of cleanliness of the communal areas and graffiti on the walls all of which contributed to the feeling of safety.

According to Betty Foster, however, at present the problems experienced on Miranda Estate are not more than anywhere else. She was quite optimistic as she said: 'eventually those youths do grow up and hopefully move off and go away and the process starts again' (BF). She also pointed out that the Estate now has a community centre where there is a youth group and toddlers group and that 'some people believe that it is made quite good use of' (BF). Having completed interviews of the Miranda Estate residents in 1996, I visited the Estate in October 1997 again and spoke to a group of white and mixed race teenagers (five boys and a girl) playing together. They all responded to my questions with enthusiasm and told me that they enjoy the activities of the youth club which meets every Friday where they play snooker, watch films and have had day outings over the summer to go to a park, dungeons and for swimming. During our conversation only one of them acted what might be called an anti-social behaviour yet others did not encourage him.

Racism on the Estate

Michalis, a Greek Cypriot man in his 50s who is living with his wife and two teenage children on the Estate, told me that as an ethnic minority man, he is quite happy and has had no problem living on the Estate so far. He did not experience any racial harassment, nor did he hear about anybody else. As far as he is concerned 'it's better ... if people live mix'. He described what he meant by 'mix' as follows: 'Instead of sort of having only one nationality, or just one family in a big estate which, for example, is they are Indian, or they are Greeks or they are Turkish whatever you know. It's better ... it's mixed, ten, fifteen families of each'. He thinks Miranda is a well-mixed Estate and he is happy about it. 'Yes, we have Iranians, we have Turkish, we have Greeks, we have Filipinos, we have ... Irish, English. It is well mixed'. Michalis's conceptualisation of ethnically mixed group of tenants was gendered and sexualised in the sense that they were heterosexual families with homogeneous and distinct ethnic backgrounds, e.g. not mixed race.

Another respondent, a white English woman in her late 30s whom I will call Hannah, is living with her three children. Hannah's former partner was an African Caribbean descent man thus her children are mixed race (Black). As a result, her neighbours on the Estate subject Hannah to racial harassment. However the person who harasses her is a Black woman therefore the harassment she experiences is not recognised as such by the Council. She described her experience as: 'I'm a white honky and I should go back to where I come from ... My mixed race kids, I shouldn't have mixed race kids. Stupidness!' Hannah gave her reason for not being able to do anything about this as follows:

'Because she's Black and ... Islington Council is trying to get all racism out. It's her words against mine ... She says that it's me racist against her. And she gets believed because Islington Council believe that, the Black people, because they try to get the racism out of here you know' (Hannah).

Hannah feels trapped subsequently, because racism is conceptualised by the local authority in quite simplistic and dichotomous terms (e.g. Whites versus Blacks), which takes the phenomena out of its context that involves power relations of inclusion and exclusion.

Isabel, a first generation migrant from Spain, came to this country with her husband 30 years ago. She is in her late 40s now and has three children one of whom is married. She is also happy about the racial mix of the Estate. She put it as: 'we have Indians they are such a nice people. We have Blacks we have the Ethiopian lady, Turkish, Irish and me. We are Spanish and get on so well, very nice'. I asked if they had ever had any problem, she replied: 'Never, whatsoever, never'.

When I asked the Estate Manager if there was any racial incidents that she was aware of, she said: 'As far as I'm aware there are a couple'. But as she began describing the situation, she said: 'I wouldn't necessarily say that it was always racially motivated. I think some of the people involved are just basically thugs' (BF). She explained that they, together with the police and the Race Equality Unit, tried to bring enough people together to form a court case. Unfortunately, she stressed, the Council cannot do anything unless they have witnesses from the Estate. She put it as follows:

'But it fell on their fears because once again people didn't want to get involved. I can understand why people don't want to get involved but it does tie our hands as well because we didn't have sufficient evidence. We are not in a position to take these people to court. Ideally, we should take their tenancies away, most certainly! But we can't do it without the support of the people who are being affected by it' (BF).

Indeed, existing regulations such as the eviction rules prevent them taking effective action in the face of overt racial attacks even though the officers are quite prepared and willing to take action against the perpetrators. The Council officers were unable to do anything against the perpetrators since they had no one coming forward to press charges, nor give evidence for fear prevented them from doing so. Betty Foster described it as follows:

'We had the police and we tried to get up and running but at the end of the day they just wouldn't come forward. And I can understand, they're frightened. But until legislation is such that it's easier for local authorities to take these people to task without half of the estate going as witnesses our hands are tied because people are genuinely frightened' (BF).



So, there is harassment going on, I suggested, yet the legislation is not allowing the Council to take any action. Betty Foster suggested that this is not limited to any estate and is happening throughout the borough:

‘... I wouldn’t say that that was specifically on just Miranda Estate. I think that goes through the borough that I think people are harassed! And I think that they are too frightened to come forward. And then our hands are tied because we can’t do anything without at least a minimum of three independent households’ (BF).

As above quotation shows, the Estate Manager, although a Council employee, distanced herself from those existing policies that require unrealistic number of witnesses to take perpetrators to court even though they may be well known to everybody. She clearly wanted the Council to take action yet was unable to and sympathised with those that fear prevented from coming forward.

None of my respondents appeared to be supportive of the perpetrators, on the contrary they all expressed sympathy with the racially harassed households or those experience structural racism in the wider society. That is to say even the white woman who was subjected to racist verbal abuse herself did not use any similar language against those Black neighbours who were harassing her for having mixed race children.

Social divisions among tenants

Brenda, an officer of the Tenants Association who is a white woman in her late 30s, believes that there are no major divisions among the tenants. The existing problems, she suggested, are usually to do with kids. She described it as: ‘you never hear arguments on this Estate. You might now and then, the bigger kids might do something that is out of order and you get the police called, that’s an actual fact in every estate’. She was quite sympathetic towards the young people on the Estate. ‘Kids nowadays are bored’, said Brenda. ‘They’ve got nothing to do. They don’t want to do anything. They don’t really want to go to work. All they want to do is sponge of the Estate, smack a bit of grass or whatever. They’re just bored. But there’s no trouble on this Estate whatsoever. It’s very, very placid at the moment’. Brenda’s identity as a mother of teenage children seemed to play an over-deterministic role in her construction of the reality on the Estate. She expressed a strong sense of sympathy towards kids: ‘we all know that we protect each other’s kids. If Max got into trouble upstairs and Stacey wasn’t in I’d protect Max

against anyone bigger than him'. She believed that there exists a good relationship between the tenants, and the reason for this lied in the fact that 'we've also grown up together'. She then added: 'I'm happy with the environment that I live in' (Brenda).

However during the interviews of some other residents it became clear that there exist major divisions among the resident of Miranda Estate. For example, Hannah's location on the social matrix led to her conceptualisation of other boundaries between tenants in terms of race and sexuality.

Hannah was not comfortable with the homophobia of some tenants. She explained how she felt at the Tenants Association meetings as follows:

'Like they were saying that woman living at number (...), they were calling her a "dyke"! ... And I didn't realise what she was saying! That's not that woman's business if she is a gay or whatever! That's not their business you see! ... And it was only afterwards I came home when I was thinking, why did she keep calling Susie "dyke"? ... And it was only afterwards that I was thinking about that I realised. And there shouldn't be any of that! There shouldn't be any of that at all!' (Hannah).

Brenda as a white woman and officer of the Tenants Association holds more power within the Association than many other members that makes her discriminatory comments more effective. She is over-determined by her identity as a mother in that mothering her children played a significant role in her identity construction around which she span her complex web of social relations. She seemed to have developed a strong sense of desire to protect the rights of offspring as well as solidarity with other mothers. She assumed homogeneity of the tenants on the Estate viewing them through the optics of a nuclear family. She constructed all women as mothers and wives and all men fathers and husbands while reducing all possible problems to conflicts between the children. She allowed no space in her construction to the possibility of childless couples, single households or gay people. She constructed 'the Other' on the basis of sexuality which appears to be the result of her perception of lesbianism as the most serious threat to her over-determining maternal identity. Brenda's discriminatory remarks highlight the way in which the differences of interests between women challenge the assumption that women share oppression (Chapter 1). It also demonstrates the multi-dimensional nature of power and powerlessness underlying the multiplicity of

ways in which the disadvantaged experience oppression, which has implications for the notion of 'empowerment'. The notion of 'tenants taking charge' assumes as if it is always possible for some people to gain more power and take more control of their housing without it sometimes having negative consequences on the lives of other powerless people (e.g. those perceived as different and constructed as 'the Other'). Tenants are not an undifferentiated homogeneous grouping with common goals and interests.

The boundary drawn between 'us' and 'them' among the residents of the Miranda Estate made itself felt particularly during the interview of Gonzalez family. Various divisions constructed were revealed throughout the interviews of Isabel, her son and daughter as they described their day-to-day experiences of the Estate. Some of these divisions were related to class such as: employed/DSS, paid/unemployed, while others were related to citizenship status such as: old residents/new comers (to the country). Some divisions concerned the relationship of the tenants to the Estate, e.g. old residents/late comers (to the Estate), and clean residents/unclean residents. Some divisions were constructed on the basis of their spatial/temporal characteristics such as: safe/unsafe and Pauntley Street/Henfield Close.

Isabel who described herself as a person keen on cleanliness was blaming those residents who are indifferent to the place they live in, calling them 'people on social security'. She put it as: '... those people ... who are on social security, they don't care (lowers her voice down). They don't care about the place ... I'd like to live in a nice environment so is my children'. She went on describing how she and her family care about the communal areas yet 'others' use these areas in such an irresponsible manner.

'We used to clean the stairs, he used to paint the doors, you're not supposed to but he did once. *The other people don't care*. I brush the balcony ... I do it myself. I look after the drains. I make sure that they are nice and clean ... *The other side* they just go in and out ... They don't care ... [we use] the same stairs, the same lift. I wish sometimes we have some other stairs ... Because we look after our own stairs' (Isabel)(my emphasis).

Isabel seemed happy with their part of the Estate namely Pauntley Street: 'It's only the stairs apart from that everything is nice up here, it's quiet, here there are nice people... nice place to live, very nice'. It was a certain group of tenants she was complaining

rather than the Council. She even had no complaints about the heating, which appeared to be one of the major and persisting problems of the Estate on the whole. She said she did not have a particular problem with the Council in terms of heating, yet again she saw the problem lying elsewhere:

‘... But the only thing is that I pay every year all this money, council tax, all these bills and I can’t see *other* people, they don’t go in to work, they live better than me and take things for granted. That is the thing make[s] me really angry! Sometimes I work 14 hours for what, to pay for those lazy buggers? ... And I can see *everyone* live better than me, *they* can go out, *they* can get up when they want to. So that is when I get angry...’
(Isabel)(my emphasis).

Isabel was stigmatising those people on social security despite the fact that her own son and daughter-in-law were also unemployed and on benefit. Her perception of the situation differed considerably when she began talking about her family. Her children are out of work, have no place to live, and she saw no future for them. Isabel’s family lives in a three-bedroom maisonette, which is already overcrowded. ‘I don’t have no privacy anymore’, said Isabel, ‘if I want to be myself, I must go to bed and sleep’. She still feels responsible for their well being with a strong sense of kinship in her parental role while at the same time feeling trapped in her own home: ‘I can’t tell them to go away. They come here, they have no money for food ... I buy food for everybody ... They come in with their dirty laundry, I have a machine ... what can I do? ... If they can’t find a room I must keep them here, because I don’t want to let them go out and sleep in the street, they are my children!’ (Isabel)

What is more Isabel is resentful for the fact that after all those years she and her husband have contributed they still cannot provide a decent future for their children and live in an overcrowded flat while she claims the available limited resources are given away to those who have never contributed to this society:

‘I worked here for nearly 30 years and so has my husband. We’ve never been on social security. We always worked. We always contributed. Now ... some other people they come in from outside and they get beautiful houses and flats and everything. And we are here we work. They come in and they have a house straightaway! And they have the money and they have this and they have that, we don’t have anything!’(Isabel).

Isabel's situation demonstrated the intersectionality of ethnicity, gender and class in that it is impossible to discuss her gender role and responsibilities in relation to her identity as a mother without locating it in the context of power relations and particularly relations of class. Her intersecting identities (a worker who is a first generation migrant from Spain with a Spanish husband and a mother of three children who were born here, a mother-in-law, a grandmother to be, as well as a wife and daughter-in-law and carer of her mother-in-law) put her in a wide spectrum of fluid and changeable positions produced and re-produced through power relations. These positions raise a number of questions in relation to the notion of citizenship and rights and entitlements. Underlying Isabel's argument is the suggestion that only those who paid tax should be entitled to benefits excluding the disabled, long term unemployed, children and refugees which is quite oppressive and far from achieving social justice.

Feeling thankful to the local authority for providing low cost housing (see below) as well as trapped in her own home have led her to construct those migrants and refugees (who have recently arrived in the country and may receive welfare benefits) as 'the Other' claiming that they use the limited resources without contributing. Structural problems such as insufficient number of large size accommodation, high levels of unemployment for young people, erosion of social and welfare rights and cuts in public spending, women's role as carers of children and the elderly in addition to their full-time housework and paid employment, invisibility of the women's and migrant workers' labour, internalisation of the none recognition of these roles all go unnoticed, while divisions are constructed excluding those poorer and more vulnerable strata of the population.

As mentioned earlier, Henfield Close and Pauntley Street are also divided in terms of the degree that tenants feel safe. When I put to Isabel that it appeared as though Henfield Close and Pauntley Street were quite separated, she agreed: 'It looks separated because we have different points of view ... I don't know anybody down there' (Isabel).

Betty Foster also thought that there existed a division between the residents of Pauntley Street and Henfield Close. 'I don't think there is any doubt that there is a division between the two' (BF). In fact, she pointed out, 'many tenants in the past have wanted to have the access from Pauntley Street through Henfield Close to be closed off. At the end of the day it is an Estate'. However, she found it difficult to explain why this

division existed: 'I can't quite put my finger on the reasons why. The people on Pauntley Street ... seem to be of the view that they are better than the people in the Henfield Close' (BF). She also agreed that the residents look after the communal areas better in the Pauntley Street part of the Estate and as mentioned earlier, this separation was quite visible with regards to the cleanliness of the communal areas and graffiti on the walls.

Betty also pointed out that the lower rise part of the Henfield Close, which is now being allocated to senior citizens only, is different from the main block. 'The small block, where the chair of TA (who is a white woman) lives, doesn't seem to be affected in that way. It's the large block long and then Pauntley Street. And they do, definitely they all feel that they are a different estate almost' (BF).

Design implications of differences

Ethnic and gender differences among the tenants have implications in terms of the actual design of their dwellings. Nasrin, a 38 years old Bangladeshi woman, lives with her extended family in one of the three-bedroom flats. There are five adults in their household, which includes Nasrin, her husband, their 20 years old daughter, 22 years old son-in-law, and Nasrin's mother-in-law. She also has two sons - nine and twelve years old - and a five years old granddaughter. Thus there are three children and five adults living in this three-bedroom flat. For such families availability of houses with at least four bedrooms and access to garden is significant.

Iqbal, a Middle Eastern woman in her late 40s, living in a two-bedroom flat stressed that in her cultural background children tend to stay in their family home until they are well into adulthood and even after marriage. She lives with her husband and eight years old daughter and 15 and 25 years old sons.

Both Nasrin and Iqbal's family characteristics underscore the significance of providing adequate internal room sizes in order to ensure sufficient space that allow for both privacy and everyday family functioning for extended families. The above examples also highlight that design of the existing housing stock affects tenants differentially as a result of their differences in their social positioning and existing structural inequalities in the society.

Malak, a 37 years old Asian woman, described to me that she does not prefer open kitchen plans since she cannot use it when another member of her family is entertaining their guests in the living room. She feels she has to dress up properly and welcome the guests even if she only wants to make herself a cup of tea.

As argued by Matrix (1984) these open plans are useful when women need to keep an eye on their children while working in the kitchen. However, in extended families such as Nasrin's family there are other adults to take care of children. Indeed, taking care of small children while mother is busy is not a particular problem in some family structures such as extended families, because another adult (for example a grandmother) may be available to do this. Malak, on the other hand, does not have any small children to keep an eye on. Instead, she needs more privacy while using spaces like kitchen and dining room at home. She therefore has put up curtains in order to separate their living room from the dining area and kitchen. She told me that she would have preferred to have a sliding door with opaque glass instead. Indeed her example highlights the fact that there are differences in the preferences of the housing design as a result of ethnic, cultural, and gender diversity of households.

Participation in 'the community': Particular moments of decision-making

In the following discussion I examine the participation of individuals with differences in their identities in the decision-making processes of the estate.

I begin by looking into the power relations between tenants as individuals and the Council by exploring how in general the tenants view the Council and the Council's management, and in particular the issues of maintenance and repairs and the Council's attitude to them. I then examine the attendance of tenants in the Tenants' Association meetings, women's participation in the Tenants Association, and how individual tenants view their role in decision-making process with regards to the management process of their housing.

Power relations between the individual tenants and the Council

Miranda Estate's contact with the Council is through their Estate Manager who is based in Elthorne North Neighbourhood Office. All of my respondents were happy with their Estate Manager who comes and visits the Estate and attends the Tenants Association meetings. '... I give her her due she is a good estate officer. She is about the best we've

actually ever had’, said the chair of the Tenants Association whom I will call Elsie Owen.

Betty Foster told me that she visits the Estate twice a week ‘even if it’s just a walk through’. She explained that tenants would ring her and let her what was happening on the Estate. She does not attend the Neighbourhood Forum meetings. People like the Contracts Manager, the Housing Services Manager attend these meetings and pass on the information to her. Tenants invite her to their Tenants Association meetings, which she attends. Occasionally the tenants ask her to get involved in certain issues, she then begins acting as the link person between the Estate and the person they want to get in touch with.

My respondents have expressed differing opinions when I asked their views on the Council management. Some were quite happy in the way the Council managed their Estate while some others expressed preference for the way Tenant Management Co-operatives operate.

Elsie Owen, a white pensioner, for instance, thought the Co-op was a good idea and that ‘in Co-op management you have to prove that you can run the Co-op otherwise it’s taken away’. Whereas, in Council management, she claimed: ‘the Council can be made as much debt as can be’, which she thinks is ‘mismanagement’. She further emphasised that in the Tenant Management Co-op properties repairs done quickly and properly, with the Council however she feels ‘it’s worse’ (EO).

Yet some other tenants told me that they were quite satisfied with the way the Council managed their Estate. Michalis, for example, was critical of those tenants who expected too many things from the Council. He argued that ‘sometimes people ... expect the Council to do everything’ for them. ‘Some people’, he complained, ‘expect the Council to come and put even a single screw onto something for them’. He suggested that those people living in the Council properties needed to do some jobs themselves. He did not even mind the fact that the flat was in a terrible state when he moved in. ‘When I moved in this place you couldn’t walk in. It was smelly, it was black, it was terrible place, it had no [kitchen] units, no bathrooms, no toilets, ... the windows are you couldn’t see outside, terrible...’(Michalis). The Council did some building work for him including the bathroom and toilet he had to do the rest of decoration work including fitting kitchen

units. He didn't mind doing it because his family was going to live in it. As far as Michalis was concerned the Council had done its share in providing low cost housing for them and the rest was up to him. He put it as follows:

'I fixed it because I'm going to live in this place. My kids they like nice, clean place to come to, you know... The Council's done okay. They changed the bathroom, they changed the toilets that's it they've done nothing else. So I've done the rest myself, you know. I know it's expensive, it costs money but you just borrow from friends or relations or ... they help you and then you just do it. You can't wait, that's why you live in a cheap place' (Michalis).

I asked Michalis what happens to those people who were unable to do these things themselves due to poor health, disability or old age for instance, whether they get help from anybody like the caretaker. He responded as: 'No, they don't get any help. But I'm sure if they go to the right person in the Council, the Council will help them. I'm sure they'll do that you know. They have the department which helps them, which helps these kind of people'. Michalis then gave an example that his next door neighbour who has got problem with his heart is visited by a social worker from the social services department to look after him.

Michalis's conceptualisation of the relationship between the Council and tenants was not based on equal power relations in which tenants can play an important role in the design and management processes of housing (which will be discussed later in the chapter).

Underlying Michalis's conceptualisation was the implicit assumption that the Council was a more or less unified, homogeneous entity that held power over the residents. He conspicuously had confidence in various departments of the welfare state and was appreciative for their provision of these services. The boundary between the tenants and the Council shifted when he expressed his critical views about those tenants who he thought were expecting everything from the Council. He empathised on this occasion with the Council as he argued that in low cost housing tenants have to be prepared to do certain jobs themselves. Thus, he identified himself with the Council as opposed to those tenants. Michalis's paternal identity was a key factor in his motivation to take care of the flat for he said his kids 'like nice, clean place to come to'. He had a large network

of family and friends mostly first generation migrants from Cyprus like himself whose labour and financial support he could draw on with a presumption about the availability of such a support to everybody. Nor did he question what happens to those who do not qualify for a home support from the social services.

With regards to the repairs Michalis the Council was doing more than enough by providing low cost housing and was quite pleased also about the maintenance of external communal areas. Having described that two caretakers work very hard he stated that 'it's not their job to sort of paint gates and paint sort of fences, you know. Their job is to keep the place clean, to contact people, electricity, water, things like that, you know. They do all'.

Isabel, like Michalis, viewed the way the Council deal with the problems of the Estate quite positively: 'I think in a way they are okay', she said, 'they try their best. You are talking about dealing with a lot of people'. There are difficulties however for Isabel when it comes to dealing with the Council, because of the structural inequalities she, as an ethnic minority, experiences. The Council insists that everything has to be put in writing to be looked at. Isabel does not know how to write in English: 'I went to the Council [to complain about the neighbours]. The Council wants everything in writing. I don't know how to write in English'. Another respondent a forty year old woman and also a first generation migrant from Turkey (whom I will call Pervin) noted that she also has difficulties in writing letters to the Council. Indeed, rules such as this assume that individuals have equal skills and abilities dismissing their differences that may be the result of structural inequalities subsequently subjecting some to institutional racism. Both Isabel and Pervin were quite capable of writing letters in their own languages but not in English. It may also mean classism for those who cannot read or not good at or used to writing letters, or disablism for those people with disabilities. However, like Michalis, Isabel also noted that they have no problem at the neighbourhood office: 'when I go there I have no problem at all' (Isabel).

Having exercised their 'Right to Buy' Isabel's family have become leaseholders subsequently they have some control on the repairs done to their flat. Isabel told me that if the Council pay for a job they pay their direct labour organisation without coming around to make sure that the job is done properly. 'I won't pay anyone until I found out if the job they did is properly done and it is finished', says Isabel 'because, sometimes

they come in and say: “we did the job”, they never touch anything. They get paid maybe. And they will be called again and so on ... They (the Council) never check if the job is properly done’ (Isabel). Despite all this Isabel seemed quite happy with the Council in terms of efficiency and repairs in general.

Isabel is very keen on the cleanliness of her stairs which she grumbles about for they are not well maintained, but it is not the Council that she puts the onus on: ‘It’s not their (the Council -TU) fault. They give us something and we are supposed to look after’. Hence like Michalis, Isabel (both first generation migrants from Europe) grateful that the Council had given them affordable housing and argued that it was up to the individual tenants to maintain it rather than expect everything from the Council. Although it would be wrong to make generalisation from their cases it does raise questions about the extent in which their previous experiences with other states (e.g. Spain and Cyprus) have contributed to their favourable view of the local welfare state in this country.

However, not all the tenants I have interviewed empathised with the Council and were as happy as Michalis and Isabel were. Most of the individual tenants that I have interviewed complained about the Council’s attitude with regard to the major repairs on the Estate. The problem of repairs was the main issue dominating the discussion in the TA meetings that I have observed and will discuss later in the chapter.

Hannah, who is living with her three children, described the recent problem she had with her central heating. She had no heating for eight months last year nor was she given any rebate, which is supposed to be the usual practice. Hannah, feeling ‘very annoyed’ about all this, says she would like to be able to control her heating herself: ‘everybody should have their own individual boiler’.

Sarah, who is a white English woman in her late 40s, too contended that the Council do not listen to their tenants, purporting that is their policy. She complained about the Council’s paternalistic approach to its tenants as follows: ““We are the Council we know everything. You are the tenant you don’t know anything.” Which is wrong! Tenants who lived on this estate for 17 years know more than that the Council know of this Estate’. She admits that: ‘The Council is the Council, you can’t avoid the system, but sometimes you get fed up and say: “I’m going to rebel”. That’s when trouble starts’

(Sarah). The complexity and lack of efficiency on the part of the Council bureaucracy seem to be frustrating tenants like Sarah considerably. Furthermore, it is essentially undemocratic, for the power accumulates in the hands of those who are not accountable to either politicians or the public. Commenting on their lack of power in influencing the decisions Sarah said: 'you can't tell the Council that they're wrong! But in the end they find out that they're wrong! So, if they've consulted the tenants on certain things they wouldn't have wasted their money'. The Council, according to Sarah, should talk to them as tenants more:

'I feel if they spoke to us a lot more not only on this estate on a lot of other estates, they get far more co-operation. If it's a big major thing TA's could arrange access to lots of different things. But they don't bother ... they should have more respect for tenants' (Sarah).

Commenting on the efficiency of the Council management Sarah said that the Council had promised tenants certain things at the TA meetings that have never materialised. In November tenants were promised disabled parking to be placed in January, which were not there when I interviewed her in early April. 'They shouldn't promise things which they can't deliver', said Sarah. I put the issue to the Estate Manager when I interviewed her at the end of April 1996. She said: 'It'll be done next Monday, I think ... They're going to have a disabled visitors only parking space' (BF).

Sarah also talked about the heating problem that seemed to be affecting most of the tenants. 'None of us are happy with the heating', she said 'because boilers are too old'. She then went on to say that during Christmas 'everyone's got no hot water and not central heating'. She claimed that 'It's been like that for 17 years. They don't repair the boilers in the summer. They leave it until someone complains that the heating has gone wrong which is in September. And if one set of heating goes wrong the whole block is out. If mine goes wrong the whole block is definitely out' (Sarah).

The Estate Manager admitted that 'heating is a problem in Miranda Estate' (her emphasis) which is due to the estate's reliance on communal boilers that serve far too many units than their capacity.



With the present repairs system, the Council makes an appointment for the tenants without consulting them, which seems to be causing waste of time and money. Some of my respondents suggested that if the tenants could make their own appointment for their repairs, time and money could be saved. Sarah for example put it as:

‘They don’t tell tenants ... you can actually make your own appointment. They will say we’ll be there within the next seven days. So the poor woman is to get the kids, go shopping, the guys turn up, what does she do? She’ll wait another seven days! But if the Council turned round and said: “make your own appointment we will fit in with you”, it’ll save them a hell lot of money. But they don’t listen’ (Sarah).

Sarah was convinced that ‘the Council will not listen’ to their tenants and believed that ‘That’s their policy’.

Participation in the Tenants Association

The Tenants Association was set up 17 years ago when Miranda was a young estate and all the tenants moved in were new tenants. ‘We decided to have a TA’, the present secretary recalled, ‘it worked well for about six years and then everyone lost interest’. Problem of childcare seemed to be the main factor in this ‘loss of interest’. The Tenants Association was not active for some time as a result. The Estate Manager Betty Foster described how they ‘had an awful job trying to get one set up again until the present chair moved on to the Estate and thankfully she’s been very, very good indeed’.

At present there are eight people on the Management Committee of the Tenants Association who are all female, over 30 years old and English. Half of these members have been on the Estate for 17 years. The Tenants Association gets no financial support from the Council at the moment but they are going to apply for a grant. They think that they may get some support next year.

The Tenants Association meetings take place every two to three months. Anyone moving on to the Estate automatically becomes a member of the Tenants Association and they are invited to the meetings. The majority of the participants at the meetings that I have observed were white women over the age of 60.² These meetings were the least formal of the meetings that I have attended both locally and centrally in terms of the format of the invitation to the meeting, the Agenda, and the way the meeting was

conducted (Appendix 2) even though the majority of the participants were dressed up nicely. The meetings get out of control quite easily and frequently for everyone starts to have a conversation with each other while someone is speaking.

The major issues discussed in the meetings I observed were compensation for roof work (completed 9 years ago), parking bays, heating and security that dominated the whole discussion. It seemed that tenants have no control on issues like parking space, heating, repairs and compensation due to them. They felt quite powerless in their relationship with the local authority and will consider taking legal action on roof issue if necessary.

Those residents that I met at the Tenants Association meetings and subsequently interviewed complained about the lack of interest in these meetings by the residents in which around 30 households participate out of 147 in total. Sarah, the founding member of the Tenants Association, complained that the attendance was very low and she expressed resentment to the fact that those who do not attend the Tenants Association meetings still get the benefits of those gains won as a result of the efforts of those who participate. ‘... Thirty will get something done and the other 120 will benefit from thirty people. Which maybe is wrong but at the moment that’s how that goes’ (Sarah).

Women’s participation

I put to Brenda (as one of the officers of the Tenants Association) my observation that there are more women than men taking part in the Tenants Association activities. She responded laughing that it has always been the case. She gave her account for it as follows:

‘Well because women will always stick together. If kids have a fight, mothers come out. It’s not the fathers! Women will always have a go, they’ll defend what they think is theirs. Men won’t. So, you will get more women at meetings. Maybe that’s a good thing, because you can encourage women to do a lot more than you can men. Men think that they’re the bosses but they’re not! We just let them think they are. I don’t have any problems like that, I look after me and that’s all there is to it’ (Brenda).

Brenda’s argument was one of many reasons given to this question by my respondents and reflected an over-generalisation and stereotypical views about women and men. In her construction of gender roles a binary existed between men and women and that

women with a common identity of being a mother constituted a group with essential qualities such as showing solidarity with each other all the time - 'women will always stick together', whereas men lacked this characteristic. She viewed the relationship between men and women as one of a power relationship in which men (always wanting to be in control) are made to believe that they are in control - 'Men think that they are the bosses'. While Brenda based her argument on assumptions of unified and fixed identities of women and men, these groups were homogenised and essentialised with fixed characteristics based on ethnicised gender roles. In effect, however, their gender roles have shifted temporally and spatially calling into question the boundary between the public and the private.

In Michalis's case he is the one in their household, rather than his wife, who goes to the TA meetings. Commenting on my question of why it is mostly women who participate in these meetings rather than men, Michalis said: '... I don't know somebody have to stay with the kids or. And probably the women, they like to talk more, they like to sort of mix with the rest of the people. But usually I like to go myself. I prefer' (Michalis). There was an ambiguity in Michalis's statement why he could not stay with the kids (they had two sons at the age of 10 and 15) as well as a stereotypical view of women as 'talking more' whereas it is mostly men who do the talking at forums that carry more clout.

Isabel's first reason for her participation in the Tenants Association meetings instead of her husband was interesting: 'Because he works', she said. Responding to my question why there were more women than men at the Tenants Association meetings, she again said: 'Maybe they are at work'. Yet during the interview Isabel disclosed that she does paid work outside her home six hours a day. Her job is early in the morning and she also does occasional evening work. When the company she works for has a special function she works from 10 am to 12 midnight, 14 hours a day. Apart from her paid job outside home, she has three teenage children and a mother-in-law to take care of as well as her daughter-in-law who is pregnant and she proudly says: 'I'll look after the baby as well', which is due in September.

Isabel then gave the second reason: 'He doesn't speak English at all (laughing). He lived here for 30 years, he speaks a little English that's all'.

Isabel's first reason illuminates the invisibility of women's labour, and caring role in our society and her internalisation of it, on the one hand, and the gendered character of the tenants' activities including the regularly held Tenants Association meetings, on the other. Michalis's situation, on the other hand, demonstrates that women's attendance in these meetings is both a gendered and ethnicised phenomena. The way tenants relate to the Tenants Association, their interactions in and around it are also highly ethnicised and gendered and involve differentiated power relations through which a wide range of power positions are produced and re-produced.

The power relations between the tenants as a group and the Council

Tenants' role in decision-making

The Tenants Association does not have any real power in decision-making process of the Council. All it can do is lobby and put pressure on the Council on behalf of the whole Estate and make recommendations, which the Council by no means is obliged to take into consideration. My respondents as a whole felt quite powerless in their relation with the Council which they viewed as a highly complex, bureaucratic machine which is not accountable to the tenants and did not believe that they had played any role in the decision-making process of their housing.

As mentioned earlier, for example, in Michalis's narrative the relationship between the Council and tenants did not correspond to equal power relations in which tenants can play a significant role in the design and management processes of housing. In his view of this relation, he was drawing a boundary between the tenants and the Council as their landlord. He accepted the fact that the local welfare state holds power over citizens and plays a paternalistic role in this relation. Thus he perceived his role in the design and management processes of housing as 'an observer' unable to participate in decision-making. He believed that they, as tenants, have no power and there is nothing they can do about this. But at the same time he considered his role as 'quite important' which meant that even though he had a major role to play in the management and design processes it did not materialise, for it was not facilitated by those in power, e.g. the Council.

Hannah compared her former Tenants Association of the Housing Association where she lived before to present one and suggested that it had much more power due to the relatively smaller size of the Housing Association. She viewed the Council as highly

powerful and complex machine, which is quite bureaucratic in the sense that they are remote from the day-to-day problems and concerns of the tenants leading to an attitude of indifference. 'I don't think anybody got any power over the Council', said Hannah with a sombre expression, 'because the Council is such a big thing! There's so many of the Council! ... They don't care! They don't care! As far as I'm concerned!' She thinks nothing can be done about it, 'unless', she says, 'we opted out of the Council and decided that we collect the rent ourselves and do the repairs ourselves. You know as a co-op' (Hannah).

To my question of whether she saw herself as an observer in the management of their housing Hannah said: 'No, I don't ... I don't see myself as anything. I'm just a tenant. I don't have no say in the Council or anything', which implied that one cannot play any role in the decision-making if s/he is 'just a tenant'. She gave an equally gloomy response to the question of how important she saw her role in the management of her housing: 'I don't have no role ... Nothing, because I don't have no role!' I then asked if she felt powerless in a way, she replied: 'Yeah, I'm very powerless'. She clearly did not feel they had any power as an Estate to influence any of the decisions the Council take.

Hannah has no faith in the management of their Tenants Association. Nor does she think that the Council's decisions can be influenced through the Tenants Association. Because, she said: 'I wouldn't say that it was a tenants' association! I would say that's more of a social gathering. "I can do this and I can do that!" I don't think it's a TA as TA'. *Firstly*, she claims, some people in the management do not pay attention to the problems of others recalling the last meetings: 'when the heating was mentioned ... She didn't want to know! She doesn't want to know! Because she doesn't have that problem! She has her own heating system'. Hannah constructed a boundary between the Management Committee of the Tenants Association and other members. She felt that the way they were running the Tenants Association was geared toward solving their individual household problems.

Hannah's experience demonstrates that management of an organisation like Tenants Association involves selecting and prioritising particular issues while avoiding others. By doing this the management also mobilise or undermine particular individuals or groups of tenants, promote or ignore particular demands. Individuals involved in the Tenants Association all have different characteristics, abilities, values that affect their

judgements in specific situations. They also develop quite complex networks of social relations and informal practices which are dependent on the formal organisation (Chapter 3). These informal practices influence the way 'the Other' is constructed which is relevant to Hannah's second point.

According to Hannah, the attitudes of some of the committee members is adversely affecting the attendance of the residents in the Tenants Association meetings including herself who does not attend the meetings regularly any more as she used to do. As mentioned earlier, Hannah felt uncomfortable with the homophobic name calling of Brenda against some tenants. She put it as follows:

'... A lot of people don't like Brenda and when she is involved they stay away. If I would've known that Brenda was there I wouldn't have gone myself, I don't like Brenda! ... Because she calls people! And she has no right you know! What people do is their own business! She shouldn't call people, very annoyed' (Hannah).

Hannah's social positioning and experiences have led her to view the relationship between the Council and tenants as quite problematic. She goes to the Tenants Association meetings quite regularly and perceives her role in the design and management her housing as 'an observer' and 'not at all important' constructing a boundary between 'us' (the tenants) and 'them' (the Council). She is resentful for the Council do not communicate with the Tenants Association. Nor do they consult the tenants while taking major decisions concerning the Estate.

Isabel who has been living on the Estate for about 17 years, used to go every meeting but since she became a leaseholder she only goes when she is invited. Isabel as a migrant from Europe who has lived in this country for many years appeared to be quite an assertive woman throughout her interview. However, she said she rarely raises any of her problems at the meetings. The reason she gave was as follows: 'I have ... couple of neighbours and ... they are English and they do understand better than me...' Isabel's relation with the Tenants Association demonstrates that even if and when ethnic minorities do become active and participate in meetings they might still feel encumbered and remain ineffective resulting from structural inequalities.

Consultation process and its shortcomings

Some of the tenants I have interviewed felt strongly about the lack of consultation by the Council. Sarah claimed that this has been the case for a long time now. She recalled an incident, which, in her opinion, illustrated well this lack of consultation on the part of the Council. When the Estate was new and the Tenants Association was young, she described, there was a long balcony in their block which was one complete straight run about two hundred feet long (Appendix 3). 'At the time it was all skates, skateboard, bikes all straight along the balcony', she continued, if people came out of their flats they could either knock a kid off his bike or skateboard or a tenant would get knocked down. They therefore asked for a dividing wall along the balcony, however, as she put it: 'Next thing we know we can have security doors! We didn't ask for them! And since they put them up they've never been good' (Sarah).

The request of tenants for a dividing wall was put to the Council in writing. Tenants that I have spoken to had no idea who made the decision that they should have security doors. Sarah claims that whoever made the decision did not respond to their request in writing nor has he/she consulted them while making this decision that they should have security doors.

'No, they didn't consult us. They consulted us on what sort of gates we would like but ... never ... actually said: "what do you want?" We were told: "you are going to *have*, decide what you want!" Which is the wrong approach to any estate... All we wanted was one wall to slow down the speed where they couldn't get up the speed to go two hundred foot long balcony' (Sarah)(her emphasis).

Although this was some years ago now, some of my respondents complained that the Council still did not consult the tenants on such major design issues. Furthermore, some tenants believed that when no consultation in relation to major design issues takes place, the Council is likely to end up creating further problems while trying to solve one. According to Hannah, for example, this was the case in relation to the lighting for the Estate. She considered it to be well lit in the Estate to a certain extent. 'But if you walk through the park coming to the Estate not so well lit'. Hannah, therefore, varies her route at night: 'If it's dark I come to the end, and sometimes I walk right around, sometimes I just cut through side'. Hannah on her way back from work at the post office after a night shift has to walk round the Estate instead of taking the short cut.

When it is dark, parts of the Estate - although public space - become inaccessible to her as a woman, she therefore varies her route. It demonstrates how the characteristics of the space change throughout the day, become quite exclusive to people with certain identities, e.g. a working class woman, revealing the multiplicity of the identities of places. It also manifests how time and space are inextricably linked to the ever changing and ever shifting identities of people in that these identities are inseparable from their location and time, e.g. the context.

Hannah did not raise the issue of lighting at the Tenants Association meetings because when they moved on to the Estate four years ago new lighting had been just put up. It is still not well lit enough 'because', she explained, 'when they put all the new lights up people was painting them black outside all along the back here (pointing) ... Because the light was shining into the house' (Hannah). In this case tenants had taken a direct action against the problem they experienced in their immediate environment, which led to the problem of having dark corners around the Estate.

Sarah argued that there is still no consultation of tenants and suggested that the Council have wasted their money on doing a park in the Estate because, she claimed, there are no young kids on Miranda Estate any more that are young enough to go in that park. She suggested that the children living on the Estate now are between 10 and 14 years old. 'They're too old to go and play on a little seesaw', she stressed, 'or a little elephant that's on the screen' she argued sarcastically. The way Sarah viewed the park contradicted to the views of my other respondent, a 14 year old girl who regards the park as being for both young and teenagers: 'It's got swings, big slides, small slides, it's got a mixture for both ages' (Clara). As I revisited the Estate in 1997 again five teenage boys were at the swings who told me that they were happy with what they had on the playing ground and that the smaller children could play in the section which has the slide, and seesaw, and has a fence and a gate to separate it from the rest of the park.

According to Sarah there were further problems with regard to the design of the park. She put it as: '... If you design a park that is supposed to be for kids, you don't design a park and put a workman's hut in front of the park! You put the workman's hut behind the park so that parents who live on the Estate can see where the kids are. You don't put a workman's hut so that no one can see!' Sarah's comments sounded quite resentful to the fact that although those who live on the Estate are in a better position to know what

would and would not work in terms of design, they are not consulted. Those who do not live on the Estate, on the other hand, learn through trial and error wasting the limited resources available. She put it as: ‘The Council should ask the tenants what they want! Not just go ahead and *do* what *they* think is best! Because they don’t live here!’ (Sarah)(her emphasis).

The considerations the Council officials had taken into account when they made their decisions on what to build do not seem to quite match up with the expectations of the Miranda residents. It seemed that asking the tenants ‘what they want’ would improve the relationship between the Council and the tenants. ‘If the Council spoke to tenants more, they might get more respect but until then they get no respect of the tenants’ said Sarah.

There clearly is a lack of consultation with the individual tenants as well as the Tenants Association at the design stage of some major services the Council provide for the Estate. Fernando, who is a second generation migrant from Europe and has lived on the Estate as a teenager argued that the Council should talk to the young people on the Estate: ‘There’s even more kids on the Estate now than there was when I was young’, said Fernando, ‘when they become adolescent, young adults and there is nothing for them they will do the same (vandalise the Estate - TU). These young people need encouragement, maintained Fernando, but ‘you don’t get that here’. The Council do not take the youth seriously, ‘the people in the Council talk to the adults’ whereas they should ‘talk to the youngsters!’ and more importantly ‘listen to the youngsters’ (Fernando).

To sum up, on the one hand, divisions in the social space of Miranda Estate are reflected on the spatial, creating different sense of space for different people, which I discuss in Part III (Chapter 12). On the other hand, the Tenants Association of Miranda Estate did not seem to have a significant role to play in decision-making process. All they can do is make recommendations that are not binding. All of this contributed to the feelings of powerlessness of the Miranda residents in their relationship with the Council, which I discuss in Part III (Chapters 12 and 13).

¹ *Elthorne Park Neighbourhood News*, Issue No: 4, Summer 1995.

² **Attendance in the Tenants Association meetings:**

There were 27 people present at the Tenants Association meeting in March 1996 including the Chair (a white woman over 50), Secretary (a white woman in her 40's), a Council officer (a young white man) and a home beat officer (a young black African Caribbean descent woman) who was invited to attend as an observer. The meeting was considered to be a low turn out for an Estate of 147 units. As can be seen in Table 12, of those present only 3 people were male. Two of them were white and elderly and the other one was in his 40's and was an ethnic minority. Of those women present 9 were white elderly women, two were younger white women, one younger and one elderly Asian (Chinese) woman and one Spanish woman. Two white participants in the meeting (one woman and one man) were in their work uniforms (post office).

Present	Total	White-o50	White-u50	B&EM-o50	B&EM-u50
	27				
25 March '96					
Women	19	10	3	1	4*
Men	4	2	1 (officer)	none	1
12 June '96	18				
Women	17	9	4 (1 Est Mngr)	1	3
Men	1	-	1 (caretaker)	-	-

* One was an observing police officer not in uniform

Table 12 Attendance in the Tenants Association meetings of Miranda Estate

As Table 12 shows, there was no man attending the meeting on 12 June except for one who was one of the two caretakers of the Estate. The majority of women were over 60 years old except three, one of whom was the Estate Manager. Of the Black and ethnic minority women, two were Asian (Chinese) descent that came with a girl aged around seven and one African Caribbean descent woman who also came with her daughter around 13 years old.



Chapter 7: Decision-making on a Tenant Management Co-operative:

Elthorne First Co-op

Introduction

Elthorne First Co-op is one of 17 tenant management co-operatives in Islington Borough Council, which has the largest concentration of management co-operatives in the country. The aim of Tenant Management Co-operatives is described as: 'to allow residents to control their own housing; facilitate small-scale, high quality, responsive, economic management and maintenance of rented housing' (Power 1988).

The Elthorne Estate was built in the late 1970s by the Greater London Council (GLC) and later transferred to the London Borough of Islington. It is situated in the north part of the Islington Borough, ten minutes away from the Archway station and five minutes from the Miranda Estate on St. John's Way, and adjacent to Elthorne Park. There are two neighbourhood offices for the area: Elthorne South Neighbourhood Office is in the middle of the Elthorne Estate, whilst Elthorne North Office is situated five minutes away from the Estate on the other side of Elthorne Park.

This chapter explores the issues of participation in decision-making when management responsibility is transferred to tenants through tenant management co-operative. The chapter illustrates how social space is organised and describes how this social reality is formed spatially and experienced by people with differences in their positioning.

I begin by exploring the constructions of difference by Co-op members with differences in their positionings by considering issues of racism on the Estate and the experiences of tenants with regards to the concept of 'the community' and the social divisions among the Co-op members.

I then look into the relationship between the Co-op and the Council, the way tenants view the Council, by taking up the issues of repairs and maintenance, the Council's attitude to the major repairs.

The chapter then investigates the specific issues of decision-making under tenant management in order to throw light on the particular moments of decision-making,

which will be interwoven into the larger picture in the final chapter of the thesis. Thus the chapter looks at the participation of tenants (who occupy different positions in the social space) in the Co-op management, including their attendance in the meetings, (e.g. women's and Black and ethnic minorities' participation in the Co-op management) and how individual tenants view their role in decision-making processes with regards to the management process of their housing.

About the Estate

Built by the GLC in 1978, Elthorne Estate was later transferred to the London Borough of Islington and split into five parts for housing management purposes. There are four small tenant management co-operatives running around half of the properties of the estate but they are still owned by the Council. There are 400 dwellings on the Council-run part of the Estate out of a total of approximately 850 dwellings. When the first tenant management co-op was formed on the Estate, Elthorne First Co-op had 137 dwellings in total and its membership was about 160. Yet tenants living on the Co-op properties do not have to be members of the Co-op. By law they can give up their membership but still keep their secure tenancy.

Elthorne First Co-op's properties consist of low-rise, red brick dwellings that are three and four - bedroom houses, two and three-bedroom maisonettes, and one-bedroom flats. As described earlier (chapter on 'Methodology'), the blocks of the Co-op property have an intercom system. There are a few playgrounds for children, a community hall, a school (where adult education is also provided for), a church and two public houses on the Estate. There is a youth club for young people based in St. John Community Centre. There are two more community halls in close proximity to the Estate on the other side of St John's Way where the Co-op and Forum meetings also take place. Summer schemes for young people involving activities such as arts and crafts, sports and trips out take place in these centres. Also organised are summer outings for adults through the neighbourhood centre. As a result of twinning there are now two neighbourhood offices for the area: Elthorne South Neighbourhood Office is in the middle of the Elthorne Estate, whereas Elthorne North Neighbourhood Office is situated five minutes away from the Estate on the other side of Elthorne Park.

Ethnic composition

The Manager of the Co-op Kevin Leonard, who is a white male in his mid 40s, provided me with an ethnic breakdown of Co-op members from their files. On the basis of this breakdown I have prepared the Co-op's profile along the lines of the Neighbourhood Profile prepared by the Islington Council (Table 11 and Table 13).

Ethnic Group	Total number of households	%
All ethnic groups	135	
White groups	98	72.6%
<i>White</i>	81	60.0%
<i>Irish</i>	17	12.6%
Non-white groups		
<i>Black</i>	28	20.7%
Other	9	6.7%
	<i>Indian</i>	<i>1</i>
	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>3</i>
	<i>Turkish</i>	<i>1</i>
	<i>Greek</i>	<i>1</i>
	<i>Italian</i>	<i>2</i>
	<i>Colombian</i>	<i>1</i>

Table 13 Elthorne First Co-op members household ethnic breakdown

As can be seen from Table 11, the percentage of black people of African Caribbean descent and of the 'Black other' category are higher in Elthorne Neighbourhood than the Islington average. Their percentage at the Elthorne First Co-op is even higher than the Elthorne Neighbourhood average. As Table 11 and 15 show, the percentage of White groups is 72 per cent compared to 77 per cent in Elthorne Park area and 81.1 per cent in Islington. The percentage of the total Black people on the other hand is 20.7 per cent in Elthorne First Co-op compared to 15.5 per cent in Elthorne Neighbourhood and the 10.6 per cent Islington average. Yet as will be discussed later in the chapter, Black and ethnic minority residents are absent in the management of the Co-op (Table 14).¹

Power relations among tenants

In the following discussion I will explore power relations among tenants of the Tenant Management Co-operative by looking into their everyday experiences, construction of 'difference' by tenants with different locations on the social matrix and subsequent

exclusions/inclusions, existing social divisions among tenants corresponding to inequalities in society, and how tenants perceive 'the community'.

Construction of 'difference' and exclusions of 'the Other'

As described earlier, the Co-op is part of a larger estate and there is not a clear distinction between the Co-op properties and the rest of the estate. Some of the residents that I have interviewed, therefore expressed uncertainty on who did, and who did not, live on the Co-op property. Commenting on the participation of Black and ethnic minorities, Carol said: 'Well, I don't know who lives where. How many people live in what block. So I couldn't say whether there was you know' (Carol).

Ruth, on the other hand, was of the opinion that the Co-op 'catered for families [more] than single people', as she put it: 'I don't think there's hardly any people who are just single'. As a young couple, her belief was that: '... there's not many people that are a couple or in my age group around this area, it's mostly families'. Ruth's husband is of an ethnic minority from the Middle East. When asked if any ethnic minority people lived in their block she said her next-door neighbour was the only black person who was a widower. Commenting on the Co-op in general, she said: 'umm, yeah there's some. Not many. I don't see many. It's usually either Asian or Black.' When I explained to her that at the Co-op meetings I did not see many ethnic minority people, she said: 'No, there's not, I would say the majority people are white'. When I explained that there was not even a minority at the meeting Ruth said:

'No, there's not even many *foreigners* you know what I mean at all, no. They're mostly English you know. Born here. No, it wasn't, many lived here. Maybe people who've got a *foreign background*, but you know basically English. There's not many of them either. I wouldn't say, no' (Ruth)(my emphasis).

Individuals in interaction with their environment try to give meaning to those events taking place around them, which is a process of selection and construction of realities and never ending, never complete. It is also a process that is the outcome of their social positioning in the social matrix. Ethnic identities, like all other identities, are social constructs either internally defined or externally imposed or both as well as relational. It was interesting to see that Ruth constructed the notion of 'ethnic minorities' on the basis of nationality rather than racial and ethnic traits as she talked about 'foreigners' and

people with 'a foreign background'. Her relationship with a man from the Middle East was constitutive in her construction of the difference between white and 'the Other'. The construction of 'Otherness' on the basis of national characteristics involves issues of citizenship as well as hierarchical relations between the states involved, for the term 'foreigner' is usually used for the people from non-English speaking and non-EEC countries. Thus, not everybody who comes from a foreign country is described as a 'foreigner'. The Manager of the Co-op, for instance who is a white Canadian man (who did have an accent) with an American wife was not portrayed as a 'foreigner' by anybody.

Carol, as an African Caribbean descent mixed race woman, on the other hand based her construction of ethnic minorities on racial characteristics, e.g. 'colour':

'...I see *coloured* people but I don't know if they're on the part where there's a Co-op. Because they say it's only Partington. The Co-op's only this Partington and just that part of St John's out there. And it's only me as a black person ... There's not much, I don't think there's much *coloured* people ... The most I've seen *coloured* people in the meetings is about three. So, I don't know' (Carol)(my emphasis).

Another passive member (whom I will call Allison) who is a mixed race (Anglo/African Caribbean) young single mother does not have much contact with the people around. 'I just keep myself to myself' said Allison. 'People don't like mixing here anyway so you just keep yourself to yourself. I just stay, I don't talk to most people, I just stay in my own place' (Alison).

Allison's comments highlight her awareness of the fact that the social space which the estate is part of is full of contradictions and conflicts. It is therefore highly dynamic, which corresponds with spatial separation (sometimes voluntary, sometimes imposed). In the wider environment, which is hostile to certain group identities (e.g. ethnic identity) and which the estate is part of the private can act as a site of empowerment and solidarity between members of the family. This appeared to be the case for Allison, who can draw on the support of her extended family while she 'keeps herself to herself', i.e. her cousins who are also mixed race and were visiting her during the course of the interview.

Carol, like Allison, does not have much contact with her neighbours and is not sure who lives in the Co-op property 'I don't really talk to anyone that much ... Just "hello" to my neighbour next door. And that's about it! It's just couple of people. If I come round in the morning and take the little ones school I say: 'hello, hello'. And that's it, they keep themselves to themselves really' (Carol). She explained that she was not even sure if Black and ethnic minority people living around her house were in fact on the Co-op property. Carol is happy living in the Co-op and described her situation in the same way as Alison: 'Yeah, I keep myself to myself'.

The Management Committee do try to keep up good relations within the Co-op members by organising socials, giving small gifts to each household. One of the Management Committee members who is a 73 years old white woman and whom I will call Debbie described: 'At Christmas I went over the office and got all the Christmas cards and delivered jars of "*Quality Street*" to every tenant'. They also visited and provided elderly tenants with some cash: 'and the pensioners got twenty pound a couple and fifteen single one. And we delivered all of them. Me and Claire ... we are both old age pensioners. I'm seventy-three. She's older than me. We've done it all ourselves. Otherwise there wouldn't be nothing' (Debbie). Although this was no doubt a thoughtful action on their behalf, it also underscores the ethnicised nature of the relationship between the Management and tenants for most of the elderly on the estate are white. The possibility of feeling isolated and in need among the female headed, Black, single mothers appeared to be as high as it is for the elderly, if not more. Because (as will be discussed later in the chapter) they were absent on those forums where problems are discussed and decisions are taken as well as excluded from the informal communication networks. As discussed in Chapter 3, individuals bring with them their values and experiences into the formal organisation, and while decisions are taken they exercise their personal judgement, which is shaped by these values and experiences including interests, which are inevitably highly racialised, ethnicised and gendered. These relations will be embedded in the more formal and informal organisation of the Tenant Management Co-op.

There is no such thing as 'the community' on the estate with common goals and interests. Different interpretations of the same events, facts and incidents were expressed by tenants with different positioning within the Co-op, in terms of their ethnicity, gender, degree of their involvement in the Co-op management and the time of

their arrival. All the same, they constructed a boundary between ‘us’ and ‘them’ differently. These constructions are also fluid and shifting constantly as the outcome of their intersecting multiple identities. These identities themselves are social constructs as well as relational, and are not fixed and constantly shifting depending on the specific situation and their relation to others. Tenants have different amounts of power in different settings depending on their particular identities.

In some blocks the issue of maintenance of communal areas seemed to be a cause of tension between the residents of the block. This was the case in the block where Ben and Theresa live, where Ben thought he was the only one cleaning it: ‘in this block, I’ve never seen nobody sweeping. I always sweep ... But I’ve never seen no-body sweeping outside there. I swept so many times... I’ve seen nobody sweeping there, no one’. Ben, therefore, stopped too: ‘now I don’t do it. All I just do my bit here just outside there. That’s it. I don’t do it. Because before I use to from the top and go all the way down and clean up. But I don’t do it anymore because I don’t see nobody doing it’ (Ben). It was interesting to see that when Ben voiced concern about the maintenance of internal communal areas he simultaneously referred to another boundary he had constructed this time with the Self and the rest of the residents in his block: ‘Every time *they* coming in and seeing *me* doing it. I don’t see *them* doing it. So, why should *I* do and *they* don’t? That’s why I stopped’ (Ben)(my emphasis).

Theresa told me her perception of the situation. It seemed very similar to that of Ben without however referring to any division between the Self and the others. In her conceptualisation, the residents in the block were a group of which she viewed herself a member:

‘Well, I’ve done it a few times. But no one else is bothered. So I’ve not bothered. Because I thought *we* were supposed to take turns in doing it. But no one, I mean the last time I’ve done it I think was last year and no one has done it since. So I don’t know. I think some blocks have a rota to take turns. But no one seems to do it here in this block so’ (Theresa) (my emphasis).

In response to my question of whether the residents in the block communicated with each other, Theresa replied: ‘No, no communication’. Claire, too, described the situation in their block as problematic: ‘Well, that is a little bit of a bad here’, she said, ‘because

not everybody takes their share you see'. 'But *we*'ve argued and argued' about it, 'now gentleman who is opposite me. He is a single gentleman. He and I do it every other week. *We're* so tired of asking, although 'it doesn't take ten minutes to do' (my emphasis). In the end they found a solution:

'... Rather than having an argument we do this ourselves. We don't go upstairs. Because we feel that there are two young women up there and *they* can manage the upstairs themselves. But *we* do our bit down the stairs and the lobby. But I think we have to sort something out there and the office she seems to think that we should get in somebody to do it professionally then there wouldn't be any more arguments. Because that is something I believe in some of the block that there are arguments about this. People don't take their share' (Claire)(my emphasis).

In the above quotation, Claire's construction of the boundaries do not appear to be fixed around categories that are exclusive in any sense although at one point she refers to an age difference between two young women living upstairs and herself and a single 'gentleman' downstairs which also corresponds to spatial division in their block (ground floor flats are mostly given to elderly residents). Contrary to the earlier respondents, Claire as a Management Committee member has had a conversation with the Secretary of the Co-op, which she refers to as some sort of answer to the problem, such as getting it done professionally.

Racism on the Estate

My respondents generally rejected the idea that there existed a problem of racism on the Co-op properties yet as they talked about their day-to-day experiences during the interviews it turned out that some in fact did experience racism. Ben is a passive member of the Co-op, who is a young Black man of an African Caribbean descent. When I asked Ben's opinion on what was stopping the Black and ethnic minority people getting involved in the Co-op management, he said: 'I really don't know to tell you the truth. Hum. I don't know it's a hard question. *But I don't think there's any racism going on or anything like that*' (my emphasis). The Manager's adamant approach in the Co-op management in terms of having a non-racist ethos seems to have played a key role in Ben's perception. 'Because, I remember I spoke to the Manager once when I went to the meeting once', Ben recalled, 'He even said that they don't tolerate anything like that. So, say if I have any problems or anything like that, I just go there and report to him.'

So, I don't think it's nothing to do with that'. Ben tried to think of any other reason saying, 'It's probably just certain black people don't want to get involved just because they don't want to know. You know. That's the reason really I can come up with' (Ben).

However describing his relation with his neighbours in the block Ben mentioned that there existed a problem between him and some neighbours regarding 'his music'. As I explored the issue he explained that as a young person he likes listening to loud music, which can become problematic in the block where there are families and elderly people living. Although Ben did not concede the problem of racism in the estate as he began describing the conflicts with his neighbours in his immediate surrounding, friction in their relationship was revealed unmasking racial abuse that Ben has been subjected to.

Ben's identity as a young person who likes listening to loud music at home clearly is not so compatible with some of the residents in the block, particularly the senior citizens. Thus Ben refers to a division with these neighbours as he talks about the way they react to his music:

'The neighbours, some of them are they're all right but sometimes they can get on my nerves really. It's like I'm young. Right? I think I'm the youngest person actually in this block and I play my music. Sometimes I play my music a bit loud and they don't like that, you see' (Ben).

Ben feels these neighbours are overreacting for he regards himself considerate enough to turn his music down at certain time of the night: 'I always turn down my music at eleven o'clock. I've consideration for other people because I know there's old people downstairs, yeah?' In the end he thinks he is being treated unjustly for he believes the noise made by others goes unnoticed, whereas everybody seems to complain about his music which he does not consider as noise: 'So, it's all right for them to make their noise when I make my noise, you know what I mean, it's not noise but listening to music a bit loud, just they're always coming and knocking my door, you know, starting this'. Ben's relations with other young people does not seem to be quite compatible with the rest of tenants either:

'And also I have a brother which has got a car ... so he always comes and check for me. And he's always revving it. He doesn't do it deliberately he does it because he's always

thinking there's something wrong with his car. And there's a woman downstairs. *She always calling names, telling blackie this, blackie that which is not right you see.* I haven't told her, I haven't been downstairs yet, but...' (Ben)(my emphasis).

Hence the reaction of this white, elderly woman to this young man's life-style is highly racialised as she constructs 'the otherness' on the basis of differences of ethnicity and generation (in terms of both life-style and age), while naturalising and universalising her own ethnicity. I asked Ben if he would prefer having more Black people in the block and he said 'Yeah', which did not sound very enthusiastic to me. But when I asked him if he would prefer to have more young people as neighbours he became quite excited: 'Young, that's right, it would be nice! Yeah! You know'. It seemed that Ben's identity as a young man over-determined his racial identity maybe because he would still feel different and isolated among Black neighbours who are families or elderly people. Thus Ben saw the problem as one of a generation difference and having a youth culture rather than that of race. It is difficult to assess how much determination of the Manager to have an anti-racist ethos in the Co-op has contributed to Ben's under-estimation and de-emphasis of racism on the Estate.

Theresa, a white woman in her late twenties living in the same block as Ben, regarded the problem as one of noise, considering the whole issue as lack of respect:

'I think someone like him next door. They haven't got any respect for elderly people because I know [the] woman downstairs. They was out in their car, revving the car out and she asked them very nicely if they could stop. And they was really abusive towards her ... And apparently there is an elderly gentleman in the next block asked him on a numerous occasions to turn down his music and he's been quite rude and abusive to him' (Theresa).

Although Theresa recognises 'the abuse' to the 'elderly lady and gentleman', in her selection of facts and construction of the reality there is no space for a different kind of respect, e.g. respecting the differences be it racial or cultural. She did not notice the racial abuse going on throughout their encounters, which slipped out while Ben was explaining 'the noise problem'. Nor did she take notice of the animosity when her partner, a young white man, described 'the noise' problem: 'And as you probably hear next door we've got music blaring out from a very *undesirable source* which does not

really speak or kind of induce good communal neighbourly spirit' (David)(my emphasis). Theresa's narrative was a social construction based on selection of certain facts and dismissing others during which the issue regarding Ben's youth culture was racialised, while the ethnicity of these neighbours was naturalised and made invisible.

Responding to my question of racial incidents in the estate, Claire who is a 75 year old white woman described her experience of racial harassment with a considerable understatement: 'There's been the odd thing. But it has been dealt with pretty sharply'. She then went on to say how her family was harassed by a neighbour who put up racist graffiti on the walls: 'Even had a little bit of ourselves because I'm Jewish. And not me but my daughter woman suddenly took a dislike to her. And started chalking up swastikas and things wanted to know why she hadn't been put into the oven you know that sort of things. So that had to be dealt with. But finished all finished now' (Claire). At present, she inferred, there are still racists in the locality, but they have been silenced by way of the change in the legislation, which made racism a crime.

' There are one or two people I know who are racist but they've been warned. They can think what they like but, you can't stop people thinking, but they must not talk about. Because if they talk about it that's punishable now. That's a crime' (Claire).

Claire then went on to describe how nasty the perpetrator was: 'Oh she was a dreadful person really'. At the same time she still tried put it on to her ignorance: 'You can only put it down to ignorance, can't you?'

Allison also implicated the presence of racism in the estate when she said she thought not many black people are given properties in the Estate holding the Co-op management responsible for it:

'We live here since we was eleven. But the thing I find with the Co-ops, they don't like giving black people places on the Co-ops. Now we've got the place with our mum and dad. But then again our dad was white. Since we've been living with the Co-ops there only been like three *black people*, since eleven and I'm old now, I'm twenty-nine now. You can still check how many black people is living around here. It's still not that much. You find only three *fully black people* or four say five. But then you'll find there's *a white girl living with a black boy* on this side. They doesn't like giving most black people anyway' (Allison) (my emphasis).

Allison's belief did not match up with the information given to me by the Manager about the ethnic composition of the Co-op (see Table 13). Nevertheless, it demonstrated how she felt about the Co-op management as well as pointing to the invisibility of Black people living on the Estate. In addition to this, the above quotation highlighted the ambiguity of the construction of 'blackness' for Allison. Both Allison and her young children are mixed race yet she has difficulty in describing what the category of 'black' includes. She uses the terms 'black people', 'fully black people' and 'a white girl living with a black boy'. Although it is ambivalent, in my opinion, it was racialisation and discrimination that determined the boundaries of the category of 'black' for Allison.

The power relations between the Co-op and the Council

The maintenance and repairs

The co-operatives in general out-perform the Council on repairs, maintenance and costs. Their small-scale and tenant involvement are said to be the key contributory factors to this (Power 1988). My respondents' comments confirmed the widely held view that the co-operatives' repairs service is popular and efficient (since most jobs are completed within two days, repairs cost less in the Co-operatives than the Council and improvements are carried out from the savings on the repairs budget).

Tenants of the Elthorne First Co-op share the view that co-op management is much more efficient than the Council management in terms of repairs and maintenance. Claire who is a Management Committee member compared their experiences in the Co-op to that of those living in council-managed properties, as follows:

'People who live on a Co-op are very much better off because, I don't mean money-wise. Anything wants doing the Council notify goodness knows how long you wait for something done. But with us if it is something that Tony (the caretaker-TU) can do, he'll do it on the same day and quickly, you know. Or if not he'll get someone who will and whereas you ask people living on the council estates they have great difficulty. Wait up to six months sometimes to get things done' (Claire).

Claire as an active member of the Co-op management was making a clear distinction between their management as a Co-op in dealing with the repairs and the Council while

constructing the Co-op as ‘us’ *vis-à-vis* the Council ‘them’ and emphasising the boundary between the two:

‘You see, that’s something. That’s *our* management. That’s how *we* do this. That’s why we need the money to sort of get, we’ve got a plumber, we’ve got a man who does electrics and things like this, you know. So I think that is one of the assets of the Co-op that they get repairs and things done quickly’ (Claire)(my emphasis).

Claire’s above statement also implies that the money they control plays a crucial role in enabling them to attend the jobs quickly, thus assigning them a strong position in their relations with the Council, which is discussed again later in the chapter.

Ben had similar views in relation to the efficiency of the Co-op in terms of repairs:

‘... If I’ve any problems like say for instance like my heating or anything like that goes or have any little problems for the flat, I can ring them (the Co-op management) and they come straight away, they come and sort it out. You see. But with the Council I believe *they’re* not like that. They’re slow *they* take their time. But with the Co-op *they’re* different’ (Ben)(my emphasis).

Tenants of the Co-op are pleased with the way repairs and problems are dealt with due to its relatively small size based on local and personal relations in contrast to the massive council machinery. The Co-op has a budget of £150,000 a year inclusive of VAT. Each Neighbourhood area gets an allocation of money to spend on repairs and security. Last year Elthorne Neighbourhood Area had £98,000. Co-ops can apply for the money allocated to their neighbourhood area. However Elthorne First do not apply for it because, as Kevin Leonard pointed out, they have more money than the Council and they spend all of it on repairs.

‘We can do all our day-to-day repairs and still have money left over. We have money the rest of Council properties don’t. So, as a matter of principle we don’t apply for money. Because we have money and we realise that there’s a lot of projects that need to be funded more than ours. But we could, we could apply’ (KL).

Kevin explained that the Co-op has a large surplus of money, which is spent on improvements and so far they have replaced all the windows, improved all of their

paving stones and put some money into gardens and shrubs. All of the communal doors of the Co-op properties have been overhauled and an electronic system was installed a few years ago. Last year the Co-op spent the surplus money on the improvements of garages. The decisions about the way to spend this money are taken at the General Meetings of the Co-op. The Council is informed of these decisions and asked for their direct labour organisation, Islington Building Services (IBS), to tender for these jobs. But the manager pointed out that 'they never get together to tender'. He highlighted the contentious nature of their relations with the Council's direct labour organisation arguing that there exists a less favourable treatment to Council tenants by IBS than private tenants:

'When they do it's so expensive. Even if they are the lowest, they are so hopelessly incompetent. They might be more competent with people they consider not council tenants but their attitude is "well, you're only council tenants", stress the "only"!' (KL).

As discussed in Chapter 2, the local welfare state enters into direct relations with the individual citizens in their provision of services - e.g. in this case, repairs done by the direct labour organisation - which are not only ethnicised and gendered but, as the Manager described above, they are classed too. The fact that the Co-op controls their own budget enables them to tender to find their own contractors and make sure that 'they give kind of service they would give anybody else' (KL). Yet there still exist repair problems that the Co-op has no control over and therefore remains problematic because the Council is responsible for structural repairs and also runs all the central heating. In other words, the Co-op is part of an estate that has four central boilers that provides communal heating to the whole estate. Two of these boilers provide heating to the Co-op properties along with Council properties. The Council have recently been renewing the central heating. Yet the Co-op complains that they cannot get a reasonable service. The Manager for instance argues that they have problems with the attitude of the people doing the repairs:

'They seem to have no concern about leaving it off for three months in the middle of the winter. And they have no sense of urgency getting it back on. There are people without heating and they need heating' (KL).

Debbie (who is also a block representative) feels that they get less favourable treatment from the Council than the Council tenants living on the same Estate. She put it as:

‘So the Council don’t give you much. I mean we’ve got this heating thing done by the Council. And it’s last summer and then this summer and we are still waiting for [a] rebate. We were without heating for seven weeks. And we’re still waiting to get the rebate. The Council give *their tenants* over that side (pointing). We’re still waiting for *ours*’ (Debbie)(my emphasis).

The way Debbie described the situation highlighted the socially constructed division between the Co-op members and the Council, which included an allegation of preferential treatment on the Council’s part to their tenants. This division is embedded in the power relations between the Council and the Tenant Management Co-op as well as social relations within the Estate and is mirrored in the spatial separation of the Estate. ‘Islington Council doesn’t like us’, said Debbie, ‘If you go down the Neighbourhood Office and say you came from Elthorne Estate, they don’t want to know. And we know that’. Although Debbie was not sure why this was the case, she thought it might because of the incident happened in the past when the Council owed some money to the Co-op for the maintenance which was not paid and the Co-op went to arbitration and got it all. ‘Probably because they see that we’re getting things done’, added Debbie.

Despite their allegations of differential treatment as a group, in actual fact the members of the Co-op management do not appear to feel powerless. This is mainly due to the fact that they are able to control their own budget. They feel in even more control in some instances than others as they have the control of resources such as the communal boilers of the central heating system.

The Manager recalled a recent incident, for example, when they were able to get the heating restored in one day as opposed to three weeks a year ago. This was mainly because, he argued, they had been able to exercise some control over those who were going to do the repairs. ‘The valves in this particular case is in one of our workroom. We have the key’, said Kevin, ‘if he leaves the valve off, I’d turn it on ... I have the power to do that’. The job was completed in one day, ‘whereas [when] we had the same problem the year before, it took three weeks’. The frustration they experienced then was

tremendous: ‘... you can scream at them they don’t. I shouted at them, pleaded, he said “if you phone me again I’ll turn it off a week more”. He actually said that to me! Whether he would’ve done it, I don’t know’ (KL).

Decision-making under the Co-op management

As mentioned earlier, despite their allegations of differential treatment as a group by the Council, in actual fact the Co-op members do not appear to feel powerless owing to the fact that they are able to control their own budget. They appear to be even more in control when they have a direct access to the resources available to them, e.g. control of the central heating system. Nevertheless, the group’s exercise of control does not necessarily lead to an increase in each individual tenants’ sense of control. This is because, on the one hand, individuals are positioned differentially within their collectivity as a result of the social divisions. Indeed the notions of tenants taking charge, being in control or their ‘empowerment’, all assume a non-problematic transition from individual to collective power. On the other hand, those Co-op members who may have joined the Co-op recently do not appear to know much about the Co-op management in general and lack the motivation that the founding members may have had and do not identify themselves with the Co-op.

Participation in the Co-op

The Management Committee of the Co-op is elected at their General Meeting. There are three officers to be elected at the General Meeting, namely the Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer, though sometimes a Vice Chair is also elected. Block representatives representing their own or neighbouring blocks at the Management Committee are also elected at the General Meeting.

The Co-op management is dependent on the participation of its members. The Co-op has General and Management Committee meetings every alternate month. The quorum is one fifth of the total membership (20 per cent), which is about thirty-two people.

Below Table 14 shows the breakdown of those present at the two General Meetings of the Co-op I attended.

The active members of the Co-op pointed out to me that the attendance at the Co-op meetings is a problem. As a matter of fact, I attended four monthly General Meetings of

the Co-op and only two were quored. Thus, as can be seen from Table 14, in the two General Meetings I observed the level of attendance was quite low (i.e. around 35 out of 130 units). What is more, the participation process was gendered and ethnicised in that not only was the number of women higher than the number of men but also white women were over represented while Black and ethnic minority men were under represented, and women from these groups were absent altogether.

Present	Total	White-o50	White-u50	B&EM-o50	B&EM-u50
Nov. '95	36				
Women	25	13	12	-	-
Men	11	6	4	1	-
January '96	32				
Women	23	10	15	-	-
Men	0	3	3	-	1

Table 14 Attendance at the meetings of Elthorne First Co-op

The Management Committee introduced incentives to involve members in the Co-op management that seemed to have some influence on the attendance, which was confirmed by the passive members I have interviewed. For example Ruth said she was 'not that keen on' getting involved in the Co-op business. However, one of the requirements of the Co-op membership is to attend at least three meetings a year: 'well, it's part of the membership to attend the meetings. And I do that, but I don't do anything else' (Ruth).

Carol, who is a passive member, said 'Yeah, I go to their meetings ... No, not every meeting ... sometimes I don't get their leaflets that tells you the time of the meeting. So, when I get them I go. You've got to go to three meetings for the year ... I go to four may be'. There is no crèche facility for single mothers to attend the meetings. Thus, Carol, as a single mother of four, leaves her 'big ones... to watch the small ones'. Carol responded to my question of why she has got involved in the Co-op as follows: 'They look after you, yeah they look after you ... So, everyone has to be involved'. Carol made a clear distinction between 'the Self' and 'them', - the Co-op - though she did not specify whether 'them' included all of the active membership or just the Management

Committee. Even when she goes to the meetings she does not construct the Co-op as 'us'.

As both Ruth's and Carol's quotations reveal, when members attend these meetings as a requirement of their membership, their attendance is often reduced merely to their presence. Carol, for instance, noted that 'I just go there and sit' and 'if there's something to say, I say it'. 'But most of the time', she says, 'I'm there, listen and that's it!' Theresa also described that she attends 'nearly all the meetings' and 'that's about as far as it goes'.

Some active members can clearly see that the attendance of this sort does not solve the problem of Co-op management. Debbie who has been an active member since the Co-op started (that was 19 years ago) told me how they introduced incentives so that if members do not go to two or three meetings throughout the year they would not get double-glazing. 'Or if they're in arrears they don't get it.' 'When this was suggested', Debbie went on to say, '... the tenants started turning up for a couple of meetings'. But this did not solve the problem because 'once their double glazing put in then they drop off again'. Debbie's frustration with those who do not take any part in the running of the Co-op, was obvious when she said:

'I don't know why but you get a certain group that not bothered about it. If there's anything going for free then they'll turn up. And you can't even get people. I mean we want more members on the Selection Committee. Nobody wants to go on to it. They want everything done. But it's the same few people that has to do it' (Debbie).

It is the Selection Committee's responsibility to interview and select the future tenants of the Co-op, yet they find it difficult to motivate members to stand for these positions and take control. Comments of both the passive members (Ruth, Ben and Theresa) and the active members (Debbie) demonstrate that improving the attendance through incentives does not automatically create an active membership either. The Co-op management involves taking a web of decisions rather than a single decision or specific decisions that requires the tenants' participation over a period of time rather than some occasional meetings. It is a dynamic process in which decisions are taken, implemented and fed back into the decision-making process all of which requires motivation and cannot be achieved by compelling the members to attend some individual meetings.

Thus, Debbie further complained: 'They go to meetings they don't say anything, just stay there instead of speaking up you know, but get buy'.

Claire too complained about the lack of interest in the Co-op management. She put it as follows:

'... We've got a hundred and thirty-five properties. That doesn't mean a hundred and thirty-five people that means probably about with all the children three or four hundred. But how many turn up at those meetings. See, we have to have thirty, thirty-two, thirty-three I think it is for a quorate' (Claire).

Although she herself enjoys taking part in the Co-op management, Claire thinks this lack of interest in the Co-op is 'terrible'. 'I mean it's not asking a lot, once an hour once every two months. I don't think it's asking a lot of people. They just can't be bothered you know'. Claire finds it 'ridicules' that so few people are interested in the Co-op management and says: 'I wish I knew the answer to it'.

Both Debbie's and Claire's remarks signify the concern of many co-ops that a few long standing co-operative leaders carry out disproportionate burden (Power 1988). Many of the active members feel they are doing too much and that as long as they carry on it is difficult for other less involved members to take over, and not enough people are actively involved.

Theresa however did not share Debbie's view as she put the onus on active membership. She gave her reason for the non-participation this way: 'I don't think you are encouraged enough to take part'. When I asked 'by whom', she responded as: 'By any of the Committee members. It's just you sort of go to the meetings they try to get people to ... no one really takes any interest, nothing. When there's no one to take interest then no one else is sort of going to participate'. All these comments clearly highlighted that there was a lack of communication between the Committee members and some passive Co-op members. When I asked whether Theresa would consider standing for the Management Committee if asked, she responded:

‘Well, I don’t know what it involves. They never explained enough about how the committee runs. How it’s run or anything. So, I don’t really know. I can’t really say because I don’t know what it involves’ (Theresa).

Representation

The Co-op needs volunteers to become block representatives to express the views of residents living in the block they represent, who then will be entitled to attend Management Committee meetings. Claire became a block representative about a year after she moved to the Co-op property, which was nine years ago. She finds it ‘very interesting’ and suggests that people like herself should get involved because that is the idea of a co-operative. They do not have meetings as a block but if any of the residents in her block has any problem they can ask her and then she can sort it out at the office. ‘It doesn’t happen very often’, she says, ‘and [I] take leaflets around when there’s a meeting and put them in the doors that sort of thing’. Claire complained that although Co-op members are asked to offer their services or to be block reps, ‘nobody wants to know. They won’t be bothered ... I don’t know’ (Claire).

Theresa who moved to the Estate six years ago said she did not know anything about block reps. When I told her as much as I could, she said: ‘I didn’t know that (laughs)... I mean I didn’t know we had a block rep. I didn’t know even existed (laughs)’. Theresa remembered how she was caught by surprise when she was offered a place on the Co-op property as she did not know until the last moment that she was on their waiting list. She had no idea how a co-operative has run and put it as: ‘So as [to] the Co-op I haven’t got a clue. I don’t even know the first thing about how they run. Let alone representatives of the blocks (laughs), because no one’s ever told me that we’ve got a rep’.

Theresa’s comments confirm the view that dissemination of information can be inadequate in Co-ops (Power 1988). Yet it is also suggested that co-ops (like many organisations) operate an extensive informal network of information (see discussion in Chapter 3). It is equally true that some people may find themselves outside of these informal channels of information for a number of reasons including differences in world outlooks, life-styles, working hours, and absence of a common language (as result of ethnic, national or cultural differences or disability).

Theresa's lack of awareness in many aspects of Co-op management illuminates those issues concerning the Tenant Management Co-operatives. When the council tenants decide to form a Tenant Management Co-operative it is the result of many discussions and they go through processes in which they make all the decisions that need to be taken during which time they are and remain highly motivated. In my opinion, this is the time that these tenants also go through a process of group identity formation (which is a social construct) by articulating their thoughts, beliefs, orientations and values. They define their boundaries externally with the Council and non-members, as well as internally with those they consider different from themselves through formal as well as informal discussions. Certain attitudes and characteristics in the group are encouraged while others are played down. This is also the time when the founding members develop their own practices, values, norms and social relations whose roots will be embedded in the formal organisation. Such a high level of motivation however is often difficult to sustain over a long period of time. Indeed, co-operatives aim to re-house those in need who show willingness and enthusiasm to participate in the co-operative. Nonetheless, after re-housing, the active involvement of the vast majority of members drops to a minimum. Furthermore, new residents arrive in the Co-op property that have not been part of the processes of group identity formation that those founding members have. Newcomers may also have values and norms that may conflict with that of the dominant group(s) and members. Some people may feel particularly excluded because of their differences in terms of racial, ethnic, and cultural characteristics. Also, the requirement of participation in the co-op management for eligibility may lead to excluding those who are in greater need of a home, yet are unable to be involved in management - such as those whose first language is not English, unfamiliar with the system, work unsocial hours - all of which affects ethnic minorities disproportionately.

Participation of women

Table 14 shows that the majority of people who attend the Co-op meetings are women and men tend not to get involved in its management. When I put my observation to Claire and asked what the reason was for this as far as she was concerned, she said in her daughter's family (who also are Co-op residents) it is her daughter rather than her husband who goes to the meetings: 'Yeah. I mean, my son-in-law, I don't think he's ever been to a meeting. My daughter yes. She was a vice-chairman at one time'. Still she is the one who comes to meetings even though she is a leaseholder now. 'Because she doesn't think an hour every couple of month is a lot to ask'.

The fact that women are active in the management of Co-op rather than men is seen as a problem for some active women like Debbie who compares it to other Co-ops and says: '... We've got a couple of men but not a lot on this Co-op. But, I've been to other Co-op meetings and they've got men on it'. She believes that they need men despite the fact that women do the main bulk of the work: 'I really think you've got to have a few men stand for you, you know. Although the women do a lot but I think you should have men' (Debbie). She gave her reasons as follows: 'I think they've got more, with the Council you got to, they can stand for you and go for it'. Debbie's argument underscores the differential power attached to gender roles in our society. When I asked whether the Council does not take women seriously, she responded: 'Well, I don't think so. No, no!' thus underlining the gendered and ethnicised and highly differentiated nature of the relationship of the local state to individual citizens.

Debbie's comments raise several issues. On the one hand, her observation is remarkable in portraying the fact that many women occupy politically subordinate positions at central levels of the decision-making structure despite their central role in organising and management at local levels, e.g. tenant management co-operatives, tenants' associations. It also highlights that collectivities such as the tenants groups are not homogenous grouping, instead individuals are positioned differently within the collectivity in terms of ethnicity, gender, class, age and that certain individuals hold more power than the others within the same collectivity.

On the other hand, Debbie's view of women through the optics of the Council machinery raises issues that relate to the social construction of (male) superiority over (female) inferiority. Structured inequalities construct women as inferior which may be internalised by the women themselves, e.g. in the political sphere as 'time wasters' because of their emotionality, or 'lack of professionalism'. Inferiority is not the same as feeling powerless (Neckel 1996:19). There are those who are powerless but do not feel themselves to be inferior, and there are the inferior who are not totally powerless. White men (i.e. the manager of the Co-op) unable to influence the Council decisions, for instance, are more likely to feel powerless rather than inferior. Women's inferiority is a social construction over a period of time in the process of which women are not simply assigned subordinate position *vis-à-vis* men, but are also conducive to their subordination through their own renunciation of autonomy (De Beauvoir 1952 cited in

Neckel 1996). The feelings of inferiority lead to further circumscribing already restricted opportunities for those in subordinate positions, e.g. internalising the subordinate position and handing over the power to those who seem to have more clout.

As mentioned in Chapter 5 often women undervalue the part they play in day-to-day management of their Estates. Debbie filling in the questionnaire at the beginning of the interview described her role as 'just important'. However during the interview she explained that she had been a member of the Management Committee as well as the Selection Committee of the Co-op for many years now. As I suggested that her role must be *extremely* important she agreed and said 'Yeah, because we do have to interview people for the flats and say whether we are going to accept them or not' (Debbie).

According to some residents, women were more involved in Co-op management than men because 'women have more time' and 'men's work outside home'. When I interviewed Theresa, I put to her that there were more men than women participating in the Council meetings centrally at the Town Hall yet the number of men involved at local neighbourhood level is considerably low. She responded thus: 'I'm not really sure (laughs) ... Maybe because it's local level because it's voluntary. They're not getting paid for it (laughs). I don't know'. She later added that men may come home 'from a hard [day at] work and might sit in front of the television'. In their household, it is Theresa who attends the meetings rather than her white male partner despite the fact that, like many other younger women that I have interviewed, Theresa also works full-time.

Martin, who is a divorcee, Black man from the West Indies in his early 60s, works at night and therefore cannot attend the Co-op meetings regularly. I asked Martin's opinion as to why women go to the meetings rather than their husbands or partners. His response emphasised a stereotypical view of gender roles in our society, which in actual fact is far from reflecting the reality of our time. He put it as:

'... I don't know because I come in and tired you know. Sometime I feel to relax and so on. And some of the wives they are not working so they have more time to go out and so on ... all I can say ... otherwise I don't know...' (Martin).

Nevertheless, most of my women respondents (except for pensioners) had paid work outside of the home on top of their housework and yet they were the ones involved in the Co-op management. For instance, it was Ruth who participated in the Co-op meetings despite the fact that she was working full-time, doing an access course, and was not really keen on the issues of Co-op management.

Participation of black members

As mentioned earlier, Black and ethnic minority residents are absent in the management of the Co-op (Table 14), as my observations of the two General Meetings as well as the interviews of the tenants and officers demonstrated. The active members defined the problem of absence of Black people as one of general attendance. I explored, for instance, what Debbie meant when she said that there was a certain group of people who were never interested in the Co-op and whether this included white and black or a particular ethnic group she was referring to. She said: ‘both! Both! Because we’ve got on St John’s Way, you’ve got quite a lot of Blacks on there. But as I say if there’s anything going on they go. And if there isn’t they don’t want to know. They complain but they don’t want to know about it’ (Debbie).

Claire, as an active member over the last 9 years (now the Treasurer), commented on the lack of involvement of Black and ethnic minorities in the Co-op. She stated:

‘We’ve got quite a few. You know they’re fine one or two are block reps I think. I think so ... Sibyl on the corner. On the whole they’re not particularly interested which I think is a pity. We haven’t got one on the management and I would like to see that but you can’t force people. It’s a shame. They like to sort of. You see the more you mix and integrate I’m sure that’s better. I think it’s a great pity to sort of be in your own little ghetto. Don’t you?’ (Claire).

Both Debbie and Claire were discontented about the fact that the black people did not ‘involve themselves’ in the management. They discerned the absence of black tenants as their personal choice to remaining indifferent, and did not allow any space for the structural disadvantages that particular groups experience. Their comments involved some degree of resentment for the enjoyment of non-participants the same level of benefits of being a Co-op as active members. Claire said, for example, when ‘they have complaints or things they just go straight to the office. They’re very quick to do that but

if they sort of would come to offer themselves to management they could sort those things out and you know give us the benefit of their ... I don't know'. Nevertheless in Claire's statement there was some acknowledgement of racism in the estate as she said: 'the children all seem to get on well. Well, children are children aren't they? They don't see colour do they? Thank goodness. Some do but I'm sure that's the parents, nasty racialism' (Claire). It is difficult to tell how much Claire's own experience of racial harassment as a Jew contributed to her admission of racism in the estate regarding the participation of minority ethnic groups which seemed to go unnoticed by other tenants.

Allison gave her reasons for not getting involved in the Co-op management as follows: 'They have the people that they want, so I don't get involved with the Co-op' (Allison). Allison does not identify herself with the Co-op management instead she draws a strong boundary between herself and the Management. She keeps her distance instead of involving herself with the Co-op management which she perceives as a conflict management rather than a means of taking part in decision-making and being in control. She recognises the existing conflicting interests and divisions in the estate but also notes that there exists a balance of forces and she is pleased that the estate is well maintained. By paying her rent regularly and keeping her distance she manages not to get into conflict with anybody. She put it as follows:

'... I doesn't try to involve myself in them. I just try to be in no debts with them. Just take no side. And just be glad that I've got a good place ... I mean, they look after the place anyway. It's not too bad' (Allison).

Ben too is happy about the management of their Co-op but he does not identify himself with it. He notes what he likes about living in the Co-op property: 'Oh yeah, *they're* good at that (repairs-TU). *They're* very quick. I give *them* that. The Co-op yeah ... That's one good thing about *them* as well' (Ben)(my emphasis). Indeed, more passive members of the Co-op (like Ben and Allison), as opposed to the active members (like Claire and Debbie), tend to construct a boundary not only between the Co-op and the Council but also between the Self and the Management of the Co-op.

To sum up, the management of the Co-op is based on the voluntary work of its members. There exists, however, a general problem of lack of interest in the Co-op activities and the attendance in the meetings was quite low. It is mostly women that

participate in the Co-op management rather than men even though younger women often have work outside home and have childcare responsibilities and some of them are single mothers. Black and ethnic minority members on the other hand are absent in the management of the Co-op. Yet under representation of men (white) was perceived as problematic rather than the minority ethnic groups by one of the Management Committee members because of the amount of power attached to gender roles in their relationship with the Council, which I will discuss in Chapter 13.

¹ **Interviews**

The Manager has also given me a list of 30 tenants with their names and addresses and with the breakdown of their ethnicity and the degree of their involvement in the Co-op's management. I selected my sample mainly from this list on the basis of their ethnic, gender characteristics. As explained earlier (Methodology), the blocks of the Co-op property have intercom system, which creates a particular problem in gaining access as one cannot knock on the tenants' doors nor is it easy to explain who you are through the intercom in order to persuade them to open the door for you. In contrast, however, when I mentioned their names, residents immediately opened the door for me without asking any further questions. Characteristics of those residents I have interviewed were as follows:

Degree of involvement*	Interviewees		
	Ethnicity	Gender	Age
2	Black	Female	20-30 (single mother)
2	Black	Female	30-40 (single mother)
2	Black	Male	20-30
2	Black	Male	over 50
1	White	Female	over 50
1	White	Female	over 50
2	White	Female	20-30
2	White	Female	20-30
3	White	Male	30-40

(*) Degree of Involvement of residents:

- 1 Active member: Members of the Management Committee including block representatives
- 2 Passive member: Attend meetings only
- 3 Non-participant

Chapter 8: Self-build process and professional agencies

There are a number of agencies that participate in self-build processes. These are namely: the housing association, the local authority, the self-build agencies, the Housing Corporation, the consultants, architects, project managers, surveyors, site supervisors and voluntary organisations.

This chapter examines how the self-build process is organised with regard to the participation, power relations among the participants and constructions of ‘difference’ in the self-build process by looking at the self-build process from the professionals’ point of view namely the architects and the Community Self Build Agency. It considers the roles the participants in the process and the amount of power attached to their roles as well as the way professionals view their relationship with the self-builders.

The following questions are explored: Are the self-builders participating in the decision-making process (both minor and major decisions)? Who is in control of the process? What are the ways in which professionals involved in the process construct ‘difference’ and how their constructions influence the self-builders.

Architects

‘Architype’ is an architectural practice involved in a number of self-build projects as well as a lot of other projects. Currently, self-build projects comprise around a quarter of their total work. They have been involved in self-build working with Walter Segal in Lewisham as early as 1978. The architects are in touch with the Community Self Build Agency (CSBA) although not in a close way. They currently work for about five housing associations though main body of their work is with the South London Family Housing Association (SLFHA).

Participation in the process

Power relations among the participants: who is in control?

The changing nature of the self-build process

One of the architects in Architype whom I will call Patrick Walker is a young, white man and has been involved in self-build projects since 1978. He noted that the nature of self-build process has changed considerably over the years, which has ramifications in

regards to the involvement of the self-builders in the process. At the beginning, in mid 70s, 'the self-builders were very much at the centre of the process'. More recently however, the housing associations have become involved and are funding the schemes. Subsequently, it is proving more difficult to involve self-builders in the design process. 'Although it's very much what we want to do, we aim to do', stressed Patrick.

In recent years, the architects have been appointed by housing associations. Looking at the self-build process from the architect's point of view, Patrick voiced concern about the fact that, due to the Housing Corporation funding process, the architects generally find themselves involved in feasibility work for housing associations in order to attract funds. 'A lot of basic decisions are taken at that stage generally without self-builders being involved', stressed Patrick, 'So, it's in the nature of the process, in the way that process itself has changed, that means that self-builders tend to be much less involved than they were ten years ago' (PW).

The process in the early versions of the scheme was different. The Council took a decision to do a scheme and provided a site and money and then 'let the architects get on with it'. The architects and Walter Segal sat down with the self-builders and developed the scheme. Patrick compared it to the present process this way:

'What that meant was that we could sit down with the self-builders both as a group and individually and work out what they wanted. Whereas now housing associations are putting bids to the Housing Corporation to get funding for schemes and in order to do that they want feasibility work carried out prior generally to self-builders being involved. And numbers of dwellings and types and sizes, and basic ideas about the layout very often that's been quite a lot of work done, all that before they could get involved' (PW).

Edward Young, also a young, white male self-build architect working for the Architype, agrees that there has been a change in the role of the designer. He argued that over the years the process has become more professionally led and bureaucratised reducing the role of the self-builders to a mere labourer thus adversely affecting their motivation in the process. He put it as follows:

‘Increasingly as the process has become bureaucratised and less about the self-builders and more about creating a process, in other words it has become more professionally led over the past few years, and there are good reasons for that (EY).

He gave his reasons for the process to become more bureaucratised this way:

‘... After those initial two or three schemes got under way, the professionals were left especially in the Housing Association end, looking round for more work to do. So, they go out and they get councils interested in and say “have you got any land?” and the council says “hmm, it sounds like a good idea” and it becomes completely professional led and in many instances there hasn’t been a group till after planning approval has been gained’ (EY).

According to Edward ‘... the initial schemes were initiated by groups that set themselves up and spend years bashing away at the door of the system trying to get in’. Thus when the scheme was initiated, the collectivity had the group cohesiveness already achieved and they were highly motivated and ready to go. ‘They may have not any building skills but they went for it’, said Edward. The process in its current form, Edward claimed, is a recipe for a disaster.

As soon as the housing association gets a land from the council everything is switched to go for the architects, Edward stresses, ‘we’re designing away’. This is the stage on the other hand, ‘the housing association is scrabbling around trying to get the group together’. According to Edward ‘it’s a disaster! ... Because once you get on site you end up with a group of people who are standing and scratching their heads wondering what they’re doing there!’ What is more, the self-builders have committed themselves to do something which they are not so sure about: ‘And they’ve signed this contract saying 21 hours a week’, said Edward stressing that ‘that’s tough when you’re holding a full-time job’. Whereas, he noted, ‘in fact what you’re looking for is double that’.

What is more, there is now reluctance on the part of housing associations to involve the self-builders in the design process, who believe that in order to achieve a smoother process, the amount of self-builders’ input and choice should be limited. Patrick explained the ramifications of the more limited nature of the process this way:

‘I think there’s a counter veiling issue that is, the less control self-builders have, the more marginalised they become, rather than being at the centre of the process. I think this reduces people’s motivation and I think all sorts of other problems follow from that to do with commitment, productivity on site, timescales get extended, costs rise. And these are the issues we’re dealing with at the present time’ (PW).

Edward described how these changes affected the self-builders. As the process has become more professionally led ‘self-builders have not come to it with the same ideas and same motivation. They come to it as one self-builder put it “because we need somewhere to live not because we want to do self-build”. And that’s a completely different motivation’ (EY).

The South London Family Housing Association states in its brochure that ‘self-building for rent’ scheme ‘allows future occupants to have a very significant say in the design, construction, management and maintenance of their homes’.¹ Yet under these circumstances obviously architects cannot involve the self-builders in the design process. When self-builders do get involved it is usually too late to make any major decision because by that time all the budgets have been set. All of this takes away the self-builders’ ability to participate in major decision-making and therefore sense of being in control.

Formal and informal communication can have a significant role in influencing the process. The architects believe that self-builders are able to make their views known quite well throughout the process providing them with the feedback. Self-builders of the *Community Self-build* project in Islington, for instance, are quite articulate and every self-builder there has ‘something to say about it’. Nonetheless this is not the case in other groups where often ‘it falls to a small handful, two or three people, who tend to become leaders ... or play a leading role and therefore they are the ones that express the point of view of the group as a whole ...’ (PW).

The architects claim that at present they are facilitating the flow of information from the self-builders after the schemes have been completed. ‘We are now trying to get better feedback by inviting self-builders in’, noted Edward, ‘talking about what’s gone well and what’s not gone so well and how we can learn from them and so on’.

Timescale

The professionals I have interviewed have claimed that these schemes are buildable in 18 months as long as self-builders do enough hours. However, they also admit that the self-builders are not informed about the actual number of hours they have to put in. Edward put it this way:

‘The fact is that they are buildable in 18 months. They’re buildable in 9 months but not on 21 hours a week. But there is a certain amount of misrepresentation around. When housing associations are setting the scheme, they say “yes, you can go in 18 months, however here’s a contract for 21 hours a week”. Because the only way to get them in 18 months, if the self-builder pulls out all the stops and is doing well in excess of 21 hours a week’ (EY).

Edward gave an example that is a one-off, private house in North London where the self-builders started last summer and have recently completed in 9 months. A young man and his father with support from the family built the house. The reason that they managed to get it done within this sort of timescale, Edward believes, is because they put the hours in. And he argues that it is the same with the self-build projects. ‘If you don’t have motivation, it won’t happen’ says Edward. ‘And ... self-builders need to have consistent motivation to work *well over* their contracted hours to achieve what is necessary within that timescale’ (EY).

The question then arises, why is it that the self-builders are not told by the architects that with 21 hours of input there is no way that they can finish that sort of design? For instance, Islington self-build project had two split sites and a complicated design (see Appendix 3). So, is it not the architect’s role to tell them that although they can finish it within 18 months, but with this sort of design, and with this sort of split sites it’s impossible? When I put the question to Edward, he responded as follows: ‘Yes, but we have to be careful that we don’t contradict the Housing Association selling the scheme’. I then asked: ‘So, you feel that you just have to keep quiet about it?’ He replied:

‘No, it’s not always clear a few years ago my assumption was that self-builders understood that. And understood that the contracted hours were nominal number to enable a contract to take place. And that the number is 21 because they are legally allowed to work because of social security, etc.. But my assumption was, I thought most

self-builders understood that actually to build within that period you have to put in well over that' (EY).

I put it to the architect that it seemed that the timescale being missed out by the Housing Association while 'selling the scheme'. It is not very clear that self-builders have to put more hours in order to finish the scheme within 18 months. The architect then pointed out the following:

'Well, it can't be clear because they couldn't claim Social Security if it was clear ... That's why it's restricted to 21 hours. And that's going to drop to 16 hours ... because the law is changing and you won't be able to work more than 16 hours on anything voluntary without affecting your Social Security. But they're going to get round to that, instead of saying 21 hours per unit, they're going to say 16 hours per person involved which means that, if you've got 2 people signed up for a house then there'll be 32 hours expected from you' (EY).

It is still not clear how they would 'get round to it' since it *is* the case *at the moment*. Self-builders repeatedly told me throughout the interviews that each individual should put in 21 hour a week, yet if they are covering for a partner they are expected to do double amount of that time.

According to the architects, motivation of self-builders varies enormously from group to group. There are some groups, they claim, where the level of motivation has not been as high as is necessary for good results. 'I think it's partly because of expectations and lack of information, lack of formal training, it's a problem' said Patrick. I think in the past groups tended to be more self-motivated'. Islington self-builders, for instance, came together completely independently of any council or housing association and therefore were more self-motivated. They organised themselves training that they thought they needed. 'Whereas now', says Patrick, 'it tends to be much more that group of people, often at council waiting list kind of delivered to the scheme. And they're not given, ... sufficient understanding about how the process works, how to organise themselves as a group, and ... how to understand the building process...' whereas, 'the whole training side of things is in a muddle at the moment' (PW).

Professional advice

The general point put by the self-builders repeatedly is that they are inexperienced and that they do not get the advice and support that professionals should be providing for them. They complained, for instance, that the architects have not supported them. 'They haven't been sufficiently supportive' one of the self-builders said. 'They don't seem to be very much interested in self-build', others argued. Regarding the timescale they are told that the scheme can be completed within 18 months yet they end up building it for three years. What is more, at the end of the day whatever happens, they are the ones who pay for it, they are the ones who are put at a disadvantage and suffer. As I asked architects about their views on these issues, Patrick responded as follows:

'I think it again comes back to this question of motivation. I think that this kind of timescales make a number of assumptions about the amount of time which people are going to be working and that the self-builders' perception very often is that if they put in a minimum contracted hours that they'll get it built in time whereas it hasn't been clear that ... the level of motivation generally ... has to be higher than that in order to get a good result. And therefore the self-builders, I think, are quite rightly saying that they've been misled. You can do it in the timescales but you can't do it in the timescales and put in the minimum amount of effort. You've got to put in a lot more' (PW).

Nevertheless the term 'motivation' seemed a little bit ambiguous for self-builders *can* be motivated while they do their 21 hours, but the minimum amount of time that a self-builder needs to put in may be insufficient. In other words it does not mean that self-builders are not motivated but 21 hours is not enough to complete the scheme within the timescale. Patrick stresses that they have to do much more than that:

'I think the only way that you can do that is if people are motivated. I think motivation is at the core of all this and it affects productivity as well. Because very often you find groups that aren't well motivated, their productivity is exceptionally low. And therefore it's going to take a long time. I mean it's a very complex issue this' (PW).

Indeed, it is a very complex issue since some self-builders have full or part-time jobs, or need to do the work of another self-builder partner. In which case it is nothing to do with motivation, but having no time at all. Furthermore the self-builders' evidence revealed that throughout the building process they encountered problems that were unpredictable without the professional knowledge (such as the choice of site supervisor,

as in the case of the Community Self-build Project - see Chapter 9). On top of all this, self-builders experience particular problems as individuals and as groups. These are due to the structural inequalities in the society on the grounds of 'race', ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality as a result of which they are constructed as 'the Other' and subsequently experience hostility from some neighbours. Indeed, as discussed in Chapters 9, 10 and 11, while building, self-builders had to devote their time and energy to tackle such unpredicted problems. The architects, however, did not seem to be aware of any of these problems. When they talked about the Fusions Jameen Phase II, there was not acknowledgment of the ethnic divisions, e.g. the racial hostility the group experienced in the neighbourhood. The way the architects have collapsed all the problems to the self-builders' lack of motivation all sounded misleading and unfair, as well as based on assumptions homogenising the self-builders.

One of the architects admits that there are other aspects to this problem when he says: 'another criticism is made is that very often designs are complex and difficult to build and that designers like us should make designs that are much more buildable, much easier to build. And I think there is some substance to that argument' (PW). He elaborates it in the following quotation:

'I think that over the years the designs have become much more complex in the face of increasingly demanding standards from the building regulations, things like that, but also expectations have risen, self-builders want more, they want more out of it. They want more complicated and better standards, and so on. And that hasn't been recognised in the sort of timescales that have been talked about. So, I think there is a mismatch; the expectation that self-builders have been not properly apprised of what it means. The timescale that are talked about, and the times they're expected to work, and the productivity' (PW).

He then summed up what he thought would be the alternative, as follows: 'And I think this all comes back to proper motivation at the outset to the ... thing being properly set up, planned, people understanding the process and being trained sufficiently in what's going on and what their role is in it and in the building process itself' (PW). In my view it is still not clear how much all this planning would alter the imbalance of power in the building process without enabling the self-builders to control the budget, removing the

legal restrictions on those who are on benefit and while some self-builders have to do other full-time jobs or have dependents to care for.

The self-builders I have interviewed, on the other hand, described the way *they* see the problem as follows: In retrospect they can see that this sort of complicated design could not have been achieved even with professional builders let alone with inexperienced self-builders. It has nothing to do with them being self-builders, but the problem is that they were not told by the professionals that with this complicated design, ‘there’s no way you can achieve this within 18 months’. As far as self-builders are concerned the professionals must have known from the beginning that it would take three to four years to complete the scheme. As I put this to Patrick, he responded:

‘I think ... that there should be a discussion between people like us and self-builders, about these issues ... I think there are number of variables here. It’s to do with how the groups have been formed, and people in them. Whether they are capable of working effectively or not. It’s also to do with the design of the buildings. But I think it’s overstating it to say that professional builders wouldn’t be able to do it in the time. I think that the self-builders don’t understand what the productivity in building process is about. Maybe at the outset they shouldn’t, and can’t because they haven’t done it before. And it comes back to this question about everybody being clear what their expectations are at the outset. And it’s also part of the whole process that self-builders at the end of the process are going to be capable of doing it in the way that they weren’t at the beginning’ (PW).

Edward pointed out that a lot of the problems have risen in recent years due to cost. ‘That’s where self-builders are coming and saying they are being penalised through no fault of their own’ suggested Edward, ‘they are relying on professional advice and professional advice is letting them down’. However it is the process rather than the individuals that is at the root of the problem, he claimed. He rendered the paradoxical nature of the process as follows: the Housing Association gets to hear of a site and they get a council interested, which is the only way it’s going to proceed, then they go to the architects for free feasibility and advise. And they do a sketch without always knowing if there is a major sewer, running underneath of the site. They may not fully have time to consider the natural constraints of the site.

Edward then gave an example of the Fusions Jameen Phase II project (see Chapter 11): ‘Moorside Road is a very long, thin site. We applied a road cost to it but what we didn’t consider was that there was only room for houses on the one side of the road. So, the cost of the road was twice per house what would it have been’. Such mistakes become inescapable as Edward described it: ‘Yes, we’re at fault for not picking that up but on the other hand we’re not being paid for it, we’re doing a quick desk-top study of it’. Such problems can be avoided if they are paid for their services properly. ‘I strongly feel that the Housing Association should pay for us, pay a consultant and get a site survey, site investigation done’ argued Edward. ‘Which would cost them a little bit of money but it would reduce risk ... make everybody’s life a lot easier at the end of the day because that’s the key time when the financial decision is made’. Because after that sum has been agreed, or projected by the architects the bid goes to the Housing Corporation and if it is successful it is that fixed amount of money and nothing can vary it (EY).

So, the answer to the question of ‘who is in control of the process at the moment?’ is that obviously it is *not* the self-builders. The architects insist that ‘they should be!’ ‘I think it depends upon the group,’ says Edward, ‘but, where the group formed itself and fought to get there then it tends to be a lot more in control ... ’ (EY).

The architects did not seem to feel that they, as professionals, are in control of this process either. When I put the question to Edward, he replied that they are in control ‘not of the whole process ... Bits of it’. In answer to my question of who, he thought has the most say in this process, whether it is the funders or anybody else, he responded this way:

‘It depends in what context. We have most control over the design. The Housing Association has most control over the rents and how they operate. And at the end of the day, self-builders have most control over how long it takes. You can’t get a way from it. They are the contractor. And it’s up to them, either they perform or they don’t perform’ (EY).

Views on the future of self-build

Patrick stressed that ‘I don’t know any who haven’t stood back at the end and said: “it was hard work but definitely worth doing”’ (PW). Nevertheless, he thinks that self-build projects need some amendments, which he outlined as follows:

‘... It’s essential to ... put the group at the centre to make them own their projects and that means a lot more investment in money and time by the Housing Association at the beginning. And they should be *all* there, at least a year before they start on site, so they have time to form a cohesive group. And start their own banging at doors. And hopefully get involved in the design more. I think cost should be controlled a lot better. And ... I think people should be paid at feasibility stage even if it’s only a small amount. That means that they are willing to put more resources into it’ (EY).

Contrary to his earlier comments when Edward put the onus largely on the self-builders, his proposals involved changes to the organisation of the self-build process itself. In other words, initially he held self-builders responsible for the shortcomings of the process yet his proposals were mainly concerned with the way self-build process was organised and managed, which fell outside of the self-builders’ control.

Edward’s further comments highlighted the fact that it is the Housing Association as the funding body who have the most power in influencing the way self-build process is organised and managed. However they do not seem to appreciate the importance of experience while making their decisions. Architects believe that after 10 years they think they are getting on top of the cost. However, at the very point they are in control of the cost, the Housing Association has lost a certain amount of faith in them and that it is now involving quantity surveyors rather than architects. Edward put it as follows: ‘... it’s ironic that the very moment we’ve got a good handle on costs they’re actually going to someone else who has no experience of self-build to give them cost information’ (EY).

Construction of ‘difference’

Professionals and non-professionals

As mentioned earlier, this particular architectural practice has been involved in self-build since the late 70s. Nevertheless, they still appeared to have a strong boundary construction between the self-builders as non-professionals and professionals. When

Edward, for example, described the modifications he would like to see in future self-build projects he said:

‘I also think that there could be another role created which is that of a self-builder’s friend. It’s not a professional who is like a tenant’s friend who is there to hold their hand. But who knows all the ropes. So that they can advise the group as to how to deal with the architects and the Housing Association. And behave in an appropriate manner. And help them to be a co-operative or to form a right sort of group. I think that can make a big difference’ (EY).

Edward’s remarks emphasised the separation of the professional from the client and his proposal is likely to have the effect of solidifying it further rather than obliterating it. Moreover one of the major criticisms raised by the self-builders was that professionals who are supposed to be supporting self-builders in fact themselves are *inexperienced* in self-building. They may be good at their professions but experience in self-building and their commitment to it is different and missing. In other words, it is the professionals that seem to need a better understanding of the self-build process. Thus, adding another ‘semi-professional’ to the process, rather than finding ways of facilitating a better communication between the self-builders and those architects who can provide the much needed specialist advice, raises doubts about the professionals’ ability to address the problems of self-builders.

What is more, I am not sure what the architect means by ‘right sort of group’ which ‘behave in an appropriate manner’. After all self-build is a process that puts a group of individuals into a contractual obligation to put their time and labour freely for a minimum of three years just because they do not qualify for a decent and permanent affordable housing under the existing system. All of this is in addition to their existing commitments, responsibilities and financial hardship. They are not supposed to have any skills yet as demonstrated in the following chapters many of them are highly qualified. The above comments, however, seem to fail to recognise all this and expect even more of self-builders to ‘behave in an appropriate manner’.

While emphasising the professional/non-professional divide between the self-builders and professional agencies, the architects did not acknowledge other existing divisions such as ethnic divisions. The fact that certain groups experience particular disadvantage

as a result of the racism (both personal and institutional) was overlooked by the professional agencies including architects.

The Community Self Build Agency

The Community Self Build Agency came out of a project in Bristol, which was the first ever scheme for young, single, unemployed people who built their homes. One of the officers of the Agency described their role as essentially trying to promote good practice and the concept of self-build *nationally*. He noted that they provide independent advice rather than promoting a particular way of working, or a specific type of building construction. Another representative of the Agency, a white woman in her late 40s whom I will call Sharon Parker, summarised the reasons for the initiation of the agency as follows:

‘In St. Paul’s area of Bristol there were a lot of *young, black, unemployed man* who at that time didn’t have much chance of getting into permanent housing and also not faring very well on the job market. So the idea of the scheme was to give them a chance to actually build their own home and through that to acquire skills, which would help them in the job market. Now, by the end of the scheme it was eleven out of the twelve were in work, and when there was a survey carried out eight years later, those same people were in work, so it actually showed that self-build for those young people was a real turning point in their lives and gave them stability which they didn’t have before’ (SP)(my emphasis).

Thus the Community Self Build Agency was set up, according to Sharon Parker, in order to give more opportunities to ‘people in housing need and who are out of work’, and also ‘particularly young people to have a chance to develop their potential’. She argued that ‘the vehicle we used is actually self-build homes’. She went on to say: ‘Now so where we’re coming is using housing finance available to build homes but our primary interest is in the individuals who are actually building those homes’. Noting that they are there to help individuals ‘develop their talents’, Sharon suggested that this is quite difficult to do in a traditional work setting. She put it as follows:

‘And now that so many people are out of work anyway it’s an ideal opportunity for people who aren’t wage earners to actually contribute to the family budget and the obvious way is to try to reduce your housing cost. So any self-builder who becomes involved in the self-build has an opportunity to participate in the planning their homes

which improves their knowledge base generally about how the world work, and can introduce so they have an opportunity through the building their homes ... which means that in the long term they're really contributing to the family budget even though they're actually not working' (SP).

This way, she claims, self-builders are in effect reducing the running cost of the scheme and in the process acquiring different skills. 'And by that I don't mean just in the building industry', she stresses, 'I mean out of self-build schemes come people who are *leaders* and haven't shown that quality before. There're people who are actually good at communicating and haven't really had a chance actually to show their true colours. The variety of ways in which people can develop their potential if you like, so, that's our main focus' (SP)(my emphasis).

Throughout her comments, the Community Self Build Agency representative made various assumptions about the self-builders in terms of their ethnicity, gender, class, employment status, life style, stage in the life cycle and the self-build process itself. She assumed, for instance, that self-builders have families and can contribute to the family budget by reducing their housing cost. In fact, most of my respondents were single people. Self-builders are, according to her, unemployed and that they need to develop their talents and self-building can facilitate this, which again contradicted to the experience of most of my respondents many of whom already had skills (building skills as well as others) and some were in employment. Her assumption about the self-build process in that self-builders have the opportunity to get involved in the design process of the scheme does not correspond to the recent changes in the process as described by one of the architects earlier.

Participation in the process

Power relations among participants

The role of the Community Self Build Agency

Communication seemed to be a crucial factor in 'empowerment' of self-builders. I put to Rodney the concern that self-builders voiced about the fact that they believed they were misled about the duration of these schemes to complete. Admitting that the Community Self Build Agency do not give clear information in terms of timescale, he made the following striking comment attempting to justify their attitude: 'Because quite honestly *if you said to some people " it's going to take you three years waiting to start*

on site and two years to build”, they’re not going to become involved’ (RM)(my emphasis). The above quotation demonstrates the extent to which the self-builders are misled in the process.

Rodney claimed that the Community Self Build Agency is trying to help self-builders in speeding up the process so that they do not lag behind. He put it as: ‘What you have to try and find are ways in which you can speed up the process so that people still get the same benefits, but with better organisation and better input from the people who are working with the self-builders, we can actually get something that’s more realistic’ (RM). When Rodney talked about self-builders he was making assumptions about their social positioning in terms of their gender, sexuality and life style. ‘Because if you’ve got a young family, suggested Rodney, ‘you certainly are putting your marriage at risk if you’re spending all of your spare time on a building site. And someone has to look after the children and usually may be the mum who looks after them rather than the father’ (RM).

Yet his comments and his example did not quite reflect the reality of most of the self-builders that I have interviewed. This is because it is often not the two-parent families with children who are involved in self-build schemes for they are given priority in re-housing by the local authorities. Rather it is single people, single parents or childless couples. Nonetheless one of my respondents did say his relation with his wife was broken mainly because of self-build process (see Chapter 10). Rodney then asserted that:

‘So we’re about *stopping people trying to re-invent the wheel* because by now there are fifty examples of completed community self-build schemes, the people in housing need and there are lessons to be learned from all of those which need to be passed on to the next generation. And essentially there’s absolutely no reason for people have to spend two years or two and a half years working on site unless they particularly wanted (laughing)’ (RM)(my emphasis).

Ironically however, as the interviews of self-builders have demonstrated, the agencies failed to do what the Community Self Build Agency representative claimed they had been doing. The self-builders repeatedly complained that they do not have the exchange of information and that they learn by making the same mistakes as other self-builders

and that in fact they keep ‘re-inventing the wheel’. One of the self-builders in the Greenstreet project described they were not given a platform in a recent conference. Another self-builder explained how she felt they were being *discouraged* from meeting other self-builders (see Chapter 10). I asked Rodney how the Community Self Build Agency promotes this sharing of experience. He described it as:

‘Well, we run six self-build forums a year. Where visitors may be allowed to self-build sites. So, for instance, we visited the Islington scheme last year and we encourage people thinking about self-build or who may already be involved come along and learn from the people on the ground, who are actually doing it. And listen to what they say what went well for them and what didn’t go well for them. So that if people are thinking of doing the same, having the same approach, there may be ways in which they can perhaps do it slightly differently to actually do it better than the Islington scheme’ (RM).

Rodney claimed that ‘the whole thing is ... about different people coming together and listening to each other’. Yet the self-builders I have interviewed highlighted the failure of the institutions and professionals to listen to the self-builders, their lack of real support and co-operation. Rodney, *too*, calls on those professionals involved in the process to listen to the self-builders:

‘It’s also about trying to say to people who are paid to become involved in self-build, there’s a group out there that have to be listened to. These are the self-builders, they can do it, they have done it, and there’s no reason why more people can’t do it. You’ve just got to give them a chance’ (RM).

Quite contrary to the above quotation, however, my respondents’ comments (self-builders as well as officers) indicate that the agencies, and professionals as a whole do not have much faith in the self-builders. They seem to have a difficulty with the idea of community self-build, for one reason or another, and in effect are not equipped to work with the concept of self-building although *they get paid for it*.

Decision-making

Rodney also stressed that they as the Community Self Build Agency are not involved in decision-making process. ‘We don’t make any decision for any group at all, they make their decisions’ claimed Rodney’. What we see ourselves is actually helping them to

learn what's happened before and to learn from other people. So if somebody phones up and says "we're thinking of doing this" ... I'd say "why don't you go and speak to so and so group because they've already tried that and it hasn't worked for them or it has worked for them" (RM).

Claiming that it is the self-builders themselves that make the decisions, Rodney said, 'and what we're trying to do, I suppose, is to breakdown this view that some professional people have is that people in housing need can't do anything, they can ...' His comments contradicted both the evidence given by self-builders themselves and the architects. Self-builders do not appear to be the ones making *major* decisions. Nor do they occupy a central role in the self-build process anymore. Moreover, there is a tendency now to bring even more professionals into the process (e.g. subcontractors) rather than to brake down the professional/non-professional divide. Rodney went on to say that:

'... it's bit like tenant participation; people think they know nothing about it but they can be very sensible in some of the comments they actually make and suggestions they put forward. And it's really trying to improve the input from the self-builders and actually encourage the other organisations to listen to what they have to say and to actually be more open towards them' (RM).

As a matter of fact, Rodney's comments suggest that it is the input of the *agencies and professionals* into the process that needs to be improved.

Sharon pointed out that the group has almost no say in the appointment of the architect and this is because those who fund the scheme wish to have the final say in that. Sharon portrayed the situation as follows:

'You see, what you have to understand is that the housing association attracts the money and they have ultimate responsibility to see that is well spent because it's government money. And most of them will want to appoint the architect themselves rather than the group. Some *will* allow the group to appoint an architect' (SP)(her emphasis).

Sharon stressed the importance for the group to realise that ‘if they go down the route of appointing an architect before they’ve got a housing association on board as their partner’ they could be ruining their chances because ‘the housing association may wish to have an input into the appointment of that consultant’. She noted that some of the housing associations are ‘very reluctant to take an unknown consultant in to work on what they consider a risky project’. Thus she recommended that the group keep an open mind until they have had some interim discussions with the association because every association has a list of approved consultants. And those are the ones who they have worked with over the years and ‘who, they know can deliver’. Sharon, too, emphasised what seemed to be a persistent problem that these consultants may not necessarily have the experience in self-build: ‘The difficulty about those consultancies is that very few of them - if any of them - will have self-build experience. And therefore someone with self-build experience would be ideal because then all the partners are not learning at the expense of the self-builders’. But the Community Self Build Agency’s advice to the housing associations is: “you really ought to have somebody as part of your team who knows what self-build is about and ideally that should be the architect”. And having said that some associations still want to work with architects, who are on their approved panel’ (SP).

Sharon’s above comments underline the institutions’ lack of confidence in non-professionals, e.g. self-builders. Indeed the interviews of the self-builders revealed that this often seems to be the case. Again contrary to the traditional practice in which the client appoints the architect, crucial decisions, such as the appointment of the architect are not taken by the self-builders. When they *do* appoint the architect, the criteria is not that they should be good at that particular type of work, i.e. self-build, but that they should be on the approved list of the Housing Association.

Who is in power?

I asked the Community Self Build Agency representative her opinion about the power attached to the role of the self-builders in the self-building process. Sharon claimed that ‘there’s a limit to it’. Their design input is limited, she said, because the site will dictate the number of dwellings and their layout. She argued that they have input in terms of internal layout, how it appears visually outside, and decisions relating to central heating. She suggested that ‘for them inside is perhaps more important than outside anyway’. Nevertheless, her separation of ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ seemed to be problematic. Sharon

suggested that 'it will very much depend on the architect that is working with the group and that housing association'. She rendered the way different parties envisage the process and the output as follows:

'At the end of the day the housing association will see this as *their* house, if it's going to be rented. If it's for shared ownership they may still see it as *their* house because they don't know when people will actually buy out entirely. And so they may have very fixed views about the style of housing they want because they have a planned maintenance problem and different styles of housing complicate planned maintenance and so forth. So nobody's free agent in a sense on the design front. But I still think that given a plot and given that it'll produce nine houses say, there's still a lot that self-builders can actually input that scheme to make it *theirs* if you like' (SP)(her emphasis).

I asked Sharon who is it that the self-builders go to when they feel powerless in the decision-making process. 'Well', she said, 'their first recourse is to try and actually work with their partners, the consultant, the housing association whatever'. She pointed out that they can also phone them up for advice but the Agency's role would be to advise them that "yes, this would be reasonable or that would be reasonable" and to actually go back and negotiate'. 'Because,' she said, 'at the end of the day they have got to make with their partners. I can't make it work for them. *They* have got to work' (SP)(her emphasis).

At this stage, the problem may get more complicated rather than addressed because of the way housing professionals deal with people and their aspirations. Sharon's comments were striking for she recognised that some schemes deliberately keep the power away from the self-builders and do not see them as equals rather there exists a paternalistic attitude by these professionals in those agencies. 'That's where the dilemma comes in' said Sharon, 'because some schemes perhaps don't give the group enough input because they are frightened of it. Or frightened of the group and also they also want to control things. So it doesn't get out of hand'. She concluded by drawing attention to the view held by professionals that 'lay people cannot understand what it is all about' (SP).

Sharon argued that, what needs to be understood is that local authorities and housing associations are providers of housing. 'They're used to actually being benevolent

landlord saying “we’re offering you a flat” and everybody being grateful and saying “thank you very much!”” She further stressed that the problem lies in the paternalistic approach of the local authorities and professional agencies. ‘They’re just not used to dealing with people on a one-to-one basis as customers, if you like, and certainly not in terms of planning. So they’ve got a long way to go in that respect’ (SP).

Construction of ‘difference’: ‘the Other’

Throughout our conversation the Community Self Build Agency representative made assumptions about the homogeneity of the self-build groups. When Rodney did refer to the importance of the differences between self-builders, his conceptualisation of these differences did not relate to the social positioning of the self-builders in terms of their class, ethnicity, gender and age. Instead, they were the differences in the expectations of self-builders in relation to the tenure of their homes. His comments were as follows:

‘So you have to have a flexibility built-in to the whole dimension of the self-build schemes. And also because people are different really, they want different things out of life. Some people are interested in shared ownership, and some are interested in rented. Some may have a check of a financial career in which case they can’t contemplate shared ownership but they can do self-build. So it’s all about having a flexible approach to what people can and cannot do’ (RM).

As stated earlier, when Sharon mentioned the Bristol project she had described the group by their ethnic, gender and class characteristics. I invited Sharon to comment on the targeted groups in the self-build schemes by asking her if they had targeted particular groups, for instance, by ways of advertising the available schemes. She responded that it is the group or whoever is initiating the scheme and not the Community Self Build Agency that would advertise. She went on to say that:

‘Essentially we would be trying to influence everybody concerned with the scheme to have a better mix of people with ethnic minorities and a better mix of women on their schemes. Primarily because self-build has traditionally being associated with the white male and we want to get away from that. We actually want it to be open to anyone who lives in that community. So we would be encouraging people from ethnic minorities and women to participate and encouraging all the organisations that work with them to do it’ (SP).

Describing the difficulties they had when they had initiated a scheme in Brent, she said they had a Black woman and three or four men from Black and ethnic minority backgrounds. Although they thought that was quite a reasonable mix it was not easy to achieve. They tried to encourage and speak to their referral agencies that actually have links with that community, to encourage that to happen. Thus they only had two women out of twelve. Pointing to the fact that there are more women on the Islington scheme, she suggests that this 'is partly because from where they're coming from. Because they've all been part of a short life group which has been very equal towards the sexes, if you like' (SP).

Complaining that 'people get very hooked up on "why haven't you got a lot of women?"' Sharon gave the example of a scheme in North Tyneside where the group 'went out of their way trying to get as many women as possible and they ended up with one'. She claimed that 'it's all about people's different background, their aspirations of their family, what the tradition is and particularly in the North it's actually very difficult to get women to feel that they want to participate in the building process' (SP). Furthermore she stressed that women's contribution to a self-build scheme is recognised only as and if it is perceived to be 'building work'. She gave the following example:

'There was a conference last month where in fact in the workshop that ... we had ... two women. We had a woman who was actually working with them doing it, who has actually been the secretary of a local group. And she was doing it with her husband. And there was another woman in the group who hasn't actually even started building on site, and said she didn't do any of the building work. And this immediately embraced the hackle of the other woman who said "why not? You ought to be!" And it's all about the horses for courses! What they didn't realise that this woman Sheila had actually taken all the deliveries, signed them all off, she'd been the security person, she kept the group together and yet they were actually demeaning what she had done because she wasn't physically building and yet it was her husband that was actually the self-build member and she was doing this as a contribution to the group' (SP).

Sharon's above quotation renders once more on the one hand the invisibility of women's labour and on the other hand women's internalisation of it. Sharon's construction of gender difference on the other hand highlighted women's contribution making it more visible. It also underscores the fact that it would be wrong to essentialise the self-build process, which I discuss in Part III of the thesis.

To sum up, there has been a considerable change in the nature of the self-building process with regard to the power relations over the years. Self-builders used to be very much at the centre of the process. More recently, however, the housing associations have become involved and are funding the schemes. They are concerned with the financial aspects of the process and therefore keep the process under their control. As a result of which self-builders have become less in control of the process and less able to get involved at the design stage of the process. Thus the architects argued that over the years the process has become more professionally led and bureaucratized reducing the role of the self-builders to a mere labourer, thus adversely affecting their motivation in the process.

The architects also highlighted that there has been a change in the role of the designer too. Because of the Housing Corporation funding process the architects nowadays generally find themselves involved in feasibility work for housing associations in order to attract funds, which they do free of charge. Generally a lot of basic decisions are taken at this stage without self-builders being involved. As a result self-builders tend to be much less involved than they were ten years ago. According to the architects the less control self-builders have the more marginalized they become, which reduces their motivation and all sorts of problems follow, such as commitment and productivity on site are reduced, timescales get extended, costs rise, and incentives are lost. When all this is combined with the fact that institutions involved and professional in general have mistrust in non-professionals such as self-builders, the process can become disempowering and even hostile for the self-builders. Professionals involved in the self-build projects have implicit and explicit assumptions about the ethnicity, gender, class and status of self-builders, which did not correspond to the social positionings of my respondents. These views that involved also stereotyping of the self-builders appeared to be a major obstacle in their relationship with the groups.

I discuss the issues arising from the changes to the self-build process and the positioning of the self-builders in decision-making processes, in Part III.

¹ *Self-build for Rent, Based on the CHISEL Model*, South London Family Association, p.3.

Chapter 9: *Community Self-Build*

Introduction

All the self-builders of the Islington self-build project were living in a short life housing co-operative before the scheme was set up. In 1985 an advertisement appeared in the co-operative which they belonged to inviting those people who would be interested in building their own house to attend a meeting. Those who responded to the advertisement developed their scheme and started building.

The group bought the land from Islington Council and the New River Housing Association became the development agent of the group. At the point that the group got the funding from the Housing Corporation and that it became a real possibility to build, the New River folded as an association. Then the group had to take the package of self-build out to tender to other housing associations since they could not develop it themselves, even though they are a registered housing association. They founded the Community Housing Association (CHA), which is now their development agency.

About the Project

Islington Community Self-build project is situated in the middle of the Elthorne Estate, which has 850 units of dwellings in total. It is mostly families living on the wider estate.

The project is split into two sites: the main site is in Nicolay Road where there are thirteen houses, and the other site is in Sussex Way where there are three bungalows. There are 23 self-builders in the group building 16 properties on a split site, which means some houses are to be shared by two members. Dwellings, however, differ in their sizes. The main site - Nicolay Road - consists of two and three storey houses and all the three storey houses are three-bedroom. The two storey houses are two or three-bedroom. Bungalows of the Sussex Way site are two or three-bedroom dwellings. The designs of houses on split sites are also totally different. Bungalows are the more traditional Walter Segal method in that they are completely built of timber.

Although the project is both for single people and families, there are neither families nor people with children on the project. There were certain criteria laid down by Islington

Council for people to join the Co-op and come on the scheme one of which was that they ought to be living in short life housing in the Borough.

One of the Islington self-builders, a 40 years old white man whom I will call Simon, was living, and still lives, in a short life property. He responded to the above advertisement and subsequently has got involved in the project. They developed the scheme by organising meetings, which was seven years before they started the work on site.

Nancy, who is a 38 years old white, female self-builder recalled that they did not have the registration with the Housing Corporation after the New River Housing Association disbanded, nor could they register since they were supposed to have developed previous schemes. 'The Housing Corporation wouldn't give us registration' she noted, 'So, we were led into a situation [where] we had to seek a second housing association to become our development agent'. Thus the group invited other associations to tender to take on *their* scheme. Her comments indicated that the procedures have led to the construction of a boundary between the group and their future development agency even at the early stages of the project (which is discussed later in the chapter). Nancy sounded resentful when she said, 'and then *they* got the allowances to do all the development and got the money and the recognition to develop *our* scheme that actually *we* did' (Nancy)(her emphasis).

Jonathan, a 48 years old white man, has been involved in the project over the last five years - that is, two years before they got on site and for nearly three years building it. He told me that they have to put in a minimum of 26 hours, which is three days and two hours a week.

Melanie, who is a 42 years old white, female self-builder, has been involved in the project right from the beginning, eight years ago. Five years later she left the project and she came back two years later just as they started building it. 'We had so many start dates', she recollected, 'and it's just never happened. In the end I just left, I had enough ... and then somebody dropped out and with a friend, I went up ... asked group ... I was interviewed and I got allocated with my friend, we were co-builders. At a later date he dropped out. So they allowed me to stay on'. Melanie pointed out that at some point

they worked it out that over a hundred people have gone through the group over the years.

Power relations within the group

Construction of 'difference' and 'the community'

Skills and 'empowerment'

Although self-builders are not required of having skills to do the project existing and acquired skills appeared to play a significant role in their sense of power/empowerment.

Some self-builders, like Simon, had no building qualifications before coming on site. Until last year they did mainly block work, e.g. laying blocks and mixing mortar. Last year Simon did mostly electric installation, e.g. wirings and cables for the whole site. He noted that they had a weekend training course for electrical installation and he also read some books in the library, subsequently acquiring new skills that he did not have before.

Melanie had carpentry skills before coming on site. However, responding to my question whether she had acquired new skills since she began working on site, she was not as certain as some others were. 'I must have' said Melanie. Because it is intensively carpentry orientated, she explained, she had not had a chance to work in other trades such as electrics or plumbing as she hoped. 'Or do anything other than carpentry really', she noted. 'So, I found that quite disappointing ... those other people who weren't [skilled] have learned so much! People qualified themselves as electricians. I've learned some carpentry stuff that I haven't done before' (Melanie).

Like Melanie, Liz (a 34 years old white woman) also had building skills before coming onto the project. She outlined the skills she brought to the project as follows:

'I was a tradeswoman before I joined the group. I worked as a tradeswoman ... for a housing association as a plasterer, structural worker, so I had a lot of experience of wet trades plastering and structural work of building. I did that for ten years before' (Liz).

She also was involved in voluntary organisations and housing associations prior to the project knowing about the legal aspects of an organisation. She therefore got involved

in developing the legal agreements with the Community Housing Association and in negotiating the legal agreement between the group and the housing agent.

Indeed women on this particular scheme are highly skilled in terms of organising building work as well as its actual construction. Liz, for instance, stressing that this group is unusual for its high level of tradeswomen involved, pointed out that ‘Out of the twenty-three people involved I would say just under half are women and out of that there’s two plasterers who’re women, two carpenters who’re women’. Thus in total, ‘four tradeswomen who were already skilled, qualified working within the industry before they came into this group, all four of us’. Liz argued on the basis of her observations as follows: ‘I’ve never heard of other groups who have got tradeswomen who were experienced, know what they were doing in their trade’. She further pointed out that there are also four men in the group ‘who had skills associated all relating to the building industry’. There are two tradesmen, one landscape gardener, an architect as well as someone who can do finance and administration. Despite her prior skills, Liz emphasised, what she has learned is ‘phenomenal amount of skills’ and she delineated it as follows:

‘Ranging from practical skills like carpentry, bricklaying, plumbing, electrical, health and safety, ... working practices, having an overview of the construction that I’ve never had before, understanding all of the components of buildings rather than seeing the most separate components, seeing as a whole process. Being involved in doing the structural timbers of the house, putting the roofs on, doing just extensive sort of learning of the building process and all those elements in it’ (Liz).

Liz underlined that she also acquired a lot of interpersonal skills and put it as: ‘on a personal level, I think I’ve learned how to work in a group situation under an immense pressure. And involving numerous conflict and opinion and having to resolve that, not walk away’. She pointed out that sometimes she had to work with people she did not like and had no respect for.

Ethnicity

The way self-builders described the ethnic composition of the group varied: ‘mainly white’, ‘mostly white’, ‘white only’, so did their explanations for it.

Jonathan argued that they ‘tried to get the ethnically diverse’ people but they ‘didn’t succeed’. In the end ‘the people who really wanted to do it, who really have the commitment to do it were all white’. To Jonathan ‘it seemed right because they wanted to do it’. He put it as: ‘If a Black or Bosnian or whatever who wanted to be in the group they could have been, you know, as far as we were concerned’. Jonathan did not seem to be questioning why at the end of the day it was only the white people that decided to remain on the scheme, what were the factors that had resulted in the commitment of individuals with similar ethnic characteristics to the scheme. Failing to recognise those differences stemming from structural inequalities in the society, he put the onus on those who are already disadvantaged in the society.

Jonathan described the way they approached those people as follows: ‘we circulated all sorts of organisations. We advertised in short life groups, all sorts of short life groups. Not just white, predominantly white ones. So it would have gone out. The adverts would have gone out’. As I explored further, it became clear that those leaflets in fact were in English and they were sent to organisations with the hope that they would get through to the individual members. Individual members of a collectivity, however, occupy different places in the collectivity, thus do not have an equal access to the information and resources available to the collectivity as a whole. What is more, certain individuals who have more clout in a group may be acting as ‘gate keepers’ preventing an equal distribution of information and resources within the collectivity.

According to Jonathan, there is no ethnic division within the group: ‘No, because we’re all white and fairly middle class’. Yet, he argued, they ‘never intended to be that way’. He described how it came about as follows: ‘We invited people to join the interview for the group from ethnic minorities ... but nobody actually wanted to join’. When I asked Jonathan what he thought the reason was for this, he said: ‘You have to ask *them*’ (his emphasis).

Initially, as the quotation above demonstrates, Jonathan not only constructed a distinct boundary between the white-only group as ‘us’ and Black and ethnic minorities as ‘them’ but also he held responsible those who are absent from the group for the ‘white-only’ characteristic of the group. He changed his position slightly when he began elaborating it further: ‘May be because there was a predominant already of white middle class people. May be they felt discouraged’. It is difficult to tell to what extent my

personal characteristics as an ethnic minority female researcher, and my approach to the whole issue, contributed to this quick change of positioning of Jonathan. In actual fact, his positioning vacillated rather than changed, as he did not really believe that they were discouraged. He put it as follows:

‘... their contact with the group would have been through an interview. They would have met three or four of us in a Panel. We actually awarded places to one or two people. *But nobody ever joined* (my emphasis). Sometimes we’d hold open evenings. Once or twice Black people came but the next time they didn’t take it any further. They actually didn’t investigate it any further apart from the initial contact. I can only presume that was because, I don’t know why that was, you have to ask *them* (his emphasis) ... I can’t ... because we weren’t trying to be excluding. There was actually, we paid lip service at least to sort of equal opportunities policy. We’re politically correct more politically correct people in the group. We’re concerned to be seen acting fairly’ (Jonathan).

For Jonathan, the existing ethnic composition of the group did not seem to be problematic and he said he felt good about it. ‘We had good intentions to include other ethnic groups’, said Jonathan. ‘When we met with no response we then didn’t go out and spend a lot more time and trouble to make sure that we’ve got ethnic diversity’. This is probably because ‘we were ourselves were under pressure to make things happen and so we accepted white people’. To sum up, he said: ‘if a white person wanted to join that was fine. So we felt probably not getting much response from other ethnic groups that it would have been far too much trouble for us to. That system interfered with what was already going on, but made people not want to join us’ (Jonathan).

I suggested to Bill, who is a 41 years old white man that the group is white dominated. He agreed and pointed out that no minority ethnic person was on the scheme: ‘none, none, I am really disappointed. Politically. I think we are pretty shameful middle class bunch’ (laughing). I then asked him if they tried to involve ethnic minority people, Bill suggested that: ‘I was the last person but one to join. I never had any say on that. I’ve always thought it though. None of the members have children either. We’re all fairly semi-professional middle-class bunch’.

Equating the absence of ethnic minority groups with that of children indicates Bill's failure to recognise the structural inequalities Black and ethnic minorities experience in housing, as well as the fact that the council housing is more accessible for people with children than those without.

I also find it problematic that Bill (as well as others in the group) described the group as middle class for despite being semi-professionals these people were living in short life accommodation, unable to afford any mortgage, not enjoying those privileges that a middle class person normally would.

Melanie also agreed that the group is white dominated, as she said 'absolutely it is' and she *too* constructed a boundary between the white-only group as 'us' and ethnic minority groups as 'them'. Nevertheless she was less complacent about it: 'I think it's a big shame', she said pointing out that it wasn't always like that: 'because when I was first joined the group it wasn't. I'd say about a quarter of the group were from different ethnic backgrounds'. These people, Melanie suggested, were 'Black British, African, quite a few Irish people, Turkish'. There have been a lot of people through the building process, she explained. As I asked what happened to those ethnic minority people Melanie replied as: 'Well, just the period of time involved a lot of the people dropped out anyway ... Some might have found it difficult being the only one. I don't know ... you have to ask *them*' (her emphasis).

Contrary to other self-builders, Liz explicitly held the group responsible for the absence of the ethnic minority people. 'There's no black in the group', she stressed, 'it's totally a white group' and this is 'a real failure of this group'. She succinctly put her views as: 'I think it's a real indictment of racism in a way that no black people are in the group'. Her historical account was similar to that of Melanie: 'In the past, in the development of it there were black people involved who were going to build and then dropped out. Her contextualisation of the problem rendered the magnitude of the problem: '... you can't say that it's just a coincidence in an area that there are a lot of black people or ethnic minority people living. And it's serious indictment to this group's racism' (Liz).

As far as Liz was concerned, it was hard to tell what the main reasons were for this, whether the problem lies in the way the panel selected the people to the scheme or whether it was to do with the procedures. She believed that it was both institutional and

individual racism. 'I think it has to be all of it', she emphasised, 'I think it's institutional racism if you want to put it like that. That it's the procedures in place. But it's also on a personal level people's own individual racism ... Their own perceptions of who they were building with'. The group's dominant characteristics prompted the same characteristics in others: 'we're like people. And it's a very middle class group. So that people told their friends about what they were building and their friends applied and then were selected'. According to Liz, therefore, 'there's an indirect form of prejudice in the way that people have been selected'. At first sight it seemed to be fair but in a way they ended up with groups of people who were friends and have been friends for a long time before they got into the group. So, Liz stressed 'obviously although it went through an external process of advertising and selection and interviews and that whole thing, it's a coincidence that people from the same co-ops have ended up building with each other ...' She concluded as follows: 'you can only summarise from that it's a discriminatory practice that's been in place to get people into the group although of course you can't prove that ...' (Liz).

Jonathan told me that the group has an equal opportunities policy. It was devised by the group and 'was based on somebody else's'. Liz, on the other hand, dismissed the suggestion that the group had an equal opportunities policy: 'No, this group doesn't know what that means' (laughing). She recalled that when she joined the group a year before they come on site, she was shocked to see that there were no black people on the scheme. At the time she got involved in interviewing, a Muslim woman applied with her father and wanted to be in the group. Liz says she supported her to come on to the scheme yet her application was turned down for people felt she would not be able to do the work. It was because when she came to the interview her father accompanied her and she wore a *hejab* (long black cover over the head and dress). What this woman suggested was that she would be on site when she could, but 'if there's men around semi-naked she wouldn't and her father and her father's brother [would do the job] or it would be like a family involved'. Liz did not view it as problematic at all: 'which would have been fine. I mean, I have no problem with that'. The interview panel that Liz was part of recommended that she be accepted into the group. However the group did not think 'she would fit in'. So, the group as a whole overturned the panel's decision and did not accept her onto the scheme.

According to Liz the panel had selected her on the basis of that she met the criteria for application which was that the person should be in a short life accommodation and that they were in need of housing, that they were living already in the Borough of Islington and on the homelessness list of the Islington Council. This woman met that criteria and she would commit herself to do the building process for a year and a half and give 26 hours a week to build and would be able to build. She did not have to have the skills because they were going to train her at that point, but must be willing to, and able to, take part in the building process. The fact that ‘she wasn’t able to build ... when some semi-naked men are around’ was viewed by the group as: ‘that’s her problem and we shouldn’t adapt our working practices’. Liz stressed that ‘that was on a cultural issue that she was Muslim and that was something she wouldn’t accept’. Therefore the group decided not to accept her application.

Gender and sexuality

I further explored social divisions within the group other than ethnicity originating from the diverse positioning of self-builders and differential and shifting power relations. Thus in the following discussion I examine these divisions by taking up the notion of ‘the community’ and analysing how individual members view the group.

Having worked together for five years building their houses these self-builders will continue to live together as a ‘community’ in the same estate. Simon feels ‘fine’ about the idea and in fact this is what he wants. ‘I feel much prefer it like that. I’m happy about it’, he commented. However, not every self-builder seemed so positive about it. Moreover, they appeared to have strong divisions *within* the group particularly on the basis of their gender and sexuality. Some of the self-builders reflected, quite spontaneously, the existing gender divisions as they expressed their opinion on the building process. For instance Bill’s comments about the division of labour within the group included stereotypical views about women and revealed an overt prejudice towards female self-builders. While noting their ‘less physical strength’, Bill failed to express any acknowledgement whatsoever of the unusually high skills of some women in building trades. Bill argued that:

‘we’ve had a third of the group women, and in my estimation *they don’t have the strength*. We tried at the beginning with the ten thousand blocks we laid as a party wall. We tried to concentrate women on the timberwork. Because it was less in terms of ...

some of these blocks weights eighty pound. So, it was less for the women to do' (Bill)(my emphasis).

Bill himself had no building skills before coming on site in contrast to some women self-builders who were highly skilled. Yet in order to be able to speak from position of power, Bill contrasted himself with women not in terms of the building skills but 'physical strength'. As can be seen from the above quotation, in his narration Bill was very specific about the gender of those who he claimed lacked the strength. However, when he referred to skilled people in the group he was quite ambivalent about it. 'We're self-builders', Bill said, 'we're not skilled building people. We have other small amounts of people, skilled building people, on site. But they haven't really in the past translated drawings. They haven't worked with drawings all that much' (Bill). Bill was not specific about the gender of these 'skilled people' and still laying the emphasis on their relative 'weaknesses' in terms of reading plans rather than their strengths.

I explored other possible divisions within the group as I interviewed Bill, and he referred to divisions of sexuality while conflating it with that of gender. He depicted his perception of the situation as follows:

'In my estimation some of the women (pause) I don't want to be seen sexist but some of the gay women have developed a little niche and survived together ... power structure developed in that respect. Some of the men who did some of the early manual work big block laying, concrete mixing, slinging, we had a huge winch, slinging the concrete up on the winch getting across the site with blocks, the concrete, a niche developed there, a gang of the macho man' (Bill).

In his earlier statement Bill constructed women as 'the Other' and stressed a difference between 'the Self' as strong, masculine men laying heavy blocks and 'the Other' as feminine women 'lacking strength'. Whereas in the above quotation, his construction of 'the Other' shifts from women to 'gay women' and at the same time refers to a clique of 'macho man' who based their group identity on the heavy manual work at the initial stages of the project that Bill was also part of. He puts a particular emphasis on the difficulty and importance of the manual work done earlier, conflating in his depiction the *manual* power of masculine men with the *mechanical* power of the machines they have used. Bill's remark is full of ambiguity in that, on the one hand, he stresses that he

is not sexist and that he differentiates himself from those who are 'a gang of macho man'. On the other hand, his remark sounds quite homophobic for he naturalises heterosexuality and describes only gay women by their sexuality and not with any other characteristic, although these women have other characteristics which make them 'different' and which are highly relevant to the self-build process, such as having building skills.

As can be seen in the following quotation, Bill simultaneously empathises with 'the Other' (women/gay women) as he constructs another 'Other' of those with 'professional skills'. Hence Bill's construction of 'us' and 'the Other' within the group is ever shifting as he positions himself in terms of power relations.

'I was speaking to somebody the other day and she was utterly frustrated how she hadn't learned sufficient because of limited manual dexterity. And she felt a sense of resentment. Because these cliques have developed and she feels herself just having been disregarded because of lacking in manual application ... Some people would take on professional skill to assume a sense of power...' (Bill).

Apart from revealing his prejudice towards women and gay self-builders and subsequently reflecting the social divisions on the basis of gender and sexuality within the group, Bill disclosed some other perceived divisions between the Self and others (e.g. those who joined the scheme earlier). 'The people who were members of the group from the beginning had a much more tighter circle of communication. As a late-comer to the group, I feel that I have been restricted. I haven't been part of debate, covert debates about resources, about development, about finishes' (Bill). It seemed to me that his lack of communication with the rest of the group deprives Bill of position of power within the group.

As far as Jonathan is concerned it is a good thing to know the group more intimately than neighbours normally do. 'I know all my neighbours and we've all been together in very demanding circumstances' he said. 'We've all seen the good side of each other and we've all seen the bad side of each other. We know each other much more intimately than normal neighbours and that's a great thing'. 'I really feel good about the group as a whole', said Jonathan 'even though the group has its own factions you know (laughing). I actually like everybody'. Jonathan was very illustrative as he delineated these factions:

plastering. Because I'm good at it, I'm fast, I'm quick and I did do a lot. But I didn't want to just do that it's not the idea of houses' (Liz).

Furthermore, Liz claimed, the fact that all women involved in the project are highly skilled posed a threat to men. She argued: 'I think that the men found that very threatening to be honest'. I think they found that very difficult to cope with'. She believed that the existing division between those skilled and unskilled self-builders further reinforced the division between men and women. In hindsight, she thinks that men in fact tried to contain the women to stop them actually becoming more skilled in a way. 'I don't think it was deliberate', stressed Liz, 'I don't think it was intentional but I think it was a defence to being threatened that women knew a lot and were already co-ordinating and running ... and sort of organising groups of labour on the site and they didn't want really that to expand at all'. She was quite surprised to see that 'some men were happy not to be skilled and be treated like labourers'. She thought it was like 'pecking order of priority, they were quite happy to look up other men and him tell him to go and dig that hole so that we can put some concrete in it or to knock up the concrete' (Liz).

Liz argued that the group ended up doing very labour intensive building unnecessarily when they could have used machinery, mechanical forms of lifting and she thought this *too* was a reflection of gender divisions within the group. 'We could have used machinery, mechanical forms of lifting. We should have used' she said. 'But instead we manually lifted things and that's associated really (laughs) with indirect sexism really that men have to prove their worth in terms of their muscle. She finds it really quite sad that such a thing still happens. She stressed that 'it wasn't direct sexism'. In response to my question whether Liz felt any sort of power structure or power difference within the group, she said:

'Yeah definitely, definitely yeah, definitely. I think there's divisions of power in the sense of trades that's how it was divided up, that one person would hold the power if they had the knowledge and the skill in a certain trade. And the way to keep that is not to train other people or disseminate that information. So you hold on to that, and then you're an important person' (Liz).

Whereas, according to Liz, what the women wanted to do was actually to break all that down and not to reinforce that structure but to say ‘no, actually the whole point of building is that we all get empowered through it and that we all should learn’. Arguing that this is because ‘that’s how it is in the building industry for women’, Liz said.

‘Women’s experience of building all the time is that it is mystified, and held out to be that it’s something that women can’t attain, and that’s not true. Women can do it and are doing it all the time. So it’s shocking to come to a group that wants to sort of reinforce that structure really. And the women here they didn’t want it’ (Liz).

It is interesting to compare remarks Liz made with the aim of self-build. Underlying the self-build process is the belief that the building process is mystified and thus put beyond the reach of ordinary men and women and through simple self-build technique the building process is demystified again. As Liz underlines, women experience a further exclusion in the building industry by both professional and unskilled men who further mystify the construction process and make it unattainable to them.

Liz identified some other conflicts that were around personal issues like people’s attitude to work being different. As a result ‘some people would want to come into the site at twelve o’clock and not start at eight in the morning’. The team, however, insisted that they start at eight in the morning. Such issues were quite confrontational according to Liz, but ‘the way the group resolved them wasn’t to challenge people’. ‘We initially started challenge people on those issues but there seemed to be a lack of willingness to deal with the conflict. So, people ... ended up sort of adapting to suit people in a way. So, it’s been sort of a free flow really, that people will sort of build on their own in the way that they want. Or small groups will do that’ (Liz). It seemed that while seeking to solve this conflict on their attitudes to work, the group ended up creating more divisions, and ‘cliques’ in the group. All of this contradicted with the comments made by the architects that homogenised the self-builders in terms of their motivation and attitude to work.

I asked Melanie whether she saw any divisions within the group, and how she viewed the existing interpersonal relations within the group. She noted that ‘there are certain groupings anyway’. ‘I think over time you sort out the people you feel you can really trust and the people you can’t. By the end it’s very clear who you do, who you don’t!’

(laughing) I then explored the characteristics of those ‘you trust or you don’t trust’, she pointed out that ‘some people don’t put in as much as the others. So you resent that. You feel that you’re putting more than them’. This subsequently gives way to animosity rather than a communal spirit: ‘some people live off your efforts. And some people look after themselves all the time and it undermines the communal effort’. Melanie suggested that ‘once that’s undermined you can’t get that back really. And it forces everyone into looking after themselves in the end which is quite a shame’. Melanie stressed that ‘you just learn with being people for so long who’s going to help you, who’s looking at themselves, who’s prepared to share and put effort’. She thinks that ‘it’s a natural thing that happens in groups’. However self-help process exacerbates it because ‘when you rely on each other so much it creates a lot of tension, a lot of resentment, quite a lot of bitterness’ (Melanie).

Jonathan did not see these divisions within the group as any potential *threat* but as potential *conflict*. However even as ‘potential conflict’ he did not view it as a problem because he thinks ‘that’s natural’. He essentialises them by claiming that ‘that’s just human nature’. He suggests that he himself would always try to breakdown those barriers. He accepts that the divisions are there. ‘But I’m personally very encouraged that ... we can put those to one side. It’s not the end of the story. So, I don’t feel bad about that. I just see that they’re there and let’s work around them or if we can’t work around them that’s fine’. As Jonathan’s comments illustrate the group does not have any strategy to tackle the issues stemming from divisions that are based on structural inequalities involving hegemonic power relations. In relation to the way the group view their differences, Jonathan said ‘I’m not sure that they even recognise them’. Nobody talks about them hence ‘maybe they’re not there’, he says. ‘This is the way *I see* it. This is *my* interpretation of the way things go sometimes. You do find certain people having similar views’ (his emphasis).

Jonathan’s above (and earlier) comments implied his appreciation of the fact that there are may be other ways of interpreting the same events as a result of their differences in their positionings.

In contrast to Jonathan, Liz thinks that the existing divisions within the group and conflicts they experience at present *do* pose a *threat* to the future of the project because of its *disempowering* effect on the group in general and some self-builders in particular.

As a result of this, she claims, some members have left the scheme. She claims that some self-builders thought that individuals as well as the group as a whole were *disempowered* by the attitudes of some members in the group. Sexism of some members, for example, adversely affected the group. As mentioned earlier, pointing to the men's attitude toward training she commented as 'so, it ended up sort of disempowering all of us in the end really even the men. They ended up disempowering themselves through it'.

Construction of 'difference' and 'the community': Neighbourhood

I asked Simon whether the group had any contact with the wider estate, he replied: 'At the beginning yes, we are the PR group. And we tried to contact certain people, active in sort of neighbourhood groups ... We haven't caught up any of those relationships'. Simon also explained that they used to go to the Neighbourhood Forum meetings at the time they started building. Simon himself attended about five meetings yet they were not able to keep up long because of the pressure of work. Describing how the Forum viewed the group, Simon said: 'Okay I think ... They were worried about normal sorts of things like noise, disruption to their own lives'. Melanie on the other hand thinks that the neighbours have been very understanding. 'Because we've been so noisy, so long' she said. Nonetheless, Melanie voiced concern over the attitudes of the kids in the neighbourhood, which was due to the fact that it is mostly families living on the wider estate and heterosexual life style is dominant. Different sexualities, and people with alternative approach to life clearly do not fit in the existing wider neighbourhood. All of this highlights the interplay of social space (concerning issues about the safety, harassment and exclusion) and the physical space (reflection on the spatial and the way the design of it affects the social).

Issues of safety

Melanie voices concern about the anti-social behaviour of the kids in the neighbourhood who she finds 'quite abusive', as a result she does not feel 'totally safe' in the neighbourhood. She pointed out that these kids are quite young - e.g. around 7-8 years old. They are abusive particularly to people working on this project, 'I've only seen against members of the group' she said. She expressed concerns about living on the Estate, as follows:

‘... What if they decide they don’t like you? It’s going to be like that here. If you don’t fit in the category of people they like, the parents like ... That’s why living in a community of sorts might be good, that they might not take one on but the groups are bigger than, you know, then may be they’ll think twice about it ... May be they’ll see it as a community. It might not be in the end, but may be people won’t try to pick on one person’ (Melanie).

Melanie’s remarks underpinned the fact that even though the group is highly divided among themselves and all the self-builders I have interviewed acknowledge it some members hope to be perceived as a ‘community’ in order to be able resist the hostility surrounding them. The way Melanie describes their situation demonstrates that the notion of ‘the community’ and assumptions about its unitary nature are utilised to protect those minorities who are constructed as ‘the Other’ by the hegemonic group.

According to Melanie lighting in the area is not brilliant either, and the layout of the buildings contribute to the feelings of insecurity in the area: ‘like this is a slip road, it’s not a proper road (pointing). And you’re on the back of flats there are garages (Appendix 3). That’s what makes you feel more insecure probably’. One does feel more secure when there are houses on both sides so that people can see if something happens, Melanie stressed. There are balconies of blocks of flats, however, often kids use them to throw things. As she put it:

‘[It’s] not very pleasant place, people have to live there as well. You can imagine ... [It] makes you wonder whether the Council should think again what that road is ... You feel very vulnerable going that way (pointing). So I tend to walk down that way home when it’s dark, after site. And I’ll probably do that when I live here. It is silly! ... Because it’s the proper street, houses on both sides there. Of course this school is empty at night. So, here is a bit insecure as well’ (Melanie).

The group looked at a number of different sites before deciding to built on this particular one. Initially they became interested in a different site but it did not materialise. While they were looking at some other empty sites, the Council offered the group a possible site on the car park but the local residents objected to it. When some members of the group attended the local Tenants Association meeting those people present at the meeting became very abusive. ‘Local people don’t want us there’ Melanie said. ‘They saw us we weren’t local people. And they didn’t see why we should be

getting housing while their sons and daughters could not find housing'. These local council tenants constructed a boundary between 'the local people' as 'us' and the self-builders as 'the outsiders' - 'the Other'. 'So, they saw us as incomers and really unhappy about us even though some of us lived here twelve, fifteen, twenty years, in Islington. It was not the same as being part of the family' (Melanie).

Melanie thought it was because of the way the group looked, e.g. 'alternative'. 'We don't fit into, probably, and we're not their sons and daughters. And we're not the sons and daughters of the people they know'. The experience of the Islington self-builders calls into question both the possibility and desirability of the commonality of interests among the members of the local 'community' living in the same neighbourhood. It underlines the fact that the notion of homogeneous 'community' can be highly exclusive and conservative, excluding those perceived as different and getting narrower to the extent that it only includes family members and very close friends. The group took the provisional drawings of the project to the meeting. Yet the tenants were not prepared to listen to the group at that point. The tenants had the final say and consequently the self-builders did not get the site they wanted.

When the group found their present site it had some derelict houses on it. Although the new site was also in the same neighbourhood it was not perceived the same by the TA members for there was a short life housing on it, which the Council decided to knock down. 'It wasn't seen the same', Melanie pointed out, 'we weren't taking anything away from them. We weren't taking away car parks'. Nevertheless the other site where bungalows are built was an old children play area and that the Council tenants had put a proposal into the Council to have part of the wall taken down so that they could see the kids playing and felt that the kids would be safer. Self-builders did not know about all this and now the Council tenants are not happy that people will live there. 'The Council told us that it was unused area' said Melanie, 'because they wanted to help us, it's not because for horrible reasons. But you can see why local people might resent something, to people coming in'. Melanie's comments imply that in actual fact the Council supported the self-builders against the wishes of the local tenants who had limited power in deciding the allocation of the land in their immediate environment. The position that some Council tenants adopted was to the detriment of the self-builders who were portrayed as 'the outsiders' and did not allow any space for those who may have not shared the views of the representatives of the Tenants Association. Melanie recalled

going to one of the Tenants Association meetings together with other 5-6 people including the architect. She described the meeting as follows:

‘I think they’re all white ... But also very outspoken, I think one of them might be a woman actually. There were very outspoken men among them. Obviously the leaders within the group, the TA, were used to speaking publicly, very vocal. Other people who didn’t feel, I could see would’ve felt intimidated if they said something differently. But there was obviously some dissatisfaction with our proposal’ (Melanie).

Nevertheless despite their initial resentment, the perception of the local residents did not remain fixed. Melanie stated that ‘they’ve been very nice since. They can see people have worked hard for a long time’. Hence it would equally be wrong to essentialise the positioning of these groups on the basis of their characteristics, which is subject to change over time and through their interaction with other individuals and collectivities with different characteristics and positionings.

Participation in the decision-making process

Power relations between the group and the professionals

There appeared to be a strong boundary construction between the self-builders and other agencies involved in the process, which amounted to a lack of confidence in the professionals by self-builders.

As far as Bill was concerned ‘the architects have not been sufficiently supportive in terms and the duration of the scheme’. Because the staircases were complicated, Bill explained, they had to have some help from the ‘Laings School of Woodwork’ who came and fitted the staircase for them. He also voiced concern about the fact that the information they have now with hindsight was not available at the time. ‘In my experience’, he stressed, ‘everything we learned we learned by prior experience. There has been nobody or group or anybody we could turn to’ (Bill).

The self-builders, according to Bill, tried to make a lot of decision on their own in terms of the development procedures. Yet they received a lot of difficulties and objection from the development agency Community Housing Association on this that led to a lot of battles with them in the development process. However, having their lives ‘so tied in the process’ self-builders had to ‘get on with building’. Bill was critical of those decision-

making bodies that hold the money and come for *inspections*, whereas what they need is *support* and they have not had sufficient support. He underlined that ‘... in my estimation, professional bodies who should have been here to support us, to earn their money have completely and utterly failed us all way down the line’ (Bill).

Bill maintained that the group did not get sufficient support from architects either: ‘I personally don’t think the architects have supported us at all’ he stressed. In the first phase, the architect lived very locally. Yet he never came on site, apart from the monthly meetings to do an assessment. ‘He never looked in, he never talked to us separately, he never came up here he never showed an interest’. This architect now has left the job Bill noted. ‘There’s a new architect and again, in my personal estimation, they’re not interested. I know the scheme took seven years to develop. I know they were drawing throughout this period. I know things were complicated in terms of their income’. However, Bill insisted, these professionals were not available when the group needed them.

Nancy also thought that they were not getting enough cooperation from the institutions they were working with. These organisations in a way ‘just came in once, it all been set up and from that point on they saw it as much more of a business relationship, then really it wasn’t their scheme’. She went on to say that when the New River Housing Association developed the scheme from the beginning they saw it as *their* scheme. Whereas, according to Nancy, there have always been problems with the next development agent that is the Community Housing Association. ‘I think they’ve always seen us as a bit of experiment’, Nancy claimed, suggesting that the issue of tenure lies underneath of the problems. She outlined the situation as follows:

‘... They own three quarters of a house. We only own a quarter of a house. So they are *their* houses, they are not our houses even though *we* built them and *we’re* going to live here and *we’re* going to have shared ownership lease, really, they’re *their* houses (Nancy)(her emphasis).

Nancy maintained that the problem stems from the fact that there exists a *conflict between those organisations and the self-builders* in terms of the differences in aspirations, expectations from such a project. ‘What they want is financial’, she argued, ‘at the end of the day they want houses to be built as cheap as possible within a

timescale that means that they won't financially lose any money, that they will make money'. In other words their main concern and main criteria to judge the success of the project is financial. Nancy further argued that if anything goes wrong, it is the self-builders who are being penalised all the time.

'... there is no question that (architects - TU) will get their fees paid, there's no question that development agents will get their fee for their developing the scheme. It seems that if anything goes wrong it's the self-builders actually who will lose equity or lose money, nobody else ... The professionals will never lose. It's the self-builder who will always lose' (Nancy).

Melanie also thinks that they were let down by professionals. She pointed out that the project has taken twice as longer than they thought. 'The funding never came through properly' she noted. 'We were let down by the building society. Twice. We had two start dates'. She further complained that: 'I don't think the professionals have been very honest with us'. When I asked Melanie to elaborate on this she recalled that the group wanted to adopt a particular technique that involves more block-work and therefore more difficult. Yet the architects who have been involved in this sort of scheme before did not warn them about the consequences of choosing this particular building technique. 'I think they can be more honest' said Melanie, 'but then again if they said it was going to be three years may be a lot of people wouldn't be bothered. So once you start you keep going on'. I asked Melanie if they get enough cooperation from those institutions they work with, she said:

'Walter Segal Trust, yeah they've been helpful. Housing Corporation, we haven't had a lot to do with ourselves. It's been the Housing Association who have been intermediaries and they're our development agents. I'd say they haven't been a great help' (Melanie).

Melanie thinks this is because 'they're not committed to the idea of self-build, they wouldn't have chosen it to do ... unless they have been obliged to do. Community Housing Association, never felt they were particularly interested in ... '

There also exists some sort of ambiguity in terms of the assigned roles of self-builders in the eyes of those institutions who are involved in the project for financial reasons

without necessarily being familiar with values of self-build projects as opposed to those self-build agents who initiate and develop the project. 'And they don't know how to treat us, pure builders or tenants' Melanie stated, 'if we're tenants, tenants just pay rent, if we are the builders who are responsible for the building future tenants ... It's very awkward definition, we don't fit in' (Melanie).

Simon described the self-builders' relation with the agencies involved in the scheme as 'sort of parent and child' relation stressing that most of the time they 'clashed'. I asked Simon if he felt it was a relation of equals or an imbalance of power existed in that the agencies imposed decisions on the group, and whether the group was supposed to implement the decisions that have *already* been taken by those agencies. Simon replied: 'I think they have a set mode of procedures. They're trying to adapt us or to fit us into their own housing set-up, own regulations and stipulation with regard to most things'.

As far as Simon is concerned self-builders take minor, practical decisions, whilst the major decisions are already set. 'So, the major decisions about the design are taken and then we can do sort of move walls'. He also argues that it all depends what the minor and major decisions are, for instance, 'money, land, size, those decisions are already taken'. They can make some changes within certain limitations in the plan according to their needs. 'Central democratic process takes place in taking minor decisions', said Simon. For example, as they were overrunning at the time of the interview, they were making decisions on how to allocate and spend money.

When I asked Jonathan whether he feels as individuals and as a group they are in control of the decision-making process of their future dwellings and immediate environment, he said 'Yes, but not entirely'. He went on to say: 'There are certain things we can and cannot do'.

During his five years involvement Jonathan feels he had a say in some decisions. 'Also I feel that there are a lot of decisions we felt powerless to change'. He then gave the example of a bay window, which was shown in some of the plans. When it came to actually building them the architect left them out because he didn't have planning permission. 'They weren't on the building line, they extended the building line slightly' noted Jonathan. 'We said to the architect we want our bay windows ... The architect said

we need planning permission for these and by the time you get planning permission, etc., etc. it'll be too late'. Jonathan described how the group felt as follows:

'And I felt powerless in the face of rules and regulations to do anything about that, as a block we all felt "that's it we can't have them". We were very upset that we couldn't have these bay windows, because they would have made a big difference to the rooms. There were a lot of instances of coming up against things in the design where the architect refused permission. And he always came up with some reason or other, well you can't have this, you can't have that' (Jonathan).

Jonathan expressed his lack of confidence in professionals involved in the project as follows: 'and I was always very suspicious of these reasons', he said, 'I didn't know whether he was (the architect - TU) ... refusing it because it meant extra work for him or these were legitimate reasons he was using excuses like planning permission and fire regulations'. It seemed that the lack of communication between the self-builders and the professionals contributed to this mistrust and hindered the possibility of rectifying it.

Nevertheless, 'the group was able to take some major decisions', according to Jonathan, 'whether or not we had oak, how much cladding was oak and how much was larch board. And what parts of the work got sub-contracted out and which parts we did ourselves ... Whether we have communal gardens, or whether we have gardens' (Jonathan).

I asked Nancy if as an individual or as a group she felt in control during the process or as if the decisions were being imposed on them. She said she felt very much in control when there was a clear programme and target set to meet. Nonetheless, she continued, 'at other times I think we lacked management control' which affected the decision-making process and their sense of control. Self-builders' lack of experience had a considerable impact on the management of the process at the later stages of the project. For example, the group appointed a site supervisor whose skills were useful at the beginning but who lacked the necessary skills required at the later stages of the process. Nancy put it this way:

'In a way it was great at the initial outset of the scheme when we were bricklaying. But as soon as the bricklaying and structural element of the wet trades had finished, once we started getting into the timber construction he wasn't as useful. And then we had

already employed him. You can't just then start re-changing somebody's job. But I think it is with hindsight. It's always easy afterwards to know what skills you need for somebody during the process' (Nancy).

In retrospect, Nancy also thinks appointing the site supervisor on a part-time basis was a mistake for in actual fact they needed someone to be on site full-time.

'On a self-build scheme you need a full-time professional who's working for us on our interest ... And we only had a half-time professional who had limited skills. So, I think that now it's much clearer to me the professional that we would want would have to have training skills, would have to have good administration skills ... I think self-builders need a full-time person, because we're not here all of the time, we're part-time builders' (Nancy).

Nancy's comments illustrate the increasingly important role played by those who have the responsibility of organising the self-build process. Self-build technology is made quite simple in order to provide access to those who know nothing about the construction of a building. Yet the *organisation* of the work becomes crucial for the smooth running of the process since self-builders are supposed to have never done it before and are thus inexperienced as well as have a tight budget and timescale. Moreover, they are supposed to be doing it on a part-time basis, which often means they have other responsibilities in their lives. Although the self-builders had the power to hire and fire, their lack of building management skills had an impact on their decisions in employing their staff, and subsequently they were not able to employ the right person to supervise the job. As a result they were the ones to pay the price in terms of timescale and finance.

Timescale

With regards to the timescale, self-builders did not seem to be in much control of the process. They put the onus on the professionals such as architects.

Nancy, who has been involved in this project for four years at the time of the interview, a year before the building started, feels that it is a good project. Yet like others, she voiced concern about the timescale. 'I wish I'd known at the beginning how long it was really going to take', she complained. 'One of the worst things about doing self-build

was that we were told that it was going to be eighteen months. And it's really turned out to be nearly two years'. As far as Nancy was concerned that was a failure of the architects and the people who develop self-build schemes to underestimate the amount of time that a building process would take. She put it as follows:

'I think it has been very demoralising to people involved ... I think it wasn't realistic. From the outset they didn't have a realistic timescale for building and development. So, I feel frustrated and disappointed really and feel that set up to fail a bit really' (Nancy).

Nancy claimed that nobody could have built these houses within the set timescale. In the beginning, she explained, they all believed that it could be done. 'It was only when the deadline came and we failed to meet that in a way we realised well it isn't achievable and it isn't achievable by external standards, it's not because we're self-builders'. 'Any builders' Nancy asserted 'that wouldn't achieve the building of the houses because of the way, that we've got split sites, we've got two sites, and that it was just too much to do within the timescale they gave, with the design that was given'. She argued that 'the way that houses have been designed are not in some ways modular. They are ... to our individual specification. And in a way that makes it more difficult to realise ... because [they are] more complicated, it takes longer time' (Nancy).

Who is in power?

Some of the respondents described how powerless they felt from time to time throughout the process, and the fact that they were tied up with the project that was lagging behind prevented them from taking any action. Jonathan, for example, said 'I thought powerless in the face of sort of a lot of the red tape actually pushed through'. He didn't feel he had the time to pursue these to make a fuss because his 'time was under pressure'. 'All I had time for was to get on and do the work' he said. He then summed up the situation this way:

'I felt disempowered by just the sheer volume of work. *The volume of work also disempowered me apart from empowering me*, as I said before it also meant I couldn't stand up for myself, because I didn't have the time and the space to do that' (Jonathan)(my emphasis).

I explored whether Liz felt in power or *powerless* in the process, or whether that varied throughout the process. She said 'I think ... I can say it's *powerless* really as an individual and as a group'. This is because, she went on 'they're the professionals' whereas 'we were not professionals' highlighting the strong differentiation existed between the professionals and non-professionals. It was interesting to see that such a division existed even in a group that believed they were 'a good mixture ... of different skills and different abilities that were brought to the self-build'. Nevertheless, she stressed, 'I would say generally I have felt powerless in that relationship'. This is because as professionals, 'they've done this before - we haven't. They seem to have access to all of the ... legal opinion that we didn't have. They had access to the money that we didn't have. They have access to the ... administration and that set-up. So, I think the balance of power was certainly with *them* not with us' (Liz)(her emphasis).

Melanie, on the other hand, said 'at times I felt quite powerful. You get very involved. You feel you're part of the organising ... Then you can feel quite powerful'. Nonetheless, she noted, the Housing Association always had the last say, and she didn't feel that they were very supportive. 'So, I don't feel very powerful with them', she stressed. With regards to the architects, she argued, although it was good to talk to them, 'in the end they're professionals and actually they're going to be okay'. Hence, Melanie summed up, 'you feel fool guy between everybody in the end'. This is because financially it is the self-builders who are going to lose out. 'If the professionals let you down', Melanie complained, 'they don't take responsibility for that'.

When self-builders were tenants in the short life accommodation before coming on the scheme, they had a constant sense of insecurity, which seemed to persist and remain increasingly prevalent throughout the building process. The vast majority of my respondents emphasised that they are the ones who will lose out at the end, which led them to feel powerless. 'You have no position' asserted Melanie, 'you're too busy working and you don't know all the legal situations. There are ways we've been let down that cost us a lot of money and time'.

Views on the concept of self-build and its future

Simon who worked over two and a half years said that he has got satisfaction from the process: 'I've got a lot of satisfaction. I enjoy doing quite a lot of work'. He did not think, however, that he wants to be more in control in the major decisions making: 'No,

I prefer to leave it at having a choice as who does make those decisions, if you know what I mean. I don't want that sort of responsibility'. 'But', he added, 'it's nice to be able to chose the people who would take those decisions'.

For Jonathan the process has been extremely challenging and demanding yet he feels very pleased about the whole thing and he thinks this process has empowered him:

'It's been very, very difficult. It's been very, very challenging. Probably one of the best things I've ever done in my life. It's caused me huge problems, which I've overcome. So, I feel it's tested me and I feel very good about it. It's given me a lot of confidence. I can go from here and do a lot more things. And I'm not just talking about skills that I've acquired. I'm talking about anything in general. It's empowered me. I feel I can cope with a lot more things in life in general' (Jonathan).

Jonathan is a self-employed gardener and he feels he can take a lot more jobs and handle a lot more clients' paperwork, take a lot more pressure as a result of his self-building experience. 'I had to work and come here for three days a week and keep a business going', said Jonathan, 'I didn't think I could do it actually. I managed to do it'. So the last three years he had been working six days a week and in the last three months he had been working seven days a week having no time off whatsoever. 'And I feel fine', 'it's given me a lot of confidence in the rest of my life' (Jonathan).

Bill did not get any particular satisfaction since they ran over the scheme. 'We're a year over the amount of time we anticipated or more than a year really. Fifteen months. I'm utterly frustrated'. Nonetheless he still believes that self-build is 'a brilliant idea' stressing the amount of skills self-builders have acquired and thinks that they should be greatly encouraged.

Nancy found the process of self-build 'very exciting' at the beginning, 'a wonderful opportunity to be involved in a communal effort to make our own housing'. Nonetheless, she felt it just went on so long until they got started. It was 'very tiring committing yourself and going to meetings nothing happening and all that'. Neither Nancy nor anybody else realised it would take so long.

Nancy believes that ‘in the future the schemes need to have a legal agreement between them and their agents so ... it protects the self-builders’ rights and protects in a way that people understand what commitments and what responsibilities they’ve got’.

Melanie calls for more regular involvement on the part of professionals such as full-time site manager, architect with experience of and commitment to ‘self-build’ and ‘community-build’. She went on to say:

‘Obviously you need more money to do that to pay full-time staff, full-time site manager. It has to be taken into account. Looking back it would have been very good to have somebody here everyday, because there was no one person to take that role ... You need continuity, you need certain jobs done well ... Financial, etc.’ (Melanie).

She points out that it puts an amazing amount of strain on people if they are working and part-time building. She calls for more exchange of information and suggests that self-build groups can write a book so that other groups can find out all the pitfalls beforehand. She noted that ‘The Walter Segal Trust were interested in creating a sort of resource centre with that information so there’ll be a pack going out to new self-build groups’. She further noted that ‘We know another self-build group starting in Islington and they don’t seem to be learning anything from our experience which I think is a real shame...’ (Melanie)

Melanie argued that ‘tenant participation or participatory housing schemes need a lot of professional back up’. I asked how that could be brought in, and she said funding is needed to pay those professionals. ‘You can’t just let people out on their own. Without people know what they get themselves into’. She emphasised that it is a long process and self-builders do have to have back up and that they need somebody to answer questions they do not know the answers to. Funding is something, Melanie pointed out they do not have and need to have.

To conclude, this chapter looked into the diverse experiences of self-builders stemming from their differences in their social positionings. Islington Community Self-build Co-op was supposed to be an ethnically mixed group but ended up as a White-only group. While the group is homogeneous in terms of ethnicity and household characteristics (e.g. single childless people) it is quite diverse in their social positioning. Self-builders

constructed their identities and ‘difference’ on the basis of their gender and sexuality and other characteristics such as status, skills, and values manifesting strong divisions among themselves, which I discuss in detail in Part III.

Chapter 10: *Greenstreet Housing Co-operative*

Introduction

People who formed the Greenstreet Housing Co-op were originally all members of a short life co-op called Bashstreet Housing, which was created a long time ago in Brixton and eventually developed out into Southwark. At one normal co-op meeting members suggested that they try and create a permanent co-op in order to find a permanent solution to their housing problem. They initially tried creating a permanent co-op by converting some buildings that have fallen disrepair. But they realised that the actual skills required to do this were beyond their abilities, as these sorts of projects require the use of skills (e.g. brickwork and plastering) which the group thought that were not particularly easy to pick up. Eventually they heard about the concept of self-build and the more they inquired the more they liked the idea of it (Jeremy).¹

The group formed their permanent co-op seven years ago. People drifted in and out just by word of mouth at the beginning. Only when they actually got the site and decided what they were going to build did they actually started putting adverts into local papers and posters in the library in order to attract new members. One simply had to be in housing need to be able to join the co-op. The number of people within the co-op, however, changed immensely over the years. Today there is only one self-builder left from the founding members of the permanent co-op, out of the 15 co-op members in total. Thus the initial membership of the project is completely different to the present membership. According to some of my interviewees people who did not get on with the group tended to leave on their own choice and they ended up with a group that gets on quite well. The number of share certificates they have issued over the years is 47. At one point they worked out that more than a hundred people have gone through the group over the years.

About the Estate

The neighbourhood of the Greenstreet project is supposedly an urban conservation area with fine examples of the Victorian terraces. For this reason the local conservation society objected the scheme. But the self-builders won their fight and were granted planning permission on the basis that they were producing public housing and that there was a desperate need for it. In a way, the housing outweighed the planning and

environmental issues. Yet they had to make considerable changes to the external design of the houses with an attempt to make it mirror the other side, thus make conform the existing buildings. However, despite all these efforts, self-build houses still do not 'fit in' - they are totally different. In short, the self-builders did a lot of design changes for the planning application to get through and eventually it did go through.

One of my respondents described the immediate environment as follows: 'this is on the road to nowhere. There aren't any shops here or anything. This is just a road that people take a short cut on their way to work' (Jeremy).

The development agency of the project is the Co-operative Housing in South East London (CHISEL). The group told me that the agencies such as the Walter Segal Trust, the Self-Build Agency and CHISEL encouraged the group at the initial stages of the scheme till their work began on site three years ago.

Contrary to the recommended design of community self-building, this scheme has very large houses and the building system is relatively complex which, as my respondents admitted, is very ambitious. The group will be renting the houses when it is completed.

The Greenstreet self-builders are running over the budget since they have been building a lot longer than they were supposed to. The project was supposed to be completed within a year and a half or even two years, but it has already been three years and at the time of the interview they reckoned it was going to be at least another year - which is at least twice as long it was supposed to be.

Power relations within the group

Construction of 'difference' and 'the community'

Skills and 'empowerment'

Contrary to the Islington self-builders, the Greenstreet self-builders did not have building skills before coming on site and acquired them as they began building. They soon noticed that organisational and management skills were as important as building skills if not more for the smooth running of the project.

Sophie, who is 29 years old mixed race (Anglo-Asian) single mother, had no building skills before coming on site. She runs her own business with another self-builder on the

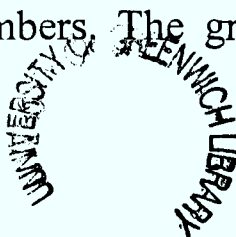
scheme. Hence, she had some office skills yet since they have another self-builder with similar skills, she mainly worked on site. 'Which has been brilliant', she says, 'because I've learnt so much here'. The skills she acquired range from carpentry and plumbing to reading drawings and using tools. 'I feel like very competent now. I feel like I can tackle most jobs', said Sophie, 'building jobs as well as jobs in general'.

Valerie, who is a 31 years old white woman built structures on playgrounds before coming on to the scheme and found it useful that she had some idea of tools and had used drills and saws before. Nevertheless, 'it's not just building skills that you require', argued Valerie, 'I do think that anyone with an interest can learn those things and pick things up'. There are other skills that you need to bring to it and in actual fact these are the skills that are more important to it, according to Valerie. Skills like working with other people, the attitude to learn, organisation and meeting skills, or administration and fund-raising skills. The group has got a grant for training and Valerie is now organising it. 'We're more than just builders', argued Valerie, 'we are a group of people and it *does* matter how we function as a group together'. 'Furthermore', added Valerie, 'because we have a massive amount of responsibility whether that's financial, or employing people, or health and safety ... it's necessary for us to have other skills'.

As far as the group are concerned, the skills they acquired are instrumental in reinforcing the coherence of their collectivity. Daniel, who is a 48 year old man describing himself as mixed race, suggested that the skills they acquire are 'shared skills', in that 'your bit contributes to what somebody else does'. He believed this is very good, because 'you couldn't do it without the other people, they couldn't do it without you'. So, he argued, it is like they are weaving something together. 'You've got your little thread there and somebody else has got their little thread there. When you put them together it's a joint that really holds tight' (Daniel). Thus, my respondents stressed that training has not only made them much more efficient, but it has played an important role in team building. The group views those new members of the Co-op who lack these skills also positively.

Ethnicity, gender and sexuality

There are fifteen self-builders in the Greenstreet project. One third of the group are from minority ethnic people and about half of them are female. There is an Asian male member and two African Caribbean female members. The group comprises of two-



parent families, single- parent families and single people, and the age range from about 27 to about 47. Self-builders believe that it is quite a good mix and they are happy but not complacent about it.

Both Sophie and Valerie think that in terms of ethnicity they could have been better. They suggested that the presence of a Black (African Caribbean) self-build housing co-operative called Fusions Jameen Housing Co-operative (see Chapter 11) not far from the Greenstreet Co-operative has contributed to their difficulty in getting Black members. 'We're perhaps not as good as we could be', said Sophie, because Fusions Jameen is a co-op which only take Black people, and has two sites fairly close to Greenstreet. 'So, there is a mix here but maybe it's not as high as we would possibly like it to be' (Sophie). It was interesting to note that Sophie's description of Black-only group did not involve construction of 'us and them' divide.

Jeremy, who is a 47 year old white male, did not seem to be quite happy with the ethnic composition of the group either, because he thought, 'it's a little bit on the white side'. But, he underlined that 'it's ... been a very, very difficult few years' for the group. 'We had ... many, many problems', said Jeremy, 'we tried to address the problem of ethnic balance and we continue to but it's so difficult to find somebody who wants to do this. And also it's the right sort of person to do this. Because we had many people who wanted to do it and just haven't been able to do it'. Jeremy, as the only founding member of the co-op who remained in the project, recollected the initial stages in terms of the group's ethnic composition as follows:

'... we had a lot of difficulty in bringing people from other ethnic groups into the co-op. *We found ourselves really under-represented quite a while.* We did try quite hard, we leafleted and put up posters in various resource centres for people of different ethnic origin. All our literature encouraged people particularly Afro/Caribbean people. We've got very little response at all ... When we came on site I think we had it might have been three Afro/Caribbeans ... We had great difficulty bringing the numbers up and keeping the numbers up' (Jeremy)(my emphasis).

Jeremy's comments, like Sophie's, did not involve construction of Black people as 'the Other'. Subsequently his description of the absence of minority groups did not involve any 'us and them' division. Instead of putting the onus on the racialised minorities, he

perceived it as the problem of the *group* and described it likewise when he said: ‘we found ourselves under-represented’.

The project manager of the scheme, who is a 33 years old Anglo-Asian mixed race woman whom I will call Nandita, highlighted the sensitivity of the group regarding the issues of social exclusion. Having observed that ‘they are not a prejudiced group among themselves’, Nandita suggested that they all accept each other and they are ‘quite hot on equal opportunities’, subsequently ‘they make all types of people welcome here’.

Daniel, too, underlined that the Greenstreet Housing Co-operative is an ‘equal opportunities co-operative’ and striving to reflect the society in particular in terms of ethnicity and sexuality. Outlining the group’s attitude in regards to equal opportunities, he noted that there have been times when they particularly looked for a certain type of person. ‘We’ve been particularly interested in having someone from an Afro/Caribbean background’ said Daniel, ‘not from a sense of tokenism but for a sense of balance’. Noting the group’s awareness about the exclusion of people on the grounds of sexuality, Daniel stressed that the group reflect the society on this issue: ‘... we’re very welcome to lesbian or gay people in the co-operative because that’s also a part of what our society is about at the moment’. He also admitted that it is a very difficult issue, ‘because you can’t artificially make quotas’ (Daniel).

At present the Greenstreet Housing Co-operative does have an equal opportunities policy devised on the basis of their experience and anyone coming to work on the scheme, such as trainees, are asked to read through this policy. ‘We have a certain number of things they have to agree with’, stressed Sophie, ‘that they’re not going to be sexist or homophobic or racist’. ‘When we’re looking for new members’, Sophie added, ‘we make sure that we’ve gone to all the local places, that we’ve gone to Lewisham Council and we put all the notices up in all the local community centres so that people can get involved if they want to’. Hence the group by implementing its clearly set policy distanced itself from those who insisted on their attitudes amounting to racism, sexism and homophobia, making others feel uncomfortable. Subsequently the group, through the ethos developed over the years formed a group identity that challenges the construction of ‘the Otherness’.

The way self-builders felt about each other and the group as a whole varied. Nigel, who is a 29 year old white, male self-builder, suggested that having worked so long together the members of the group have now got to know each other pretty well and they get on with each other quite well which, he believes, will be an advantage when they start living together. He elaborated his feelings about the group in the following quotation:

‘I like them I like most of them. They are my friends and obviously we know each other quite well now ... So I’m looking forward to it. Certainly one of the advantages is that we’ll be living around people we know and like, or at least some of them. So, that’s definitely an advantage. It’s much nicer than living around strangers. And living in London you tend to not to get to know your neighbours. Neighbours just aren’t that friendly. They keep themselves to themselves in general ... We know we’re going to get on here...’ (Nigel).

Sophie, pointing out that generally it is a very good group of people, believed that they work very hard and fairly well together. Having admitted that she personally gets on better with some people than she does with others, Sophie recalled when she came down to the site with her letter of resignation last week, everybody said ‘we really don’t want you to leave’. Sophie seemed to be touched by that. ‘That’s really lovely’ said Sophie, ‘I feel really supported by’ and ‘very close to everyone here’.

Nonetheless my respondents in general admit that they have conflicts and factions within the group. ‘Each time one person leaves another person joins’, observed Jeremy, which causes the formation of new relationships and new conflicts. ‘Everything shuffles around in terms of relationships, new factions ... There’s all sorts of things that cause animosity’. The hardship self-builders go through during the building process exacerbates the existing conflicts. He argued that people ‘can become quite selfish when life gets tough’. Conflicts usually centre on the lines of the quality of people’s work. Jeremy recalled that they have had problems with people getting behind with their hours. ‘Not hugely behind’, he added, ‘but because everybody’s stressed out, because everything is so tense and stressful!’

Daniel described the conflicts they have within the group in terms of personalities. ‘You have personality conflicts, you have a way of dealing with things’ suggested Daniel. ‘You tend to be an optimist you come across to somebody who is a pessimist. The

pessimists don't want to hear the optimists, and the optimists don't want to hear the pessimists. That's just human nature'. He insisted that despite the hurdles, as people work together they start finding ways of dealing with that.

Yet Greenstreet self-builders were quite positive even when they talked about their existing conflicts within the group. They manifested empathy and understanding about each other's problems. Jeremy, for instance, depicted the particular difficulties of a single-mother self-builder as follows:

'We have one member, who is a single mother with a very active nine year old, and she is a full-time teacher as well. She does her full hours here and she lives in North London. God knows how she does it. It's hard doing this, there's bound to be friction. But we've never had anything really very bad thing to happen to us in terms of personalities or factions. Generally we are pretty cohesive' (Jeremy).

Sophie claimed that at present the group has no factions with regards to sexuality within the group despite the fact that there are heterosexual families as well as gay members in this project. She explained that they did once have a trainee who was very homophobic. The group dealt with the problem partly by talking to him about it and then asking to leave 'because he was making some of the members feel really uncomfortable with his attitude' (Sophie).

According to Daniel, among the self-builders there is a sense of making something that they believe in. 'And because you believe in it', Daniel noted, 'you look at it carefully - you look after it. And that sense of care goes through I think'. He insisted that 'it's a positive thing ... not only for us but for the community in general. Daniel further argued that, after all, self-builders do get something pretty good not only 'a place you built yourself, a wooden place to live in' but also 'a place where you've been building a *community* as you've been building' (my emphasis). He pointed out that spending several years with people building houses means 'you've sorted through a lot of problems by the time you've got to building those houses'. Getting to know each other this well, he stressed, was the necessary condition to create a 'community'. 'I should think that's a good basis for what's a real community' (Daniel).

In my opinion, the Greenstreet self-builders have certain values and goals that form their individual identity and are constitutive of the self. The way they describe themselves resonates the view of communitarians that conceptualises the self as socially constituted. Moreover it was the group identity that self-builders formed over the years which has provided a space to cross the boundaries and transgress their differences rather than re-construct them, which led the group to attain the degree of cohesion they have achieved.

Construction of 'difference' and 'the community': Neighbourhood

I explored self-builders' views on 'the wider community' and that the way they see self-builders. What my respondents told me indicated that there was a discrepancy between the ways each party perceived one another. When the group began work on site they experienced hostility from some neighbours who were particularly aggressive towards the self-builders. Daniel recalled a particular incident:

'One came and threatened us with a baseball bat once. He works nights and we make sleeping difficult for him in daytime. He's not a nice person... But over the years I think the community has grown quite fond of us. We lend people tools, we help them climb in through the top window when they've lost their key' (Daniel).

When the group experienced this aggression from one or two rather vocal people, Valerie suggested that they go out and talk to all the people; give them a letter saying that they are going to be building for another couple of years which might be inconvenient and noisy, and give them the information. Thus Valerie who herself comes from this neighbourhood went around and knocked on the doors of eighty houses round the site. Valerie's recollection of the event was as follows:

'If someone was there I'd leave the letter and talk to them and if there weren't I'd just drop off the letter ... And I was actually surprised when I went round with the response because I think there are about two neighbours virtually across the road who were a bit antier. But most people were really, really nice. And very interested and would say "I'll keep an eye on site" or "how is it going?"... There's one bloke who said: "If you ever need a hand, my car is there come and knock". So, it actually was more positive than I'd expected' (Valerie).

‘I’d say 95 per cent were positive in their response’, said Daniel, ‘those 5 per cent, we already knew about them!’ He noted that ‘People can’t believe how long it takes. Because they’re used to very quick building, cheap building, modern methods ... And that’s difficult for people to understand’ (Daniel).

Similarly Sophie noted that there are some neighbours that they get on very well with, while there are some neighbours that they do not get on well with at all. ‘They resent us being here’, Sophie pointed out, ‘and don’t like living next to a building site that’s been here for three years’. ‘In general people are quite friendly but we’re not that involved in the local community’.

Nevertheless, the self-builders like as with many other issues, envisaged the future of the locality in quite a positive way. They hope and are keen to develop a better relationship with their immediate neighbourhood. ‘I would really like for us enliven the community because there isn’t, unfortunately, much of the community’, Jeremy said. Their design of the houses also reflects this desire. ‘I would like for us to become a central part of the community’, noted Jeremy, ‘we’ve got a community hall, which we’re building here. In a central square which will be high decking ... we can put bands there, we could have little exhibitions, we can run crèches ... single parents who want to go down to Lewisham and do their shopping, they can drop kids or whatever’. According to the self-builders there is a lot of potential to create a space that is inclusive and encouraging a communal life, subsequently fostering the social life of the residents rather than segregating them: ‘There’s no reason why every one of us should have a washing machine we live fifty yards away from each other. So, we will have a launderette which we will be able to use’. There will also be ‘a store room, somewhere to store bicycles’ and ‘all the garden is communal’ (Jeremy). In answer to my question if the architect’s community background helped them arrive at this sort of design solution he responded:

‘I think ... the architect made us realise, gave us the key but once we realised, we saw the picture bigger than he did because we’re used to co-operative living anyway. When we suddenly realised there was a blank sheet of paper and we were building a tiny little village right in the inner city and we didn’t necessarily have to follow the rules outside, we didn’t have to assume that anything had to be that way. Then suddenly it opened up. We became enthusiastic about it’ (Jeremy).

It was interesting to see that the hostility of some neighbours did not lead the Greenstreet self-builders to emphasise the boundary between the local residents and the group. Instead, it encouraged them to actively try to improve their relations with the local people as a whole and it worked. They established contacts with some residents and gained their support and thus crossed the existing boundaries. The way they collectively designed the layout of their housing aimed to obliterate the boundaries that might exist at an individual level as well as challenge the dichotomous separation of the public/private.

Participation in the decision-making process

Power relations between the group and the professionals

The project manager

The project manager is employed by the group, and given a lot of power to make decisions. There exists, however, an ambiguity in terms of her relationship with the co-op as well as external agencies. 'Ultimately they're my employers', said Nandita stressing that 'it's quite an odd situation' for the group have employed her to be 'their boss' and 'to manage them'. The ambiguity is felt even more in the relationship between the group and other agencies, which Nandita described as 'very vague and not very satisfactory'. The self-builders act 'like they're employed by the architect half the time rather than they're employing the architect themselves to do a job which is the wrong way round completely'. This is partly because, she underlined, 'they are the client of the architect and they also have other contractors carrying out the work. So, the relationship is not how it would normally be. 'And because of that it's quite clouded' Nandita stressed. All this makes her own relationship with the group quite difficult as well: 'They are not clear and therefore they are not clear what I should do' (Nandita).

Self-build agencies

The Greenstreet self-builders claimed that they are denied of power by the agencies that appear to despise the self-builders. Daniel recalled a conference that had taken place recently with four agencies - namely *Walter-Segal Self-build Trust*, *Community Self-Build Scotland*, *The Community Self Build Agency* and *The Young Builders Trust* - where self-builders were invited to attend. The whole morning was taken by heads of departments of these agencies, Daniel complained, and that the representatives of the Housing Corporation were 'talking, and talking a very grand language'. Daniel thought

that they were ‘almost congratulating themselves for what’d happened’. Yet one element was missing, Daniel stressed, ‘there was no single self-builder talking that morning’. He depicted it as follows:

‘I brought that up and they said “oh, it’s all right we’ve got workshops this afternoon to deal with that!” And in a way we were put in our place; we were going to be in the workshops. But all the big knobs who were talking in the morning were not going to be at that workshop!’ (Daniel).

‘Surely this is the wrong way round!’ insisted Daniel, ‘there are self-builders who *can* talk and they *can* give ideas and they can give inspiration! And they should be there right at the beginning’. He felt that they had a ‘condescending attitude’, and put it as follows: ‘they were looking down on us and they were more or less saying “isn’t it good what we’re doing for you?”’, which Daniel thought ‘was a bit patronising!’ He interpreted what they were saying as: ‘we’re trying to *help* people, we’re trying to help these *young* people, we’re trying to help these people who *need*’. Whereas Daniel argued: ‘Let’s not forget we, self-builders are helping *you*! We’re helping you with your careers we’re helping you setting up these things’ (Daniel)(his emphasis).

The way Daniel felt about the professionals echoed the way those professionals I have interviewed perceived the self-builders. As I discussed in Chapter 8, the professional agencies appeared to have implicit assumptions about who the self-builders are and what they expect from their lives in general and their housing in particular. The Greenstreet self-builders viewed their project as a way of attaining the general principles of co-operative living rather than merely acquiring a permanent accommodation. Over the years the group formed an identity, as a result of which they consciously try to transcend the existing constructed boundaries. Thus they go beyond the mere attainment of housing and aim to create an inclusive social space as well as physical space challenging social exclusion.

The professionals, on the other hand, totalising and essentialising the characteristics of self-builders ended up with stereotypical views about them. The self-builders perceived their relation with the professionals as paternalistic, marginalizing them and reinforcing the division between the professional agencies and the self-builders leading to their feelings of powerlessness.

‘None of us had any experience of this sort of thing’ noted Jeremy. However, the whole idea of self-building is to involve people *without* building skills who should be able to build it. In actual fact, the self-builders are much too dependent on outside professional advice and the importance of the support needed by these self-builders in order to run their scheme does not seem to be recognised by the external agencies. ‘We were absolutely in the hands of professionals!’ stressed Jeremy, ‘and led astray badly! Really badly!’

Nigel argued that their project was the first self-build scheme the architects have done and because of their lack of experience in self-building the architects agreed everything the self-builders asked for. Nigel explained:

‘We asked for these houses but we didn’t know what we were asking for. We didn’t realise what we were taking on really. Somebody should have told us basically at the beginning. And we should have chosen an architect that they’ve done it before. But we liked the people in this particular ... architect’s practice. We just liked them and liked what they were saying to us’ (Nigel).

At the end of the day it was the Co-op’s decision to hire this particular architect. Yet Sophie stated that:

‘given that everybody who was involved in was a complete beginner, nobody had done self-build before, nobody really knew anything about it, the professionals who were involved in it should at some point have said “hang on a minute, this is going to take you a really long time and it is going to be expensive, and there are all these problems with this kind of scheme. And if you go over budget and if you go over time these are the penalties you are going to have to pay”’ (Sophie).

Instead, Sophie claimed, agencies involved were very positive and kept saying ‘That will be lovely, it will take 18 months’. ‘At the end of the day, however, it is the self-builders who are going to be penalised by having to pay much higher rents and having had no support really!’ Sophie was sceptical about the attitude of the professional agencies alleging that they were ‘positively discouraged’ to have contact with other self-build schemes and share their experiences by their developing agency. She complained that the encouragement given at the beginning by the agencies disappeared and that they

did not get the professional support they needed at the later stages of the scheme. She put it as follows:

‘The self-build professionals, if you like Walter Segal Trust and the Self-Build Agency and CHISEL, are very good at encouraging the self-build and getting scheme up and running and that you get a lot of support in the first stages but once you are on site and building then really there’s a definite lack of support there. Because it seems to me that *every self-build is re-inventing the wheel really*’ (Sophie)(my emphasis).

Self-builders admit that the design of the houses was over ambitious. Sophie, for instance, thinks that ‘they are absolutely huge’ with ‘big double pitched roof’, whereas ‘the idea of self-builders is that you built something small, and fairly simple to build, and you do it in 18 months or two years’. She recalled that when the scheme was set up, the Co-operative Housing in South East London (CHISEL) told the self-builders: ‘This is the budget, it will take 18 months to build, it’s going to cost this much, the rents will be cheap, there’ll be a premium payment paid back to you at the end of building or if you leave’. It seemed as a good option to the self-builders. ‘But the reality of it is that that just wasn’t true’, claimed Sophie, ‘the budget almost immediately went straight over ... and then ... the professionals who were involved, the architect and development officers at CHISEL have this attitude that “well, it’s not our problem”’ (Sophie).

The project manager also thinks that this project is particularly ambitious. She argued that it is not possible for 15 self-builders who are very inexperienced in the building world to tackle the problems of this particular scheme without professional help yet this support was not available to them, which she finds quite unfair. She put it this way:

‘And they weren’t given much guidance about what their designs meant in terms of how long they would be at the project and the impact it will have on their rents because it was a quite extravagant project for the money that they had. There was nobody really controlling that side of it. They probably had to keep the design down. Yet how can they possibly keep the design down if they do not know how much it is costing or what their limits are really’ (Nandita).

It has been a strenuous process but the group seem to ‘cope well’ according to the project manager: ‘under the circumstances they’re amazingly positive’ even though ‘morale is low generally in the whole group’ (Nandita).

Timescale

As mentioned earlier, the project is overrunning in terms of timescale and budget. The Community Housing in South East London that developed the scheme told the self-builders that it was going to be one and a half or two years and the rent was originally supposed to be quite a low rent. The South London Family Housing Association (SLFHA), stating the benefits of self-build in their brochure, point out that ‘the housing association can set rents which are at least 20% lower than for homes which are not self-built’.² What is more, The South London Family Housing Association claims that ‘the housing association can offer self-builders when they leave their tenancies, a cash payment which is related to the value of the labour they have “invested”’. However the self-builders of Greenstreet think that their rent is now going to be probably the normal rate of rent, they might not be getting a cash payment either as a result of the cost of overrun, which means they have lost a lot of the advantages of doing the scheme. Sophie, for example, decided to leave the scheme after building for 18 months, which means that she is not going to get anything for her labour of one and a half years. She put it as:

‘If I decided to stay I will have been building for nearly three years. In fact at the end of the day you’re paying completely normal rent and there won’t be any kind of premium payment (laughs). What’s the point in doing it? The point is: they will be very nice houses. They’ll be big’ (Sophie).

Apart from building her own house, Sophie is running her own research company. Thus she is a self-builder, a businesswoman as well as a single parent. Daniel, commenting on Sophie’s situation, said:

‘She’s been building for 18 months she’s been putting in 21 hours a week for 18 months. If you look at that in ... pounds and pences ... she’s probably put 20 thousand pounds worth of work into the scheme ... She’s not getting anything out of it! Public housing sector has got that work, you could call it slave labour!’ (Daniel)

Commenting on the timescale Nigel noted that they have to put in 21 hours a week. ‘So, it’s like half a week. But then there’s administration, meetings and time worrying

(laughs)... there's been lots of times when I could have left', said Nigel. 'Lots of people left, ... as I said of the original people you only got about two, one or two' (Nigel).

Jeremy complained that the length of the time it has taken adversely affected all the existing relationships of those building it, including himself. 'There's only one couple that have survived this', Jeremy noted, 'all the other relationships that were in the co-op when we started building have broken up now. People have been born and people have died. And all this has been going on' (Jeremy).

At present the Housing Association want the self-builders to finish as soon as they can and spend as little as they can to finish. 'The Housing Association', noted Nigel, 'now started to talk about bringing contractors in, professional builders to come and do some work to speed up the progress'. But they are not imposing it yet, they are still leaving it up to self-builders to decide whether they should do that or not. 'But obviously the pressure is on to finish, and finish cheaply and quickly' (Nigel).

Design process

The South London Family Housing Association states in its brochure that: 'Self-build for Rent allows future occupants to have a very significant say in the design, construction, management and maintenance of their homes'.³

The Greenstreet group *was* involved in the design process. Nigel, who joined the project in 1992 before building work started, noted that they were involved in every part of it. Initially, the houses were designed with a different site in mind, which they did not get in the end because of planning objections. There was a local campaign against the project by the local residents because, as one of the self-builders put it, 'it is a posh neighbourhood'.

The design process went on for quite a long time with the architects having held lots of meetings and interviews to find out what people wanted. Thus, there was a long process to get the design, find the building site and get the planning permission. They lobbied councillors, trying to convince the politicians that it was a worthwhile project so that they would give them planning permission. As mentioned earlier there were objections from the residents in this neighbourhood *too* but the self-builders won their battle.

The self-builders think that, subject to planning restrictions, it was *their* project *they* designed it. *They* decided *where* they wanted to do it. *They* chose the architectural practice who then were employed by the housing association. They decided to have an independent project manager who is directly employed by the self-builders to run the scheme for them.

Yet, as the evidence presented earlier clearly demonstrates, having the decision-making power on a specific issue does not necessarily put the self-builders in a position of power within the social matrix. Ability to make a particular decision proved to be insufficient without an access to professional advice, and has led the Greenstreet self-builders to a position of further powerlessness by compelling them to pay for their mistakes. What is more, the building process is about making a series of decisions, which involves interaction between the agencies with differences of power attached to their roles, e.g. financial, technical, and political. The vulnerability of self-builders in most of these areas such as financial, and technical reflects itself in their inability to exercise of power in other areas, such as finding the right person for the job, hiring staff, and design.

The management process

The self-builders stressed that the management *is* very important to them. Valerie suggested that personal issues can affect the building work seriously and they can be very difficult to resolve. ‘So’, she said, ‘we actually need to set up structures that are already in place to deal with problems’ (Valerie). She pointed out that they needed ‘a kind of team building’ for it all depends on how they work as a group.

According to Daniel, ‘that’s all about ... working well together, working in team, talking through what needs to be done, knowing the target you’ve got to reach’. Yet, ‘we didn’t start off with that,’ insisted Daniel, ‘we evolved to that’. He recalled that in the beginning the meetings could get very emotional. At this stage an outsider who was a trainer came in and reflected this back to them and, Daniel thought, the situation immediately began to improve.

Valerie too stressed that their meetings are quite good now. She also underlined that they have newer members who might feel less confident at meetings. ‘Some people just do’, said Valerie, ‘people have their strengths and weaknesses, don’t they?’ Indeed they

are quite sensitive about the new comers as well as those who do not speak much at the meetings. ‘When we have a meeting of 15 people sometimes certain people speak much more than others’, noted Daniel, ‘but the people who don’t speak have just as many important things to say’. He went on to say:

‘That’s why we’re going down this road of actually looking for professional advise in management procedure. How some of us who are more vocal can try to listen to those who aren’t necessarily so vocal, and whether we should hold back for what we want to say because we’re doing that whatever’ (Daniel).

It was interesting to note that contrary to the hegemonic ideology, this group always set their norms according to the needs of the most vulnerable rather than the dominant. In my opinion, this was due to the ideological positioning of the members of the group and the fact that the Greenstreet self-builders have a strong conviction to the principles of co-operative. They think that co-operatives *do* work and *can* work and they’re very successful. They may appear to be slow, they argue, but when the decisions are made they are very solid decisions.

Although they are a co-operative of 15 people, sometimes they have to break it into smaller units ‘so that individuals can feel quite loyal to their smaller units and then those units can feel loyal to the larger unit’ (Daniel). They think that when they are working with three or four people, it is much easier to keep some sense of being in control than as they are working in a larger unit of 15.

A consultation process *does* exist and is quite effective *within* the Greentstreet Co-op. They are trying to observe democratic principles and finding it difficult to act on behalf of others without consulting them. Valerie described how she felt:

‘When you are talking to someone or writing on behalf of the co-op it’s more difficult because you have to be very careful if you try and represent people, or you try and get everyone’s views ... And I wouldn’t be prepared to make a decision on my own if it was going to affect everyone, if it was major really. Even in setting up a day of training. I wouldn’t just say, “this is the training day” without consulting people’ (Valerie).

Despite all the pitfalls the group still strive to be in control after the completion of the project. With this in mind, they are planning to organise training on ‘housing maintenance’ and ‘finances, budgeting and rents’ which will aim to provide skills that will be needed when they are a housing co-op and no longer a building co-op.

Who is in power?

In terms of having power and being in control, the views of self-builders varied. The majority said they had mixed feelings. Nigel was quite pessimistic in terms of being in charge during self-build process: ‘I personally don’t feel particularly empowered by doing the scheme for lots of reasons. Partly, when I’m doing the building, people have to tell me what to do. I’m not a builder. So, I’m feeling like I’m just a builder just doing the building...’ (Nigel).

Sophie, on the other hand, differentiated between her personal empowerment and that of the group. She insisted that acquiring new skills made her much more self-confident. ‘As an individual’, said Sophie, ‘I feel like I’ve been empowered because I have these new skills and I have the confidence to tackle things’. She argued that having to take on not just the building, but all the legal and financial aspects too made them very strong. But at the same time, she stressed, they as a group are quite *powerless* since they have no control over some very critical issues such as their rents. ‘As a group of prospective tenants’, she complained, ‘I think we’re actually really *powerless*’.

Valerie on the other hand felt sure that they *do* have power and are in control despite the lack of support that they are supposed to be getting from the organisations and agencies:

‘I do feel that we do have a lot of power in that way and control ... But I also feel that we’re really struggling here and working hard for nothing and bringing massive amounts of time and energy and commitment and grief and everything into it. And I do not feel that we have enough support from the various organisations that we’re involved with, e.g. the architects, the CHISEL who are the development agency, and SLFHA - the housing association that we ultimately come under’ (Valerie).

Despite the problems and difficulties they ran into, all of the self-builders I have interviewed still believe that Through self-building one can take control over her/his

housing situation instead of waiting to be housed and may be never housed, especially if one is a single person who has a very low priority in public housing. As Daniel put it:

‘So, you’re able to take control and actively do something about sorting out your own housing problem. You’re working with other people to do that. You have a lot of say in design. And that ultimately you’re building a community as well which I think those we lack at the moment, sense of community and neighbours knowing each other’ (Daniel).

Views on the concept of self-build and its future

The way Nigel felt in terms of the concept of self-build differed from the rest of my respondents. Having been involved in the project since 1992, Nigel felt it has been a really difficult time and he is not certain whether it was worth it or not. In some ways, he reflected, the only reason he really came onto the scheme was because he did not have a particularly good alternative. It has taken a lot of his time during which he has not been able to advance his career or anything like that. ‘So overall I’d say a lot of the time it’s been borderline whether it’s worth it or not’, said Nigel ‘and perhaps when we finish ... it’s all forgotten, all the pain’s forgotten’.

Jeremy arguing along similar lines stated that ‘they all come down to the fact that the life is pretty hard when you’re doing this’. He then portrayed the conditions self-builders go through as follows: ‘Either you’re on the dole and ... you’re just scraping from one giro to the next’, and at the same time, ‘working hard and wearing your clothes out, you’ve got to pay your bus fares here or whatever. You are working and you haven’t got a minute to yourself’ (Jeremy).

All the respondents called for some amendments in self-build process. Jeremy, for instance, argued that ‘if the government wants to look at re-generating inner city areas and creating sense of community, sense of pride this is undoubtedly the way to do’. ‘But it needs a radical overhaul’, he insists. ‘Money needs to be given to a big architectural group to do a serious research and design. Like the original Walter Segal, we want the “Walter Segal” mark two that satisfies people’s needs in the 1990’s and the next century’, suggested Jeremy. The concept of self-build is in fact more than building your own individual house maintained Jeremy, ‘it is about building a better future and re-generating the areas that are needed’ (Jeremy). Indeed these projects can be a way of regenerating the run-down inner city areas by providing employment and housing while

at the same time providing the unemployed opportunity to acquire new skills. What Jeremy is suggesting on the other hand echoes the aims of the Social Exclusion Unit of the Labour Government, which was discussed in Chapter 4. Self-builders claim that to achieve all this funding has to be provided by the Government and the experiences of the self-builders need to be tapped into.

Believing that self-build 'is a wonderful idea' and feeling very positive about it, Valerie pointed to the need for better support for self-build groups. She underlined that every self-builder group is actually quite isolated and struggling with problems on its own. She furthermore highlighted the innate problems with the concept of self-building. 'If you're going to spend two years building, how do you support yourself or your family during that time?' asked Valerie emphasising that issues such as the notion of 'free labour' should be looked at. 'The way that people have seen self-build is that the labour element of it is free. Well, it is because it's voluntarily given but it's not free as such in a way'. At the end of the day the so-called free labour of the self-builders provides public housing. Valerie suggested that 'maybe people should be given a low wage ... to support them doing that. If you look at what we're building, yes, this is initially for ourselves but it's public housing at the end of the day as well, we do not own that' (Valerie).

The project manager also suggested that self-build groups should have more people who are permanently working on site. People such as a site manager and a foreperson who are permanently on site can provide professional advice to the self-builders. She elaborates:

'They should have more funding for training and to employ people that can come and help them. Actually on site ... I think a lot of thought needs to be put in ... in terms of the number of hours they put in on the project. And obviously ... they need to be funded more adequately. There's not enough money to do it properly and that is not fair' (Nandita).

To sum up, as a mixed self-build group some of the problems Greenstreet self-builders experienced were similar to those of Community Self-build members, such as lack of professional support they needed and hostility from the residents in the neighbourhood as well as differences of social positioning among the members of the group resulting

differential power relations. Yet the ways in which they tackled with these problems were totally different, which I shall discuss in Part III.

¹ One of the self-builders, Jeremy, summarised the history of Walter Segal Self-Build system as follows: Walter Segal is the architect who felt that people were being conned by the building trade into believing that it was not possible to built your own houses to keep that industry going. He needed to construct a temporary building in his back garden to house his own family, whilst he modernised his own house. And then he tried to think about a very simple system for constructing a timber building. Once he had housed his family in there, he developed the thing further and created the self-build model. This has gone along way since then, as a lot of problems have developed from this.

² *Self-build for Rent, Based on the CHISEL Model*, South London Family Association, p.3.

³ *ibid.*

Chapter 11: Black Project: *Fusions Jameen Housing Co-operative* *Phase I*

Introduction

Fusions Jameen Housing Co-operative is an African/Caribbean Housing Co-operative, which has been established for about eight years, at the time of the interview. The Housing Corporation fund the scheme and at present it is available only to Lewisham residents. The Co-op has a contractual obligation to complete each scheme within 18 months. Once on site, members have to work a minimum of 24 hours per week.

The Co-operative Housing in South East London (CHISEL) and the South London Family Housing Association (SLFHA) have now amalgamated and become one company as their landlord. The site was found with the joint effort of the developers, the initial co-op members and the city council.

The first phase (*Phase I*) of the project has now been completed and the self-builders are already living in their houses. The project is split into two sites, which are in close proximity to each other. There are nine self-builders involved in the *Phase I*, who together with any volunteers and friends that they 'managed to drag into it' have built eight units in total. The units are mainly for single people and single parent families, yet they have two parent families on the scheme as well.

About the project

The project is divided into two split sites that are on different roads and that has led to the spatial division of the group. Thus, although it is one scheme and they are one group, in effect they live on different roads namely Brockley Park and Lowther Hill, and the group is split accordingly.

Andrew, who is a 37 years old Caribbean man, has been building with his brother who is also a self-builder. They will be living in the same house together with Andrew's white partner and their baby son. Andrew had been involved in building for approximately two years and living in his house for about a year by the time of the interview. Although it was not completely ready when he moved in, his housing situation was such that he needed to move from where he was. He, therefore, moved in

while he was still building. Other self-builders moved in within three to six months of the time that Andrew had moved in.

Amanda is a 26 years old Caribbean woman who has been living in her self-build dwelling with her four year old son. Self-build was the only option for Amanda to get decent accommodation. As a council tenant she lived for 8 years in Lee Green, which is also within the Borough of Lewisham. The property that she was living in was a converted house. She was on the top floor, which had a lot of glass windows and a lot of stairs. Although it was a nice flat for a single person, her four year-old child developed asthma due to the leaking roof and spent a lot of time in hospital. She described it as follows:

‘The windows were hazard so was the stairs and I had an eight foot window down the side of the stairs. The Council couldn’t, or wouldn’t, board it up because they said it would have been a fire hazard. Obviously because of my child’s ill health I did ask them for a transfer and they even refused to put me on a transfer list’ (Amanda).

The Council refused to consider Amanda as homeless and put her on the waiting list because ‘she had a roof over her head’ and therefore was not in a housing need. However, as Amanda noted, the roof she had over her head was leaking. ‘I’d been in the property for eight years’, said Amanda, ‘and I’d been on to the Council to do the repairs on the roof for seven years’. She described her ordeal this way:

‘It got to the stage that at one point it was just like leaking from the chimney breast but then there was the gas fire so the water was leaking into the back of the gas fire. And then, ... every time it rained there would be water dripping from another part of the ceiling which was in the bedroom and the front room. So, obviously there was a lot of mould, wall paper hanging off the ceiling, a surveyor kept coming round and kept telling me that there was no damp’ (Amanda).

The above quotation also highlights Amanda’s relations with the Council as she insisted that ‘the work just never was done’. The Council did send people round to do it, but ‘they’d never actually done the work properly’. ‘In fact they made it worse’, complained Amanda, ‘and I ended up bolts sticking from the ceiling ... but the leaks were still there and they got worse’. She thought, ‘it was a case of do it yourself or

Amanda worked as a chef before her son arrived and did not have any building skills before joining the project. She knew how to use a hammer and saw and learned other things on site like taking measurements. As she went along she picked up tips from other people. ‘Obviously we had qualified supervisors’, said Amanda, ‘they were like carpenters. They gave you tips and showed you certain things as you went along...’ She did not get any formal training on site: ‘No, when I actually started the scheme, the scheme had been going on for about two years’, explained Amanda, ‘so a lot of the other self-builders had had training but obviously I had come late in the day, I missed out on that training’. Nevertheless, she believes she acquired a considerable amount of skills. ‘Yeah, I acquired, definitely, definitely’, said Amanda, ‘In fact, I’d like to go into that sort of field of work. Not necessarily carpentry but like interior designing or that sort of field. I’d like to go into it eventually’. Thus like many other self-builders, Amanda wishes to put her newly acquired skills into use after the completion of the project.

Ethnicity

Fusions Jameen state in their brochure that one of the criteria for co-op membership is that ‘all applicants should be of African or Caribbean descent’. The Greenstreet Self-build Housing Co-operative’s site is situated within close proximity to the site of *Phase I* of the Fusions Jameen Co-op, and there are other ethnically mixed self-build co-ops in the Borough of Lewisham. I explored the reasons why my respondents went for a Black co-op rather than joining in one of those ethnically mixed co-ops in the area. Elaborating on the necessity for a Black co-op Andrew said he joined this particular co-op after he heard about it from another self-builder. ‘I don’t think it really mattered to me at the beginning that it was a Black co-op’, noted Andrew. Stressing that ‘although it’s quite important that there should be a Black housing co-op’, he insisted that ‘but it wasn’t my initial reason to join just because it was a Black co-op’. He expressed his justification and support of the idea of a Black co-op as follows: ‘Black people are severely disadvantaged in their housing in this country anyway. For me, that’s a good reason to have a Black co-op. It gives us a bit more input, a bit more control’ (Andrew).

Commenting on the ethnic characteristics of the group, Andrew noted that throughout his involvement they had Black people from Africa, the Caribbean, and South America who were involved at one time with the co-op. ‘With Black people to my mind there is no difference ... anyway whether they are from Caribbean or Africa itself’. The self-

builders are all African Caribbean but with their partners and children it is an ethnically mixed 'community'.

Similarly, Amanda went for a Black Co-op because it was the first advertisement she came across. 'In my case it wasn't actually a case of join a Black self-build community', said Amanda, 'it just happened to be that this was the first advert that I saw. And I said well I'll go for it'. Nevertheless, Amanda *did* express a preference for living together with other Black people:

'But if there was more schemes on offer and there was mixed, I think *I still probably would have gone for a black based community*. I think we all sort of like all on the same kind of level, we all like to play *our* music so in that sense nobody complains ... *We* all play *our* music, different, even at the same time but no one complains ... And probably I feel more confident and more comfortable amongst Black people ... being black myself ... I think I would have gone into a Black community' (Amanda)(my emphasis).

Amanda's description of her preference for living in a Black neighbourhood rendered the construction of a boundary between Blacks as 'us' and Whites as 'them.' As the 'racialised Other' she felt more comfortable amongst Black people for they would not complain about the music that she described as '*our music*'. It is unclear whether she means '*kind of music*' with cultural connotations or our individual music, which could be any type of music. In any case, her portrayal implies her preference for living with people who she can culturally identify with. Although there was a high possibility of such an identification in this particular project, as far as I am concerned Amanda's perception of Black people was essentialistic and therefore problematic. Indeed her portrayal contradicted with what went on in the immediate neighbourhood in that (as discussed later in the chapter) according to Amanda, the group did not have any problems with their neighbours except for one Black neighbour who did not seem too pleased to have them as neighbours. It is difficult to tell how much Amanda's experiences in her previous predominantly white neighbourhood, where a lot of racial harassment took place, contributed to her essentialising Black people and her contradictory comments. She did, however, refrain from essentialising White people when she talked about her former neighbourhood. As Amanda put it:

‘But I think a lot of that was down to the fact that in my old place we had European neighbours and they were ... I had some difficulties with *them*. Do you know what I mean? Things like although I had the share of the garden *they* wouldn’t let me go in the garden. *They* were always complaining about nothing but everything you know. It was just ... but having said that *not all of my neighbours were like that either...*’ (Amanda) (my emphasis).

Amanda came from a neighbourhood where her ‘otherness’ was created and re-created by the racist attitudes of her neighbours in everyday practice and discourse. The presence of a few non-racist neighbours was ineffective in challenging the dominant practice and discourse in which Amanda and her son were the racialised ‘Other’. Furthermore, as a single mother Amanda lacked the support of an immediate family network which could put her in solidarity with others against the racial hostility of the neighbourhood. Amanda’s sense of space was totally different from those of her white neighbours in this predominantly white and ‘desirable’ part of Lewisham. The existing social relations subjected Amanda as a Black single mother to a subordinate position as ‘the racialised Other’ while they meant solidarity and co-operation for the white people.

Amanda preferred living in the neighbourhood where she as a Black single mother felt supported by her neighbours. In her narration she, too, has constructed a divide between Black people and White people as ‘us and them’. However, this divide was not exclusionary in that her construction allowed space for non-Blacks to live together so long as they did not impose power on others in order to dominate and subordinate. Her former White neighbours’ construction of ‘the Other’ involved racialisation and classing of ‘the gendered Other’. Her Black neighbour’s construction of ‘the otherness’ reflected in not wanting Black people in the neighbourhood, in my opinion, demonstrates internalisation of whiteness thus constructing the racialised people as ‘the Other’.

Gender

Amanda described the characteristics of the self-build group as follows:

‘We’ve got ... four single parents, single parent families, (who are all - TU) single mothers ... then we have ... three single men, and we’ve got one family, one complete unit (two parent family - TU) but basically I think in fact as far as women go, there’s

myself, Sonia ... I think the ratio of men to women is about even. In fact there is actually two families now' (Amanda).

She also described the breakdown of the site she is living in the following quote:

'On this site, I'm a single parent and then my neighbour who lives opposite, he was a family unit but obviously there was a breakdown of the relationship. So, he's a single man and the house behind him is a single woman and the house behind me is a family unit' (Amanda).

Disadvantage in terms of access to permanent housing is the only characteristic that all self-builders share. They all have a low priority in the waiting list for public housing and they cannot afford a mortgage. However, they are not homogeneous among themselves. Although my respondents' comments did not imply construction of strong divisions within the group, they did reveal that they occupied differential power positioning within their group in relation to the self-build process. Amanda's experience of self-build, for example, was clearly quite different to those self-builders who were either single or had a partner to look after their children. Amanda had to bring her three years old son to the site, which highlighted the gendered nature of the self-build process.

She portrayed her situation as follows: 'But because I didn't have ... any sort of baby-sitters or childminders so, I didn't have any other choice but, it was a case of either bring him on site with me or lose house. So, you had to sacrifice somewhere. But all in all it turned out okay, we didn't have any major accidents' (Amanda).

She suggested that her son learned a lot coming to the site with her and enjoyed it. Nevertheless, she noted, 'I must admit to bring a child on to site is not an ideal situation at all'. It made self-building even harder for her: 'it was hard for me because I was trying to get my work done. And entertain him make sure that he is not getting into any danger. So, it was quite hard' (Amanda). Despite the hardship Amanda experienced while building her house, she pointed out that 'there are people who work full-time and still do this which I don't know how they manage'. Amanda's expression indicates the extent that women's unpaid labour doing housework and caring responsibilities are taken for granted. She had to take care of her small child all the time, even when she

was building her house and did not enjoy any family support. However, she underlines the achievement of those who work full-time (mostly men) and self-build at the same time noting that she doesn't understand how they manage. Women internalise, yet again, the unrecognised nature of women's caring responsibilities, which is the characteristic of the hegemonic ideology.

Thus as a racialised 'Other' Amanda had a unique experience in self-building which once again underscores the racialised, gendered and classed nature of the self-build process that I discuss in Part III.

As mentioned earlier, the group is spatially divided, which in effect means they are two separate 'communities'. In answer to my question of whether Amanda considers themselves two separate groups or just one group, she responded thus:

'Well, it's one scheme, ... we are one group but, I think because we live on different roads, although we're all Phase One - Brockley Park and Lowther Hill are both Phase One - and we all get on very well with each other. But in lots of other ways we're separate communities as well ... They all live there and we live here' (Amanda).

Moreover, Amanda suggested that the layout of the houses has led to relatively more distance between the residents of Brockley Road site (where Andrew lives), which in turn shaped the interaction of the households.

Having built together and to be living together in the same neighbourhood, Andrew had quite positive feelings about the group in general.

'From my initial involvement there was a kind of family feeling that had grown along with the Co-op, and as we come near to the end we come closer and closer as people, as a group. Now we are pretty much like any small community together ... We have our ups and downs that's probably as neighbours. But it ... doesn't carry on. We are quite a lot like a tight knit family in lots of ways' (Andrew).

Andrew (like Bill in Islington self-build) drew a resemblance to a family, but unlike Bill his construction of the family was a positive one (see also Chapter 1 for discussion on ethnicised and racialised construction of the private/public divide). With regards to

factions, divisions and conflicts within the group, Andrew suggested that they had them only when they were faced with difficulties. 'I'm not saying that any difficulty led to factions being formed', he said, 'but you felt along the way that certain people you know who you could rely on to go up and do things, only in that way'. He nonetheless underlined that '... they were never ever so deep rooted that we couldn't get around them. We were always dealt with the issues at hand. In fact we found that the more kind of stress ... that the closer people got and actually did things together. In that way I think it was good for us as a group' (Andrew).

It was interesting to see that Andrew did not refer to any constructed boundary amongst the members of the group whilst describing the factions, but instead emphasised the group's unity as he said 'it was good for us as a group'.

Wanjiru, who is a 32 years old African female self-builder also had positive feelings about the fact that having built together and having worked for so long the self-builders will be living in the same area.

'We are very community based here ... If we need something or we need help or whatever, there's no hesitation to knock on somebody's door, we all get on very, very well. We don't have any grievances at all. And if there is something that's niggling somebody then you just say ... you come to a compromise. But as a rule we don't have any problems because we all built together and we've got to know each other' (Wanjiru).

Wanjiru did mention 'us and them' divide when she illustrated the way they interacted as neighbours. Nonetheless, this divide based itself not on the construction of 'the Other', instead it was based on the different needs of the people at different times. She highlighted the constantly changing nature of needs of individuals and noted that members of the group show respect to these changing needs and each other's space.

'We know what each person's character is like. We know when they want *space*, when they want *company*. So, even though we're living in our houses we all got our own personal space but on the other hand if somebody's bored we can go and knock on their doors, and we can have a conversation. No problem. We do, we all get on very well' (Wanjiru)(her emphasis).

Construction of 'difference' and 'the community': Neighbourhood

Andrew described that the neighbourhood had positive attitude towards the project. When the project was first started, the site had to be set properly they had to get the water and electrics. During this time they got a lot of help from the neighbours. To my question of whether they are still positive after so many years Andrew responded: 'yeah, yeah (laughing). There has been times obviously especially in a good weather we stayed and we were late obviously creating a lot of noise, but people were always very understanding about that. We got quite a good relationship with the local community'.

Amanda did not experience any racism *herself*, nor did she hear about racism about the other self-build groups. She did not hear of any incidents of racial harassment in the area either. 'But having said that', she added, 'the local area is a mixed community, there is ... Blacks, there's Whites, there's Asians, Indians so it's quite well mixed, yeah' (Amanda).

In Amanda's narrative, construction of space was differentiated by race that became visible by her choice of area. She compared the present neighbourhood to Lee where she lived previously and where there was a significant level of racial harassment.

'But when I actually lived in Lee not myself personally but I know people who did experience sort of some racial harassment. And I think that's because we were sort of going in that sort of Eltham area, you know where a lot of black racism has been carried out. A lot of black kids have died, etc., etc.. *That was a nice area but it was good to get out of there as well*' (Amanda)(my emphasis).

Amanda's main concern in moving out of this 'nice' but predominantly white area with a history of overt racism was not for herself but for her son. She put it as follows:

'Because I didn't want my son to have to face it, I don't want my son to grow up before he has to. Do you know what I mean? I know he has to experience racism at some point and he already has but in moderation you know. The older he gets the more obviously aware he'll become of it. But I don't think it should be thrown in his face at three four years old. You know. Experience it as he grows with it, you know' (Amanda).

The racialised and ethnicised nature of space is demonstrated in the experiences of Amanda. As expressed in the above quotation one of the characteristics racialised people have to take into consideration while choosing the area to live in is the degree of racial harassment taking place.

Furthermore, Amanda noted that they did not have any problems with their neighbours in their present neighbourhood. Nevertheless, she added, they had a problem with a *Black* neighbour. 'We actually did have a problem with a Black neighbour. He didn't want our kind living next door to him...' In other words 'the sameness' in terms of ethnicity did not automatically bring a 'community spirit' in their locality, rather it brought ill feelings among some neighbours.

Nevertheless, on the whole 'the neighbours were very good', said Amanda. 'They did look out for us and obviously there was time when the building was too much for them but we were like considerate about it obviously no sort of banging or whatever after 8 o'clock. We were very considerate'. A lot of the neighbours were very curious to see what the houses would be like. When the group had the open day they did invite the neighbours along, and a lot of them were quite pleasantly surprised. She summed up as follows:

'Looking at the outside you wouldn't know what to expect from the inside. But ... we didn't have any problems with neighbours really. Obviously you get the odd complaint but then I suppose that's the same with anywhere, there's building work people will complain. No, the neighbours were very good. And they still are ... who lives next door to me Graham, he's fantastic guy, he's really good guy. And I've got to know a lot of the neighbours up and down the road. So, they're all saying "Hello", asking if we've completely finished and asking how things are going...' (Amanda).

Noting that the neighbourhood is ethnically well mixed she described the ethnic heterogeneity of the neighbourhood as follows:

'Graham who lives next door to me is actually Irish. The other side is the Black guy and then I think next to him is another Black family has just moved in and then I think we've got Polish and then we've got a German and then we have a West Indian, Asian families, we've got a couple of Black families. So, it's quite mixed, mixed community, mixed street' (Amanda).

Amanda seemed very pleased about the ‘mixed’ nature of her neighbourhood. In fact this was a characteristic of major importance for a Black-only project, for in a relatively homogeneous neighbourhood (other than black) the group is highly likely to be constructed as ‘the Other’ and experience harassment which was the case for the Phase II of the Fusions Jameen Project.

Issues of safety

Wanjiru feels quite safe in the neighbourhood: ‘We’ve been building for a couple of years, so we’ve got to know a lot of the neighbours’, she noted, ‘so, obviously we watch out for each other. And on our little close that we have here somebody’s always in’. When they were building they had a lot of things stolen, machinery, and tools. But since they have moved in they have had no attempted break ins. ‘There’s a house just down the road and they’ve only been here for a month and since then they had six attempted breaks in a month!’ she said, ‘but we haven’t had any, touch wood. I do, I feel very safe around here’. Wanjiru suggested that having built together they have got to know each other well therefore everybody looks out for each other. ‘So, there’s very rarely a time when the close is completely empty’. Noting that she does not worry too much about her own personal safety, Wanjiru summed it up as follows: ‘you do your best. The windows and doors have all got locks on them. You lock your doors at night. Yeah, I feel quite safe, I do’ (Wanjiru). In my view, the layout of the houses clearly contributed to the sense of safety one could feel on this site (Appendix 3).

Participation in the decision-making process

Power relations between the group and the professionals

During the building work the contracts manager was responsible for running the project. ‘As a co-op we employed the contracts manager and a site supervisor’ Andrew noted. ‘He is the guy who’s actually got the hands on skills, carpentry, electrics or whatever’. Andrew stressed that ‘if we didn’t have people around like that, it wouldn’t happen. Self-builders alone couldn’t do that’. As far as Andrew is concerned, they have employed the right person for the job. ‘But that was another learning process’. He believed that ‘in the main’ they *did* get enough support from the professionals. ‘When it came out of the way you always got the support’, said Andrew, ‘you have to battle for it at times’.

Elaborating on the way Wanjiru viewed their relation with the external agencies (such as the architects and the Housing Association), she did not consider the group to be in the centre of the process. Constructing 'us and them' division between the group and the professional agencies, she thought self-builders were marginalised in the process.

'I think we're just basically a small ... proportion amongst these agencies. Because at the end of the day there are lots of other schemes, they're planning they are doing, one successful scheme is an incentive for them to push and do more. But at the end of the day we're just ... a small fish compared to them. We're helping them but they wouldn't suffer without us either. They would carry on ... obviously if we are successful it's good for them but if we're not it's not a big deal because somebody will always come and take your place' (Wanjiru).

Timescale

Initially the self-builders had to put in a minimum of 24 hours and then they gradually 'crept up' because they were lagging behind. In the end, they ended up doing something like 25 hours a week. Yet the group were not able to keep the timescale. 'We went a little bit over', said Andrew, 'It was pretty difficult because ... most people who are self-builders work. And if they don't work they have families to take care of. So, you have to ... build mainly in your spare time. We all build in our spare time unless you are unemployed'.

Wanjiru emphasised that self-builders have to be made aware of the hours they ought to put in while they are building to finish it on time. 'You can't just come and do ten hours for the week and say: "well, I've done my share". If you're expected to do 21 hours, you have to do 21 hours. Even if you're working, you still somehow, somewhere have to fit those hours in'.

Amanda found the process quite exhausting. 'Actually it was hard work, oh yeah, it was hard work! But it was fun', she said. Occasionally she was disheartened: '... there were days when you just felt, "why am I doing this, I can't do any more", because at the end of the day you are mentally and physically exhausted'. She depicted what she went through as follows:

‘I was here on site seven days a week. Because we ... had to do a minimum of 30 hours a week. So, during the week I was doing like five hours a week but obviously if I didn’t have my son with me I would’ve done longer hours. But that was long enough to achieve a certain amount each day but I also had a little bit of time to spend with my son as well’ (Amanda).

The above quotation demonstrates once again the gendered nature of the self-build process. Amanda further argued the process is very demanding and ‘is a big, big sacrifice’ on the part of self-builders. She went on to say:

‘How much you give up, for two years your life is a total standstill, you don’t have a social life because you’re too tired to do anything. And you’re always here and if you do take a day off then you’ve got to make up those hours. So, it does take up your whole life. It’s like having a full-time job. It is a full-time job! (Amanda).

According to Wanjiru the motivation of a self-builder varies throughout the building process. ‘There’re days when you’re on a high’, said Wanjiru, ‘there are some weeks when you do like a month’s work in a week and there are some weeks when ... you don’t even do a day’s work in a week ... You have your highs and lows. But I think it’s like everything you do up and down...’ Despite all the difficulties Wanjiru firmly believes ‘it was definitely worth doing’: because, at the end of the day, she pointed out, she has moved out of a flat into a house and she has a two-bedroom property rather than a one-bedroom. ‘And it’s all *my* work, everything in this house I can say “I did this nobody had provided it for me”. I’ve got more space I’ve got a garden, yes, definitely worth it. It was worth all the sacrifice’ (Wanjiru).

Who is in power?

Having completed the project, the Co-op members now have their monthly management committee meetings. Amanda voiced concern about the fact that not many people want to be involved in the management of the Co-op. ‘People don’t want to take any responsibility’, she complained, ‘because you know someone has to be treasurer, a chair, secretary, etc., etc., then you’ve got to fundraise and ... keep the scheme kicking all the time’. She maintained that the issue that needs to be addressed now is: ‘how do you get people motivated enough to participate at the end when the houses finished?’ (Amanda).

Andrew pointed out that they still have difficulties with regards to learning how to manage their housing which they will need particularly when the buildings are complete. 'We hope to manage the running', Andrew noted, 'we built for rent but we hope to manage the rent of the houses in the long run. So, we are looking for training in that'.

Both Andrew and Amanda viewed the importance of their role in the design and management of their housing as 'quite important'. Amanda sees herself as a participant in 'all minor *and* major decisions', whereas Andrew thought he was participating in *minor decisions only*. I asked Andrew if he felt they had been in control of the whole process or whether he felt the decisions were being imposed on them of which they had no control. He responded as follows: 'No, I don't feel that'. Nevertheless, he added: 'I *do* feel that there could have been a bit more input'. Andrew thought that the group's input in decision-making was not significant. This was an inevitable outcome of their lack of experience according to Andrew:

'Whatever input we had in major decision-making was very tiny, very, very tiny. And I think it had to be that way because, like I said, it's all new to us. There's no way you could get a group, like going up, running and doing things. It wouldn't work... How things need to be done. What you need to do. What experience you need to have to get building done. Learn how to run a co-op' (Andrew).

Andrew described his role in the design and management process initially as 'rather important' changing it to 'more important' later on. In fact this was often the case when my respondents described their role in design and management processes. In my opinion, it is the ambivalent nature of the self-build process that causes this uncertainty of self-builders' regard of their role in the process. On the one hand it takes a lot of courage and perseverance to get involved and built for years, which in itself is 'empowering'. Nevertheless, the fact that individuals do this out of desperation, and more importantly as the process does not involve a real transfer of power to the self-builders *vis-à-vis* the paternalistic attitude of the professional agencies and lack of much needed advice, means that they often feel quite powerless in the process. The pressure to keep to the timescale exacerbates all of this. Andrew stressed that they needed more training in the decision-making process to be able to make decisions.

Despite the flexible approach of the architect, the self-builders of the Fusions Jameen Phase I Project had no involvement at the initial stages of the design process. 'The only input that self-builders had' Andrew noted, 'was that they could actually ... influence the layout of their homes. And that was ... on a day-to-day basis ... something that we wanted to change we could change it, with quite a lot of flexibility from the architect. Nevertheless he thought that 'self-builders should have a more involvement in the actual initial design' (Andrew).

Andrew was not sure why they were not involved in the design process of their dwellings. He himself joined a year after building had started subsequently by that time plans were already made. 'But I don't quite know why', he said, 'I can imagine but...' When asked what he would imagine to be the reason for them not to get involved, Andrew expressed empathy with the architects and responded as follows:

'Well ... the way the self-builders work, week to week they all want to do is something different. From just that aspect alone you're making the lives of architects, they've got a limited time to design things, they ... can't take everything into consideration that a self-builder wants to do' (Andrew).

Wanjiru, on the other hand, felt self-builders were in control of the process. She said she did not feel that 'decisions were really being imposed on' them. 'Apart from the shape of the house, the structure of the house', she said, 'we were allowed to design the layouts of the insides'. She pointed out that they could have their bedroom, the kitchen, and the living room in the way and size they wanted them. 'It was totally down to you with regard to the inside of the house ... Obviously somebody said if you did this it would give you more space' (Wanjiru). So, she felt at the end of the day the decision was hers.

Amanda identified her role as 'quite important' in the design and management process of her housing. But her evaluation was slightly different from my other respondents. She contextualised it and assessed it in terms of its impact on others who are disadvantaged, in terms of access to a decent and low cost housing. She explained that: 'if my house has given somebody else incentive to build their own house then I think I've played an important role in sort of persuading people you can get up and do things

for yourself'. She further argued that 'you don't have to rely on other people to do it for you. You don't get anywhere in life waiting for other people. You have to get up and do it yourself'.

Amanda maintains that the whole process requires discipline and resolution, and she now feels a 'sense of achievement' and 'empowerment' by the whole building process. The following quotation demonstrates the extent the building process is mystified for many people and occasionally Amanda lost heart and thought they could be right:

'I did say to some people "I'm building a house". "Oh, you can never build a house, do you know how much hard work goes into a house, you'll never be able to build a house, you'll never finish it". There were times when I thought: "yeah, these people are right". But it's a lot to do about discipline and persevering' (Amanda).

But at the end of this strenuous process Amanda has got not only affordable permanent housing but also a sense of achievement and self-confidence which had an impact on the way she views herself and life generally.

'Yeah, I am more confident because I know at the end of the day I can achieve whatever I want to achieve, ... I build this house and it took me two years to do it. But some people don't achieve half of that in a life time ... I'm only 26 but I feel like I achieved more in 26 years of life than I'll probably achieve in the next 26 years' (Amanda).

Views on the concept of self-build and its future

The way Andrew perceived self-build was quite positive: 'I think it's a good experience', he said, 'I think a lot more people should be given the chance to do thing like this. It's a really good experience. Excellent!' He also claimed that 'it's an excellent way of learning to build up a community for one thing. Just from that aspect alone it is worth people getting involved with them'. He described how he retrospectively felt about the project as follows:

'As far as the building's concerned I would do it again. But I'd do it hopefully with more input from the self-builders. I don't really think there's enough input from the self-builders especially in the design ... But any other aspects, I would do it again' (Andrew).

Although Andrew is very happy with the process as well as with the result, he still thinks that the self-builders should get more involved in the process:

‘I think a self-builder has to be a bit more realistic in what it takes to actually build. This is not criticism but it is just some idea to move along. If the self-builders themselves were a bit more involved in process of design, ... actually sitting down with the developers and looking at the timescale of building this place. I think the self-builders need to be a bit more involved in that type of thing’ (Andrew).

Present in Andrew’s comments was an implicit resentment about insufficient commitment from the self-builders, rather than the construction of ‘us and them’ division between the self-builders and the professionals. His comments resonated the remarks made by the architects in that self-builders had to be more motivated to be able to build within the timescale and the budget (Chapter 8).

Amanda also perceived the idea of self-build positively and said: ‘... at the end of the day it’s worth it. It really is worth it you know’. She pointed to its merits as follows:

‘You can prove to yourself that you’re capable of so much more than you ever thought you’re capable of. You better your standard of living. And at the end of the day, it’s something that you can look back in ten - twenty years time and say “well, I did this, no one did it for me”, you know. “I provided my own home for myself and for my child...”’ (Amanda).

Despite all the hardship she went through while building, Amanda was certain that she ‘would do it again’.

‘I finished building just like a year in August, and I must admit I feel absolutely brain dead. I feel I’m so bored. Although like when I was actually building I was thinking “god I wish I’d hurry up and finish” you know. Now that it’s finished I just feel like I need another big project to get my hands into again. So I would do it again, yeah’ (Amanda).

Wanjiru argued that self-building is not just about building your own house because at the end of the day once the house is finished you have to manage your home and your estate. She claimed that people do not realise the changing emphasis. ‘At the end of the

day it's not just building your home, closing the door, and that's the end of it', she said, 'there's more to it'. Therefore, she maintained, 'people need to be made more aware of the managerial, the theory side of things'. She stressed that 'you've got to manage the properties you have to attend meetings which can be a drain. But it's a stipulation of when you build ... I know it's not a glamorous side of things but there's always a downside to everything'. She summed up as follows: 'And so, I think people need to be made more aware of what's expected of them once the house has finished'.

To sum up, self-builders the Phase I of Fusions Jameen Co-operative that I have interviewed constructed difference and 'us and them' division between 'the Self' (as 'I' and 'group') and White people in order to overcome their disadvantaged positioning in housing. It did not involve exclusionary practices. They did not construct divisions within the group, which enabled them to form harmonious relations as group on the whole. They seemed very pleased about the 'mixed' nature of her neighbourhood.

Fusions Jameen Housing Co-operative - Phase II

Introduction

Contrary to many other self-build co-ops, the group building the Phase II of Fusions Jameen Housing Co-operative was formed after the work started on site. That is to say they did not initiate the project but were found for it. The group consists of 13 self-builders. They need one more person to join the group, as one of the houses is not allocated yet. All the self-builders come into the project for affordable housing. There are also young people on the scheme working as trainees, about two thirds of which are Black.

The Council were co-sponsors of the project. Thus they, together with the South London Family Housing Association (SLFHA) and Co-operative Housing in South East London (CHISEL), looked for an appropriate site that was quite low in costing and found this particular site that was owned by the Council.

About the project

The neighbourhood that the site of the Phase II of Fusions Jameen Project is situated is a predominantly white area and that there are some people who are not happy with the presence of self-builders as a Black project. Thus the group is subjected to racial hostility.

In August 1996 there was an arson attack on the site as a result of which one of the houses was burned down. The group heard rumours that it could have been a racist attack. There was also a National Front (NF) sign put up on one of the houses (Appendix 3).

Wendy, who is a 44 years old Black woman, is a single mother with two children. She found out about this 'community project' through a friend who was on the scheme. She was told that the budget was supplied and that all they wanted was her labour for a secure tenancy. She thought this could be the answer to her housing problem since she wanted a larger accommodation. She was interviewed and accepted on the basis that she would commit a certain number of hours a week and do so much work. 'I was happy to

do it', said Wendy, 'because being unemployed I had a lot of time on my hand, I was able to commit myself'.

Matthew is a 33 years old Caribbean man and had been on the scheme for four months at the time of the interview. It was Matthew's sister who was involved in the project at the beginning but had to drop out for personal reasons. About a year later he was approached by another self-builder and was told that a place was available for a family for which he was eligible. Matthew was unemployed at the time, and with two boys needed a larger accommodation. He decided to come round and looked at it, and they put him on a month's trial. He did the work and was committed to the scheme. He then was interviewed in March 1996 and accepted on to the scheme. Matthew was aware of the advertisements about the project, yet he had not seen one till he came.

Power relations within the group

Social divisions in the group: Construction of 'difference' and 'the community'

Skills and 'empowerment'

Wendy had no previous training and found it very difficult to read the plans and visualise how it was going to be from the plans. She put it as:

'I'm really learning, experiential learning as they go along to try and look at the plans and see how that fits in to what we're actually doing. And the site supervisor actually tells us what is needed. It's not till you're actually doing the job, "oh yeah, I understand that now, how that fits in with the plans"' (Wendy).

Matthew had some woodwork skills before coming on the scheme. He did get some training on the scheme but it was not structured. He suggested that they need structured, 'a class room type of training' before coming on the site.

Ethnicity

Matthew had some conflicting feelings in terms of being a Black Co-op. He acknowledged that as the 'racialised Other' they occupied a disadvantaged position and experienced particular problems in the housing sector due to the structural inequalities. Nevertheless, he preferred a mixed group. He elaborated it as follows:

‘Being a Black co-op, I’ve got mixed feelings about it. On the one hand, I’d like us to be mixed you know. Black and White, Chinese you know. On the other hand I know from statistics that some of the Black communities ... do suffer more housing problem. It tends to be worse for *us* all the time (my emphasis). I thought the opportunity to have a Black Co-op is a good idea. Black groups have decided to do something, to use some initiative. This is a good thing that shows people that we *can* help ourselves. We *can* provide housing for ourselves’ (Matthew)(his emphasis).

Matthew’s construction of Black people as ‘us’ appears to be a reflexive action to the construction of Black people, as the racialised other by the dominant ideology. So far the white majority have been predominant in this neighbourhood, while Black and minority ethnic people are excluded. Hegemonic ideology involving differential power relations include particular groups of people while excluding others. In other words, the area became a ‘white neighbourhood’ only in so far as ethnic minorities were *excluded*, left outside. As Bauman argues, ‘invariably such operation of inclusion/exclusion is an act of violence perpetrated upon the world, and requires the support of a certain amount of coercion’ (1991: 2). Thus ethnic minorities are excluded from the neighbourhood by the coercion embedded in the dominant ideology. Yet the Black-only project appeared to be an ‘insertion’ of a group of people thus subjecting them to the gaze and hostility of the white majority rather than challenging the assumptions that excludes all those perceived as different, in this case the ‘racialised Other’.

Matthew’s reaction to the hegemonic ideology’s classification and segregation of people as ‘homogeneous’ groupings was an expression of ambivalence in the sense that on the one hand he preferred living in a mixed community, at the same time was wanting to form a ‘Black-only co-op’. As a result of racism in the housing sector he feels ‘empowered’ through the act of taking the initiative as Black people and providing housing for themselves.

Wendy did not construct a boundary between the Black and White people who may live in the houses after they have been completed. At the time of the interview one of the houses was still not allocated. The group have decided not to put anyone there because they will not be able to fulfil their minimum hours to obtain the discount in the rent. Instead they are considering allocating it to someone who is a trainee and has been participating on the building and who may want the house. Wendy stated, ‘It’ll be very

nice to offer to them something as opposed to someone from outside who has no insight into what's been going on and how we had to build these houses and the hard work that we've made'. There are quite a lot of young people on the scheme as trainees and about two thirds of the trainees are Black but, as far as Wendy is concerned, the person who will be given this particular house does not have to be Black.

Gender

Wendy suggested that they have a lot of divisions within the group and claimed that this is due to the fact that the group was formed after the project was initiated. 'We didn't choose to be together', said Wendy, 'we have been thrown together. So, if you can imagine the consequences, all different personalities, all different thinking people'. Being a Black project does not make a lot of difference either. 'Although it might be a Black project, we are not the same', Wendy argued, 'we don't all think the same, we don't all feel the same, we don't all like the same'.

The number of male members in the group is higher than women. The project appears to have challenged the existing prejudices of some of the self-builders. Matthew, for example, said that he had 'never worked before with women doing carpentry', which he said he was happy about. 'Never seen it before. *They* work as hard as *us* you know. We all get on fine you know', said Matthew. His remark revealed his construction of men as 'us' and women as 'the Other' and stereotypical views about men and women. Self-build process clearly represented a challenge to Matthew's stereotypical perception of gender roles.

The group is quite diverse in terms of family structure. There are five single parents on the scheme and two of them are women. There is a childless couple and a couple with two children. The rest of the members are single people.

According to Wendy in the past they had a lot of personality conflicts in the group. Some people did not commit themselves, thus they were asked to leave if they did not really get involved, 'because we need people', said Wendy, 'that are working, doing their hours with full commitment'. She noted that they have policies in place to deal with that attitude. 'And it is an *attitude*', insisted Wendy, 'hopefully we've stamped it out now. Because we're so close to the end, we've got about eight months to go now.

We can't afford to mess around any more'. If the group fails to meet this deadline, Wendy maintained, the group might as well 'say good-bye to the low cost rents...'

What is more, some people on the scheme are 'more responsible than others. Some people care about what we're actually doing in a communal sense', while some others 'just want their houses. And that's it!' So, Wendy stressed, 'I think you have to respect that we're not all here for the same motivation. And we have to work and try to unify ourselves with a common goal. And the common goal at the moment is to complete the houses'.

Divisions that Wendy described brought on ill feelings and in some cases dislike of particular people, and they did have a problem of people not wanting to work with other people. Nevertheless, they now have a core group of about ten people who are willing to co-operate with one another. In other words the majority of the self-builders are now able to work together. Wendy pointed out that a lot of the people have left already as a result of 'the awful time' they had in the past. She pointed out that people had not been doing what they should have been doing and that there was 'a general disconcert about the whole project' all of which adversely affected the work on site.

'Because that's been reflected in not coming in, we've had to take a stand and say to these people: "well if you don't really be involved with this then you can't stay" because we need people that are working, doing their hours with full commitment' (Wendy).

Matthew thought that the group itself had a lot of potential yet it needed to pull together more. 'We definitely need more motivation', he stressed, 'we need to remember what we're doing it for and at the end of day we're gonna have a house'. He complained that sometimes people tend to forget what they are doing and suggested that 'some incentives could be introduced to motivate people such as some award can be given, not to separate each other, a competition, but motivate each other'.

Wendy thought that the fact that most of the self-builders found out about the project by word of mouth contributed to the emergence of the existing cliques in the group. 'There's one particular family that has three houses here. It's brother, sister and an uncle', noted Wendy. 'And a couple of other people that came on the project; they knew

them as well. I knew the couple that were on here. I invited another couple that I knew'. She thought it was unfortunate that there has been a lot of word of mouth. 'It *has* been advertised', she noted, but 'we haven't had a big response'. Wendy suggested that the intensive labour that they have to put in and the hours that they have to do may be putting people off'.

In terms of divisions within the group, Matthew observed that 'there's a small amount of cliqueness' by some families. 'There is one or two families', said Matthew, and 'you get a sort of friendship type of clique. Closer to each other and back each other ... That doesn't tend to sort of gel us together, because it's got some little fractions'. The group did try to move positively and try to get rid of that, according to Matthew, and there was a good response. To develop it further, the group needs more meetings, asserted Matthew, 'positive, constructive meetings'.

Construction of 'difference' and 'the community': Neighbourhood

Commenting on the ethnic characteristics of the group, Wendy highlighted the adverse consequences of situating an ethnically homogeneous project in an area with a population of predominantly different ethnic characteristics. She said she personally would have liked to be on a mixed project. 'I don't think it's healthy to have one set of people identified as ethnic minority in one particular area of housing', argued Wendy, 'Because it targets you and also it isolates you in some ways in the neighbourhood'. She complained that 'you've got to watch what your neighbour (self-builder - TU) does. If your neighbour is out of order than they think everybody there is out of order. That is this fear'.

Wendy voiced concern about the 'Black only' nature of the scheme. 'I was a bit concerned about being ethnic', she said. It could be a really nice idea to say 'let's have all Black people come together work in community', said Wendy. However, she warned, 'make sure these communities reflect the people living around you. Otherwise you're gonna have problems. You're gonna come up against people that are not happy with the group as you are. Just do your homework before you start doing these things' (Wendy). She further emphasised that she decided to come on to the scheme despite the predominantly white characteristics of the area. Yet, she thought, some people may be better off on a mixed project or in a mixed area. She put it this way:

‘When I first came here I *knew* the lay of the land, I *knew* the type of people living here ... and even with that I still saw the pros to come on the project was higher than constraints. So, that brought me here. But may be someone with a lesser will, more fear, more concern, might be better off going on another project that might be mixed and reflect the community or accept them more easily’ (Wendy).

Wendy outlined the group’s relation with the neighbourhood this way:

‘Well, until the fire, I think, we were very low profile and people knew we were here. I don’t think they realised that it was completely Black project. And still people round here that have a wrong idea about what we’re doing. I think we had people say: “They’re a Black project and they come and they’re just being given those houses”’ (Wendy).

Repudiating the claim by the local people that they have been given these houses, Wendy stressed that they are paying for these houses in every respect. She put it as follows: ‘that is *not* the case! In fact we’re here every day of the week and we’re not being given these houses. We have to pay a rent at the end of the day’. Wendy stated that they, as a group, are trying to address that problem. ‘We’ve actually composed a letter, we’re going to leaflet the neighbourhood and we’ve invited people if they want to come and have a look at them, fine!’ She emphasised that if the neighbours want to know more about what they are doing, they are quite welcome to contact her or any other self-builder and they will be pleased to show them around. ‘We want to get on with everybody just like they want to get on with us’, said Wendy. She was critical of the local press which gave the false impression that the outsiders (all Black) were coming to an area and being given freely ‘specially designed’ houses whereas the local people (all white) were being denied of resources and opportunities. Through this dominant racist discourse not only the facts were distorted but also Black people were re-created as ‘the racialised Other’. What is more, in addition to their experience of disadvantage in the housing sector, Black people who go into self-build as the last resort to get low cost housing were targeted and being held responsible for the limited nature of resources that white people might be experiencing. Wendy’s narrative on the one hand highlights her open mindedness in her attempt to enter in ‘neighbourly relations’ with the local people to create a ‘community spirit.’ At the same time, she shows resentment to the dominant discourse perpetuated by the local press:

'I believe in community spirit. I've never had *any* problems wherever I've lived. I've been living in Lewisham since 1978 and I've never come up against real, blatant racism or anything like that. Coming here, I *knew* that it was a predominantly white area and I *knew* that there would be some people that won't be happy with the fact that we were here and I think, after being exposed by the press as being a Black project, specially designed houses and it sounds as though we're really in a lovely environment here, we're getting the best out of life and these people like been here forever in their Council houses and they're not getting the fair crack of the wheat, they're *not* getting the opportunity' (Wendy)(her emphasis).

Wendy voiced concern about the fact that there exists a hostility directed at them that is quite subtle. When asked if she thought the arson attack was racially motivated, she responded as: 'In my heart I hope not'. She then went on to say:

'May be it's just a rumour that one particular person in the street alongside the project is an overt racist, member of the National Front and he's openly boasted that he's set that fire and burned the house down and he will continue to do so till we leave. Now, whether it is true or not, I can't really say. Again it's rumour, these things that somebody else heard that somebody else and I'm gonna sort of take that on board because we can't live in fear' (Wendy).

Wendy's negation of the suggestion that it was a racially motivated attack in fact appears to be an effective strategy to cope with the constant racist hostility that the group has been surrounded by at the moment. Racists like the National Front members play on the vulnerabilities of 'the Other' by creating an atmosphere of constant threat and fear through a few incidents. Wendy, by denoting that she cannot live in fear especially when she moves into her house, adopts a strategy that in the long term isolates the racists rather than her. 'I've got to live here with my two children', she maintained 'and I can't live with that on mind, with constant fear. Otherwise, you can't exist like that'. Therefore, she said, she was trying to establish good relations with the neighbours:

'I'm just trying to sort of put that aside and build up a community spirit. I've walked down here with my daughter and we said "good morning" to a lot of people, they've

been happy to talk to us, or whatever ... and I'm happy to encourage that sort of friendliness' (Wendy).

The residents in the neighbourhood are mainly ex-council tenants who have been in the area for sometime now. Wendy put her views as follows:

'I should imagine, they've been here quite sometime, passed the houses down from generation. So, they're used to living with like-minded people around them, people that feel similar to themselves. I'm sure I could be compatible with *anybody* around here, because decency, respect for one another, that's top of list. That's what I want, good neighbourhood co-operation' (Wendy).

As Wendy's comments indicate, in addition to all the stress and worries that self-builders have with regards to building and keeping the timescale, these self-builders are at the same time trying to construct a 'community spirit' under not so favourable circumstances, while experiencing explicit as well as more subtle hostility on racial grounds.

Matthew pointed out that there is mixed feelings in the neighbourhood towards the group. 'I think some people get on nice with us', he commented, 'they pop in and they talk to us'. In relation to the recent arson attack they had the self-builders tried to 'keep an open mind'. Matthew put it as: 'We did want to keep an open mind that it wasn't racist but we're hearing rumours that, it seems that it could've been a racist attack'. He further described it as:

'We had an NF sign put on one of the houses, down the bottom (Appendix 3). We had a burglary and it was after that. But even then, when the fire happened I still did think that it's just a little kid who have no motive. But this *can* be a racial area. I only live down two mile from here in Catford, which is more mixed, like the world, everybody's there. I know there's a minority Blacks living in this area' (Matthew).

Like Wendy, Matthew adopted a survival strategy, which in the long term was more likely to isolate the racist militants rather than 'the racialised Other'. 'I don't mind living here', Matthew stressed, 'I think it can only change if the people can take the chance and come in and try and change it. I grew up in here like this anyway in South Croydon. It's not new to me'.

Participation in the decision-making process

Power relations between the group and the professionals

Both Wendy and Matthew viewed their role in the design and management process of their housing as 'quite important'. Wendy perceived herself in the design and management process, as a participant in *minor* decisions while Matthew believed he participated in *major* decisions.

Wendy joined the scheme eight months prior to our interview, at the stage of the project when all the groundwork had been completed. All outer frames were in place but there was no external covering at all. Thus she was not involved in the design process of the houses. 'The actual input that we have in the design is to the internal structure', Wendy explained, 'whether we want a wall there or a doorway there or whatever'. She outlined the general design as follows: 'in all three-beds there's a staircase in the middle, ... the two bedroom upstairs, the other bedroom is downstairs and the kitchen and living room'. Subsequently, she added '... really there's *not* a lot that we can do apart from add windows and put internal doors on different places and may be put skylight. But in the actual outside structure we don't have any say at all'. According to Wendy other self-builders were not involved in the design process either. This was 'because the designs were actually set up by architects and their designs came from the previous projects'. For those who designed the houses, the priority was the costing as well as the simplicity of actual building.

Wendy felt that sometimes the decisions were being imposed on them. 'I think sometimes, people are trying to do things that they feel it's for our group but there's a tendency to run over our head sometimes to sort of present something as a *fait accompli* rather than consult with us initially and ask us whether it's good idea or not'. In that respect Wendy said, she would like more consultation and more reference to the self-builders and the Co-operative than they have at the moment. She put it as follows:

'Rather than people saying this is what we have, complete package whether we want to take on board that we would really like to say "well, this is what we want you design something around that, you customise that for us rather than you come to us with something"' (Wendy).

Nevertheless, Wendy thought that ‘it’s gradually getting like that now’. This is because, she said, ‘we’re finding our feet and learning about how co-ops work and how much input we can put in towards decisions that are made’. According to Wendy the group *still* needs more training in that area for many of them are not familiar with co-operative procedures in the way that they operate. Nonetheless, they are developing more ability to influence decisions. As Wendy put it: ‘I’m getting more involved in the management committee and it’s really opening my eyes to what we can actually influence and how we can sort of sway decisions to meet *our* needs and *not* necessarily the needs of our officers, agents around us’ (Wendy).

Matthew believed that they ‘have got a bit of say’ in decision-making if they ‘feel strong on something and pull together as one’. However, he added, ‘I feel sometimes as if they’re pulling the strings more than we should be. I think we should be more involved’. He argued that it would have helped if he has been part of the design process. For instance, he would have preferred his house to be slightly bigger, for the sizes of the houses are just the minimum legal requirement. Matthew believed that the group could have more power if they get more co-op training: ‘definitely we need co-op training. I can really see some of the pitfalls. Even at a later stage it is important that we get some training’.

Views on the concept of self-build and its future

Wendy had a very positive opinion with regards to the concept of self-build: ‘it is a great opportunity not only to get low costing house but to have training to gain skills that you wouldn’t normally have’, she maintained, ‘there’s a lot good things, positive things coming out of this and I would recommend anyone’. She believed that if self-builders are committed and once they have an input into the design of the house, then it works out very well and is affordable. Furthermore, ‘it’s environmentally friendly as well’.

Matthew described the way he sees the concept of self-build as follows: ‘I think it’s brilliant idea for community. If I didn’t have this opportunity I would’ve gone on waiting list. I don’t know how long I would’ve been waiting. This is my *best* option’. Moreover being unemployed, Matthew noted, getting involved in the project has given him a focus in life.

Matthew would like to pass on to people his experience. 'If there is training I'd like to get involved', he stated, stressing that 'it's a brilliant scheme'. He noted that 'people get quite proud of what you're doing. People say, "It's good, building your house!"' Matthew contrasted the West Indies to Britain, which highlighted the mystification of the building process in this country. In the West Indies, it is quite normal for someone to say: 'we're building our house', because 'everyone does that', Matthew explained, 'but over here in England it is different'. So, 'I think it's brilliant' (Matthew).

To sum up, self-builders of Fusions Jameen Co-operative that I have interviewed had mixed feelings in terms of Black-only characteristic of their project. On the one hand, they argued, the disadvantage Black people experience in housing all the time makes self-build the only option available to them. Therefore although in general they considered ethnically mixed Co-op a better idea, they also admitted that they get cultural support through the Black project. Nonetheless as one of the respondents pointed out, it also creates separate 'communities', which can make Black people a target in a predominantly white area.

The two phases of the same Black-only self-build co-op rendered considerable differences with regard to the housing experiences of the collectivities despite their ethnic homogeneity as a result of the differences in their social and spatial contexts. Phase I was situated in an ethnically mixed part of Lewisham where the self-builders formed good relations with the residents on the whole. Phase II on the other hand was situated in a predominantly white area where the self-builders were constructed as 'the racialised other' and subsequently subjected hostility by the local residents. I shall discuss these issues in detail in Part III.

Conclusion of Part II

Part II of the dissertation analysed the decision-making processes in public housing in two inner London boroughs, namely Islington and Lewisham, in order to see the extent tenants are able to participate in them. The ways in which gender and ethnicity issues configure in these processes have been explored. The roles tenants play in the decision-making processes and how *they* perceive these roles have been examined within the context of decentralised and central decision-making structures.

In the case studies I have examined, there are three different types of housing projects with a considerable variation in the degree of tenant involvement. Each project allowed different kinds and levels of participation by tenants in decision-making. Among these different types of projects, Tenant Management Co-operative members collectively seem to have the most decision-making power regarding the day-to-day management of their housing. Tenants of the Tenant Management Co-operative in general appeared to be better off than the tenants of the council managed estate for they are in charge of their own budget. Nonetheless the feeling of being in control was by no means uniform amongst the tenants of any of the groups. In the process of taking charge and involvement in the management of housing, the power is not transferred unproblematically and distributed equally within the collective (see discussion of this in Chapter 12).

As a result of decentralisation in both Islington and Lewisham, it is claimed that housing services became more responsive and officers became more accountable to the tenants. However, there still remain problems in terms of tenant participation in decision-making processes.

The decision-making structure is less formal at local neighbourhood level. It becomes more formal as one moves up towards the central bodies. Gender and ethnic compositions also change considerably as shown in the breakdown of the membership of the central committees and sub-committees in both boroughs in Appendix 2. The number of female participants is proportionately higher than that of men at the neighbourhood level. In other words, white women's participation increases as the meetings become more local and less formal. At the *Council* (that is the highest and

most formal level), the participation of women and Black and ethnic minorities drop substantially, as the majority of the elected members of the both Councils are white male. In Islington, Black and ethnic minority people in general and women in particular are absent in the medium and higher levels of decision-making bodies. At medium level decision-making bodies (e.g. housing committees) the number of white men and women participants are almost the same. At the local level Black tenants and residents are absent in Forums and tenants organisations. Black women participate in these bodies as the employees of the Council (e.g. managers) who do not necessarily live in the neighbourhood. Lewisham fares better than Islington with regards to the number of Black and ethnic minority councillors - both men and women (Appendix 2).

The case studies demonstrated that decision-making bodies are highly heterogeneous and dynamic and full of shifting power relations. Decision-making structures and processes are highly gendered, ethnicised and classed processes.

Also revealed by the case studies is the importance of access to information about local issues. Both informal channels of information (social networks) and more formal ones (tenants associations) provide (or fail to provide) individuals and collectivities with access to information in participatory processes. Moreover, an on paper commitment to equal access to information and to the processes of decision-making does not automatically lead to equal participation. My respondents' comments highlighted the ways in which intersectionality of ethnicity, class and gender produce and re-produce the positionings of power and powerlessness that the disadvantaged people experience in the processes of decision-making that have a major impact on their lives. Hence there is a need for alternative approaches that are based on an understanding of the identities of individuals and collectivities as constantly shifting and fluid, putting them in differential power relations that are multidimensional. These issues are taken up in detail in Part III.

Part III - Ethnic and gender divisions in tenant participation in public housing

Chapter 12: Social divisions, ‘empowerment’ and ‘the community’

Introduction

This chapter takes up some of the theoretical issues raised at the outset and discusses them in relation to the case studies, drawing out the main contribution of the case studies for the development of the concepts. I begin by focusing on more abstract theoretical concepts that are taken up in the first three points. Related to this I will also examine a number of issues problematised in the thesis in relation to policy-making, equal opportunities policies and other more practical concerns.

On the more abstract theoretical level I explore the following:

- The question of the limitation of the notion of ‘community’ in terms of questions around who is included and who is excluded and what the processes involved are. In Chapter 4, it was noted that the change of the criteria in entitlement to public housing had implications for both the minorities and the majority population as well as the way public institutions constructs ‘the community’. This chapter further explores how as a social construct, different people construct ‘community’ differently and how processes of inclusion *and* exclusion are interwoven into them.
- There is the issue of the spatial dimension of social divisions. In what ways are differences corresponding to the social divisions also reflected in spatial terms? I further explore construction of identities as ‘the Self’ (e.g. individuals and groups) and difference (e.g. ‘the Other’) and the ways in which these constructs result in spatial exclusions.
- There is the issue of the role of participation in challenging the public/private distinction and the dichotomies that correspond to class, gender and ethnic differentiation, and social inequalities. I explore the ways in which housing processes play a part in eliminating/perpetuating dichotomous constructions underlying social divisions.

The following points are of a different level of abstraction and concern issues of a more practical nature.

- What are the design implications of the diverse and special household needs resulting from differences in ethnicity and culture? Although the diversity of Britain's minority population indicates major differences in household composition between ethnic groups they are not sufficiently reflected in the housing policies. Policies need to take into account the special needs of disadvantaged groups while avoiding homogenising these groups.
- Housing policies affect tenants in a differential manner as an outcome of the differences in the social positioning that correspond to the existing structural inequalities in society all of which lead to differential power positionings of individuals and groups. As a result, certain policies (e.g. 'Right to Buy') may lead to institutional racism experienced by racialised minorities. How can housing policies help *obliterate* institutional racism rather than perpetuate it?
- Since the late 70's there has been much public debate in relation to violence against women which led to calls for proposals to divide the public space, providing women-only areas, as well as privatise it. I explore the issue of safety with regards to the public/private divide and how women's access to public spaces is restricted as a result of their concern for personal safety, which raises questions about the notion of citizenship.
- The notion of social exclusion is generally perceived as a local phenomenon, occurring in a specific place, such as an inner city neighbourhood or peripheral housing estates. These interpretations place a particular emphasis on the spatial aspect of the phenomenon. I will explore the social divisions underlying the phenomenon of social exclusion and how specific social inequalities marginalize members of specific collectivities excluding them from public life, preventing them from participating in the economic, social and political domains.

- The relationship between processes of ‘empowerment’ and how are they linked to equal opportunities policies. Equal opportunities policies have led to the employment of individuals from disadvantaged groups in areas where they have so far been excluded. I explore how employment of Black people affects the participation of these groups in decision-making processes in terms of power relations.

Community constructions and the construction of ‘difference’

The change of the criteria in entitlement to public housing

As mentioned in Chapter 4, one of the changes that have taken place in housing policies since the late 1970s relates to the question of who is entitled to public housing. In an attempt to redress discrimination in housing allocation, the number of points tenants were required to get in order to qualify for an allocation changed. This and the new homelessness legislation have meant changes in the criteria of entitlement to public housing. This affected different ethnic groups differentially. The ‘care of the community’ approach meant families would get more points in allocation processes if they had other family members living on the same estate. As a result, sons and daughters of existing tenants (mostly white) were given higher points than those who had no family members living on the estate. Subsequently, newcomers (mostly ethnic minorities) were put at a disadvantage in access to public housing under this system. Changing the criteria, and not making it priority any more to have relatives on the estate, subsequently meant that those families who were entitled to public housing would no longer get an allocation. This issue also relates to what is considered to be ‘community’ which is relative for both natives as well as migrants. Implicit in the former approach was a construction of ‘the community’ which was based on ‘the sameness’ including only the relatives, friends and alike. Boundaries of ‘the community’ excluded all those perceived as different including ethnic minorities.

Indeed community construction involves processes of inclusion and exclusion. Community construction in the housing projects I have looked into was not the same for everyone. The notion of ‘the community’ mattered most when the competing definition and practices involved construction of difference as ‘the Other’. This is because the construction of ‘the Otherness’ led to exclusions (socially and spatially), which corresponded to the social divisions in the form of social inequalities. People with differences in their identities in terms of ‘race’, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, status (residential status and membership in the group) and values/beliefs expressed different

interpretations of the same events, facts and incidents. Some interpretations involved naturalisation of ethnic, gender and sexual characteristics of the dominant group. For example, Ben's White neighbour naturalised the ethnicity of White people when she called Ben 'Blackie', while Theresa perceived the problem as a lack of respect to the elderly, overlooking the problem of racialisation of 'the Other'. The tenants I have interviewed constructed 'us' and 'them' differently resulting from their diverse location within the project in terms of the length of their membership, the degree of their participation, as well as other identity characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, sexuality and age.

The community construction of the Elthorne Estate residents - who wanted to keep the site for their sons and daughters - excluded newer arrivals in the neighbourhood and included only family members and very close friends. This demonstrated the highly exclusionary and conservative nature of some community constructions.

Similarly, three out of four self-build collectivities were constructed as 'the Other' by the residents in their neighbourhood, and hence were subjected to harassment. Yet 'the Otherness' of each group was constructed on the basis of a different category because of their varying contexts, e.g. 'race', class, and sexuality. In the Community Self-build project the residents of Elthorne Estate constructed the self-builders as 'the Other' because of their differences in sexuality and life-style which led to their subjection to harassment. The Greenstreet self-builders had problems mainly because their project did not 'fit in the area'. The houses were 'different' in the sense that they were not built using conventional building methods and the self-builders did not have the characteristics of the residents that are required for conventional housing such as a stable employment for a mortgage. Phase II of the Fusions Jameen Co-op were subjected to racial harassment (racist graffiti and arson attack) in their white neighbourhood. Despite their similar collective identities, the experiences of the two phases of Fusions Jameen projects differed considerably as a result of the differences in social and spatial contexts within which each project is situated. In other words, as a Black project their common collective identity has led to totally different experiences in different neighbourhoods. The self-builders of the Phase I situated in an ethnically mixed area received support from the majority of the neighbours in this locality. The Black-only characteristic of the project helped them achieve solidarity and co-operation not only amongst themselves but also with the majority of their neighbours. In contrast,

the self-builders of the Phase II became a target for overtly racist attacks as a result of their Black-only characteristic situated in a predominantly white area. Thus, their racialised collective identity led to the construction of this group as 'the Other' by the majority of the neighbours. These examples demonstrate that the social, political and economic meanings of self-build will be different in different contexts.

Different individuals and groups construct an understanding of 'community' differently which, as discussed in Chapter 1, often involves attachment to a specific (and also constructed) physical space. These constructs are constantly contested. Those who so far have held privileges also hold the power, often construct their identities and 'their community' by keeping 'the Other' out of a particular locality over the years. This was the case, for instance, in Fusions Jameen Phase II neighbourhood where the local residents construct difference to exclude and often have the ability to protect their locality from 'outsiders'.

The ways in which my respondents conceptualised 'the Self' varied considerably depending on the situation leading to differences in their construction of the boundary between 'us and them'. My respondents constructed, for example, the notion of 'ethnic minorities' differently depending on their individual experiences. Sandra as a mixed-race (African Caribbean/White) woman based her construction of ethnic minorities on their 'racial' characteristics, e.g. 'colour'. On the other hand, Ruth as a White woman who is married to a man from the Middle East described ethnic minorities in terms of their nationality, constructing a boundary between those who were born in this country (English) and foreigners. These narratives are partly the product of the location of these individuals with regard to the ethnic, gender and class relations and their group membership, which put them in specific power relations with other individuals, collectivities and institutions. Moreover, the same people were constructed differently within different discourses. Some racialised minorities for instance were constructed as 'homeless' (e.g. by statutory authorities), 'refugees' (e.g. by politicians), and 'people on social security' (e.g. by some neighbours), where each construction subjected them to different treatment. Their construction as 'homeless' by statutory authorities provided them with an access to temporary housing (See Chapter 4) as well as stigmatisation by local residents (for example in Elthorne Park neighbourhood where the hostel for the homeless was situated). As a result of their construction as refugees they simultaneously received sympathy by some politicians and people and hostility (e.g. threats of

deportations and discrimination and harassment) by others. Being stigmatised as ‘people on social security’ subjected them to discrimination on class and ethnic grounds that they always experienced in gendered ways.

The Council’s constructions of ‘the community’

The council as a local government organisation responsible for making and implementing housing policies, has its own constructions of community. These constructions often vary according to the departments of the council. The Race Equality Unit’s construction of community, for instance, is based on contestation of the boundaries between the white and non-white residents recognising the conflicting interests between members of these collectivities, often however overlooking the conflicting interests within minority ethnic groups. Alternatively, the Women’s Unit’s construction of the community is based on the recognition of the disadvantaged position of women in general, which may overlook the power differences between majority and minority women, on the one hand, and differences amongst women of each group on the other. What is common to these units is that they both construct difference in order to include. These units work on specific issues of the groups that are usually excluded. These units try to bring ethnic and gender sensitivity to the policies of the council. This way they strive to eliminate inequalities on different grounds. The construction of difference by these units differ significantly from the construction of some other departments where the dominant sub-culture constructs difference to exclude ‘the Other’ (e.g. surveying). The sub-culture of some departments on the other hand are ethnic-blind or gender-blind or both therefore overlook the exclusion of racialised minorities and women from their constructions of the community. The Islington Building Services for example is not decentralised and therefore remains unresponsive and unaccountable to the tenants. Respondents in Elthorne First Co-op complained that Islington Building Services, by privileging the middle-class residents, did not take public housing tenants seriously, which highlight the fact that their construction of difference was exclusionary. The tenants also described how unacceptable they found the practices of the Islington Building Services in terms of intrusion of their privacy as well as not bothering to inform tenants when they will turn up to attend a repair.

As a matter of fact, decentralisation was a particular community construction. When Islington council initially created 23 neighbourhood areas, they drew geographical boundaries, which involved inclusion and exclusion in each one of these localities.

These boundaries played a part in the construction of communities in these neighbourhoods. When the boundaries of the neighbourhoods were changed by twinning as a result of cuts the council was in fact imposing new community constructions. Yet some residents formed the 'identity of the community', which excluded the poor and ethnic minorities as 'the Other'. The white and better-off residents who had internalised these artificially drawn boundaries around their neighbourhood had constructed an identity of the place creating 'inside' and 'outside'. Thus, they rejected the plans that they perceived as a threat to 'the Self' because it threatened to make 'the Other' one of 'Us'. It was specific social divisions such as class and ethnicity, which formed the basis of their constructions. As mentioned earlier, the Council went ahead and implemented their plan against to the wishes of the majority of the residents participating in the consultative process.

Emily in Lewisham described how they made the council accept the homeless unit to become a neighbourhood committee, which also involved community construction by the homeless people themselves, the Federation of Lewisham Tenants and Residents Association (FELTRA) and eventually the council. The above examples demonstrate that community constructions are not fixed, but constantly contested and negotiated. Those who have the power often have the ability to impose their own construction on others. Each construct inevitably involves inclusions/exclusions.

The notions of tenant management and tenant control that have been advocated by both Islington and Lewisham councils are based on specific community constructions. These notions imply certain implicit assumptions as though the tenants are a unified group of people with a commonality of goals and interests and as though the process of taking charge and involvement of tenants in the management of their housing is a process in which power is transferred non-problematically and distributed equally within the collective. My case studies in general, and Elthorne First Tenant Management Co-op in particular, revealed the flawed nature of these assumptions by highlighting the multiplicity of the identities of tenants with conflicting interests and differences in the power attached to these identities because of the structural inequalities. Neither tenants nor self-builders are unitary categories. Individuals have different amounts of power in different settings and the power each tenant has in a specific situation corresponds to their location in the social matrix. I take up the issues of control and power in the next chapter.

Social divisions within groups: Construction of 'difference'

As mentioned earlier, ethnic homogeneity by no means created a group without divisions. The Black self-builders had other differences resulting in social divisions within a group. Matthew, for instance, held stereotypical views about women and constructed them as 'the Other'. So did Bill in the 'White-only' Community Self-Build project. In this collectivity, diverse abilities and skills of individuals did not lead to complementary practices. Instead, these differences gave rise to cliques and contributed to the widening of the gulf between certain groups of individuals. Some of these differences corresponded to the social inequalities in the wider society therefore reinforcing social divisions.

Individuals had different experiences within the same projects as a result of the intersectionality of their racial, gender, and class identities. Amanda, as a Black single mother self-builder, for example, had to bring her son on site whilst she was building. No choice of crèche provision existed for her nor did she enjoy any support from a family member. On the other hand, Andrew's White female partner looked after their little daughter while he was building his house together with his Black self-builder brother. The way differences constructed by the members of the collectivity played a crucial part in making self-building projects sites of conflict or sites of harmony. Members of the Community Self-build project in Islington, for example constructed their differences that involved constructions of 'the Other' on grounds of gender and sexuality and class/status. As result the site became an arena of conflict and resentment, involving formation of cliques, and struggles for positions of power, rather than complementing each other with their diverse skills and sharing experience. Some self-builders found the attitude of some members disempowering for individuals and the group.

The Greenstreet self-builders' construction of difference, on the other hand, led to the inclusion of 'the Other'. Like the Community Self-build project of Islington, the Greenstreet self-builders have differences in personal characteristics, which has led to factions that were exacerbated by the stressful conditions. However, contrary to the Community Self-build project of Islington, the way the Greenstreet self-builders viewed their group was quite positive. This was mainly because they are used to co-operative living, which seemed to have a considerable impact on their construction of everyday

realities. Instead of treating their differences as a fixed reality and thus creating and re-creating them through practice and discourse, they concentrated on issues such as ‘conflict resolution’ which was constitutive in their construction of new realities. They managed to achieve a dialogue-based democracy opening up a space for those who are not so vocal to express their opinions. This way they challenged power differences within their group and subsequently created a site of harmony.

Their conscious efforts to observe democratic principles and keenness to have equality within the group have helped them to construct their relationship in such a way that obliterated the constructed boundaries subsequently challenging the existing structural inequalities. The group had no factions regarding sexuality among them, despite the fact that (contrary to Islington self-build) there were heterosexual families in this project. They dealt with the problem of the homophobia of a trainee promptly. The group took a definite stance when they were faced with those values that were incompatible with their own on issues such as the construction of difference. All of this led to the development of new attitudes and new identities on a personal and a group level. On a personal level, they appreciated difficulties other self-builders go through due to their positioning rather than their own individual problems. This prevented them from having a self-centred outlook. Instead, they empathised and respected others in the group. For example, two male, single members recognised the particular problems of a single mother self-builder rather than their own (despite the fact that one of them had caring responsibilities for his elderly father). By leaving aside a self-centred attitude to life, they in fact created a climate in which differences in the personal characteristics of individuals resulted in the appreciation of others rather than construction of ‘the Other’. Each person mobilised their relative power due to their different positioning, in order to build up a project based on mutual respect and inclusion rather than exclusion. All of this led to the creation of a new sub-culture based on transgression of differences as opposed to essentialised notions of identities/differences which seemed to be instrumental in reinforcing the coherence of the collectivity as well as the attainment of characteristics such as an ability to make ‘all types of people welcome’.

The case studies demonstrated how racism against mixed-race families went unrecognised. Hannah, as a white woman, for example, was subjected to racist abuse by her black neighbour at Miranda Estate for having a black partner and mixed-race children. This neighbour gets power from the anti-racist policies of the Islington

council, which are based on perceptions of racism as a Black/White issue. She gets 'empowerment' from these policies and utilises it to harass and exclude other mixed-race tenants. In fact, black and white members of mixed-race families equally experience racism from both sides. Mixed-race people were excluded from both the tenant management co-op and neighbourhood committees.

Refugees were also subjected to racism in these estates. Indeed, refugees' access to space is subject to a number of barriers ranging from immigration control to preventing them settling in certain residential areas, to racial harassment by their neighbours. Residents in Elthorne Park area held feelings of resentment against the presence of a community hostel where refugees - who were on income support - were staying as a temporary accommodation. As seen in this example as well as in Isabel's case, racism against refugees is articulated through class.

All these also highlight that there is a great social distance between the members of minority ethnic people - e.g. refugees, and mixed-race people - and that of the majority, although they have been living on the same estate or neighbourhood.

'The community' and the neighbourhood

The case studies demonstrated that the notion of 'the community' pertaining the *neighbourhood* is also problematic. Those living in the same neighbourhood do not share a sense of community. Those moving into the neighbourhood do not automatically become part of 'the local community' and immediately begin feeling and sharing the identical sense of community. At first, the existing local community both in Islington and Lewisham mobilised the resources available to them (such as the tenants association) against the self-builders, in order to prevent them from building in their neighbourhood. These groups became subjected hostility such as racist violence, homophobic harassment and classist exclusion as they began building on the site allocated to them by the council. Thus, relations of power that are found within each division of ethnicity, gender, class and sexuality involved political mobilisation in order to exclude 'the Other' from the existing resources. I take up issues of political mobilisation and exclusion in more detail in the final chapter.

In the Community Self-build project there existed a division between the group and the residents of the neighbourhood on the basis of sexuality and life-style. One of the

women described how heterosexual families in the neighbourhood perceived them as 'the Other', constructing a boundary and excluding gay people, which underlined the confinement of sexuality to private spaces whilst naturalising heterosexuality. The Elthorne First Tenant Management Co-op residents as a collectivity did not appear to experience what the self-builders of the Community Self-build project have been subjected to (that is, homophobic harassment), although both of them are situated within the same estate. The fact that members of the Tenant Management Co-op are well mixed in terms of their household size, e.g. young and elderly single people as well as families, has possibly prevented those non-heterosexual people becoming targeted in a predominantly heterosexual area and subjected to homophobic harassment. Also people with alternative sexual orientations and life-styles are less likely to have priority and the chance to be housed by the Council, and are thus living on a council estate. Homophobia also existed amongst the tenants of the council-managed Miranda Estate as a result of which some tenants were subjected to verbal abuse by some other tenants who played an active role in the tenants' association as officers.

Reflection of social divisions in space and place

The case studies of the investigation confirmed the heterogeneous nature of social space. Differences between individuals and collectivities emerge as a result of intersecting social relations of class, 'race', ethnicity and gender. Some of these differences are the outcomes of structural inequalities and correspond to social relations of power. What this implies is that while recognition of differences is important, it is equally important not to reduce these social inequalities to differences. Differences corresponding to social divisions are also reflected in space. For example, the existing social divisions expressed by the residents of the Miranda Estate often corresponded with the spatial division between the two blocks of the Estate, namely Pauntley Street and Henfield Close. Parts of the Estate were not considered to be safe by some of my interviewees, which demonstrate the multiplicity of the identities. It also reveals the temporal nature of space in that some parts of the Estate became dangerous for certain individuals at certain time of the day when certain groups were present. The presence of young people clustering in the stairwells is intimidating to others, particularly the most vulnerable such as ethnic minorities, women, elderly and other children. For these young people, this is an identity formation process in that they construct certain individual and collective identities through their relations in these public spaces making them exclusive to certain 'others'. It also manifested that public space is contested,

territorialized and occupied as a result of the unfolding social relations in them involving conflicting interests and differences of power. It demonstrates that different identities and different social processes will create different spaces and that space is not a passive arena, but instead that power relations permeate it. Thus space is constitutive of certain identities and 'difference' therefore through space 'the Otherness' is constructed leading to processes of inclusions/exclusions.

As discussed in Chapter 1 social divisions and conflicts are reflected in the spatial. These spatial aspects of social conflict are extensions of social, political and economic relations. Time and space are inextricably linked to the ever-changing and ever-shifting identities of people. These identities are contextualised, inseparable from their location and time. Case studies demonstrated the fluidity of the ever-shifting identities of respondents on the one hand, and the importance of contextualisation of their individual and group identities which requires them situating in time and place, on the other. Sophie, in the Greenstreet Project, for example, as a self-builder on site, shares a collective identity with other self-builders that is constructed in relation to the members of the group, on the one hand, and residents in their neighbourhood as well as those institutions that they deal with, on the other. Her characteristics such as gender, ethnicity (she is of mixed race - an Anglo/Asian woman), age, situates her within a specific social location. She is a businesswoman while dealing with clients at work as well as the business partner of another woman. Her business partner is another self-builder on the project, which puts them in a different relationship with the rest of the self-builders. As a single mother Sophie has similarities and differences with other self-builders such as Jeremy who is the carer of his father, another single mother, and two-parent families. These identities, however, are not essential but constructed against each other. When we interact with other people, we construct these specific identities, or our certain identities override all other identities. These identities are part of social relations that are 'lived' in social and physical spaces of these housing projects and neighbourhoods as well as constituted by them.

Similarly, identities of places are constructed against each other. 'The Other' is excluded to keep the identity of place whether it is white, middle class, Christian, or a heterosexual identity of the locality. Sharp distinctions are drawn between places creating 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. There existed strong boundary construction even within the same Elthorne Estate between some residents of Co-op, council tenants and

self-builders. Nevertheless, these boundaries are contested and negotiated and are therefore subjected to change.

As argued in Part I, different identities and different social processes create different spaces. The differential power attached to these different identities will consequently lead to differentiation in the spatial. Social inclusion/exclusion is often reflected in space and place. These processes occur in a particular time and space thus evoking a different sense of space in different individuals which might be a sense of isolation and disempowerment for some, while solidarity and confirmation of certain individual and group identities (and thus empowerment) for others. The social space of the projects I have examined were full of contradictions and conflicts, and therefore highly dynamic, which corresponds to spatial separation (sometimes voluntary, sometimes imposed). As a result of the hostility towards certain group identities (e.g. racial identity), the private may become a site of empowerment and solidarity between members of the family who can draw on the support of their extended family or friends. Female heads of mixed-race families in Elthorne First Co-op and Miranda Estate described this by saying: 'I keep myself to myself'.

The Greenstreet self-builders described how the space they have set out to create is a mirror of their perception of 'the Self' as a group. It will reflect, for instance, how they construct their own identities as individuals, how they perceive each other and form and conduct their interpersonal relations within the group. Their created space will also reflect how the neighbourhood perceives them, what the existing and drawn boundaries are as well as their reaction to this perception and construction of boundaries, and how they negotiate these boundaries. It seems that a tension inescapably exists between the way they see their own space and the immediate environment, the local, and the way their neighbours perceive them. The degree of this tension will have a direct affect on their long-term enjoyment of the space they have collectively created. This tension may lead to one party to become less threatened by 'the Other' or it may equally lead to an increased hostility resulting in an increased level of conflict and attempts to exclude 'the Other'. An intervention by the local authorities in the form of affirmative action may provoke a backlash by the majority population in the neighbourhood. It may also lead to legislative changes criminalizing certain type of behaviour (e.g. 'anti-social behaviour'), which is discussed later in the chapter.

As discussed in Chapter 1, identity is a social construct. People have multiple identities which are not fixed, but are instead shifting constantly. They are relational, that is constructed against each other. Identities are constructed through difference. 'The Self' is constructed in relation to 'the Other'. Yet this construction is not fixed. It is situational taking place in a specific context. When the construction of 'the Other' corresponds to social inequalities, those who are discriminated against are excluded. The problem emerges when 'the Self' is constructed on the basis of the denial of rights, or exclusion of 'the Other'. Brenda, on Miranda Estate, constructed 'the Self' with an over-determining identity of motherhood in opposition to homosexuality, which led to her homophobic and consequently exclusionary remarks about Susie. These remarks corresponded to social inequalities. As an officer of the tenants' association, her remarks became even more effective in excluding Susie and her friend Hannah from the decision-making body of the Miranda Estate.

The public and private divide

In the dichotomous construction of the public/private women are often relegated to the private sphere and when they participate in the public domain they are often constructed as a subordinate category. As argued in Chapter 2, feminists highlighted that these two domains cannot be looked at separately. The unequal distribution of resources (such as work, time and money) as well as factors such as emotional dependency and lack of self-esteem form the basis of the interaction between the public and private hampering women's autonomy and subsequently their membership in the political community. The limited nature of women's access to public places (as discussed in Chapter 1) contributes to the curtailment of their ability to participate in the formal politics and potential to act as citizens.

Chapters 1 and 2 argued that this dichotomous separation of the public/private is socially constructed. On the one hand the divide is ambivalent and the assumption that there exists a straightforward and self-evident separation between the two domains is flawed. Moreover, it is constructed differently in different cultures and ethnicities. Meanings attached to each one of these domains are temporal and spatial, therefore can change depending on the context. What is important to note is that this socially constructed dichotomous separation often operates to exclude those constructed as 'the Other' such as women, and racialised minorities, from the political, public domain. As the case studies demonstrated, the higher and more central the levels of decision-making

process (e.g. the more public it is) are, the less the involvement of minority ethnic groups and women is. At the highest level of decision-making process in the Councils in both Islington and Lewisham (though it fares better than Islington) was the most white, male-dominated forum. (In Islington, for example, 73 per cent of the total members of the Council are male, and 84.6 per cent of the councillors are white). As described in Chapter 5 and 6, the case studies also revealed that the Council often took white-men more seriously in the decision-making processes. Generally, these men had more self-confidence often acting as the 'spokesperson' of tenant groups although the majority of the members were women (white and older). Nevertheless white and younger women participating in these processes had power over these men as a result of their class position and status as Council officers or councillors. All of indicated power relations of a highly complex nature emerging in these processes.

Participatory building processes have the potential to help blur this boundary. Emily, for example, explained how they have managed to involve Asian and Turkish women: this is even though it is considered to be the Public, and thus men's domain, which appeared to be part of the Islamic culture. Similarly, self-build as a distinct building process, can be instrumental in challenging the existing public and private divide. In contrast to the conventional building methods, there are a number of aspects of the self-build process that function to help blur the boundaries of the public and private divide.

In traditional building methods, skilled labour is used and some of the materials are factory produced. A relatively smaller proportion of work is carried out on a factory level, while the main bulk of it is done on site involving both manual labour and mechanical equipment. In mass-produced housing everything is produced by workers in a factory (who get alienated from their own labour in a Marxist sense), and then the parts are assembled by some other workers on site often involving the use of heavy machinery on site. Construction workers in each case are building somebody else's home rather than their own. In both traditional and mass produced building methods, the public and private divisions exist by strong differentiation of work/home, male/female, professional/non-professional, skilled labour/unskilled labour, intellectual labour/manual labour, workforce/client, and client/future users. These separations often correspond to class, gender and ethnic differentiation. Both factory and building sites are considered to be public domain and highly male-dominated. They are often

extremely hostile to, and exclusive of, women, which is perpetuated through sub-cultures that are blatantly oppressive to women (see Chapters 1 and 3).

The case studies revealed that in self-building the dichotomous separation of the public/private, professional/non-professional, and home/work is challenged through transgression of their boundaries. Self-build, on the whole, is a labour intensive process; no skill is required, and no sophisticated building methods are involved. At the design stage of the process, self-builders are expected to contribute by incorporating their individual and family experiences, which often involve discussions with their families, friends and group members. Women take an active role in their housing process. Thus, all of this involves simultaneously crossing the boundary of the public/private domains, which blurs the boundary lines of these two domains making the binary even more ambivalent. Also challenged is the boundary between 'the Self' as individual ('I') and collectivity ('We') - and 'the Other' (members of the group, and neighbours).

There exist differences between the conventional building methods and the self-build process in terms of spatial characteristics of the project and its context. Conventional building projects with their male-dominated workforce and working environment (which is often hostile to women) often creates a contrast with their immediate environment when situated in residential areas. While working on site self-builders view the locality as their ultimate community and neighbourhood. In other words as their home. No dichotomous separation of the residential area/work area is present. The self-builders construct senses of community and belongingness during the self-build process. The process may also involve challenging the assumptions and prejudices of their neighbours. Indeed, it is this characteristic that motivated the self-builders of the Greenstreet as well as Fusions Jameen Phase II projects to form good neighbourly relationships with their neighbours, e.g. by producing letters telling them about their project. All of this points to the fact that self-building is not a smooth process involving simple insertion of the project into the existing social and geographical landscape. Instead it is a process of contestation and negotiation involving multiple power relations and resistances. Furthermore, as in the Greenstreet project's case, the public domain - which is the domain of the state and civil society - involved campaigning and lobbying to get planning permission for their future homes, thus blurring the public and private boundary even further.

Women's access to space

Differences in social positioning play a key role in determining who has access to public space. Construction of difference as 'the Other' lead to exclusion of particular individuals and groups from the public space. The way space is used and experienced is gendered. Women's fear for their safety hampers their access to the free use of space. There are significant differences in the way women and men experience urban space. Women are prevented from using urban space because of their fear of male violence. As mentioned in Chapter 4, since the 1970s there has been much public debate in relation to violence against women. This has prompted suggestions of dividing the public space, providing women-only areas, and privatising to make it more secure. Urban space has exacerbated these concerns with its dead city centres and car parks, undergrounds and subways. Calls have been made for an increase in the use of public areas by the mixed land-uses. The question of personal safety relates to the binary separation of the public and the private. The majority of women are apprehensive about their personal safety when entering public and semi-public space. The fear of sexual violence structures women's behaviour in relation to their use of space. Hannah, returning from work at night, changes her route avoiding the park situated between Miranda Estate and Archway, highlighting the fact that women's use of public space is highly restricted. Other tenants of Miranda Estate noted that they avoid certain parts of their Estate, which may be either dark or where young kids cluster. Women find it especially difficult to walk through dark and long subways or parks for safety reasons. Islington self-building women described how they have been constructed as 'the Other' by the residents of Elthorne Estate and how its design contributed to their feeling of vulnerability, e.g. the combined effect of presence of garages alongside the road and the school building that is empty at night. Physical space can reinforce the inequalities and social divisions that exist in social space. Thus, social exclusion is often reflected in space and place.

Design implications of differences in household compositions

As mentioned earlier, Britain's minority population is highly diverse which highlights the presence of large differences in household composition between ethnic groups. This diverse and special household needs of ethnic minorities have ramifications in terms of design.

The design of the existing housing stock affects tenants differentially as a result of their differences in their social positioning and existing structural inequalities in the society.

In local authority housing, special needs are addressed by providing one-bedroom flats for single (young and elderly) people, and childless couples. Yet as the high percentages of overcrowding among racialised minorities shows, the needs of the extended families are not sufficiently addressed. As both Nasrin and Iqbal described, the number of children and adults living in their parental home is higher among specific minorities resulting in an increased need for larger accommodation providing more privacy and access to garden. In inner city areas where the majority of ethnic minorities are concentrated, the existing stock fails to respond to this need causing high proportion of overcrowded households among ethnic minorities.

Noting these and other special needs and requirements of disadvantaged groups should by no means lead to homogenising these groups. Indeed the special needs of oppressed minorities need to be addressed without homogenising them and essentialising their needs.

This may be achieved through different forms of consultation processes. Ethnic minorities with diverse and special household needs can be involved in developing ways of addressing their needs. Specific design, allocation and transfer policies can be developed locally through participatory processes which address the changing and diverse nature of the needs of tenants. Good practice in relation to the *changing needs* of tenants was pointed out by one of my respondents in Miranda Estate where low-rise - two floors only - blocks on Henfield Close (which consists of one-bedroom flats) have now been designated for senior citizens only. According to Betty Foster, it proved to be popular for tenants who want to continue 'living independently but prefer other senior citizens around them rather than teenagers'. Indeed, when I interviewed a woman of Caribbean origin in one of these flats she proudly showed me her garden where she grew plants, and she gave me some to take home.

Similarly, housing projects can have this built-in flexibility to provide accommodation for the specific needs of ethnic minorities, such as extended families, with a housing practice that enables people to transfer within the same estate.

The differential effects of housing policies

Housing policies affect tenants differentially as a result of the differences in their social positioning and existing structural inequalities in the society. The 'Right to Buy', for instance, affected the tenants differentially for a number of reasons. On the one hand, under this legislation tenants in the public sector were given a statutory right to buy the house they occupied. Yet this right could only be exercised by a specific group of tenants, e.g. secure tenants, the majority of which were white. The amount of discount was worked out according to the number of years it had been occupied, which again benefited the white tenants since they had longer tenancies. Moreover, it was the tenants who were in full-time and permanent employment who could get a mortgage to buy their homes. Yet the unemployment rate for people from minorities is higher than for White people. According to the Commission for Racial Equality (1997a) in 1995/96, for example, the unemployment rate for ethnic minorities was (18 per cent), more than double the rate for their White counterparts (8 per cent). Unemployment levels were highest for Pakistani (27 per cent) and Bangladeshi (28 per cent) people.

On the other hand, the sale of council housing led to the reduction of larger properties in the housing stock which disproportionately affected Black and ethnic minorities because of their larger average household structure. Indeed, the differences in household structure and employment have been a crucial factor for these groups in experiencing institutional racism. Housing policies can play a part in eliminating/perpetuating institutional racisms the government therefore needs to consider the differential effects of the policies on individuals and groups with differences in their social positioning.

Social exclusion

Generally, the concept of social exclusion is seen as a local phenomenon appearing in a specific place such as an inner city neighbourhood, or a specific housing estate. Such an interpretation places a particular emphasis on the spatial dimension of the phenomenon.

The case studies highlighted the flawed nature of those interpretations of the concept which perceives it mainly in relation to poverty, reducing it to the problem of the underclass. These observations point to the geographical concentrations of poverty and deprivation in inner city areas and peripheral housing estates. Yet this discourse, which emphasises the aspect of poverty in social exclusion, is colour-blind and makes invisible the fact that ethnic minorities are concentrated in these estates. Or if they are white-

dominated, then persistent racism and racial harassment is present. Moreover, in such observations, political exclusion of those racialised minorities in housing estates that are in not-so-deprived areas and where better off working class people live - as was the case in Elthorne First Co-op - is not recognised as a problem.

Analyses of social exclusion often involve an assumption that the presence of 'a community' in decisions is the way to eliminate social exclusion. Such an assumption, however, overlooks how the process of community construction itself excludes individuals and groups. As the case studies demonstrated, neighbourhood boundaries, artificially drawn by the Islington council, resulted in a community construction of some residents (often most active and vocal) excluding 'the Other' on the basis of ethnicity and class. In the majority of the neighbourhood forums and committees, on the other hand, community construction of the majority did not involve Black and ethnic minority residents. Neither decentralisation of services and resources, nor attempts to involve 'the community' in decision-making processes by the local state seriously challenged the existing relations of power and oppression. Black and ethnic minorities generally, and women particularly, remain absent in these processes.

As mentioned earlier, the notion of community involves boundary construction and a process of inclusion/exclusion. Embedded in this process is an endeavour to exclude all those perceived as 'the Other' and control of available resources. In other words, the more 'outsiders' are excluded and denied resources such as houses, playgrounds, schools, health and leisure centres, the more they become available for those included in the community. It is also important to note, once again, that individual members have a different relationship to these resources and subsequently degrees of power as a result of their characteristics such as class, gender, and ethnicity. The attempt to control resources can be based on a number of social criteria, such as class, race, ethnicity or gender.

If control of resources depends on their successful denial to 'outsiders' and this attempt can be based on a number of social criteria including class, race, ethnicity or gender, then the construction of 'the otherness' is central to social exclusion. Social exclusion is a direct outcome of social inequalities that determine life chances of specific social groups. Specific social inequalities marginalize members of specific collectivities and exclude them from public life, preventing them from participating in the economic,

social and political domains. Understanding the ways in which ‘us and them’ construction based on social divisions and the shifting nature of these constructs, multiplex character of positions of power/powerlessness becomes even more crucial in order to offer any remedy to the problems that social exclusion gives rise to.

Experiences of mixed-race tenants (e.g. Sandra and Allison), as well as refugees (e.g. Somalians), underlined the fact that there is a great social distance between members of the ethnic minority people and of the majority although they have been living in the same estate or neighbourhood. These tenants were largely excluded from both the formal and informal networks of communication in their estate. Their isolation is the key feature of their exclusion. Their social propinquity does not correspond to spatial propinquity, all of which amounts to social exclusion.

Racial violence, the threat of violence and harassment (such as racist graffiti in both Elthorne First Co-op against the Jewish family and Black members of Fusions Jameen Phase II) are instrumental in maintaining racial inequalities in housing. All of this points to the importance of making connections between poverty and ethnic identities. It also highlights the overlapping nature of these categories underlining the fact that the disadvantage cannot be reduced to class. Each division exist within the context of others. Although ethnic minorities are over-represented amongst the poor the inherent racism among the working class subjects them to further disadvantage. Thus, recognising poverty alone is not enough to tackle the problem of social exclusion.

In the Green Paper of April 2000 the government describes some of the housing-related manifestations of social exclusion. These include rough sleeping, vulnerable people (e.g. mentally ill, people with drink and drug addictions, and victims of domestic violence); people living in insecure accommodation (thus subjected to crime and fear of crime); people subjected to ‘anti-social behaviour’. The paper states that the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 introduced Anti-Social Behaviour Orders that can be used against any individual (whether they are a social or private tenant or a householder) who is causing harassment (including racial harassment), alarm or distress to others. Although under this new Act it may be easier to take action against the perpetrators of racist crimes, it remains problematic for it tends to reduce racism to a behavioural problem of individuals rather than relating it to structural inequalities.

‘Empowerment’ and equal opportunities policies

One of the aims of decentralisation and involvement of local people in decisions is to empower those involved in those processes since people gain empowerment when they are incorporated into decision-making processes. Greater collective control over resources and increasing input into the decision-making process through local platforms such as the Forum is expected to help the empowerment of local people. Yet the notion of ‘empowerment’, as discussed earlier, is problematic. In the present composition of the Elthorne Forum (the majority of the Forum members are white, while ethnic minority *residents* are absent), there exists the potential problem that empowerment of the Forum members is likely to operate to the detriment of minority groups. Indeed, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, most members of the Neighbourhood Forum constructed a boundary drawn between ‘us and them’. They were empowered to make decisions about the allocation of the community budget. They made their decisions to keep these resources for the white majority and to exclude ‘the Other’. These minority ethnic groups were not perceived as part of ‘the community’ despite their contribution to their locality. Local participation involved political mobilisation, exclusion of ‘the Other’ from particular resources and struggles over them, and claims to representation.

The Government in their Green Paper (DETR 2000) emphasise the role of local authorities in ‘consulting and empowering the local community’ encouraging tenants participation compacts. An officer in the Residents Initiative Unit of Islington Council (a 49 years old man who described himself as African Caribbean) told me that the Green Paper does not define the term ‘empowerment’, it is up to tenants, communities, and local councils to define it. ‘Empowerment’ is an elusive term, he noted, ‘I don’t think anybody knows what it means. It’s up to the tenants and residents to fight for power, the Council won’t give it to them’. According to this officer, the Council tries to support those tenants who want to develop ways and means of involving in the Council’s decisions and consultation processes, as well as in the management of their estate e.g. by setting up Tenants Associations, Tenant Management Co-operatives. The only budget tenants control at present are the Tenants Association budgets which are about £200-£300.

All of this has implications for the equal opportunities policies. As a result of equal opportunities policies, the Council employs more members of disadvantaged minority groups. Although employment of some individuals in areas where they were so far

works with the differences among people (Webber 1978 cited in Healey 1997: 252). Moreover, it echoes what Healey (1997: 253) underpins as Habermasian perspective, which 'emphasises how people's conceptions of their preferences are communicatively and intersubjectively constructed'. All of this need to be taken into account in formulating policies.

Space as an expression of power relations: Creating inclusive spaces

The case studies also demonstrated that space is an expression of differential power relations. A number of contradictory messages are transmitted in space as well as through space such as message of domination and subordination as well as solidarity and co-operation, all of which contribute to individuals' senses of space. What occurs in a specific place is that certain identities are resented, threatened and challenged. For example, the Black and Jewish identities of Tenant Management Co-op members and the non-heterosexual identities of the self-builders on Elthorne Estate were all threatened. In Miranda Estate, some migrant tenants disliked refugee identities of some other tenants. On the other hand, certain identities were endorsed and fostered, such as the identity of the elderly heterosexual couples in Elthorne First Co-op by the Management Committee. In the Black-only Fusions Jameen Projects, the racial identities of members were supported *within* the projects, whereas the group's ethnic identity in Phase II was subjected to an overt *external* threat by the racists in the area. In Islington, the supposedly ethnically mixed feature of the Community Self-build has never materialised, and the group ended up being White-only. The Greenstreet self-builders of Lewisham, on the other hand, challenged the homophobia of a trainee and encouraged racialised minorities to take part in the project. These threats and endorsements in turn provided a foundation upon which new individual and group identities could be constituted. Indeed, by their challenge of oppressive identities of the hegemonic groups and by supporting the disadvantaged, the Greenstreet self-builders moved in the direction of achieving an inclusive group identity and subsequently towards their long-term aim of an inclusive neighbourhood. Arson attack on the Phase II of Fusions Jameen, on the other hand, made some of the self-builders more determined to form good relations with their neighbours who were used to living with white people and have so far kept the racial homogeneity of their neighbourhood.

All the above examples also demonstrate that where there are relations of power there are also resistances. Like power, resistance is also multiplex. Mixed race tenants resist

the prejudices of both white and black tenants. Hannah, as the mother of mixed race children, had to put up with the abuse of a Black tenant, while Allison and Sandra 'kept themselves to themselves' as a coping strategy with the white dominant identity of their Estate. Tenants of both Miranda Estate and Elthorne First Co-op put up resistances against the bureaucratic practices of the council. Self-builders on the other hand put up resistances against professionals and institutions including the tenants association of the Elthorne Estate.

The Greenstreet self-builders did not get their first planning permission because their project did not 'fit in the area,' which was quite posh. A certain type of housing required a certain type of tenure which in turn required certain characteristics of the residents such as a stable employment for a mortgage and also that the houses were to be built using conventional building methods. Yet the self-builders put up a resistance by first lobbying the elected members and later by relentlessly leafleting the neighbourhood. This way they managed to get planning permission and then formed good relations with the majority of their neighbours. By resisting their assigned 'otherness' not only did they brake their isolation and marginalization but they have also taken an active part in attempting to achieve a socially *inclusive* neighbourhood rather than exclusive. Similarly, Fusions Jameen Phase II members, as 'the racialised Other', expressed their determination to improve their relationship with the local people who have so far constructed difference to *exclude* others. The predominant whiteness and relative homogeneity of the neighbourhood where Fusions Jameen Phase II is situated has been achieved on the very exclusion or subordination of the rights of other categories. This resonates with Mouffe's (1992) argument that particular rights of subordinate groups cannot be achieved without deconstruction of certain identities of hegemonic groups. As mentioned in Part I, criticising the liberals for being blind to power-relations Mouffe points out that they agree on the need to extend the sphere of rights in order to include groups that have been excluded so far. However, they perceive the process as 'a smooth one of progressive inclusion to citizenship'. Noting the problematic nature of this approach she points to the fact that 'some existing rights have been constituted on the very exclusion or subordination of the rights of other categories'. Therefore, she suggests, the process of recognition of several new rights requires us to deconstruct all those identities (1992: 236).

Thus the residents in the neighbourhood need to deconstruct the 'White-only' identity of their area. This process will involve contestation and re-negotiation of power socially and physically which will inevitably lead to a new identity construction both socially and spatially.

The exclusion of 'the Other' can go as far as denial of rights and resources including the right to live, which was implicated in the threat to Claire's family in Elthorne Estate. But my respondents were not put off by this behaviour mainly because they thought living together was one way of changing the attitudes.

Amanda preferred living in an ethnically mixed area than 'nice' but predominantly white parts of the borough. She thought her little son's experience of racism was inevitable. Nonetheless she did not want him to be subjected to it too early. Amanda and her son had completely different senses of space from those of their white neighbours. Their 'otherness' was created and re-created by the racist attitudes of their neighbours in everyday practices and discourses. Thus, existing social relations subjected Amanda as a black single mother to a subordinate position as 'the racialised other', which in turn meant solidarity and co-operation for the white people. Amanda preferred living in the neighbourhood where she was, for as a Black single mother she felt supported by her neighbours.

The above example demonstrates that people like Amanda cannot choose where they want to live and how they want to live because of their limited income revealing the fact that each social division exists within the context of others. Their racialised identities limit their choices even further. Indeed one of the characteristics racialised people have to consider when deciding which area to live in is the degree of racial harassment taking place. All of this reveals the relationship between space and power.

The above discussion gives rise to the following question: What are the ways of creating the spaces/places of inclusion rather than exclusion and of challenging the hegemonic constructions of place?

My respondents described some of the localities in relation to their inclusive nature. Matthew, for instance, described Catford in Lewisham as 'like the world'. Similarly, members of the Fusions Jameen Phase I project felt supported by the residents in their

neighbourhood. I, myself, felt that the area around Archway station (which I have described in Chapter 6) was quite inclusive in that diverse people were accepted with their multiple identities.

As a matter of fact, the Greenstreet self-builders seemed to have grasped the dynamic nature of space. They do not envisage the housing they create to be mere products but rather instrumental in changing the existing reality by creating a new one. Its design will be the outcome of particular social relations, which bear the mark of a specific culture of the collectivity that involves shifting one's position to be able to understand 'the Other' and attempting to include 'the other' by making them feel welcomed. The spatial outcome of this ethos, on the one hand, would reflect the interaction of those using it on the other hand it would be constitutive of new social relations and would in turn be shaped by them. All of this resonates with the transformative potential of dialogue-based democracies. Moreover, the answer to the above question lies in the understanding of citizenship, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter has raised the issues of more overriding theoretical questions as well as the practical issues the thesis deals with and their implications for policy-making – such as how to tackle violence against women and the binary divide of the public/private that operate to exclude women from the public domain, equal opportunities and how to increase the participation of usually excluded groups in decision-making processes of housing.

The chapter examined social divisions of gender and ethnicity in the social and spatial, and how different positionings of individuals and groups in terms of 'race', ethnicity, gender, class and sexuality result in differential access to the spatial. It maintained that differences corresponding to social divisions are also reflected in space. It pointed out how in different ways the public and private divide is transgressed and the boundary is challenged in participatory processes. Underlining that the phenomenon of social exclusion is social divisions in the form of structured inequalities the chapter discussed the issues of 'empowerment' and 'the community'. Pointing to the flawed nature of assumptions implicit in the concept of 'tenants' control' which homogenises tenants it argued that neither the category of 'tenants' nor the residents of a particular neighbourhood are a unified, homogenous group but are divided in number of ways

including their race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexuality, class, age, as well as personal outlooks and values. Individual tenants are positioned differently within their collectivities, and the power they have in specific situations correspond to their social location, all of which has implications for equal opportunities policies.

In the next Chapter I explore decision-making processes with regard to the actual involvement of tenants as individuals and groups, and the power relations. The Chapter also considers the general conclusions of the thesis including the implications for the local authorities.

Chapter 13: Participatory decision-making processes

Introduction

This chapter discusses the extent to which tenants are able to influence decisions; who are the parties involved in decision-making and the extent they influence the decision-making processes?; popular planning and decentralisation, all of which have been explored in this investigation. Some of the problems mentioned in Chapter 12 relate in a way to how decisions are made both centrally and at a grass roots' level. The issue of tenants' participation partly relates to the question of *which* tenants participate in the decision-making processes. Analysing participation in decision-making processes in terms of power relations can illuminate many other problems (e.g. the problem of exclusion socially and spatially). There are no objectively right or wrong answers to these problems rather they are subject to diverse and often conflicting interests. Therefore, the whole process of decision-making needs to be analysed in order to see how these gendered and ethnicised dimensions are reflected in these processes.

The chapter begins by discussing decentralisation of decision-making in terms of the problem of representation. It is argued that decentralisation and democratisation of decision-making processes are two different things. The key factor in decentralisation is the amount of power being decentralised, and to whom.

The chapter then looks at the concept of tenants' control and assumptions implicit in the concept. It argues that contrary to these assumptions there exist conflicting interests and differences among tenants. Neither tenants nor self-builders are unitary categories. Individuals have different amounts of power in different settings and the power each tenant has in a specific situation corresponds to their social positioning.

The following section of the chapter discusses the nature of power differences among tenants. Individuals simultaneously withstand and exercise power. However, not all individuals have equal power. Exercise of power in relation to a particular characteristic of an individual such as ethnicity, in the form of racism, is articulated through other categories, such as class and gender. The same individual exercising this specific form of power, however, may be subjected to another form of power on different grounds.

Then the chapter highlights the shifting nature of power relations among the participants of the decision-making processes corresponding to the characteristics of individuals in terms of ethnicity, gender, and class. This further puts them in differential power relations with others in the wider social, economic and political context.

The chapter concludes by looking at 'the community' and community politics, arguing that community control does not automatically lead to an extension of democracy. Instead, in a number of instances, community control at local level meant mobilisation for some groups to *exclude* others in order to keep their existing privileged access to services.

Decentralisation of decision-making: The problem of representation

As argued earlier, the decentralisation of the service provision at local level may increase the accountability of the local authority departments and officers to their constituents. Also claimed by some council departments is that decentralisation of decision-making results in an increased responsiveness of these services to 'the community' and to the needs of local residents. However, conceptualisation of needs in this way is quite problematic. Inherent in this claim is the assumption that the authorities can unproblematically identify and address the needs of the local community by tapping into local knowledge and experience. This view overlooks the socially constructed and conflicting nature of needs. A quite common way of tapping into knowledge and experience of specific groups is co-optation of some individuals on to the Council committees. Indeed, often the most active and articulate individuals are co-opted on to the central committees as representatives of particular ethnic groups that they are affiliated and expect them to inform the relevant bodies about the needs of these groups, whilst ignoring the competing interests within these collectivities.

The Race Equality and Community Affairs Committee in Islington, for example, was a male-dominated committee. The co-opted members 'representing' the Black and South Asian communities, in the meetings I have attended, were also all men. There was no co-opted member 'representing' the Turkish and Kurdish communities who are the second largest minority in Islington (the largest in some wards). Issues regarding the specific experiences of women seemed unlikely to emerge and influence any decision taken by this committee. Yet there was certainly complacency by the members of the committee in terms of incorporating the views and experiences of minorities.

have lost their powers to professionals and quangos that are not accountable. The likely outcome this kind of decentralisation, far from extending democracy, makes tenants more vulnerable.

Tenants' control

Both of the local authorities I have looked at (namely Islington and Lewisham) are committed to tenant participation and advocate tenant management and control. As mentioned in Chapter 12, there exist implicit assumptions about the notions of tenant management and control, as if the tenants are a unified group of people with commonality of goals and interests. The case studies demonstrated the flawed nature of these assumptions.

The extent each group felt in control varied from project to project. Compared to the Council managed estate, as well as self-build projects, the Tenant Management Co-op members appeared to be the ones who most felt in power. Ability to control their own budget, having direct access to the available resources increased their sense of being in control and in power. Indeed, this particular group appeared to be even more in control when they had direct access to the resources available to them, e.g. control of their central heating system. Although the Tenant Management Co-op have a certain degree of power *vis-à-vis* the Council, this power is often encumbered because the Council still has the responsibility for major decisions (e.g. concerning the structural elements of the building and management of major repairs).

Tenants' sense of power generally diminished as their ability to control their budget and resources decreased. Indeed, tenants of the Council managed estate, in contrast, were quite *powerless* in influencing the decisions taken centrally. Tenants' Associations do not have any real power in the decision-making process of the council for all they can do is to lobby and put pressure on the council on behalf of the whole estate and make recommendations that are not binding. Their lack of voting rights and inability to veto the council's decisions has taken their sense of power away altogether. Despite decentralisation, the unaccountable and unresponsive nature of the bureaucratic council machinery seemed to be the major cause of the problems for tenants of the council estates.

Likewise, the remoteness of the professionals in self-build led to their failure to give advice when needed by the self-builders. The self-builders' positioning in the process, coupled with their location in the social matrix resulting from their class, gender, and 'race', all contributed to their vulnerability and powerlessness.

Prior to their self-build project, members of these groups were either homeless or living in temporary accommodation. They were not considered to be the priority group for getting re-housed and therefore appeared to be the most powerless group in terms of access to public housing. The combined effects of certain factors contributed to their feelings of vulnerability such as: being homeless or in temporary accommodation thus having self-build as the only option for a decent and permanent accommodation, being unemployed or having a low income, or having to work full-time while self-building, and the experience of institutional racism for some.

The experiences of self-builders in terms of 'empowerment' varied considerably highlighting the suggestion that the meaning of the notions of power and dependence changes depending on its contexts. Self-builders simultaneously felt 'empowered' and 'disempowered'. They felt 'empowered' by taking an active role in their housing problem. Furthermore, the challenging nature of the process, the training they received and the skills they acquired increased their self-confidence. Indeed, all the respondents referred to some sense of 'empowerment' as a result of learning new skills, running a project that they have not done before, working together and achieving something in what is considered to be a highly mystified building process. At the same time, however, they felt 'disempowered' mainly because of their lack of any other alternative in being housed, (e.g. this was the only option available to them for permanent accommodation), the fact that their labour was unpaid, that they are either on the dole with some dependants such as children, elderly, or if they *are* in employment they work too many hours and therefore their economic hardship still remains. What is more, professionals are not there when the self-builders need them. Therefore, they lack the support they desperately need from professionals and agencies. Hence, the vulnerability and powerlessness of self-builders was reinforced by the process itself, e.g. unmet deadlines and ambitious designs, lack of specialist support, and losing incentives for lagging behind.

Self-build groups had differing experiences in terms of feeling in control from one another. Members of the self-build group, who went for a less ambitious design and completed the project on time, felt 'empowered' and more in control. Indeed the experiences of the self-builders in terms of 'empowerment' varied considerably highlighting the suggestion that the meaning of the notions of power and dependence changes depending on the contexts.

Power differences among tenants

A group's ability to exercise control does not automatically lead to an increase in each individual tenants' sense of control. This is because individuals are positioned differentially within their collectivity as a result of social divisions.

There existed differences of power among the individual members of a collectivity. Thus, those tenants who are to be 'empowered' in the decision-making processes of housing are highly heterogeneous with differentiated interpersonal relations. The fact that 'the Otherness' is constructed in terms of race, ethnicity, culture, nationality, gender, sexuality, class and status underlines the multi-dimensional nature of power and powerlessness. Difference constructed on such grounds corresponded to the relations of domination/subordination and signified specific amount of power and powerlessness in varying circumstances for different individuals.

Isabel's expressions about the refugees when she stigmatised them as 'people on social security', amounted to a form of racism against these refugees and was articulated through the category of class. Isabel herself was subjected to power in relation to her English, which amounted to different forms of racism (e.g. institutional racism), as she found it difficult to communicate with the Council when they asked her to put things in writing. She also said that she did not raise any issues at the tenants' association meetings leaving it to those tenants whose English were more fluent than hers. All of this resonates with Foucault's view that there is horizontal power not just hierarchical (see Chapter 2).

Indeed, corresponding to these power differences, each collectivity I have investigated had a number of divisions among themselves based on the construction of certain individuals as 'the Other'. The residents of Miranda Estate held different groups of individuals responsible for their day-to-day problems. Some were of the opinion that the

main cause of their everyday problems was the irresponsible behaviour of a certain type of residents describing them by certain characteristics, which involved stereotyping and stigmatising of refugees, the poor, and the unemployed. In this way, they constructed and emphasised their difference from 'the Other', although they may share some of the identities that they deplore. The respondents' construction of 'the Otherness' shifted constantly as they spoke about their experiences with the Council, the Tenants Association and other tenants on the estate. Their intersecting identities determined the way each respondent conceptualised the problems on the estate, constructing boundaries and excluding 'the Other'.

'The Otherness' was constructed on different grounds (e.g. gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and class) revealing the multiplex character of power and underlying the diversity of ways in which the disadvantaged experience oppression, which has ramifications for the notion of 'empowerment'. As discussed later in the chapter, it would be a mistake, for instance, for the Council to resort to strategies of 'empowerment' for tenants as if tenants are an undifferentiated homogeneous grouping with common goals and interests.

Shifting power relations in decision-making processes

As discussed in Part I, dichotomous thinking results in a distinct separation of the public and private, which remains problematic. In Britain, housing issues are perceived to be part of the private (i.e. women's) domain. Yet the case studies revealed that this assumption is ethnocentric which constructs boundaries of the private/public as universal based on the experiences of the dominant ethnic (white) and cultural (Christian) group. Indeed, this problematic divide is not only gendered but also *ethnicised and culturalised* as well in the sense that housing issues are considered to be part of the public domain in some ethnic and cultural groups and therefore it is men who get involved. On Miranda Estate, for example, for white families as well as a migrant family from Spain, housing issues were seen as the domain of women while tenants based their reasons on false assumptions (i.e. Isabel's husband works or Brenda's argument that women care for children more than men do). For some other ethnic minorities, on the other hand, it was the public domain and therefore men participated, which seemed to me more of a regional tradition (i.e. Michalis' Greek Cypriot family and Pervin's Turkish family). The Federation of Lewisham Tenants and Residents Association (FELTRA) representative also described difficulties in involving Asian and Turkish women in

Tenants Association activities generally in Lewisham, due to the differences in cultures, which sounded more like for religious reasons. Therefore, the private/public divide in general and women's attendance (white women's significant presence) in the Tenants Association meetings in particular are gendered, ethnicised and culturalised (e.g. religious) phenomena involving differentiated power relations through which a wide range of power positions are produced and re-produced.

Tenants who were active in the Tenant Management Co-op and Tenants Association were discontented about the fact that the Black and ethnic minority people did not 'involve themselves' in the management. They believed the absence of those tenants to be their personal choice to remain indifferent and did not allow any space for the structural disadvantages that particular groups experience. Some demonstrated a degree of resentment to the enjoyment of non-participants of the benefits to the same extent as active members. Some white self-builders emphasised the hardship of the self-build process insisting that only those who are the most determined remained in the project. They failed to note, however, the privileged position of white groups on ethnic and cultural grounds despite their common class position. The class characteristics of these racialised minorities are articulated through their ethnicity and culture as well as gender putting them in a more vulnerable position than their white counterparts.

As mentioned earlier, one of the crucial elements in decision-making processes is the question of power attached to the roles of those participating in them. Those who are experiencing structural inequalities appear to have the least power in decision-making processes. The case studies revealed that although women play a central role in organising and managing at a local level, (e.g. neighbourhood forums/committees, Tenant Management Co-ops and Tenants Associations), their number decreases and the power attached to their role shifts as one moves up to higher and more central levels of decision-making. The majority of tenant representatives are white women yet it is the chief council officers and councillors participating in these processes who have more political and financial power in policy formation and decision-making.

Nonetheless, the experiences of women in decision-making processes is diverse in that some women have power over others in the decision-making processes while some men and women share interests and goals. Professional women exercise their power of knowledge over some women as well as some men. A white, working class man acted

as the spokesperson of a mostly female (white, older) delegation of tenants at the Council committee meeting for as a white men he had more clout than women *vis-à-vis* the Council. Yet the female Council officers, who were white and younger, had more power attached to their roles than him because of their class and status. Black women were absent in the senior positions at the central level and among elected members. They occupied junior positions and as a matter of fact Black female committee clerks appeared to have the least power of all participants in these meetings. The Managers of the Neighbourhood Forum were Black (African Caribbean descent) women. Thus, some white residents were in a subordinate position in terms of their class and status in their relation to these officers. Nevertheless, as discussed later in the chapter, these residents were able to exclude racialised minorities at the local level. Indeed it is important to note that because of the Equal Opportunities policies, inclusions and exclusion at the level of Council are very different from the neighbourhood level.

All of this highlights the highly differentiated nature of decision-making bodies and processes. The power attached to the role of individuals is multi-dimensional and shifting constantly depending on the specificity of social relations in a specific context. Thus, the diversity of experiences of participants in decision-making processes highlighted the potential problems in *essentialising* difference. Also underlined is the fact that there can be no unitary category of 'women'.

In general, the participation of the Black and ethnic minority members is very low. Yet one of the Management Committee members found the under-representation of men (white) more problematic than the minority ethnic groups because of the amount of power attached to gender roles in their relationship with the Council. The fact that Debbie believed that men (white) are taken more seriously by the Council indicated that values are embedded in those structures and processes within which local participation takes place. These values inevitably shape the involvement of the participants in these processes. These shifting power relations correspond to the ethnic, gender, and class characteristics of individuals. Each one of the identity-based categories has to be contextualized within others. This further places them in differential power relations within the wider social, economic and political context. Intersectionality of ethnicity, class and gender produce the positions of power and powerlessness that participants experience in the processes of making decisions. Exclusion of racialised minorities in decision-making processes corresponds to the divisions at macro level, e.g. social

exclusion. The highly contradictory and paradoxical nature of the power relations in these situations points to the dangers of collapsing ethnicity, gender and class.

Participation in the decision-making: Who takes the decisions? Who is in power?

The Tenants Association of Miranda Estate does not have any real power in the decision-making process for all it can do is lobby and put pressure on the Council on behalf of the whole Estate and make recommendations which the Council is by no means obliged to take into consideration. My respondents as a whole felt quite powerless in their relations with the Council which they viewed as highly complex, bureaucratic machinery, unaccountable to the tenants and they did not believe that they had played any role in the decision-making process of their housing. Many of them expressed feelings of powerlessness and frustration by the fact that at the end of the day it is the central bodies that hold the power to decide what they want, and that their views and concerns are not taken seriously. Thus, while the paternalistic attitude of the professionals and authorities remain, the ambiguity of the whole notion of participation adds to the problem.

Compared to the Council management and self-build schemes, Tenant Management Co-operative members collectively seem to have the most decision-making power regarding the day-to-day management of their housing. As mentioned earlier, control over the budget played a significant part in their sense of being in charge. They felt even more in power when they had access to other resources such as the communal boilers of the central heating system, and ability to hire and fire contractors which freed them from a great deal of hassle that most tenants experience with the Islington Building Services. Nonetheless, the feeling of being in control was by no means uniform amongst tenants. Despite the fact that the Tenant Management Co-operative as a collectivity was in more control of the decision-making process than any other project, passive members did not seem to have any sense of being in control as such. Active members did feel in control on certain issues while remained powerless in terms of major repairs that were the responsibility of the council.

Although *all* of my respondents resident in Miranda Estate expressed feelings of powerlessness in their relationship with the Council, both on an individual level as tenants and at group level as a Tenants Association, they did not, however, experience it in the same way. Instead, it varied amongst individuals depending on their social

positioning in terms of race, gender, sexuality, status and age. Those who are subjected to structural inequalities appeared to have different problems in their daily experiences. For example, according to some tenants, the Council wanted everything in writing. Yet some of my respondents had difficulties in writing letters to the Council. Indeed, rules such as this assume that individuals have equal skills and abilities dismissing their differences, which may be the result of structural inequalities in the society that subsequently subject some individuals or groups to institutional racism. Indeed, these respondents were from ethnic minority groups and were quite capable of writing letters in their own languages but not in English. It also underlines the fact that those minorities who share cultural resources such as the language of the dominant ethnic, racial groups within the state may have a privileged position, affecting the salience of group membership.

The experiences of self-builders are not unified and homogeneous either. Instead what the self-builders of a collectivity experience differed considerably both within the group and between the groups. Self-builders have differences in their experiences on the grounds of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, as well as employment status, and stage in the life cycle, all of which position each individual self-builder within the same collectivity differently in terms of power relations. For instance, the self-builders of the collectivities I have studied experience economic hardship in general. However, not all self-builders are unemployed or on benefits which led to a conflict and subsequent division between employed and unemployed members of the Community Self-build.

Through self-building, one takes control over her/his housing situation and actively does something about it instead of waiting to be housed which, as described earlier, itself is empowering. They are also in charge of some crucial decisions such as the appointment of the architect or project manager. Nevertheless, having decision-making power on a specific issue does not necessarily put the self-builders in a position of power on the whole. Ability to make specific decisions was insufficient without constant access to professional advice, and led both the Greenstreet and Community Self-build groups to a position of further *powerlessness* by compelling them to pay for their mistakes. Moreover, self-builders claimed that professional agencies such as the Housing Corporation, the Community Self Build Agency, and some housing associations despised them and adopted a condescending attitude.

policy. They complained about the Council's paternalistic, e.g. 'we know what you need' approach to its tenants.

Both Michalis and Isabel said they *were* satisfied with the way the Council managed their Estate. Yet their conceptualisation of the relationship between the Council and its tenants was not based on equal power relations in that tenants can play an important role in the design and management process. Instead, there existed a boundary construction between 'the Self' and the Council as their landlord, which they perceived as a more or less unified, homogeneous entity holding power over residents. They accepted the fact that local welfare state held power over citizens and had a paternalistic role in this relation. Not surprisingly, the tenants of Miranda Estate perceived their role in the design and management process of their housing as merely observers unable to participate in decision-making and they believed that, as tenants, they have no power and that there is nothing they can do about this. The boundary these tenants constructed, nonetheless, shifted constantly as they narrated their own experiences. The relationship of the individual tenants' with the Tenants Association also varied because of the difference in the power attached to their multiple identities. The tenants' perception of these relationships was quite diverse owing to the differences in their social positioning including their past experiences, beliefs and values (e.g. ideological space they occupied).

The tenants of the Elthorne First Co-op in general share the view that the co-op management is much more efficient than the Council management in terms of repairs and maintenance. Less active tenants were also happy about the management of their Co-op even though they did not identify themselves with it and constructed a boundary between 'the Self' and the Co-op management. Both active and less active Co-op members also constructed a boundary between the Council and the Co-op that materialised in their interaction. This socially constructed division between the Co-op members and the Council included an allegation of preferential treatment by the Council to their tenants. The degree of control the Co-op members as a collectivity felt *vis-à-vis* the Council shifted constantly. On the one hand, despite these allegations of differential treatment, the active members of the Co-op management, as a group, did not seem to feel powerless. On the other hand, they felt they were not taken seriously as well as discriminated against by some Council departments such as the Islington Building Services. As described earlier, one of the management committee members felt they

were not taken seriously at the central level unless they had a male spokesperson. This constructed boundary between the Co-op and the Council shifted in different ways since the individual's construction of 'us and them' differed depending on their individual positioning in terms of ethnicity, gender, age as well as the length of their membership of the Co-op (founding members and those joined after it was formed), and the degree of their participation (active and passive members).

As described earlier, considerable changes have taken place in the self-building process over the years. As a result, self-builders have become less in control of the process and their ability to be involved in the design process has diminished. The architects pointed out that over the years the process has become more professionally-led and bureaucratised reducing the role of the self-builders to a mere labourer, thus adversely affecting their motivation in the process.

Moreover the professional agencies appeared to have implicit assumptions about who the self-builders are and what they expect from their lives in general and their housing in particular. The representatives of the Community Self Build Agency, for instance, made certain assumptions in relation to the self-builders' employment status and their marital status, which did not quite match up with the characteristics of many of my respondents. Nor did these professionals make any reference to the ethnicised, gendered and classed characteristics of the processes. Instead, they collapsed the differences between specific groups and individuals to the differences in their attitude to tenure. These assumptions, however, did not represent the experiences of the self-builders of the four schemes that I have studied in this investigation. There seemed to be a tendency to perceive self-builders as 'failures' in that this is a chance to develop their talents that they have no other way of developing. The interviews with the Community Self Build Agency representatives confirmed the claims made by the self-builders that there exists a paternalistic attitude on the part of professionals and agencies in that a 'we know what you need' approach to the problems of homeless people is prevalent. Nowhere throughout the interviews of professionals (e.g. architects and the Community Self Build Agency), did they identify with the self-builders. Instead, they often made comments that have represented the self-build groups as a problem.

Quite contrary to the perception of the professionals, the Greenstreet self-builders viewed their project as a way of attainment of the general principles of co-operative

living rather than merely getting a permanent accommodation. Over the years, the group formed an identity as a result of which they consciously try to transcend the existing constructed boundaries. Thus, they go beyond the mere attainment of housing and aim to create an inclusive social space which challenges social exclusion. Indeed, this group seemed to have realised the social transformation potential inherent in participatory schemes. This echoes Healey's (1997: 265) argument that highlights transformative potential of consensus-building practices that I take up later in the chapter.

In my opinion, the self-build process offers a great deal of opportunity to overcome the boundaries between the professional/non-professional on the one hand, and the binary divide between the public and private on the other (as discussed in Chapter 12). As a matter of fact, what underlies the idea of self-build process is the attempt to de-mystify the whole building process by de-professionalising it. Instead, throughout my interviews with the professionals, there appeared to be a constant strong boundary construction between the self-builders and 'the Self' which reinforced the professional/non-professional binary rather than challenging it. This in turn intensifies the presently existing ambiguity in terms of the assigned roles of self-builders in the eyes of those institutions who are involved in the project for financial reasons without necessarily being familiar with the values of self-build projects as opposed to those self-build agents who initiate and develop the project.

All this resonates with the view of Lefebvre (1974) who calls for the reconstruction of a spatial 'code', that is of a language common to inhabitants and architects as an immediate task in uniting the 'fields' which are comprehended separately so far, e.g. physical, social and mental space. Such a code would break down the existing barriers between concepts and their spatial expressions, and contribute to the recognition of shifting boundaries around social categories.

Processes of decision-making at local level

Individuals bring with them their values and experiences into the formal organisation such as the Co-op management, Tenants Association, and the self-build group. While decisions are taken, they exercise their personal judgement, which is shaped by these values and experiences including interests which are inevitably highly racialised, ethnicised, gendered and classed. These relations will be embedded in the more formal and informal organisations of the Tenant Management Co-op, self-build co-op and

Tenants Association all of which have their own identities. They define these identities through their rules and practices, which are also adopted by members through training and socialising. There are two pubs on the Elthorne Estate where residents including the Tenants Association members gather. Community centres also play an important role in bringing certain residents together where they exchange views, share feelings, and form and re-form opinions. In turn, certain identities are recognised and encouraged such as the identity of the elderly in Elthorne First Co-op (elderly heterosexual couples get Christmas gifts). On the other hand, others remain invisible such as the identity of single mothers in that no child care provision for single mothers to attend the meetings is available, nor are the venues accessible for the disabled at the Elthorne First Co-op.

The Manager of Elthorne First Co-op appeared to play a key role in identity formation as well as shaping members' preferences. Indeed, some ethnic minority (e.g. Ben as a Black man) and cultural minority (e.g. Claire as a Jewish woman) members I have interviewed at the Elthorne First Co-op denied that there was racism in their Estate despite the fact that some of them clearly experienced racial abuse and harassment by some neighbours. The Manager, who observed principles of non-discrimination, appeared to play a key role in a more inclusive community construction within the Co-op. He became a source of 'empowerment' for some members such as Ben who is constructed as 'the racialised Other' by some of his neighbours.

How could particular moments of decision-making be interwoven into more macro constructions of citizenship?

The case studies demonstrated that the management of the Tenant Management Co-operative, Tenants Association and self-build projects are all based on the voluntary work of their members. The attendance of the meetings of the council-managed estates appears to be a major problem. Similarly, there exists a general problem of lack of motivation to participate in the Co-op management in general and attendance in the meetings in particular. Incentives introduced by the Tenant Management Co-operative to involve members seemed to have improved the situation slightly. Nonetheless, attendance of this sort does not solve the problem of management in the long run since it does not automatically create an active membership. Housing management is a dynamic process that requires the participation over a period of time. It also requires motivation to engage in dialogues and exchange of information to make decisions,

which cannot be achieved by passive participation of tenants in some individual meetings.

This also underlines the importance of dialogue-based, communicative democracies that provide the framework for interactive approaches to policy-making in which the emphasis is on the process as much as the final outcome.

All of this echoes Healey (1997) who asserts that:

‘The idea of inclusionary argumentation demands ... a broadly-based social technology of strategy-production. The focus is on the processes through which participants come together, build understanding and trust among themselves, and develop ownership of the strategy, rather than the specific production of decision-criteria or an alternative image. The objective of the social technologies proposed ... is to help release community capacity to invent processes through which to collaborate and build consensuses which are useful to those involved and which have the potential to endure’ (1997: 249).

According to Healey (1997), these practices potentially change the frameworks for thinking, as well as the content and modes of use of rules, and the way resources flow. ‘They thus have the potential to transform institutional capacity and relations of power’ asserts Healey. ‘Consensus-building practices are a powerful form of social mobilisation’. This transformative effort, she maintains, ‘is a field of struggle, in which those who have power may easily control access, routines and style’ (1997: 265). In these practices the planner needs to be a ‘facilitator of debate’ rather than a ‘substantive expert’ in the process (Webber 1978: 162 cited in Healey 1997: 254). However, as Yuval-Davis (2000) points out, there remain problems with dialogue-based processes since consensus-making and political decision-making are quite different things.

All of this also raises issues regarding social citizenship and the welfare state; rights and entitlements; and citizenship and participation at a much wider societal level. Indeed, these housing management processes are taking place against a background of growing crisis in the welfare state, and the social rights that have come to be taken for granted in the welfare state are under threat. In recent years, the idea of ‘the active citizen’ has been put forward and promoted as an alternative to the welfare state. Within this

discourse, citizenship is transformed from being a political discourse to a voluntary involvement within civil society. Trends that accompany these developments include increased centralisation through nationally appointed and controlled quangos. Indeed abolishing the veto power of tenants accompanied increased centralisation at macro level and subsequent capping of local authorities, tighter control and diminished accountability. While the local authorities have absorbed more administrators and their role changed to that of enablers their self-governing powers have been hampered by the Conservative governments. Yet, as discussed in Chapter 4, also accompanying all this has been a major reduction in the budget of those institutions (e.g. housing associations) that the local authorities were expected to enable to provide public housing. Although the New Labour allows local authorities to spend capital received from the house sales they also aim to continue with the policy of stock transfer to the social landlords.

The Conservative government introduced the Citizen's Charter in 1992, which further enhanced the depoliticization of the notion of citizenship. As a result, citizens come to be constructed as consumers and customers. The notion of citizenship rights has become equated civil rights of an economic kind (that is market access related), such as the right to buy council houses rather than social rights of welfare. Under the current Labour government the emphasis on citizens as consumers culture remains.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the local welfare state's relationship with individual citizens are ethnicised, gendered and classed. As stated earlier, the self-building groups I have investigated initiated their projects out of desperation for permanent housing and endured a great deal of difficulties throughout the process. Their problems were magnified due to their class positioning. Self-build agencies, on the other hand, could not be clear with regards to the actual hours they need to put in to remain within the timescale, since 'they couldn't claim Social Security if it was clear'. The whole issue of self-building of this sort (e.g. collectively building to get a permanent accommodation) is related to citizenship rights. Those on welfare benefits live under the state's scrutiny. Those whose contribution to the society is invisible such as the unwaged (voluntary workers), low waged, and women become extremely salient with regards to the benefits and services they receive from the welfare state. While their labour remains invisible (for instance raising children, taking care of the sick, elderly and disabled, voluntary work and campaigning on a range of issues), and is taken for granted, they are stigmatised and treated like parasites (e.g. single mothers) and they become visible

when they claim means-tested benefits, such as income support, housing, council tax and childcare benefits.

Self-builders put time and labour into an extremely difficult building process for an alleged minimum of 18 months (but in actual fact for some it is a few years) and the end product is a contribution to the public housing stock. Working under such restrictions, putting their labour in freely without getting the benefits at the end indeed amounts to exploitation of self-builders. This has serious implications on the process itself. Having said that, the idea of self-build does have a potential to contribute in creating an active citizenship. Members of collectivities emphasised the ways in which the process has 'empowered' them. Nevertheless, the set of values around which such 'active citizens' are mobilised is crucially important in determining the political implications of their mobilisation. In some projects, the dichotomous separation of the public/private, masculine/feminine, skilled/unskilled and professional/non-professional were reinforced rather than challenged and women's role were not valued, but were instead rendered invisible.

'The community' and community politics

The case studies underlined that in a number of instances community control at local level is used by dominant groups to *exclude* others in order to keep their existing privileged access to services.

The residents of Elthorne Estate, for instance, kept their privileged access to local resources for their own 'sons and daughters' by excluding non-locals. They mobilised against the newcomers using decision-making bodies like the tenants association that were available to them. The Tenants Association of Elthorne Estate objected to the self-builders' application for the site offered to them by the Council. This prevented them getting the site they wanted.

Isabel, on Miranda Estate, was not happy about the fact that her refugee neighbours received services (such as housing) while herself and her sons did not get what they felt they deserved. However, in contrast to the Elthorne Estate residents, she was not in position of control, e.g. able to exercise power and mobilise against them.

Members of the Neighbourhood Forum in Islington exclude local African Caribbean and Chinese community organisations in order to use the limited amount of money available in the community budget themselves. Subsequently, these racialised minorities are prevented from applying for the limited funds. Indeed, community control did not lead to an extension of democracy. Instead it was utilised to exclude certain groups from political power and to keep the privileged access of the dominant groups, thus limiting rather than extending democracy. Similarly, increasing participation did not automatically and necessarily result in more democracy. Those who became actively involved in these processes have mobilised their limited power to exclude 'the Other'.

Neighbourhood Forums and Committees by and large fail to involve racialised minorities in their activities. Those residents who *do* get involved - e.g. the white majority - often construct a boundary around their neighbourhood that excludes 'the Other'. As described earlier, this was most clearly revealed in twinning some neighbourhoods, despite the resentment by 'the community'. This raises the question of whether popular participation in decision-making is always the right answer to democratisation of the housing process. Central decisions, such as the employment of ethnic minorities and women as officers, can play a significant role in achieving equalities. It also highlights the fact that conceptualising the boundaries of an area as fixed can lead to serious consequences if, for instance, the residents of the area are predominantly racist.

Also revealed by the case studies is the fact that participation in local activities does not necessarily lead to higher levels of participation. Members of the Tenants Association and Tenants Management Co-op were not aware of the activities of their neighbourhood Forum or the central committees of the local council. At the Annual General Meeting of the Pepy's neighbourhood committee there was a general reluctance by the newly elected officers to stand for representation at higher committees. Nor is the gender composition of the local decision-making platforms reflected at the central level. Women do not occupy positions in the central decision-making bodies to the same degree as they do on a neighbourhood level.

All of this underlines the crucial question of 'who participates?' in decision-making processes. The case studies highlighted the problems that emerge as a result of the unrepresentative nature of local decision-making bodies. Also revealed by the case

studies is the flawed nature of believing that by empowering the disadvantaged groups, the struggles against racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination and disadvantage can be taken forward successfully. Moreover, views such as these are based on assumptions that notions of the community and local participation are essentially progressive. As discussed earlier, in an area where the majority of the active constituents are racist, local participation and control can mean excluding non-whites. Although participation can be instrumental in providing people with greater control over decisions, the values that are embedded in these participatory processes determine whether they lead to more inclusive democracies.

To sum up, this chapter looked at the decision-making processes, discussing the actual involvement of tenants in these processes. The chapter underlined the highly ethnicised, gendered, and classed nature of decision-making processes leading to shifting power relations among the participants. Pointing out that in a number of instances, the dominant groups used community control to exclude disadvantaged groups and to keep their privileged access to resources. Thus, the issue of tenants' participation partly relates to the question of *which* tenants participate in the decision-making processes.

In the next section I briefly look at the general conclusions of the thesis considering the ramifications for the local authorities of the outcomes of the research.

CONCLUSIONS

Social divisions and space and implications for local authorities

With regard to the theoretical concerns of the thesis the case studies showed that social divisions of gender, ethnicity, 'race', class are central to participatory housing decision-making processes. The identity categories corresponding to the social divisions place individuals and groups in positionings with differentiated amount of power leading to inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics. Individual and collective identities are constructed in relation to difference and that difference can be constructed to include or exclude 'the Other'. When 'the Otherness' is constructed on the grounds of 'race', ethnicity gender and class, and therefore corresponds to social inequalities, those who are discriminated against are excluded both socially and spatially.

The ideal notion of 'the community' is overcast by problems of who is included and who is excluded. As a social construct, different people construct community differently. What is considered to be 'community' is relative both to the majority and the minority. Community constructions both at the macro and local levels involve inclusions *and* exclusions and that who is included and who is excluded from 'the community' depends on who is constructing it. The case studies revealed the problematic nature of the notion of 'the community' both in relation to the collectivity and neighbourhood. Individuals within groups (e.g. tenants association, tenant management co-op, and self-build groups) construct their identities and differences which meant exclusions of some individuals. Residents of the same neighbourhood or estate do not automatically share a sense of community. Groups I have investigated have become subjected to hostility by the local residents who constructed them as 'the Other' on the basis of their 'racial', class, and sexual characteristics.

The notions of 'the community' and 'empowerment' involve implicit homogenisation local people and tenants overlooking the existing conflicting interests among them. Like identities, the boundaries of community constructions of tenants are constantly in flux. However, essentialised notions of 'community' and 'empowerment' fail to see the shifting nature of constructions of identities/difference, 'us and them' divisions, and shifting power relations within collectivities. Therefore these notions do not respond to

the problems of social exclusion from the public domain of those who experience discrimination.

Individuals are positioned differentially within their collectivity as a result of social divisions there exist differences of power between the individual members of a collectivity. Therefore, enabling a collective to exercise control does not necessarily lead to an increase in each individual tenants' sense of control. Those tenants who are to be 'empowered' in the decision-making processes of housing are highly heterogeneous with differentiated interpersonal relations. The fact that difference is constructed as 'the Otherness' on the grounds of 'race', ethnicity, culture, nationality, gender, sexuality, class and status underscores the multiplex nature of power and powerlessness. The case studies demonstrated that difference constructed on the basis of these identity categories corresponded to the relations of domination/subordination implying particular positions of power/powerlessness in varying settings for different individuals.

All of this reveals that decision-making bodies and processes are highly ethnicised, gendered and classed. The power attached to the roles of participants in these processes is multi-dimensional and ever-shifting depending on the specificity of social relations in a particular context. Thus, the complexity of power relations and diversity of experiences of participants in decision-making processes highlighted the potential danger in *essentialising* difference. Also underlined is the fact that there can be no unitary categories such as 'women' or 'Blacks'.

Also to be emphasised is the fact that providing equal access does not necessarily mean equality. Neighbourhood forums and committees are expected to serve as democratic structures by giving people right to participate through direct involvement. Tenants with an equal access to the local decision-making bodies, however, do not automatically participate in these processes. As one of the Neighbourhood Managers said, some people are too busy to put food into the mouths of their children. Indeed the economic hardship of some tenants puts them in a particularly disadvantaged position in terms of participation. Self-builders are too busy struggling to keep to their timescale. Moreover, refugees are not familiar with the whole British system of local government and the way it functions.

All of this echoes the issues of social and political participation and citizenship at a macro level. Particular groups are excluded from the full rights of citizenship, such as the poor, ethnic minorities and women. When people are homeless, or living in temporary accommodation such as bed and breakfasts, hostels, women's refuges and squats (i.e. self-builders), they are unlikely to be registered to vote. As mentioned in Chapter 4, ethnic minority groups are over-represented among homeless households, as they spend a longer time in temporary accommodation. All this resonates with the views of Hill (1994: 78) who, examining debates on citizenship in the 1980s and 1990s, argues that 'the poorest have difficulty with access to information and legal review and redress (for benefit claimants, for example); the lack of childcare facilities and labour-saving devices traps women in "time poverty", making social as well as political participation remote'. Observing that 'exclusion from the full rights of citizenship is more acute for ethnic minorities and women, and at the local rather than national level', she stresses that in the contemporary society, 'not only has there been an increasing "feminisation" of poverty, but an increasing "racialisation" also' (1994: 78).

As noted in Chapter 2, some existing rights of people from the dominant social categories have been constituted on the exclusion or subordination of the rights of other categories. The process of recognition of certain new rights requires us to deconstruct these identities. Moreover, it is important to recognise group differences as some groups are in subordinate positions while some others enjoy privilege and power. Those social policies that are based on the experience of dominant categories of people while other categories that are marginalized or regarded as 'the Other' needs to be challenged. Equally important is the need not to essentialise these differences.

Physical space can be instrumental in eliminating or reinforcing existing inequalities. Space is not a passive background, but is constitutive of social relations, can influence, change and contribute to the processes that work to challenge and eliminate inequalities or to perpetuate them. Space can operate to include/exclude. Through space 'difference' can be constructed either as 'the Other' – which involves different forms of exclusion such as stigmatising, threats of violence, harassment (e.g. racist graffiti), physical attacks (e.g. arson attack) and in extreme cases extermination. Or the 'difference' can be constructed so that those usually excluded (such as marginalized and made invisible) individuals and groups can be included, which may have to involve deconstruction and elimination (obliteration) of certain identities, e.g. 'white identity' of a neighbourhood.

Dichotomous thinking constructs categories that are essentialist, mutually exclusive, static and homogeneous. Dichotomies fail to recognise the diverse, fragmented, contradictory, multiplex and incomplete character of the situations. Yet hegemonic power basing itself on the dualisms of dichotomous thinking maintains inequalities of power. A whole range of dualisms construct distinctions which reflect and contribute to the construction of 'the Other' on the basis of social divisions such as 'race', ethnicity, class, and sexuality, this way racialising, ethnicising and classing the gendered processes. Gender divisions are reinforced by the dichotomous separation of the public/private in the social space and the divide itself is ethnicised. Thus, dualisms such as the public/private in social space need to be questioned and the spatial needs to be re-examined critically in the light of this analysis in order to prevent the design and creation of forms that maintain and reinforce this division.

The case studies demonstrated once more the ambiguous nature of the term 'participation'. It can mean many different things to different parties ranging from merely 'informing' residents to enabling them to take control (e.g. formation of tenant management organisation). Often it is not clear to those whose participation is sought for what it means in a specific situation.

Nevertheless, participatory processes have the potential to contribute in going beyond existing dichotomies, thus eliminating them by blurring their existing (and often ambivalent) boundary. Indeed the participatory processes have the potential to transform institutional capacity and relations of power. Practices based on reflexive, dialogue-based democratic processes enable participants to transgress boundaries. In this way they can be effective tools of challenging the constructions of difference as 'the Other' to exclude as well as corresponding power relations. In these practices the planner, however, needs to be a 'facilitator of debate' rather than a professional expert. However, as argued in Chapter 2, there remain problems with dialogue-based processes with regard to political decision-making.

All of this has implications for local authorities. Both authorities studied in this thesis claim that they have democratised decision-making processes by committing themselves to tenants' participation. They decentralised services aiming to make them more responsive to their constituents and claimed to involve local people in decision-

making whilst seeing the local as a favourable setting of citizen's involvement and activity. Yet the relationship between tenants and local authorities as well as professional agencies continue to be paternalistic and the division between the tenants and authorities as 'us and them' remains. In the case of the self-build projects, the professionals totalising and essentialising the characteristics of self-builders ended up with stereotypical views about them. Similarly, the self-builders perceived their relationship with the professionals as paternalistic marginalizing them and reinforcing the division between the professional agencies and the self-builders, which led to their feelings of powerlessness.

The local state is related to individual citizens in a heterogeneous way. While allocating properties, attending repairs and maintenance, and improving services the local welfare state engages in relations with individual tenants that involve power. The case studies demonstrated the differences of power tenants hold as individuals and as groups (e.g. Tenants Association, Tenant Management Co-operative, self-build groups) *vis-à-vis* the Council as a result of their constructed identities. Moreover, housing policies affect tenants differentially as a result of the differences in their social positioning and existing structural inequalities in the society. While it is important to note the differences in the identities of people in housing projects, there is not a fixed notion of identity as such on the basis of which tenants and residents groups are formed. Moreover, time and space is inextricably connected to the ever-changing identities of people. The ethnic, gender and class identities of participants in housing processes relate to power relations and the structure of inequalities in society leading to positions of advantage/disadvantage.

Community is a notion falsely assumed to be the response to social exclusion, which takes place also in areas and estates that are not suffering from deprivation. Moreover, the issue of racism is still generally seen as Black/White issue. When racism is viewed as a Black/White issue, the experiences of ethnic minorities as well as mixed race tenants are overlooked. The case studies demonstrated that ethnic minorities experience different forms of racism and each one of them needs to be addressed. Power is the key factor in all of them. The multi-locationality of individuals and groups needs to be recognised. The case studies have highlighted, for example, racism against mixed-race families and racism against refugees. All of this has implications for equal opportunities policies. Also such a view overlooks the fact that race is articulated through class and gender, and therefore within each one of these categories (e.g. Black and White) there

also exist class differences and gender differences. These identity categories of class and gender interplay with those of race to produce hierarchical outcomes for individuals.

It would be wrong for me to make specific policy recommendations because conditions can be shifted. Nonetheless, some points need to be emphasised for consideration in future policies. Thus, future policies and any change in the policy area should take into consideration the following:

It is imperative for the local authorities to recognise the diversity of experiences of tenants. Such a recognition would require policies to be formulated as a way of rejecting the unitary notion of tenants and would do away with the tendency to rely on fixed and unchanging notions of 'the community', culture and identity. Policies need to be formulated on an understanding of the way identities are constantly formed and re-formed around race and ethnicity, which in turn are influenced by other forms of identity-based categories such as gender, class, age, and sexuality. Some council departments falsely assume the homogeneity of local people with a commonality of interests. Local authorities, nonetheless, are not homogeneous institutions. Instead, they are highly heterogeneous with competing interests. Diverse sub-cultures with conflicting views about their constituents often co-exist. Individuals or groups who may be part of a sub-culture constructing and excluding 'the Other' on the grounds of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, often have to work with those departments or units (such as equalities) who have a completely different sub-culture. These units strive to influence policies in order to eliminate inequalities on different grounds such as ethnicity and gender. Thus they construct difference in order to include those constituents who are constructed as 'the Other'.

The recent inquiry into the Stephen Lawrence (Macpherson 1999) murder case highlighted the collective failure of organisations. Local authorities with their heterogeneous sub-cultures are also prone to such collective failure. Indeed, throughout this research I have explored some of the issues that have also been raised in the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. I have looked at social divisions other than ethnicity and race.

The case studies in this research revealed the crucial importance of access to information in consultation processes. Informal channels of access to information include social and organisational networks, and contacts with councillors individually or collectively. More formal structures of access, on the other hand, include tenants' and residents' groups, and neighbourhood forums and committees. Yet in the case of the Islington rent rise, these formal structures have become ineffective. Exclusion of ethnic minorities and other disadvantaged groups in these processes also mean that a large amount of information is left out of policy-making processes.

Co-opting some members of minority groups as 'representatives', as discussed earlier, is highly problematic and does not address the problems of the most vulnerable. Underlying these approaches is the conceptualisation of these minorities, as well as residents of a specific locality as having fixed boundaries and perception of their needs as pre-given. Thus, in future policies these boundaries should not be constructed as fixed but ever-shifting and historical.

Participatory processes have the potential to challenge the existing public and private divide. Members of the self-build projects I have investigated, for instance, appeared to use this potential by simultaneously transgressing the two domains and blurring the boundary lines. Although it is important to recognise this potential, it would be equally wrong to essentialise the characteristics of any particular building method since it is the values attached to these processes and the ideological locations that members of these collectivities occupy which makes the difference in the end. Indeed, the examples given by the representatives of the Community Self Build Agency appeared to be based on the assumptions of the hegemonic ideology and that existing division of labour is reproduced through the self-build. What is more, in these participatory practices professionals such as the planners need to become a 'facilitator of debate' and 'enabler', rather than a provider and an expert in the process.

The subordinate groups may adopt Black-only models of projects in their resistance against oppression. Agencies and local authorities may formulate policies and allocate resources accordingly. However, it needs to be stressed that these schemes can have different outcomes and impacts upon tenants in different contexts. It would be wrong to totalise and essentialise them. Expecting a particular model to produce the same effects under any circumstances would be a mistake. For example, ethnically homogeneous

projects such as Black-only self-build may not be the best answer in challenging racism. Instead, it may lead to further subjection of these collectivities to racism in specific contexts. Therefore, models need to be flexible enough to address the issues stemming from the specificity of the project within its social context.

To say that self-build projects are open to all groups on paper does not necessarily lead to the formation of ethnically mixed groups. As in the case of the Islington self-build project, the ethnically mixed characteristic of the collectivity may never materialise unless structural inequalities preventing access to housing by certain segments of the population and the specificity of their needs are recognised. Similarly, on paper commitment to the involvement of tenants in decision-making processes does not automatically involve racialised minorities in them. Therefore, participation of ethnic minority tenants may never take place. It is important to identify the specific needs of ethnic minority groups and to act accordingly. It is equally important to remember the socially constructed and conflicting nature of needs.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, the case studies highlighted the question of whether popular participation in decision-making is always the best way of democratising the housing process. Indeed, there exists a fundamental tension between on the one hand the understanding of democracy as self-governing and increasing the involvement of people in those processes where decisions that have an impact on their lives are taken. On the other hand, eliminating inequalities and preventing their re-production through these processes thus achieving social justice. Social policies including housing policies, therefore, need to deal with this tension constantly.

Appendix 1 Housing policies in Britain

	1980	1985	1991	% change 1980-91
Dwellings	21,426	22,350	23,622	+ 10.3
Households	20,400	21,400	22,800	+11.8
Surplus	1,026	950	822	-19.9

Table 2 The number of dwellings and households, United Kingdom, 1980-91 (000s)

Source: Central Statistical Office; D.o.E., cited in Balchin 1995

	Number	% of total population	% born in U.K.
Total population	54,888,844	100.0	93
White	51,873,794	94.5	96
Ethnic minorities	3,015,050	5.5	48
Black Caribbean	499,964	0.9	53
Black African	212,362	0.4	36
Black Other	178,401	0.3	84
Indian	840,255	1.5	42
Pakistani	476,555	0.9	50
Bangladeshi	162,835	0.3	37
Chinese	156,938	0.3	28
Other Asian	197,534	0.4	22
Other-Other	290,206	0.5	40

Table 3 Ethnic composition of the population of Great Britain, 1991

Source: D. Owen (1992-1995) 1991, cited in CRE 1997

Countries of birth	No. resident in Britain	% of Britain's population
Northern Ireland	245,000	0.45
Irish Republic	592,000	1.08
Germany*	216,000	0.39
Italy	91,000	0.17
France	53,000	0.10
Other EC	133,900	0.24
Scandinavia and EFTA	58,300	0.11
E Europe & former USSR	142,900	0.26
Cyprus	78,000	0.14
Rest of Near and Middle East	58,300	0.11
Old Commonwealth (Aust, NZ, Canada)	177,400	0.32
New Commonwealth	1,688,400	3.08
Jamaica	142,000	0.26
Rest of Caribbean	122,600	0.22
India	409,000	0.75
Pakistan	234,000	0.43
Bangladesh	105,000	0.19
Rest of South Asia	39,500	0.07
South East Asia (inc Hong Kong)	150,400	0.27
East Africa	220,600	0.40
West and Southern Africa	110,700	0.20
Rest of the World	566,200	1.03
Asia	231,000	0.42
North Africa	44,600	0.08
South Africa	68,000	0.12
Rest of Africa	34,300	0.06
USA	143,000	0.26
Rest of Americas (exc Canada)	42,000	0.08
Total born outside GB	3,991,000	7.27

* Includes children of British army personnel who were born in Germany.

Table 4 People born outside Great Britain and resident here, by countries of birth (1991)

Source: D. Owen, 1992-1995, cited in CRE 1997

Year	Local Authority	Housing Association	Private Developers	Total
1975	103,000	13,600	131,500	261,500
1980	67,000	19,300	110,000	204,000
1981	45,000	16,800	98,900	170,700
1982	28,500	11,200	108,000	150,700
1983	28,500	14,300	127,300	171,200
1984	29,250	13,900	138,990	182,160
1985	22,490	11,490	135,460	170,040
1986	18,870	10,600	148,900	179,200
1987	15,600	10,940	161,740	189,300
1988	15,730	10,780	176,020	202,930
1989	14,010	10,650	154,000	179,360
1990	13,880	13,320	136,070	163,900
1991	8,050	15,300	131,200	154,600
1992	3,280	20,790	119,530	143,830
1993	1,400	29,590	116,520	147,530
1994	1,100	30,460	121,430	152,990
1995	810	31,070	123,590	155,470

Total column also includes new towns and government department buildings

Table 5 Housebuilding in England (1975-1995)

Source: *Housing and Construction Statistics* (HMSO), cited in Shelter 1997

	Local authorities and New Towns	Housing Associations	Completed sales
1980	4.15	14.8	89.6
1981	26.0	11.6	114.9
1982	34.8	18.3	200.4
1983	34.6	14.3	142.1
1984	27.4	12.7	102.8
1985	22.0	12.5	94.3
1986	20.4	13.1	90.9
1987	19.9	12.9	105.6
1988	16.4	14.5	163.8
1989	15.2	15.9	186.0
1990	8.6	18.6	128.7
1991	4.1	22.4	74.9
1992	2.6	33.8	65.1
1993	2.0	41.3	-

**Table 6 Houses started in the social sector and the sale of council houses to their tenants,
Great Britain 1980-93 (000s)**

Source: Department of Environment, *Housing and Construction Statistics*, cited in Malpass and Murie 1994

Year	Acceptances*	Applications
1978	53,100	n/a
1979	56,750	n/a
1980	62,920	n/a
1981	70,010	157,600
1982	74,800	157,500
1983	78,240	164,100
1984	83,190	170,190
1985	93,980	203,480
1986	102,980	219,300
1987	112,400	227,180
1988	117,550	242,470
1989	126,680	251,850
1990	145,800	301,610
1991	149,670	302,700
1992	148,250	313,556
1993	139,790	318,250
1994	127,290	297,900
1995	125,640	313,770

Table 7 Number of households accepted as homeless in England (1978-1995)

Source: Local Housing Statistics (HMSO). Homeless Statistics (D.o.E.), cited in Shelter 1997.

	High estimate	Low estimate
Total potential households	22,113,000	21,282,800
Vacancy rate at 4%	920,000	890,000
Total dwellings rqr'd in 2000	23,033,000	22,172,800
Dwelling stock	20,209,000	20,209,000
Dwellings currently fit	988,900	988,900
Allwncce for exstng 2nd homes	240,000	240,000
Existing stock contributing to needs in 2000	18,980,100	18,980,100
Net requirement of additional adequate dwellings	4,052,900	3,192,700

Table 8 Estimated housing need, England and Wales, 2001

Source: P.Niner (1989) *Housing Needs in the 1990s*, National Housing Forum, cited in Balchin 1995

	1975-76	1979-80	1985-86	1991-92
England and Wales				
Demolished:				
In clearance areas	41,772	23,747	5,279	1,221
Elsewhere	3,939	2,472	2,354	447
Closed	5,416	4,207	1,397	703
Total	51,127	30,426	9,030	2,371
Scotland				
Unfit	9,964	4,001	939	
Others	694	1,572	639	1,816
Total	10,658	5,573	1,618	1,816
Great Britain	61,785	35,999	10,648	4,187

Table 9 Houses demolished or closed, Great Britain, 1975-92

Source: Department of Environment, Housing and Construction Statistics, cited in Malpass and Murie 1994.

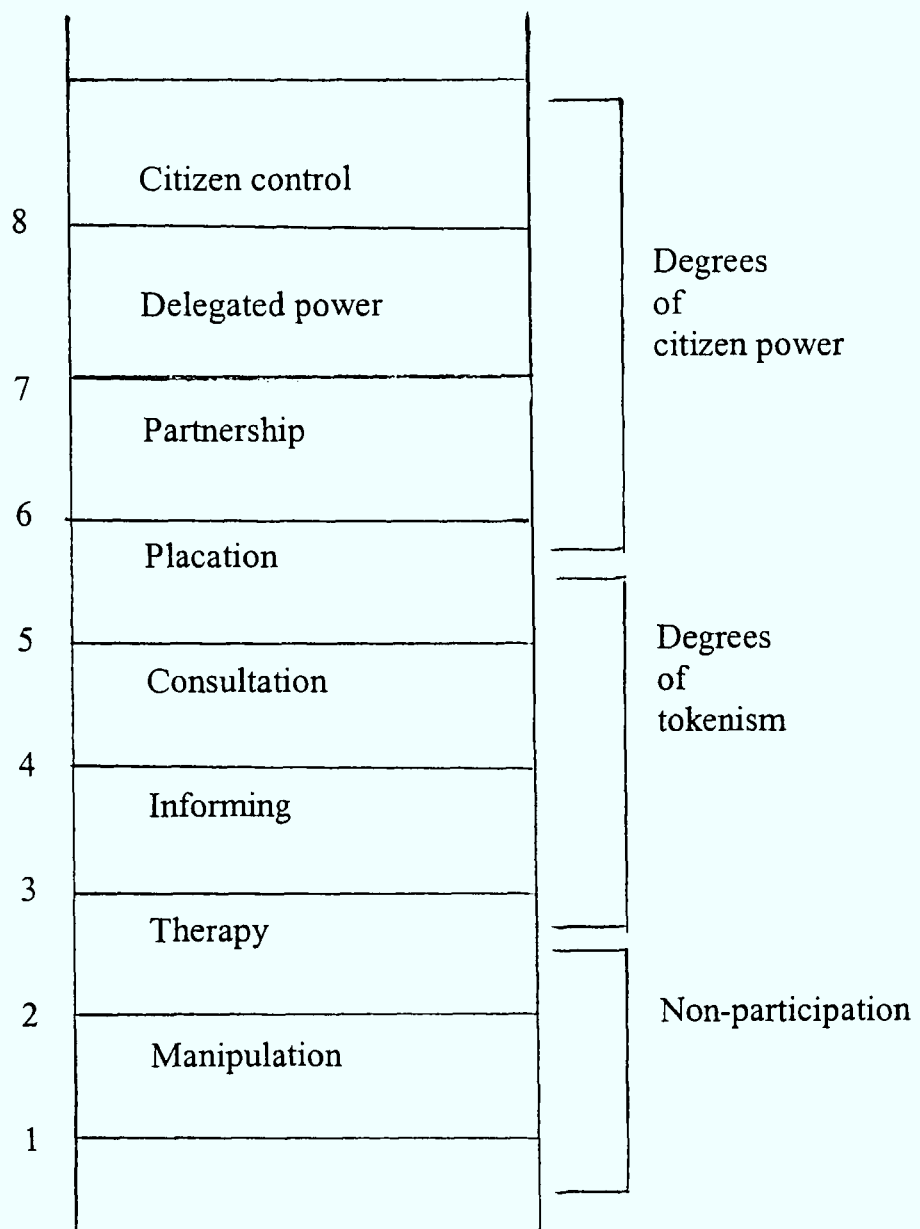


Figure 1 Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation

Source: Arnstein 1969.

Equalities Committee

At the meeting of the *Council* held on 22 May 1996, a decision was taken to create a single *Equalities Committee*. As a result, Lewisham Council now has one corporate Equalities Committee. This in turn will change the way in which Equality grants are administered and allocated. Until March 1996, the Equalities budget consisted of three separate grants budgets administered by three different committees namely the *Women's Committee*, the *Race Relations Committee* and the *Central Services Committee* (which had a budget for funding Pensioners, Disabilities and Lesbian and Gay Men's Groups). With the re-structuring there has also been a reduction in resources available to the new Committee.

One of the Black, male councillors at the Equalities Committee meeting pointed out that there has been a significant reduction in grant (£30,000), in staff (e.g. a women's officer post has been lost) whilst there has been an increase in workload. He then asked the following question to those present at the meeting: 'how this very ambitious workload will be achieved in this municipal year?'

The Policy and Equalities Unit in its report to the *Equalities Committee* meeting held on 3 July 1996 stated that 'given the limited funds available and the desire of the Committee to ensure that its funding makes an impact, it is recommended that priority be given to grant applications which seek to empower equalities groups and/or increase their participation in decision-making' (23).

The *Equalities Committee* is made up of 20 councillors of which 16 are males and four are females. There are seven ethnic minority male councillors out of 16 male councillors. There are two South Asian and one African Caribbean males, over 50 years old. All of the four male councillors under 50 are of African Caribbean descent. Of the four female councillors two are white under 50 years old and one Asian (The Mayor) and one African Caribbean female (both of them are under 50 years old). Of 20 councillors the total number of white members is 11. Both majority and minority ethnic women over 50 years old are absent in this Committee.

The total number of people present at the 3 July meeting was 30. It included the Committee members, observers (both as members of public and as invited guests). There were 10 officers sitting around a separate table. The Table 26 shows the breakdown of the participants in the meeting.

As can be seen from the Table, those present at the meeting were well mixed in terms of ethnicity, gender and age. Yet the disabled people were under represented. A woman sitting at the public seating area (who used to be the Chair of a working party) made the following comment: 'We have these meetings in the Committee Rooms 1 and 2 in order to provide space for the wheelchair users'. However, she maintained, these people were not present at the meeting. She pointed out that there were only officers and councillors present at the meeting and asked: 'where are the *people*?' (her emphasis) One of the white male councillors replied: 'we have to find ways of including the public more. People usually prefer participating in peer groups who understand their problems better, rather than these meetings where we look at reports and discuss. Why should they bother to come and listen to us?' The former chair responded as: 'They didn't listen to us we listened to *them*' (her emphasis).

The Leader of the Council pointed out that they were hoping to build a strategy to work jointly with the *Community Affairs Committee*. However, there was a mixed feeling about the newly formed *Equalities Committee*. Representative of a voluntary organisation complained that the Committee had been discussing for three and a half hours and this was because the agenda was far too long. When there were three separate committees, she claimed, the agendas were much shorter. In his response the Leader of the Council argued that this was the most exciting *Equalities Committee* meeting he had ever attended because *cross-referencing* of issues was possible.

than the females present while the majority of the Council officers present at the meeting were males. There was an Asian (Chinese) female and a white male local councillor present at this meeting.

At the Annual General Meeting on 21 May 1996, it was pointed out that Pepy's is the busiest and the second largest neighbourhood area in the Borough of Lewisham. It was pointed out that new Tenants Associations in the Neighbourhood were being set up. However, former members stop attending the Tenants Association meetings, because the Council does not do anything in relation to the issues raised at the Tenants Association meetings. Crusader Tenant Management Co-operative representative said: in that case, 'you should form a Housing Co-op'. However, she pointed out that they also had problems as a result of being situated in the middle of a Council-managed estate.

More communication of the Neighbourhood Committee with the tenants' representatives was called for. A Committee member argued that there has been no considerable improvement therefore year after year the same things were being discussed and reported. That is why, he claimed, people do not attend the Neighbourhood Committee meetings and the attendance is very low at the Annual General Meeting. There was a general discontent among the participants regarding the low level of attendance.

Four different people brought up the issue of racial harassment on different occasions throughout the meeting. A white male member of the Committee reported that there have been racial incidents, car crimes and vandalism at Silwood Estate. The Chair (who is an African Caribbean descent male) called for support to the Tenants Association and to stand behind them because they were the ones experiencing most this racial tension. The local Councillor present at the meeting (who is a young, white, male) also stressed that 'with the history of racism in Silwood' the Committee could support the Tenants Association. He proposed that it is put to a vote, which was carried unanimously.

Then the elections took place. The present Chair was re-elected as the Chair. A white, male was elected as the Vice-Chair. The officer who is a young white female (who first made teas and coffees for everyone and then took the minutes throughout the AGM) was also re-elected.

There were also the elections for representatives to the Lewisham Tenants' Council (LTC). It was difficult to get nominations. A white female over 50 years old was elected as the LTC representative on a temporary basis. Two people were elected to the Community Refurbishment Scheme (a male who was elected as the Vice-chair and a female as the LTC representative). A white male was elected to the Tenant Appeal Panel. And the Lewisham Tenants' Council representative was re-elected as the co-opted member representing the tenants on the Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) panel. As can be seen from the election results there were three males attending the meeting (excluding the councillor). All of them were elected as officers and representatives of the Neighbourhood Committee at various bodies. Although the majority of those attending the meeting were females, only two of them were elected (for three posts) as officers and representatives.

Woodpecker Neighbourhood Committee

The meeting of the Committee was held at the Woodpecker Community Centre, which is situated in the middle of Milton Court Estate.

As can be seen from the Table 32, this is quite a young committee. People kept coming in and leaving the meeting throughout the evening. Thus, although the total number of males was higher than females, this was not the case at any particular time of the meeting and that Black (African Caribbean descent) people in general and Black (African Caribbean descent) women in particular were the majority in most of the evening. Moreover, Black women appeared to be

quite assertive in expressing their views and participated actively in the discussions throughout the meeting.

Present	Total	White-o50	White-u50	B&EM-o50	B&EM-u50
Women	11	-	5*	-	6
Men	13	1*	6	1 (Asn)	6

* includes a person with visible disability

Table 32 Attendance at the Woodpecker Neighbourhood Committee on 7 August 1996.

Black and ethnic minority women over 50 years old were absent from this meeting. So were white women over 50 that are generally over represented in local decision-making bodies. There was one white, woman councillor and one disabled woman who were both under 50 years old. There were six male participants in the meeting. Three of them were Council officers (including two Managers: the Neighbourhood Manager and the Property Services Manager) and a police officer. One of the six African Caribbean descent Black women participants was a Council officer (Community Involvement Officer). There were six African Caribbean descent Black male participants in the meeting. Two of them were local councillors.

A young male, Black council officer attended the meeting as part of consultation process on *Race Equality Strategy of Lewisham Housing Department* and presented a report for discussion. One of the questions asked after his presentation was about the way the Council would consult the residents. The officer informed that *this* was in fact consultation that is *before* presenting the document to the Council, discussions were being held at the neighbourhood level. One of the Black councillors (Padmore) welcomed the paper and emphasised that it covered various aspects. 'My concern, however', he added, 'is about its implementation'. The Chair of the Committee (who was a white female) commenting on the implementation of the strategy told the meeting she found the document 'a bit woolly, wishy-washy'. She said: 'It is like 1970's thing to me, maybe I'm missing something but I can't see how and when we're going to do things, whereas we have to be saying: "we're going to do this by 1997, *this way*"'. Referring to the officer's suggestion that Tenant Associations are mainly white, 'it may be true for the Borough in general', she said, 'but three out of five TA's in this area are chaired by Black people. Deptford is doing well. We are doing well in comparison to other parts of the Borough'.

On the basis of the document presented, the Committee held a discussion on racial harassment. One of the local councillors (who was a young white woman) pointed out the complexity of the problem of racial harassment and argued that the perpetrators were in fact young kids who had no education or job prospective and live in deprived conditions. 'Unless we put things they can look forward in their lives, we can not tackle the problem'. A Black (African Caribbean descent) male representative rejected the suggestion. He argued that excrement was being thrown through the letterboxes of black tenants and claimed that education is not the answer to racial harassment. The Chair supported his view said: 'Yeah, we end up well educated racists'. Another representative (who was an African Caribbean descent Black woman) stated that Black people were much more deprived than these people. The discussion continued with a heated tone. Finally the Chair called for an end to the discussion.

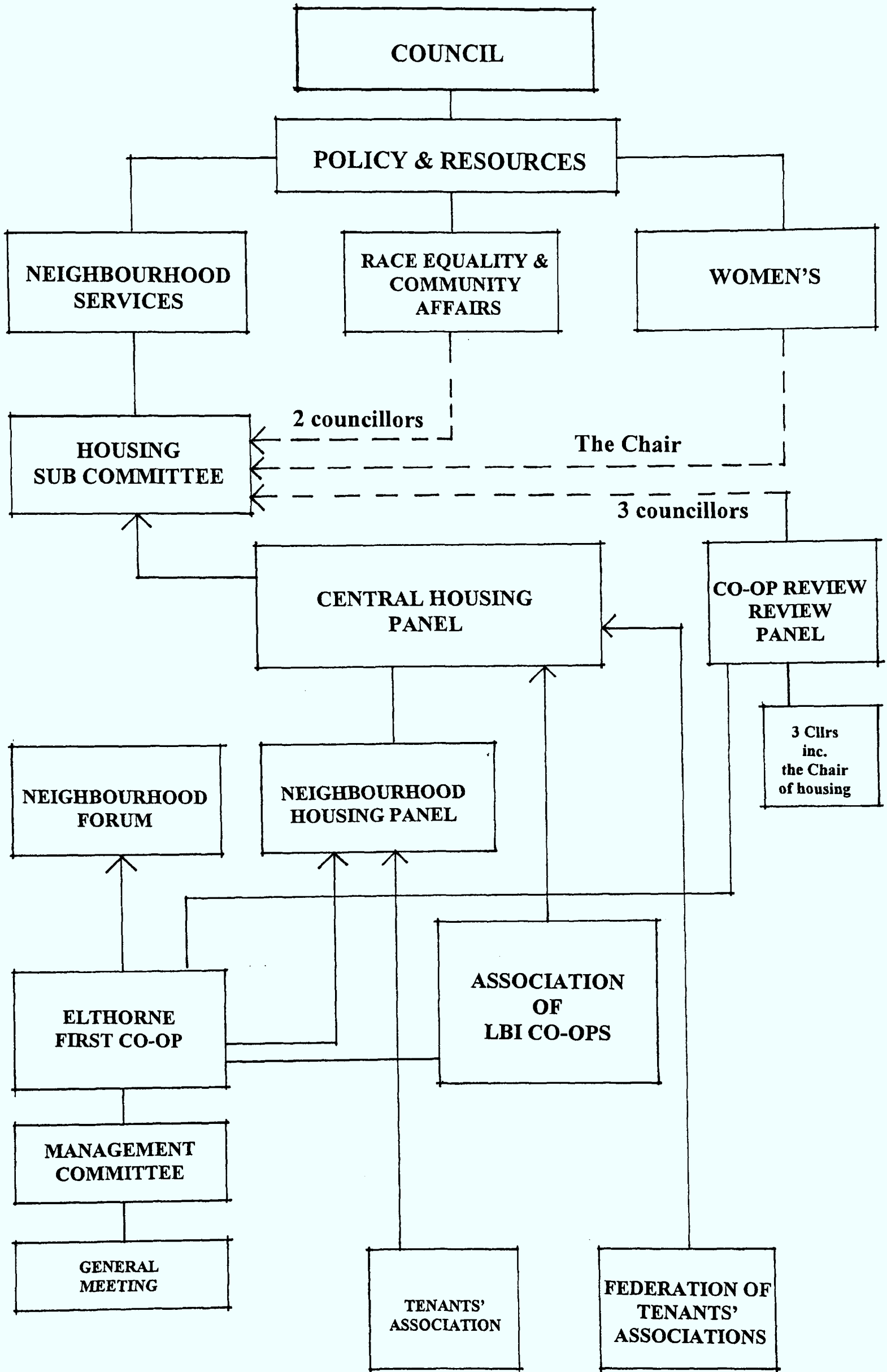


Figure 3 The relationship between the decentralised decision-making platforms and the central bodies in Islington



Appendix 4

EXAMPLES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

How long have you been living here?
Where did you live before?

Was it a council / co-op / housing association / private property?
How do you feel about living on this estate?

Do you go to the Tenants Association meetings regularly?
Is it always you who goes to these meetings, or does your partner go too?

What made you to get involved in the Tenants Association in the first place?
When did you start getting involved in the Tenants Association activities?

The estate is run by the Council, how do you feel about it?
Are you happy with the Council in terms of repairs?
Central heating/ compensation / parking space was a major issue discussed in the meeting, how do you feel about it?

How do you feel about being an ethnic minority on the estate?
Have you experienced/heard of any racial incidents on the estate?
What do you think about the racial composition of the estate?

As a woman do you feel safe in the neighbourhood?

Do you get support from the Council financially or politically as the Tenants Association?
Do you always get a representative at the Tenants Association meetings?
How do you feel about their attitude? Are they helpful?
Do councillors attend the Tenants Association meetings?
Do you also go to the Committee meetings at the Council?

(In relation to the Questionnaire)
How do you see your role in the management of your housing?
Do you feel you have power in making decisions?

How important do you see your role in the management process of your housing?

Are you involved in the Co-op management?

What does prevent you from getting involved?

What makes you to get involved in the Co-op management?
When did you start getting involved?

What do you feel about the Co-op management in general?

What do you think about the relationship between the Co-op and the Council?

I attended Co-op meetings and noticed that there aren't many Black and ethnic minority people involved. Is there any particular reason why they don't get involved?

There are Black and ethnic minority people on the Estate / Co-op but not in the meetings. Did you notice that as well?

What do you think about the Estate in general?
Are there any problems on the Estate/ in your block?
Do you have any arrangement in relation to the communal areas?

Do you know any of your neighbours?
Do you know the ethnic composition of you block?

Are you happy with the neighbourhood?
Do you feel safe in the neighbourhood?
Are there any racial incidents in the area?

Do you have any dealings with the Neighbourhood Office?

Are there any major problems of repairs in your estate?

Is there anything you would like to ask me?
Do you have any other comments?

How did you get involved in the self-build?
How long have been involved in the project?
Did you have any building skills when you joined the project?
Have you acquired any skills since you have joined the project?

Have you had any training on site?

How do you feel about the project?

Was your group involved in any major decisions?
How do you make your decisions as a group?

Do you feel that it was you as individuals or as a group who made the crucial decisions?
Do you feel if any of the decisions were imposed on you by other agencies that you had no control of?
Do you feel in control as an individual or as a group in the self-build process?
Did you get enough co-operation from the professionals or agencies you worked with?

How do you feel about the group?
Do you have any conflicts within the group?
What are the main divisions resulting in conflict within the group?

Do you have any contact with the wider estate/neighbours?
How do you feel about the neighbourhood?

What do you think about the idea of self-build?
How do you see the future of the group?

QUESTIONNAIRES TO TENANTS

Background information

Name

Address

Age

Sex

Ethnic Origin

What is your ethnic origin? (That is ancestral origin, not nationality or place of birth)
If it is just an individual household, please tick the appropriate box, otherwise please write in the number of people in the appropriate boxes.

African

Indian Asian

Pakistani Asian

Bangladeshi Asian

East African Asian

Chinese

Other Asian

Caribbean/West Indian

Greek Cypriot

Greek

Irish

Turkish Cypriot

Turkish

UK European

Other European

Any other ethnic group

(please specify).....

.....

.....

.....

Gender

How many females and how many males are in your household?

Females

Males

(Please tick if there is only one person in your household. Please specify if the number is more than one)

About the household: Size and type of the household

Please specify the number of people in your household

- One person household
- Two person household
- Three person household
- Four person household
- Five + person household

Do you have any children in your household? Yes..... No.....

If 'Yes' please specify the number

Are you single parent household? Yes..... No.....

Do you have any pensioners in your household? Yes..... No.....

If 'Yes' please specify the number

Are you pensioner only household? Yes..... No.....

Are you single pensioner? Yes..... No.....

About the accommodation

Name of the landlord

- L B Islington
- L B Lewisham
- NIHHA
- Circle 33
- Co-op
- Other (Please specify)

.....

Type of the tenancy

- temporary secure assured
- other.....

Size of the dwelling

Please specify the number of rooms in your household space

1&2 Rooms

3&4 Rooms

5&6 Rooms

7 + Rooms

Design and management process

How do you see your role in the design and management process?

0 = An observer

1 = A participant in minor decisions

2 = A participant in major decisions

3 = A participant in all minor and major decisions

Other

How important do you see your role in the design and management process of housing?

0 = Not at all important

1 = Slightly important

2 = Somewhat important

3 = Quite important

4 = Very important

5 = Extremely important

INTERVIEWS WITH TENANTS

Elthorne First Tenant Management Co-operative, Islington

Interview with Claire, The Treasurer

December 1995

I met her at the Co-op meeting and made an appointment to interview her at her home. As I arrived I realised that she had prepared biscuits and coffee. She told me about her four children and her husband who died twenty years ago. She also told me that she had visited Turkey several times and could speak some Turkish.

T-How long have you been living in here?

C-I think it's about ten years. Nine or ten years. Something like that.

T-You're not lease holder are you?

C-No, just a tenant.

T- Where did you live before?

C- I lived in a flat in Holloway near Highbury. But I had a lot of health problems, and my daughter who lives in St. John's Way. It was very inconvenient because she had to keep coming up to me and it was most difficult so she said 'oh mum if we could only get you near to us it would be wonderful'. Because she was living in St. John's Way on the Co-op. And she said 'you'll like it because she said you know you like people. And you like to sort of be in sort of a community where you help each other'. She said 'it'll be nice', she said 'I won't be inconvenience will I? I will be able to just see you every day and that'll be fine'. I thought about it. I didn't really think it was such a good idea to be too close to family but the more I thought about it the more it seemed the only decent thing to do really. So I applied with the Council and got on to the waiting list with the Co-op. And then I was, I had to wait quite a while. Then I was interviewed. And asked why I thought it would be a good idea to join a Co-op. And to me it obvious that it was just what I wanted to be able to sort of be part of the community, and help each other in some ways. And after waiting for a one of these pensioners' flats to come up I was lucky enough to get this.

T-Have you been living on your own since then?

C-Yes, but my daughter is just round the corner.

T-She still lives here. Is she a Co-op member?

C-Oh yes. Every morning I go round before she goes out to work, she works for a doctor as a receptionist, before she goes to work I go round to her pick up my *Guardian* paper. And have a cup of tea. And then she knows I'm alive you see she can go off to work (Laughing).

T- When did you start getting involved with the Co-op? You are a member of the Management Committee. You are the treasurer.

C- Oh yes, I suppose probably about a year after. After sort of I knew a few people. And then they were asking for volunteers to become a block rep. I started that way. And once you become a block rep then you are entitled to attend management meetings which I find very interesting. Then I became the treasurer. Not that I am brilliant at figures or anything like that but it's interesting you know to see where the money goes and why. Try to make economism.

T-So you are part of those people who make the decisions about the Co-op when

C-At the management meetings yes.

T- Between the Management Committee meetings there are the general meetings

C-And then there's the general meetings yes. That's where I have to read out a report. You probably heard me read out the treasurer's report. I don't think it interest people very much but it has to be done. But there are copies they can study if they wish.

T- Do you enjoy? Do you feel any issues are problematic?

C-There are always problems. You always find people who won't agree. I think they ... we have an expression I don't know if you've heard it, 'bloody minded'. They disagree because they want to disagree you know. But on the whole they're OK. They're very nice people on the whole. Plenty of

families. You know lots of children and those strangely enough though perhaps it isn't strange a lot of problems arise because of the children. Even amongst members will quarrel over the children.

T-What sort of problems are they? Noise?

C-Sometimes noise. But if two children quarrel then the parents quarrel. That sort of thing. But oh we get over those. On the whole I think it's a happy Co-op. I think so. We're very sorry Kevin is going though. He's been wonderful. He really has. As the manager there he's I don't know if we get anybody he's like again. Because he's really put himself out. When people have problems and some of them are really very difficult. I had one myself. He takes so much trouble. And spends so much time and gets it sorted out. If he can't do it himself he'll tell you where to go to somebody who will help. Splendid man.

T- It is sad yes. Why do you think people get involved or don't get involved with the Co-op?

C- Well people who do and there aren't many of them unfortunately. I should imagine they've got the same reasons as I have that we want to be involved because that is the idea of a Co-operative. But people who don't get your apathy they can't be bothered you know. You've been to one or two of our generals where we haven't been able to have meeting because there are not enough people. It hasn't been quored. I think that is terrible. I mean it's not asking a lot. Once an hour once every two months. I don't think it's asking a lot of people. They just can't be bothered you know. And I wish I knew we all wish that how you could interest people so that they will come. I don't know.

T-What I noticed that there are more women in Co-ops than men. Why do you think that is...

C-Well there aren't more, it's just that men don't come. But

T-Why do they not come?

C-This wouldn't happen in Turkey would it? It would be all men that would go. Of course, of course.

T-Yes, but also in other areas in this country. For instance when it comes to Council meetings it's mostly men.

Pause

T-In certain places decisions are taken mostly by men. But in Co-op it's mostly women.

C-I think that's true

T-I'd like to ask this to those women why their for instance husband don't come, or partners don't come.

C-Well it's like the Parliament you don't have not enough women MPs. It's the same thing isn't it? But that's a great pity but I suppose they can't be bothered I suppose. Oh we're not going to go and sit over there. It's a strange attitude.

T-Do men think for instance it's waste of time?

C-Probably, probably. But you see if they came if more people came I'm sure we'd do a lot more things you know.

T-Like what?

C-In the social way we'd get things going. But no one wants to know. And I don't quite know the answer to that. Yeah, I'd be interested to know if you talked to some of these women and ask them. I mean my son-in-law I don't think he's ever been to a meeting. My daughter yes. She was a vice-chairman at one time. But she hasn't got enough time for that now. But she comes to meetings even though she is a leaseholder now. But she still goes to meetings. Because she doesn't think an hour every couple of month is a lot to ask. It's ridicules I wish I knew the answer to it.

T-How is the relation between the Co-op and the Council? Do you have any problems with the Council?

C-I don't think they view us really as something good. I don't think they really like it.

They're not terribly helpful let's put it that way. Don't tell them I said so (Laughing).

T-This is all confidential.

C-They're not helpful. Not helpful at all. Because they pay us so much to manage the properties. People who live on a Co-op are very much better off because I don't mean money wise. Anything wants doing the Council notifies goodness knows how long you wait for something done. But with us if it is something that Tony can do, he'll do it on the same day and quickly you know. Or if not he'll get someone who will and whereas you ask people living on the Council estates they have

great difficulty. Wait up to six months sometimes to get things done. You see that's something. That's our management. That's how we do this. That's why we need the money to sort of get, we've got plumber, we've got a man who does electrics and things like this you know. So I think that is one of the assets of the Co-op that they get repairs and things done quickly.

T- You said you were the representative of your block. Do you have meetings as a block?

C-We don't actually. But what it means if they have problems then they can ask me and then I can sort it out at the office. It doesn't happen very often and take leaflets round when there's a meeting and put them in the doors that sort of thing. But they all know that if they have a problem and they can't get to the office themselves then I can sort it for them. And there's one for each block you see.

T-Does the block chose the person to represent them?

C-They don't actually. There again they're asked to sort of asked offer their services or to be a block rep nobody wants to know. They won't be bothered again. I don't know.

T-Are there any problems between the residents of the Co-op?

C-I can't think of anything at the moment. I think now and again may be somebody will complain about noise but that's sorted out quickly enough. I don't think there's anything outstanding. Not really. Somebody's dog perhaps barks too much. I think they mostly get on all right.

T-Yeah I could see from the meeting people seem to be getting on all right.

C-Oh yes. But you see you don't see many do you? I mean we've got a hundred and thirty five properties. That doesn't mean a 135 people that means probably about with all the children three or four hundred. But how many turn up at those meeting? See, we have to have thirty, thirty-two, thirty-three I think it is for a quored.

T-Also I didn't see many black and ethnic minority people at those meetings. Do they not get involved with the Co-op?

C-We've got quite a few. You know they're fine one or two are block reps I think. I think so. ... Sybil on the corner. On the whole they're not particularly interested which I think is a pity. We haven't got one on the management and I would like to see that but you can't force people. It's a shame. They like to sort of. You see the more you mix and integrate I'm sure that's better. I think it's a great pity to sort of be in your own little ghetto. Don't you?

T-Of course. Do they never express why they don't get involved? There's no one they express those...

C-I mean they have complaints or things they just go straight to the office. They're very quick to do that but if they sort of would come to offer themselves to management they could sort those things out and you know give us the benefit of their ... I don't know. The children all seem to get on well. Well children are children aren't they? They don't see colour do they? Thank goodness. Some do but I'm sure that's the parents. Nasty racialism.

T-Have you had any racial incidents, problems on the Co-op properties?

C-There's been the odd thing. But it has been dealt with pretty sharply. Even had a little bit of ourselves because I'm Jewish. And not me but my daughter, woman suddenly took a dislike to her and started chalking up swastikas and things wanted to know why she hadn't been put into the oven you know that sort of things. So that had to be dealt with. But finished all finished now. There are one or two people I know who are racist but they've been warned they can think what they like but you can't stop people thinking but they must not talk about. Because if they talk about it that's punishable now. That's a crime.

T-How did they deal with that harassment your daughter experienced?

C-The woman moved (laughing).

T-Was she asked to move by the Co-op?

C-No I think it was the incident happened when she was in the process of moving. Oh she was a dreadful person really. There you are. You can only put it down to ignorance can't you?

T-Well but that ignorance also harm people so it has to be dealt...

C-My husband wasn't. He wasn't Jewish. So we're a multi you know.

T-Sometimes you don't describe yourself by certain identity

C-No

T-But others impose on you ...

C-That's right... *Evet* (Yes - TU). (laughter)

T-You speak Turkish. Lovely. Did you learn it in Turkey?

C-A little bit, not much. I know, '*cok guzel*' (very nice/beautiful -TU).

T-*Cok guzel*. Oh you speak very well. Your pronunciation is very good.

C-*Tesekkurler ederim* (thank you -TU).

T-*Bir sey degil* (not at all)(laughter). You don't have any Turkish-speaking tenant on the estate. Or there's I think a family.

C-They're Kurds aren't they. Yeah, they're Kurds. Little bit different.

T-You are a single woman, how do you feel as a woman in the neighbourhood? Do you feel safe for instance?

C- I wouldn't go out at night on my own. No. But then I don't, I think that applies anywhere I don't think it makes a lot of difference. They say it is particularly bad but you hear about in other areas too. So I really don't think this is any worse than anywhere else. But I wouldn't go out at night on my own. It's true.

T-This is a one-bedroom flat. Do you feel safe within your flat?

C-Yes. I wouldn't like to live on the ground floor. I think that sort of gives me a good feeling being one up.

T-What is the arrangement with the maintenance of the communal areas?

C-Well that is a little bit of a bad here because not everybody takes their share you see. But we've argued and argued. And now gentleman who is opposite me, he is a single gentleman. He and I do it every other week. We're so tired of asking. It doesn't take ten minutes to do. And rather than having an argument we do this ourselves. We don't go upstairs. Because we feel that there are two young women up there and they can manage the upstairs themselves. But we do our bit down the stairs and the lobby. But I think we have to sort something out there and at the office, she seems to think that we should get in somebody to do it professionally then there wouldn't be any more arguments. Because that is something I believe in some of the block that there are arguments about this. People don't take their share.

T-Within this block there are one-bedroom flats downstairs and two-bedroom upstairs.

C-All these along here these six blocks here are all one-bedroom flats. So there are six one-bedroom flats.

T-How about the communal areas outside, are you happy with the maintenance?

C-Oh Tony he's excellent our caretaker. He really is. He's splendid. Little jewel he is. Very nice little man and he works hard. And he keeps it nice.

T-How do you feel about the parking space and garages?

C-I don't think there's any problem. There's always plenty of parking spaces out in Duncombe Road for instance, garages OK. And we have new gates put up there. So, to save people getting in.

T-Are you happy about the estate on the whole?

C-Yes, I think so. I've been happy living here anyway. I've got to know quite a few people. And you don't feel alone somehow. You never feel alone. When you're on your own you don't feel alone. I feel there's people around. I like that, I like the people, when sometimes the little girl upstairs, she's only two, she'll run across the flat, that's nice (laughter). Yeah.

T-Do you meet with your neighbours?

C-Sometimes I go into Fiona upstairs who's got the little girl. She'll ask me if have a coffee. Play with the little Daisy. But obviously some people don't want to know. They want to keep themselves to them. That's fine just say hello you know. Pass your way.

T-Do you have socials as a Co-op?

C-We haven't had some little while. We use to have the odd dance. And one or two outings. We went to a pantomime once and a couple of years ago we had an outing to Brighton you know. It was nice. And the boys, and girls I think, they've got a football team. They're in the league, which is nice.

T-Is there anything you want to ask me.

C-I think we said it all don't you? I wish I could think of something. I think my memory isn't what it used to be. Thing happened during the War which is fifty years ago are clear to... I can remember

everything happened there. But things that happened yesterday is gone. Why can you remember way back? When I was five and six.

T-I don't know if had the answer I'd do something with my memory.

C-There you are. This June I shall have my three quarters of a century. I'll be seventy five this June

T-You must be celebrating it then.

C-No.

T-I think you should. Well, thank you very much.

END.

Greenstreet Housing Co-operative, Lewisham
Interview with Valerie, Self-builder
April 1996

The interview took place in the site office that was being used by the self-builders to rest, discuss issues and have meetings.

V-I'm a self-builder and I've involved I think a bout a year and a half now. Just over a year and a half.

T-Where do you live?

V-Well ... I'm in the process of becoming homeless at the moment. I'm an illegal council tenant at the moment. So, it's someone else's council flat I'm leaving, and I still haven't got a place legal ... I'm just trying to hold out until the house is built.

T-How do you feel about the self-building idea?

V-Oh, I think it's a wonderful idea. I ... do feel very positive about it. But I also think there are a lot of problems with it, or my experience has been that from the scheme... But I think the whole thing could be improved. There needs to be better support for self-build groups so that they get the proper support they need whether that's financial or whatever. But also that things get passed on that you're not going to be re-inventing the wheel! Because it feels that every self-builder group is actually quite isolated and struggling with problems on its own... The reasons I think it is a good idea are that you take control over your housing situation instead of waiting to be housed and may be never being housed, especially if you're a single person you're a very very low priority. So, you're able to take control and actively do something about sorting out your own housing problem. You're working with other people to do that. You have a lot of say in design. And that ultimately you're building a community as well which I think those we lack at the moment, sense of community and neighbours knowing each other. You're building something, I could live here for the rest of my lifetime and my children can grow here. May not as well but you have that possibility. Even though you don't necessarily have the money for a mortgage. So, I do think it's very exciting idea really.

T-Did you have any building skills before coming on to the project?

V-No, not in terms of house building. I've built on... structures on playgrounds for children....

T-Was it part of your job?

V-It was then

T-What did you do?

V-I was a play worker. I do housing research now. With Sophie, we've got a business together.

T-Were the skills you've already had useful or were they just irrelevant?

V-The thing is, it's not just building skill that you require and I do think that anyone with an interest can learn those things and pick things up. So, ...it was useful that I had some idea of tools and I used drills before and saws and the stuff. But I think there's other skills that you need to bring to it. And actually skills that more important to it are things like working with other people. And the attitude to learn. And then there's other things like organisation, or meeting skills or administration and fundraising... I do think that what I knew was useful and I've learned a lot.

T-Have you had any training?

...

V-Very little. Little bits of training from other people here ... like Nandita the site manager showed me how to use a machine the other day which I'd never used. So, a little bits like that but not kind of official training.

T-But ...you're organising training?

V-That was because we've got a grant for training and who was organising that training left so I took that on. And... again because we're more than just builders, we are a group of people and it does matter how we function as a group together, and because we have a massive amount of responsibility whether that's financial or employing people or health and safety ... it's necessary for us to have other skills. So, there are ... four courses that I'm doing. One's actually already gone, that

was computer training. Anyone who wanted to go on that did... And part of the idea of us being a co-op and building together and being housed together is that everyone can take a role and ... have a part to play. So, you need proper access to everything. The other training that I've set up is on co-op development and it's divided into various things; They [the workshops] all come under co-op development. The main thing I gathered was needed was kind of team building. It was looking at how we work as a group. And then Sally who's doing the workshops suggested various other things which seemed we really needed them like conflict resolution. Problem comes up in the co-op especially if it's outside of building... If something personal is affecting the building, ... it can be very difficult to resolve. So, we actually need to set up structures that are already in place to deal with problems. Because obviously there are especially when you're dealing with 15 very different people. And the last two bits of that are 'decision-making and meeting skills'... I think our meetings are actually quite good now but we have newer members who might feel less confident at meetings and some people just do. People have their strengths and weaknesses, don't they? And then after two things I need to set up are 'housing maintenance' and 'finances, budgeting and rents'. But both things are for when we are a housing co-op and no longer a building co-op. Because we will be doing maintenance and you need to have system so that ... may be once a year you check all the roofs or whatever it is. So, that's new things that we have, keep learning I suppose.

T-About the compositions of the group, especially ethnic and gender, how do you feel about it?

V-About the mix. When I first came I remember feeling there weren't enough women fully participating in the building. I don't feel that now. So, I think there's a good gender mix and there's a good age mix there as well. There's quite a range of ages. In terms of ethnic mix, it could be more mixed. Obviously there are people with various different ethnic backgrounds but I think there are reasons for that. One is the existence of Fusions with their two sites who are black self-build co-op. So, obviously they've attracted people that might have wanted to build here otherwise, maybe... Yeah, for me obviously the ideal is to live in a mixed environment as possible...

T-How do you feel about the wider neighbourhood, environment?

A-Around here?

T-Yeah.

V-... I actually grew up around here... Just other side of the Hill. Actually this area, now it's a conservation area, is really changed since I grew up... The houses have gone up in price and it's become ...a bit smarter and a bit wealthier... I think it's really mixed area actually. New Cross and Deptford and Brockley.

T-How do they see the site and the group?

V-It's funny...when I first came I gathered that there were problems with a few neighbours. So, one of the things I did was I did a letter, and I went round knocking on all the doors. If someone was there I'd leave the letter and talk to them and if there weren't I'd just drop off the letter. It was saying things like; explaining what we were doing, explaining that we were going to be a bit noisy because we were doing some ground works done, heavy machinery and just saying 'here's our phone number and if you ever want to talk to us or have a problem or whatever, ... please do'. And I was actually surprised when I went round with the response because I think there are about two neighbours virtually across the road who were a bit antier. But most people were really, really nice. And very interested and would say 'I'll keep an eye on site' or 'how is it going?' ... There's a one bloke who said 'If you ever need a hand, my car is there come and knock'. So, it actually was more positive than I'd expected... I think the attitude is from anyone that knows the site, whether they drive pass or live locally is; 'God it's taking a long time!' Maybe that's quite annoying to people in a way. That it's taking so long but then it is to us as well.

T-As a single woman do you feel secure in this neighbourhood?

V-I think I'll feel very very secure here... As a single woman in London, you're not safe basically. I've got a bycles and a van and ... I don't really travel around on my own very much on foot...public transport.

T-Do you feel you are in control and you have the power to make decisions as an individual as well as a group?

V-Yes. It's actually ... quite difficult sometimes when I speak to people like when I was speaking to the woman I was setting up the training with, I could say, 'this is my impression of things, or this is what a few people have said to me'. But it is difficult when you are talking to someone or writing on behalf of the co-op. It's more difficult because you have to be very careful you try and represent people, or you try and get everyone's views... So, there is quite a responsibility like that. And I wouldn't be prepared to make a decision on my own if it was going to affect everyone, if it was major really. Even in setting up a day of training. I wouldn't just say 'this is the training day' without consulting people. Yeah, I do feel that we do have a lot of power in that way and control and for me that's quite important. But I also feel that we're really struggling here and working hard for nothing and bringing massive amount of time and energy and commitment and grief and everything into it. And I do not feel that we have enough support from the various organisations that we're involved with.

T-Like? Which organisations are they?

V-Well, there's the architects, there's the CHISEL who are the development agency and SLFHA which the Housing Association that we ultimately come under.

T-Do you think this self-build idea should carry on or should stop or should carry on with amendments?

V-I definitely think it should carry on and it should get a lot more funding than it does at present. If we get a Labour government, what I understand is that they intend to invest in public housing and self-build is part of that. Because I do think that people are prepared and willing to do this. Then there should be the money to do it. But I also think, ... each scheme, I know about different schemes from different people or from television or reading about them, talking to people, and they are all very different. There is one in Peckham that was set up for young single and homeless people and it involved training. And it was done in 18 months... It's done for different reasons and in a different way. So, it think each self-build has it's own individuality which is the sum total of what those people are coming together to do, what their attitudes are. Yeah, I think it needs to improve as well. There are innate problems with it like if you're going to spend 2 years building, how do you support yourself or you family during that time? And I think that should be looked at. And the way that people have... saw self-build is that the labour element of it is free. Well it is because it's voluntary given but it's not free as such in a way... May be people should be given a low wage or something to support them doing that. If you look at what we're building, yes, this is initially for ourselves but it's public housing at the end of the day as well, we do not own that.

T-Do you feel empowered by the project or disempowered?

V-Empowered but also as I said I do get very frustrated with various organisations we deal with. I feel that there's a lot of egos, people are more in to their jobs and a lot of politics...just a lot of things going on that aren't about our best interest. ... I hope there's better support and that the system of doing this improves. So it doesn't have to be such a struggle for other people that has been everyone here to do that. Because I do think ... there are a lot of positive things about it.

T-You have this specific issue that someone will be coming and you will be sharing your house with. How do you feel about that?

V-I will have some say and some choice about that. The person will have to be in housing need and accepted by the co-op and go through that process. If it's someone that I don't think I can live with I won't do that. It's too important to me.

T-So, you do have a say as an individual as well as the group.

V-Yeah.

T-How do you feel about the group since you'll be living together?

V-I don't like him out there (Pointing to a self-builder, laughs) Well, obviously I feel good about it otherwise I wouldn't be doing it. I feel that we are really a kind of mixed and diverse group of people in lots of ways; personality, attitude, background. I feel that that's the good thing in itself.

T-Do you have any other comments to make, or any questions to ask?

V-No.

T-Thank you very much.

END

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