Local Development Issues on the Urban Periphery: Tallaght from the Bottom-Up

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Introduction

The aim of this paper is to contribute to the understanding of aspects of urban social change by orientating the analysis around a grassroots-level focus. Specifically, bottom-up experiences of and responses to some of the contradictions of Dublin's new-town experiment are explored, highlighting both critical perspectives on the limits of this experiment in peripheral urban expansion and efforts to find alternative, independent solutions through bottom-up development practices. The paper first provides some contextual material in an overview of a larger research programme from which the discussion draws. It then examines some community perspectives on the problems of new-town planning as it was implemented in Tallaght on the western periphery of Dublin, drawing on qualitative analysis of interview data in order to gain some insight from the level of everyday life. The final section focuses on efforts to explore and implement alternatives through autonomous local development initiatives of various kinds,

Context

The findings presented here are obtained from a recently completed examination of grassroots action and community organisation in Dublin, carried out between 1997 and 2000, which sought to assess the place and meaning of such bottom-up praxis in the context of uneven development in the urban system. The research problems that prompted this work came into view initially in a particular context, which is of some interest in itself, as this was instrumental in the way that the research programme and methodology were subsequently constructed. In the course of some earlier work on a development strategy for the new town of Tallaght in Dublin (Drudy and Punch, 1997), two critical points quickly became clear. First, the new town was characterised by deep social divisions and spatial segregation. This meant that, over twenty years since development commenced, even the most basic local economy had not proved viable in a number of areas. As a consequence, communities were struggling with considerable deprivation. Furthermore, isolation and the absence of basic social or community services and infrastructure exacerbated the experience of poverty. Secondly, in the context of such stark inequality, a number of very active community organisations and 'social-economy' initiatives had sprung up. That such bottom-up praxis had emerged as an unplanned consequence of the production of urban space suggested that the experiences of those involved deserved attention, providing both an interesting alternative grassroots perspective on the contradictions of the new town policies and an emergent force for local development. Indeed, it seemed true to say that this highlighted serious lacunae in Irish urban studies, which attended to the top-down or broadly descriptive aspects of urban change (economic trends, renewal, new town development, planning and so on) but said little about

how these processes were experienced, understood and at some points resisted at grassroots level.

In sum, the research question or objective was to assess the place and meaning of grassroots action in the context of uneven urban development. This focus built on earlier work in Tallaght, which suggested that a number of communities were largely surplus to the requirements of capital, a plight manifest in marked social divisions and the physical geography of segregation. In this vacuum, there was the fledgling emergence of some kind of alternative where, through community development and the social economy, market relations did not prevail.

Methodological Note

The empirical research was targeted geographically and socially: it focused primarily on grassroots organisation within working-class communities in the new town of Tallaght on the edge of Dublin. As part of a wider research programme which also encompassed the city centre, the main survey work involved a series of in-depth semi-structured interviews with key activists and local leaders involved in grassroots organisations of various forms: community associations, alliances of community groups and local development initiatives. A total of 62 interviews were conducted, of which 17 related specifically to organisations in Tallaght. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis, which was carried out using standard qualitative methods (coding, constructing typologies). This work was largely 'interviewee-driven', but the main topics covered included critical local issues, history, philosophy and aims of the organisation, actions taken, effects, coalitions, conflicts, etc. This fieldwork resulted in a rich database comprising a wealth of human experiences, understandings, aspirations, practices, victories and failures. The dataset provides a record of the reality of the uneven development of the urban system in recent decades and of a tremendous expending of energy and effort in a collective desire to attain something beyond the immediate demands and pressures of the contemporary urban social system. References to specific interviews are coded (I-1, etc.) in order to preserve anonymity.

Tallaght New Town: Top-Down Processes, Bottom-up Perspectives

> The plans are the deception. The ugliest place ever built looked great, I saw it, on the planning folder. All that clever shading, to soften the brutal cost-effective frontages, and the neatly placed tree, you can almost hear the bird song...Urban arcadia, on paper. In fact a slum of the mind (Williams, 1979, 74)

> These plans promised, in the long term, a town described then as 'the Garden City of Europe'. Ten years ago *(1978)*, signs were erected on the approaches from the Greenhills and Templeogue roads with the words 'Welcome to Tallaght New Town'. Today, nearly twenty-five years on, the only qualification Tallaght has to being a town is its population of 70,000 people. Planning lost its way in Tallaght a long time ago (Tallaght Welfare Society, 1988, 1).

The Irish experience with new town planning was a top-down exercise in urban restructuring on a grand scale, involving the production of residential space in three large tracts on the periphery of Dublin. This new-town programme was essentially a conception of the late 1960s, being first mooted in the Myles Wright plan (1967) and subsequently effected through the Dublin County Development plan (1972), though development continues to date. The engagement with this far-reaching policy derived from the prevailing conditions of economic buoyancy and population growth and a reinvigorated planning system. Despite these generally

favourable conditions, the creation proved ponderous and erratic, with major phases of construction dating from the 1970s and early 1980s, and there were many limits and contradictions within the process as it unfolded. It can also be said that the project was underpinned by anti-city policies, which favoured low-density suburban-style expansion, while effectively undermining the residential function of the inner city. The main details of planning and development trends have been well recorded elsewhere (see, for example, Foley, 1983; Bannon and Ward, 1988; Ronayne and Duggan, 1990; Drudy and Punch, 1997; MacLaran and Punch, 2002). Instead, this section focuses primarily on bottom-up perspectives and experiences in an effort to offer some understanding of the social meaning of new-town development from the point of view of the residents. In the main, the detail is drawn from the interviews.

Overview of Development

Despite the direct influence of ideas drawn from British planning praxis, the actual process engaged in was marked by a number of critical departures from the new-town development model practiced in Britain. These can be summarised briefly. In particular, there was to be no provision of dedicated development corporations and planning administration long remained within the control of the local authority, which was never provided with enhanced powers to ensure their successful completion. Instead, progress relied almost totally upon the zoning powers of land-use planning to designate agricultural land for new functions (residential, industrial, open space, mixed use, etc.) and facilitate private-sector development interests. Progress also involved the formidable task of trying to secure the cooperation and coordination of plans and policies of a disparate range of institutional actors, from various state agencies to private capital. The creation of the towns' industrial base, of great importance if they were ever to attain any degree of autonomous development, was compromised from the beginning, as the focus of the state's Industrial Development Authority was directed by other regional priorities of the period. As for the local authority, its only direct actions were to provide basic infrastructures and implement large-scale public-housing projects. This policy coincided with a concerted and sustained effort to de-tenant and decentralise older working-class housing areas in the inner city.

The most important difference between the Irish and British new town experiments related to the vexed question of betterment. The key point here is the protection in the Irish Constitution of the right to profit from the ownership of private property. The political unwillingness to challenge this position or to implement the recommendations of Justice Kenny's report (1973) ensured that compensation for compulsory acquisition of land would have to be made at full development value. Unlike the Mark I UK new towns, there was no provision to control land prices in order to capture the returns from socially-created development through planned urban expansion for the community at large.

Given that the state's primary direct action involved rezoning agricultural land for development, while relying on private sector investment, the most dramatic immediate effect was to make vast fortunes for a number of 'fortunately' placed landowners. There followed a scramble for land between large-scale housing developers, and land dealing became a significant and profitable pursuit, while the phasing of development was impossible to control as it depended primarily on conditions prevailing within the private market. The greater proportion of the residential development in Tallaght was undertaken by private-sector developers building for owner-occupation, accounting for over 60 per cent of the total by

1985 (Planning Department, Dublin County Council, 1987). Equally, however, non-market provision of housing by both Dublin Corporation and Dublin County Council was notable above all for a great lack of imagination and scant evidence of any interest in urban design. This social housing was largely confined to large estates on the west of the new town (Killinarden, Jobstown and Fettercairn).

In this piecemeal manner, development proceeded rapidly, but it was 'housing-led' with scant provision of social or urban facilities other than the most basic infrastructures. The development followed the classic clean-sweep approach, with existing natural features (trees, hedges, etc.) removed to maximise economy and profitability, while the design and layout of housing and estates showed little variation. Planning permission for all development included a minimum requirement of 10 per cent open space. This generally was 'the bit left over' by the builder after houses and roads were constructed, and in many cases the open-space provision long retained the woebegone appearance of an abandoned building site, never being developed as parkland or amenity. Furthermore, development density was low, making car ownership an imperative to reach even basic amenities. The resultant built environment, widely denigrated with some justification as a prairie landscape, is profoundly monotonous and visual testimony to profitability criteria (Bannon and Ward, 1988; Tallaght Welfare Society, 1988; Ronayne and Duggan, 1990; Drudy and Punch, 1997). In this fashion, the population of Tallaght, a village of a mere 700 persons in the mid-1950s, grew rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s, and it currently stands at over 70,000 people.

Community Perspectives: Displacement and Isolation
Historically, the first difficulty created through new-town development relates not to Tallaght itself, but to the older inner-city and inner-suburban social-housing areas, from where many of the new residents were relocated. The immediate local effect was the displacement of people from long-established working-class communities and, by implication, the rupturing of their complex informal networks of support. This was a very real loss both for those who relocated to the periphery and for the places they were leaving behind. Lee and Murie (1999, 635-6) highlight the critical importance to 'functioning communities' of factors like 'solidarity, social cohesion and order', which 'derive from family links within estates; the ability of families to support themselves between and across generations; and from supportive and reciprocal relationships between people, who have been born and brought up in the same neighbourhoods, attended the same schools and perhaps were employed in similar parts of the economy'. Such stability in the locale was disrupted by the twin blows of economic and urban restructuring imposed from outside/above, the former leading to the loss of traditional work places, the latter leading to the displacement of people. In Dublin, these experiences produced varying degrees of practical consciousness regarding the operation of capital and, usually more clearly, the local state in the production of urban space. The contradictions of strategies that hastened urban decline (and underpinned the new-town construction process) were keenly felt in north-east inner city communities:

> ...around the 1970s, there was a lot of speculators would have moved in and seen this was prime land and they had great visions for it. But in the meantime all the flat complexes in around Sheriff Street and around the inner city, the likes of Sean MacDermot Street, Corporation Street and Foley Street were being allowed to run down. They were changing times. The plan that the Corporation had for them then was to shift these people, the community, out of the area. Put them out in the suburbs where there was no infrastructure in place (I-14).

Accordingly, for many tenants of the local authority, the most immediate meaning of new-town planning was the disruption of older community networks and the dislocation and sense of isolation that followed resettlement to the periphery.

> I came from Ballyfermot. A lot of people would have moved from Ballyfermot and Drimnagh area, Crumlin area. A lot would have moved out from Ballymun in the early days…People did generally find it very disorientating. There was a huge fear of having to move out to an area that was perceived to be in the sticks as some termed it or up in the mountains. Particularly for anyone coming out from say the northside of the city, although even people in Crumlin or the inner city experienced problems of isolation. I suppose being away from the family and that and the supports that were there (I-57).

The isolating and atomising peripheral urban environment contrasted with familiar dense and close-knit inner-city neighbourhoods:

> Some of them stuck their ground, maybe got flats in the flat complexes like Mountainview Court or St. Judes' Gardens or St. Josephs' Mansions. Others just saw - this is it and ended up going to the housing estates, where they were absolutely broken-hearted because - gone were the neighbours that they had. You see, the inner city is a close-knit community. Everybody knows everybody. But once you went out to the housing estates, it was a shut hall door…they were just lost (I-14).

Although many would have preferred to remain in the inner city or inner suburbs, a paternalistic allocation policy meant that few were willing to risk refusing the move:

> You're always told if you turn it down: you're the one that's looking for housing, you're in need of housing, we're offering you a house, and the threat always was, we'll put you down to the end of the list. So most people jumped at that and ended up going some place that they didn't really want (I-57).

The sense of isolation was exacerbated because the residential estates were low density and designed for car ownership rather than public transport: "The transport system would not have been great. The nearest real shopping area would have been Kilnamanagh shopping centre, and there was no regular bus service to that…Very few would have had their own private transport…It took a hell of a long time for people to settle. People moved back to Ballymun, couldn't stick it because of the bad transport system" (I-57). In this way new urban problems were imposed on the new communities, who had to contend with isolation as well as other problems of exclusion:

> People were being rehoused from inner city areas or other public housing estates, so there was a lot of social exclusion anyway. But added to that was the fact that they were cut off from extended families and that. I know Tallaght doesn't seem very far out now, but at the time it was. There were no transport links, say, between here and Ballyfermot, where a lot of people came from, for years, and even now it's a very rudimentary sort of service. So there was that sort of - people were suddenly landed out in these areas, economically deprived and every other way deprived (I-48.)

Community Perspectives: Urban Social Inequality
Many of the new-town settlers faced multiple deprivations, finding themselves on the losing end of a range of urban social inequalities. The main periods of construction coincided with increasing economic problems for working-class communities, a result in large part of capital

restructuring processes. The economic base in Tallaght remained for long under-developed, and although some industrial investment was attracted in the 1970s, the problems that affected the city in general also had an impact, with manufacturing declining by 27 per cent between 1976 and 1996 (Drudy and Punch, 1997.) The development of the town's economic base therefore proceeded slowly, with frequent set-backs caused by industrial closures, which meant that sufficient job opportunities failed to materialise locally. A related economic problem was that in many parts of the new town, particularly the large western public-housing estates, the local economy remained weak for many years. Incomes were almost uniformly low, with a substantial proportion of the local labour force out of work for long periods, while there was also a high proportion of lone-parent households dependent on social welfare. For example, communities in west Tallaght experienced unemployment rates of over 50 per cent in the 1980s and 1990s, while one-third of households consisted of lone-parent families. There were also low levels of educational attainment, while the class structure showed an over-representation of those defined as semi-skilled or unskilled (Drudy and Punch, 1999.)

However, many people felt from everyday confrontations with the state that there was little establishment understanding or sympathy for the realities of unemployment or living in poverty generally. One symptom of such insensitivity related to eviction policies for non-payment of rent. The attitude at local government level was that:

> ...people should be happy if we give them a roof over their heads. And I heard officials actually making those types of comments, years back. If someone had difficulty paying their rent for example. Where people would try and say, look, I'm on the dole, this is all my income is, this is the reason I am in this difficulty. I am finding it hard to pay for my rent, to pay for the kids' clothes and books for school, to purchase the necessaries - what they saw they needed in order to survive, to live. They would be told well hang on, the first thing should be the roof over your heads - this comment has been made by officials in rent sections in the Corporation. We all came across this to some degree, to some extent. (I-57).

The lack of a vibrant local economy also meant that most communities were provided with few commercial services. In some cases, even where the local population numbered several thousand, there was no local shop. The situation was described as "impossible, there was nothing out here. The nearest supermarket was the village. That's where you had to go for your messages. Everyone had to walk - I mean you can just picture us now. Taxis weren't available, buses weren't good; how would you get your messages? We used to have to drag them up from the old village" (I-59). Where efforts were made to construct village cores, the low local income meant that such efforts were often short-lived. Facilities were often deserted and closed up, thereby creating an air of urban decay: "they build a shop and then six months down the line, the shop has a big barbed-wire fence around it. Then in a year's time, it was like Fort Knox - it was worse than a prison" (I-59).

At the same time, many basic collective consumption needs were not provided for and public services generally were completely inadequate. One good example, which drew much negative comment, was the protracted failure to provide for basic health services in the area. This urban inequality was reflected in the fact that, out of necessity, many commuted back to older parts of the city to avail of basic services. In Killinarden, there were no health facilities, and doctors still have to use the community centre as premises on a part-time basis. In effect, "the health clinic was go back to Crumlin" (I-57). Similarly in Jobstown, there are no health facilities "for 8,000 people, that's up to this day now, and you're in 1999, and Jobstown has

no doctors…The majority, to this day, on this estate use their own doctors back in the city centre. And that hasn't changed in - I'm here now 19 years - that still hasn't changed" (I-59).

Another concern for the new population was the low quality of the living environment. Alongside the lack of amenities and services, the new built environment was bleak and for many felt 'unfinished'. One cause of the difficulties was that development involved the construction of housing and little else, while the open-space provision was given scant attention by developers and in many cases long resembled an abandoned building site. This was reflected in some extraordinary environmental difficulties:

> The big issue when I arrived here was a certain part of our road, when the houses were built in 1980; they left this big mound of muck out beside an old road. It came off the houses. When they finished the houses, they must have said we'll dump the stuff there and we'll leave it on this small road. It was there from 1982, let me see, going back, I'd say a good 15 or 17 years on that road (I-59).

In view of the inadequate provision of services, shortcomings in the living environment and other related problems, activists have constantly had to expend a great deal of energy in campaigning: "for almost anything that was required or seen as being essential to the well-being of the population, we nearly had to lobby all the time" (I-57). However campaigns for environmental improvements, collective-consumption provisioning, urban services or other necessary changes were often frustrated by a further new-town problem, administrative disarray:

> The boundaries of all the providers were totally different - I mean it was crazy. The Health Board comes out in a big triangle, and then you had FAS, which was a West Dublin thing, which was huge. South Dublin was another area…and the other problem was that most of the houses were Corporation houses built in a Co. Council area. In other words, you had an absentee landlord, and trying to get them to put some services in to backup the houses they put in. (I-48).

Community development in public-housing estates was later undermined by the introduction in the 1980s of the (aptly titled) £5,000 surrender grant, which offered a cash reward to public-sector tenants relinquishing their tenancy to move into owner occupation. Many communities almost did surrender, devastated by the exodus of households with adults in permanent employment in a position to access private housing, while they were usually replaced with jobless families and lone-parent households. Within three years, over 1,000 families had left, mainly from west Tallaght, and this had a destabilising effect on communities struggling to find their feet in what were already trying circumstances.

> From 1988 on it was even worse. That was again down to new schemes, like that £5,000 surrender grant scheme. That was a disaster. I mean the people who availed of that were, the majority of them, were in paid employment. So it led to great devastation. The houses were allocated mainly to people who were unemployed, and that's what created what people term unemployment blackspots. So there was no real thought given to anything…It was probably in around 1985, 1986, the £5,000 surrender grant scheme. But that created havoc - that was disastrous. Disastrous. I mean a lot of people would have been involved in community activity (I-57).

Informants also highlighted continuing socio-spatial inequalities, which raise critical questions. It was argued that although the local authority collects rent from several thousand

tenants in west Tallaght, the area is disadvantaged in terms of basic public expenditure in comparison to middle-class areas within the same local government boundary. This raises the problem of effective political disenfranchisement of working-class people:

> If you look at the maintenance, you look at the street cleaning and other services; there's a huge amount of neglect. Other more well-off or well-to-do, the likes of Terenure, say, or Templeogue, would be in South Dublin County Council. In fact, they're paying no contribution to the cost of local authorities with the exception of road taxes…And you would see a hell of a lot more work being conducted in those areas, purely because they have the political backing within the establishment. And they are educated in such a manner that people know how to use their vote. And there is more apathy in the working-class areas - there is that lack of understanding there (I-57).

The issue of traffic calming provides an insightful example of the everyday reality of urban inequality. In west Tallaght, activists have campaigned over many years for measures to curb or discourage joyriding. These efforts have met with little success, yet other middle-class communities, where the need is arguably less, are well-provided for in this respect:

> The first priority is traffic calming measures. You walk around Terenure, Tempelogue and you will see at the entrance to every estate the best quality pieces of traffic calming, right? You go into local authority estates, it's a black hole…that's where you really see the inequality…I would like to have a copy of the financial report of the local authorities to see exactly where it's being spent, how it's being spent (I-57).

This theme of inequality, both social and spatial, is the persistent subtext to working-class experience of new-town development. In this respect, one activist commented tellingly:

> I don't like using the term disadvantaged. In fact, we often use the term in Killinarden oppressed rather than that, the area being likened to maybe the Irish equivalent of a South African township. The manner in which people have been treated, and it wasn't because we were in some sense disadvantaged as such. (I-57).

Overall, most of the immediately apparent shortcomings that drew comment related to such things as the lack of facilities and services and the isolating tendencies of suburban forms. One consequence of this is a view of the Tallaght problem as primarily a function of bad or inadequate planning. It was felt that the area was "constructed without any real or proper thoughts regarding planning" (I-57). For another informant, decentralised from Inchicore to Jobstown in the early 1980s, the fundamental failing with the new-town experiment was readily identifiable, and it was equally clear where blame should lie: "the main issue was there were only houses: no shops, no doctors, no facilities, the basics that you need in an area. Whoever planned it, they should be put up against a wall and shot" (I-59). For some, the core problem in planning for the new town was the insensitivity in the process, which was implemented as a technical exercise in 'blob planning':

> Another big mistake that they're making is they're just planning in an office without going out to the area, even seeing the area. They're just looking at it on a map…And when they're planning for Jobstown, I'm just giving the example of Jobstown, they say there's Jobstown, well, they can only see it on the map. A blob - and that's it, the blob there, we're just planning for that. But if they don't get up off their arses and get out of their offices and have a look at what they're doing, you're going to have the same problems going into the year 2000. If they don't change, everything will get worse. (I-59).

In this respect, local community leaders saw bottom-up input as the necessary basis of an alternative development approach, something that was manifestly not structured into the planning process for Tallaght. The critical missing factor is "the experiences of people and obviously their understanding of what's needed in order to create a better quality of life" (I-57). By contrast, the actual process of development unfolded in a decidedly paternalistic fashion, the local communities that actually ended up living in Tallaght (and dealing with the many shortcomings) being completely powerless with respect to the imperatives of capital and the state. Ultimately, for the working class population shunted out from older city areas, the new-town experiment in the production of space left an abiding sense of disempowerment and frustration in the face of a difficult local living environment created by top-down forces way beyond local control.

> If you're going out to an area like we were put out here, you're sent out to live in it - people have already planned your life out here - they pull you out, they say there you are, without you having a say in where you're going or what. Your area is planned for you. If it was another person or someone who is advantaged coming from the top, right, they ask for what they want. People out here have no choice in what is dealt to them. They plan your lives for you; they plan your houses for you (I-57).

Social Contradictions of New-Town Development

The above sections have offered a view of the top-down implementation of new-town planning and some grassroots experiences of the everyday implications. By way of synthesis, it is worth summarising some of the inherent contradictions in the whole process in terms of the social costs, the economic beneficiaries and the physical quality of the end product. The 'winners' in the entire process were developers and landowners best placed to take advantage of the state's dependency on private-sector action to construct much of the new housing. At the same time, significant costs were imposed on the prospective dwellers, many of whom were relocated to estates in Tallaght from working-class communities in older parts of the city, including the inner city. A number of problems in particular became apparent.

The 'new towns' were founded upon an anti-urban ethos (MacLaran and Punch, forthcoming 2002). They incorporated the central components of the 'anti-city' identified by Mumford (1961): planners' dual mantra of speed and space, that is, development organised around belief in the necessity of green spaces and rapid locomotion to the 'good life'. The estates were built for atomised, two-car households (the middle-class urban 'idyll'), the functionless open spaces and sweeping roadways providing the spatial framework around which the housing was constructed. Furthermore, the bankruptcy of imagination in the design and landscaping, the clean-sweep approach to development, and private-sector profitability imperatives all ensured the production of a monotonous and unsympathetic landscape. It seems almost, as Lefebvre (1996, 79) observed, "that the 'planning thought' of large social housing estates has literally set itself against the city and the urban to eradicate them. All perceptible, legible urban reality has disappeared: streets, squares, monuments, meeting places".

Compounding the deficiencies created by an absence of a development corporation possessing both executive functions and powers of implementation, it soon became apparent that Dublin's was to be a new-town policy on the cheap. The lack of power to effect the creation of community facilities, together with the inability of planners to control the phasing of private-sector development, resulted in the creation of peripheral housing estates that remained long

unserved by urban facilities, which also remained beyond the logic of private-sector development to provide. Furthermore, the constitutional guarantee to private property ownership was believed to preclude addressing the question of betterment and ensured that increments in land value arising from urban growth could not be captured for social ends. The contradictions of new-town development in Dublin are nowhere more evident than in the poverty of everyday life for those who actually ended up living in them and the fortunes reaped by various factions of the urban bourgeoisie (developers, land speculators, public representatives, etc.) from the whole experiment:

> Instead of following the British example of taking all the land required into public ownership and setting up a development commission to plan the 'new towns', what happened in Dublin was largely developer-led. Speculators would acquire options on parcels of land and persuade the county council to rezone it, netting enormous sums of money for themselves at the stroke of a planner's broad-brush or a vote by the elected members. Land values multiplied, generating a hothouse environment in which corruption flourished. With millions of pounds to be made, it is hardly surprising that some councillors accepted and even solicited bribes for their championship of particular rezonings (MacDonald, 2000, 202-4).

As a result of the deficiencies, the new towns were characterised above all by a dialectic of agglomeration and isolation, not just in abstract terms, but in the lived experience of those communities enduring the many failings and the loss of older, familiar locales elsewhere in the city. The main 'urban effect' of new-town development was to produce a near-perfect built environment for capital. In the classic manner of suburbanisation, the spatial organisation of the residential landscape was both fragmenting and alienating (McGuirk, 1991), while also stimulating consumption through low-density development designed for private transport. The solidarity of working-class communities was disrupted in the first instance by the decentralisation of inner-city dwellers to the distant new-town estates and again by the surrender-grant policy.

At the same time, the entire exercise represented the commodification of space on a grand scale, with constitutional support ensuring the unhindered appropriation of significant exchange-value from social development by development interests, despite the limitations in terms of use-value of the end product. The segregated development of massive estates for working-class communities created large new 'urban reservations' of surplus labour, reflecting the hard edge of the class system. In many ways, Tallaght offers an interesting case study of the limits of new-town development under particular superstructrual and structural conditions (that is, the institutional and constitutional situation and the production of space for profit) and the contradictory implications of all of this at the level of everyday life.

The Search for Alternatives: Bottom-up Responses
It was the lived experience of the contradictions of new-town construction that generated critical or oppositional readings of the whole experiment at grassroots level. This final section explores some more proactive responses in the form of local development initiatives. Indeed, the rapid expansion of Tallaght and the inequalities laid bare in the segregated urban spaces are among the key factors that interpenetrated with the trajectory of community organisation and action in general. The interviews suggested that the key themes present in grassroots practice of this kind in Tallaght were community development, urban demands, anti-drugs mobilisations and local economic strategies. Some of the key moments in this historical process are traced below.

Community Development

The rapid expansion of the built environment and associated population growth generated significant new problems. The earliest local response to these urban pressures came in the form of the Tallaght Welfare Society (TWS), an organisation initiated by local Dominican priests in 1969, concerned with the changes set to be imposed on what was a village at the foot of the Dublin Mountains. Interestingly, the initial intention was to promote local empowerment and development, but circumstances - particularly the rapid pace of housing construction and the lack of community facilities - forced a shift of focus to community-based service provision:

> I'm here seven years, but just talking to other Board members who have been around 30 years, some of them would actually feel that we kind of teetered a bit as an organisation - that we really started as an organisation into community action and community development - starting as an information service might indicate that. But I think there was a definite sense of that because Tallaght was so deprived, services had to be brought into the area, someone had to do it. That in fact, we stumbled into doing a bit of that (I-61).

The early action revolved around developing community social services in line with unmet social needs (Lavan, 1981), including home help, child care and a day centre for the elderly, as well as advice on welfare and household budgeting. However, as the new town grew and new and complex problems emerged, it became clear that more innovative, bottom-up responses were necessary.

> It (*TWS*) was very much about citizen advice and stuff like that and meals on wheels and that sort of response. They began to look at the expansion of the area and began to see the need for something much more substantial. And as the public housing estates were built in West Tallaght, they identified the need for some particular action to take place up there because people were economically and socially and spatially isolated (I-48).

Accordingly TWS supported the emergence of a number of key local development initiatives in the new estates (most notably Get Tallaght Working), discussed below. Subsequently, the West Tallaght Resource Centre (1985) was set up as a community development project based in Brookfield providing citizens advice, welfare rights information, social work services, primary health and local cultural development, while also organising campaigns for service provision and support for the long-term unemployed. TWS has also built strategic and supportive links with many other grassroots organisations over the years, including Tallaght Centre for the Unemployed, Tallaght Community Mediation, Tallaght Money Advice and Budgeting Services, Tallaght Volunteer Bureau, South West Women's Refuge Initiative, After Schools Programme, Tallaght Homeless Advice Unit and Tallaght Traveller Development Group.

Democratic local structures were also constructed in many of the new-town communities. In particular, community councils were formed in neighbourhoods in West Tallaght. These were bottom-up representative committees elected annually. The broad aim behind such organisations, as described in one case, was "to promote the social and economic interests of the people in the parish of Killinarden" (I-57). The earliest campaigns generally involved pursuing funding for community centres or local facilities, and to varying degrees, social and economic initiatives were pursued over the years. The work was carried out on a voluntary basis, and in many cases, activists were able to commit long hours to the tasks over many years because they themselves were long-term unemployed. Locally based religious (priests,

nuns) were active in a number of areas, working for social justice. Coalitions also emerged, most notably the West Tallaght Combined Residents Association, which "came together on common issues and to lobby and to fight to get what was required in West Tallaght" and "to deal with issues of common interest" (I-57). While the community councils pursued the local authority on urban issues (facilities, services, etc.), there were also efforts to develop and support local economic initiatives, including local cooperatives and, later, development in the social economy.

Anti-drugs Responses

The anti-drugs movement has also been strong in Tallaght, and the 1990s saw significant action. Through a sub-committee of the West Tallaght Combined Residents Association, activists from all the community councils became involved in anti-drug work as the heroin crisis became an increasingly visible phenomenon in the 1990s. To begin with, drug abuse centred on solvents, cannabis and alcohol, but in the mid-1990s things changed for the worse: "…gradually we built up a bank of at least 60 people using 'napps' in the area in early 1995. We were still working with joyriders at the time, and I met one of the drug users telling me that, he said 'Liam, we're not using napps anymore, we're using heroin.' Heroin had come back into Tallaght and the purity was good" (I-58). At this point, grassroots anti-drugs action escalated rapidly, involving defensive action such as protest marches, patrols and pickets against drug dealers: "…we got together and we set up huts all over the estate and then pickets. Our husbands manned it at night while the women manned it during the day with the children. It was a very difficult time, we were very stretched, everybody was just wore out from it…you had to get up the next morning, you had to get out again and get on your picket because if you lapsed for one minute they were automatically back in again" (I-54). There were also important developmental responses, including community drug rehab services, education and prevention and other initiatives. Important examples include the Fettercairn Drug Rehabilitation Centre, Jobstown Assisting Drug Dependency, Killinarden Drugs Primary Prevention Group, the Community Addiction Response Programme and St. Dominics Community Response and Street Workers' Project. Finally, a broad-based alliance, the Coalition of Communities Against Drugs (COCAD) was created from a platform in West Tallaght, and this grew quickly building links in Clondalkin and eventually across the city. COCAD's mission statement captures the context and the intent:

> Over the last two decades many communities across Dublin and in particular the ones experiencing the greatest degree of 'social exclusion' have suffered terribly from the problem of drug abuse. In 1996, as a response to this and the ongoing lack of any meaningful action by the responsible authorities on the issue, communities mobilised in large numbers to address the problem. COCAD emerged as the central coordinating body for the community based anti-drugs campaign. Since 1996 COCAD has worked continuously to develop the campaign. This work has been grounded in the recognition that any effective response to the problem requires the core participation of affected communities (Coalition of Communities Against Drugs, 1999).

A statement from the COCAD chairman describes the praxis of the alliance:

> The methods adopted by the anti-drugs campaign were many, ranging from informal discussions with people dealing drugs to organising public meetings to expose dealers and, less frequently, marches to a known drug dealer's home. Marches only took place after asking, sometimes many many times, for the Gardai or local authority to take action…Using local knowledge, our approach has been twofold - one, to confront the dealers locally and, two: to put pressure on the agencies to fulfill their obligation to public safety (Johnston, 1999).

Bottom-up Development

Since the 1980s, a number of local development initiatives have also materialised. These signal the emergence of alternative economic models built around the production and consumption needs of particular communities. In recent years, the term 'social economy' has been adopted in many quarters to denote this work. The social economy essentially derives from community or cooperative efforts to create alternative local development initiatives, which operate on a nonprofit basis and are informed by alternative goals to the accumulation imperative at the heart of fully capitalistic enterprise. The ultimate aim from a grassroots perspective is local control over economic activities directed towards meeting the material and socio-cultural needs of everyday life.

In Tallaght, the earliest activities involved some very small local cooperative enterprises and the Get Tallaght Working (GTW) cooperative, a support agency for local enterprise set up in 1984. The origins of this latter bottom-up organisation were linked to the negative impact of restructuring in the new town, where the construction of an economic base suffered frequent setbacks through factory closures. GTW "is a locally based cooperative concerned with enterprise development, which is now a huge organisation. It came into being after the closure of a small factory, it produced computer parts. That was the stimulus for setting it up" (I-48). In Killinarden, cooperative shops were organised, with assistance from the local Community Council, to create economic opportunities and to meet the gap in provision of such facilities. A hamper club was also organised in order to provide a local alternative to commercial schemes, which were seen as over-priced and a drain on scarce local resources at Christmas time. This local effort is a small example of a social-economy initiative. The scheme is run:

> ...not as a profit-making exercise but as a self-help project. It was quite successful in the manner in which we did it. We did make a profit, so we have been able to reuse that to support - not even at this stage to finance the community centre, but to finance other activities. The likes of the summer project. There's a hostel that we're constructing down in Carlow. Some funding went towards that. And the community games and some of the other clubs that might be experiencing difficulties. We see that as a source of income. Helping as well to subsidise, if necessary, the operation of the community centre (I-57).

More recently, the Social Economy Unit (SEU) was set up by Get Tallaght Working in order to facilitate and encourage local development initiatives in communities struggling with difficulties relating to inequality. The SEU has four workers with experience in local development and in the cooperative movement. Its socio-spatial focus is 'disadvantaged' individuals and communities, which in practice has translated into a predominant focus on public-housing estates in west Tallaght. The main work areas are project development and support work, promotion of the social economy, policy development, seeking funding for the social economy, networking, research and documenting, social auditing, training, advice and examination of the potential of LETS (I-52). Various initiatives have been implemented with support from the Unit. The main ones are: Tallaght Childcare Centre, Weaving Dreams, Re-leaf Tallaght Project, Cultur Beo, Alternative Entertainments Tallaght, Fettercairn Youth Horse Project, Syscom, Heat and Energy Action Tallaght, Tallaght Community Radio, Meadow Nursery Products and Fettercairn Drug Rehabilitation Project. Local development praxis in this instance was encapsulated as "social entrepreneurship...We often go to the state with, not looking for grants although we end up getting grants, but offering partnership deals. Offering them opportunities for meeting their objectives within a framework. And we are very good at spotting opportunities and exploiting them to best advantage. That's what

we're trained in. So if you like, we are like little capitalists let loose for the benefit of communities" (I-52). The key lies, therefore, in facilitating local activity that is commercially viable but which cross-subsidises other local development, which emphasises important local socio-cultural concerns in its aims, but may be marginal economically.

The Shanty project, a local adult education initiative based in the Jobstown community, was involved in setting up a community business in 1993, Weaving Dreams. In this case, the key actors included members of local women's groups and directors of the educational initiative with the ambition of facilitating a local community education development. The education centre grew from a small base in 1985 with 15 participants to offering a range of education and training courses providing opportunities for 200 women. The enterprise wing was initiated in 1993 as a means of creating work opportunities in an area of west Tallaght where the local economy was very weak. This involved setting up a community-based craft industry centred on manufacturing and handcraft operations. This operation has developed a range of products and has become economically successful, exporting to the U.S.A. and building up domestic customers by exhibiting at the Irish Craft Fair in the RDS and through word of mouth. Both Shanty and Weaving Dreams are now constituent parts of An Cosán, a local development centre in Jobstown.

Finally, in 1996, the Tallaght Community Development Initiative was set up to implement the Whole-Time Jobs Initiative (FÁS funded scheme), which creates local employment for long-term unemployed (five years unemployed, aged over 35) by fostering community initiatives. The main areas of activity include supporting local sports clubs and sports training in schools, publication of a local newsletter, staffing a family resource centre and providing security services for community facilities. A network of all such local development organisations, the Community Initiatives Tallaght, has also been organised to co-ordinate the work and build stronger local coalition.

Conclusions

Although there is no question that much has been achieved through local action in a difficult environment of poverty and alienation, it should be noted that currently there remain limits

Table 1 Social Economy in Tallaght: Summary of Effects

Project	Economic	Community-Cultural	Urban/Environment
Weaving Dreams -	Creating local jobs Contribution to local economy	Training (weaving, etc.) Producing handcrafts	Construction of local development centre in Jobstown
SEU	Four workers providing support to emergent social economy	Training provided in "social economy actions" (e.g. community business & cooperative development)	Support of Fettercairn Horse Project, Horticultural projects, tree planting, etc.
TCDI	Creating local jobs for LTUE Providing labour for local development	Sports training Publication of Newsletter Family resource centre Security (community facilities)	

to the evolution and likely impact of the social economy. Local development is not by itself a panacea to the inequalities and degradations of the contemporary uneven urban system. Such bottom-up economic praxis occupies a contradictory position since it is built on an alternative or antagonistic logic and structure to that of the dominant system. A number of concerns remain, therefore, which were reflected in comments from practitioners involved in the social economy. In turn, these highlight some of the existing structural limits to local development, principally relations between the state and the grassroots and the economic vulnerability or marginality of much local development.

One difficulty is the tendency within capitalism continuously to expand the basis for profit, absorbing or destroying residual or emergent economic forms in the competitive struggle, thereby posing a constant threat to any alternative development in a social economy. Most of the activities are economically marginal in that they do not earn substantial income through trade or service provision, not least because of their social aims. This leads to vulnerability and dependency on non-market supports. There is also the fear of displacement, as urban development pressures can make it difficult to secure space for non-profit activity of this kind.

A further concern follows from this point. To varying degrees, the social economy as it is currently configured suggests a shifting social relation between autonomous bottom-up actors and top-down state agencies. Most obviously, there are many funding linkages, as initiatives often depend on state support to meet at least some capital and current expenses. This does not come without difficulties. There are concerns that the value of this work is undermined by inappropriate state attitudes towards the social economy insofar as central agencies tend to view it as a temporary or secondary economic 'fix' and there are constant pressures to move people into 'real' employment as soon as possible. In short, local development initiatives can become restructured as general labour market mechanisms, albeit with a certain degree of local relevance and input. Such initiatives then play functional roles in the uneven urban system, absorbing the long-term unemployed, providing temporary work experience or training, but their contribution in terms of realising an alternative development vision may be more equivocal. Moreover, local community workers involved in such initiatives may find their energies diverted into seeking funding and participating in partnership structures in their roles as 'project leaders'. This in turn leads to concerns that the relation between the state and the grassroots in the social economy will become one of centralised control rather than autonomous development. There is "concern that the state would go down the same road with the social economy that it went down with workers co-op development, which ended up in disaster. Which is that the state would try to become an operational wing of the social economy, development of the social economy. They can't do that. The social economy can only be developed by the social economy" (I-52). The fear is that in some ways, an element of incorporation may be intrinsic to the escalation of centralised interest in this emergent field of bottom-up development. This essentially ideological problem is an important one. Activists with interests in constructing an independent, non-profit community-owned local economic base may find themselves entangled as directors of EU or state-sanctioned poverty programmes, training initiatives, etc., none of which will depart from (or contradict) dominant interests. Far from providing models of empowerment, such local structures may simply 'paper over the cracks' in an era of globalisation, rising inequality and weakening systems of local governance (Geddes, 2000; Swyngedouw, 2000).

Overall, this paper has provided a grassroots view of local development issues in Tallaght on the periphery of Dublin. This highlighted two interrelated points: the contradictions of new-town planning from the perspective of working-class communities decentralised to this new urban space and the efforts to construct responses informed by an alternative developmental vision in the shape of community-cultural engagement, anti-drugs work, urban provision and economic activity. Ultimately, for many residents, the social meaning of new-town development could best be described in terms of isolation and aggregation, a harsh environment, a disrupted network of family and community support, and constrained access to additional use values in the form of facilities or services. Subsequent efforts to implement local development responses have met with significant success, reflected in the creation of an emergent social economy. These achievements notwithstanding, the limits to such bottom-up praxis within the contemporary urban system, a particular product of the general process of uneven development, need to be borne in mind. The fear is that bottom-up development, in the light of broader inequalities and exclusion, may play a compensatory or legitimising role, while incorporating local grassroots action into acceptable and safe channels.

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