

Integration and Exclusion, Active Citizenship and Neighbourhood Change and Development

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Introduction

Active citizenship is seen as an antidote to the decline of community, an indication that despite some evidence to the contrary, people still engage with others in their neighbourhoods, providing friendship and social support, and when necessary acting collectively on behalf of the neighbourhood as a whole. The research which is documented in this paper explores the nature of residents' and community associations as examples of the way in which groups of individuals organize at a local level, interact collectively with the state on environmental and planning issues, while also providing a forum for community development and neighbourhood identification. This research has been carried out on a sample of residents' associations and community groups in the Greater Dublin area. The paper also draws on a study on the planning system and the provision of homeless accommodation carried out by the authors. The paper situates this research within the wider academic debate regarding social capital in neighbourhoods, by exploring the nature of the social capital that residents associations help to create in their neighbourhoods, both positive and negative. The research documented in the paper demonstrates that residents' groups can often utilize social capital in exclusionary ways. The paper posits the question of whether or not the literature on NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) activity, can provide the lens to focus on some of the manifestations of more negative forms of social capital, particularly in instances where residents' associations and community groups react negatively to the siting of controversial human services facilities in their areas.

In order to understand the manner in which these more negative elements of social capital are utilised, it is not enough to focus on residents' associations and their actions alone. What is required is an exploration of the manner in which social capital is shaped by the socio-economic context of the neighbourhood and by the wider political context, what has been termed the "reciprocity which exists between civil society and state in terms of social capital maintenance and generation" (Maloney et al. 2000: 817). Our research supports the literature which stresses the need for a more top down approach to understanding social capital (Lowndes and Wilson, 2001; Maloney et al. 2000) and also suggests that we need a more nuanced perspective on the NIMBY debate.

We believe the Irish context is of interest in exploring these issues, as given recent significant levels of growth and increasing affluence there is a perceived decline in citizen engagement. There is a fear among Irish politicians and others that Irish society has changed rapidly and radically, moving from a country that had a deep tradition of active engagement, to one where there is much greater atomisation and individualisation.¹ In the context of increasing privatisation of many spheres globally, insights from the Irish case may be of interest internationally

The paper is divided into three parts. The first part discusses some of the key elements of the social capital debate which frame this research, and draws on the wide literature surrounding NIMBY. The second part of the paper describes the different areas within the Greater Dublin

Area where the research took place and discusses the methodology used. The final part of the paper examines the nature of residents' associations and their contribution to social capital in their respective areas. It analyses bonding, bridging and linking capital and the importance of both the wider institutional context and the other forms of capital available to the members of the residents' groups in contributing to these. In particular the empirical research focuses on residents' engagement with the planning system, as our research shows that in the Republic of Ireland the planning system often provides the stage on which citizens engage with the State regarding their local area. Our research illustrates the extent to which the strengths and the failings of the Irish institutional context, and in particular the planning system in the Greater Dublin Area, have helped activate citizens in positive and negative ways.

Social Capital: An Overview

Social Capital is an increasingly widely used concept in sociology, political science, in social policy circles and indeed in popular culture. There are, however, contrasting understandings of what constitutes social capital and obtaining a definition of the term can be difficult, given that some feel that the term is imprecise, *vague* and overused (Forrest and Kearns, 2001). Evidence for increasing use (perhaps overuse) of the term is given by those reviewing the literature (Aldridge and Halpern, 2002; Wall *et al.*, 1998). It is not our intention to outline all of the debates surrounding social capital here, rather to note that there have been many extensive reviews of the concept, its origins and history (see Farr, 2004; Field, 2003; National Economic and Social Forum, 2003; OECD, 2001; Office of National Statistics, 2001; Wall *et al.* 1998). There has also been considerable debate on the extent to which it can be measured (Johnston and Percy-Smith, 2003), its usefulness as an analytical concept (Middleton *et al.* 2005) and in particular on its use in a policy context as the potential panacea for neighbourhood problems, particularly in disadvantaged areas (De Fillipis, 2001; Edwards and Foley, 2001; Kearns, 2004).

We concur with Putnam's definition of social capital as referring to "connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (Putnam, 2000:19). However, we believe it is important to temper Putnam's work on social capital with insights from the work of other social theorists, notably Bourdieu. Bourdieu (1986) does not view social capital as a product of collective action, rather he sees it as an individual resource. While he believes that social capital inheres in people's networks and relationships, it is realised by individuals. Bourdieu's writings on social capital were related to his work on social hierarchy and the important role which cultural capital played as an asset which groups used to maintain superiority over others. Therefore, he understood social capital as one of the means by which people maintained their position, by utilising their networks and connections.

For Bourdieu, social and cultural capital are rooted in economic capital and ultimately can be reconverted to economic capital. Bourdieu's conceptualisation of social capital thus highlights the importance of ensuring that social capital is not separated from underlying economic capital and that the power that inheres in economic and cultural capital are recognised. His conception of social capital is thus useful in understanding the manner in which residents' associations and community groups draw on the economic and cultural capital of their individual members to underpin social capital, both for their own benefit and the benefit of the area as a whole. Thus it is likely that in more affluent areas, there will be evidence of greater social capital, just as there will be evidence of greater cultural and economic capital. While we respect the idea that social capital can be realised by individuals, we do believe that when individuals come together in an organisation such as a residents' association, that collective or aggregate social capital can be

created. We agree with Kearns, who drawing on Temkin and Rohe, points out that community capital – that is neighbourhood organizations and their networks and linkages in wider areas – need to be studied alongside a study of social relations between individuals in order to fully explore a community's social capital (Kearns, 2004:9).

Looking at what Kearns (2004) has termed the three scales at which social capital may operate and what Briggs (1998, 2004) has termed the types or faces of social capital, may help us get a better view of how social capital can be operationalised at community level. Putnam distinguishes between two types of social capital - bonding and bridging - which are central to the understanding of the term, while Woolcock (1998) includes a third dimension of linking social capital. Bonding social capital relates to ties which bring together those who are similar to each other on the basis of ethnicity, education, interests, social background or any other dimension (Healy, 2004). It creates strong in-group identity and loyalty and is useful for supporting reciprocity and mobilizing solidarity. By its nature it tends to be exclusive. This is the social capital which Briggs (1998) describes as a social support which helps people "get by" or cope (p178).

Bridging Social Capital on the other hand, refers to the ties which link more diverse people, linking those who are not similar in social background, ethnicity etc. Bridging social capital is therefore more outward looking and cross cutting, it encompasses the weaker ties which Granovetter (1973, 1995) has pointed out are important in job search in areas outside those where family and friends were already employed. Briggs describes this as "social leverage" or social capital that helps a person get ahead (Briggs, 1998: 178). For many authors Bridging social capital is seen as a potentially more powerful form of capital (Larsen et al 2004, De Filippis, 2001).

Linking social capital is similar to bonding social capitalⁱⁱ, but more specifically relates to relations between individuals and groups at different levels of social status or power, it consists of vertical rather than horizontal linkages (OECD, 2001:42). Woolcock (1998) sees linking social capital as a means for the community to leverage resources, ideas and information from formal institutions outside the community. It is the collaborative or external social capital that Purdue (2001) relates to the links that community leaders make with external agencies such as banks, local authorities and funding bodies and which may be of importance to residents' associations. These three different scales or dimensions of social capital allow for a more coherent understanding of the possible range of outcomes of differing combinations of these types (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000).

In analysing these forms of social capital empirically in different neighbourhoods in Bournville, Middleton et al identify membership of residents' and tenants' associations as evidence of both bridging and linking social capital. They point out that "they can be seen as bridging capital if one defines them in terms of their membership - horizontal connections to people with broadly comparable economic status and political power, or as linking capital if they are conceived in terms of the vertical ties between communities and people in positions of influences in formal organisations" (2005:1735).

Thus, residents' associations and the manner in which they create networks within neighbourhoods and link beyond the neighbourhood, are an important facet of social capital in their communities. However, we believe it is not enough simply to count the number of such organizations, and the number of residents who are members, as being indicative of the existence of social capital in a neighbourhood. The interesting and important questions, and what we focus on in this paper are: What are the outcomes of this bridging and linking social

capital? What happens when the networks formed by residents groups are activated? Why and how do residents' associations link their communities to outside agencies? These questions lead us to two other facets of the social capital literature, firstly the nature of the negative elements of social capital and secondly, the importance and nature of the institutional context within which these groups form and act.

Negative Social Capital

While many of those using the term assume that social capital is a positive attribute for communities, this does not always hold true. There is a dark side or downside of the concept (Field 2003). While Portes and Landolt (1996) initially criticised Putnam's work for its failure to recognise the dark side of social capital, Putnam has in his more recent work conceded that social capital can be misused in certain circumstances (Putnam, 2000). It has been pointed out that strong social networks, and substantial bonding social capital exists among youth gangs, the mafia and criminal groups, which can facilitate criminal activity (Portes, 1998; Putnam, 2000; Aldridge and Halpern, 2002). A key negative outcome of social capital is the manner in which social capital can be used to exclude rather than include. This occurs when communities or groups which have strong ties and networks among themselves - bonding social capital - use these ties to ensure that others outside the group are deprived of access to the networks (Portes and Landolt, 1996; Portes, 1998). This disadvantage can be related to the manner in which social capital is treated as a "club good" to pursue the interests of the club's or section of society's good, rather than as a "public good" for the good of society as a whole (Aldridge and Halpern, 2002). There is an inherent tendency for those who will benefit from the network to keep the network as closed as possible (DeFillipis, 2001). Clearly then, residents' associations and neighbourhood action groups may use their social capital in a negative way to exclude what they perceive as either undesirable people or undesirable uses from their neighbourhoods (Briggs, 2004). Putnam recognises this when he points out that among other groups, NIMBY ("Not In My Backyard") movements, often exploit social capital to achieve ends that are antisocial from a wider perspective (Putnam, 2000:22).

NIMBYism as negative social capital?

The Not In My Back Yard (NIMBY) syndrome is defined by Dear (1992, 288) as ' the protectionist attitudes of and oppositional tactics adopted by community groups facing an unwelcome development in their neighbourhood'. Such opposition is often against social service type facilities (e.g. homeless shelter; social housing) but may be against any kind of project, environmental, infrastructural, residential or commercial, and usually involves a conflict with the local municipality or a service provider (Wolinsk, 1994). What is common also to many of these conflicts is that opposition is well-organised and vocal. However, while these cases are clear demonstrations of citizen engagement, this activism is often defensive, even reactionary, and the bearer of prejudicial feelings by local communities. Thus, while such conflicts may generate an active community and a form of active citizenship, such activity may be a case of negative social capital in action. In what is perhaps the classic article on NIMBYism, and almost certainly the most cited one, Dear (1992) provides a clear and useful guide to many aspects of the NIMBY syndrome. The cycle of opposition to the siting of a facility goes through three stages, youth, maturity and old age. In the first stage news has just emerged about the proposal and opposition is led by a small group who are most directly effected. Moreover, this early opposition is often expressed in harsh and sometimes prejudiced language. The second phase sees the contours of the conflict enter into the public arena with language being appropriately

modified. The final stage, where the conflict is ultimately resolved, is a protracted affair which may involve a multiplicity of strategies on both sides. Ultimately, Dear argues, the arguments against such facilities relate to a perceived threat to property values, personal security and neighbourhood amenity.

From the viewpoint of this paper, the construction of attitudes to the location of social service facilities is important and Dear (1992) provides a clear outline of the key factors which explain local community attitudes to proposed social facilities. The first broad aspect which influences reactions are the characteristics of the clients. According to Dear public attitudes to different client groups operate in a hierarchical fashion, with some groups, such as the physically disabled, being generally accepted by local communities. However, at the other extreme, client groups with problems related to drugs or alcohol will face greater opposition and experience greater prejudice. While this evidence comes mostly from the US, the case studies in this research suggest a similar hierarchy in Ireland. Research by Takahashi (1997, 1998) shows the problems faced by homeless and AIDS/HIV client groups in the US and demonstrates how stigma is constructed and used to oppose needed facilities. More recent work by Wilton (2002) and Hubbard (2005, 2006) explores NIMBYism in the context of the defence of race and ethnic identity, specifically the defence of whiteness. What this literature shows is that while local contexts vary, and the prominence of the client groups vary over time, the persistence of the NIMBY syndrome is striking. The second broad factor which determines community responses relate to the characteristics of the facility itself. Here, factors such as the type of facility, whether it is residential or not, how and who operates it, are important. The size of the facility and the number of similar neighbourhood facilities is particularly crucial. Neighbourhoods which have no social facilities will fight long and hard to prevent any such facility being located, often perceiving it as a precedent for more development. Other neighbourhoods may have an excess of facilities and opposition may thus vary. The third broad factor which determines local attitudes is the characteristics of the host community. Dear points to the situation in the US where homogeneous middle-class suburbs vigorously oppose social service facilities but such opposition is more varied in diverse inner city neighbourhoods. The greater diversity of inner cities has led, in some cases, to what Dear terms 'neighbourhood saturation' of social service facilities. Even though the political context differs, with US suburbs having greater powers to exclude, this comparison with Dublin is an apt one. The inner city of Dublin has the greater proportion of such facilities with the suburbs less likely to be a host location.

Although much of the literature on NIMBYism shows similar evidence and patterns, the general interpretation has begun to shift. The approach of Dear (1992), for example, is clearly an anti-NIMBY one and his article concludes with extensive suggestions on how local community opposition might be persuaded to accept social facilities. This political stance is entirely understandable as it sides with those who are socially, economically and politically marginalized. However, one of the problems with some of the literature is that conflicts are often portrayed as simplistic morality tales. As Gibson (2005:383) states '... the very notion of the NIMBY syndrome ...harbors simple and unsustainable dichotomies between the *rational/civic* interest on the one hand and the *irrational/special* interest on the other'. Thus, the dominant narrative represents conflicts between civic authorities and local groups as battles between the greater good of the public versus the narrow self-interest of small local groups. For example, planning conflicts over the provision of homeless shelters are portrayed as a quarrel between the need to provide a socially-needed service, in contrast to the opposition from a local group which is self-interested and socially prejudiced. The contrast is stark. On the one hand there is the civic authority attempting as best it can to provide a much-needed social facility. On the other, there is the narrow-minded, selfish, often prejudiced, local group seeking to prevent the facility being provided. One of the reasons such contrasts are so deeply held, particularly in the

academic literature and public discourse, is that in some cases the contrast and description is fairly accurate. However, the problem is that this general approach to NIMBYism is essentially moral rather than analytical, and it would be easy to select other cases, for example environmental conflicts, where the local group are seen as heroic and righteous.

As Gibson (2005) argues, this approach is somewhat naïve and assumes that state authorities necessarily and always represent some pure public interest. We know, however, from various analyses of the nature of the state that this is highly unlikely. Even the most innocent of analyses would contend that the state is not neutral in its aims and objectives. This general imbalance has led, Gibson states, to a situation where the ‘... human services literature ... analyses the attitudes and tactics of opposition groups in great detail, but offers less analysis of the institutional motives and political interests of government agencies and local non-profits’ (Gibson, 2005:385). In the context of this paper, this is a critical observation. In suggesting that the motives of the local state should be interrogated, there is no automatic suggestion of malevolence on the part of local state institutions. However, the manner in which policy is made, strategic decisions arrived at and ultimately specific locational decision made, needs critical inquiry. For example, locational decisions by the state may be heavily influenced by considerations of the relative ease with which a facility may be provided, so that locations with relatively wealthy and politically resourced communities may be avoided. Conversely, poorer neighbourhoods can become the location of many social facilities. This latter point gives rise to consideration of the notion of ‘fair share’ of social service facilities. If we are to interrogate the role of the local state one of the areas to focus on is the need for a policy which allocates a fair share of facilities to different neighbourhoods and does not take the easy option of locating in the same communities. In the case of Dublin, it is reasonably clear that there is no such ‘fair share’ policy. If we assume that the state is not necessarily neutral, nor can we assume that local groups are automatically entirely self-interested or prejudiced.

This discussion points to three general implications for research in this area. First, in analysing the role of the state in NIMBY conflicts we need to have a more sophisticated understanding of the workings and motivations of the state and its institutions. Second, we need to query critically the assumptions regarding the substantive issues at stake. For example, with regard to the location of facilities, it can be legitimately asked whether such facilities are needed in the first instance. Detailed debates about the location of development and public facilities can occlude a more fundamental argument about policy directions and strategy. Third, and relatedly, we need to have a more nuanced understanding of the composition and motivations of local groups and not jump to simplistic conclusions. However, there is a clear danger in Gibson’s approach which is that it can easily be used, not to say twisted, to defend local opposition to needed facilities and thus give support to prejudicial actions. Thus, while Gibson is correct to unpack the debate and in particular to highlight the need for a focus on the state, it is not a charter for facilitating the more base forms of NIMBY behaviour.

The Institutional Context of Social Capital

This focus on the State, which is central to Gibson’s argument, is also relevant in some of the more recent literature on social capital. A number of authors have identified the manner in which the political and institutional context influences the extent to which social capital is activated (Maloney et al, 2000; Lowndes and Wilson, 2001; Pennington and Rydin, 2000). Political institutions, and in particular local governance institutions, have a role in encouraging and sustaining civic vibrancy. This is because the approach of elected local authorities together with non-elected partnerships or other institutions help determine the extent to which communities

become mobilized. As Lowndes and Wilson (2001) argue, these institutions can enable and support (or disable and frustrate) the citizenry as they are influential in supporting and recognizing the voluntary and community sector (through funding or in their formal recognition of certain groups), in providing the opportunities for participation, in their responsiveness to citizens in decision making and in the extent to which decision making is actually transparent and adequately balances the diversity of different community demands. As Maloney *et al* (2000) point out, a city's political opportunity structure affects social capital as it provides the openings or incentives for people to undertake collective action.

In the Republic of Ireland the planning system is often the interface where citizens and the state meet, so it is frequently within this context that the dramas between residents' associations and local political institutions are played out. Public involvement and participation in the planning system is enshrined under current legislation (the Planning and Development Act, 2000), and relates to both development plan and development control functions of the local authority. At a local level, land-use regulatory instruments are broadly similar to the UK planning system, based on the formulation of land-use development plans and discretionary development control exercised at a local authority level. Local authorities are required to prepare or review development plans every six years, and there are statutorily defined opportunities for public participation at key stages of the plan-making process. A fundamental difference to the UK planning system relates to planning appeals. In the Irish system, provision is made for First and Third Party Appeals, whereby individuals and interested parties have the right to appeal to an independent Planning Appeals Board (An Bord Pleanála) against the granting or refusal of planning permission for any new development (for a detailed discussion of Third Party Appeals, see Ellis, 2002).

While in theory this element of the Irish political opportunity structure should offer good opportunities for participation, resulting in active and engaged citizens and positive social capital, the reality is somewhat different. In essence much citizen engagement with the planning system is reactive, as individuals respond to planning applications in the development control process rather than interfacing with the development plan making process. Furthermore, the market-led nature of the planning system itself influences citizen's engagement. The Planning regime in Dublin has been described as being entrepreneurial in its philosophy and actions. The literature on entrepreneurial planning explores the nature of state involvement in and direction of, environmental planning. In simple terms, it suggests that far from being a neutral arbiter between the citizenry and development interests, that the state has been an active supporter and enabler of development interests and that the power of the public to influence planning and development decisions has been increasingly marginalised (Ward, 2003). A number of authors have traced the emergence and entrenchment of an entrepreneurial approach to planning in Dublin since the mid 1980s, especially as it relates to urban regeneration in the inner city (Brudell *et al.*, 2004; McGuirk, 1994, 1995, 2000; McGuirk and MacLaran 2001; MacLaran and Williams, 2003; Bartley and Treadwell Shine, 2003). These analyses are in broad agreement with regard to the evolution of entrepreneurial planning in Dublin and argue that the central and local state has become increasingly facilitative of development interests. The more recent work of McGuirk and MacLaran (2001) and Bartley and Treadwell Shine (2003) argues that Dublin City Council has in fact become an enthusiastic advocate of neoliberal entrepreneurial approaches, to such an extent that it is seen as being enthusiastically pro-business. While this analysis is specific to policy in the central area of Dublin, it can easily be extended to other areas of Dublin and to other kinds of developments. The scale and pace of economic growth in Ireland generally, and Dublin in particular, has placed local authorities under immense pressure to permit rapid development of housing and associated development. Consequently, local development plans, it can be argued, have become more flexible and pro-development. And, while there is a third

party right to appeal planning decisions, the planning appeals board must take central government policy into account in making decisions. As such policy stresses economic growth, the balance of power lies very much with development rather than local interests. As a result the institutional planning context in which residents' associations operate, is not so benign and may ultimately influence the nature of the social capital created in neighbourhoods and of course influence the manner in which residents associations engage with the State.

Case studies

The findings outlined below form part of a research project entitled 'Neighbourhoods, Residents' Groups and Community Development', funded by the Royal Irish Academy's Third Sector Research Programme. The overall research project involves a series of case studies throughout the Greater Dublin Area, including inner city, suburban, edge city and rural fringe locations. The case studies involve reviewing all relevant documents in the public domain (including relevant planning documents and policies) and undertaking semi-structured in-depth interviews with representatives from community and residents-based interests (n=75). Interpretive analysis (drawing on Hastings, 1999) was used both to examine the content of the discourses deployed by the interviewees to construct the causes of problems and to examine the way theories-in-action were constructed.

As there was already a significant amount of research which analysed the role of community groups in disadvantaged areas, and the role of tenant groups on social housing estates (Redmond, 2001; Russell 2002) a deliberate decision was made at the outset of the research to focus on residents' associations in primarily private housing areas. The starting points for the sample selection for the interviews were initial discussions with both the local authority and umbrella community groups, with the purpose of identifying active residents' associations and groups within the local case study areas. This initial 'scoping' of local residents' groups included the identification of neighbourhood characteristics to ensure a representative sample, with key criteria including: timing of neighbourhood establishment; neighbourhood scale and location; timing of residents' group formation; and the level of recent growth or decline. Thus, the study investigates residents' associations in two well established inner suburban areas, in two outer suburban areas, and in two rapidly developing edge city suburbs (see table 1 below). The case studies are located throughout the Dublin Region, which is comprised of four local authority areas: Dublin City Council, Fingal County Council, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council and South Dublin County Council.

Table 1: Profile of Case Study Areas

| Location | Area | Income | Demographic Change between 1996-2002 | Local Authority Area |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|---|--|
| Established Inner Suburb | Ballsbridge/ Sandymount/ Nutley | High Income | Low Growth Growth of 2.9 % Most significant growth in the Ballsbridge area (Pembroke East E 12.2%). | Dublin City Council |
| Established Inner Suburb | Kilmainham/ Inchicore | Lower - Middle Income | Mixed Growth Rate Growth of 12.2% High rate of growth in the areas closest to the city centre (99.7 % growth in Ushers A, 20.4 % Ushers F). Decline in the western area, Inchicore A decline of -4.8% and in Kilmainham A, of -3.7%. | Dublin City Council |
| Established Outer Suburb | Sandycove/ Glasthule | High Income | Static Decline of - 0.15% Decline in Glasthule small growth in Sandycove | Dun Laoghaire Rathdown, County Council |
| Established Outer Suburb | Finglas | Lower Middle Income | Decline Decline of – 9.11 %. Decline in population is particularly pronounced in the Finglas South C and South D DEDs. Where decline of –16.3 % and – 17.9% respectively have been experienced over the period 1996 –2002. | Dublin City Council |
| Urban/Rural Fringe/ Recent Growth | Donabate Skerries | Middle Income | High Growth Significant growth in both areas, 42.2% in Donabate and 33.5% in Skerries. | Fingal County Council |
| Edge City/Recent Growth | Lucan | Middle Income | High Growth Very significant growth 66%. Lucan Esker highest growth in the entire country over the period 1996 –2002 of 179.3 %. | South Dublin County Council |

Our deliberate selection of case studies in a wide range of neighbourhood types, but particularly in areas which are not disadvantaged allows us to overcome the problems identified by Forrest and Kearns (2001) that focusing on problem or disadvantaged neighbourhoods, “ obscures the role that available resources and opportunities have in underpinning social capital in better-off neighbourhoods” (p 2138). Our research thus has resonance with other studies which examine

better off, or mixed neighbourhoods such as those carried out by Butler and Robson (2001) and Middleton *et al.* (2005).

The remainder of this paper will focus on nature of the social capital created by residents' associations, in response to proposals for developments which are opposed by local residents. We draw on findings from the research on residents' associations but supplement it with insights from a second research project carried out by the authors which looks at the planning system and the provision of homeless accommodation (Redmond *et al.*, 2003). This study documented 14 case studies of both successful and unsuccessful planning applications for supported, transitional or hostel-type homeless accommodation.

Bonding Social Capital

The research revealed only limited evidence that residents' associations play a role in generating a sense of neighbourliness, reciprocity and trust in the wider neighbourhood community, or what is termed bonding social capital. However, they do create temporary bonding capital in times of perceived threat. The main benefit of the residents' associations in the areas studied is for undertaking collective action, what has been termed in the literature bridging and linking social capital.

Bridging Social Capital

The very existence of residents' associations or residents groups in an area is used as an indicator of bridging social capital by a number of authors. As a result we might be in a position to argue that all of the areas studied had evidence of bridging social capital, simply by virtue of the existence of residents' associations. However, our research shows that in general the number of active members in the associations studied is small, usually only 10-15 people, often with an even smaller number of officers responsible for undertaking most of the work. Furthermore, residents' associations can be relatively dormant until a specific issues galvanises the members into action:

'Residents' associations tend to be relatively dormant until such time as an issue emerges' (Interview with committee member residents' association).

Clearly then there is a danger of simply operating a numbers game, and we believe that the level and quality of the actions engaged in by residents' associations are a better indication of the existence of and the 'use value' of social capital. As Forrest and Kearns point out "social capital, then, is important not for its own sake, but for what one does with it, or can attain by it, as with other forms of capital"(2001: 2141).

When the actions of residents' groups were explored it was found that most were involved in broadly similar activities within their local communities including:

- Environmental improvements: e.g. improving coastal walks, sand dune and coastal protection, open space enhancement, organising garden competition;
- Tackling anti-social behaviour: e.g. liaising with police, cleaning graffiti, collecting litter, neighbourhood watch;
- Lobbying for enhanced local services: e.g. campaigning for a local secondary school, improvements to local infrastructure including parking, and additional police presence;
- Community and Social Activity: running activities in local community centre, organising children's activities, organising activities for the elderly;
- Local land- use regulation.

It was in the arena of land use regulation that the organisations studied became much more engaged and active, and social capital was activated and used to achieve certain ends. For many of the organisations monitoring weekly planning lists was the most onerous part of their organisation's activity, but was often the preserve of only a couple of residents. Thus, residents' associations acted as self appointed gatekeepers of development in their areas. However, in responding to what was perceived as significant development, e.g. ongoing large scale residential development of an area (Lucan and Donabate); a major development proposal in a sensitive location (Sandycove/Glathule); or with regard to locally unwanted landuses, notably human service facilities, (Nutley and Inchicore) and an incinerator (Sandymount), both bridging and linking social capital became evident.

The nature of this bridging and linking capital is examined below in relation to three of the case study areas where there was a particular focus on opposing development, using social capital in a negative manner, or what might be termed classic NIMBY opposition. The type of unwanted land uses proposed, an overview of the grounds of opposition, and the strategies deployed are summarised in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Summary of Cases Opposing Unwanted Land Uses

| Area and Residents' Association | Type of Development Proposed and Instigator of Development | Grounds of Opposition | Strategies Deployed |
|---|--|--|--|
| Kilmainham/ Inchicore Inchicore residents' association | Juvenile Detention Centre Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in conjunction with the Prison Service | Fears of anti social behaviour Feeling that area had already had fair share of problem uses. Planning grounds - Access | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaflets • Petition • Public Meetings • Protest March • Meeting with proposer of development • Seeking support of local politicians |
| Sandymount/Ballsbridge/ Merrion Nutley Residents' Association | Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform | Fears of anti social behaviour Planning grounds – Use of the building not appropriate, particularly for the proposed numbers of people to be housed, and Neighbourhood not appropriate for Asylum Seekers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with proposer of development • Instigation of Judicial review proceedings |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| <p>Sandycove/Glasthule Sandycove and Glasthule Residents' Association</p> | <p>Major €140 million mixed use waterfront redevelopment scheme Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council</p> | <p>Scale of the development Destruction of visual amenity Privatisation of public land</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaflets • Petition • Public Meetings • Protest Marches • Actively lobbying local and national politicians |
|--|--|--|--|

In the face of the initial threat of an unwanted development the residents' associations studied mobilised the support of the wider residential community, in effect bridging beyond the more active residents' association members to their wider membership and beyond. In two of the three cases, the waterfront development proposal in DunLaoghaire and the juvenile detention centre, in Inchicore, this involved raising awareness among the community through a number of channels:

- Providing information regarding the development in a newsletter
- Delivering leaflets outlining the nature of the development
- Knocking on doors or meeting people at public events to inform them and asking them for their support (in both cases this involved asking people to sign a petition indicating their opposition to the development)
- Organising public meetings.

The initial means of mobilising support was through delivering leaflets and newsletters and holding public meetings.

'We held meetings, we went knocking on doors, we delivered notices, we got little printed copies and we sent them into every door to get people along, the hall was packed.' (Interview with residents' association committee member, Inchicore residents' association)

'A very simple thing, Leafleting and newsletters, very simple, because there is a lot of apathy, well not so much apathy, as lack of knowledge I mean I've met people at some of the things and these are people who had heard it [display regarding the development proposal] was down in County Hall and these are people who come home in the evening and they've been working all day and they say 'ah sure it's going to go ahead anyway' and then suddenly they find out it is going to be 180 apartments. So therefore you can use newsletters and leaflets to educate people as to what is happening in a fair way.' (Interview with residents' association member Sandycove and Glasthule residents' association)

In each of these cases this initial mobilisation of residents by the residents' association was followed by further direct forms of protest, notably the organisation of protest marches. In both Inchicore and Sandycove the residents' associations organised marches highlighting their opposition to the proposed developments. The purpose of protest marches can be twofold, they can help raise the profile of the protest and further mobilise the community, and secondly, they can gain the attention of forces outside of the local neighbourhood by creating headlines in the national media, and gaining the attention of politicians:

'We were very pleased with the first one, with 1,200, and we were able to use...in fact the press all picked it up, it was the biggest march held in Dun Laoghaire since the British

troops left in 1922 and a lot of newspapers picked up that headline.’(Interview with residents’ association member Sandycove and Glasthule residents’ association)

This mobilisation of the community is indicative of the creation of bridging social capital, the generation of an active network of residents, which can in turn be used to lever further resources, or can be used as a starting point to develop vertical linking social capital. It is to this facet of social capital that the paper now turns.

Linking Social Capital

In each of the three cases elements of the oppositional strategies engaged in by the residents’ associations are examples of the manner in which these groups generate linking social capital. The associations act as a vertical link between the neighbourhood and local politicians, national politicians, representatives of the agencies developing facilities, and external experts.

Lobbying local councillors was a strategy employed with particular success by the Sandycove and Glasthule Residents’ Association. The residents’ group intensely lobbied local politicians, meeting all the local elected representatives individually, and also encouraged their members to lobby their councillors. To make it easier for local residents, the association provided residents with the councillors’ contact details:

‘As I’ve said we have joined forces with a number of other residents associations and Save our Seafront in our meetings, and we have the ability to leaflet drop 50 or 60 thousand, and what we did is... I don’t know if you saw an article by a guy called Kevin Myers in the Irish Times who spoke out totally against the baths, as did Fergal Keane, and Vincent Brown [all prominent Irish journalists] in Village magazine. We took that article by Myers, we did copies of it, and we gave it out as a leaflet, and on the back of it we listed all of the councillors’, names, parties, phone numbers, email numbers etc. And there was one councillor who came to me afterwards and said he had 150 emails in one day from angry residents and he was totally for it and now he is totally against it’ (Interview with Chairperson of residents’ group).

In this instance the residents’ association was generating both bridging social capital, in that it was engaging and mobilising a wide number of residents, and linking social capital, by drawing on the resources of the network and encouraging linkage upwards to councillors.

Likewise, in Inchicore the residents’ association linked to a wide range of different individuals in their campaign of opposition against a proposed juvenile detention centre. They sought the support of the political parties, particularly the opposition politicians for their area. They also sought advice from outside sources, which included raising funds to obtain legal advice from a solicitor, and using the residents’ association committee members’ own social networks. For example they sourced information from the Gardai (police) and Prison officers, who were friends of committee members, on the likely impacts of such a facility.

In Nutley, in opposing the change of use of a former religious retreat house (Broc House) to a residential unit for asylum seekers, the residents’ association also acted as a means to link to official channels. However, the manner in which this linkage took place was much more low-key. Rather than lobbying local or national politicians, the local residents themselves met with representatives of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law reform and other official agencies dealing with the reception of asylum seekers, as is reflected in the following quote:

'Somebody said to me 'What are we going to do about this?' so I said "well we'll have to have a committee meeting, ---- we'll discuss it", and they came here that night and this whole business of Broc House was thrown into the arena and I said "well we'll have to approach the Minister, we have to approach the parties that deal with refugees".' (Interview with Nutley residents' association committee member)

Unlike the situation that existed in the other two areas, the Nutley residents did not engage in the activity of wider mobilisation. It might be hypothesised that the residents were more confident of the social capital that their own small network possessed, and did not feel the need to widen the network. They were also clearly conscious of the political sensitivities of the issue and were motivated by a desire to ensure that their opposition was seen as being "about uses". The residents' association did not want to be seen to be acting against the public interest:

'We didn't make any headlines in the papers at all, we didn't express any opinions on the issue because it was, at the time, a very delicate matter and we would not like to be held up as acting against the public interest' (Interview with Residents' Association Committee Member Nutley Residents' Association)ⁱⁱⁱ

The extent to which the residents were in a position to circumscribe their opposition, is returned to later in the paper when we explore the context in which social capital is created.

NIMBYism as Negative Social Capital?

In each of these three areas there was evidence of considerable social capital networks, and active, engaged citizens. However, the residents' associations' actions were essentially exclusionary, and while they contributed to the creation of social capital, it was essentially negative social capital. The nature of the opposition in each of the areas might be largely portrayed as NIMBY opposition. In both of the human services facilities cases - the residential unit for asylum seekers and the juvenile detention center - there was clear evidence of defensive, reactionary, and prejudicial feelings towards the proposed developments. Mirroring Dear's (1992) observations, the arguments put forward against these facilities related to a perceived threat to property values, personal security and neighbourhood amenity.

Thus, in relation to the reception centre for asylum seekers, concerns for safety were expressed:

'Some of those houses there have walls four feet high ---now don't tell me that children or young men, who have nothing to do all day long aren't going to climb and see what's on the other side.' (Interview with Residents' Association Committee Member Nutley Residents' Association)

In both cases antisocial behaviour was a key concern:

'We had reports from Cork and places like that, of places where the refugees were housed, of the prostitutes they brought outside the place at night, the hangers on and everything else, and frankly we're too old to be dealing with these sorts of problems now.' (Interview with Residents' Association Committee Member, Nutley Residents' Association)

In relation to the Juvenile detention unit:

'you could have a row at a gate, because of certain circumstances, perhaps someone visiting a boyfriend or girlfriend and in sheer frustration you might get your car wrecked. Although this is all kind of hypothetical stuff, we already had difficulties with antisocial

behaviour and it isn't as if you get used to it.' (Interview with Residents' Association Committee Member Inchicore)

Reflecting Dear's cycle of opposition the residents' group in Nutley had entered the second stage of NIMBY opposition, whereby opposition was expressed in terms of rational and objective concerns about the effects of unwanted development. Thus, interviewees stressed that they were not opposed to asylum seekers per se, but that they were concerned with the ability of the facility to accommodate the numbers of people envisaged, and that the infrastructure in the area was insufficient for asylum seekers:

'We have made a contribution to the fund that the local residents have raised to legally fight the case and by the way the legal issue was nothing to do with asylum seekers, it was to do with the use of the building' (Interview with Residents' Association Committee Member Nutley Residents' Association).

'The other thing, which is a question which I raised with the Government, is that there are no facilities for people around here, there are no cinemas, there's no, what I would call the shop for the man of the street, you know what I mean cheaper shops, there's no local atmosphere. There is a very dangerous road going past the gate so if the children went out they wouldn't have a hope' (Interview with Residents' Association Committee Member Nutley).

In Inchicore, the opposition had remained rather more visceral and emotional, although the residents' association themselves were aware that it was important to remain unemotional. The advice that the residents' association received from their solicitor was that technical arguments would be the only ones which would succeed in stopping the development:

'The solicitor pointed out to us that there was a limited window of protest against this particular operation. He pointed out that it would be only on a planning issue that it would be turned down, such as access points - that the road isn't big enough, too much traffic etc. etc.' (Interview with Residents' Association Committee Member Inchicore Residents' association)

One major difference in terms of the arguments used to oppose this unwanted land use in Inchicore, which set it apart from the situation in Nutley, was the argument that Inchicore and the surrounding areas already had an undue concentration of social problems (including a problematic local authority "sink" housing estate). The residents' were frustrated at what they perceived as an unfair situation

'I was trying to press the ticket, that what you are doing here, is you're hitting one social group all of the time. And I kept on at that point, because I found that you can get this across, that there is an unfair concentration in one area. And people were saying, "well there is no land, and its very difficult and they can't get this". Be that as it may, it seems that everything was happening in one area. And it wouldn't happen in Dublin this and that, and people say "well the land is very expensive there", but the fact of the matter is *it wouldn't happen!* because what kept coming forward was that, well people are very powerful. But hold on what is this? What is this about being powerful? Just because someone speaks with a Dublin accent doesn't mean that they are any less vulnerable than somebody who speaks with an affected accent?' (Interview with Residents' Association Committee Member Inchicore).

This comment raises the issue of fair share of social service facilities and leads us to reflect on the importance of context, particularly the socio economic and political context in which the residents' associations operate. How far does the underlying cultural and economic capital of residents in certain areas manifest itself in social capital, which can ultimately be utilised for exclusionary purposes?

The Importance of Context

In all three of the examples outlined the aim was to block what were perceived as undesirable uses locating in their neighbourhoods. In each area the residents' associations were instrumental in acting as the bridge between residents and as the link between the neighbourhood and actors and agencies outside the local area. The research shows, however, that the ability to create linking social capital to external agencies was easier in the areas where the underlying stocks of economic and cultural capital were greatest. Thus, in the areas of Sandycove and in Nutley, the residents associations had a ready-made network of expertise within their membership, which, for example, made the production of newsletters or leaflets a simple task. In Inchicore, such tasks were much more difficult and expertise had to be sourced externally. In Nutley, a sub-group of the residents resorted to the expensive option of initiating judicial review proceedings against the proposed reception centre for asylum seekers. This course of action is an expensive one, requiring a legal team and the potential that costs may be awarded against those taking the judicial review proceedings. In this case, the ability of the residents to take such proceedings is indicative of the financial capital available to them as a group. the need to create a wider horizontal network, or to mobilise bridging social capital, and to engage in more direct forms of action was not necessary. Indeed it might be argued that social capital was probably less important in this instance than financial capital.

In direct contrast, in Inchicore the residents' association had a greater compulsion to mobilize opposition to the proposed development of a juvenile detention centre. In this case the residents' association had to activate bridging social capital to mobilize residents as strength in numbers was important. In Sandycove/Glasthule, bridging social capital was also important as the residents wanted to convince local councillors of their convictions. However, in this neighbourhood contingency plans, including potential legal avenues were also explored, but were not needed.

The evidence from this research concurs with Dear's (1992) contention that the characteristics of host communities are an important determinant of the level of protest against certain unwanted land uses. The three cases outlined above are all located in relatively settled suburban areas and opposition could be described as vigorous. It is useful to compare these findings with the case studies carried out for the study by Redmond *et al* (2003) regarding the planning system and homeless accommodation. This study, commissioned by the Homeless Agency, reviewed how the planning system was catering for the provision of homeless accommodation in the Dublin area. As part of this study 14 case studies of successful and unsuccessful planning applications for supported, transitional and hostel-type homeless accommodation over a period of five years were investigated, primarily through the documentary analysis of the relevant planning files. Table 3 provides an indication of the level of opposition to each of the proposals, and the grounds of the objections. What is clear from the table is that the majority of the case studies do not appear to have generated significant local opposition. Indeed, in four cases no objections were submitted (case studies 9, 10, 11 and 12) and there were less than five objectors to a further six proposals (case studies 1, 3, 4, 5, 8 and 14). Only four of the case studies appear to have been subject to controversy with large numbers of objections and petitions from local residents (case studies 2, 6, 8 and 13).

Table 3 Classification of Objections to Homeless Accommodation Planning Cases

| | Case Study 1 (3396/01) | Case Study 2 (2920/01) | Case Study 3 (4034/00) | Case Study 4 (3980/02) | Case Study 5 (2431/98) | Case Study 6 (0377/02) | Case Study 7 (1940/02) | Case Study 8 ¹ (2871/98) | Case Study 9 (2433/00) | Case Study 10 (2175/02) | Case Study 11 (2285/02) | Case Study 12 (1516/00) | Case Study 13 ² (E1077/01) | Case Study 14 (3352/99) | Total Objectors | Total Cases |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--|---------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|--|----------------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| LOCATION OF CASE | Inner city | Inner city | Inner city | Inner city | Suburb | Suburb | Inner city | Inner city | Inner city | Inner city | Inner city | Suburb | Suburb | Inner city | | |
| OBJECTORS | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Total objectors | 3 | 8 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 24 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | n/a | 2 | 48 | 13 |
| Local residents / residents' associations | 2 | 2 | 2 | | | 24 | 2 | 1 | | | | | | | 33 | 6 |
| Petitions | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | 2 | 2 |
| Applicant's tenants | | | | | | | | 2 | | | | | | | 2 | 1 |
| Local businesses | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Local NGOs | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Politicians | 1 | 5 | | | 1 | | | 1 | | | | | | | 8 | 4 |
| SOCIAL GROUNDS | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Anti-social behaviour | 1 | 3 | 1 | | | 15 | 1 | | | | | | | 1 | 22 | 6 |
| Concentration of vulnerable people | 2 | 6 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 8 | 2 |
| Injurious to the 'image' / ambience of the area | 1 | 3 | | | | 12 | | | | | | | | 2 | 18 | 4 |
| Crime / personal safety or property threat | | 1 | | | | 15 | 1 | | | | | | | | 17 | 3 |
| Concerns regarding management | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 |

1. Based on planner's report as the original submissions were not available (file is on microfiche).

2. Submissions not applicable as this was a planning enforcement file. However, the enforcement case was initiated when the development was reported to Dublin City council by local residents

Table 3 Contd.

| | C.S. 1 | C.S. 2 | C.S. 3 | C.S. 4 | C.S. 5 | C.S. 6 | C.S. 7 | C.S. 8 | C.S. 9 | C.S. 10 | C.S. 11 | C.S. 12 | C.S. 13 | C.S. 14 | T.O. | T.C. |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------|------|
| VISUAL GROUNDS | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Poor design | | | | | | 3 | | | | | | | | | 3 | 1 |
| Excessive height | | | | | | 3 | 2 | | | | | | | | 5 | 2 |
| Excessive scale | | 1 | | | | 4 | | | | | | | | | 5 | 2 |
| Injurious to streetscape - not in keeping with the character, form or scale of surrounding buildings | | | | | | 9 | 2 | | | | | | | 1 | 12 | 3 |
| TECHNICAL GROUNDS | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Injurious to residential amenity | | | 1 | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | 1 | 4 | 4 |
| Noise | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Overshadowing / loss of light | | 1 | | | | 3 | 2 | 1 | | | | | | | 7 | 4 |
| Overlooking / loss of privacy | | 1 | | | | 4 | 2 | 2 | | | | | | | 9 | 4 |
| Capacity of public services | | | | | | 12 | | | | | | | | | 12 | 1 |
| Traffic / access / parking | | 1 | | | | 22 | 2 | 2 | | | | | | | 27 | 4 |
| Open Space | | | | | | 4 | | | | | | | | | 4 | 1 |
| Building conservation / heritage | 1 | | | 1 | 1 | 4 | | | | | | | | | 7 | 4 |

Source: Redmond et al (2003) Appendices

What is also notable are the low levels of protest in many inner city areas. The most significant protest was evident in case study 6, which was for the construction of three apartment blocks comprising 26 apartments and four two-storey semi-detached houses, in the grounds of a Hospice in the suburban location of Harold's Cross. In this instance there was significant local opposition to the scheme, which manifested itself in 24 objections to the Planning authority. A combined residents' association, formed in response to these proposals, subsequently appealed the decision to grant permission to An Bord Pleanála.

Where there was evidence of significant protest in inner city areas, notably in case study 2, for a supported housing complex on James Street, the main grounds of objection related to the already very high concentration of vulnerable groups in the locality. These objectors (which included a petition with 99 signatories), highlighted the various existing accommodation services for refugees, Travellers and homeless people located in the James Street area, along with a drug treatment centre. Local residents seemed to feel that the local community had been asked to absorb more than their fair share of special-needs groups and that there was a need try to create a more balanced community.

This additional research seems to give credence to the argument that opposition will tend to be greater in well resourced, politically aware neighbourhoods and that in some areas of Dublin there is evidence of what Dear (1992) has termed 'neighbourhood saturation of social service facilities'. While it is clear that there are NIMBY motivations involved in the protest documented in both research projects, we do need to critically examine the motivations of the State and the extent to which the political and institutional context has shaped this type of negative engagement.

Conclusions

The Political and Institutional Context: Revisiting the NIMBY Debate

A critical review of the wider political and institutional context that frames residents' associations' activism, and particularly, the NIMBY type opposition which we have identified, supports Gibson's (2005) contentions. The research reveals that the simple dichotomy between rational/civic interest of the State as represented by Government Departments and local authorities, and the narrow irrational/special interest of residents' groups is flawed. In the three residents' associations' cases reviewed, it can be argued that the State was implicated in shaping the action of the residents and in the generation of negative social capital. In each of the cases, there was no evidence of the proposals being developed as part of a 'plan-led' consultative process, rather they were presented as ready made solutions to problems by the relevant authorities. This failure to engage local communities at the outset, creates a lack of trust in public authorities and the resulting outcome is a tendency for residents to become defensive and exclusionary.

This lack of trust in Government authorities was particularly evident in the two human facilities cases, where residents felt that the lack of consultation was a significant drawback. In the case of the residential accommodation for asylum seekers, residents were indirectly informed of the proposals:

'It was only be word of mouth we heard about it and this is something I'll never forgive the government for, nobody in the area was ever talked to, or was ever consulted

about the whole thing.' (Interview with Residents' Association Committee Member Nutley Residents' Association)

Although, meetings were subsequently organized with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law reform, it was felt that these were largely ineffectual:

'I was at a couple of those meetings and I certainly concluded from my participation in the meetings, now I wasn't actively participating, but I concluded from being at those meetings that the only way the issue could be satisfactorily dealt with from the residents' point of view was through the legal process. Because it was quite evident to me that the people from the Department of Justice had no interest in hearing the views of the residents at all, and they held the meeting so that they could say they held the meeting-----I concluded that there was actually no point in coming up with issues because they just side stepped them or passed them on, or said that's up to the guards that's not us or-----It really opened my eyes to the attitude of the public sector in relation to these issues' (Interview with Residents' Association Committee Member Nutley Residents' Association)

As is evidenced in this reaction, the interviewee felt that the adversarial legal process became the only option for ensuring that the residents' viewpoint would be heard.

There was also a sense among residents in Inchicore that the rationale for a site being selected for controversial development in their area, was based, in part, on targeting an area where there was deemed to be less resistance:

'One of the councillors who gave us advice, also told us that among the councillors that Inchicore is regarded as a soft touch. And having looked at other areas, and having heard people complaining about a telephone box or a footpath, I believe we are fighting for survival here in this area.' (Interview with Residents' Association Committee Member Inchicore Residents' Association).

Given this feeling of being embattled or of fighting for survival, it is little wonder that adversarial reactions are the outcome.

In Sandycove/Glasthule the perception among residents' was that the senior management in the local authority was arrogant, and there was some disbelief that in the face of vehement opposition, the local authority were willing to press forward with the development proposal. There was a sense from the residents' perspective that a different approach might have avoided some of the more confrontational reaction:

'I think if they listened and said ok, this is not a runner, not try to push it down someone's throats, I think there would have been something in between, that would have satisfied everybody, there wouldn't be this agro. As I say what this has done now, is pushed people totally against it, there are some people who want to leave it as it is.'(Interview with residents' association committee member, Sandycove/Glasthule residents' association)

The suggestion is that the result has been poorer because of the approach taken by the local authority. Thus, it can be concluded that in instances where the Political Opportunity Structure offers neither formal participatory processes nor the existence of some form of collaborative arena to debate proposals, that residents will be likely to explore other informal avenues for participation. That is they will engage in direct agonistic protest, lobbying etc. and to engage in negative, defensive NIMBY opposition. While this analysis does not seek to legitimise NIMBY type opposition (there clearly were unwarranted exclusionary and prejudicial facets to the

residents' opposition), what it attempts to illustrate is that the State does play a role in generating negative social capital.

In conclusion, the research outlined in this paper illustrates that residents' associations are good examples of active citizenship, and are representative of local civic engagement. In contrast to much of the existing empirical literature on social capital, which views residents' associations as representing positive bridging and linking social capital, this paper documents the downside of residents' association engagement. It confirms the importance of context for the analysis of social capital, outlining the importance of underlying economic and cultural capital in determining the nature of engagement. Finally, the paper provides an insight into the importance of considering the wider political and institutional context when exploring social capital. In particular it identifies the role played by State Institutions and local authorities in shaping NIMBY activity.

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Endnotes

ⁱ In May 2006 in response to these concerns the Taoiseach (Prime Minister) appointed a Task Force on Active Citizenship.

ⁱⁱ In some instances where authors simply distinguish between bonding and bridging social capital, the understanding of what is meant by bridging social capital is almost synonymous with linking capital, for example Taylor (2003) understands bridging social capital, as relating to the manner in which communities can link to the external environment, Larsen et al. (2004) also take this view.

ⁱⁱⁱ While the residents themselves did not actively seek publicity, there was newspaper coverage of the residents' legal action.