The Politics of Urban Regeneration in Dublin

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Introduction

For most of the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, Ireland’s economic recovery has been heralded as the success story of the European Union, the so-called Celtic Tiger. During this period, the capital city of Dublin and its surrounding hinterland has experienced massive in-migration from other parts of the country as well as from abroad. There has been a huge expansion in the level of infrastructure, including office complexes, tourism and leisure facilities and residential areas. Moreover, some of Dublin’s most derelict and crime-ridden inner-city areas have been rejuvenated and regenerated as flourishing focal points for tourism, housing and business activities. For those of us interested in the politics of urban regeneration in Ireland, there remains a curious twist to this story. This story of successful urban regeneration has apparently occurred in absence of any effective or democratic system of local metropolitan governance.

Unlike most other countries in Europe, Ireland has consistently rejected the model of decentralised decision making even in policy areas, which many observers might suggest are most sensibly located and managed by the local or regional sub-national levels of government. Ireland’s system of local government is traditionally poorly organised, in receipt of very limited funding, and responsible for a very limited range of policy, which includes refuse collection, sewerage and minor local planning issues. Central government, instead of local elected officials, has traditionally managed policy initiatives tackling a range of physical and social ills in the locality or on a constituency basis. Moreover, this is coupled with a pervasive system of clientelism, supported by a political culture of “it’s not what you know, but who you know”. However while Irish domestic political institutions are highly centralised, Ireland’s domestic governance structures have also responded to the pervasive impact of the European Union. In particular since the late 1980s, the political agenda of the European Commission has strongly supported a multi-level system of partnership based governance under the Reform of the Structural Funds and called for the effective involvement of local, regional national and European level public and private actors. Any analysis of urban renewal and policy innovation in Ireland over the last two decades is informed by the significant economic and political importance of the EU Structural Funds for Ireland and indeed for these types of local oriented policy initiatives (Payne, 1999).
In this research we are interested in examining how the political processes have facilitated the innovation of policy initiatives for urban regeneration in Dublin. Dublin’s renewal has been on the political agenda in Ireland since the early 1980s. For instance, the Urban Renewal Schemes, first introduced in 1985, were designed to promote urban renewal and redevelopment by promoting investment by the private sector in the construction and reconstruction of buildings in designated inner city derelict areas. Like most European countries during the 1980s and 1990s, these schemes focused on property-led regeneration, whereby the incentives introduced were primarily tax-based, targeting investors in and occupiers of properties in designated areas. For most of the 1980s and 1990s in Ireland, and indeed across many European countries, these schemes operated through powerful networks of public-private co-operation. This co-operation was based on the interdependence between central and local government and private property developers, where the private sector supplied the finance and secured the economic risk in return for government unlocking land and property for development through planning, rezoning and services provision (Atkinson, 1998, McGuirk, 2000).

However towards the later part of the 1990s, as in many European countries, this type of approach to urban renewal in Ireland came under increasing fire. Increasing attention was paid to the formal organisation of partnership arrangements around urban renewal schemes and several writers suggest that “what is qualitatively different about the regeneration during the 1990s and the beginning of the new century is the role afforded to the community –at least in the rhetoric of regeneration” (Russell, 2001; see also Duffy and Hutchinson, 1997). In the late 1990s the Irish government introduced a series of measures that suggest a departure from the strictly property-led approach to urban renewal. A new Urban Renewal Scheme was introduced in 1999, which "looks at physical, environmental, social and economic development, and tax incentives are available only where all four elements are addressed." The use of Integrated Area Plans were established under the Urban Renewal Act 1998, whose preparation and implementation required consultation and partnership across a broad range of public and private interests.

1 For instance in the Irish case, the role of the appointed officials such as planners in Dublin city council was usually sidelined as were the views of the local community interests, who often failed to benefit from the property-led approach to urban renewal in the city (McGuirk, 2000). Russell has pointed out that “major reviews of urban policy such as that carried out by...a consortium of consultants headed up by KPMG in Ireland clearly outlined this failure” (KPMG et al.1996 in Russell, 2001)

2 see http://www.dublincity.ie/services/econ2.html)
In this research we examine metropolitan governance, Irish style, through the lens of urban renewal policy in the inner city of Dublin. In particular, we use case studies to examine and compare urban renewal in the Temple Bar area in the late 1980s with urban renewal in the Liberties/Coombe area of Dublin, which did not begin till the late 1990s. The regeneration of this Temple bar area has been quite successful. It is now home to many of the capital’s cultural venues and contains a high density of small shops, restaurants and alternative clothes shops. On the other hand, while the regeneration of the Liberties/Coombe area is still at a relatively early stage, it is already showing very mixed results. Consultation and implementation around the Integrated Area Plan for the area has proved controversial and divisive. However, within the area, a major project known as the Digital Hub, has proceeded successfully and has established a productive management structure, with very little criticism.

In the following discussion, we begin with an examination of the institutional structures and political context within which we can set our analysis of the politics of urban regeneration projects in Ireland, and in particular Dublin. The case studies ably illustrate the curious clash between Ireland’s traditional centralised, hierarchical and clientelistic political culture and the growing call for greater participation at all levels of the political process in Ireland. However, instead of strengthening the existing local authority structures, new institutional bodies or quangos are established which report to a central government department. The case studies show the continued importance of central government, and in particular the innovative role of the Department of the Taoiseach, as an incubator of these emerging frameworks of co-operation within urban regeneration. The selected representation of interests is defended as being derived from shared interdependencies around the specific project, rather than the formal requirements of institutional representation. The research suggests an emergent model of partnership around urban regeneration, which is driven by informal, networked participation rather than rigorous democratic accountability.

1. Key institutions of Irish political system

In 1924 Ireland adopted legislation which put in place a highly centralised system of Government policy making and which was closely modelled on the British structure of public administration “under which large sectoral departments manage complex
programmes with minimal devolution to local or regional authorities” (Marshall, 2002). Key decisions affecting the type of urban regeneration projects adopted, the finance, and policy implementation are all taken at the central government level\(^3\). Alongside this hierarchical, centralised structure of administration Ireland’s political system is characterised by a traditionally high degree of clientelism. National elected representatives (i.e. TDs) in the Dáil or parliament are generally very careful to take look after their local constituency demands, even where these are minor policy issues most appropriately dealt with at the local authority level. As a result it sometimes seems in Ireland that all politics is local, and even though local councillors are elected to office to fight for local policy demands, it is the TD at the constituency level, who will be usually be approached in the first instance.

In Ireland, the City and County Councils\(^4\) provide the forum for local elected representatives, but these Councils have very limited capacity\(^5\). Executive decision-making and day-to-day management of local government is the responsibility of the city or county manager, who is directly appointed by the Minister for Environment and Local Government. Marshall has suggested that these “managers have also been responsible for liaison with national government departments on projects of local interest, thereby ensuring a sort of technocratic governance visible in rural County Kerry as well as urban Dublin” (Marshall, 2002). The issue of overhauling the system of local government had been on the political agenda. It subsequently gained momentum in the light of revised EU Structural Funds that emphasised geographically based programmes drawn up in consultation with local and regional authorities. In 1991, a new Local Government Act was passed, which subsequently saw the institution of Regional Authorities in Ireland. However, these authorities are composed of indirectly elected local councillors, a number of appointed officials, have very limited executive decision rights and very limited financial resources at their disposal (Government of Ireland, 1991).

\(^3\) Under the Structural Funds, these central government departments became the “lead departments” directly managing the implementation of the Operational Programmes.

\(^4\) Local government in Ireland consists of a number of local and regional authorities at three levels. These are: at county/city level: thirty-four local authorities are the mainline providers of local government services - twenty-nine county councils and five cities; at sub-county level: eighty town authorities carry out a representational role for the town with a varying range of local government functions; at regional level: eight regional authorities co-ordinate some of the county/city and sub-county activities; they play a monitoring role in relation to the use of EU structural funds; two regional authorities, known as Regional Assemblies: were established in July 1999 under new structures for regionalisation.

\(^5\) Local councillors have “reserve powers” which implies that under some exceptions they may
From the 1970s onwards, most European states witnessed a strong push to decentralise to the regions responsibility for various policy areas, often including regional economic development. However Ireland's public administration, unlike most European states in the late 1970s and 1980s, showed an increasing emphasis on centralised decision-making within the public sector and a tendency towards greater central control of the activities of state sponsored bodies (NESC, 1979). The tendency in Ireland has always been to establish a single function state body that is first answerable to the central state authorities and often to a particular government department. This is instead of using a decentralised, territorial approach, as was increasingly the case in other European states during the 1980s. In the absence of functioning sub-national local and regional authorities, many semi-state bodies and public bodies had regional levels of organisation.

At this level of organisation, one finds the ad-hoc growth of single function agencies and offices -quangos- arising mainly from decentralisation of government departments and state agencies and operating, for the most part, as autonomous actors and independent of each other. Coyle and Sinnott point to "a proliferation of regional bodies operating in differently constituted sets of regions" (1993: 79). There are numerous statutory regional bodies with responsibility for the health service, for tourism promotion and for the development and protection of inland fisheries. Marshall argues that "in no other country, save possibly the United Kingdom, do quangos and national ministries control such a wide range of programmes and services, to the detriment of devolution and local initiative" (Marshall, 2002). However more often than not, the boundaries of the territorial areas for which these different statutory bodies have responsibility, do not coincide with one another.

An understanding of the Irish political system and its distinctive governance patterns must also include an examination of the Irish partnership model. Following the 1987 General Election, a Fianna Fail Government, with Charles Haughey as Taoiseach\(^5\), was returned to power. A consensus began to emerge at this time that an important aspect of Ireland's economic recovery was the ability of the Government and the Social Partners which included the farmers, trade unions, private business and the community/voluntary sectors, to reach and fulfil the national centralised agreements to keep public expenditure low and industrial unrest at a minimum (Payne, 1999). The 1987 Programme for National Recovery (PNR) was the first of the national

\(^5\) act to amend the county or city development plan.
centralised agreements. In 1987, the PNR agreement had already established a mechanism for communication and negotiation, called the Central Review Committee (CRC). The Department of the Taoiseach (i.e. Prime Minister) chaired this Central Review Committee (CRC). The Irish model of partnership – national level negotiations between central government and the social partners - was already underway when the Structural Funds Reform measures, including calls for multi-level partnership and subsidiarity, came into effect in 1988. Marshall points out that “whereas regional governments in other parts of Europe took the initiative in contacting and networking with trade unions, voluntary groups and business associations, the central administration was already engaging in that role in Ireland” (Marshall, 2002).

2. Facilitating urban regeneration

In this research we trace the development of Irish urban renewal policy and in particular, focus on urban renewal initiatives in two inner-city areas of Dublin. Urban renewal policy in the 1980s and early 1990s was distinctly oriented towards property-led development. By the mid-1990s, there appeared to be a shift in Irish urban renewal policy and accompanying legislation, apparently formalising the partnership-led approach to urban renewal and widening the focus of policy initiatives. Our selection of inner city areas in Dublin and initiatives for case study attempts to throw some light on the impact of these policy changes over time and the emergent governance patterns in the urban space.

2.1 Regeneration of the Temple Bar area of Dublin city

The Temple Bar case study is the story of the renovation and development of a mostly derelict part of Dublin, an approximately twenty-eight acres site, which is situated in the inner city of Dublin near the river Liffey. During the 1960s and 1970s, the Temple Bar residents and small businesses were living and working in crumbling buildings owned and leased by the Irish national transport company, Córas Iompair Éireann (CIÉ). The CIÉ had plans to replace the buildings with a central transport...
depot. CIÉ, and not unnaturally, were unwilling to invest in the upkeep of the fabric of the buildings. The poor structure of the buildings was coupled with almost non-existent tenant rights for those on short-term leases. It was the tenants and residents of Temple Bar themselves who started the process of redevelopment in the late 1970s. Informal discussions in the café of Dublin Resource Centre amongst CIÉ tenants about the future of the area, led to an increased collective sentiment of unity against their landlord. Concern both for individual businesses and the area as a whole was increased in the 1980s when it was suspected that CIÉ plans for a transportation centre were unlikely ever to be realised. During this initial phase of redevelopment, issues for discussion amongst the tenants were negative ones: rent, the conditions of the buildings, the poor appearance of the area and the future of the businesses.

As Table 1 below shows, the process of rejuvenation was one of increasing speed and momentum to develop the area away from derelict buildings towards a cultural centre of the city. There was concern among the participants that redevelopment could not be allowed to slow or stall once the initial process had begun. It relied on the enthusiasm and motivation of volunteer enthusiasts and eye-catching landmarks were deliberately created to make Temple Bar both visible amongst the general public, but also to keep up the morale of the participants themselves. Many of the original actors feared the process becoming grounded through excessive bureaucracy and meetings, and so they developed from the outset a style of management and co-operation which was ad hoc and informal. This quest for constant movement and speedy development has been blamed by some participants for many of the failures of the development. A lack of an effective review process in planning permission, and flaws in some architectural decisions were because of the speed of change. Likewise, despite efforts to the contrary, some actor groups notably at city level were left behind or neglected during key moments of the process. It is therefore worth spending some time examining this change and its consequences for urban governance of the area.

This research has identified three clear phases in the development of Temple Bar area. The first can be characterised by the emergence of collective solidarity through the tenants of CIÉ-owned buildings. At this point regeneration was still theoretical. Background work was being undertaken by local residents about how their area could be preserved. The second phase was when this hypothetical research crystallised into a practical opportunity to redevelop, when preliminary work such as
paving and lighting was undertaken by Dublin Corporation. When provisions of legislative and financial aid to realise the redevelopment project came through, the project entered its third and most publicly visible phase. In all these three phases, informality was the most obvious characteristic of the politics of development.
### Table 1: Chronology of Events for Temple Bar case study

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Key Events of the Time Period</th>
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<td></td>
<td>- CIE approve this proposal and begin acquiring property in the area and leasing buildings at low rent to artists, retailers, etc.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Temple Bar Study Group produce report urging Dublin City Council, referred to then as Dublin Corporation, to rethink their support for bus station.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Department of the Taoiseach in partnership with the Temple Bar Development Council prepare a proposal for submission to the EU for funding of Urban Pilot Projects under Article 10 of the ERDF. This proposal is successful and awarded IR3.6m pounds by the European Commission.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The Minister for Transport and Tourism directs CIE to abandon its plans for a transportation centre in the area.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The Finance Act, 1991 sets out the tax provisions that would be available in the Temple Bar area until 1996.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The Temple Bar Area Renewal and Development Act, 1991 establishes the financial and statutory powers of the two new companies set up to deal with the development of Temple Bar.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- October – Urban Design competition initiated by TBP, to provide an architectural and urban design framework for the project. Competition won by Group 91 (comprising 8 architectural practices).</td>
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<td>1992</td>
<td>- March – Temple Bar Properties publish a Development Programme for Temple Bar, which has six component sub-programmes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>- EU Structural Funds Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development – Sub Programme 3, Measure 5 outlines ERDF and Exchequer funding for continued development of Cultural Programme.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>- November – Planning application lodged by Temple Bar Properties for redevelopment of west end of Temple Bar – mixed use residential and retail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>- Development of Cultural Centres completed with the opening of The Project. The development of the West End of Temple Bar is also complete.</td>
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Working without funding, residents of the Temple Bar area, and in particular tenants of the local shops in the area, decided to establish a Temple Bar Development Council, which relied on the efforts of personal contacts and friends. As they had no public funding or public visibility, tenants were unworried about claims of cronyism or corruption. It was felt that when – or indeed if – the project gathered any momentum a more formal and accountable organisational structure would be needed. Until such a point, the early development of Temple Bar was characterised by amateur enthusiasts using their limited circle of friends and own resources to unite in order to preserve their businesses.

In 1988, there was the first significant turning point in the development of the Temple Bar area. Informal discussions had led to the creation of the Temple Bar Development Council (TBDC) whose first main task was examine the possibility opposing the transportation centre through a submission to Dublin City Council’s Draft Dublin City Development Plan. At a public meeting of residents and interested bodies, a slim submission was produced containing seven general aims for the area. Each of the seven proposals was deliberately pitched to bodies ranging from national to city level. It was felt that pitching initiatives at national level would put downward pressure from national government onto the City Council. The 1988 Submission reveals a great deal about the general aims of the emerging Temple Bar organisation. Its aims were suitably modest for a body whose realistic expectations were fairly low. The most ambitious was the proposal regarding tax incentives to raise revenue for building refurbishment. The suggestion that the Department of Finance be approached came from within Dublin City Council who were unable to make financial provisions of that level and to raise the public profile of the whole proposal.

The submission needed to strike a balance between being innovative enough to be eye-catching at national level but modest enough to be feasible. Internally, Temple Bar Development Council felt it crucial to prevent their progress from being undermined by splits within the ranks of Temple Bar businesses. Much of the initial work undertaken by members of the Council was to survey and inform their potential supporters. As one senior figure noted, cultural organisations and groups (which were the employers of many of the Council) are not good networkers. They were often rivals for limited public funds and the culture of collaboration was not easily created. Nevertheless it was also recognised early on that coherence amongst
groups within Temple Bar could only increase the bargaining power of the Temple Bar Development Council and their submission.

Table 2: 1988 Temple Bar Development Council Submission Proposal

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<th>Proposal</th>
<th>Body to which Proposal was Aimed</th>
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<tr>
<td>• To disallow any proposal for a CIE transportation centre from being included in the Development Plan.</td>
<td>CIE (National)</td>
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<td>• To draw up a local area action plan which would facilitate the rejuvenation of the Temple Bar area.</td>
<td>Dublin City Council Planning Department (Local)</td>
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<td>• To upgrade the streets with paving, pedestrianisation, landscaping, lighting, etc.</td>
<td>Dublin City Council Paving Department (Local)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• To offer tax incentives specifically directed to encourage the refurbishment of existing buildings and the suitable development of infill sites.</td>
<td>Department of Finance (National)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• To act upon An Taisce recommendations regarding the listing of buildings in the Temple Bar area.</td>
<td>Dublin City Council Planning Department (Local)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To assist in creating a central, attractive business and residential area providing ongoing employment and residences for Dublin people.</td>
<td>Department of Trade and Tourism/Bord Fáilte (National)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To establish Temple Bar as the cultural centre of the city and as a major tourist attraction.</td>
<td>Department of the Taoiseach (Arts and Culture) (National)</td>
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Parallel to this progress, Ireland’s first EU Community Support Framework (CSF) under the Structural Funds Reform Framework was being negotiated and agreed between central government and the European Commission. A key principle of the Reform of the Structural Funds legislation was the call for multilevel partnerships involving the public and private actors, at the relevant local, regional and central levels of administration within the member state. Given the hierarchical and vertical nature of Irish government and its administration, coupled with the weakness of local
authority structures, this resulted in rather varied and ineffective participation of subnational public and private interests in the policy negotiation, and subsequent implementation, of the Structural Funds in Ireland (Payne, 1999, 2000). In relation to the impact of the Structural Funds supported projects impacting in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA). Marshall argues that “the lack of an overarching urban policy framework for the GDA, along with the area’s balkanised local authority structure, ensured that the first CSF did not bring about local authority-led partnerships or positive changes in metropolitan governance (2002). Structural funded urban projects were planned and managed directly by sectoral government departments, rather than at the territorial level thus fostering horizontal networks across relevant local and regional actors. Marshall is strident in his critique suggesting that “central government was able to control the pace and structure of urban renewal in Dublin, to the consternation of the Dublin City Council and the county councils in the surrounding suburban jurisdictions”(2002). In many instances, the central government sectoral department established a separate body, effectively a quango, to manage the structural funded urban projects, rather than go through the existing local authority structures and the elected base of local representatives. Returning to our case study of the regeneration of the Temple Bar area, this will prove a useful illustration of this emergent urban governance pattern in Ireland.

In the later part of 1988, there was informal contact between the Temple Bar Development Council and Paddy Teahon, the dynamic and influential General Secretary of the Department of the then-Taoiseach, Charles Haughey. His access to the Taoiseach allowed the Temple Bar residents to by-pass the normal formal and time consuming political ladder and instead have access to the heart of government. The Taoiseach was in a position to pluck “pet projects” from the pool of schemes for his own attention. One architect involved in the plans believed that Charles Haughey, the Taoiseach, saw Temple Bar as a visible cultural initiative in which he could promote himself as a statesman in the dying days of his premiership (interview material). Haughey saw the Temple bar area “as the new ‘cultural quarter’ for Dublin to serve as a showpiece for the capital, which had recently been designated the 1991 European City of Culture” (Marshall, 2002). Temple Bar was an eye-catching project at the heart of the capital city, and activists were delighted when Haughey publicly confirmed the importance of the area.
“Temple Bar is one of the most important, traditional, attractive and noteworthy parts of the city, and it has to be refurbished and kept and I won’t let CIÉ near it” Haughey, 1985.

Article 10 of the European Regional Development Fund was established by the European Commission to fund innovatory projects, which included during the period 1989-1991 a total of 32 Urban Pilot Projects. The Department of the Taoiseach facilitated a partnership with the grassroots Temple Bar Development Council, who then developed an application for ERDF designation as an Article 10 Urban Pilot Project. In November 1990 an application was made under Article 10 of Regulation No. 4254/88 for ERDF grant aid for an urban co-operation with local development groups notably the Temple Bar Development Council. The Urban Pilot project submission was the first time that the cultural quarter’s role had been officially defined. In the event, the application was successful, and IR£3.6m (€4.57m) was granted for planning, infrastructure, and the construction of the Irish Film Centre in Eustace Street (Marshall, 2002).

Moreover, soon after the announcement of the ERDF award, the Department of the Taoiseach requested a speedy creation of legislation to establish new institutional structures to manage the development of the Temple Bar area. The relevant legislation included the 1991 Finance Act and the 1991 Temple Bar Renewal and Development Act. Temple Bar Renewal Ltd. was set up with the remit to approve development proposals to enable them to avail of the incentives provided for in Chapter VII of the Finance Act, 1991. Temple Bar Properties Ltd. is the Development Company for the Temple Bar Area so designated under the Temple Bar Area Renewal and Development Act, 1991. Funding under the auspices of the EU Urban Pilot Project together with the package of tax incentives outlined in the Finance Act 1991, provided the financial mechanisms to underpin urban renewal in the area. The establishment of two new companies Temple Bar Properties Ltd. and Temple Bar Renewal, provided the organisational and management framework to give form and

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10 This legislation was introduced it on the last day of the sitting of Dáil Éireann, when fewer TDs were in attendance, instead of waiting until the start of the autumn sitting.
11 Temple Bar Properties was founded to oversee the development of Temple Bar as a bustling residential, cultural and small business precinct of the city. This mission statement was formalised through provisions of the Temple Bar Area Renewal and Development Act, 1991. As well as ability to compulsorily acquire property in the Temple Bar Area and to acquire and manage the lands, buildings and leases, Temple Bar Properties were given control over the manner in which their tenants in the area sub-let, shared or sub-leased their buildings. The Act also allowed the Minister for Finance to guarantee borrowings by Temple Bar Properties up to an amount of IR£25 million.
focus to the renewal process. Central Government commitment to the project in the form of the support of the Department of the Taoiseach was also vital to ensure that the project would succeed.

The story of the regeneration of Dublin’s Temple Bar area is a story about centralised government, combining with the personal interest of the then-Taoiseach, Charles Haughey and tireless work by grassroots activists, who together bypassed the largely powerless local government structures in the form of Dublin City Council. Temple Bar Properties (TBP) was set up to enable governmental control of regeneration as well as to undertake of community consultation. It was a new layer of government to facilitate partnership with local business people, artists, and residents and ensured that “the agencies in Temple Bar have deliberately adopted a strategic management approach to the area” (Montgomery 1995: 137). It is also useful to note that some of the key individuals involved in the original Temple Bar Development Council also subsequently took management responsibilities within Temple Bar Properties. Over the course of the first (1989-1993) and second (1994-1999) CSFs, Temple Bar attracted some IR£40.6m (€51.55m) in EU and State funding, of which IR£22.1m (€28.06m) came directly from the European Regional Development Fund. Despite the European Commission’s strong desire for subsidiarity – policy-making and implementation at the lowest possible level – the Temple Bar project was managed in a way wholly consistent with the centralised Irish approach to governance (Marshall, 2002). The sponsoring department, in this case that of the Taoiseach, implemented partnership and subsidiarity on its own terms, creating a brand-new State agency to serve as an implementing authority with the participation of local-level actors and the social partners.

For some commentators, the new institutional structures created such as Temple Bar Properties (TRP) are seen in a negative light. Marshall argues that “the creation of a special regime for Temple Bar further eroded the power of existing local authorities” (Marshall, 2002). For others, such as Montgomery (1995), “the government was careful and very sure to keep Dublin City Council at arm’s length from the whole initiative…the effect has been to free the area from the dead hand of bureaucracy”, thereby ensuring efficient implementation and progress (in Marshall 2002). Russell suggests that “local authorities acted as facilitators and enablers of private sector development, rather than as the key drivers or implementing agencies of urban renewal (Russell, 2001; see also KPMG et al., 1996; Prunty, 1995 and Society of Chartered Surveyors 1993). Certainly these contrasting critiques go to the heart of
the debate about the principle of local democratic participation and representation in this emergent Irish urban governance model. Moreover, this issue becomes more relevant when it is noted that the Temple Bar governance structure was later replicated throughout the Dublin area as additional European funds were directed to urban initiatives.

Certainly the European Commission was unhappy with the heavily centralised manner in which the Irish Government was implementing the Structural Funds and called for greater subsidiarity (Payne, 1999). In the run up to the second round of the Structural Funds, the Irish Government established sub-national Regional Authorities\(^\text{12}\) and claimed to endorse a more central role for local government. However the reality of the implementation of the Structural Funds on the ground was very different (Payne, 2000). During the second round of the Structural funds, the model of “lead government department” was retained and strengthened (Payne, 1999). The development of Temple Bar remained a project under the auspices of the Department of the Taoiseach up until 1993, when there was a general re-organisation of government departments. Responsibility for the Temple Bar project was then shifted to the Department of the Environment, a body better suited to overseeing the formal development of a project, following its incubation period in the Department of the Taoiseach. The partnership between the local community in Temple Bar and central and sectoral oriented government departments remained strong as did the exclusion of the relevant sub-national authorities, namely Dublin City Council, from key executive decisions affecting the Temple Bar project. Despite this, the success of this flagship project, Temple bar, “is striking: from the initial ERDF block grant in 1991, TBP was able to leverage an additional IR£37 million in cultural funding from the EU and the Exchequer over the course of the 1989-93 and 1994-99 CSFs” (Marshall, 2002). Moreover the Temple bar area has been transformed into a cultural, economic and social arena for the city and surpassed all expectations as a project in urban regeneration.

\(^{12}\) Eight new Regional Authorities (RA) were created under the second CSF to provide a new regional focus for the implementation of Structural Funds programmes Made up of unelected bodies composed of town and city councillors, who “never enjoyed a high profile in central government, political or parliamentary circles” (Knox and Haslam 1999: 27) the RA’s were demanded by the European Commission which had been adamant that a regional tier be established for the administration of ERDF and ESF programmes. They were granted only a token consultative and oversight role over the course of the CSF. The Dublin Regional Authority and its sister organisations exist predominantly to satisfy the formal European requirements of partnership and subsidiarity, and have almost no resources or credibility amongst national political actors. Ireland’s central government once again played the key role.
In this research we explored the Temple Bar case study in some more detail to see if we could shed some more light on this issue of local authority participation and its relevance to the Temple Bar project. At about the time of preparing the initial ERDF Urban Pilot Project proposal, and indeed during the subsequent drafting of legislation, the Planning Department of the Dublin City Council was split between the more conservative-minded planners, who viewed Temple Bar as an opportunity for traditional heritage design to attract modest tourism, and those younger planners, within Dublin City Council, who were enthusiastic for change and whose efforts thus far had been limited by finance. Certainly, the Urban Pilot Project (UPP) submission was built on Dublin City Council’s initial aspirations to create internal permeability in the area via an east-west central pedestrian route. Dublin City Council envisaged that this route would link the existing lively retail area centred on Crown Alley, with the cultural uses of the Olympia Theatre and the Project Arts Centre and, provide associated new public urban spaces. However, the final UPP submission for ERDF funds envisaged the creation of a cultural hub, which went far beyond the more conservative plans called for by Dublin City Council’s mainly senior planners at the time. In making a case for the European applicability of the Urban Pilot project and in stressing its innovative elements, a case was made for integrating urban design with cultural provision. The application for the Urban Pilot project stated:

“It is also innovative in seeking to link cultural provision, youth recreational consumer demand and tourism revenue potential by the provision of exhibition/performance spaces along a new pedestrian walkway.” (Urban Pilot Project Application, 1990)

At the outset of the regeneration programme, many within Temple Bar believed that the Dublin City Council’s passive stance on their proposals was based on a suspicion that it would never see fruition. At the same time, the Temple Bar Development Council had little faith in the capacity of the Dublin City Council to deliver13. Projects that could be undertaken by the Dublin City Council were limited by tight financial control. It had no cohesive over-arching development plan for

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13 “Outwith the Dublin Corporation, there are presently three County Councils, responsible for local authority functions: Fingal County Council, Dun Laoghaire- Rathdown County Council and the South Dublin County Council. These bodies were created in 1991, when old Dublin County Council was disbanded. This local government reform, in turn, caused serious disruption of the metropole, as new institutions had to be created (or often duplicated)” (Marshall, 2002; see also Fitzgerald, 1992)
Dublin, nor did it have the finances to undertake one even if the desire had existed. There seemed little hope that the changes, demanded by the local business interests and residents, could be undertaken by the local authority.

Whatever way we judge the Temple Bar project, the impact of the legislation introduced in 1991 is clear: it gave a new dynamic to the regeneration project and created new working patterns amongst the key partners to the process. At one level within Dublin City Council there is a deep sense of grievance that it has been effectively sidelined in terms of the executive decision making regarding the development of the Temple Bar area. Marshall has pointed out that “Dublin Corporation was included on both of Temple Bar’s management committees, but as day-to-day executive decisions remained the province of TBP, the city’s elected government played a comparatively minor role in the formulation of redevelopment policy. The Corporation’s only leverage over the Temple Bar project was in planning approvals; unlike the Docklands, Temple Bar was not designated an independent planning area” (2002).

However our research work also suggests that planners and architects within Dublin City Council, while recognising their limited role, have also successfully worked together with Temple Bar Properties in the intervening period. Together, they oversee the implementation of architectural framework for the Temple Bar area, which is led by a private group of architects called Group 91. The working model is that each area of development within the Temple Bar area had its own individual style based on the plans of the constituent architectural company within Group ‘91, but agreed within the general parameters set in collaboration with the Dublin City Council planners, the architects and the Temple Bar Properties. This arrangement has been hailed as the most successful aspect of the redevelopment and there was a view within the Dublin City Council that this approach – pulling together as many disparate groups as possible – was an effective framework for future Dublin re-developments (interview material). Moreover, our research suggests that a new generation of planners was emerging within Dublin City Council, who are more

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14 In October 1991, several teams of Dublin-based architects were asked to submit proposals for a framework plan for Temple Bar, to spark discussion on the visible aspects of the area. The competition was won by Group ‘91 a loose team of eight separate practices which formed itself into a company in order to submit a collective proposal. This informal grouping became responsible for much of the visual aspect of the area, reflecting similar informal patterns elsewhere in the project.
ambitious and confident about the potential role for the City Council in large-scale regeneration projects.

2.2 Community Partnership and Local Government Reform in the 1990s

From the late 1980s onwards, the Irish government came under increasing pressure from the European Commission to institute appropriate sub-national governance structures to facilitate participation in the preparation and co-ordination of the Structural funds process. As the discussion of urban regeneration process in the Temple bar area of Dublin suggested, the favoured response of the Irish government departments was to establish a separate statutory body – a quango- to manage the policy process. This often involved either bypassing entirely or relegating to a minor role the participation of the appointed and elected officials from the relevant local government offices, as was the case for the Temple Bar project.

At the micro level of local development policy and social renewal, a similar tactic of bypassing local government was adopted. In early 1990s, the Irish government established a number of Area Based Partnerships\(^\text{15}\) in disadvantaged areas and subsequently, a range of other types of local development groups, such as EU LEADER groups, which “were playing a pioneering role in social renewal of their respective areas” (Russell, 2001, see also Parkinson, 1998; Walsh et al, 1998). Nevertheless, over time there were increasing demands from the local government sector, particularly by elected representatives, that they should have a much more central role in these local development initiatives, reflecting their democratic mandate at the local level. It was usually the case that local community activists in these groups did not seek or welcome the involvement of the local authority, fearing that the local development process would become bogged down in political cronyism or local bureaucracy. Local government officials, along with other statutory agencies

\(^{15}\) “Under the national social partnership agreement, the Programme for Economic and Social Progress (PESP) in 1991, twelve Partnership companies (legally constituted under the Companies Act and limited by guarantee) were set up to pilot an area based response to long term unemployment over the period 1991-1993. In 1992 a EU Global Grant for local development – provided funding for the 12 Partnership companies and for an additional 28 local development groups. The Global grant placed greater emphasis then the PESP on community development and on building capacity in local organisation so that they could participate in an effective manner in the local development process. In 1995 under the Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development a further 26 Partnership Companies were created” (Russell, 2001).
representatives, did participate as senior board members in these local partnerships but they tended to be very defensive of their role as service providers. As Russell suggests “this feeling of defensiveness was exacerbated for local authorities, who unlike many of the other statutory agencies, saw themselves as having a local development remit, the appropriate administrative structures and comprehensive geographical spread, for playing the role allocated to the partnerships” (2001). At the same time, local authorities, as key providers of public housing, were blamed for the growth in social problems associated with the spatial concentration of poverty, such as those which are generated in some of Dublin’s housing estates and flat complexes (Fahey, 1999; Fahey and Williams, 2000). In defense of the local authorities, they had neither the financial resources nor statutory role to be able to tackle these wider social issues. Indeed Russell suggests that “the establishment of ABPs, just as with the establishment of single focus regeneration agencies can be viewed as an element of a centralising government and an effort to bypass ineffective local government.” (2001). Rather than initiate a difficult and complex reform, local government in Ireland was, once again, sidelined in the policy process. Moreover serious questions about the accountability and democratic representation of partnership-led policy initiatives for local development continued to arise.

By the mid 1990s, we see further reforms being introduced, which was particularly relevant for urban renewal policy. As pointed out earlier, there was increasing criticism raised about the property-led focus of the Urban Renewal Schemes used in Ireland since the late 1980s. A major report of urban policy was published at this time, wherein “a consortium of consultants headed up by KPMG in Ireland clearly outlined this failure” (KPMG et al.1996 in Russell, 2001). Also in 1996, a document was published by the Irish Government entitled “Better Local Government - A Programme for Change” which set out a programme for the future development of local authority services in Ireland. In 1998, there followed the Report of the Task Force on the Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems which called for the establishment of County/City Development Boards (CDBs) to bring about an integrated approach to the delivery of both State and local development services at local level. In 1999, this was followed up by an initiative entitled “A New Deal for Local Government” which, for example, increased by about

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16 CDBs are representative of local government, local development bodies (e.g. Area Partnerships, LEADER Groups etc), the State agencies or quangos and social partners (i.e. business, trade unions and farmers interests) operating locally.
a third the funds of local government for discretionary day-to-day expenditure. At the same time local authorities were asked to establish Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs), whose remit is to prepare the groundwork for policies to be decided on by the county/city councils. Alongside elected councillors, a minimum of one third of the membership of each SPC is drawn from sectoral representatives, giving sectoral interests and communities an opportunity for input to local government policymaking. Such committees were also used in the preparation and monitoring of implementation the Integrated Area Plans (IAPs) for certain areas designated for urban renewal. These latter policy initiatives, particularly the more formalised approach to partnership-led local development combined with targeted policy approaches to designated areas promise a more balanced approach to urban renewal. Our second case study of the urban regeneration in the Liberties/Coombe area provides a useful opportunity to test this.

2.3 Regenerating the Liberties/Coombe area of Dublin city

The Liberties/Coombe area has a rich history of market trading as well as production of goods. Traditionally the area also served as a main focus for meeting and selling of agricultural and farming produce. Although still associated with open market trading, most of the small firms or family businesses associated with the traditional manufacturing and trading of goods have not survived. For much of the twentieth century the area became associated with poverty, unemployment and the variety of social ills that emerge in these conditions.

This case study describes two interwoven policy processes for urban renewal in the Liberties/Coomb area and the chronology of main events for this case study is given in Table 3 below. Legislative and policy changes in the second half of the 1990s prompted the Dublin City Council, to begin the process of developing Integrated Area Plans for Dublin city, including one for the Liberties/Coombe area. The Liberties/Coombe Integrated Area Plan (IAP) was completed in March 1998 and was submitted by Dublin City Council to the Minister for the Environment for

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17 see http://www.environ.ie/DOEI/DOEIPol.nsf/wvNavView/Overview
18 Following this initiative, the Local Government Act, 2001 (No.37 of 2001) was enacted. The stated aims of the Act are to enhance the role of the elected member; to support community involvement with local authorities in a more participative local democracy; and to modernise local government legislation, and provide the framework for new financial management systems and other procedures to promote efficiency and effectiveness.
endorsement\textsuperscript{19}. The Liberties/Coombe is one of five areas in the inner city targeted by Dublin City Council for redevelopment under an Integrated Area Plan (IAP). The objective of developing an Integrated Area Plan is to bring about sustainable urban regeneration by encouraging a framework of intervention that achieves a balance between social, physical and economic renewal\textsuperscript{20}.

\textsuperscript{19} A large section of the south west inner city is included in the plan, from the Liffey quays in the north to the Grand Canal in the South and from Patrick Street and Clanbrassil Street in the east to St. James's Hospital and Rialto in the west.

\textsuperscript{20} This type of approach to planning was also supported by the changes in government policy regarding the focus of the 1999 Urban Renewal Scheme for tax designated areas.
### Table 3: Chronology of Liberties /Coombe IAP and the Digital Hub project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Key Events of the Time Period</th>
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| 1997-98 | • Preparation and completion of Liberties/Coombe Integrated Area Plan (IAP)  
         • Establishment of IAP Monitoring Committee |
| 1999 | • Enterprise Ireland report recommends development of digital media in Ireland  
       • Government announces plan to support establishment of MediaLab Europe (MLE) in Dublin associated “media village.” |
| 2000 | • Digital Media Development Limited established by a Government decision under the aegis of the Department of the Taoiseach |
| 2001 | • “Digital Hub” discussion document published outlining vision for development of the area.  
       • Dublin City Council approved a variation to the City Development Plan (includes Liberties/Coombe IAP) to provide for a core development of the Digital Hub  
       • Responsibility for Digital Hub transferred to the Department of Public Enterprise  
       • IAP Monitoring Committee fail to endorse their Annual Report |
| 2002 | • Digital Hub Development Agency bill published  
       • Private sector partners in place  
       • Urban Design Framework Plan (with reference to IAP) agreed  
       • IAP Monitoring Committee fail to endorse their Annual Report  
       • Two Community representatives resign from IAP Monitoring Committee |
| 2003 | • Digital Hub Development Agency Act 2003 signed into law  
       • First Phase of Digital Hub Implementation completed |

In order to ensure this balanced approach to planning and implementation of the Integrated Area Plan, a Monitoring Committee was established to oversee the IAP progress. The Monitoring Committee comprised of local authority elected representatives, community representatives, and a number of representatives from the private business sector and trade unions. Initially there was a reasonable level of enthusiasm for this new type of initiative in urban renewal policy, and in particular,
the community representatives welcomed the invitation to be consulted on forthcoming plans to develop their area. However, it seems that early on in the work of this Committee, serious difficulties arose for the community representatives. The three local elected representatives from Dublin City Council insisted that the chair of the Monitoring Committee should be rotated between themselves, the elected representatives, despite the objection from the community representatives that this was not a requirement specified in the terms of reference of the Committee.

Subsequent to this and through the Monitoring Committee, the community representatives made a number of proposals for changes to the implementation of certain aspects of the IAP. These proposals reflected local concerns about the need for adequate parking facilities and pedestrian walkways. The vast majority of these proposals were rejected by Dublin City Council, which resulted in claims from the community representatives that the work of the Monitoring committee was no more than a cosmetic exercise, and that property developers’ demands were more important than the needs of the local community (Interview material). Indeed following the ongoing objections of the community representatives, the Monitoring Committee failed to reach a unanimous agreement and could not endorse either the 2000-2001 or 2001-2002 Annual reports of the Liberties/Coombe IAP Monitoring Committee. As stated, “following the non-approval of the Annual Report 2000-2001 by the Monitoring Committee, a Minority Report outlining a number of serious and unresolved concerns on the part of the Community Representatives was prepared and submitted to the Minister for the Environment and Local Government” (Liberties/Coombe IAP Annual Report 2001-2002). By November 2002, the Minister’s office had issued a response and following this, two of the four community representatives resigned from the Monitoring Committee. Following this breakdown in communications, the IAP Monitoring Committee has met infrequently and the work of the Committee has remained, to some extent, hampered by these unresolved issues.

Despite these difficulties within the Liberties/ Coombe IAP Monitoring Committee, there is also another story of public/private and community partnership around an urban renewal initiative within the Liberties/Coombe area, which has been very successful. This is the story of the Digital Hub project, which we will now outline below.
The Digital Hub project is located on a nine-acre renovated site, which formed part of the famous St. James Gate Guinness Brewery complex situated in the Liberties/Coombe area of inner city Dublin. The aims of the Digital Hub project is to create a type of cyberspace village by clustering together Irish and international digital media start-up companies and research facilities in one area through the provision of state-of-the-art infrastructure. The broader aim is to encourage the growth of research, enterprise and investment in the digital media industry in Ireland\(^{21}\). In 1999, a number of coincidental events occurred which led to the establishment of the Digital Hub project. First a government commissioned report\(^{22}\) became available in 1999, which, stressed the increased importance of digital media as a growth industry and recommended that the Irish government formulate a policy to embrace this developing technology\(^{23}\). Other reports by Forfás, the State’s policy and advisory board for enterprise and technology, suggested that a defined area of the city be set aside for media development. At about this time also, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) was seeking locations in Europe for their Media-Lab Europe (MLE). MIT's proposal for a Media Lab Europe would build on its already pioneering partnership of corporate financing and academic research, which characterised the MIT Media Lab in Cambridge, Massachusetts in the USA. Part of the MIT proposal included the also opportunity for companies investing in Media Lab Europe to avail of the technology insights developed at the MIT Media Lab in Cambridge. In terms of location and property suitable to house the proposed Media Lab, an opportunity arose through the Guinness Brewery company\(^{24}\), which was seeking to sell a lot of its now derelict property in the Liberties/Coombe area. This property formed part of the St. James’s Gate Guinness Brewery which itself

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\(^{21}\) "The digital hub, as it is commonly called, will house companies that specialize in everything from special effects and digital TV to electronic music and technology R&D—all within a deeply traditional neighbourhood of about 20,000 people" (http://www.darwinmag.com/read/070101/eire.html).

\(^{22}\) Irish Council for Science, Technology & Innovation (ICSTI) led this report. The Irish Government set up the ICSTI in 1997 with the aim of building a strategic science, technology and innovation policy for the country.

\(^{23}\) The report argued that while the Irish government's low corporate tax rates of the late 1980s and early 1990s succeeded in luring technology leaders such as EMC, Dell and Microsoft to Ireland, most of the jobs created were in support sectors—such as manufacturing or call centres—which do not generate much intellectual capital. Moreover, these jobs were also dependent on labour costs staying low and as the wages of Irish workers continued to rise, so the incentive to stay would soon disappear. For Ireland’s economic prosperity to continue, its leaders needed to build a framework to support home-grown innovation (http://www.darwinmag.com/read/070101/eire.html).

\(^{24}\) The Guinness Company is owned by the multinational foods and drinks conglomerate Diageo and Guinness is now brewed in many different locations outside of Dublin and outside of Ireland.
covers a total area of about 64 acres\textsuperscript{25}. The coincidental timing of these developments meant that preliminary enquiries into the possible foundation of the Digital Hub could begin immediately.

For the purposes of this research, we can separate the political process of establishing the Digital Hub into two phases: the initial planning phase 1999-2001 and subsequent first phase of implementation up to 2003. During the initial planning phase, the Department of the Taoiseach played a central role in setting the pace of development. The Irish Government, led by Department of the Taoiseach, reacted rapidly to the opportunity presented by the MIT proposal. By late 1999, the Taoiseach's Department had already reached a provisional agreement with MIT that would see the location of the Media-Lab Europe in the Liberties/Coombe area and in a restored warehouse originally used by the Guinness company. To secure the deal, the Irish Government would later purchase the Guinness properties on behalf of Media Lab Europe, as well as provide substantial seed capital for them to attract start-up companies to locate their business there. Between 1999 and 2001, a broader strategy was rolled out which would lead to the decision to develop the area as a Digital Hub (Digital Media District), with the Media-Lab Europe as the anchor tenant. Alongside this, the Irish Government established the Technology Foresight Fund, which aims to bring world-class researchers to Dublin's universities.

The Department of the Taoiseach facilitated the preparation of a strategy for the phased development of the Digital Hub project and also selected partner organisations to work together with the Taoiseach’s department to plan for the Digital Hub project. At the outset, there were probably five different government departments that could have made a legitimate claim on the sponsorship of the project. Instead officials from these departments were seconded to the Department of the Taoiseach where the project had the full attention of the Secretary General, the most senior civil servant in the department. This was also a very public way of confirming that the project had the full support of the Taoiseach. Alongside these interests, senior representatives of the statutory agencies Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland, both with various responsibilities for industrial development, were also asked to become involved in this planning phase. The most striking aspect of the Digital

\textsuperscript{25} The Guinness Brewery has been located in the area since nineteenth century and at its height employed up to 4000 people. In the later part of the twentieth century, this figure had dwindled to about 400 and much of the Guinness site became redundant and derelict.
Hub development is the speed of progress made and the key role played by the most central government actor, the Department of the Taoiseach, at least in the initial start up phase. The flexible and influential nature of the Department of the Taoiseach means that projects with no natural government departmental home can be “incubated” by the Taoiseach’s Department until developed enough to be given a more permanent home in one of the government departments. Our research suggests that it is questionable whether the Digital Hub would have ever taken off at this point had it not had the visible support of the government (interview material). Others have said that the individual patronage from the Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, also lifted the project out of the possibility of it becoming mired in inter-departmental politics.

In 2000, a separate body or quango called Digital Media Development Ltd. (DMDL) was established to manage the implementation of the Digital Hub project. This agency (DMDL) has responsibility for the delivery of the proposed mix of digital media, enterprise, learning, retail and residential development in targeted Digital Hub area. DMDL also has responsibility to work along the public sector to develop the Public Private Partnership (PPP) financial model, which will fund the Digital Hub project over time. So far the Irish Government has committed an estimated 130 million euro, and it is planned to expand this budget to 250 million euro through these public/private partnerships with key business and research interests. Over the longer term (by 2010) it is envisaged that the Digital Hub project, currently located on a nine acres site will expand to cover about forty acres of land in the wider Liberties/Coombe area.

This almost immediate establishment of the agency, DMDL, to manage the policy and implementation process reminds us that that there is still a very strong tendency to resort to this kind of model of governance, as opposed to enhancing the role and management capacity of existing sub-national government structures. At the time of the announcement of the government’s investment in the MIT-branded media lab, there was some criticism of the government decision from opposition parties and backbenchers, as well as from the academic community. Questions were raised as to why public money was being used to fund what was seen as a private enterprise. Irish academics criticised the government for funding “a research facility with an

26 By 2001, the Department of Public Enterprise had taken the role of “lead department” on the Digital Hub project. By 2003, this responsibility was to move to the Department Communications, Marine and Natural Resources
American university's brand name rather than an Irish one."

The setting up, at arm's length, of an agency or quango like DMDL, like the earlier establishment of Temple Bar Properties, is a useful tactic to be able to ensure reasonably smooth implementation of a major multifaceted project such as Digital Hub. For example, this type of institutional structure provides some distance for the central government, and particularly the Department of the Taoiseach, from the day-to-day political issues and controversies that will inevitably arise. It also easily facilitates the contracting in of full-time executive management services from the private sector and offers a pool of individuals skilled in business and project management, as well public relations. Moreover, many of the public and private sector representatives, involved in the Temple Bar redevelopment project, were also participants in the later Digital Hub development. The relevant government departments and semi-state agencies continued to be represented on the management committee of DMDL and in the public/private partnerships being formed to develop the Digital Hub over time. Indeed during the start up period of DMDL, the Secretary General of the Department of the Taoiseach took up the position of executive chairman of the agency.

From its inception, the Digital Hub project was clearly defined by the Department of the Taoiseach as a policy initiative to be driven from the national level. However the project is in fact clearly linked to the development of a particular defined area within inner city Dublin and addresses the multifaceted aims for urban renewal in that area, as identified in the Liberties/Coombe IAP. When the Digital Hub was first mooted in Government circles, the Dublin City Council was keen to be one of the main actors in

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27 http://www.darwinmag.com/read/070101/eire.html
28 "The Board of DMDL commissioned an executive services team, comprising a consortium of companies to implement the first phase of The Digital Hub project with public sector, private sector and community partners up to December 2003. The consortium, which provides executive services to The Digital Hub is led by Magahy & Company and includes Price Waterhouse Coopers, Murray O'Laoire Architects, BDO Simpson Xavier and Judo Design" (DMD, 2001).
29 One of the most noticeable aspects of Irish political life is the relatively small pool of people from which political actors are taken. A small population has given Ireland a small and readily accessible political elite. However, this may also have a downside. More recently, another high-profile urban redevelopment project in Dublin has collapsed in part because of negative rumours surrounding the personal friendship of its major partners. Such has been the narrow band of people involved in urban redevelopment projects that the Dáil Public Accounts Committee questioned whether tenders were awarded on the basis of friendships or on merit. A number of state-sponsored tribunals have been founded in Ireland to examine corruption in planning and other issues, partially resulting from informal practices in un-regulated areas of the economy. Collins and O’Shea’s study into corruption in Irish politics has noted the overlapping of public duties and private interests in many political projects and the often informal nature of decision-making processes, especially "golden circles" or "cronyism" in matters of urban planning (Collins and O’Shea, 2000, p.71).
the development process. The Digital Hub was a perfect opportunity for Dublin City Council, particularly for the planning and economic development sections, to demonstrate how much had changed in terms of the its organisational capacity. While the lead remained at level of national government, the Dublin City Council was asked to come on board the planning process with a view to it co-ordinating the necessary planning and development of infrastructure in the area to facilitate the Digital Hub project. Unlike the Temple Bar project, there was no attempt to sideline the Dublin City Council. Instead it seems that DMDL recognised that a collaborative partnership approach with Dublin City Council would be much more beneficial and early on, Dublin City Council was asked to participate in the DMDL management committee.

Another rationale for involving the Dublin City Council from an early stage was the need to change the original Integrated Area Plan for the Liberties/ Coombe area (i.e. part of the Dublin City Development Plan) to accommodate the Digital Hub proposal. While this change went through with reasonable speed and relatively limited controversy in late 2001, early on in the Digital Hub process it seemed very likely that this might not be so. Our earlier discussion of the work of the Integrated Area Plan Monitoring Committee suggests that the relationships between Dublin City Council and the community representatives were becoming increasingly strained over this period of time and there was a chance that this controversy would spill over into the Digital Hub project. The DMDL quickly realised that given the proposed location of the Digital Hub in a very traditional community, it was important that local residents and businesses support and feel they can gain from the redevelopment of their area. The DMDL looked across the river Liffey to the Irish Financial Services Centre (IFSC), developed after Temple Bar and before the Digital Hub, which has been plagued with local disquiet and vandalism from its excluded local community. Worried that negative stories in newspapers may frighten potential clients for the Digital Hub, it was deemed more efficient and practical to bring the community into the project. It was better for DMDL to consult with the community – however tokenistic this may be- than to have the community on the outside without any forum to register their views, except for the media or resorting to vandalism (interview material).

The response from DMDL to this problem is very informative and in particular shows the skill of the DMDL (contracted in) executive services team, and others within to DMDL, to manage and effectively defuse a potentially difficult situation. DMDL
sought to involve neighbourhood residents, sending questionnaires to residents and business owners asking what they thought of the plans, which buildings in their area they wanted to see renovated, the kinds of jobs they wanted to see created and what kind of training they wanted. The DMDL also directly met with and asked more than 140 different area community groups to help draw up a mission statement that will reflect as many local perspectives as possible. Local groups were quick to organise themselves into committees when meeting representatives of the Digital Hub. Some within DMDL believe that the consultation was primarily a face-saving exercise which may be able to effect minor issues, but which can have no major effect on what is a purely commercial venture. It is difficult to estimate what outcome this community participation has had on the Digital Hub project, but it is certain that local dissatisfaction about the re-development has generated less media interest than that in Temple Bar. Moreover, many in the community worry that with all the new money pouring into the area, housing prices will rise to the point where they and their children will be priced out of the market (http://www.darwinmag.com/read/070101/eire.html). In response to these concerns, the creation of affordable, new housing has been identified as one of the objectives of the urban renewal associated with the Digital Hub project over its medium term development. To conclude this section, the Digital Hub Development Agency Act was signed into law in 2003 and this put the DMDL on a statutory basis as the lead agency for managing the Digital Hub project. The Digital Hub Development Act modified the organisation of the Board and specifically listed its powers, making separate the roles for overall project management Board and day-to-day executive powers. Moreover, the Act specifically establishes the role and participation of local community representatives in the Digital Hub management Board, as part of a three way partnership model between public/private and community interests.

3 Patterns of governance for urban renewal in Ireland

Our empirical research has spanned a critical time period in the urban regeneration of Dublin's inner city. From the case studies presented, it is clear that the institutions of Ireland's centralised government remain deeply rooted and powerful. Partnership based governance, Irish style, increasingly involves central government departments

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30 In July 2001 the Liberties/Coombe Integrated Area Plan Monitoring Committee established an Advisory Group, under the chairmanship of Clive Brownlee, Assistant Managing Director of Diageo Ireland to examine the potential benefit for the community from The Digital Hub. The Advisory Group has produced a report which helped to shape this development strategy particularly in the areas of potential long-term benefit for the community (DMD, 2001).
initiating or directly engaging with micro level community actors and social partners in the initial stages of a local development initiative. Moreover over the 1990s there was a significant increase in the capacity of central government departments to effectively engage directly with local level actors and social partners more generally, often for the purposes of managing EU funds (Payne, 1999). This increase in capacity refers to changes in the internal organisation of the government departments, such as the provision of extra personnel and other resources, in separate dedicated sections within the overall department structure.

Following the Reform of the Structural Funds, the European Commission sought to persuade and coerce Ireland’s political elite to enhance and strengthen the country’s sub-national government structures for regional and local representation. For the most part, the response of central government in Ireland was to sideline the traditional forms of local and regional government. In order to be able to bypass local government and yet establish a credible mechanism or process for partnership, the Irish central government has consistently resorted to the model of a stand-alone agency or quango. This agency has responsibility for effectively managing these partnerships “between central government ‘lead’ departments, these arm’s length agencies, the social partners and micro-level groups at the community level, thereby satisfying the Commission’s demand for broad participation and consultation” (Marshall, 2001). Indeed, at this stage there are numerous statutory or non-statutory based agencies or quangos, like Temple Bar Properties or the DMDL, with responsibility for particular types of policy implementation. Some commentators are highly critical of this approach and argue that “the Dublin area now has one of the most convoluted structures of governance in the entire EU, a status which may ultimately threaten to undo its newfound success” (Marshall, 2001).

4. The future: contested governance and urban renewal

Our research findings suggest that there is emerging and contested pattern of governance for urban renewal in the Dublin city. The story of evolving governance patterns in Dublin is also one of growing and persistent calls for greater representation in the policy process. While this call has been echoed across the Irish political system, in particular, we have observed that public and private actors at sub-national level have become more aware and confident in their own potential contribution to the policy process. Perhaps this is not too surprising given Ireland’s long tradition of clientelistic politics, which has always encouraged individuals and
local community groups to take their political grievances directly to the top, to their national elected representatives in the Dáil. Moreover the impact of the various EU financed initiatives directly targeting local communities has allowed new actors to enter a political process, which has traditionally been centralist and hierarchical. Despite the limited effectiveness that these new actors actually enjoy there, there is little evidence, at the local level at least, that the enthusiasm for the partnership approach to policymaking is on the wane (Payne et al. 2001). Marshall suggests that “grass-roots actors, accustomed to a place at the table following a decade of EU-mandated partnership arrangements, show no intention of withdrawing from the urban policy process despite the progressive wind-down of EU funding for Dublin city-region” (2001).

This research suggests that the ad-hoc approach to partnership governance in Ireland has led to a kind of confusion and irreverence about the distinction between participative and representative democracy. Often this has resulted in the pursuit of partnership led governance for its own sake, with little attention paid to who is representing who, on what basis and with what capacity to do so. Our research points to the general lack of trust, which characterises local level relationships between the local public elected representatives and the local private sector and community interests. Local urban development initiatives are seen to be successful often in spite of local government, which has usually felt threatened and sidelined by these activities.

The introduction of the various local government reforms from the mid-1990s onwards promises a stronger co-ordinating role for democratically elected local government in Ireland. Moreover, these reforms also attempt to incorporate into their model of local government the widespread demand and popularity of participatory form of local governance. However the research findings presented here suggest that, by themselves, these reforms seem unable to facilitate city and county councils to engage constructively with local partners and establish a clear advisory role or voice for the local community and social partners in local government policy. The findings second of the area-based case studies, particularly the discussion of the IAP in this research point to these failings. While this move towards a more formalised approach to partnership at the local level and within local government is welcomed by many of those involved, the really difficult and thorny issues of enhancing the resources, management capacity and policy remit of democratically elected local government in Ireland remains essentially untouched. In the absence of real progress on this front, Ireland’s favourite response, innovative but ad-hoc, effective
but of dubious democratic credentials, the ubiquitous quango seems likely to remain
the only game in town.
References

Interviews
Semi-structured interviews were undertaken by the authors with senior officials who were involved in the regeneration of Temple Bar and/or the Digital Hub either in a personal capacity or as representatives from the following bodies, on the dates shown.

Temple Bar Properties 1.4.2003
Group 91 Architects 3.4.2003
Magahy and Co. 8.4.2003
Dublin City Council Planning Department 10.4.2003
The Digital Hub 9.6.2003
Irish Business and Employers Confederation 24.6.2003
Enterprise Ireland 25.6.2003
IDA Ireland 26.6.2003
Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources 14.7.2003
National Centre for Partnership and Performance 16.7.2003
Dublin City Council City Manager’s Department 28.7.2003
South West Inner City Network (SWICN) 23.10.2003

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