'Problem Neighbourhoods' in a Part-Linear, Part-Network Regime:

Problems with, and possible responses to, the Housing Market Renewal Leviathan

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Cover illustration: View from the top floor Lomeshaye Bridge Mill, looking across housing in Whitefield to St Mary's Church. Image courtesy of North West Heritage Trust.

Abstract

This thesis investigates the knowledge and governance practices that surround the way government has pursued 'sustainable communities' by trying to balance housing markets in supposedly low demand areas. The government's housing market renewal initiative has been characterised by fifteen-year masterplans proposing a mix of housing redevelopment and refurbishment to attract higher income households. Academic research has been drawn upon to argue that this approach is 'evidence based'. However, opponents of the approach dispute the dominant vision of progress, fearing a loss of heritage, home and community.

The thesis shows how the housing market research which has justified and directed renewal was informed by previous attempts at slum clearance, and by the centralisation and marketisation of housing policy. The investigation disputes the objectivity of that research, highlighting instead its use to uphold a discursive technology, or 'black box', which joined up the interests of housing and local government institutions with central government decision making arenas. The co-ordinating qualities of this black box were initially pivotal to securing funding for deprived, depopulated and hard-to-manage areas. However, as renewal schemes progressed, the black box cultivated an increasingly rigid and opaque approach to decision making. This approach satisfied a demand for co-ordination within a distinctive governance regime, which is referred to as a part-linear, part-network regime. The linear component of this regime is made up of central government technologies of control, based on universal ideas of how cities work and linear, statistical attempts at measurement. The network element is made up of alliances of regional, sub-regional and local actors from the public, private and third sectors. Central government seeks to use the part-linear, part-network regime to maintain control, while allowing sub-regional and local actors enough flexibility to co-ordinate the interests of a fragmented local state spanning public and private sectors. The dynamics of the regime have encouraged the development of guarded alliances between organisations working together to pursue public and private funding in a period of macro-economic housing market boom. This has crowded out less well connected interests and narratives, even when these have had an informed and coherent epistemological basis. The subjugation of these arguments runs counter to knowledge-based policy making, which requires earnest consideration of the way issues are understood by different actors. For these conceptual reasons, housing market analysis approaches to policy making risk being ineffective and socially unjust.

The thesis uses an exploration of housing market renewal schemes, principally in Liverpool, Merseyside and Whitefield in Lancashire, to test the conceptual argument above. It illustrates the importance of institutional cultures and local networks of opposition to the way that the housing market renewal black box has been imposed. The local state in Liverpool is highly co-ordinated and well connected. Multiple pots of funding are located within a 'meta-partnership regime', which employs black boxed housing market narratives to demonstrate joined up policy. Despite vociferous opposition, and successful legal challenges, this strong form of organisation has driven through centrally prescribed proposals for the redevelopment of part of the Kensington neighbourhood. The level of organisation in Liverpool contrasts with the less well co-ordinated and less well funded environment in Whitefield. Expert-led proposals for clearance of the Whitefield neighbourhood were challenged at a public inquiry and compromise was negotiated through an enquiry-by-design. Even so, highly organised objectors were unable to break open the housing market renewal black box and therefore could not generate discussion around the viability of alternative problem framings and responses. The cases highlight a conflict between the need for mechanisms of long distance persuasion and control to distribute central funding to shrinking cities, and the capacity to exploit local knowledge and opportunities when designing responses.

In both of the cases above, the end of a boom period in the housing market adds a new layer of complexity to the disputes. Schemes are at risk of being undermined by the recession and solutions are needed if a legacy of neighbourhood blight is to be avoided. The thesis concludes with a personal suggestion that more equitable and effective approaches to renewal require deliberation around less capital intensive responses to creating local employment and tackling neighbourhood blight.

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This thesis is as much the result of reflection on my previous education and experience as it is a study of urban policies. I must therefore extend my acknowledgements beyond those above to include, of course and as always, my parents and a few seminal teachers over the years, whose support and wise words somehow wind themselves between the many words in this thesis. A big thanks to 'Paddy' Carpmael, my tutor at Norwich School, and also to the sociology and general studies teachers at the Hewitt School. It seems a long time ago, but also so near.

Preface

Prior to writing this thesis I worked for Newcastle City Council as planning officer on the Walker Riverside project. Although the local authority was responsible for plan production at the time, the Walker Riverside project was a multi-partner endeavour including external funding bodies, developers and the arms-length housing management organisation. It also included representatives of residents and businesses. My role was to convert draft Supplementary Planning Guidance into an Area Action Plan. The process of agreeing the planning approach was a highly contested one. There was strong opposition to demolition proposals from local Councillors. This opposition interfaced with a varied reception of the proposals by the local residents. Early community involvement activity had encouraged the forming of neighbourhood level residents associations which tended to focus on the immediate issues in their area. By contrast we, as planners and regeneration professionals, sought to focus on bringing these issues together and acting strategically.

The Draft Masterplan had been developed by consultants using community 'capacity building' exercises together with an analysis of statistical information on demographics, deprivation and housing among other issues. It contained within it a diagnosis that the high proportion of social rented housing in the area (73% of all properties) was contributing to the high rate of population loss (40% over 30 years). The proposed reaction was to demolish hundreds of properties, the majority of which were council owned. The process of converting the Draft Masterplan to an Area Action Plan required negotiating through an array of actors who were against the plan. Some residents were opposed for many different reasons to the demolition of housing and often made loud representations, supported by their Councillors. As the scheme progressed, a significant increase in demand for social housing occurred, but we didn't know how long-lived this upturn would be.

My experience as a planning officer delivering housing market renewal made me deeply sceptical of inferences (Hackworth and Smith, 2001; Slater, 2006; Glynn, 2008; Cameron and Coaffee, 2006; Allen and Crookes, 2008) that the HMRI could simply be understood as gentrification. The reason for this scepticism was that my experience was not one of an aggressive, top down attempt to appropriate land values from disinvested locations. The environment I worked in was a highly contested one, but these contests could not simply be

reduced to a linear class struggle, or a struggle between labour and capital. This was a far more diverse environment, one that is better encapsulated by Hillier's (2002) analogy of a game or a battle, where disparate actors come to the table with different interests, ethical perspectives and competing strategies. Private developers were not driving this process. In fact, they took a back seat and the constant rivalry of interests meant there was little certainty for them. This was no green field development and there were many times when it looked like the project might collapse. The task of planning was one of negotiating a way forward, heading off the various threats and attempting to get a feel for whether or not residents wanted what we were able to provide. Something more complex was happening than is suggested in many of the gentrification accounts: millions of pounds were being invested by government and a response was needed, at least in the early days of the programme, to population loss and housing vacancy.

The Draft Masterplan for Walker Riverside was intended as a radical reaction to a lack of demand for housing that would make it viable for private developers to build new properties, but it had adapted over time in response to local pressures for less demolition. If much more demolition was removed from the proposals in the process of converting it to an Area Action Plan there would be insufficient sites to build saleable new housing for owner occupation and developer contributions would not be enough to fund the new community facilities promised. As a planner tasked with involving the community in agreeing the planning approach, I was able to rely on two forces. The first was wide consultation on three options which, pragmatically, demonstrated the effect of less demolition on the provision of new community services and investment (in open spaces, transport and so on). The second was the foregrounding of a social mix discourse. National government policy statements such as Homes for All (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2005) and Planning Policy Guidance note 3 (Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions, 2000) sought the creation of mixed communities and problematised 'monolithic' concentrations of social rented tenure. I relied on these documents to form arguments defending the plan in the face of Councillors, residents and partners. I didn't know how 'true' they were at the time, but they were useful. Their status as national policy meant objectors found them hard to disagree with and I assumed that they would have a high degree of sway with the planning inspector who would assess the soundness of the plan at a public inquiry.

This was my experience of urban renewal when I began my PhD research. It would be stretching it to say that I believed renewal was what people wanted, but it seemed to be acceptable to most and a sensible response to social and physical problems in the area. It would not be exaggerating to say that I was very supportive of housing market renewal. I had come to assume, as the mouth piece of government policy on spatial issues of social exclusion in Walker Riverside, that these ideas must have had some kind of academic basis. Not only that, but my own, first-hand experience of deprivation in Walker Riverside seemed broadly to fit with the government's explanations. I therefore started out on this thesis project by exploring the academic roots of the 'theory' of social mix and I found them in Chicago (see Wilson, 1987/ 1996). In depth research on neighbourhoods in Chicago had been undertaken by Julius Wilson and its findings transferred to Walker Riverside. But wasn't this rather a large leap to assume that the same processes were happening in the east end of Newcastle upon Tyne? No firm academic research could support the existence of the neighbourhood opportunity causality in post-industrial locations in the UK. Indeed, much of it suggested that no such link existed. Yet the idea that it did had been integral to securing the adoption of the Walker Riverside Area Action Plan. My initial reaction was to test whether self-reinforcing cultures of poverty existed in the UK. Rapidly, I realised that, even if I had considerably more time, resources and perhaps even a team of researchers, proving or disproving this argument would still be problematic. Mightn't it be possible that such a process could occur in one place and not somewhere else? I wondered how, if I felt I couldn't prove or disprove such generalised, across-the-board ideas of how society works, why was it that others felt they could?

This line of reasoning guides the approach taken in this thesis. If some questions about society could be securely regarded as sufficiently complex that they defied investigation and generalisation, then this would have huge implications for the legitimacy of contemporary approaches to urban renewal. Rather than taking a realist approach to uncovering the facts about urban populations, I decided to ask how it was that others felt confident enough to prescribe them. This approach is particularly well suited to investigating how planning and urban renewal decisions are made because these decisions often rest on the assertion that certain universal discourses are facts. One of the key contributions of this thesis is therefore to reveal the routes by which these kinds of claims have been granted factual status by various parts of government. Scrutiny of the construction of these narratives not only reveals their epistemological flaws, but leads to a detailed map of their political functions.

Introduction

1.1 An introduction to the debate about housing market renewal

In 2002 the government announced that it would offer long term (approximately 15 year) financial support for a major new programme of physical renewal known as the housing market renewal initiative (HMRI). The announcement signalled a move away from the community-led approach to area-based action which New Labour had advocated during its rise to power, and which had led to the creation of the New Deal for Communities programme in 1998. It was argued that initiatives such as the New Deal for Communities were not capable of tackling housing problems in declining cities because housing markets operated at a sub-regional scale, beyond the comprehension of local communities. Professional experts would therefore be needed to manage large, property-led programmes (Nevin, 2002).

Pressure to establish the HMRI came from local authorities, housing agencies and other organisations with fears that neighbourhoods across the North and West Midlands of England were on a downward trajectory from high levels of housing vacancy towards the abandonment of whole neighbourhoods. For policy makers, these problems were also associated with endemic criminality and welfare dependence, and this threatened the government's wider policy aim to establish mixed income communities. The resultant initiative proposed to address these concerns with a mixture of interventions principally related to the housing stock. An initial concern with the future of mainly terraced housing developed into a forecast that up to 400,000 homes would need to be demolished to stem decline (Northern Way, 2004); however, the projected amount of demolition later fell to around 57,000 (National Audit Office, 2007). To date, key outputs have included improvements (ranging from minor 'facelifts' to full refurbishment) to 40,000 dwellings, the demolition of 10,000 homes and the construction of a further 1,000 (National Audit Office, 2007). The principal aim has been to 'restructure' the housing market to eliminate undesirable concentrations of empty properties in the long term. Delivery has been via nine 'pathfinders', which are managed by partnership boards and receive funding directly from central government. The initial purpose of the pathfinders was to pilot interventions that would then lead the way for tackling low demand across the UK. Since their establishment, their distinctive approach based on expert-led housing market analysis has been used as a

methodology to intervene in other parts of England, as well as in Scotland (Glynn, 2008) and Northern Ireland (Williamson Consulting, 2009).

The housing market renewal initiative is an unusual subject for investigation because it has ostensibly been research-led. A relatively small number of housing academics have defined the style and justification of the approach with recourse to university research. Furthermore, the initiative is controversial, both in terms of the research on which it is based and the shape of the interventions which have been justified by that research. Some of this controversy has surfaced in academic journals (see Allen, 2008; 2009a; 2010; Glyn, 2008; Nevin, 2010; Webb, 2010). However, the initiative has also generated a wave of challenges to compulsory purchase orders. Heritage organisations have used these forums to raise fears about the impact on historic buildings and urban forms and on community understandings of heritage. The response from residents has been extremely varied, but has included direct action strategies such as street protests and hunger strikes (Dewhurst 2001). Politicians and residents have, variously, branded proposals as ethnic cleansing (Girling 2004, Nicholson 2004), social cleansing (Clover 2005) and social engineering (Clover 2007). Contributions to the debate about whether the HMRI will solve social problems can be divided into the following four positions.

1. Housing academics and regeneration professionals, rather than politicians, have tended to be most supportive of the programme. They are able to reference support from a large body of social science and policy literature which argues that a better mix of housing is key to stemming population loss from the cheapest neighbourhoods (for example Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2003, Cole and Nevin, 2004, Deputy Prime Minister, 2005; Ferrari, 2007). A substantial number of residents have also voiced their support for the initiative.

Those who have been critical include:

2. Academics who have undertaken class analysis of cases of using housing market analysis to direct renewal. This includes Stuart Cameron's work on Newcastle (2003) and Tees Valley (2006), Sara Glynn's research on the gentrification of Dundee (2008) and Chris Allen's book (2008) and subsequent articles (2009, 2010) on housing market renewal in Liverpool.

3. A substantial number of affected residents have pointed to manipulation of community engagement processes and inequalities in power and capital (Pascoe, 2008; Edge, 2008; Wilson, 2009). Parallels have also been drawn with the destructive

impact of post-war slum clearance on community ties and relations. There has been a recent trend towards encouraging critical residents to present their experiences at academic conferences, as part of a challenge to traditional 'social science' approaches to knowledge.

4. Heritage professionals have typically sought to distance the nature of the housing stock from the problems being ascribed to it. Some have placed emphasis on how the popular meanings and perceptions attached to different house types can and have changed (Muthesius, 2006). They too have drawn comparisons with the post-war clearance of pre-1919 housing, and the revalorisation of Georgian and Victorian housing which has occurred since (Sear and Bashford, 2004; Wilkinson, 2006). These concerns have become manifest in arguments to inquiries and planning committees that decisions on renewal schemes have not taken sufficient account of technical assessments of heritage or of the way communities value the historic environment.

The perspectives above informed the initial brief for this thesis, which was to explore competing notions of how renewal might be used to create sustainable communities and suggest a way forward. However, for reasons discussed below, any straightforward attempt to appraise the potential effectiveness of housing market renewal at meeting a definition of 'sustainable communities' faces substantial epistemological difficulties. The thesis therefore responds to this brief by exploring how competing values, knowledge claims and theories of planning/ decision making have influenced planning decisions, and how they might do so more constructively in the future.

1.2   The objectives of housing market renewal

The ambiguous and transient nature of the HMRI's objectives has shaped the approach to research and the way the research questions have been formulated. Cole and Nevin (2004) define the initiative as an attempt to address abandonment, and lack of demand for housing in general, by reducing housing surpluses, removing 'obsolescent' housing stock and tackling neighbourhood issues. One of the authors maintains that low demand for housing is still an issue (Nevin, 2010), while the other no longer sees it as a pressing concern (Leather et al, 2007). Alternatively, Cameron (2006) has charted how the justification used to support housing market intervention in Tees Valley changed from tackling low demand to modernising the housing stock. A further characteristic of the initiative, and one which provokes a substantial amount of investigation throughout this thesis, is the tendency for its proponents to claim that it will be 'all things to all people'. The documentation which sets out

the justification for intervention in each of the nine 'pathfinder' areas is infused with arguments that renewal will tackle deprivation, balance housing markets, respond to community concerns, improve economic performance, safeguard the historic environment and so on.

One approach to researching the HMRI would be to scrutinise the claims made by the HMRI pathfinders through some form of direct, realist approach to empirical assessment. Such assessment would require the formation of theoretical benchmarks against which the evidence could be compared. These benchmarks would imply normative goals, and would probably draw on associated frameworks of thinking such as the concept of 'social capital' or that of the 'knowledge economy'. We could ask the questions: does the HMRI destroy or create social capital? Will it improve people's housing choice? Does it result in a more or less cohesive society? Will it contribute to economic restructuring in post-industrial areas? Will it damage the historic environment or ensure its survival in the long term? The problem with finding an answer to any of these questions, however, is that they require the supposition of some level of uniformity, either in the operation of society or the implementation of the programme. Such uniformity is not easy to find. Not only have the precise objectives of the HMRI as a national programme changed over time but the measures proposed, and their intended outcomes, differ between each of the nine core, sub-regional projects. Some schemes, for example, seek to increase owner occupation while in other places the aim is to stabilise or reduce it. The diversity of approach makes it difficult to use this perspective to gain an overall impression of the HMRI.

1.3 Concerns arising from the gap between theory and practice: primary and secondary tasks guiding the investigation

This thesis' investigation responds to two overarching research tasks, which are outlined here. Both tasks address the theory-practice gap in planning, in other words, the difference that exists between some of the ways of going about planning that are suggested by theorists and the actual ways in which practitioners and others carry out planning activities (Watson, 2008). The first task is predominantly an analytical one; it is to understand the reasons why a gap exists between the planning practices which have occurred in a number of case studies of housing market renewal and the suggestions for going about planning that are provided by much of the academic, theoretical literature. The second task is predominantly normative; it is to ask what planning theorists and practitioners might do to address the theory-practice gap

identified through task one. More detailed definitions of these tasks are provided in the next section. It should be noted, however, that the precise way in which the tasks are defined has grown out of a relational investigation into the conflicts that have occurred around the HMRI. In other words, the tasks, and the subsidiary research questions which follow them, have not been imposed from the beginning but have developed through a form of dialogue with the evolving research. A short summary of that dialogue is provided below; it offers important insights into the nature of the gap between the practice of housing market renewal and theories for making planning decisions.

Early research found that the practice of urban renewal was characterised, not by theory but by something which resembled an institutional regime. An investigation of the economistic knowledge claims which have been used to justify and direct housing market renewal found these claims to have significant, unacknowledged weaknesses which were not reflected in the level of institutional influence they commanded. Conversely, instances were found where alternative knowledge claims were marginalised on grounds other than their epistemological credibility. These findings suggest that the HMRI can be conceptualised as part of an institutional regime which is reliant on partial, social scientific arguments for legitimacy and which treats these as if they were a comprehensive and accurate knowledge of urban processes. This regime is labelled a 'part-linear, part-network regime' because a key function of it is to link central government's linear, statistical attempts at control with the flexibility that is required to engage public, private and semi-public actors in co-ordinated local development strategies.

Contemporary debates in planning theory regularly attend to the importance of engaging with different subject positions and different epistemological routes to constructing knowledge of urban events. Heterogeneous understandings are often acknowledged as providing important information for planners (see for example, Healey, 1997; Sandercock, 1998). This information embraces issues such as how people live their lives through built and natural environments, and how they value places and the social and economic networks which run through them. Yet the workings of the part-linear, part-network regime surrounding the HMRI indicate a persistent, institutional demand to define places in line with reductionist research narratives, rather than to facilitate interrogations of the values and credibility attached to multiple knowledge claims. This thesis is concerned, therefore, not just with the gap between HMRI practice and planning theory but with the specific forces, conceptualised

here as forming a part-linear, part-network regime, which are responsible for sustaining the existence of this gap.

Leading on from the situation described above, a second task of this thesis is to consider what academics and regeneration actors might do to re-arrange governance towards a form that is capable both of commanding funding to respond to urban problems and of engaging with the practical and ethical dilemmas raised by different knowledge claims. The motivation for asking this question reflects Foucault's position on social justice. O'Farrell describes this in the following way.

> All forms of order should be challenged at every opportunity, so that people can understand why current orders exist and reflect on whether or not they should be changed. (O'Farrell, 2005, p. 54).

The heated objections to the HMRI that were outlined earlier include claims that it is a form of social and ethnic cleansing, and that it has caused elderly residents to die from the stress of being forced out of homes scheduled for demolition (Clover, 2010). The initiative's proponents claim these issues are minimal and the programme has brought important investment to deprived areas of the North (Cole, 2008a). The severity of these claims demands a detailed investigation into the order which underpins the HMRI; one that asks if it should be changed, and how that change might be brought about without creating an even more unjust situation.

1.4   How the thesis addresses the primary and secondary tasks

The primary and secondary tasks are broken up with the aid of five subsidiary research questions. As stated earlier, the process of research was not smooth, linear and guided in the first instance by these questions; rather, they have been formulated to frame and structure the material in the thesis.

The primary task of this thesis is defined below:

Primary task	Why does persistent, institutional demand exist to define places in line with reductionist research narratives, rather than to facilitate interrogations of the values and credibility attached to multiple knowledge claims?

The first two research questions provoke empirical research (in chapters four, five, six and seven) which aims to develop an understanding of the part-linear, part-network regime surrounding the HMRI. They ask:

| R1 | What kind of networks of actors and arguments led the state to pursue a housing market analysis approach to renewal? |
| R2 | How has the housing market analysis approach to renewal sought to deal with competing values and knowledge claims? |

In response to the questions above, chapter four traces the genealogy of a dispositif, or historical way of governing the official response to problematised urban areas. This is matched in chapter five with epistemological scrutiny of the knowledge claims which have revived this dispositif as a means for driving the implementation of housing market renewal. In chapters six and seven, two case studies are used to explore reactions to the dominant knowledge claims, and to discuss the way in which institutional arenas have managed conflict between competing claims. Research question three has a dual role, contributing an understanding to both the primary and secondary tasks.

The secondary task of the thesis can be defined as:

| Secondary task | What might regeneration actors do to re-arrange governance towards a form that is capable both of commanding funding to respond to urban problems and of engaging with the practical and ethical dilemmas raised by different knowledge claims? |

The response to that task is framed by questions three to five. Question three asks:

| R3 | Why does the state continue to pursue a housing market analysis approach despite the controversy that has surrounded the initiative and its changing objectives? |

In response to question three, chapter eight identifies and explores the institutional regime which supports housing market renewal activity. The importance placed by this part-linear, part-network governance regime on achieving centralised co-ordination and control contrasts with the use of instrumental or communicative forms of rationality in planning theories which advocate, respectively, the opening up of options and the need to consider diverse knowledges. The limited take up of planning theory in practice requires investigation and explanation. Questions four and five therefore ask:

| R4 | How has planning theory affected the way evidence has been used to inform housing market renewal decisions? |
| R5 | If forces exist that are preventing policy makers from exploiting intellectual opportunities to respond more equitably and effectively to contemporary urban policy challenges, how might it be possible for planning theory itself to adapt to challenge these forces? |

Chapter nine finds planning theories appropriated into roles that are subservient to, and tend merely to provide legitimacy for, the part-linear, part-network regime. This conclusion

suggests a need for a more engaged form of planning theory to address the secondary task within this thesis. In an epilogue, an attempt is then made to respond explicitly to the secondary task of the thesis by suggesting how local authorities might react to contemporary challenges.

1.5   Key arguments made

Key arguments made in the thesis are discussed below and linked with the research questions above. The following two chapters provide context for the main arguments of the thesis. This begins in chapter two with a review of the conceptual premises of the literature on state-led gentrification, which many authors have drawn on in an attempt to frame understandings of the HMRI. This review provides justification for a theoretical departure from the approach which currently dominates critical academic commentary on the HMRI, and urban regeneration more widely. It does this by arguing that structuralist perspectives are too often axiomatic on an assumed and abstracted notion of hegemonic state action. This notion is the product of a focus on global political economic changes over the last forty years and more, which recognises the importance of economic and ideological constraints on state action, often expressed as neo-liberalism. However, it underplays the agency of planners and policy makers to generate emergent movements when conditions allow them to do so. The review of literature in chapter two therefore concludes by arguing that gentrification research needs to be scrutinised by more inductive research into the heterogeneous facets of state action. Chapter three then investigates some theoretical tools that might facilitate such an investigation, attending in particular to Foucauldian genealogical analysis and actor-network theory. The strengths of Foucauldian genealogical analysis are contrasted with those of actor-network theory and elements of both perspectives are set out as a basis for empirical exploration in the later chapters. However, actor-network theory (ANT) provides the principal theoretical platform for the thesis because it offers a radically inductive approach, which is well suited to studying how actors can achieve control over absent and distant actors, and how those forms of control can themselves attain agency. The first two chapters therefore justify and set out the approach which is adopted in subsequent chapters to respond to the thesis's tasks and research questions.

R1	What kind of networks of actors and arguments led the state to pursue a housing market analysis approach to renewal?

In response to research question one, chapter four traces the genealogy of a particular way of thinking about urban renewal. This genealogy informs a subsequent investigation in chapter five into the events which led to the construction of early research and policy on housing market renewal. In this sense, historically produced understandings and institutions of urban governance are assumed to provide legitimacy and credence to subsequent urban policy recommendations. These understandings and institutions are referred to as an integrationist dispositif, the roots of which lie in nineteenth century attempts to grasp and react to urban problems. However, the dispositif had greatest impact during the clearance and redevelopment of residential areas in the thirty five years following World War Two. Chapter four also identifies processes of state change from the mid 1970s onwards. These changes complicated the re-imposition of the integrationist dispositif by withdrawing government funding for housing policy, and by centralising and fragmenting governance processes. They created governance problems which prompted the rise of the part-linear, part-network regime in response.

The material outlined above contextualises the work of chapter five, which identifies the processes within which actors and arguments arose to lead the state to adopt a housing market analysis approach to renewal. The chapter traces the employment of researchers by Liverpool City Council to undertake research that would guide the council's response to problems of vacant housing in the city and follows their attempt to construct a rational response from statistical research and stakeholder engagement. The housing market research which resulted was predicated on the factuality of a number of master narratives. The chapter examines the theoretical assumptions and interpretations, and the political circumstances which led to the construction of these narratives. It shows that the findings of the HMRI research are limited by the specific time and location where the research was carried out and by the historically contingent outlooks of the researchers. However, the chapter also presents evidence of how a wider assemblage of institutional actors in Liverpool actively contributed to the substance of the research narratives which were produced. Housing associations were prominent actors in this assemblage, and narratives strongly reflected their needs. Chapter five refutes the claim that the housing market research underpinning the HMRI reflects the reality of how housing markets work and argues instead that the research produced a highly political package of arguments. These arguments have provided leverage on central government, and simultaneously provided a means to justify the programme. Central government has

attempted to control the programme by placing constraints on what HMRI funding can be spent on; these constraints respond to dominant assertions about how housing markets work.

R2	How has the housing market analysis approach to renewal sought to deal with competing values and knowledge claims?

The adoption of rigid housing market narratives to direct urban renewal funding and strategies has made it difficult for planners and regeneration professionals to consider alternative knowledge claims. Question two is addressed by exploring these difficulties, principally through two case studies. These cases illustrate how a number of different decision making frameworks have attempted to deal with competing values and knowledge claims. The first case study remains in Liverpool to investigate a location where institutions have been well organised and well funded. The second case study provides contrast by attending to Whitefield, in Lancashire, where organisation has been poorer and funding more limited.

The scale of regeneration taking place in Liverpool leads the case study to investigate the forms of control which have been used to command the support of a diversity of partners and professions working within institutions in the city. A specific, localised regime of control, referred to as a 'meta-partnership regime', can be seen to have emerged to co-ordinate funding for area-based initiatives. This form of control is made possible by the representation of partial housing market research narratives as fact, and by subsequently black boxing them into a succinct set of guiding principles for carrying out urban renewal. This black box is manifest within the technology of housing market assessment that is employed by the HMRI pathfinder organisations, and by other organisations progressing a housing market analysis approach to renewal. Nevertheless, the black box operates across places with diverse institutional cultures and path-dependent ways of framing urban problems.

The implications of this 'meta-partnership regime' (and the associated black box) are explored for the Kensington area of the city, where the housing market renewal approach has been powerfully driven through despite vociferous objections to proposals. Liverpool's meta-partnership regime, and its strong connections with the origins of the HMRI, have enabled it to forcefully implement a strong set of declarations about how renewal will occur in the city. Accordingly, 'regeneration' in Kensington has meant subjecting it to a number of master

narratives which reflect the interests of key institutions in the city, at the expense of the views of residents about the problems in the area and the possible responses to them. The institutional strength of these master narratives has shielded renewal schemes from challenge through the planning system. Nevertheless, the powerful meta-partnership regime has been unable to prevent delays caused by legal action and has been weak at anticipating macro-economic changes in the housing market.

Chapter seven progresses a detailed empirical investigation of the use of the housing market renewal technology in the very different context of Whitefield, Lancashire. The availability of funding in Whitefield has been more limited and objectors have been better able to organise and draw on formal institutional resources to object to redevelopment proposals. Furthermore, whereas in Liverpool housing associations had a substantial influence on the justification for, and shape of renewal proposals, housing associations did not directly influence proposals in Whitefield. Nevertheless, narratives that had been confirmed in Liverpool were used to address an area that was predominantly a mix of owner occupied and private rented housing. Contentious proposals for redevelopment in Whitefield appear to have been driven largely by a concern to maximise investment in the area. Three decision-making regimes are observed, each of which has framed how actors have competed to advance different visions for the future of the area. A funding-based regime of decision making, which grew to incorporate the HMRI, competed with a scrutiny-based regime of planning inquiry, which favoured consideration of critical objections as well as dominant perspectives. Ultimately, this scrutiny-based regime was replaced by an emphasis on negotiation and consensus building that allowed actors to have a say over renewal proposals for the area, but prevented scrutiny of the HMRI master narratives and the national regime of funding-based control that they uphold. The chapter provides a case example of where networks of alliances between residents and heritage organisations have been able to take advantage of safeguards in the planning systems to resist dominant narratives. However, it concludes that, increasingly, a combination of central government funding and local partnership working threatens to divorce urban renewal schemes from the benefits of critical challenge and from the ethical prerogative to consider non-institutionalised concerns.

R3	Why does the state continue to pursue a housing market analysis approach despite the controversy that has surrounded the initiative and its changing objectives?

The obduracy of the housing market analysis approach is explored in chapter eight. The chapter draws out common findings from the previous case study chapters and combines these with other examples of HMRI schemes (Walker Riverside in Newcastle and Gresham in Tees Valley) to develop an understanding of the relationship between central and local government in more depth. It argues that the institutional dynamics of this relationship necessarily compromise housing market research by requiring it to perform a role as a political mediator. There is great pressure on local partnerships to convincingly demonstrate that they are efficiently restructuring their housing markets and economies with renewal funding. Official guidance encourages the application of established methodologies and narratives to the housing market; these both conceal the complexity of housing market processes and minimise the risk that an explanation is seen as unpersuasive. The result is a self-perpetuating institutional cycle of 'evidence' which is used to legitimise established approaches and marginalise critical commentary (Webb, 2009a; Webb, 2010). This cycle has assisted the HMRI to continue, even as macro-economic changes have radically impacted on investment and population change in problematised neighbourhoods. As house prices have rocketed and affordability, rather than scarcity, has become the norm, the closed institutional production of market 'knowledge' has facilitated the production of new narratives linking renewal schemes into politically stronger agendas such as economic restructuring. The inability of renewal to adapt to or incorporate alternative forms of knowledge can thus be attributed to a form of institutional and political momentum based on the reification of neo-classical market technologies.

| R4 | How has planning theory affected the way evidence has been used to inform housing market renewal decisions? |
| R5 | If forces exist that are preventing policy makers from exploiting intellectual opportunities to respond more equitably and effectively to contemporary urban policy challenges, how might it be possible for planning theory itself to adapt to challenge these forces? |

Chapter nine problematises the impact of planning theory in the institutional context outlined above. A review of the earlier empirical work identifies the selective use of planning theory ideas to aid further attempts to provide legitimacy to HMRI proponents seeking to defend and implement their proposals. Two forms of rationality are shown to be in use and a focused review of planning theory literature is used to add intellectual background to these. The chapter concludes that the relationship between institutional interests at the local and national

levels has resulted in a need for planning theory to be used opportunistically, rather than methodologically, to legitimise the planning approach that has resulted from the government's strategy of long distance control. This knowledge of the governmental processes surrounding the practice of planning and urban renewal means that we need to think more clearly about what we intend to accomplish by developing new theories of planning. Specifically, the chapter argues for the need to situate planning theory work within detailed analyses of the environments in which such theories are intended to operate. It considers the potential within ideas about knowledge management, which have evolved from the actor-network theory tradition, alongside Deleuzo-Guattarian ideas about negotiating contested futures. This identifies the potential to draw on the Deleuzian-inspired, multi-planar theory of planning proposed by Jean Hillier to embed a greater level of foresight within local authority planning and renewal activities.

Chapter ten summarises the arguments made in this thesis and reflects on its limitations. Thereafter, an epilogue illustrates how Hillier's theory might be used to provide advice and trigger discussion among planners and local politicians. This attempts to illustrate how foresight might be embedded in local authority practices through a consideration of the likely forces which will emerge to impact on the HMRI's current regime of control. The epilogue concludes with an appraisal of possible courses of action which could be taken by local authorities delivering renewal and other organisations with an interest in more equitable and effective urban policy. Equitable and effective policy making is understood here as a direction and a goal rather than something that can be clearly and precisely defined. It is conceived broadly as the pursuit of local urban policy that both attracts financial support from central government and is able to consider alternative values and understandings of urban problems and potential responses.

Together, the chapters above address the primary task which guides this thesis; this is repeated below.

> *Why does persistent, institutional demand exist to define places in line with reductionist research narratives, rather than to facilitate interrogations of the values and credibility attached to multiple knowledge claims?*

The chapters trace the evolution of a network of urban renewal action, and explore the influences which have guided its development. They illustrate the conscious efforts of housing researchers to direct policy in ways that they felt were achievable and would be

beneficial to the people and cities affected by population loss and vacant housing at the turn of the century. But they also chart the limitations which existed on the agency of these researchers and the way in which other actors appropriated housing market analysis tools to advance their interests within a distinctive, part-linear, part-network governance environment. Accordingly, they reveal the rise to dominance of a particular way of understanding housing markets that used a demand for comprehensive action to concentrate public and private sector resources on the (re)development of particular parts of England. The story provides an insight into the contests at play within the contemporary mode of managing the demands of fragmented local states alongside calls for control from a politically and economically centralised national government. These insights are used to postulate a response to the secondary task of the thesis:

> *What might regeneration actors do to re-arrange governance towards a form*
> *that is capable both of commanding funding to respond to urban problems and*
> *of engaging with the practical and ethical dilemmas raised by different*
> *knowledge claims?*

The conclusions highlight the limits which exist within heuristically-based attempts to understand urban policy as gentrification. In doing so, they hopefully provide a constructive basis from which to pursue more equitable and effective policy processes.

A Review of the State-led Gentrification Heuristic

2.1 Introduction

The concept of gentrification has had particular influence on the analysis of urban change, re-investment and, more recently, studies of urban policy and renewal. Important lessons can be learned from gentrification research, but it is not used as a framework of analysis to guide this thesis. This chapter therefore offers justification for deviating from this dominant line of critical inquiry. It supports one of this thesis's key arguments; that, in addition to gentrification research, an approach is needed towards the study of urban renewal that highlights potentially subtle but important differences in the way urban policies are formulated and implemented. The publication of accounts of gentrification in academic books and journals currently has little impact on policy makers or public awareness. The need for a new approach arises partly, then, from a desire to increase the traction of academic accounts with these groups. I take the optimistic view that, in general, politicians do not set out to make damaging and exclusionary decisions, even if that is the ultimate result of their actions. Academics therefore have an important role highlighting the possibility of practical alternatives as well as mounting critiques. In short, we must understand the pressures faced by politicians so that we can help them understand the likely consequences of different choices and hold them to account for their decisions. This perspective requires a renewed focus on agency and this chapter will argue that gentrification research, while often providing a much needed critique of capitalistic forces, can sometimes be over-reliant on abstracted models of how society is structured. This chapter begins with a review of the influence of the concept of gentrification on contemporary critical understandings of urban renewal.

In the early stages of undertaking this thesis I attended a conference on gentrification in Switzerland, and later a seminar series in Bristol on gentrification and social mix. What became evident was that a sizable stream of international research now engages in critical gentrification research by referring empirical data on urban renewal schemes to a wider, theoretical understanding of how those who control capital have been able to influence public policy to serve their interests (see for example Vicario and Rodriguez, 2007; Glynn, 2008; Shaw, 2008). The prominence of such research is exemplified by the debate conducted by the International Journal of Urban and Regional Research around an article by Tom Slater (Slater, 2006; 2008). Slater began with a tempered argument that a more critical edge is needed to 'gentrification research' that highlights the problems with the pro-capital, political

agendas of researchers such as Richard Florida. But he concluded by implying a need to view all urban renewal schemes as sugar coated attempts at gentrification. As part of his critique, he made a number of far reaching statements including the following.

> Perhaps a key victory for opponents of gentrification would be to find a way to communicate more effectively that *either* unliveable disinvestment and decay *or* reinvestment and displacement is actually a *false choice* for low-income communities (DeFilippis, 2004, p.89), and that progress begins when gentrification is accepted as a problem and not as a solution to urban poverty and blight. (Slater, 2006, p. 753, emphasis in original)

I have considerable sympathy with those such as Slater, who have good reason to be appalled by such things as the 'diversification' of tenure in social rented estates in London, where an extreme lack of affordable housing is now endemic, and by aggressive and socially unjust urban policies, particularly in parts of the United States. The focus of this chapter, however, is to explore some of the fine grain, theoretical issues associated with the epistemological route which is often used to investigate gentrification. The purpose is not to argue that gentrification understandings are unimportant, it is to question whether, as academics, we might be able to develop more detailed, accurate and policy-relevant accounts of these kinds of processes.

2.2 The origins of the state-led gentrification concept

The term 'gentrification' was first used by Ruth Glass (1964) to denote her observations of how certain residential parts of London were changing. She identified areas which had previously housed low income populations, and which received relatively low levels of maintenance, but had since been refurbished for a new, higher income population. Over the 45 years since Glass's book, gentrification has come to be understood as a process, and a range of explanations have been offered for its occurrence. A common way of understanding these contributions is to divide them into demand-led and supply-led explanations. The supply-led argument is that actors reinvest in a neighbourhood in a way which capitalises on the value of latent characteristics of that area, the market value of which was not previously fully realised. An example is Neil Smith's rent gap thesis (Smith, 1987). An example of a rent gap is when a centrally positioned area's location becomes more valuable as development arises around it, providing close access to service benefits. A trigger point, such as a period of economic boom, might then catalyse re-investment in the area to make it more appealing for a more profitable, higher income population. In contrast, demand-led

explanations suggest that processes of economic restructuring and changing cultural attitudes might create additional demand for the housing and neighbourhood offer of a particular location. One example of this could be a transition in a city's economy from blue collar to more centrally located, white collar employment, attracting demand from white collar workers for housing there. A different example might be a positive cultural revalorisation by those on higher incomes of particular features of Victorian housing. Supply and demand side explanations can be used in a complementary fashion to explain pressures which may incentivise re-investment and population change. Further studies of gentrification have then looked at the factors which have catalysed market adjustments, in terms of capital and population, in areas affected by supply and demand forces. The presence of artists, for example has been identified as one of these catalysts, held responsible for attracting higher income households by increasing the cultural offer of a neighbourhood (Ley, 2003).

In this chapter I wish to explore the way that an heuristic, based on 'traditional' gentrification studies such as those which followed Ruth Glass, has been used to study urban renewal or 'state-led gentrification'. The most obvious difference between accounts of traditional and state-led gentrification lies in the sets of actors which trigger change in the built environment. Traditional gentrification research describes changes that occur as a result of the actions of individuals and private firms. Within these actions, patterns exist which reflect wider changes in the way societies work and live. These changes occur within both private and social housing. While it is important not to forget that inequalities in demand are also a feature of social housing, changes in the two sectors are regulated differently, and the gentrification literature has been largely concerned with the capital-driven processes affecting the private sector. As discussed above, traditional gentrification research draws on critical economic theory to explain the social and economic forces that sometimes make it possible for actors to generate super profits by investing in previously disinvested residential areas. It asks how these forces, from cultural choice to occupational and lifestyle needs, bring order to many individual economic choices, and then explores the implications of the resultant patterns for residential neighbourhoods and those living in them. The more recent research into state-led gentrification has sought to apply gentrification ideas to processes of reinvestment which are occurring as part of a more complex bundle of other prominent changes. Unlike traditional gentrification research, these processes of urban change cannot be fully ascribed to socially and economically driven changes in the private sector: they incorporate a significant element of government policy.

2.3　From explaining market action to explaining state action

The move from traditional studies of gentrification to an analysis of state action potentially requires a different body of theoretical support. As has been shown, traditional gentrification research requires a contributory knowledge of the spatial consequences of wider economic changes. The understanding has generally been that decline in some employment sectors and growth in others has meant the location of employment, and of different types of employment, has migrated between regions and within cities themselves. There is a clear theoretical link between this understanding of economic change and an appreciation of processes of capital reinvestment in gentrifying areas of private sector housing. When we look at the concept of state-led gentrification, this theoretical link is less clear cut. Instead of economic processes driving urban change we find states driving urban change and co-opting private developers to deliver their plans (Cameron, 2003).

In the switch from traditional to state-led gentrification research the notion that spatial changes in the housing market can be partly explained by wider economic changes is replaced with a concern that states are now actively encouraging higher income populations to move into lower income areas. The majority of academics with interests in this area argue that the core motivation driving states is now a desire to facilitate the making of super profits from the refashioning of urban environments for higher income groups (Lees, 2009; Smith, 2002; Glynn, 2008). Here, the use of critical economic theory has shifted from a role where it underpins an explanation of market-driven urban change to a new role where it is used to theorise the way that states now regulate the market. Whereas traditional gentrification's assertion that capitalist processes drive the market is a direct and a self-evident one, the allegation that they also drive the actions of the state implies an additional, structural understanding of how states have responded to the increasing internationalisation of economic production. A feature of this understanding is that it has focused almost single mindedly on the emergence of neo-liberal practices within the way states work, to the detriment of a more nuanced understanding of diverse state practices. The dominant argument is that the way states regulate the market has changed over the last thirty years or so. They now mimic and support market processes of capital accumulation; they try to work with and expand markets rather than attempting to constrain their negative effects with measures to redistribute income and provide welfare (Weber, 2002; Moulaert, 2000). There is considerable empirical support for this argument. Nevertheless, other forces and processes

also have important influences on the way states work, and these are often obscured by the level of interest in the dominant framework of understanding.

Academics who advance the above understanding of state-led gentrification tend to research instances where the principal driver affecting state action seems to be a desire to facilitate the making of super profits. However, the concept of state-led gentrification has also been used by a smaller camp of academics as part of research in a very different context of post-industrial decline, where the local state has had an over-riding concern with managing social housing and pursuing neighbourhood stability. Because of this context, academics such as Power (2000) have, in the past, welcomed policies which they have termed state-led gentrification. A normative argument has been mounted that states should seek to attract higher income earners into particular neighbourhoods as a conscious strategy to address neighbourhood and city wide population loss. In this sense, the gentrification term no longer becomes analytical and is used instead as a way of explaining a particular approach which should be taken to addressing population loss. State-led gentrification here is a call to do something and a question about whether it is being done well, rather than a desire to extend the gentrification concept in order to gain a better understanding of something that is happening. It implies an emphasis on the agency of academics and, to a limited extent, the gentrification discourse, in the development of public policy. Because of this understanding, that population change and re-investment might be desirable in this context, later analytical research has tended to focus on the way the state has managed conflicts of interest in the renewal process (Allen, 2008; Webb, 2010), rather than on simply comparing cases with the wider dominant, structural understanding of state action.

2.3 Defining gentrification

In areas with a history of population decline, it has not been sufficient simply to ask the question 'is gentrification occurring?' because the demographic context challenges the critical understanding of gentrification in terms of class conflict that often underlies this question. Concerns for displacement sit uneasily alongside trends of out-migration and residualisation. However, that has not been the case for those undertaking research in areas of extremely high demand for housing. Scholars working in this environment have sought an easy definition of gentrification, which can be used to pin down instances in which 'the process' is occurring. Davidson and Lees (2005) define the parameters of this framework of concern, which covers both traditional and state-led gentrification, as i) reinvestment, ii) in-

migration of higher income households and iii) the displacement of lower income households. In doing so, they confirm their support for an heuristic which is commonly used to direct researchers' attention to instances of gentrification, and then to understand them as part of wider, global processes. At first sight, the terms of this heuristic seem logical. If all three parameters have been met, it seems to follow that they will map structural economic forces: in such instances it seems that something has been provided to incentivise those on higher incomes, who by definition have more housing choice, to come to an area at the expense of poorer residents. Often, this may be the case. However, using an heuristic is a short cut and as such there will be exceptions. The context of post-industrial decline and population loss deviates from the expectations of the heuristic because the state, potentially at least, has a significant interest in facilitating the future sustainability of population in parts of the city. The use of the term gentrification here is at best a rough fit. Nevertheless, it has been applied to such situations because they meet the specifications of the heuristic, rather than because these instances necessarily bear simple comparison with the advance of a market-enabling, neo-liberal state.

The use of a gentrification heuristic in place of a more thorough description of processes in declining and booming areas results in the replacement of an inductive approach with a deductive one, the consequence of which is to privilege particular matters within local neighbourhoods as being of concern and reduce the receptiveness of researchers to the circumstances of individual cases. Traditional gentrification research offered a range of explanations, which typically tried to make sense of the decisions of individuals by using diverse concepts such as cultural capital (Ley, 2003) or global economic restructuring (Smith, 1986). However, state-led gentrification has tended to work in reverse, formulating an abstracted definition linked to global, structural understandings of state action and going through a process of affirmation or rejection to apply them to localities. The quote below exemplifies this practice of defining a template and seeking to use it to unify processes and events in very different places, at the expense of attention to local specificities.

> In terms of location, gentrification has gone global (see Atkinson and Bridge, 2005). It can be found in different sites all over the world. It is evident not just in English-speaking countries but, as Smith (2002, page 439) lists, in Eastern Europe, South America, the Caribbean, South Africa, Asia, and even holiday islands like Tenerife. (Davidson and Lees, 2005, p. 1167)

The use of an heuristic in this way is useful to generating a wider structural understanding of events. But this understanding is inevitably a selective one, which comes at the expense of detailed investigation of the processes and forces taking place on a day to day basis as local renewal schemes are prepared and delivered. In short, the use of an heuristic assumes a correct, prior knowledge of global, economic and political processes that potentially displaces a more acute level of attention to understanding the minutiae of causal processes leading to urban change.

A major risk with taking a deductive approach is that empirical observations are subordinated to theoretical hypotheses. Perhaps the best example of this happening is the treatment of Cameron's (2003) account of policy attempts to respond to persistent population decline in Newcastle upon Tyne. As discussed earlier, Cameron used the language of gentrification in his description of the initiative, but his argument was that the city's 'Going for Growth' initiative was largely an understandable response to population loss and vacant housing which was occurring even in the context of a lack of market interest. Despite presenting a very clear and articulate academic argument to this effect, other scholars quickly re-interpreted Cameron's account in a much more negative light.

> Ironically, it is sometimes the state pursuing a 'social inclusion agenda' which is responsible for creating (at least potentially) the kind of displacement-oriented revanchism that Smith blames on global capital. Cameron's (2003) account of the demolition of working-class housing in Newcastle to make way for middle-class housing and the 'trickle-down' benefits of social mixing is a particularly acute example.' (Butler, 2007, p. 165)

> Cameron (2003) discusses new-build developments in inner-city Newcastle (United Kingdom) which have been deliberately built over razed public housing *and which therefore demonstrate* an aggressive and strategic attempt by Newcastle City Council to attract the middle classes back into specific locations in the city centre. (Davidson and Lees, 2005, p. 1168, emphasis added)

Ironically Tim Butler, the author of the first of these quotes, devotes a large part of his article to criticising an academic reliance on a hegemonic heuristic, yet his statement illustrates its agency over his decision to obscure important factors in the story of why and how urban renewal policies evolve.

Issues of social justice mean it is important to maintain our structural understandings of how capitalism is developing. However, a recent dispute between Lambert and Boddy (2002), later Boddy (2007), and Davidson and Lees (2005) highlighted some of the problems with the use of an heuristic to approach phenomena with a predetermined view of how to look for structural patterns. Lambert and Boddy argued that the term 'new-build gentrification' was not appropriate to a description of the redevelopment of commercial and industrial land in Bristol, and probably elsewhere in the UK, for new housing. Their strongest argument was that new-build gentrification differs from traditional gentrification because different actors (including policy makers) and processes are at work. Boddy (2007) argued that the heuristic of new-build gentrification was stunting a more advanced, critical analysis of the policy and development processes actually at work in Bristol.

> What is evident in Bristol and elsewhere is a complex and powerful process of capital investment and the remaking of the urban landscape. It is driven by interlocking circuits of capital in terms of both production and consumption. It is set within and shaped by a particular policy context. The occupiers of these new residential developments are from relatively better off strata, provision of affordable housing has been limited, and developments have had little if any positive impact on deprived neighbourhoods. (Boddy, 2007, p. 103)

Boddy's argument emphasised the need for a more careful approach to understanding actors and processes. He underlined this by referring to Tom Slater's website 'gentrification-web', where a photograph of a new apartment block with a Starbucks cafe in Bristol was accompanied by the slogan 'something smells like gentrification to me'. It is easy to see how a process of deductive reasoning might be used to interpret such an aesthetic as an obvious sign of gentrification. Boddy simply pointed out that the main purpose of the development was actually to provide training, housing and work experience for homeless people, which was subsidised by the ground floor Starbucks. In doing so, he highlighted the problems with assuming a knowledge of how places work based on a potentially crude, universal template.

The use of an heuristic is a double edged sword. It can help academics build an overarching, structural understanding of political and economic global trends, but it can also introduce epistemological dangers, which stem from a commitment to and concern with this same understanding. Identifying how market-liberal politics and behaviour impacts on urban change in diverse locations is a complex and messy business that cannot be fully captured by

a simple heuristic. One of the pitfalls of such an approach can be to view policy as something that can simply be sourced to a combination of parliamentary debate and economic constraint. The dominant political economic understanding suggests that governments respond to a neo-liberal agenda because production has globalised while democratic control remains nationalised; the consequence being the use of policy to suit the interests of capital over labour (Sassen, 1992). From this perspective, we are witnessing a fundamental shift in the economic mode of production at the global level, which results in the need for states to respond by changing the way that they seek to regulate the market's accumulation of capital (Weber, 2002; Hackworth and Smith, 2001). The use of an heuristic to approach local case studies implies that these local instances of urban renewal can be understood merely as the outcome of structural shifts in state activity, which take place on a grander scale. The implication is that there are three scales or tiers; a global scale, at which economic changes occur, a national scale of state regulation and the local consequence, which is the state assisting the market to rework existing residential areas. However, there are problems with understanding politics and policy simply as something which reflects processes of economic production and travels in a linear fashion through democratic arenas to the point of implementation (Uitermark, 2005).

It would be difficult to argue against the premise that the global expansion of capitalism has had profound social and economic implications for western governments and traditional welfare regimes. The key question which arises from this, however, is 'how are such wider structural events connected to the everyday actions of urban policy makers?' The work of some of the most prominent proponents of the 'state-led gentrification as neo-liberal revanchism[1]' thesis suggests that the current answer is that it doesn't matter (Smith, 2002; Slater, 2006; Davidson, 2009). For these scholars, it is only necessary to assert that structural processes are happening and to look for evidence of them in urban events. However, an incomplete understanding of the relationship between global political and economic shifts and local actions can lead to the subjugation of the diverse interests of residents affected by renewal by a crude, dualistic conception of working class resistance to structural forces. In advance of undertaking specific research, scholars cannot know the diversity of issues and concerns which surround urban renewal processes (Nowotny, 2003). Academics, therefore, are not qualified to assert a privileged knowledge of social and material conflicts. Yet there is

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[1] Revenge on the working classes

some evidence that this does happen. In Jacobs et al's (2007) exploration of the proposed redevelopment of Glasgow's Red Road estate of high-rise flats, they document how academics employed the gentrification discourse to argue that tenants should resist redevelopment. However, their critiques were met with a general lack of interest by the affected residents. On this occasion, the gentrification narrative clearly did not connect with the issues of most concern to those living in the flats. The practice of academics in this instance is concerning, because it amounts to the privileging of an overarching, structural knowledge over a more fully developed analysis of the content of urban renewal and the reasons why it is advanced in different localities.

2.4   Practical and political issues

The production of global understandings of the development of capitalism has its place in academia. However, such critiques are only relevant if they are accompanied by some kind of potential for practical benefit. Indications of what that potential might be can be found in calls for anti-gentrification policies, or in the following article extract.

> It is argued that the 'eviction' of critical perspectives from a field in which they were once plentiful has serious implications for those at risk from gentrification, and that reclaiming the term from those who have sugarcoated what was not so long ago a 'dirty word' (Smith, 1996) is essential if political challenges to the process can be effective. (Slater, 2006, p. 737)

Others have bemoaned a lack of anti-gentrification policies (Lees, 2009). The insinuation is that, if a critical academic consensus can be achieved against gentrification, pressure can be mounted on policy makers. The argument that politicians should show more awareness of the structural consequences of free market capitalism is a worthy one; but the efforts of academics seem so futile. Fifty years ago, arguments that are essentially based on structuralist Marxism may have had influence in government but the situation today is very different. Furthermore, politicians might understandably ask why they should privilege abstracted arguments over debates about the merits of specific policies, which often do not align as clearly with these abstractions as some would like to make out.

I believe there is a need to balance a concern with damaging, self perpetuating processes of class takeover against other factors, such as the interests of individual residents and the potential for economic or demographic decline to occur. As was discussed earlier, to recommend policies based on a gentrification heuristic is to give advice based on a selective

attention to structural forces that is too often accompanied by a homogenous understanding of how they work. It risks applying an over-simplistic conceptualisation of how political and economic forces are felt in urban change by focusing on gentrification, potentially at the expense of other changes which might be uncovered through inductive research. This issue has been highlighted in a recent debate in City journal between Tom Slater and Chris Hamnett, which has attempted to delineate the boundaries between changes in the nature of employment and displacement resulting from gentrification processes (Slater, 2009; Hamnett, 2010). In addition, the tendency of gentrification researchers to combine their work with idealistic aspirations of how society should be makes it a tool that is less effective at developing pragmatic and politically workable suggestions for how we might improve things. Working towards such suggestions entails an ability to grapple with disparate issues, such as entrenched problems of centralised and fragmented government. The narrow focus of the gentrification heuristic prevents a constructive engagement with these issues, but it is essential that we know about them because they can compound (or potentially mitigate) capitalist inequalities and frustrate the delivery of well-intentioned policies.

2.5 Discussion

This chapter has argued that a broader research agenda is needed that will enable researchers to ask a host of questions that are often not tackled by gentrification research. If we approach phenomena with a predefined conception of how relational processes work then we need only find evidence for those processes, but if we begin with an open mind new opportunities are created. We might ask 'is the advance of a neo-liberal policy outcome really so hegemonic and, where it does exist, how has it come to prevail over the alternatives; how does it maintain control? Is there no chance that uncertain and diverse outcomes might arise from complex political contests (what do we need to know to promote these)? And, more generally, 'how can we match structural assertions with our observations of the day to day work of planners and other actors involved in development processes?' I believe that it is only by asking such questions, and by undertaking unprejudiced explorations of relational dynamics at a case based level, that we might draw more persuasive conclusions with greater relevance to policy makers. This, however, does not mean that there is no place for structuralist research of urban policy. In fact, the warnings which emanate from this kind of research are often echoed in the case studies and conclusions of this thesis. Work in the political economy vein contributes to a valuable understanding of structural forces, but the way those forces manifest themselves is complex and diverse, not linear and stratified.

Structural forces are just one part of the story; inductive researchers should be content to know that, if they are present, they will emerge naturally alongside other findings that may well be more useful to the pursuit of social justice than merely establishing that an abstracted heuristic can yet again be located in practice.

Theory of Investigation

3.1   Introduction

This chapter proposes a theoretical basis for addressing the research questions set out in chapter one. It is divided into four parts. Foucauldian analysis informed the development of actor-network theory, and part one explores how Foucault's concepts might be used to investigate the conflict around housing market renewal. A number of useful Foucauldian concepts are highlighted, along with the elements which make actor-network theory particularly suitable for addressing the field work in chapters four to seven. Notable among these is the utility of the concept of the black box to exploring how actors pursue control at a distance. The second part begins by taking a more detailed look at ANT's relational (baroque) approach, and the fundamental differences between this and more established, holist (or romantic) approaches to understanding society. It then goes on to explore the philosophical premises on which ANT rests by considering some of the concepts ANT theorists have defined as they have attempted to operationalise its premises through investigations of science and technology. This section also discusses some clarifications which must be made about the way scholars have attempted to understand and make use of the concepts. The conceptual analysis of ANT informs part three, which discusses some practical ways of operationalising the approach. The use of ANT in this thesis has been a learning process involving trial and error, and part three begins by reflecting on that process. It considers three methods of investigation that have been proposed by ANT theorists and discusses how useful these methods have been for the study of urban renewal in this thesis. It then concludes by setting out the rationale for case study selection and linking this to the research questions outlined in chapter one. Finally, part four considers and reflects on the practical tasks which were undertaken, together with the data collection issues which were faced as the research was progressed, and how these have affected the results.

3.2.1 Part one: a choice of theoretical approach

A key aim of this thesis, outlined in chapter one, is to investigate the reasons why a market-analysis approach has achieved and maintained dominance over other understandings of urban issues and over the execution of alternative policy reactions (research questions one to three). In chapter two, a review of the literature on state-led gentrification suggested a need to attend more closely to issues of agency through an inductive, rather than a deductive,

heuristic-based approach. The empirical material that arises from debates about urban renewal therefore needs to be treated in a way that respects, but also critically scrutinises, different understandings. One way of justifying the dominance of the market analysis approach would be to argue that it represents the most rational response to urban problems, and that this explains its prevalence as a way of guiding urban planning strategies, but it is possible that a multiplicity of rational responses exists. The conceptual basis for investigation must be capable of assessing the internal coherence of different rationalities and of displaying the political stakes and moral principles associated with the elevation of one rationality over the alternatives. Furthermore, a critical understanding of the events surrounding housing market renewal must be able to explain the structure of the forces which have sustained the rise and durability of the market analysis approach. Together, these requirements suggest a need for a practical conceptualisation of power; one that allows it to be traced within the work of developing, debating and delivering housing market renewal schemes. In summary, then, an inductive approach is needed which is able to scrutinise multiple rationalities and locate the constraints on planners' agency by attending to specific instances where power is exercised. A number of theoretical perspectives meet these requirements, and two possible approaches are discussed in this chapter. The first of these is Foucauldian archaeological analysis.

3.2.2   Foucauldian analysis

The work of Michel Foucault began as a reaction to Marxist attempts to view social relations as a reflection of the requirements of economic production. For Foucault this was too simplistic, and he argued for the need to more fully integrate cultural factors into an analysis by constructing narrative accounts of how people understand themselves and others. The historical content within these accounts draws on a set of concepts collectively known as discourse or archaeological analysis to explain the parameters placed on social behaviour. Importantly, it is not necessary to use Foucault's work in its totality; in fact, he presented it as a conceptual tool box for researchers to dip into (Simons, 1995). Furthermore, there is a large degree of overlap between Foucault's tools and ideas in actor-network theory. Of Foucault's tools, those which are most relevant to the kind of analysis pursued in this thesis are his ideas of regimes of thought (otherwise known as the historical a priori), the dispositif, the episteme, his definition of power and the conceptualisation of subjectivation. These are discussed here in turn.

Regimes of thought define a foundation of unchallengeable assumptions and ways of thinking. Once accepted, these assumptions then underlie and make possible the generation of more specific statements. Foucault described this in the following way.

> This a priori is what, in a given period, delimits in the totality of experience a field of knowledge, defines the mode of being of the objects that appear in that field, provides man's everyday perception with theoretical powers, and defines the conditions in which he can sustain a discourse about things that is recognised to be true.' (Foucault, 2001a, p. 172).

The historical a priori sits at a less conscious level, and makes possible the production of, numerous heterogeneous statements or discourses. These may perform functions such as describing an entity in a way which is deemed legitimate or alleging knowledge, such as of processes of cause and effect. Foucault's similar concept of a dispositif, sometimes translated as an apparatus or a device, implies a further strategic, technical and institutional set of relations emanating from one or more a priori understandings. John Ploger describes it as follows.

> A dispositif can contain both material/technical/textual forces, installations and configurations that, in certain relations or constellations, obtain power to regulate, govern, institutionalize or empower a specific element in space. According to Rabinow, Foucault in fact underlines that the apparatus 'is always linked to certain coordinates of knowledge which issue from it but, to an equal degree, condition it. This is what the apparatus consists of: strategies of relations of forces supporting and supported by, types of knowledge' (Ploger, 2008, citing Rabinow, 2003, p. 53 and referencing Foucault, 1980).

The sense with which the dispositif concept is used in this thesis refers to the practices of attending to physical and cultural interventions in the lives and environments of residents of slum (and/ or low demand; deprived) areas. In this way, a dispositif refers here to governmental strategies emanating from particular, a priori understandings of problematised parts of the city.

The related concept of the episteme describes the institutional foundations of a particular regime of thought. It comprises all of those forces which work to maintain or create it. O'Farrell describes it as

> ...a subset of the historical a priori which describes the underlying orders, or 'conditions of possibility' which regulate the emergence of various scientific or

> pre-scientific forms of knowledge during specific periods of history'
> (O'Farrell, 2005, p. 63)

In this sense, the episteme is often most evident during shifts in the dominant regime of thought, when:

> ...an unproblematic field of experience or set of practices which were accepted without question... becomes a problem, raises discussion and debate, incites new reactions, and induces a crisis in the previously silent behaviour, habits, practices and institutions' (Foucault, 2001b, p. 74)

Foucault employed his concepts to trace grand systems of thought, which he saw as operating across the populations of whole countries and lasting for centuries or more. However, these systems were conceptualised as operating alongside many other systems, which were perhaps younger and more specific. The principles of regimes of thought and epistemes can therefore be applied at a range of levels. When they are considered together they bear close similarity to the components of an actor-network such as the network of regeneration professionals and housing market analysis techniques charted in the field work chapters of this thesis.

Foucault's definition of power distinguishes it from force, and thus limits it to instances where an individual has a choice, but acts in a particular way because they have been subjected to a set of beliefs and practices (Foucault, 1981). Its aim is to facilitate an understanding of how widely accepted regimes of thought shape the way individuals speak and act, and how they think about themselves and others. This way of conceptualising power informed actor-network theory and is discussed further in part two. In Foucault's own work, he charted the flow of power through regimes of thought, and emphasised the political function of these regimes as forms of cultural control over entire populations. In these accounts, regimes of thought act through individuals who, having accepted the premises of a regime, construct themselves in ways that are subject to these premises. This is a process of self-subjectivation, whereby individuals employ technologies of subjectivisation to effect 'operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality' (Simons, 1995, p. 34 citing Foucault, 1988, p. 18). This concept of subjectivation is used in the field work chapters to provoke enquiry into the way that actors understand themselves and the legitimate boundaries of what they are able to say and do.

This thesis could have been approached solely by drawing on Foucauldian concepts. The four sets of interests and perspectives outlined in the introduction (of housing academics, gentrification researchers, resident objectors and heritage bodies) can be understood as discourses which are made possible by historical patterns of thought and organisation. In this sense, the profession of housing and urban management has roots and modes of organisation that date back to Victorian attitudes towards slum areas of the city, to drives to create affordable housing for workers of an acceptable standard and to more recent political-economic influences on housing policy. The gentrification heuristic has roots in Marxist analyses and the ideology of 20th Century working class struggle, albeit articulated through more detailed epistemological choices. Similarly, the existence and arguments of heritage bodies reflect what Laura-Jane Smith (2006) defines as an 'authorised heritage discourse' that emerged in the 19th Century, and which regards buildings as an inheritance which should be preserved as found for the benefit of future generations. Similarly, resident objectors have relied on community engagement processes, which are employed by the planning profession to provide legitimacy for decisions, and on a modified 'community heritage' discourse, that supports more diverse ways of understanding heritage. The statements made by proponents of all of these perspectives can be thought of as discourses (or networks) located in historical legacies of thought that allow them to be articulated as credible statements supported by communities of actors (Foucault, 2001a).

Foucault's work offers a valuable conceptual framework for urban policy research. It is engaged with in chapter four to guide an archaeological analysis of the development of state practices in relation, firstly to urban reform in the nineteenth century, later inter and post-war slum clearance and more recently housing market renewal. In that sense, Foucauldian concepts offer a means to gain insights into strategies of government that lie behind, and permeate through, the actions of individuals. It facilitates scrutiny and questioning of the obduracy of historic ways of understanding and governing which may not be appropriate when compared to contemporary society and the possibilities for social justice it presents. However, Foucauldian analysis developed as a tool to study extensive periods of history, and this lends it towards a focus on exposing systems of thought, rather than on the micro-level regulation of competing systems of thought. The attempt to govern through the regulation of competing views and interests is, by contrast, central to urban planning. As a historian, Foucault's main interest was in the power of ideas and practices; one of his concerns was for these phenomena as actors which subject others to various roles within society. By contrast,

ANT attends more closely to the precise ways in which actors can control, or be denied control over a network of ideas, practices and connections. The use of the network concept thus facilitates a clearer and more prescriptive level of conceptual attention to the fine grain ways in which dominant structuring ideas and practices change across time and space. As Latour explains, the cost of this is to proceed extremely slowly and meticulously.

> Travelling with ANT, I am afraid to say, will turn out to be agonizingly slow.
> Movements will be constantly interrupted, interfered with, disrupted and dislocated... the ANT scholar has to trudge like an ant, carrying the heavy gear
> in order to generate even the tiniest connection. (Latour, 2005, p. 25)

Painstakingly slow analysis is needed in order to understand and piece together the actors that appear to be operating at various stages in the development of networks, and to account for all the available evidence within a network narrative (Law, 2004). Nigel Thrift (Farias, 2010) concludes that this makes ANT more suited to relatively closed scenarios, such as laboratory practice. This compares with Foucault's ability to analyse large tracts of history, and his contention that 'the best tool to examine and dismantle existing orders is history' (O'Farrell, 2005, p. 54).

ANT's development as a tool for establishing the minutiae of fine grain connections between actors in scenarios that have taken place in the recent past makes it particularly well suited to a study of urban policy developments that have taken place in disparate locations over the last decade. In chapters six and seven, for example, this detailed level of analysis reveals how actors were able to extend the use of housing market analysis techniques to secure the support of more distant actors for the particular kind of interventions proposed. One of ANT's strengths, which is particularly relevant to this task, is that it provides a conceptual framework for investigating the techniques which are used to make networks durable. The focus on durability relates to the ability of networks to exercise control over geographically or institutionally distant[2] locations. ANT provides the capability to analyse how networks are able to command control in these circumstances. This capability can be used in turn to assess why and how rival actors have attempted to oppose these strategies, and to explore the reasons why these strategies of resistance succeeded or failed. ANT's assertion that black boxes, or immutable mobiles, are used to make networks durable is thus pivotal to the

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[2] The term institution or institutional is used throughout this thesis to refer both to formally bounded organisations and to habitual patterns or structures of social order and co-operation.

response to research question three, which asks why the state has continued to pursue a market analysis approach to renewal despite the controversy which has surrounded the approach.

3.2.1 Part Two: a Conceptual Analysis of the ANT Literature and its Relevance to Urban Renewal

Ideas that were later to become the theory of the Actor-Network originated in the material-semiotic philosophy of Michel Serres and drew on the work of linguist Algirdas Julien Greimas. The theory's conception and development, however, was carried out by Michel Callon, Bruno Latour and John Law, largely at the Centre de Sociologie de l'Innovation (CSI) of the École nationale supérieure des mines de Paris in the late 1970s and early 80s, and was strongly influenced by the work of Michel Foucault. Law (2007) summarises ANT's scope as follows.

> Actor-network theory is a disparate family of material-semiotic tools, sensibilities and methods of analysis that treat everything in the social and natural worlds as a continuously generated effect of the webs of relations within which they are located. It assumes that nothing has reality or form outside the enactment of those relations. (p. 2)

ANT's strength of exploration and explanation stems from a radical break with traditional, social scientific ways of building up pictures of society from models and from generalising from specific cases by using assumptions. ANT seeks to limit its conceptual premises to a tightly theorised understanding of relational action and then to build descriptions of events from attention to detail, rather than speculation. Extensive developments over the last approximately 15 years have challenged and extended this understanding, opening new debates about the use of this relational perspective. The second part of this chapter discusses some of these developments, where they are of most relevance to the approach in this thesis.

The first uses of ANT were as a framework for the study of science and technology. In contrast with a view which conceptualised science as an objective process of revealing the truth, ANT highlighted the political constitution and functions of objects and organisms as diverse as microbes, scallops and door closers. The theory's importance to geographers and environmental researchers is similar. Its use in this thesis has highlighted that one of its key

strengths is its effectiveness at analysing research conclusions that claim to rest on a neutral, technical and scientific process of study. An ANT approach reveals the political make up of this kind of science and shows how it is used to legitimise politically contested urban policies by framing them as a necessary response to objective facts about how cities and societies work. ANT embodies a critique of the philosophical premises of this approach to revealing objective facts. The field work in this thesis builds on that critique to undertake a detailed empirical exploration of how this approach to social study has become so influential, and of the impact it is having on urban renewal schemes across the country.

3.2.2   From a romantic to a baroque approach to knowledge

The way post-structuralist theories such as ANT approach large and complex phenomena is illustrated by material-semiotic philosopher Chunglin Kwa (2002). Kwa draws a distinction between two approaches to knowledge, which he terms 'romantic' and 'baroque'. Metaphors which can be associated with these terms include the experience of looking down at pedestrians from the top of a tower block versus that of looking through the eyes of an ant (the creature). Kwa locates the development of the former, romantic perspective in the systems theories of the 60s, with their computer and anatomy-based analogies. The analogy of the tower block stresses that the romantic approach to research is one of climbing up and looking down at the world below in an attempt to find trends and patterns; the whole is viewed as greater than the sum of its parts. The romantic view is thus receptive to the idea that cities are guided by some form of coherent rules, such as individuals' attempts to maximise the satisfaction they derive from spending money. Similarly, a view of the city as an organism might lead to a particular, problematised neighbourhood being seen as a dysfunctional part of that organism. If cities are indeed subject to strong systemic pressures such as these then the specific 'paths' that have led to the adoption of a planning policy or a particular organisation become less important. What matters is how that policy or organisation affects the functional workings of the city in the present. The romantic view can be found in use in the analyses of housing markets that have underpinned the case for housing market renewal and its sub-regional implementation. Van Wezemael (2006) locates the successfulness of this perspective in its use as a basis for prediction and for making 'logico-deductive' intervention. But he notes that 'this is directly related to the two basic assumptions of linearity: large causes will produce large scale effects (and vice versa), and the same cause always produces the same effect' (p. 6), but non-linear science explicitly rejects the notion that these assumptions actually hold fast in real life.

A consequence of adopting a romantic perspective is that it legitimises the claim that those who can comprehend the whole gain a privileged view of how society functions. Statistics are thought to hold the key to this holistic, or bird's-eye, view of how society works. However, to generate statistics researchers are required to define categories and populate these with observed phenomena. In this sense, both the categories and the resultant phenomena respond to the particular concerns, motivations and conceptual outlooks of the researchers. The researchers are then obliged to interpret patterns of correlation and causality within these data sets. Complexity is made visible by reducing the potential for multiple explanations and competing narratives to emerge. Researchers become empowered to provide the interpretation which frames the dominating narrative. Romantic researchers cannot avoid having to make political decisions about how to approach the mass of potential information before them and how to interpret what their synthesis then yields.

For ANT theorists, the romantic goal of finding a system is challenged by the chaos and complexity of everyday life, and the fact that researchers are always part of, never ethically or normatively detached from, society (Cilliers, 2002; Law, 2004; Van Wezemeal, 2006). Law (2004) draws on Leibniz's (1973) advice to look for a world of ponds within ponds and gardens within gardens. By this he means to say that, in following the movements of the ant, or the person on the street, wide-ranging elements are brought together. Strange and seemingly random things become connected. Law's example is of a military aircraft where the G forces and plane design sicken and prevent pilots and navigators from operating comfortably and effectively. As the case is analysed further it first leads to arrays of navigational and flight technology, their engineers and commissioners, but later to the plans and projects of occupational medicine, research projects in hospitals and the work of meteorologists. Here again it is action and relations that form the bedrock of the ANT methodology. Yet the movements of those involved do not lead to a coherent system but instead to a series of collisions between fragmented actors and concepts at all different scales. Indeed, a conventional understanding of scale becomes confused, with elements of national government bound, both directly and indirectly, to the local and to other disparate sites of interest. Similarly, abstract concepts are found to be manifested in the plane's technologies which shake and discomfort the pilot.

The baroque, then, looks toward discarding traditional dualist conceptions as foundational and these include our conventional notions of scale (see, for example, Callon and Latour's early paper on scale (1981)) and distinctions between humans and objects. Instead, it gains an understanding of large, potentially 'non coherent', wholes by drawing links outwards, often beginning with an instance which appears, initially, to be spatially bounded. Because a baroque approach refuses to assume the existence of strong, systemic or causal processes it necessarily becomes more attuned to the factors which lead to the existence or form of a particular planning policy or organisation. The way these phenomena are constituted is seen as the result of constantly evolving webs of relations between actors. The 'path' which has formed an organisation's structure in a particular way may therefore have relevance to the way that organisation acts in the future. In the case of the housing associations in this thesis, for example, political decisions in the late 1970s to encourage them to accommodate more vulnerable households would have implications for their ability to respond to high vacancy rates two decades later. In this sense it is sometimes argued that the baroque approach to complexity represents a new relationship to using data in its totality, seeking out and using information that might otherwise by disregarded under romanticism as erroneous or anomalous (Murdoch, 1997; Latour, 2005; Van Wezemael, 2006).

3.2.3 Translation

ANT emerged as an alternative to two philosophical camps in the social study of science. On the one hand, realists sought to establish scientific findings as objective representations of physical phenomena. On the other, the strong programme, also known as the sociology of scientific knowledge, sought to locate scientific findings within a psychological, social and cultural context or paradigm. In contrast, Latour argues that it makes no sense to talk of context in this way, as if it were some kind of abstract set of ideas and practices

> There is no need to go searching for mysterious or global causes outside networks. If something is missing it is because the description is incomplete. Period. Conversely, if one is capable of explaining effects of causes, it is because a stabilized network is already in place. (Latour, 1991, pp. 129-130)

The ANT perspective seeks a more precise understanding of the 'actors' that influence researchers to conclude one thing and not another. Rather than inferring an explanation for events from broad, cultural characteristics, ANT sets out to define in minute detail, at every stage in the development of a narrative of scientific explanation, the key, causal contributions.

One of the defining features of ANT which emerged from this environment was its acceptance that non-human actors could have substantial agency through relations with other actors in the scientific process, and this would later lead Murdoch (2001) to describe the ANT approach as 'co-constructionist'. Murdoch refers to Latour's study of how Louis Pasteur identified the bacillus bacteria that causes anthrax. Latour argues (says Murdoch) that 'we should not imagine the bacillus as a thing 'out there' waiting to be discovered… it is the co-construction of a complex socio-natural assemblage or network that allows the (natural) substance (and also the 'great scientist') to emerge.' (ibid, pp. 118-119). Latour (1999) goes as far as saying that the bacillus did not exist before it became a feature of Pasteur's research. Although, the truth is that such a question is outside the scope of ANT. ANT is material-semiotic. Strictly speaking, before an actor has a bearing on a story it is not that it cannot exist, it is simply that it is not important: it has no effect either materially or semiotically. In Law's words ANT 'asks us to treat different materials- people, machines 'ideas' and all the rest – as interactional effects rather than primitive causes' (Law, 1992, p. 389).

This relational approach allows ANT to strike a middle way between the realist and the strong programme camps. Figure 3.1 illustrates science's relationship in society, in an environment where particular groups of actors call on scientists to address a problem in the world in a way that will respond to their interests (translation 1). An example of this could be anything from mothers seeking help to tackle childhood leukaemia to agri-businesses seeking to genetically modify more 'efficient' crops. Translation 2 sees scientists seek seclusion in an attempt to test how non-human actors might be enlisted into new relations with humans. The potential uses and implications of new possibilities are then negotiated in a process named translation 3, in which new technologies must be tried out and their unexpected consequences estimated. For Callon et al, science does engage with real non-human entities but it is also an inescapably political process.

> How else, other than politics, could we describe the movement from macrocosm 1 to macrocosm 2, the exploration of possible worlds, and the choice between them? What is at stake in this movement is actually the form and composition of the collective in which we live. What better political questions are there …? (Callon et al, 2009, p. 68).

An important clarification about this view of politics is that it is not constrained to interactions between humans; it also establishes a political relationship with non-human

actors by allowing or constraining the agency of such actors in a desired future version of the world. Further detail of the stages within processes of translation is provided in part three.

Figure 3.1: science as a political process of generating new human and non-human assemblages
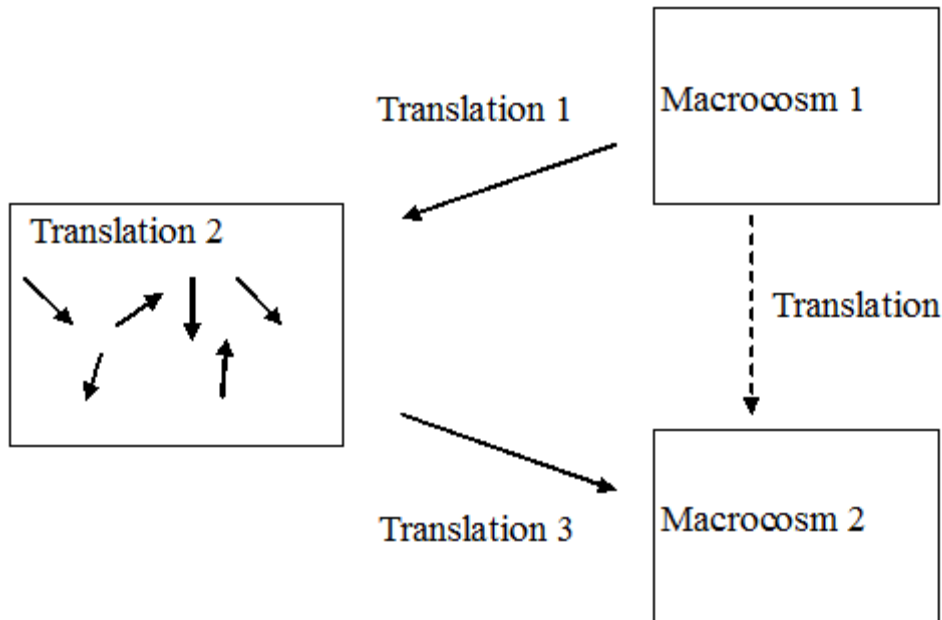
Source: Callon et al (2009, p. 69)

3.2.4 Power

One of the implications of using actor-network theory to understand cases of knowledge creation or policy control is a need to think carefully about, and clarify, some longstanding definitions of power. To illustrate this, two definitions are given below as examples, starting with a Weberian definition.

> (Power is) the *chance* of a man or a number of men to realise their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action (Gerth and Mills, 1947, p. 180, emphasis added).

> A *exercises* power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B's interests. Lukes (1974, p. 30, emphasis added).

One of the characteristics which distinguishes ANT from the definitions above is its attention to understanding power in an environment of networks of performance. The need to understand power in this context leads Latour to define it as follows.

> When an actor simply has power nothing happens and s/he is powerless; when, on the other hand, an actor exerts power it is others who perform the action. It appears that power is not something one can possess- indeed it must be treated as a *consequence rather than as a cause* of action. (Latour, 1986, p. 264, emphasis added)

This view of power as consequence is crucial to supporting the methodological procedure advocated by ANT theorists. They contend that an understanding of activities such as scientific procedures, policy making or governance can only be gained by identifying each stage of how networks change. Part of this thesis, for example, therefore looks in detail at how more and more organisations were recruited into a movement lobbying for a housing market renewal initiative, and how social scientific research findings contributed to the engagement of these new actors. An ANT approach here involves identifying points of network expansion and then working backwards, gathering evidence that seems to account for this change.

Another distinction between ANT and the approaches to power highlighted above arises from ANT's commitment to viewing life as constantly evolving networks of human and non-human actors. The focus here on endowing non-human actors with the potential to actively contribute to network construction questions the linear and straightforward notion that power exists as part of a relationship between human rivals with intentional strategies. In doing so, it emphasises uncertainty, understood as the potential for unexpected events and path-dependent eccentricities to emerge. This is because networks are viewed as having varying levels of ability to control events and understandings. In Callon's example of the meltdown at Chernobyl, the nuclear power station could be seen to act initially as an intermediary, merely conforming to the role ascribed to it by human actors: converting fuel to energy for distribution to consumers. But, when the meltdown occurred, the power station became an actor, actively creating a new network of relations; the consequence of this new network was that sheep and reindeer became radioactive and environmental protestors were mobilised (Callon, 1991).

Before moving on to discuss the wider implications of ANT's insistence that non-human actors should be given full rights of agency it is worth reflecting on an one further perspective on power which has become increasingly popular in planning. This is the notion that we are now living in a 'network society'. Despite sharing an emphasis on networks, this notion should not be equated with ANT as the networks it focuses on are concerned principally with the globalisation of manufacturing and the rise of information technologies. Its proponents, such as Booher and Innes (2002), attribute increased importance to whoever can put together innovative new networks of actors in a joint venture. One consequence of this view is that planners are seen as increasingly able to circumvent traditional state and bureaucratic forms of control, and sometimes this is accompanied by a hope that communicative planning processes can harness this potential for more equitable and effective planning (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003).

The idea of a network society is based on a model or heuristic, which attempts to define how social relations are now practised, and this contrasts with a strict interpretation of ANT, which seeks to build up detailed understandings rather than impose preconceptions. While a network society model sees a new form of society, which planners can exploit by facilitating more equitable configurations of actors, an actor-network view sees a process, where some actors have been able to construct powerful networks to support their interests. It argues that certain actors, such as quangos or successful businessmen, have become that way through their ability to command at a distance, which they have gained by finding ways to prescribe the form networks should take and by making them difficult for other actors to contest (Callon and Latour, 1981). Such a view is unlikely to lead to a general optimism about new possibilities for the empowerment of progressive planning. Rather, ANT encourages greater attention to the particularities of how actors have built positions of strength, and then seeks to follow how these positions are used to prevail, or otherwise, in arenas of conflict over the future of local environments.

3.2.5 Actors and intermediaries

Callon (1991) provides us with some definitions of entities that can be conceptualised as existing within networks of performance. These definitions clarify ANT's approach to understanding how some actors prevail in complex, path dependent contests. They also help to clarify the basis for ANT's assertion that non-humans demonstrate an important level of agency in network building and in the resolution of conflict between networks and external

actors or networks. Callon defines an actor as something that actively creates new networks of consequence, and he compares this with an intermediary which may complete a link within a network but does not build new ones. The boundaries between these concepts are in constant flux and may become blurred because, as in the example of the power station above, something may be an intermediary one minute and suddenly become an actor the next. Another example could be that of sending an email to an adjacent office. If the email has no additional consequence other than to convey the message as efficiently as simply speaking to the recipient, then it is an intermediary. If, however, the email resulted in confusion, perhaps as a result of poorly conveyed sarcasm or the impression of malice that was not intended, then new consequences may emerge as a result of the addition of the email-actor into a network with the writer-actor and the message's recipient. This example illustrates the difference that Callon has tried to highlight, between actor and intermediary, but it also demonstrates that events are rarely this clear cut because agency is necessarily a consequence of the performed relations between actors, rather than actors themselves.

3.2.6 Humans and non-humans

The reasoning above is crucial to explaining the superficially absurd notion that objects can have agency. An empty terraced house does not grow legs and begin to build an urban renewal initiative but, in combination with other actors, it can act to convince others that one is needed. Both Callon and Latour have gone as far as referring to a principle of 'symmetry' in their discussion of the role of non-humans in networks. But the attribution of this level of agency to actors remains a controversial proposition. Symmetry relies on the notion discussed earlier, that objects can have agency and entice humans into networks just as much as humans can entice objects into networks. However, the extent to which this symmetry holds fast has been brought into question by David Bloor's challenge to Latour (Bloor, 1999). Bloor notes a contradiction in Latour's instructions to start from the interests of the actors, while at the same time assuming equal agency to humans and objects. He asks how we might understand the interests of bacilli, or for that matter of a pencil sharpener? Hacking (1999) also distinguishes the human ability to reflect: ANT accounts are always written for humans, never for non-humans. One way in which these problems can be overcome is to refer to 'free association' rather than symmetry. When the agency of objects is expressed in terms of free association, the principle seems clear: the researcher should not restrict or direct which relations any actor may be seen to construct.

While it may seem a relatively minor point, substantial benefits can be gained from approaching the relationships between actors from a position that defends the possibility of free association rather than seeking symmetry by emphasising the potential for agency in non-humans. A reading of much of the way ANT has been used in planning, geography and urban studies shows that scholars seem to begin with the intention of using ANT to look at objects and animals, because this is recognised to be a hallmark feature of the approach. The result is that studies concentrate on tower blocks (Jacobs et al, 2007) or water voles (Hinchcliffe et al, 2003) instead of following the spirit of ANT's argument in the specific context of their subject. This point is clarified by the following attempt by Michel Callon to explain ANT's premises.

> … an 'actor' is any *entity* that more or less successfully defines and builds a world filled by other entities with histories, identities and interrelationships of their own' (Callon, 1991, p. 140, emphasis added).

An actor can be anything because it is the consequences which arise from its existence that are important, not its shape, size or name. This thesis does not begin by taking a particular interest in the level of agency attached to objects such as housing. In fact, objects have relatively little agency in this thesis' account of urban renewal, while animals have none. Nevertheless, a formidable level of agency is found in the path-dependent institutions which organise government. Discourses, too, have considerable agency in the empirical work covered in this thesis. They are understood, and can be defined here, as causal narratives used by human actors, usually to describe urban or market processes[3]. As Rick Iedema (2001) has noted, causal understandings that may initially have begun as complex and diverse can become 'resemiotized', or reduced into simpler forms in order to assist the building of alliances. Reductionist narratives or discourses, such as the idea that terraced housing causes low demand, can take on their own agency in certain settings and become actors in their own right.

A failure to grasp the key point that actors can be anything, has led some authors in urban studies to argue that ANT is insufficiently theorised or of little use to studies of administration, development or housing. Valverde (2005) for instance, argues that 'it should

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[3] N.B. This interpretation of the term 'discourse', which is used throughout this thesis, is distinct from any more complex Foucauldian references to discourse analysis. Rather, I use this term in a way that is interchangeable with 'narrative'.

be possible for socio-legal scholars concerned about systemic inequality to borrow some tools from actor-network analysis to analyze the workings of a knowledge network while complementing such an analysis with a substantive study of power relations' (p. 421). Similarly, Routledge (2008) argues that, in order to explain power imbalances, there is a need to look beyond a relational approach and incorporate unequal access to resources such as language skills. These authors have failed to fully embrace ANT's relationality, keeping one foot in the old conception of the social that theorists such as Latour (1988; 1997; 2005) have so forcefully rallied against.

Routledge, for example, uses ANT to study networks of resistance to neoliberal globalisation, and concludes that ANT's relational approach means it is poor at understanding the unequal distribution of language skills. But when the ability to speak different languages is conceived of as an actor in itself, with relational consequences, it becomes necessary to enquire about how that actor emerged and how it came to be embedded in relations that warp other actors' ability to understand and shape collective actions. We might then find links to important forces, such as the provision of free education, or bilingual parents, and we can progress further, to see these forces as complex, path-dependent constellations of human and non-human actors. If we do this, and thus continually extend rather than close down ANT's relational approach, then we effectively achieve a relational description of how power imbalances come into being. Proceeding with this fully relational approach allows us to return to stories such as Routledge's study of peasant resistance or Cowan et al's (2009) study of processes surrounding social housing allocation mechanisms. What we find is that both authors cling to normative, causal understandings of how the world works, which prejudice their research; these understandings can be viewed as the result of a stabilised network of knowledge generation and maintenance. Routledge's study seems to continually reference concepts that are rooted in a neo-Marxist paradigm of social relations, while Cowan et al appear committed to a belief in the use of housing policy tools as legitimate and workable means of creating an optimum pattern of social relations. A more rigorous use of ANT requires that these frameworks of understanding are suspended in order to concentrate more faithfully on building up a story, and new knowledge, by watching how actors piece themselves together. This is not to deny researchers the right to beliefs and ethical positions, but to privilege empirical observation as the basis for building new knowledge.

3.2.7 The presence of absent actors

The non-human actors of importance to the ANT account in this thesis are discursive ones. It will show how certain substantive discourses, or master narratives, persuade disparate actors to understand problems in a particular way that leads these actors to support specific planning actions. It also finds these discourses framed by governance discourses, which have successfully become operationalised through policy and regulation. As a result, these translated discourses of governance guide the ways in which substantive discourses combine with experts, civil servants, politicians and others to make problems and decisions. There is no pre-set agenda here of what is important or of who is acting honourably or otherwise; these issues emerge from the claims and actions of the actors who are observed.

An interesting outcome of the research has been the identification of discourses of housing market renewal which attempt to pre-empt and disarm the arguments of those who object to the initiative. The arguments deploy strategies which attempt to define the motivations of objectors in a way that is favourable to further argumentation. Having imposed a definition of the interests of rival actors, dominant narratives can be found to respond to this definition with arguments that position housing market renewal as being in the interests of those opposed to it.

While at first glance this may sound like a conspiracy theory, what is suggested here is that this is merely the logical conclusion of an incremental, path-dependent process of anticipation and response which occurs as part of the political task of building consensus around the desirability of a future scenario. As Law and Callon (1988) have shown in their sociological analysis of the construction of a fighter jet, absent actors are instrumental to this process. They give an important example of how actors who seek to build networks in contested environments often use arguments which seek to persuade by raising the possibility of achieving an optimum scenario. Future actors are visualised and placed in certain positions in this scenario, alongside strategies for holding them there. Law and Callon show how this leads the designers of the fighter jet to differentiate it from existing models, and to ensure it is designed in a way which will give it the advantage over enemy aircraft it might have to engage with. In a similar way, chapter five on the origins of the housing market renewal initiative (HMRI) shows how the lack of contribution from residents and local businesses to the design of the initiative is compensated for by (optimistic) estimations of how they will respond to the initiative's proposals, and by introducing narratives which present their interests in line with the project.

3.2.8 Multiple realities

Research that approaches strongly contested, political topics should have a duty to deal sensitively with the values and understandings at stake. This point is raised by Lee and Brown (1994), who suggest there is a risk that grand narratives might emerge from ANT's tendency towards using data in its totality. They raised concerns that a focus on the process of network building might lead to the treatment of those whose interests conflict with the network merely as 'other' to a dominant (meta) narrative. Clearly, this would play down the importance of more peripheral ontologies and understandings of events. This critique is matched by fears from other scholars that ANT might be becoming popular as a tool to improve management practices, rather than to guide critical research that engages with inequalities (Haraway, 1991; Star, 1991; Strathern, 1991; Hetherington and Law, 2000; Vandenberghe, 2002).

Moser's (2008) study of Alzheimer's disease is a prominent illustration that ANT research need not necessarily be constrained to managerialist investigations. She follows the way the disease is constructed as a concept and a matter of concern, and how these constructions interface with multiple networks of actors, each seeking to define what matters about the entity 'Alzheimer's'. Rather than finding a sure scientific basis, she uncovers a science that grasps for different shreds of evidence which might explain more of the disease/s or how to cope with it/ them. Assemblies of politicians, practitioners and pharmaceutical companies provide stability, but this knowledge supports those with interests in the manufacture and sale of drugs and is contested by other actors, including some patients.

Moser's study highlights that, in situations of uncertainty, 'facts' often form part of a partial and insecure basis on which to build reality. Instead, reality can only be deduced by watching it being performed and if we do this, we find multiple versions.

> …natures, objects and facts *matter* in the sense that they are *of concern* or *importance*. In Latour's words (2004), 'matters of fact' are also 'matters of concern' because it is impossible to disentangle what *is* from what *ought to be*. Facts are value-loaded or charged matters.' (Moser, 2008, pp. 98-99)

In the case of Whitefield, covered in chapter seven, these multiple realities form a key part of understanding the conflict over the future of the area. Terraced housing in the area takes on different meanings for different actors, representing failure and deprivation for some and

community and heritage for others. Different epistemologies are employed in an attempt to demonstrate and quantify the importance of these aspects (see figure 3.1) but, as Mol argues below, ANT does not see these aspects as innate characteristics to be discovered.

> Instead of (seeing these practices as measuring) attributes or aspects, (ANT sees these as) different *versions* of the object, versions that the tools help to enact. They are different and yet related objects. They are multiple forms of reality. Itself.' (Mol, 1999, p. 77)

The studies of housing unfitness and heritage characteristics in Whitefield thus merge with aspects of reality to co-construct the existence and performance of these features in purposive networks, which seek to define the future of housing in Whitefield. This way of conceptualising reality endows ANT with the ability to understand how different value systems and ontologies, understood as ways of approaching reality (Ugilt, 2008), contribute to a cohesive understanding of how networks expand, mutate and compete in the process of advancing the interests of the actors who support them.

3.2.9 The ethics of ANT

In concluding this section, it is worth raising one final conceptual point, which has been highlighted by a critique of Latour's Science in Action (1987). Latour comes to the fragile conclusion that ANT scholars should avoid accounts that result in new networks of power and action, but Amsterdamska (1990) rightly asserts that this renders the whole process of research pointless. Consequently, Law (2007), drawing on Thompson (2002) concludes.

> There is nowhere to hide beyond the performativity of the webs. But since our own stories weave further webs, it is never the case that they simply describe. They too enact realities and versions of the better and the worse, the right and the wrong, the appealing and the unappealing. There is no innocence. The good is being done as well as the epistemological and the ontological. (p. 15)

Amsterdamska's critique resonates with Foucault's recognition of the limitations and partiality of his accounts, and his argument that researchers should try to promote social justice by revealing why certain kinds of behaviour are normalised and stigmatised (O'Farrell, 2005). Although, as I argued earlier, ANT researchers attempt to suspend prejudicial normative understandings of the world, they are still faced with important decisions about how to use their results, and what the implications of their conclusions might be. The final three chapters of this thesis therefore seek to theorise what the consequences of

the conclusions of this thesis might be for the development of planning theory and for practices of urban renewal. Particular attention is paid to how findings might be re-interpreted by other actors to justify outcomes, such as drastically cutting funding for urban renewal, that could compound problems for those living near areas that have been boarded up as a result of the HMRI.

3.3.1 Part three: developing a method from the ANT perspective

When the ANT literature was first reviewed, prior to undertaking any field work, the intention was to combine ANT's theoretical approach with existing, contextual knowledge of the subject to draft an indication of how to proceed. A similar approach was tried by Cowan et al (2009), who sought stability by assuming the existence of a predefined network (in this case a formal housing allocations procedure) and then trying to follow it, with mixed results. What I quickly found, though, was that very little stability could be introduced at the beginning. My previous experience working on an HMRI project in Newcastle provided no firm basis for approaching events in Lancashire. Rather than seeking to apply some prior sense, it seems that undertaking ANT research must always be a dialectic process that grows from exploratory observations. Whether these are gained from textual analysis, interviews or other means is not particularly important, at least in the early stages of research. What is helpful, though, is to try to approach areas that are likely to increase the chances of the researcher successfully identifying the components of networks.

The field work for this thesis began in Whitefield, which was the subject of a long-running dispute over its future. Researching an instance of political conflict was extremely useful as a means of identifying networks because conflict forces the actors at the table to make use of (and thereby reveal) things that are of use to them in their attempts to prevail. They must 'show their hands', and in doing so they demonstrate the actions that they are able to undertake and the arguments that they feel best defend their position. The arguments and actions revealed in Whitefield thus came to be understood as material and semiotic tactics with importance in at least one location. As more information about these arguments and tactics was collected, they began to define oppositional networks, although at this stage these networks were only partially revealed. It then became possible to trace the tactics, and the actors they seek to enlist, to see if similar tactics raised similar concerns at other sites. What

was found was that some of the discourses guiding action in Whitefield are crucial planks, which are common throughout the HMRI approach. They support the ability of actors engaged in this network to carry out similar approaches to renewal with a degree of impunity from rival actors. Looking back on this research process, it was instances of conflict, as well as instances of enlistment, the persuasion of new actors to co-operate in a movement towards a collective objective, that provided the best opportunities for network identification. Chapter five of this thesis, for example, charts the attempts that were made to recruit government actors and government funding to support the HMRI network. Chapters six and seven each contain a strong element of conflict. Each of the three detailed investigations in this thesis highlights the importance of an element of rivalry to revealing the strategies of control that give the HMRI its coherency, and which the thesis sets out to investigate.

The planning conflict in Whitefield revealed the tips of two rival networks, each of which sought to assert their vision over the future of the area. The methodological process from this point then became much more focused on collecting data in order to build up a more or less comprehensive timeline of how the contest over Whitefield's future had unfolded. Once the events were established, attention shifted in an attempt to understand the rationale and justification for the actions that had taken place. At this stage, my personal experience as a planner working on a HMRI project in Newcastle upon Tyne became more relevant because many of the processes that were followed had a familiar regulatory basis; there are similarities in the way neighbourhood renewal assessments and public inquiries are likely to be approached. My experience in the field meant that I knew the various options which were open to local authority actors and could therefore more easily appreciate why one route may have been followed rather than another. In addition, chapter four's research into past justifications for urban renewal in the United Kingdom also served as a knowledge base, and this was essential as a tool to help understand why actors involved in the HMRI viewed housing and housing policy in particular, path dependent ways.

Professional knowledge of regulations and procedures and past policies was a valuable resource, which assisted attempts to determine, at each stage, why the actors behaved as they did. However, this experience was used in support of the principles of ANT investigation, rather than to prejudice research findings. Three key principles which were particularly useful to guiding this stage of the research were drawn from Callon's (1986) study of the scallops of St Briec's Bay. These are:

1. the researcher does not judge the arguments being advanced by his/ her subjects. S/he listens to their interpretations of the situation and themselves.

2. a single repertoire must be used to describe the social and technical viewpoints observed, even though there may be great differences between them (technical assertions must be scrutinised in detail).

3. free association: the observer must abandon all a priori distinctions between natural and social events. Actors must be allowed to freely associate with whichever entities they choose.

Callon clarified this third principle as follows: 'The observer must consider that the repertoire of categories which he uses, the entities which are mobilized, and the relationships between these are all topics for actor's discussions' (p. 4). In other words, categories must originate from the interpretations of the actors, not the researcher. The role of the ANT researcher is to follow the actors and how they piece each other together, since to do otherwise would be to impose 'a pre-established grid of analysis' (Callon, 1986, p. 4).

The issues which activists in Whitefield raised as being particularly important included the workmanship in the fabric of the housing in the area and the size and historical significance of the outrigger kitchens attached to the properties. In contrast, a council officer said that the houses were too cheap and in a poor state of repair, and queried whether heritage-led restoration would attract more people to live in the area. These opposing statements can be seen as the outcomes of two different networks. If we were to follow one of these networks, we could draw comparison with Latour's use of a key weight to illustrate the process of network building. Latour gives the example of a hotel manager trying to get his guests to return his keys. He argues that the manager can simply ask for the keys to be returned, or he can strengthen his position, his power over the situation, by loading his statement. The statement 'please return the keys' appeals to the politeness and good nature of the guests. In this way the manager begins to create a program/ network, the strength of which can be measured in terms of its ability to overcome the anti-programs of the guests (e.g. dispositions towards laziness, absent-mindedness and theft). Figure 3.2 illustrates this conceptualisation. In stage 3) a sign is added to the network and in 4) a weight is added. Latour is at pains to stress that the strength can be found in the network, which is the combination of all these intermediaries, not in any one variable: the weight on its own may have little effect without the sign or request.

Figure 3.2: The hotel manager and the key weights

The hotel manager successively adds keys, oral notices, and finally metal weights; each time he modifies the attitude of some parts of the 'hotel customers' group
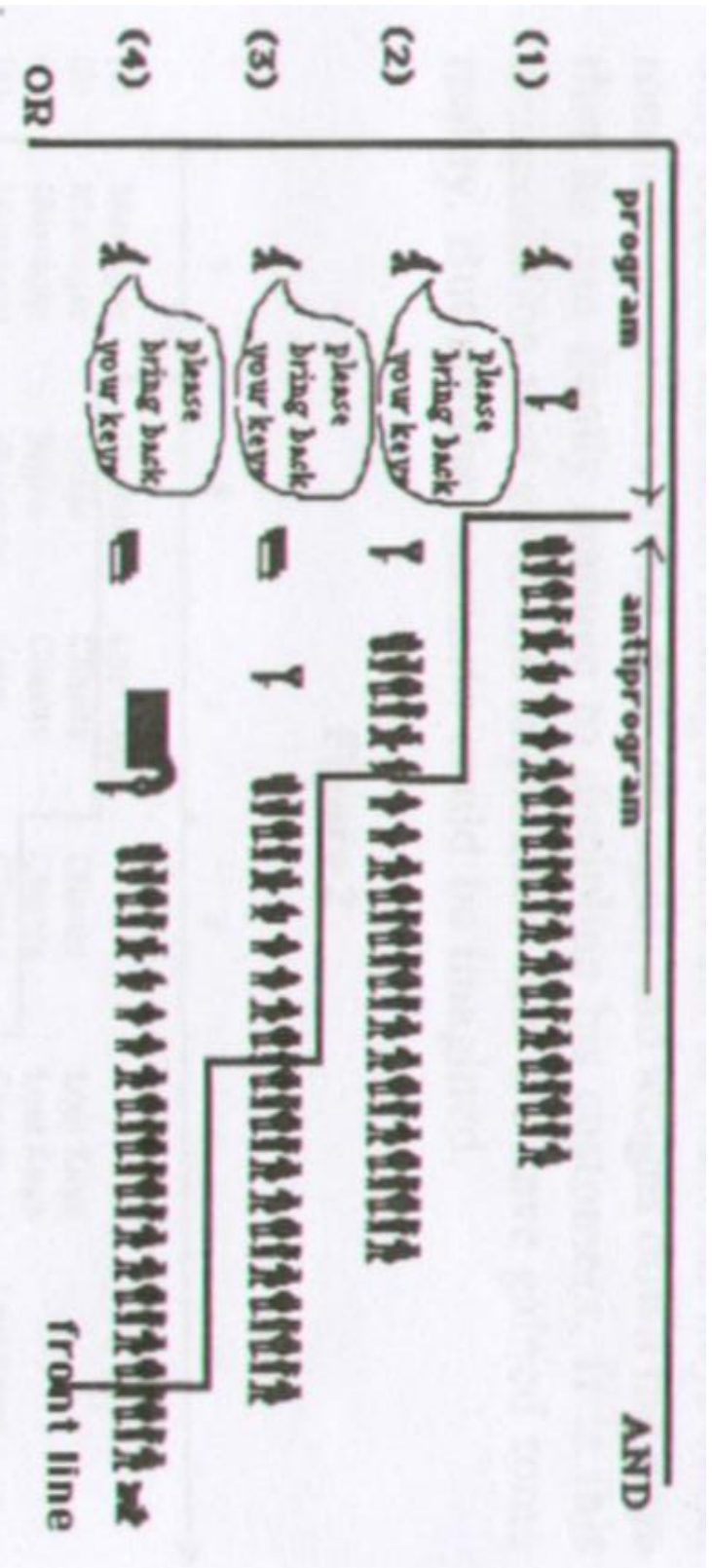
Source: Latour (1991)

The networks charted in Whitefield can be conceptualised in the same way. The crafted stone and the outriggers not only appeal to a general sense of the importance of maintaining heritage, they also function to enlist the effort and resources of heritage organisations in objecting to the redevelopment proposals. A network is built which is far greater than the sum of its parts. Similarly, the discourses of decline and poor housing condition plug Council actors into sources of funding and legislative power which conceptualise these issues as problems at a thematic level and provide resources to address them. There are limits, however to the programmatic method illustrated by the key weight. These arise from the over-simplistic aggregation of opposing forces into an 'anti-program', which is never investigated. In the example, the guests are assumed to be heterogeneous actors but what would happen if the guests organised and consorted in a conscious attempt to steal the keys? This more sophisticated context of dialectic rivalry requires a more developed understanding of how actors attempt to anticipate and obstruct rival attempts to constrain network expansion.

Callon's (1986) article on scallop farming provides a programmatic interpretation of the phases of translation which actors must go through in order to construct and maintain networks of support for particular practices, and ways of understanding those practices. Callon (1986) describes four 'moments' of translation. The first is *problematisation*, in which those seeking to build a network (Callon was also studying researchers) set out the nature of other actors and their problems, together with the details of a proposed solution that could only be progressed by establishing the researchers as an 'obligatory passage point' between other actors. The second moment is defined as *interessement*. The proposed solution requires the network builders to demonstrate that actors are likely to adhere to the roles defined for them by the proposed solution. The actors must be made interested in the joint venture and tactics must be employed to prevent them from seeking or being defined in different ways that threaten the venture. In the third phase, *enrolment*, the solution to the problematisation is pursued by seeking to secure the active support of the actors outlined in that solution. In the last *mobilisation* phase methods are employed to actualise the definitions of the groups of actors involved in the venture. In Callon's terms, the few representatives that actually engage with the network builders must be truly representatives of the groups of actors they claim to speak for. Law and Callon's (1988) study of the development of the TSR2 military aircraft project draws on Callon's phases of translation but simplifies them in order to illustrate the sociological role of 'technical' calculations within network development. Like the process of

developing housing market research which is explored in chapter five, these calculations provide a guide to the impact of rival actors on the problematisation which was employed.

Law and Callon's study of the TSR 2 military aircraft project simplified the phases of translation in Callon's earlier paper into a form which is more readily usable to study the HMRI, and consolidated Callon's concept of an 'obligatory passage point' (OPP). This OPP referred to research on the TSR2 prototype, which was conceptualised as providing the link between local actors (the treasury, the navy, the Conservative government and so on) and an improvement in Britain's global military capability.

> We implied that the management of the project would act as an obligatory point
> of passage for all contacts between the global and the local networks. (Law and
> Callon, 1988, p. 290)

Those seeking to avoid the dystopia of market collapse were similarly enticed to sign up to the prescriptions of the housing market research programme. The HMRI research was an obligatory point of passage between local actors' concerns for vacant housing and the global actors whose support would be needed to secure the establishment of the HMRI. The research represented vacant housing, and the necessary response to it, in a way which would establish a route for local authorities, housing associations and developers to lay claim to central government funding for development. As the HMRI has aged, the response to 'low demand' housing has stayed the same, even as community opposition, and demographic and economic changes, have diminished the credibility of talking about vacant housing in such terms (Cameron, 2006). The aims of pursuing government funding and addressing vacant housing have therefore become divergent. This characteristic of the story of the HMRI's development complicates the use of Callon's phases of interessement and enrolment because an analysis of housing market research implies that roles into which actors might be enrolled have shifted over time. The fluidity of these roles for actors engaged in the HMRI explains why it was so easy for the initiative to shift its justifying rhetoric from a concern with vacant housing towards the new concerns highlighted in chapter eight of creating mixed incomes and modernising the housing stock. As time has passed, the ability to attract funding has continued to unite actors around the HMRI approach, even as problems of vacant housing have faded in many places.

The complexity of the multiple interessement and enrolment phases in the development of the HMRI suggests the need for an adaptation of Callon's programme. Three phases are thus

defined, drawing principally on Law and Callon's (1988) paper. The first is a *forecast*: the portrayal through narrative of an ever-moving, 'global' network of actors and its use to identify inherent problems or opportunities for the ability of a tighter group of actors to meet their interests. The second component I will call the *optimum scenario*. Law and Callon refer to this as a 'socio-technical scenario' and define it as the development of 'a theory about how the political, bureaucratic and strategic world could be made to look five or ten years later' (ibid, p. 287). The blueprints for the proposed technology will be aligned with this theory of how to change the global network. These first two phases essentially explore Callon's (1986) problematisation phase in greater depth. The third phase is the process of connecting and *seeking the commitment* of the tighter group of actors to the pursuit of a (theoretically-based) technology, which promises to manipulate the global network towards their shared interests. This is essentially a condensation of Callon's interessement and enrolment phases, and represents the difficulty of using these processes as a conceptual lens to chart the story of the HMRI's development. Later work in chapters six, seven and eight presents evidence that renewal actors were increasingly drawn to the HMRI as a means to gain funding rather than to address vacant housing.

One outcome of viewing the process in this way was a need to attend to the interests of the individuals and organisations involved. As a result, a level of conceptual clarity is needed about what interests are. Hindess (1986) argues that interests must be understood as constructed through persuasion, rather than as something essential or fixed. Furthermore, how far could organisations be said to hold collective interests? Here, Hindess's (1986) theorisation of the relationship between interests and discourses is held in mind. He sees interests as conceptions, the articulations of which rely on discourses. Interests are thus firstly constrained by the discourses available and then by the social contexts in which those discourses must be adduced. For an organisation to have interests it must have representatives who can articulate these interests and discourses which have purchase over the populations of the organisation. The development of the HMRI could thus be understood as an iterative process in which the potential implications of different knowledge claims for collections of actors (who may be physically absent but present in interpretations) are considered. Those claims must then be tested against the personalities whose commitment is needed most. The exact same processes can be seen in practice, with CURS undertaking initial research (Nevin et al, 1999) and then testing it in a forum with actors from the Council and the local housing associations (Nevin and Lee, 2001a).

Chapter five concentrates on the development and instigation of the market analysis based approach to renewal, while one function of the subsequent case studies is to ask why the state has continued to pursue housing market renewal despite the controversy surrounding it and the hazy and shifting nature of its objectives. This question was addressed by tracing the recruitment of increasing numbers of actors (organisations, professional disciplines, funding pots). As chapter six indicates, rather than continuing to explore how selected actors were able to command what should be done, the research asked how they were able to ensure that others would adhere to their prescriptions. This new direction facilitated an exploration of the forces providing organisation, or control, over the implementation of the HMRI, and of the reasons for its durability. The concept of a black box, or immutable mobile proved to be particularly helpful. The idea of a black box is that network expansion requires a specific vehicle, which will make it easier and simpler to control or regulate potentially complex relations. This vehicle could be something as simple as a television. Viewers do not have to know how their set works, they only need to know that when they turn it on they will be able to watch programmes made and broadcast from distant places. The complex network of studios, cameras, broadcasting stations and televisions is 'punctualised' (Latour, 1999) into a simple press of a button. Although the television is not human it plays a role within a network that is partly political, communicating news and programme production teams to the viewers in a way which would not otherwise be possible. Without televisions, news teams would only be able to perform their programmes in front of live theatre audiences, and this would severely limit their ability to reach mass markets. The television set, however, facilitates network expansion by providing mobility; it enables the news team to massively expand the number of viewers they reach. Unlike Chinese whispers, it is also very difficult for the picture and sound to be interfered with in the transmission of programmes from producer to viewer, thus the television acts as a force of stabilisation and control over the new, much larger network. Over time, the viewer may become disinterested or unconcerned with the way this particular medium of communication, and the possibilities of regulating it, place constraints on how programmes are produced and on how they receive the news. As new technologies, such as mobile phone cameras and the internet, connect viewers with events in different ways they open up part of the black box of television technology by revealing some of the social and political relationships which are stabilised within it.

The idea of a black box becomes relevant in chapter six, because it helps to explain and problematise how actors who were seeking to deliver urban renewal in Liverpool were able to roll out housing market research as a basis for urban policy intervention. They needed to find a way of making that research mobile enough that other actors would understand it and see it as a progressive and useful policy. Chapter six discusses how a discursive framework, based on the concept of a 'restructure' developed to make the research sound appealing to the many different professions who would need to be involved in delivering HMRI policy. The chapter notes how many of the concepts which had previously been carefully described and documented in research reports were increasingly being referred to in vague and fuzzy terms, and that this seemed to be actively assisting network expansion. Nevertheless, as the network expanded in this way there was a clear risk that the programme would also lose its coherence. The idea that housing in Liverpool needed to be restructured to achieve social, economic and environmental goals helped to overcome this by legitimising a rigid framework of funding criteria. This framework ensured that money would only be available for interventions that aligned with the prescriptions of housing market assessments that support the institutional interests investigated in chapter five.

Latour (1987) argues that a key feature of a black box is that it seems to provide certain, expected outputs in exchange for certain inputs, thereby obscuring the actors and relationships which allow it to perform this function. Actors can therefore make themselves more powerful by building networks and subsequently black boxing them; the more black boxes an actor sits on the more powerful they become (Callon and Latour, 1981). Nevertheless, the process of black boxing is no guarantee of success because 'A black box technology is always susceptible to fresh problematisations, to renewed controversy, to unforeseen counter-claims' (Latour, 1987, p. 614). If rival actors wish to open the black box they must take time to investigate the relational content of its construction; Latour considers the time it takes to do this as a need to pay the cost required to open up a black box (ibid). It also needs to be remembered, however, that a black box remains reliant on certain inputs (funding, political support and so on) if it is to generate the outputs it has been set up to achieve. Chapter eight explores attempts which were made to use an ODPM committee in 2005 to influence political and financial support for the initiative at the central government level. Housing market knowledge was contested with alternative accounts of housing market processes in an attempt to reveal the political constitution of the housing market research narratives. However, opponents of the initiative were only partially successful at convincing the committee, and its

recommendations were, in any case, largely ignored by policy makers in the ODPM and the treasury. The chapter goes on to explore what the implications have been of adhering to a rigid idea of what HMRI funding should be spent on, despite changes in housing market conditions. It argues that, over time, the use of guarded, expert-led research to set out policy prescriptions has meant the initiative has been unable to adapt to new conditions and has instead been appropriated for ends that are significantly different from those which it initially set out to achieve. The story highlights how a black box, once created, may lock certain actors' interests together in a way that proves to be more powerful than the agency of the actor/s that created it. In this sense, the black box can become a monster: it can take on a life of its own, outside of the control of any one actor involved in its continuity.

3.3.2   Selection of the local case studies

Primary research in this thesis spans chapters four to seven and an analytical review is provided in chapter eight, which draws on some additional empirical material. The first two field work chapters cover the historical conditions which have influenced the HMRI (chapter four), and the resources which were drawn on by those who worked to secure its inception (chapter five). These chapters address research question one, which asks what kind of actors and discourses led the state to adopt a market analysis approach to renewal. They also explain the distinctive constitution of the initiative in a way which assists the two subsequent chapters to explore why the approach has persisted in spite of the controversy which has surrounded it (research question three). Chapters six and seven sought to gather information about how the initiative had been implemented by selecting two case studies with very different institutional environments and where conflict over renewal schemes had led to different outcomes. In Liverpool, the extensive housing market research which had been undertaken there was incorporated into a mode of governance focused on aligning and serving institutional interests. This network of interests was able to close down spaces for challenge and, despite legal delays, to enforce the HMRI approach. English Heritage, the project partner, had been closely involved in the Whitefield case study and had suggested it as a good example of the different perspectives on terraced housing that had been adopted by housing market renewal and heritage advocates. It provides a contrast to Liverpool because objectors were able to secure institutional and financial support from English Heritage and to resist (at least partially) the imposition of dominant narratives. In both cases, controversies were sufficiently formalised that they left a paper trail of documents from committees and public inquiries. However, the different outcomes provided important information about the successfulness of

the strategies of legitimisation and control employed by those pursuing and contesting the market analysis approach to renewal.

Chapter eight draws on the material in both case studies to suggest reasons why the HMRI technology was able to direct the approach to renewal so forcefully in Liverpool, despite a larger number of objectors than existed in Whitefield, and despite a wide base of academic opposition. The differences between the cases aid an examination of expert-led, public inquiry-based and enquiry-by-design-based modes of planning that assesses their utility at inspecting and challenging hegemonic narratives. This examination is then able to place these modes of planning within a political context. Consequently, the chapter stresses the need for planning research and practice to concentrate on this context as inherently bound up with modes of planning. The strength of these conclusions is partly attributable to the decision to choose case studies which had succeeded and failed to challenge the HMRI technology. The case studies in this thesis are therefore not presented as typical of other instances of renewal, where it may have been received more favourably. Rather, their purpose is to provide windows into the constraints that are placed on policy actors by the regime of control that surrounds and permeates the HMRI. The relevance of these constraints in locations beyond Liverpool and Whitefield is explored further through chapter eight's references to renewal in Newcastle and Middlesbrough and by examining representations which were made to the ODPM's Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee, which reviewed the HMRI in 2005.

In summary, ANT has been used to trace the development and expansion of a market based approach to renewal, and to simultaneously explore the effectiveness of strategies of objection and resistance which have been mobilised by networks of rival actors. This approach has revealed how conflicts between these opposing networks have required proponents of the HMRI to defend their approach. By using ANT it has been possible to identify defensive tactics. ANT's concept of a black box has provided a means of understanding the way in which the relationships between different actors have been regulated by housing market discourses, and the funding and monitoring criteria which has flowed from them. It has also provided a basis for exploring the 'leviathan' or self-perpetuating nature of the HMRI, which has facilitated its survival despite the political contests and demographic and economic changes highlighted in chapter one.

4.4.1 Part Four: Methods of Data Collection

This chapter has concentrated on the issue of what we regard as knowledge and has in part offered a framework for scrutinising how secure different knowledges might be. Such concerns, however, do not obviate the need to base research findings on data that is accurate and reliable. The investigation of the reception of urban renewal proposals in Whitefield was carried out using interviews with some of the remaining residents, and also by referring to representations which had been made at the public inquiry and to newspaper reports. Some residents supported the demolition proposals, but the principal aim of the research in both locations was to assess the contribution that non-established forms of knowledge had made to the shape of the renewal strategy. It was not possible to interview the planners involved in making the initial application for compulsory purchase powers because they had moved to other jobs and could not be traced.

Networks of support for a market analysis based approach to renewal were traced to national government decision making arenas and to policy work in Liverpool. Evidence of these networks was drawn principally from research and committee/ policy documents. Typically, this literature supports normative arguments for the kind of policy action that should be carried out or the way that it should be carried out. Its purpose is often to sound persuasive and to accord legitimacy to the advocated approach. It can be read in two ways. If it is read as intended, the author is expected to make a judgement, if only a preliminary one, as to whether the argument is persuasive. However, if it is read in order to understand why the author has articulated the argument in one way rather than another, and if it is then placed within a wider analysis of network building and discursive strategising, then it becomes a valuable resource. Chapter five, for example, explores the arguments that were made by housing market researchers to forecast that economic growth would lead to a continued decline in the 'worst' neighbourhoods. The process of making any argument requires that particular concerns are emphasised and others are either explicitly challenged or deliberately left out (Law, 2004). The analysis therefore considers the concerns that housing market researchers raised, and the epistemological techniques they used to arrive at these concerns. In this instance this approach to analysis highlights that the housing market research failed to investigate the influence of changes in governmental policy or of the management practices of housing associations on vacant housing. This omission was productive, because it allowed researchers to move the

focus towards concerns which were shared by multiple actors, and to thereby generate an alliance of support around a particular construction of vacant housing.

The majority of the empirical research in this thesis directly sources research and policy literature, but work by Chris Allen in Liverpool was also used in chapter six to explore processes of delivering urban renewal in Kensington. Allen's work offered a valuable source of information since he reported on eighty four interviews which he had undertaken with residents and stakeholders engaged in the renewal proposals. At the time of carrying out data collection for the Liverpool chapter the majority of the residents he had spoken to had moved out of the area. Allen used his interviews to construct an argument that the views of working class households were marginalised by a housing market renewal discourse that replicated a dominant, middle class view of housing as 'a space of positions and position-taking' (Allen, 2008, p. 73). By contrast, he argued that working class households viewed housing in a more mundane way, simply as a place to live.

Elements of Allen's work dealt with the arguments advanced by HMRI proponents as 'doxa' and explored the use of these arguments in community engagement forums in the Kensington area. Allen reported on interviews with community representatives and other residents and provided evidence that their attempts to influence the shape of renewal proposals had failed where they conflicted with the dominant position advanced by proponents of the HMRI. Chapter six draws only on Allen's descriptions of the community engagement process, as described in his book. Allen uses this section of his book to explain the tensions between HMRI 'doxa' and its mixed reception by residents. I understand this account slightly differently, as the imposition of the dominant narratives guiding renewal in Liverpool onto a diverse community which has had little influence on the principal, substantive elements of that renewal strategy. Allen approaches this process from a class-based phenomenological perspective, rather than a network-based perspective and consequently he focuses on the way the residents' understood Kensington (as a place to live rather than a declining, low demand neighbourhood). This is important as it suggests the residents never accepted the role defined for them by housing market research as victims, eager to be emancipated from a declining area. However, his amalgamation of resident views into a generally coherent working class perspective at times seems to obscure a depth of attention to diverse interests among residents that would have been sought if he had adopted an ANT perspective.

Throughout the thesis, analysis of research, policy documents and critical accounts is used to develop a story of how institutional alliances were developed, and how durable command over policy implementation was achieved. Central to this account is an appreciation of causal narratives which have purported to provide universal explanations of urban phenomena. An attention to non-humans, specifically to official policy documents and research reports, has been instrumental to following the emergence of causal narratives and their use to provide legitimisation for particular courses of policy action. The initial concerns which have informed analysis of these documents and reports include questioning how it was able to be written (what were its conditions of possibility), who wrote it and for what purpose. The epistemological routes which facilitate the arguments made are attended to and the normative judgements and assumptions in those routes are drawn out. This aids discussion of the productive power of such assumptions in the generation of arguments and supporting evidence which allows actors to justify, or set the foundations, for a joint approach, such as defining a local authority's policy on urban renewal. The matters of concern raised in these arguments often highlight and address potential areas of resistance, which are themselves (manifestly) absent from the text. This can be seen, for example, in the use of the 'adjacency effects' argument in chapter five to counter the potential challenge that existing regeneration initiatives were already capable of tackling vacancy problems. It is also possible to discern the intended audience of a document from the style in which it is written, with chapter five highlighting differences between a 'passionate' submission to the government's comprehensive spending review and a 'technical' report to the Select Committee. The former emphasises the most convincing arguments that can be made while the latter provides additional detail and reinforces this with a scholarly style designed to accord the venture with academic legitimacy. All of this information informs the development of a wider account of the generation of collective support by highlighting the influence of absent actors on the content of texts.

The fact that arguments are intended to be persuasive, and that tactics are employed to achieve this, provides a wealth of information about the form of legitimacy being pursued and the author's assessment of the optimum strategy for maximising legitimacy. This information is at times a decade old, which has often made it impossible to trace the authors and to rely on interviewees' recollections of their view of what happened. The subject is also politically sensitive and it is difficult to gather information about informal networks and to assess the validity of any information that is volunteered. Data collection difficulties are illustrated by

issues around freedom of Information requests, regeneration companies are not subject to Freedom of Information laws and local authorities have at times severely restricted the information they will release on the grounds that it is commercially sensitive (Neild, 2007b). Similarly, an interviewee within one of the institutions involved with the HMRI had been reprimanded by the Council standards board for protesting when he was prevented from entering a meeting he was entitled to attend. He raised concerns about the probity of public meetings and their records.

> ...the standards board are so now keen to prevent the public to know the culture
> of repression, they've now demanded that objectors like me cannot even field
> the proceedings, 'cos we field the proceedings to keep an accurate office
> recording from being corrupted by the council officers. They have now
> demanded, this body that's supposed to have openness and transparency on its
> agenda, has now demanded their investigations and hearings be held without
> being filmed, because they find it intimidating. You see the truth is incredibly
> dangerous. (Webb, 2009b)

Despite the difficulties, which necessitated a reliance on official documentation, contacts were made wherever possible with those involved in the development and implementation of the HMRI, and these sources have been used where possible to scrutinise the conclusions drawn in the documentary analysis.

The research literature that was used to support the construction of the HMRI was an invaluable source of evidence because it set out the detailed chain of logic which proponents of the initiative used to support their arguments. This literature was accompanied by official reports and was circulated through formal democratic processes. As such, there can be confidence that the evidence considered in this thesis was the same as that which politicians on select committees and spending reviews held in their hands as they considered the merits of the programme. As with all records, however, there are limitations on what this tells us about the processes that occurred. In both the case study of the origins of the HMRI, and the case of the dispute over the future of Whitefield, anecdotal accounts (Cole, 2008a; Webb, 2007a) pointed to the importance of informal lobbying that complemented the formal procedures. Official records do not provide a good account of how persuasive these more informal tactics were; finding information about them is difficult but they can often be an important factor in deciding how decisions are made (Hillier, 2000). In an attempt to incorporate as much of this kind of information as possible, informal telephone conversations

were held with those who have an 'ear to the ground' in Whitehall. A prominent journalist, who has recently published a book containing research on the HMRI, was contacted, as were officers of SAVE Britain's Heritage, English Heritage and others (see Appendix one for a list). Information provided in the accounts that were received was never relied on solely to make the arguments in this thesis, but was matched with other evidence available within policy and research documents. Over the course of the research around eight to ten telephone conversations were held, together with a similar number of face to face interviews. These often yielded very general, background information about the HMRI and its controversial aspects; they are referenced within the text where they directly support arguments made in this thesis.

Despite the potential for informal processes to result in omissions in the research there are two key reasons why I do not feel that this prejudices the thesis' results. The first of these is the issue of legitimacy. Ian Cole has talked of the HMRI process as a battle, a contested process (2008a). Drawing on my own experience of working to deliver a HMRI programme, I know that officials need to find ways of maximising their legitimacy in such processes. One way of doing this is to ensure that all the strongest arguments are recorded in official documentation. It is then possible to appear knowledgeable and confident in informal discussions by referring to the papers. Furthermore, the papers provide extra details that can be useful for responding to anticipated challenges from rival actors. Absent actors may therefore still be present within official documentation. The second safeguard against the importance of unaccounted-for discussions is ANT's definition of an actor. Such discussions are only important to an ANT account if they result in knock-on consequences for the process of network building. By following the evolution of the HMRI network, any substantial changes should become apparent, together with the need for an explanation of them. While informal lobbying may have played an important part in securing the initiative, this work suggests that no new arguments had a significant impact on the way the network continued to evolve.

Two chapters in this thesis focus on events in Liverpool. Chapter five, on the origins of the HMRI, follows a research process which took place in Liverpool between 1999 and 2001. It is based on published research, secondary information and official reports. The case study of Liverpool in chapter six has a similar emphasis on these sources, although a number of contextual field work activities were also carried out. Regeneration officers working in nearby Sefton and Wirral provided guided tours of the renewal proposals in these areas during the

early phases of the research. Three conferences were also attended, where presentations were made by some of the actors involved in the decision making processes in Liverpool, and these tended to re-affirm conclusions that were drawn from official documentation. Kensington resident Elizabeth Pascoe presented to the Royal Geographical Society/ Institute of British Geographers conference in Manchester and the 'Capital, Culture and Resistance' conference in Liverpool. Activists of the Welsh Streets area, which is nearby to Kensington and subject to a similar HMRI process, also presented at the Liverpool conference. In addition, the 'Regeneration is 30' conference in Liverpool was attended, and this included a presentation from Cath Green, Interim Executive Director of Community Services at Liverpool City Council. Cath Green was a key proponent of proposals for the redevelopment of part of Kensington, at the Edge Lane West compulsory purchase order inquiry. A small part of that same inquiry was also visited, and three separate, unaccompanied site visits were made to areas in Liverpool affected by clearance, including Kensington, Wavertree, Anfield and Sefton. Informal conversations were held with an academic, who has been a prominent academic critic of the HMRI, and an interview and conversation was held with a Liverpool Councillor who has objected to HMRI-sponsored demolition in the city.

Interviews are used more extensively in chapter seven's investigation of the HMRI dispute in Whitefield. At the beginning of the investigation, representatives of Homes Under Threat and the Ancient Monuments Society took me on a six hour walking tour of the area, showing me around historic features and renovated housing. They also introduced me to a local resident who had spoken out at the Whitefield inquiries and at the later ODPM committee investigation into the HMRI. In addition to these contacts, I carried out further interviews with resident activists and attended a meeting of the local community forum. The forum was useful because I observed differences in the views of residents: some just wanted any action as soon as possible to remedy dereliction, while others preferred to hold out in the hope of achieving a heritage vision for the area. Later interviews were carried out with a heritage officer who had objected to the compulsory purchase order for Whitefield, as well as with other residents and the local regeneration officer (see appendix two for a list of interviews). Unfortunately, many of the council officers who had been involved in the compulsory purchase order dispute some years earlier had been replaced and, despite attempts at contact, could not be reached. The interviews that took place were nonetheless useful because they provided information about how the proposals had developed following the public inquiries. The interview with the heritage officer provided information about how heritage interests

were being handled by the pathfinder after the dispute over clearance. It also become apparent, from talking to the regeneration officer and attending the community forum, that the Council's allegedly improved partnership process was not committed to providing full answers in response to residents' questions or to providing any commitments in response to their requests. The reasons given by the regeneration manager for the content of the new renewal proposals also lacked consistency and was not properly informed by official justifications given elsewhere in written documents. The regeneration officer's arguments tended to be supported only by hearsay rather than evidence or deliberative processes.

The interviews undertaken in Whitefield were valuable because they identified what the principal issues of concern were to those who objected at the inquiry and provided leads to the official information that was available. As a result, formal records of events such as the public inquiry and neighbourhood renewal assessment processes were obtained. These provided more detail about the arguments that had been made for and against the clearance of the area. These records are useful because they catalogue earnest attempts to preside in a conflict situation. The case studies in this thesis have both been particularly controversial, and the research could be criticised for focusing on particularly poorly handled cases. However, ANT case studies are not presented as typical of other cases. The objective is not to construct a holistic, romantic narrative, therefore the claim is not that all cases are as hard fought as the ones selected in this thesis. The existence of intense conflict is invaluable to ANT research because the uncertainty of outcome forces rival actors to mobilise their strongest resources. As the following chapters demonstrate, identifying those resources is the first step towards understanding the wider networks of interests, values and controls which characterise the contemporary regime of urban renewal.

3.4.2 Discussion

This chapter has provided a detailed discussion of the reasons why a combination of Foucauldian genealogical analysis and actor-network theory form an excellent framework for an inductive investigation of the research questions outlined in chapter one. Historical ways of thinking, and the durable frameworks of law and governance that surround them, frame the practicality of emergent responses to urban and social problems. Foucauldian analysis therefore contributes to an understanding of current developments by unearthing the historical lineage attached to present-day concepts and practices. Nevertheless, the core research areas explored in chapters five to seven of this thesis require a more process-driven approach that

offers clearer tools for understanding practices of long distance control, and of unanticipated processes of translation. This chapter has therefore reviewed the premises of actor-network theory, which provides these tools. It has discussed ANT's ability to acknowledge multiple understandings of phenomena, which include places and housing markets, and has considered how understandings are made more durable and powerful through a process of translation. These concepts, together with that of the black box, provide a strong framework for approaching the empirical data in chapters five to seven, and for using this data to draw wider conclusions on the nature of the processes of governance and democracy which surround planning and regeneration.

The Historical Precursors of Housing Market Renewal

4.1   Introduction

The housing market renewal initiative (HMRI) operates within a historically produced a priori understanding of low status residential areas, which has developed over the last 150 years of constructing, redeveloping and governing residential environments and the profile of those who live in them. This chapter draws on Foucauldian concepts that were outlined in chapter three to develop an account of the genealogy of thinking about urban renewal in this way. It attends to understandings which have historically formed an a priori basis of truth, and which have thereby supported the credibility of further, more detailed statements and debates. Where possible, the epistemic conditions which work to maintain these understandings are also considered, although it should be noted that a detailed and extensive consideration of these conditions is not possible within the limited space of an essentially contextual chapter. Rather, the principal purpose here is to develop an awareness of historically a priori understandings and, thereby, to construct a view of urban social projects as part of a particular style of governance or control.

This chapter is divided into three parts. Part one traces the emergence of a historical a priori which guided nineteenth century reactions to low status areas of the city. The historical origins of this a priori understanding are located in the nineteenth century urban reform movement. Central to urban reform in this period was a fixation with securing a social contract with slum dwellers that integrates them with wider society. The importance of this issue reflected bourgeois concerns for social hierarchy, a Liberal-protestant concern with the industrious qualities or weaknesses of individuals, and a further religious focus on individual moral responsibility. The historical a priori that resulted contributed to the shape of early town and country planning, and part one therefore considers the work of Ebenezer Howard as an exemplar. Part two considers the 'rupturing' effect of the Second World War, which solidified the nineteenth century historical a priori into a dispositif guiding state action in the next thirty five years. Social changes, together with the end of the war, provided the conditions for a radical reformulation of the terms on which integration and social structure was sought. The resultant dispositif is understood here as a collection of devices for reforming the slums which reflect a particular underlying power-knowledge, and which might otherwise be described as a set of practice-defining habits and assumptions. Academic critiques are drawn on to characterise this 'integrationist dispositif', and to support the argument that post-war efforts to

replace the slums with ideal suburban environments maintained earlier reformist concerns with bringing a national identity and social order to the people. The 'integrationist' dispositif cemented a priori attitudes into a mode of practice which affirmed the use of spatially delineated intervention in the physical environment to normalise problematised areas by attracting development. Part two concludes with a discussion of the weakening of the integrationist dispositif as a basis for substantial state involvement in the redevelopment of problematised areas. A number of conditions are identified which enabled a further rupture, or break, in the understanding of low status urban areas. This rupture can be connected with a revived discourse of economic Liberalism, which was used to push back the influence of the dispositif, partly by associating it with the political left. Parts one and two therefore trace the rise and fall of the integrationist dispositif from the mid nineteenth century to the early 1980s.

Part three moves the focus away from an attempt to define and trace the integrationist dispositif and towards a discussion of the articulation of the dispositif within contemporary governance institutions. By the turn of the millennium, the rise of a neo-liberal discourse together with significant wider economic challenges, forced a process of disinvestment in selected areas and restricted the autonomy of social housing providers, resulting in localised urban crises. Attempts by the 1997 New Labour government to deal with these problems provided the discursive and institutional conditions which facilitated the rise of a housing market analysis approach to urban renewal. The use of housing market analyses to respond to vacant housing effectively re-gathered the strength of the earlier, integrationist dispositif within a more centralised and fragmented institutional structure. One consequence of this, which can be deduced solely from this historical analysis, is that it has re-imposed a particular set of values and understandings of how to go about urban reform. Further chapters argue that a function of this has been to marginalise the potential for more sensitive consideration of the diverse understandings and values that are attached to place.

Before proceeding with the chapter in the manner outlined above, it is necessary to set out some observations and empirical limitations in the work that follows. The approach to investigation taken here is to follow one theme which, while waxing and waning at times, features strongly throughout the last 150 years or so of attending to problematic urban places. A consequence of viewing the history in this way, and of being severely limited in space, has been that other observations have had to be left out of the story. One topic which could have been explored further is the relationship between the paternalism of religious moral

prescription and reform action in the slums and the later paternalism which followed the Second World War. Similarly, there has been insufficient space to consider the mutation of the integrationist dispositif to guide Urban Development Corporations and Simplified Planning Zones during the 1980s, or the turn to 'one nation' Conservativism in the mid 1990s. Other themes perhaps need less exploration, such as the extra-ordinary similarity between Ebenezer Howard's use of neo-classical economics to underpin his idealistic magnets diagram in figure 4.2 and the use of the same theory to justify the HMRI. Sometimes, the elements above appear to have a strong influence on the shape of the housing market analysis approach to renewal, or the evolution of its underlying way of thinking about particular places. Underpinning many of these connections, however, has been an established concern for integration that has reflected the confidence of a few to broker the social norms and values that should be followed by the many.

4.2   Part one: the rise of urban reform

> Between 100,000 and 400,000 pre-1919 terraced houses face clearance. It is the return of the clean sweep, the mass clearances of the fifties and sixties from which we all assumed the lessons had been learnt- the buildings are not the cause of the problems. (Wilkinson, 2006, p. 9)

> The other day I watched a film by Nick Broomfield, the documentary director, called Who Cares (1971). You can find it on YouTube. Broomfield filmed the felling of Liverpool's elegant Georgian terraces and the forced removal of the people who lived in them to a brave new world of tower blocks where they lost touch with friends and neighbours. Nearly everyone in the political class today would regard what happened to town centres in the 1970s as a tragic mistake. So you wonder how the whole thing could happen again. (Clover, 2010, p. 1)

While it may be representative only of the worst outcomes of the period, the demolition of terraced streets and their replacement with soulless suburban estates or grey, prefabricated flats has a powerful place in the popular image of post-war planning and council house building. For some, the more recent calls from the Northern Way for the demolition of up to 400,000 homes (Northern Way Sustainable Communities Team, 2006) made it seem like this was happening all over again. For others, the scale of the potential demolition was

overplayed, while improvements in the technical competence of housing and regeneration professionals meant that redevelopment could be progressed at the same time as maintaining the levels of 'social capital' that post-war planning had ignored (Cole, 2008a). It is now clear that the number of homes demolished as a result of the HMRI will never achieve anything like the figures which were being circulated at the beginning of the programme. Nevertheless, there is a need to maintain a critical awareness that the outcomes, both of slum clearance and the HMRI, are a product of social, economic and cultural factors which go far beyond professional competence. To this end, part one of this chapter sets out the a priori understanding which underpinned the nineteenth century origins of urban reform in the UK. This period's strong understanding that society should be located at the national level was challenged by anarchist currents within Ebenezer Howard's work at the end of the nineteenth century. However, this a priori was later reinforced as a result of its absorption into state action during the first half of the twentieth century. In so doing, a dispositif of state-led urban intervention developed to guide the nature of state policy to various degrees in the period until the present. Part one begins by considering the conditions which made the rise of this dispositif possible, emphasising the efforts of nineteenth century reformists to conceptualise and respond to the consequences of rapid urbanisation and industrialisation which became manifest in the major cities.

4.2.1 Nineteenth century reform and the origins of an a priori concern with a social contract

The nineteenth century witnessed the inter-twined progression of a range of philanthropic and state-led attempts at reforming the social body, and these spanned fields including education, welfare, housing and health. The ways of understanding housing and poverty which prevailed throughout this period came to influence early thought within the town planning profession and, ultimately, the form by which the welfare state was to emerge. Forms of intervention in the social and physical environments of the poorest areas, and in the quality of housing provision for those on low incomes, reflected established attitudes towards religion, social hierarchy and social control. Characteristic of these was an emphasis on individualistic moral prescriptions and above all a strong work ethic as the solution to social problems. At the same time, however, these attitudes were confronted by the social and political consequences of rapid industrialisation, among them a sustained shift in population from the countryside to the cities and extreme, spatially differentiated, inequalities in wealth. Long working hours and poor transportation forced low income workers into areas with some of the highest rents by

floor space in the city, leading to overcrowding and grim environmental conditions (Merrett, 1979). The dominant form of political thought and control led to the repeated problematisation of these areas in ways that will be discussed below.

At the heart of the tensions driving reform was the social division resulting from ever-increasing urbanisation, which was manifest in the cleavages between London's prosperous West and poor East ends and, in other cities, in the development of inner city slums surrounded by socially distinct, and often concentrically organised, suburbs (Harrison, 1988). The term slum was applied loosely and imprecisely to poor areas, and indeed Wohl (1977) considers that its origins are associated with 'a hidden place' about which, particularly up until the mid nineteenth century, the middle classes felt that they knew little about. Historical research regularly highlights the existence of a popular comparison between the slums and the colonisation of distant lands.

> To the general public London's working class districts remained a *terra incognita* down to the middle of the century. 'As little was known about Bethnal Green' complained one of its clergymen, as the 'wilds of Australia or the islands of the south seas.' (Wohl, 1977, p. 5, citing the rector of St Phillips, Bethnal Green, 1844, quoted in Engels, 1958, p. 36-7)

Despite an acknowledged lack of investigation, a conviction prevailed that working class lifestyles were intimidating and uncivilised. The novelist Arthur Morrison wrote, for example.

> The East-end is a vast city, as famous in its way as any city men have built. But who knows the East-end? It is down through Cornhill and out beyond Leadhill Street and Aldgate pump, one will say, a shocking place, where he once went with a curate. An evil growth of slums which hide human creeping things; where foul men and women live on penn'orths of gin, where collars and clean shirts are not yet invented, where every citizen wears a black eye, and no man combs his hair. (Morrison, 1891, p. 460, cited in Weiner, 1994, p. 8)

The slums, then, were portrayed throughout the nineteenth century and beyond as wild, undisciplined and potentially dangerous to more respectable society.

The form which these inter-twined problematisations took was manifested in a deeper alliance, or more accurately an entanglement, between bourgeois and liberal politics. An older bourgeois understanding of social status was concerned with maintaining a social hierarchy, which had apparently been to the benefit of all in pre-capitalist society. It can be seen

exemplified in the following quote from one of the co-founders of the first Settlement House[4], which attempted to bring high arts and education to the slums.

> (Do you not see) that all our social system is based on a tacit assumption that there is a leisured class in every locality who will see that the laws are carried out and generally keep the social life going? (Barnett, 1897, p. 56, cited in Weiner, 1994, p. 164)

It should be noted, however, that Barnett also saw this class relationship as permeable, and actively sought to raise members of the working classes to fill what he saw as an absence of proper social hierarchy in slum areas. Others, such as the social scientist Charles Booth, espoused an economically liberal politics, reinforced by the protestant work ethic, and this conceived of inequality largely as a consequence of individual industry.

> ...the almost unbroken continuity in the gradations of the conditions which is presented to us, not only by society at large, but by the component sections of many individual trades is among the best known and healthy characteristics of the national life, while a complete change of individual status is far from uncommon. The discussion therefore of the industrial relationships of employer and employed, as if, on the one side there were a body of rich men with assured incomes, and, on the other, a miserable proletariat, involves a caricature of modern industrial society in this country, for which, in spite of the extremes of poverty and wealth that it presents, there is happily no justification. (Booth, 1902, pp. 140-141.)

The manner in which religious beliefs were practised similarly reflected a focus on the (moral) duties of the individual. One effect of the dominance of these combined attitudes was an acceptance of inequality as normal and necessary, and a conviction that poverty was principally due to weakness of human character. Another, which will be discussed below, was a perception of the slums as threatening through their lack of discipline. These a priori understandings underpinned a range of movements for social and environmental reform which sought to establish a social contract with slum dwellers.

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[4] The Settlement House initiative responded to an alleged failure by the Church to unite rich and poor and set out to bring high arts, culture and politics to the inhabitants of the slums.

Figure 4.1: Board school in South London, seen in situ

Source: Weiner, 1994, p.6

Underlying the political positions outlined above, Foucault has argued that the nineteenth century was the site of the rise of a form of 'disciplinary power', which permeated industry, education, penal institutions and the military, among other institutions, and which sought to achieve a greater level of social control than had previously been possible. This was a transition away from the use of gruesome forms of public torture to demonstrate a show of force by the monarch against those offending his/ her laws and towards a more carefully implemented apparatus of control. Two elements of Foucault's account help to illustrate its relevance here. The first is his attribution of the need for a new form of control to processes of industrialisation and wealth accumulation, and to the bourgeoisie's need for a system of law and policing that would consistently and effectively protect their property rights. The second, emanating from this, is the new form in which legitimacy was to be ascribed to the enforcement of laws and punishments. Central to this new form of legitimacy was a transition which removed responsibility for enforcing the law from the monarch and lodged it instead with the 'social body' (Foucault, 1991, p. 89).

> At the level of principles, this new strategy falls easily into the general theory
> of the contract. The citizen is presumed to have accepted once and for all, with
> the laws of society, the very law by which he may be punished. Thus the
> criminal appears as a juridically paradoxical being. He has broken the pact, he

is therefore the enemy of society as a whole, but he participates in the punishment that is practised upon him. The least crime attacks the whole of society, and the whole of society- including the criminal- is present in the least punishment. (ibid, pp. 89-90).

Indeed, the conceptualisation of society in holist terms marked out the dominant sociologists of the period including Henry Maine, Ferdinand Tonnies and Emile Durkheim, who were occupied with similar attempts to understand social order by studying social change and the differences between rural, tribal and industrial societies (Bender, 2010; Latour, 2002).

The early pre-occupations with the slums can similarly be understood as concerns to impose a social contract. During the nineteenth century, this contract reflected the Liberal reification of the protestant work ethic and implied the assertion of a gradation of social status, which chimed with a bourgeois recourse to an aristocratic social structure. However, as Foucault demonstrated, social hierarchy is also a necessary requirement of the imposition of a disciplinary apparatus (Foucault, 1991). In other words, hierarchy is essential to making the actions of the mass of individuals in a city visible by subjecting them to the supervisory gaze of their superiors. Indeed, Canon Barnett acknowledged this in the quote on page 69 when he envisaged the construction of a leisured class in the slums, who might take it upon themselves to uphold the law. Similarly, the first municipal estate: the Boundary Estate in East London which opened in 1900, provided housing for the more respectable elements of the working classes but had the effect of moving on nearly 6,000 residents to increase overcrowding in nearby areas (Taylor, 2001).

The concerns for implementation of a social contract in the slums, as the prerequisite for establishing disciplinary power, underpinned attempts at social and environmental reform throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. Common to these was an attempt to restore hierarchies of social status to areas of a homogeneously low class. The development of board schools in poor areas, for example, confirmed the social hierarchy through their focus on discipline and respectability, and in the scale and grandeur of their architecture (see figure 4.1). Philanthropic 'model villages', such as Port Sunlight in Merseyside and Bournville in the West Midlands, often explicitly operationalised their founders' theories and ideals about how the working classes should live, behave and produce (Ravetz, 1980). Similarly, although perhaps to a greater extent, Octavia Hill's housing reform movement sought to achieve an 'improvement' in the attitudes and behaviours of low income tenants through a form of

management based on intrusive levels of supervision. Octavia Hill established an expanding housing management empire in East London, based initially on Paradise Place, Freshwater Place and Barrett's Court, her attitude towards management is highlighted in the following quote from historian Anthony Wohl.

> (Octavia Hill) was as much interested in education and moral reformation as in the physical aspects of social reform. (These) were, in truth, principles widely held throughout her class...a whole host of reformers shared identical beliefs. Indeed, Octavia Hill was just one of many middle class women who invaded the homes of the poor to preach bourgeois respectability and teach domestic cleanliness and respectability. (Wohl, 1977, p. 184)

Even for Christian Socialist reformists, the solution to the problems of the slums lay in the promotion of a self-help ethic that focused on personal (individual) improvement, and which confirmed the legitimacy of the existing social hierarchy. Indeed, Harrison (1988) documents Christian Socialists who, to this end, attempted to dissuade activists from joining in a co-ordinated, working class, political movement. Reform practices operated as technologies which aimed to instil respect for the properties slum dwellers lived in and the social structure around them. Those subjected to these technologies reacted partly by prioritising the cleanliness of their house and their person and respecting the boundaries of their relationship with the more knowledgeable reformists. By the end of the nineteenth century, then, a disparate band of social and environmental reformists existed, unified by a commitment to building social control and structure in the slums. Many of those within this movement would go on to play a key part in the early town planning movement (Ravetz, 1980).

It is possible to define the a priori understanding which underpinned nineteenth century reform by its definition of certain, problematised areas of the city as requiring engagement in a social contract that integrates them within the wider social and cultural norms of a holist 'society'. A consequence of this dispositif is that it produces distinctive subject roles for reformists and slum residents. One of the reform initiatives in which this was most clearly expressed was the development of Settlement Houses, the first of which opened in 1884. Weiner (1994) traces their origins to a lecture by Canon Samuel Barnett expressing his dissatisfaction with the role of the church in uniting rich and poor. His proposed Settlement Houses would instead seek to inculcate a select few slum residents in the culture of the middle classes by providing lectures from politicians, artists and university scholars. The expectation was that the improved slum residents could then impose culture and authority onto their slum

neighbours. This was, of course, based on the usual understanding of slum conditions as attributable to poorly exercised social boundaries and relationships.

> The great want of the East End of London is beauty; the streets are ugly, and few signs of taste are anywhere apparent; it is therefore well that it should be possible for both inhabitants and passers-by to enter a building which by its grace and beauty, should remind them of a world made beautiful by God's hand. (Barnett, 1875, pp. 219-20, cited in Weiner, 1994, p. 166)

The aim of the Settlement House movement was thus to encourage slum dwellers, through the charitable provision of education, to accept the right of the middle classes to prescribe the norms of the social body, and thereafter to grasp the opportunity to immerse themselves in more enlightened scientific, cultural and political norms. As with other initiatives, such as Octavia Hill's instructions on morals and character building (Wohl, 1977) and George Cadbury's efforts to educate his tenants about how best to eat, breathe and pray (Meacham, 1999), it was the reformists who saw themselves as able to educate slum residents on their place in society, and the ways in which they could seek spiritual and material improvement. The subjectivation of reformists as moral and environmental leaders would go on to characterise planners throughout much of the twentieth century.

4.2.2   The emerging planning profession

Despite a great deal of charitable and philanthropic engagement with environmental reform in the 19th Century, there was only limited use of legislation to set out basic minimum sanitary conditions[5]. It was not until the turn of the century that a more serious professional and institutional movement began to build for state involvement in planning and housing. The starting block of that movement was Ebenezer Howard's book 'To-Morrow: a Peaceful Path to Real Reform', published in 1898, which set out the principles of how new 'garden cities' might be developed to address the problems of slums and urbanisation. Figure 4.2 sets out the logic which Howard presented in support of his argument for the development of ideal cities based on low densities, local services and public transport. His proposal to manage places through conscious techniques for attracting people and investment set the trend for much of town planning throughout the twentieth century. Howard's ultimate vision was that his garden

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[5] The Artisan and Labourer's Dwellings Act 1868 and the Artisan and Labourers' Dwellings Improvement Act 1875 allowed the clearance and forced improvement of housing in the worst conditions, while the Housing of the Working Classes Act 1885 made it illegal for landlords to let housing below a minimum sanitary standard.

cities would become so successful that they would draw housing pressure away from the big industrial cities, eventually undermining the conditions that permitted slum landlordism.

> (The slums') power to extort a large proportion of the hard earnings of the London poor (will be) gone for ever, will it yet remain an eye-sore and a blot, though no longer a danger to health and an outrage on decency? No. These wretched slums will be pulled down, and their sites occupied by parks, recreation grounds, and allotment gardens. (p. 148-9)

The hope, then, was that the rise of garden cities on a large scale would create an oversupply of housing in urban areas, and that this would trigger a process of filtering. The better housing would gradually be ceded to those on lower incomes, while the worst housing would be demolished.

Figure 4.2: The three magnets
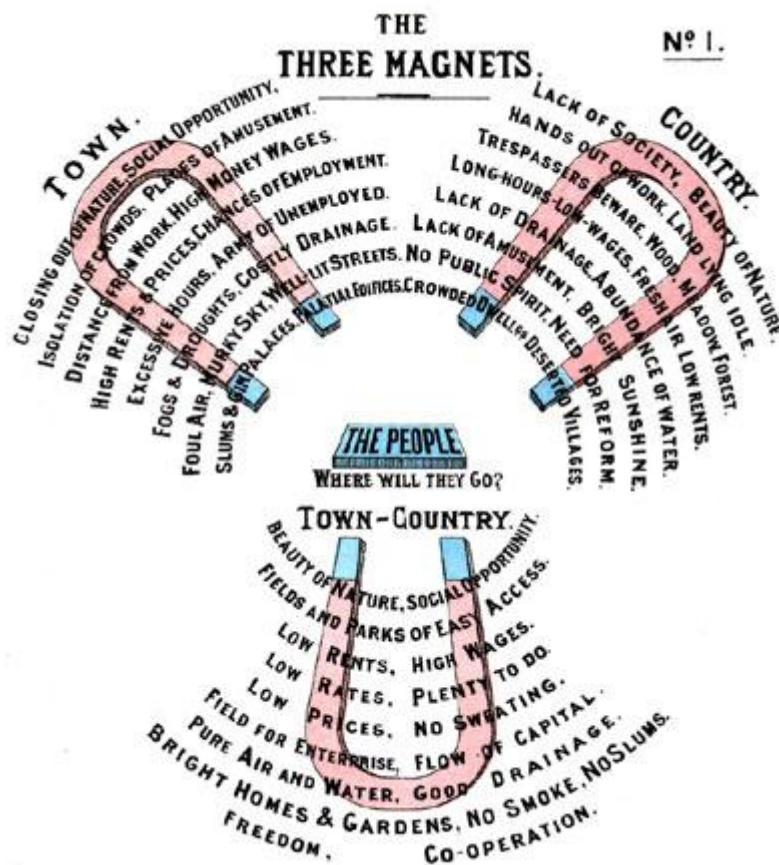
Source: Howard (1898, p. 8)

Howard's work expresses a number of features which were characteristic of the earlier reformist movement. The strongest of these is a continued acceptance of the many problematisations of cities in a way which chimed with concerns for the breakdown of social structure in the slums. In this sense, Howard continued a tradition of attempting to remodel community relations that had marked both the Settlement House movement and attempts to create model villages. However, there were a number of important differences between Howard's ideas and the previous understanding underpinning the nineteenth century reform movement. Howard introduced a scientific aesthetic within his geometric plans for new cities which implied a faith in the ability of rational thought to instil new social relationships through the prescription of environmental form. Furthermore, Howard's vision for a new social contract embraced idealist, and often anarchist, aspirations. This anarchistic influence was also expressed in Howard's aspiration that self-sustained garden cities would eventually generate their own welfare systems and governance processes, and that these would lead to a more peaceful social order than existed in the nation state at the end of the nineteenth century. Despite the appeal and legitimacy of these idealistic aspirations, they would go on to offer legitimacy for similar forms of socio-environmental intervention that never fully met Howard's ideals.

Howard's claim that scientific principles could be employed to create a new social and physical order appealed to a wide diversity of political persuasions. Alison Ravetz identifies the following political viewpoints among those attracted to Letchworth garden city.

> Reading the early history of Letchworth one meets, in addition to Quakers,
> Liberals, Fabians and ILP supporters, progressive educationalists, co-operators,
> vegetarians, spiritualists, Tolstoyans and mystics. (Ravetz, 1980, pp. 30-31)

Many of these, including Howard himself, had been concerned with creating communities based on alternative value systems, and on self-sufficiency. In this sense, Howard's ideas offered a channel of expression for idealists seeking different futures. Those who followed Howard, however, were united by a belief that architecture and city building could be used to determine a different and improved set of socially reinforcing community relationships than those which existed in wider capitalist society. This was not so much an attempt to overturn capitalism as to focus on the issue of how the slums might be replaced by improved social institutions of order and control. In that sense, it united an established problematisation of urbanisation with a loose critique of wider society. This critique challenged the right of the state or of industrialists to prescribe the terms of the social contract that would guide the new

cities. By the end of the 19th Century, the strength of this problematisation of the vast slum areas was such that Howard was able to claim that it united 'men of all parties, not only in England, but all over Europe and America and our colonies...' (p. 2). The proposed solution that self contained sites of political and economic regulation would form the building blocks for a heterogeneous society envisaged a social contract on radically different terms to that which had been sought by other reformists. Paradoxically, however, the faith in developers and city-architects to bring about that vision through a centrally-dictated architectural prescription implied a continuance of previous relationships between reformists and their clients. Residents of the new garden cities would be expected to conform to the social and aesthetic vision laid down by the city founders.

During the early part of the twentieth century, Howard's garden cities movement went on to form the basis of what would later become known as the Town and Country Planning Association. Attempts to develop privately funded garden cities at Letchworth and Welwyn ran into practical difficulties and did not lead to the further waves that Howard expected. However, by 1917, the Ministry of Reconstruction was comprised of key supporters of the garden city reform vision, including Seebohm Rowntree, Raymond Unwin and Christopher Addison (Ravetz, 2000). The influence of these reformists coincided with a severe housing shortage, which followed the end of World War One, and with widespread industrial action, a real fear of revolution, police strikes and military mutinies (ibid; Cole and Furbey, 1994). These pressures pressed the state to pursue municipal building as a route to increasing housing supply and maintaining order, leading to Lloyd George's famous 'homes fit for heroes' campaign. Ravetz notes that the opportunities presented by these events were seized by the early planning movement.

> A good many supporters (of planning), like William Beveridge and Ramsey Macdonald, plotted a course where their idealism and service were increasingly channelled through the state. That the movement attracted and retained the loyalty of people with so many different and often incompatible philosophies is something of a puzzle. But despite its limitations it must have seemed to utopians of both kinds that the strength of the Garden City ideal was that it took the ideal environment out of the hands of paternalistic entrepreneurs and placed it under the control of a free association of enlightened citizens. (Ravetz, 1980, pp. 30-1).

Whereas the garden city ideal had proposed self-sufficient communities, the alliance with the state only partially embraced the ideals of the early profession. Howard's vision of self-sufficient communities with their own forms of governance and wealth generation was translated into a post-war governmental system in which local communities would be linked into both local and national forms of government. The way in which garden city principles were used therefore reflected more closely the earlier, a priori understanding of a need to establish a social contract. A further cost of the formalisation of professional principles into state policies came in the watering down of Howard's aspiration for clusters of cities. Inter-war council house-building instead resulted in a suburban form that progressively moved away from the garden city style of design and towards a more utilitarian ethic. Nevertheless, the conviction that order must be brought to the slums through the creation of a well-organised, leafier ideal lay at the heart of planning throughout the thirty years following the Second World War.

4.2.3 World War Two and the state's embrace of integrationist planning

The social and psychological effect of the Second World War on Britain's attitude towards government cannot be underestimated. During the war, pledges to improve the state of the nation's housing had accompanied other promises for a more just society. In the prologue to Forshaw and Abercrombie's 1943 plan for the county of London, the prime minister is quoted as saying the following.

> Most painful is the number of small houses inhabited by working folk which has been destroyed... We will rebuild them, more to our credit than some of them were before. London, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham may have more to suffer, but they will rise from their ruins more healthy and, I hope, more beautiful... in all my life I have never been treated with so much kindness as by the people who have suffered the most.
>
> Winston Churchill, 8 October, 1940, cited in Forshaw and Abercrombie (1943, prologue)

War damage and limited house building during the war[6] meant that, as with World War One, house building was pushed to the top of the political agenda. The rhetoric which accompanied the policy response reflected the social and political promises that had been made during the

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[6] Half a million houses were completely or substantially destroyed and a further three million were damaged. (Ravetz, 1980)

war, and the sense of solidarity it had created. An assemblage of forces including the trials of war, the rise of a corporatist approach to bureaucracy and the new strength of the Labour movement strengthened the previous attention to social structure and national unity but located it within a redistributive vision of the state's role. This led to a rupture (Foucault, 2002) in the previous relationship between state and industry.

In contrast with the fight to establish planning principles which had occurred throughout the 1920s and 30s, planners were suddenly able to present themselves as the key to constructing a redistributive and socially idealistic new England. Fundamental to this was a re-assertion of a conceptualisation of community at the level of the nation, which was used to advance principles of universal welfare provision. A key feature of the new role for the state was an agenda of material redistribution, to be achieved through the provision of a 'better' environment for slum dwellers. The terms of what classed as a better environment were to a large extent defined by longstanding goals which had motivated the reformist movement, most notable among them a verdict that the slums were not just environmentally hazardous but also aesthetically unattractive and socially undeveloped.

> Perhaps the worst defect, even greater than their architectural drabness, though
> not than their older squalor, is the absence of local community centres. There
> were in peace-time, the main roads with their somewhat garish splendour, but
> these were an inadequate substitute for the old town square or village green.
> (Forshaw and Abercrombie, 1943, p. 4)

The quote above also demonstrates the continuance of the nineteenth century concern that slum areas lacked a community or social structure, and that this should somehow be provided to them. Elsewhere in the city, planners were more hopeful that community could be recovered and this resulted, at least in the immediate post-war years, in attempts to reconstruct and develop community wherever signs of continued community life were thought to persist. Patrick Abercrombie's plan for Greater London declared that.

> The sprawling outward expansion of London has engulfed many towns and
> villages. Within the Suburban and Inner Urban Rings they are now embedded
> in a vast sea of inchoate development. Here they remain the only real centres of
> community life despite the fact that the character of nearly all has been
> completely changed and most of their charm has been lost. Only a few have
> managed to resist the flow of disorderly building and they have retained their
> individuality. It is by accident that their form remains, but it is noteworthy that

> within them is to be found a civic pride and healthy community life which is almost entirely lacking in the surrounding sea of incoherent housing... The planning task in the Suburban and Inner Urban Ring is largely a matter of defining, completing and reclaiming (these) communities. (Abercrombie, 1945, pp. 110-11)

In the immediate years following the war, this established concern with a need to fashion a particular kind of community life, both through limited intervention in the suburbs and radical action in the inner cities, became combined with political aspirations to build the national foundations for an equitable society by constructing neighbourhoods of council housing aimed at people with a range of incomes. Abercrombie's plan stated that.

> We have used the community as the basic planning unit, Each community would contain one or more neighbourhood units, together with those buildings and open spaces which would make it largely self-contained. Each community would have a life and character of its own, yet its individuality would be in harmony with the complex form, life and activities of the region as a whole. (ibid, p. 113)

It was also envisaged that such communities would have some form of representation in local government. Thus, the thinking was that the construction of ideal neighbourhoods could lead to a form of social engineering in which cohesive communities could be locked into the social body through a strengthened form of democratic representation.

The approach to planning which resulted from the confluence of the ideas above resulted in a form of social contract which has resonance with the reformist technologies of fifty years previous. Where Octavia Hill had offered good housing but expected respect for property and social hierarchy in return, the state now offered opportunities for material improvement in return for slum dwellers' accession to a more formalised style of life in 'harmony' with the norms of the wider nation or region. A number of authors have argued that a form of local and often aggressive, personalised governance (of personal disputes, unruly children and so on) was prominent in traditional inner city neighbourhoods (Jones, 2008; Ravetz, 1980; Young and Willmott, 1957). By contrast, an important consequence of re-housing was to supplant these patterns with the use of formal environments and formalised policing and regulation. Ravetz, for example, has identified the persistence of a paternalistic style of housing management into the 1960s, citing evidence from Witney Rural District Council's tenants' handbook.

> It is a condition of your tenancy that you should look after your garden. With most tenants it is a matter of personal pride, and it is very true to say that the house inside can nearly always be judged by the garden outside...Is yours as good as it might be?... The County still has a large number of people on its waiting list urgently in need of homes of their own. Be thankful for what you've got, therefore, and make the best of it for the benefits of all- not least yourself. (Witney Rural district Council, no date circa 1960, pp. 22-3, cited in Ravetz, 2000, p. 119)

Similarly, at least until the 1970s, housing allocations policies continued to reflect judgements about the kind of lifestyle that tenants of council housing should conform to (Pawson and Kintrea, 2002). Slum dwellers were thus obliged to give up certain freedoms and accede to a lifestyle that integrated them more fully with welfare services provided through remote forms of professionally and democratically administered decision making. In return, some received larger, newer, though often more remote accommodation with modern heating, cooking and sanitary facilities. A characteristic of this contract was the subjection of slum dwellers to a more formalised home lifestyle under the management of the local authority housing staff and perhaps, through higher rents and the need for modern furnishings and products, to a more mainstream way of life dependent on regular and permanent employment. John Davies, for example, charted the existence in Rye Hill of some residents who were tired of the monotonous and unskilled work available to them and preferred instead to work intermittently, to pay low rent and to have more time to their own pursuits, such as drinking (Davies, 1972). By contrast, planners and housing managers sought to prohibit such lifestyles in the new environments offered to those in areas subject to clearance (Ebenezer Howard even discussed the option of using garden cities to promote temperance (Howard, 1898)). Those displaced by clearance and moved to council housing thus sacrificed autonomy over their lives in return for material improvement. They acceded to an apparatus of control which sought to civilise residents' culture by locking them into formalised state and economic activities.

Slum residents had little say, other than through formal political representation, in the precise terms of the social contract they were offered as a result of the new apparatus of slum clearance. They were thus subject to abstract definitions of ideal environments, which in turn reflected professional and political assumptions about the relationship between design, social mix and the characteristics of an equitable and democratic society. Similarly, the route

towards these environments was defined by the planners. The professional competence of planners was displayed in their ability to conduct exploratory surveys and gather support for a way of applying these goals to a locality. In this way, legitimacy for planning decisions was drawn from knowledge of professional and political goals, from privileged access to and command of social scientific tools, and by referencing decisions to planners' knowledge of architectural designs and areas of professional consensus. Slum clearance ultimately became part of a fixation by planners with ordering all parts of the city according to commonly agreed principles and cultural judgements on the assumption that instilling these principles and judgements in the communities being created was a straightforward process. In this period, the faith in these professional principles and assumptions was such that participative or representative democratic processes were seen as offering little that would support or contradict the sources of legitimacy drawn on by planners.

While much of the planning activity which occurred following the war was concerned with new development, the approach to addressing the slums was strongly influenced by the physical effects of enemy action during the war. The need to deal with widespread bomb damage produced a different trajectory to that proposed by Ebenezer Howard, who had envisaged that the provision of garden cities would simply lead to slum dwellers being able to negotiate redevelopment of the slums on their own terms. The cross-over between the agendas of reconstruction and redevelopment was such that bomb sites came to be seen often as an opportunity for achieving planning's ideal environments.

> Slight as is the extent of (war) damage in relation to the vast mass of London, it
> is fortunately a fact that much of it has either removed property that cried aloud
> for redevelopment, or has opened up hidden beauties which we hope will not be
> needlessly obliterated. There is thus presented to London a unique stimulus to
> better planning. (Forshaw and Abercrombie, 1943, p. 1)

Later in their plan, Forshaw and Abercrombie go on to illustrate how the opportunities presented by bombing could be channelled into practical action leading ultimately to the achievement of a properly planned, lower density urban environment. These illustrations, reproduced as figures 4.3-5, bear a remarkably close similarity with designs and methods of going about housing market renewal that are being used over sixty years later.

Figure 4.3: Stage one of proposed redevelopment in Shoreditch, showing proposals for taking advantage of immediate opportunities provided by bomb damage
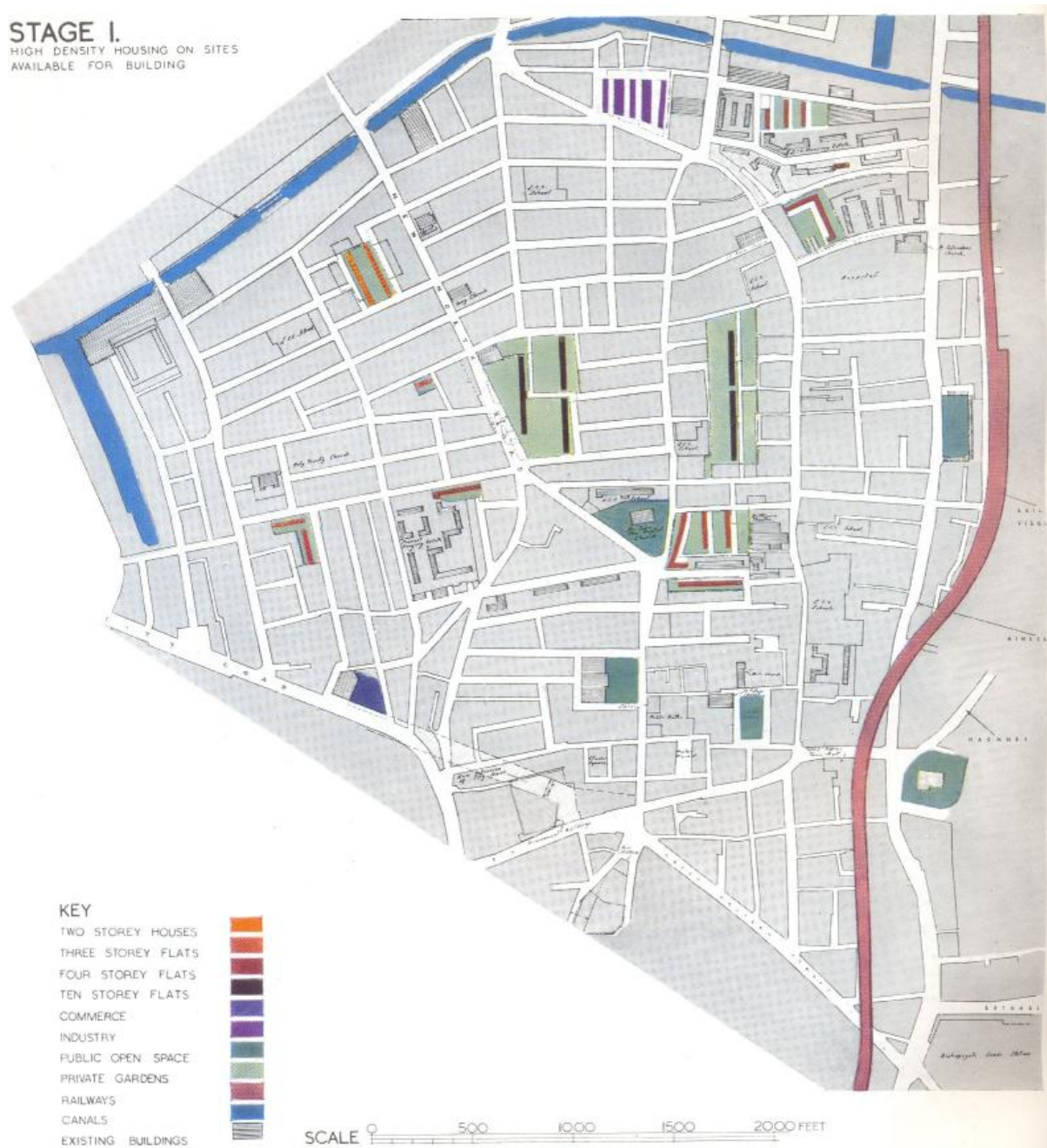
Stage I. With the key plan as the basis, immediate work can be commenced after the war on bomb-cleared sites and on land already purchased by the local authorities for housing purposes. Some land adjacent to these areas might be required to make development economic and conform to the final plan. The maximum number of dwellings will be needed quickly, and four- and ten-storey blocks of flats, the latter with lifts, might be built in preference to houses, but some houses must be included so as to establish a mixed development. The gathering together of the "peppered" small industries can be commenced with the provision of a number of flatted factories. A new road, joining up two existing main roads and contemplated before the war, can also be constructed.

Figure 4.4: Stage two of proposed redevelopment in Shoreditch, showing progression from initial reconstruction towards achievement of a neighbourhood-architectural ideal

Stage 2. As circumstances permit, this might be sub-divided into several periods, each of which would add to and conform with the final scheme. Through increased age of property, larger areas than were available in the first stage would be reconstructed, with more low-density houses and flats. The industrial re-building could be extended and some open space, shops, schools and community buildings provided. The provision of schools would be an urgent consideration and might be commenced in the first stage if necessary. A more extensive re-modelling of the street pattern and the widening of several of the existing roads would be undertaken.

Figure 4.5: Stage three/ key plan showing eventual achievement of neighbourhood ideal

KEY PLAN FOR RE-DEVELOPMENT

FINAL STAGE OF RECONSTRUCTION

KEY.

TWO STOREY HOUSES
THREE STOREY FLATS
FOUR STOREY FLATS
TEN STOREY FLATS
SCHOOLS & HOSPITALS
PUBLIC BUILDINGS
SHOPS
COMMERCE
INDUSTRY
PUBLIC OPEN SPACE
PRIVATE GARDENS
RAILWAYS
CANALS
EXISTING BUILDINGS

SCALE. 0 500 1000 1500 2000 FEET

T. L. Marshall.

A Plan for a Reconstruction Area.

If all small-scale re-building schemes are made to conform to a key plan, a well-ordered community will be achieved. The plan provides for a mixture of houses and flats at the 136 density. Existing buildings of recent construction have been retained, a new civic centre has been formed; and the street markets re-sited in squares. The community comprises three neighbourhood units, each with its own school. A large open space serving adults and school children is provided; the land might be acquired at an early stage and used for short-period development if circumstances demanded. The provision of the greater part of this open space has been left to the later stage so as to maintain the maximum housing accommodation until new building and decentralisation have reduced the demand. The present scattered commercial and industrial areas have been regrouped into compact areas or trading estates with flatted factories.

4.3   Part Two: The Character of the Integrationist Dispositif and the Forces Which Undermined it

For approximately thirty years following the end of the war, planning was committed to a sustained programme of redeveloping the slums (see figure 4.6). During this period, the a priori concern with pursuing a social contract became translated into a new and distinctive dispositif. The term dispositif is used here to refer to the institutionally embedded attitude towards the normal or right way of practising the response to urban problems. In this sense, it is also a discursive and institutional apparatus or device for attending to problems in the city. An important characteristic of the integrationist dispositif is that, during the post-war period, the aims of urban reform came to be distilled into a faith in redevelopment as a solution to urban problems that offered a more formalised and controlled environment. However, this solution persisted, even in the face of massive change in the kind of social and physical environments that planners were able to create and in the kind of urban problems that were faced. By the late 1970s, a set of conditions facilitated a substantial shift away from this integrationist dispositif. The following section begins by characterising the dispositif through an investigation of a number of seminal academic critiques published during and after the post-war period. These outline the limits of the dispositif and the concerns that are made irrelevant, or simply not seen in the language and practice of urban renewal. This discussion is then followed by a consideration of the social and economic changes which compelled, first a re-orientation and retreat and latterly a revival in the strength of the dispositif's influence over responses to problems of inner city decline and de-industrialisation.

The most significant contribution made by academic critiques of post-war slum clearance is their differentiation between the views of planners, and residents in the areas affected by clearance. Planners' own judgements, that the new estates being created represented social and environmental improvement, reflected their understandings of themselves as professionally competent at leading a social agenda based on a comprehensive knowledge of place. However, critical research revealed some of the effects of an agenda which, in contrast with planners' claims, was actually influenced by a host of wider social, economic and political challenges. Young and Willmott's (1957) study of Bethnal Green in East London confronted what they saw as a persistent attitude, which blamed slum residents for the condition of their environment. The authors traced this attitude to those such as Charles Booth

and Helen Bosanquet (1899) in the nineteenth century, who had blamed poverty partly on male drinking, violence and a lack of family planning. In contrast, Young and Willmott argued that slum clearance (based on the integrationist dispositif) failed to acknowledge the benefits of living in 'slum' areas, which included proximity to family and social support, and to work. These were less visible to planners concerned with implementing the improvement of such areas to a wider societal standard. The dominant understanding of the slums thus risked disbanding a valuable matri-local culture based on important family and kinship relations that were difficult to maintain in the new council estates. The authors argued that re-housing people in more peripheral council estates raised the standard of their housing, but broke many of the social ties which people had previously relied on, and that residents should be given more of a choice in what would happen to their neighbourhood. This work, as well as that of later writers such as Norman Dennis (1970; 1972) and Jon Davies (1972), thus mounted a challenge to the legacy of centralised idealism, that planners need only attend to certain problematic, physical features of the slums, and that having done so they could proceed with the creation of their ideal environments.

In a similar vein, Norman Dennis (1970) highlighted the value of emotional and economic attachments to place. He carried out interviews with people living in an area to be affected by clearance to gather their views about what was proposed, revealing a host of issues which did not feature in dominant discourses. Dennis found a largely settled and contented community. Unlike Howard's ideal that the development of large amounts of new housing would allow slum residents to settle with their landlords on their terms, Dennis found residents who lacked control over their future situation. Some residents had become accustomed to the nature of the housing they lived in, preferring their outside toilets and open fires to modern facilities. Others were wary of having to move to the higher rent, medium-rise flats the Council was building to replace the terraces, which seemed to aggravate anti-social behaviour and increase food and travel costs. Where once religion and cultural superiority had legitimised the efforts of the Settlement House movement Norman Dennis now argued that planners relied on a faith in pseudo-scientific professional facts to claim that they were planning for the needs of the future, not the present.

> The ideology of planning is built around self-evident truths and values which give complete authority to its main propositions and chains of reasoning. It bestows self confidence on its practitioners; which is another way of saying that it inoculates them against disturbing self-awareness and sceptical re-examination.

> Behind their lack of interest in the proximate results of their proposals, planners
> have the solid weight of mutual admiration. (Dennis 1972, p. 242).

Dennis further complained that planners saw themselves as 'waging war with selfishness, intolerance and cruelty' (ibid, p. 242), but that the majority of his interviewees preferred their existing housing to the new council housing that was offered as a consequence of demolition.

In 'Discipline and Punish', Foucault notes the homogenising effect of an apparatus of discipline on the bodies of those subject to it (1991). In a similar way, the integrationist dispositif homogenised the perspective and practice guiding redevelopment of the city, and the activity within it. Robert McKie (1971) drew on a form of systems theory to similarly argue that the concern to address obsolescence failed to recognise the functional importance of diverse activities in the city. Mckie referred to activities which were low profit, but performed socially beneficial functions in central and desirable locations. Ravetz (1980) further notes that these uses sometimes included working class housing that provided a workforce for nearby industrial uses, or local markets that provided cheap products and other advantages over profit-maximising uses. The dominant understanding of these activities as obsolescent and in need of redevelopment with more profitable uses led to a series of planning battles over a contested definition of value (see also Allen, 1996). Similarly, Jon Gower Davies (1972) found large gaps between the conceptions of progress held by planners and the way problems were understood by those living in problematised areas. He conducted field work with residents living in the Rye Hill area in Newcastle upon Tyne, which was widely accepted as a problem area suffering from slum housing, overcrowding, deprivation, crime and anti-social behaviour. His research classified those living and working in Rye Hill into four typologies: the ultra-respectables, the ordinary respectables, the immigrants and the undesirables. Davies found a community substantially in conflict and argued that the problems, rather than being environmental, could be attributed to an absence of social status, which led individuals to create a subculture where mainstream social values were reversed. The bureaucrats seeking to implement a comprehensive improvement scheme suffered, he argued, from an 'evangelical' professional and institutional culture which prevented them from understanding the area's dynamics and the needs of those living there. Common to all the accounts above is the conclusion that the inhabitants of environments affected by slum clearance viewed these areas very differently to planners. However, a political and professional belief in the need to radically remodel neighbourhoods was maintained, in part, by an underlying and persistent assumption that redevelopment would achieve a positive form

of social integration by embracing the lifestyles of 'slum' residents in a more formalised and controlled society.

The accounts above emphasise the limits of the integrationist dispositif by highlighting the way that non-professional attitudes towards the city were regarded by an institutionalised, professional outlook. Slum clearance had been constructed as an area of professional competence for planners leading post-war redevelopment when in reality this professionalism embodied an intolerance of diverse understandings of, and ways of valuing, place and an incapability to consider potential forms of development which might have been pursued instead of prescriptive clean sweep redevelopment. It should also be noted, however, that the slum clearance agenda was a double edged sword which functioned both as a source of potential gain for residents of low income areas, if they understood improvement in the same terms as the planners, as well as framing an agenda of social control. The strength of the post-war dispositif, and the scale of clearance and redevelopment which took place, were such that government remained verbally committed to clearance and redevelopment, even as economic conditions eventually forced the state to reduce public spending and reign back capital funding for housing. However, despite the state's reluctance to abandon slum clearance, as the beginning of this chapter noted, for many commentators, the post-war clearance schemes remain a vivid example of failures in housing and planning policy. Indeed, by the 1980s, these images were used to fuel the rise of a 'new right discourse' which radically broke from previous approaches to housing policy. At least three conditions can be discerned which together, changed the terms of the post-war social contract to such an extent that this break was made possible; these are considered here in turn.

i)   The move to high-density, distinctively unconventional house types

A characteristic of some estates developed during the post-war period was a fashionable architectural style or use of materials, which is often interpreted today as a symbol of stigmatisation and poverty. High density, systems-built housing has widely come to be regarded as out of step with the lifestyles of those relocated from slum areas and the designs of housing and open space which they would have chosen themselves (Towers, 2000; Dunleavy, 1981). Dissatisfaction with these designs has been used as evidence of the failure of post-war planning.

This chapter has associated the integrationist dispositif with a desire to implement a social contract between experts, working on behalf of a coherent society, and those living in problematised areas. Supervision of the terms and implementation of that contract was expected to occur through a functioning social democracy. However, the forms of decision making which actually occurred during the post-war period have been likened to a form of state action which privileged professional influence alongside other interest groups such as business and working class political representation (Dunleavy, 1981; Middlemas, 1986). According to Dunleavy, throughout the post-war period, the location and style of the new environments which planners were able to offer to slum dwellers were dictated by a need to respond to institutionalised agendas, such as the need to provide sanitary and affordable housing and to protect the countryside. At the same time, however, the financial support available for new council housing, together with the status of council housing, were progressively reduced. This had severe implications for planners, who depicted themselves as the caretakers of the nationalised right to develop land and the agents of a social democratic society tasked with defining and exercising the terms of the contract with slum dwellers. Legitimacy for this role was provided by planning's claim that it was able to draw on rational, scientific tools, which would enable it to guide the future of society in the public interest, and by recourse to idealistic end-states which would be achieved through redevelopment. However, these claims ignored the political-economic system in which planning was immersed. Planners' sources of legitimacy consequently became appropriated as tools for the facilitation of a social contract on far different terms to those which had initially been professionally or politically envisaged. According to Dunleavy, this situation was seized upon by a relatively small number of large private house building firms to portray their mass construction techniques as a technological solution which would facilitate the provision of affordable housing while minimising urban sprawl.

Central to Dunleavy's argument is that residents of middle and upper income, rural and suburban areas on the peripheries of cities were able to resist new development, and that this forced urban authorities to pursue high density redevelopment. At the same time, the organisation of local authority and developer relationships through tendering had created a hard-sell sales environment, which developers had used to present high-rise housing to planners and local authorities as a technological fix which would provide vastly improved living standards, even at high densities. At the national political level, Dunleavy argued that a combination of advertising, lobbying and professional advocacy re-affirmed developers'

arguments, while debates in the House of Commons focused on attempts to attract funding to urban constituencies, rather than concerns with design. A boom in high rise construction resulted which dramatically increased demand for urban land. Since urban land could be gained most cheaply through further slum clearance, Dunleavy argued that in some cases this led to a perpetual cycle of redevelopment, with a consequent increase, rather than a decrease, in housing waiting lists as a result of new council housing schemes. In essence, Dunleavy charts a process by which the formal professional and political post-war consensus became compromised by the cellular, private interests of a number of large firms, together with those of residents living on the periphery of the cities. At the same time, routes to political influence were far weaker for those affected by renewal policies; they had no say on the design of new estates or on the house types or communities into which they were re-housed. (Dunleavy, 1981).

ii)   Residualisation of the role of council housing- an amended contract with the state
Despite paternalistic approaches to housing management, council housing in the immediate post-war years had a high social status and long waiting lists. This in part reflected the role envisaged for it in the 1920s as a provision for the upper working classes that would allow slum dwellers to filter into their vacated homes; by the late 1940s it was envisaged that council housing would accommodate those on a wide mix of incomes. Thus, as a tool employed for reforming slum housing in the post-war period, council housing had a high status and build quality. However, while council housing remained a key tool in the redevelopment process, the nature of its design and its social status relative to other tenures changed. Cole and Furbey note that.

> From 1962 to 1978, 1.25 million of the additional 1.9 million households in public sector housing had no employment earnings. The proportion of council tenants who were economically inactive increased from a mere 4.8 per cent in 1961 to 28 per cent by 1981 (Hamnett, 1984; see also Forrest and Murie, 1988).
> (Cole & Furbey, 1994, p. 84)

In response to a combination of financial pressures and political pressures to increase house building, funding mechanisms for the provision of council housing gradually changed. Subsidies provided for new development were gradually replaced by means-tested subsidies for households. At the same time, slum clearance led to the re-housing of low income communities in the council rented sector. The quantity of council housing stock also reduced,

thus redefining the role of the sector. Consequently, Michael Harloe came to describe a redefined role for council housing as,

> '...an ambulance service concentrating its efforts on the remaining areas of housing stress and dealing with a variety of 'special needs' such as the poor, the homeless, one-parent families, battered wives and blacks' (Harloe, 1978).

In the housing association sector, grants allowed development to generous 'Parker Morris standards until 1988. The dramatic reduction in the role and status of social housing since the war combined with continued restrictions on lifestyle, which limited the degree to which people could personalise and express their individuality in council housing (Ravetz, 2000). Together, these factors radically changed the terms of the social contract which was provided to slum dwellers facing redevelopment and provided essential pre-requisites for the success of later claims that council housing was managed by faceless bureaucracies and needed to be privatised. Thatcher's arrival in 1979 sparked a dramatic reduction in spending on housing and a redirection of subsidies towards owner occupiers at the expense of council tenants, whose rent rose sharply (Forrest and Murie, 1988). Introduction of the right to buy council housing at two thirds of market value also heavily incentivised better-off council tenants to move into the owner occupied sector, leaving the council sector to cater for those on the lowest incomes.

iii)   Global economic change

In the thirty years following the war, economic growth of 3% a year had been accompanied by an attitude which located planning within the assumption that the state could and should manage capitalism in the interests of society. This meant taxing economic activity to fund an expanding welfare state. The third, and probably most important, condition which facilitated a gradual move away from the integrationist dispositif was massive pressure on the state to reduce spending. Pressure began to mount as a consequence of the receipt of a loan from the International Monetary Fund in 1966. A condition of this was that public spending would be reduced, and the same terms formed part of a second loan secured in 1975 following the 1973 oil crisis (Allen, 1999; Cole and Furbey, 1994). Cole and Furbey (1994) note that capital expenditure was hit hardest, with local authority housing investment reduced from £2,580 million in 1975-6 to £1,934 million in 1977-8. The 1986 economic crisis was followed by Thatcher's 1987 housing white paper, which prevented local authorities from using right to buy income to build new council housing, and together these events ended large-scale council house building in Britain. The consequence of this progressive reduction in expenditure

gradually undermined the capability of the state to pursue large scale integrationist planning. The decline of the integrationist dispositif in the 1970s can be conceptualised as forming into three stages. These are discussed below.

Figure 4.6: Clearance and improvement grants undertaken in the post-war period
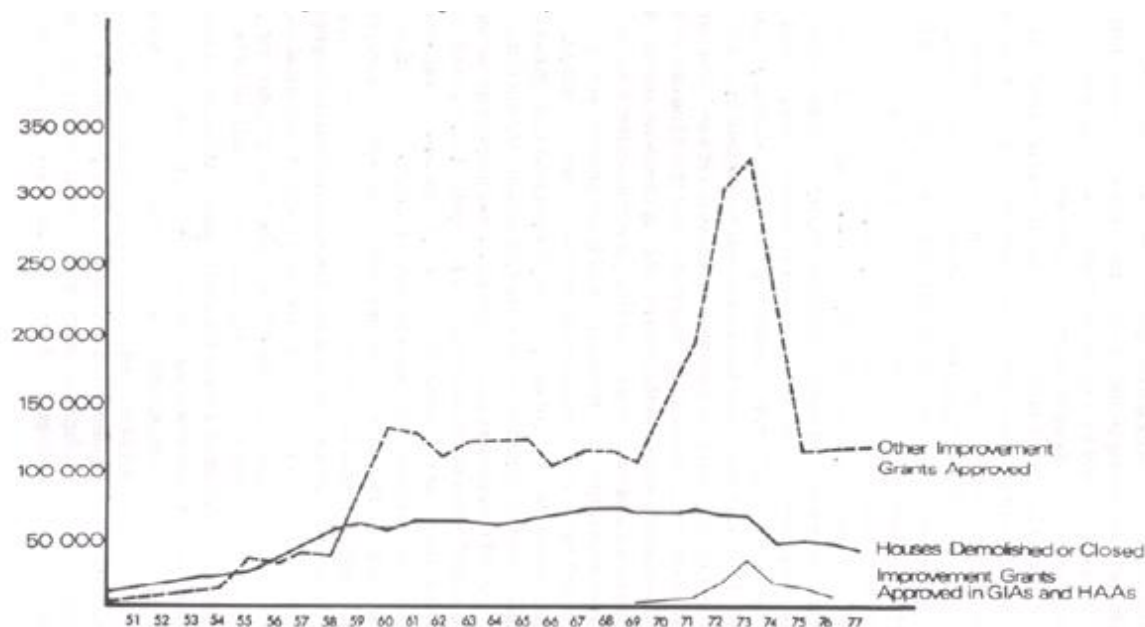
Source: Great Britain (1977), cited in Mason (1979, p. 140)

4.3.1 The initial response to recession and de-industrialisation: switching to improvement areas to maintain the integrationist dispositif

The first phase of the state's response was to move away from the use of housing clearance and towards improvements, with a later, spatially bounded focus on the inner city areas suffering most from the loss of manufacturing jobs. This was not so much a challenge to the integrationist dispositif as it was an attempt to maintain its conception of progress, albeit at a slower pace. From as early as the late 1960s, economic constraints were prompting moves to rein back the scale of the slum clearance programme and introduce a greater emphasis on limited-life improvements (see figure 4.6). Prior to this time, the primary purpose of improvement grants had been to make poor housing liveable until clearance could be progressed, largely through the installation of toilets and other facilities not provided in the original build (Leather, 2000). However, Malpass (2000a) notes that a significant number of new housing associations emerged at this time, with some based on co-ownership models and others linked to churches. A theme amongst some of these associations was a revival of interest in the refurbishment of existing housing as a way of providing affordable housing at

cost rates. The trend towards rehabilitation was strengthened by a 1967 white paper, which urged local authorities to make enhanced improvement grants available for the majority of unfit housing, where it was not earmarked for demolition. In addition, General Improvement Areas were created, which were intended to bring housing and local environments up to standard in areas of greatest need by offering even more generous grant packages. The new emphasis on improvements provoked a large increase in the number of grants awarded, and between 1969 and 1975 a total of 1.5 million dwellings were improved (Kirby, 1979, p. 84). In 1973, the government responded to additional economic pressure by further increasing the emphasis on improvements and allowing local authorities to declare housing action areas. These were intended to provide properties with a thirty year life, after which it was envisaged that there would be a review and that clearance might take place. The new policy of 'gradual renewal' appeased a number of heritage organisations and residents who had raised objections to clearance. In addition, it extended the timescale for redevelopment, allowing the government to redirect funding to areas of the worst housing conditions.

In addition to refocusing on improvement, government also passed legislation, in the form of the 1974 Housing Act, which led to a dramatic expansion in the housing association sector and simultaneously brought it under much closer state control by providing capital grants linked to greater regulation (Allen, 1999). Up until 1988, grants for housing associations were generous, giving them much greater autonomy than local authorities (Malpass, 2000a). The 1974 Act also introduced new powers allowing local authorities to compel private landlords in housing action areas to carry out minimum standards of repair. Local authorities could attach conditions to grants to keep accommodation in the private rented sector and assign tenants to properties which were being kept vacant by landlords wanting to sell up. In the most difficult cases, stipulations could be made; requiring landlords who wished to sell to give first refusal to housing associations or the local authority. The ability to transfer housing to the social rented sector provided a particularly effective way of tackling some of the worst housing conditions. However, cuts also restricted local authorities' ability to build new council housing or acquire property for council rent. The relatively lucrative grants available to housing associations enabled them to acquire property more easily. The result was that housing associations came to play an increasingly prominent role in managing housing in the Housing Action Areas. These areas were designated where housing conditions were poor and amenities lacking, but they were also chosen to cover areas with overcrowding problems, with

concentrations of older people, and to cover households made up of large families or multiple occupancy. As Mason notes, these were often some of the most difficult areas to manage.

> ...housing associations are being used to take over some of the most difficult jobs from local authorities rather than to supplement their activity. The voluntary sector is being restricted in the standards to which it can make improvements, and allowances are not being increased commensurate with the rise in building and management costs (King, 1978). It may well be that the 'voluntary' sector, which is in fact becoming a rather distant and unaccountable portion of the public sector, will be left 'holding the can' in terms of responsibility for dealing with the most acute problems in the worst housing areas in ten to twenty years time. (Mason, 1979, p. 148-9)

An effect of the manner in which costs were secured was therefore to direct those housing associations seeking to improve housing conditions in housing action areas to extend their stock portfolio into these areas.

4.3.2   The inner city problem- the integrationist dispositif remodelled and reinforced

A further consequence of economic decline was that policy makers became concerned about the practicalities of governing the inner cities, which had seen the greatest loss of manufacturing jobs. In the second phase of the state's response to deindustrialisation, government policies responded to this concern in much the same way as the welfare state had responded to concerns in the post-war growth period. They emphasised the need for a more equal society geographically as well as socially, justifying action in the name of the residents remaining in the inner cities.

> The inner parts of our cities ought not to be left to decay. It would mean leaving large numbers of people to face a future of declining job opportunities, a squalid environment, deteriorating housing and declining public services. But without effective action, that could be the future for those who live in inner areas... (Department of the Environment, 1977, paragraph 22)

Inner cities policies reinforced an implicit argument, underlying slum clearance policy, that the prosperity of particular areas (now the focus was on those in economic decline) should not be allowed to fall too far behind an average or typical level for the country. For this argument to be made, the case would need to be made that existing welfare state measures were insufficient to deal with the problem.

The consultants who had been commissioned to investigate the problems of the inner cities supported their policy recommendations with a new narrative, which used the concept of 'collective deprivation' to argue that supplementary assistance was needed in the inner cities (Llewelyn-Davies et al, 1976; Department of the Environment, 1977). This notion was essentially the precursor of later concerns with neighbourhood-based social exclusion and spatially concentrated 'spirals of decline' that form an important part of the story in chapters five to seven. Collective deprivation was distinguished from personal deprivation. Personal deprivation was viewed as those components of poverty for which the welfare state was in place to respond. Examples would be low wages, overcrowded housing and medical complaints. The new notion of collective deprivation, however, was vital to arguments proposing area-based action. Without it, the simple counter-argument could be made that individual state benefits would naturally accrue in areas of economic decline, thus offering a state support mechanism on an equal basis with dispersed incidences of poverty, ill health and unemployment. The idea of collective deprivation stated, however, that where concentrations of people suffering from personal deprivation occurred, synergistic processes resulted in further deprivation. The focus here was thus firmly placed on the residents, who were portrayed as alienated, trapped in decline and desperate for assistance. Elsewhere, however, institutional pressures were identified. It was argued that the cost of administering welfare services in these areas was increasing while the revenue they generated declined (Eversley, 1975a; 1975b). The concern about government was partly stimulated by the loss of population from many, but not all, of the inner city areas. To an extent this was the consequence of slum clearance intervention, which had often directly reduced populations without delivering the level of replacement housing which had been promised (Hall, 1973; Mason, 1979; Couch and Fowler, 1992). However, even where population was not in decline, claims were made that inner city populations were becoming disproportionately poor. One effect of this trend was to increase the cost of managing and delivering services to estates comprising of high proportions of vulnerable households. Such costs were borne by authorities that simultaneously faced a reduction in the tax returns received from these marginal or residual populations (Eversley, 1975a, 1975b; Falk and Martinos, 1975).

Despite their importance, concerns about the financial implications for local authorities of population loss and residualisation were wholly absent from the official reports of research and policy discussions on the inner areas (Llewelyn-Davies et al, 1976). Their talk of local authorities was limited to arguments that democratic representation was insufficient as a

mechanism to co-ordinate and focus services on the needs of those living in the most deprived areas. The inner cities policies thus in practice reflected long-established professional concerns with maintaining order and control, and the concerns of urban local authorities (most certainly valid ones), with finding ways of tackling the financial problems associated with loss of jobs and loss of a high-income population. Nevertheless, like the previous slum clearance policies, they were couched in terms that portrayed them as predominantly a welfare measure for those living in inner city areas.

This point was not lost on Pahl (1978) and (Ward, 1979), who both highlighted the immense cost and limited efficacy of constructing a new tier of welfare professionals, as set against the constructive potential and much lower cost of promoting community support and self-help. Pahl was not convinced by the argument that inner city policy was the most effective way to respond to the interests of the poor. He sought to show that deprived social groups, such as pensioners and one parent families, whom the Inner Area Studies claimed would be helped, were actually dispersed far beyond the inner city. In a challenge to the collective deprivation thesis and in a similar vein to Young and Willmott (1957), he saw potential advantages to be gained by some households, such as single mothers, of clustering in the same location for collective support. Pahl suggested that a more effective way to help residents of the inner cities would be to dispose of urban and planning studies and instead seek to encourage a small-scale, local and informal economy modelled on an improved version of the informal economies of the less capitalised world. However, there was no serious debate about this option. Separate advice from the government's Community Development Projects recommended looking beyond the inner cities for solutions, and potentially to protectionist economic policies (Community Development Project, 1977). The inner cities policies are an important part of the genealogy of the dispositif underlying the housing market analysis approach to renewal because they represent a continuing belief in the potency of planning to guide society. This was particularly evident in the treatment of blighted areas. Although clearance policies were criticised for blighting the inner cities and directing development away from them, blight was interpreted in a Howardian sense, as creating environmental conditions which 'contrast sharply with better conditions elsewhere' (The Department of the Environment, 1977, paragraph 13), making the areas unattractive to residents and businesses. There was thus an attempt to use a patchwork of environmental interventions including clearance, General Improvement Areas, Housing Action Areas, business grants and land use allocations to re-assemble the inner cities. This continued the spirit of earlier attempts to use

housing policy to construct a better society by arguing that more co-ordinated planning action could similarly be used to address problems of economic and demographic decline.

One consequence of the inner cities policies was to transfer problematic stock to housing associations on the presumption that slum clearance would persist as a strategy thirty years into the future. Approximately thirty years later, residents of some of these areas attributed problems of low demand to poor management and insufficient investment by housing associations (Ord, 2006: House of Commons, 2005). The absence of new clearance or improvement grants inspired calls for intervention through the housing market renewal initiative. At the same time, there were real fears about whether some housing associations with large amounts of vacant and unwanted stock would continue to be financially viable (Nevin, 2002). These fears also reflected a more general decline in housing funding, which exacerbated the management challenges that housing associations faced in economically weak areas. These cut backs also triggered a wholesale shift away from the integrationist dispositif.

4.3.3 The end of slum clearance and the rise of the privatisation agenda

The third phase of challenge to the dispositif of post-war urban reform came about initially through revisions to the housing subsidy system. In a detailed account of these changes, Judith Allen notes that by 1979 there was cross-party support for revisions that would accelerate the devolution of council housing costs from the tax payer to council tenants (Allen, 1999). Furthermore, the election of a Conservative government in 1979 revived a discourse of nineteenth century liberalism which accelerated these changes. A new rhetoric of bureaucratic failure and consumer 'choice' ignored the issues of residualisation and rural NIMBYism discussed earlier to hold up low quality, high density council housing entirely as the consequence of a faceless and bureaucratic social democratic politics. The arrival of a neo-liberal discourse undermined the integrationist dispositif, which had encouraged environmental intervention to create a centrally defined minimum standard and style of living. The new discourse argued instead that, by allowing competition and market forces to flourish, the economy would improve and this would benefit all: wealth would 'trickle down' from the affluent to the poor. This new rhetoric appeared to reflect a political power alliance which was relatively unconcerned with welfare provision, and one that certainly advocated a re-conceived role for the state. Where the state's role had been defined as redistributive at the end of World War Two (something that perhaps became increasingly rhetorical rather than substantive over the following thirty five years), it was now ascribed a new role as a facilitator

of economic growth. The revised role of the state necessitated a further scaling down of planning action based on the integrationist dispositif. In this sense, the rise of neo-liberalism became locked into (by symbiotically exploiting and facilitating) a second break or rupture in a priori integrationist attitudes towards problematised urban areas. As before, this rupture did not completely destroy previous ideas and practices. Its focus on the role of the state again remodelled these ideas to develop the concept of property-led regeneration. Where one problematic power block of professional and bureaucratically exercised corporate power was undermined, another equally problematic alliance emerged with an almost singular focus on freeing up and facilitating the private sector. The fixation with attracting external investment thus displaced the creative possibilities which might have emerged from a more heterogeneous understanding of value. Instead, the challenge to the integrationist dispositif made way for a rigid understanding of value as price and profit. The Conservatives pursued this goal by privatising the control and management of public infrastructure and established new Urban Development Corporations with their own multi-stakeholder governance mechanisms. These moves attempted to lever in private investment, but they also led to a fracturing of service provision between the public and private sectors and to a more limited public sector influence over development, both financially and democratically (Brindley et al, 1989; Furbey, 1999).

Central government's commitment to far reaching cuts placed it at odds with local authorities' ability to use their autonomy to safe-guard services through local rate increases. The autonomy of local authority housing services was thus progressively restricted. Allen notes that

> Prior to 1972, local authorities were basically autonomous housing providers. They were free to decide how much housing should be produced, what rents should be set, and who should be given access to the housing, subject only to vague legislative requirements of 'reasonableness'. (Allen, 1999, p. 57)

However, by the beginning of the 1990s, changes to the management of central government subsidies meant that local authorities had been forced to cut back on services while increasing rents. At the same time, centralisation of control over local authority tax and spending was introduced, allowing government to allocate financial settlements to local authorities, and giving them severely restricted options for raising revenue. One impact of these changes was that councils looked towards housing associations to manage their stock on terms that were more financially favourable. Another was that wealthier social housing tenants increasingly

looked towards the owner occupied sector for their housing, thus further residualising the social sector.

The reining back of state involvement in housing policy was received uneasily by many housing professionals and housing scholars. Davies notes that

> The housing service in the voluntary sector... is expected to pick up the role of provision of housing for low-income groups but using private funds. This is causing tensions in the voluntary movement, for most housing associations were set up and are run by committed people with an interest in providing housing for specific groups at 'reasonable' rents and filling gaps in local authority provision. The legislative changes are forcing a new role on associations, often at odds with their constitutions and the wishes of those on their committees. Some of the bigger housing associations are, however, embracing the new regime. (Davies, 1992, p. 2)

Throughout the years of spending cut backs, there were also moves by these groups to professionalise and improve the organisation of housing management so that it might be represented better in local government.

> As a result of all these changes (the influence of government reports, social change, the rise of participation and the impact of political ideology), the chance to unify the housing service was seized upon. It was a step which had been urged by advisory bodies like CHAC for many years. The Institute of Housing tried to establish its professional credentials by promoting the idea of a comprehensive housing service. The idea built on reports by CHAC, Bains and SeeBohm, and was designed to help senior housing officers argue for increased status at the time of re-structuring. However, the result was patchy with some housing officers becoming heads of comprehensive departments, whilst others remained in fragmented ones, or were absorbed into others. (Davies, 1992, pp. 10-11)

One outcome of moves such as these was to create a more organised housing movement, including both scholars and professionals, which could represent housing at a national as well as local level. The sequence of events leading to the new neo-liberal regime, and the tactical role now played by many who had previously operated within the integrationist dispositif, further constructed a dualism whereby expert-led integrationist planning came to be associated with a socially conscious political left. In fact, this dualism ignored the Liberal and

bourgeois roots of the integrationist dispositif in the nineteenth century and the potential for goals of social and material justice to be reconciled in alternative, more creative ways.

4.4 Part three: New Labour and the search for responses to centralisation, fragmentation and residualisation

The final part of this chapter discusses the discursive and institutional context which surrounded the advent of the HMRI. It briefly considers New Labour's discourse of social inclusion and the spatial and urban focus it facilitated before attending to the way that early academic attempts to understand housing vacancy were understood within this context. Finally, the bureaucratic environment which arose during New Labour's first term is outlined and some remarks are made on how this environment has informed the implementation of the HMRI.

4.4.1   The rise of 'social inclusion'

The election of New Labour in 1997 brought a renewed focus on cities and local service delivery that ultimately facilitated the revival of the integrationist dispositif. A new policy rhetoric of 'social inclusion' shifted the focus away from traditional concerns with inequality and towards equality of opportunities; in doing so it sought to combine a greater commitment to social programmes with a positive attitude to working with the private sector (Giddens, 1998). The argument that people's life opportunities vary greatly according to where they live provided an essential prerequisite for the return of the integrationist dispositif. The approach to addressing social exclusion was heralded as part of a new 'third way'. In 1998 the government's Social Exclusion Unit, headed up by the prime minister, published the report 'Bringing Britain Together: A National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal'. The strategy consistently identified problems at a spatial level.

> Our goal is simple: it is to bridge the gap between the poorest neighbourhoods
> and the rest of Britain. (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998, foreword by the Prime
> Minister)

It has been argued that a wooliness within the rhetoric of social inclusion helped to obscure a shift in the Labour party's underlying priorities away from its former redistributive goals towards concerns with supporting a collective moral order across a society that found itself challenged by the fragmentary effects of global economic restructuring (Levitas, 1998).

Other commentators have interpreted the strength of spatial awareness in the social inclusion agenda as evidence of the political shift that Levitas identified (Oatley, 2000; Watt and Jacobs, 2000). There are clear similarities with the inner cities policies of the late 1970s and many of the critiques of those policies have been revived. Oatley (2000), for example, strikes a chord with the comments of Pahl (1978) by contending that area-based initiatives are ineffective at tackling 'people poverty' because by concentrating on selected areas they miss out poverty which is dispersed (see also Towers, 2000). Oatley also argues that the focus on localities is a poor substitute for tackling the real problems, which exist at an increasingly global socio-economic level, but which the government feels are politically unchallengeable. For Oatley, like the Community Development Project before him, constraining the debate in this way opens the potential for a return to a dangerously pathological view of certain areas which seeks to bound the causes of poverty, deprivation and exclusion within localities. Nevertheless, the social inclusion agenda prompted a massive reorganisation of government functioning in which political and political administrative leadership was at a premium. A consequence of this was that it provided significant opportunities for those seeking to introduce a new model for responding to vacant housing and marginalised neighbourhoods.

A further opportunity provided by the new government's agenda was that it was accompanied by an unprecedented policy focus on attracting people to the major cities; this was backed up with planning policies such as Planning Policy Guidance note 3 (Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions, 2000) which directed development to brownfield sites and urban locations. Some authors have criticised this agenda for yielding to political pressure not to build in the countryside (Sturzaker, under review) and others have suggested that it opened the door for the widespread gentrification of urban areas (Lees, 2003). However, the use of New Urbanist, compact city ideals to frame policy was welcomed by many city authorities, particularly in the north of England, which suffered from similar problems to those addressed by the earlier inner city policies. These authorities continued to struggle to maintain services in an environment of persistent population loss and loss of tax revenue. The enthusiasm from these authorities was in part a consequence of the previous decade's housing and planning policies. Cuts to housing funding, deregulation of the private rented sector and low interest rates during the 1980s had dramatically increased the cost of renting and lowered the cost of owner occupation (Malpass, 2000b). This made renting much less attractive for those who were not eligible for benefits; it created a policy-induced process of segregating those on benefits into social housing and the cheapest housing in the private sector (Lee et al,

1995). At a discursive level, however, calls to deal with high levels of vacancy in particular urban neighbourhoods emphasised place-bound characteristics associated with poverty, and this was something which connected powerfully with both the social inclusion and urban renaissance agendas.

4.4.2 Early attempts to understand housing vacancy within a discourse of social inclusion

During the latter half of the 1990s a flurry of government and academic studies grappled with the issue of widespread population loss from many of the major cities. The sharp end of the debate focused on instances of large scale vacancy in particular neighbourhoods and the studies discussed below recorded the problems they posed for social landlords and local authorities. It was clear that problems associated with vacancy were increasing but, equally, the issue was not easy to pin down. At a general level, population loss was obviously connected with the decline of the north's industrial employment base. Consequently, a report of the government's 'policy action team 7' (PAT 7) identified low household growth, out-migration, lack of employment and low incomes as contributory factors (PAT 7, 1999). At the neighbourhood level researchers identified the most common problems as being crime, stigmatisation and anti-social behaviour (Bramley et al, 2000a; PAT 7, 1999; Cole et al, 1999). However, identifying the reasons for inequalities in vacancy rates across cities and neighbourhoods was notoriously difficult. The PAT 7 report attempted to represent the problem in a visible way by using terms such as 'unpopular housing' and 'low demand neighbourhoods' and listing the characteristics of areas falling into this latter, relatively new, category. Nevertheless, the same study resisted the temptation to generalise too much.

> PAT 7 has concluded that it is not possible to quantify the causes of low demand as suggested by the remit. The problems of low demand are different in different areas and are due to different combinations of causal factors. (PAT 7, 1999, paragraph 23)

A separate report reached similar conclusions.

> It is impossible to generalise as to the multifarious causes of low demand in particular neighbourhoods. (Holmans and Simpson, 1999, paragraph 27)

Thus, studies found causes to be diverse, difficult to distinguish from consequences and difficult to determine. Furthermore, the responses of social landlords were similarly diverse, including changes to management, marketing and lettings practices, security and policing initiatives and refurbishment and development work (Cole et al, 1999).

Government called for clear technical guidance about how to respond to low demand (Bramley et al, 2000a; 2000b) and academic reports joined the clamour for certainty. The PAT 7 team asked who decides when areas have gone beyond help, and what should then be done? (PAT 7, 1999). Holmans and Simpson answered that 'a robust methodology for undertaking market appraisals is needed' (1999, paragraph 33). It seemed that government needed to know what the most effective institutional response might be, in order to assess the scale of funding to make available and to have some confidence that money would be well spent. The conclusion that causes were diverse and difficult to determine was, therefore, not particularly helpful.

> The changing pattern of demand for housing in certain parts of Britain has prompted extensive policy and practitioner interest in recent years. These discussions have sometimes generated more heat than light in explaining the factors behind this trend... (Cole et al, 1999, p. 4)

At the same time, uncertainty was having a knock on effect on other governance technologies, which government relied on to manage its funding and policy commitments. Holmans and Simpson (1999) noted the impact on projections of household growth and need for new social rented housing.

> A confused audience has been receptive to the arguments given by various special interest groups which have questioned the plans for more building whilst there are empty properties. (p. vii)

At the local level, there was an urgent need for a response. Social landlords reported that empty properties were encouraging vandalism, theft and drug dealing, and that competition for tenants between landlords was making it difficult to sanction and control problem tenants. Similarly in the private sector, local authorities reported that declining house prices were leading to negative equity and a lack of maintenance while, in some areas, unscrupulous landlords were taking advantage of the situation to let cheap properties to tenants on benefits at relatively high rents.

As studies sought increasingly to crystallise the vacant housing problem into a politically and practically workable policy response, the suggestions generated increasingly came to reflect the previous dispositif which had guided earlier approaches to slum clearance and the inner cities policies. This dispositif appears to have played a part in the crystallisation of a proposed way forward, around which momentum could be generated. For the benefit of clarity it is

important to note here that this dispositif should not automatically be associated with a left or right-wing agenda, but is the product of a heterogeneous set of relations with roots that go back well before the formal establishment of the Labour party at the beginning of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, this dispositif encapsulates a shared memory and understanding of how urban problems might be addressed. In this sense it can be more concretely conceptualised as the product of an attitude towards meeting social goals that is locked into a cultural history and to which alternatives exist, albeit without such a strong heritage. Initially, two early suggestions were made that government should address vacancy problems through an urban command approach. Bramley et al (2000a; 2000b) suggested that local authorities and social landlords should confirm whether suspected areas could be designated as suffering from low demand by collecting statistical information on indicators such as vacancy rates and tenant turnover levels. Cole et al (1999) then suggested a three pronged strategy. In stage one, a decision should be made about whether to regenerate a neighbourhood or manage its decline. Capital investment should then be co-ordinated across key organisations around a coherent strategy. Finally, the researchers suggested that government should announce a pilot strategy to explore possible solutions, and to enable local organisations to work co-operatively and strategically, rather than in a piecemeal way as and when they were successful at gaining government funding for individual projects. Parts of government seemed to be receptive to this suggestion, but the response was initially sluggish. The landslide election of New Labour in 1997, with its New Urbanist, social inclusion agenda and its political affiliations with northern constituencies, represented a unique political opportunity to secure funding for deprived, low demand neighbourhoods in the region. However, not all parts of the government were supportive of making large amounts of funding available. Demands originated principally from 'old Labour' politicians on the left of the party (Cole, 2008) who had, to an extent, been marginalised by previous party reforms. The success of proposals for a pilot initiative seemed to depend on the mobilisation of a large and united group of organisations and politicians behind a convincing and coherent case. At the front line, building this collective, was a group of researchers from the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies in Birmingham University who claimed to have found a practical methodology for identifying and responding to low demand. Chapter five of this thesis follows the process through which that case was developed, and the practices which were used to generate an 'optimum scenario' in the interests of all involved. Chapters six to eight examine the implications of constructing this research-based lobby by exploring the implantation of urban and planning policy in neighbourhoods across the north of England.

4.4.3 The bureaucratic environment surrounding the construction of the HMRI

Pressures on politicians, such as the need to support competitiveness in an age of globalisation and to build policies that appeal to different viewpoints and agendas, constrain the substance of policy, and the way in which it can be explained. In the UK, the policy lines that result tend to be articulated at central government level and one feature of the New Labour leadership has been a tendency to define representations of problems and policy responses at this level. The Bringing Britain Together strategy was an attempt to set out a political rhetoric in this environment; one that would define problems and their causes.

> We all know the problems of our poorest neighbourhoods - decaying housing, unemployment, street crime and drugs. People who can, move out. Nightmare neighbours move in. Shops, banks and other vital services close. (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998, foreword by the Prime Minister)

The danger, however, of a politicised national diagnosis of local problems is that it leads to a level of prescription which may override local priorities and particularities. The government was aware of this and did seek to prioritise local control. Nevertheless, they also required some kind of national picture and a set of controls to allow them to maintain that their policies were value for money and efficient. New Labour had arrived at a time when reconciling these priorities had been made particularly difficult by the actions of the previous administration. A steady process of centralisation had occurred during the late 1980s and early 1990s, which increasingly removed financial autonomy from local authorities (Towers, 2000). At the same time, political differences between central government and local authorities, and the impact of privatisation, had resulted in the fragmentation of local services and institutions. This meant that delivery typically required the involvement of local government together with special purpose bodies, the voluntary sector and the private sector (Rhodes, 2000).

A complex governance environment has emerged to respond to this centralised but locally fragmented pattern of service delivery, and this has had a defining impact on the way the HMRI has been delivered. Early attempts to reconcile the interests of the myriad actors involved were announced in successors to the Conservatives' Citizen's Charter and in the Social Exclusion Unit's 'New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal' (2001), which proposed the use of local strategic partnerships to co-ordinate service delivery. A fundamental critique of these approaches is that they confuse the roles of customers, interested only in receiving 'better' local services, with citizens, who may have valid political concerns about

the way services are delivered. Rhodes (2000) sees this as symptomatic of a wider confusion in policy between responsiveness and accountability. The simplification from citizens to customers is tempting for centralised governments because it opens the potential to monitor the speed and responsiveness of delivery by technical processes of audit which assess efficiency purely on those terms. But the simplification that is inherent in the narrowing of government's focus to these elements alone means that the accountability of other aspects of the design and delivery of services is weakened. This translates into a limitation of citizens' ability to hold public agencies to account. As will be seen in the case study chapters of this thesis, accountability is important because without it, a view of individuals as customers implies a de-politicisation of local political activity. Both Rhodes (2000) and Oatley (2000) have argued that this process of de-politicisation is one drawback of a bureaucratic model which seeks the delivery of policy via fragmented institutions by emphasising the need to develop voluntary networks of co-ordination between them. For Uitermark (2008), the devolution across Europe of clearly demarcated issues to local partnerships with community representation performs a functional role, mediating between diverse governmental agencies and contributing to making disadvantaged neighbourhoods more governable.

The themes of fragmented services, institutional consensus building and de-politicisation of local policies run throughout this thesis. These themes can be seen to have fundamentally affected the way the HMRI has been designed and delivered, and have been a major source of the conflict and controversy that has emerged around the delivery of the HMRI in many places. With hindsight, it is clear that the tension between a need for central control and locally tailored policy opened a significant opportunity for those who would claim that expert technologies of constructing knowledge could accurately portray the reality of the world. These technologies promised to clearly represent target communities in a way which could be comprehended and responded to by the centre. In return, this created a space for an institution that professed to be concerned with the 'technical' task of engineering locally appropriate policies through techniques of audit and abstracted heuristics of social processes. This technicalisation of political concerns has been assisted by a host of discursive and institutional 'skills'. The nature of these skills reflects the concerns of the earlier slum clearance and inner cities periods- an ability to objectively identify obsolescent environments and neighbourhoods which have moved away from mainstream norms and indicators.

The case study chapters of this thesis document how truth practices based on the integrationist dispositif have re-emerged to guide policy action; in many places there has been insufficient scrutiny of the political functions of these truths. The consequence has been the expansion of a network form of state action that has split academic commentary, creating a camp of technically-focused supporters and a critical camp whose arguments have sometimes failed to fully appreciate institutional governance dynamics. In contrast, this thesis follows the social use of the knowledge claims that underpin the HMRI. In doing so it bears out many of the concerns raised by Rhodes (2000) in his early appraisal of New Labour's civil service. Rhodes identified a number of drawbacks of the network approach to bureaucratic control as listed below.

- It is designed to serve private interests, not the public interest
- It can be difficult to steer
- It is inefficient because cooperation causes delay
- It can be immobilised by conflicts of interest
- It is difficult to combine with other governing structures

Many of these problems can be identified in the empirical work which is discussed later in the thesis. Universal truths result in opaque forms of governance which shield underlying power relations from scrutiny. The networking of institutional interests under overarching partnerships and regeneration companies further circumvents traditional forms of scrutiny which assume that control is lodged in the local authority. Striking changes in the buoyancy of demand for houses cannot be translated into a review of the policy approach. Furthermore, the attempt to de-politicise local delivery closes down the spaces of scrutiny available to those whose interests are harmed by the initiative.

4.4.4 Discussion

This chapter has argued that ways of thinking about and practising urban renewal action in the UK have been directed by a historical a priori which has its roots in nineteenth century political ideologies and conceptions of the social. This a priori is built on a conception of society as a coherent whole and therefore as something with norms and goals that can be defined by experts. Throughout the twentieth century, this attitude became a dispositif, or device, for redeveloping slum areas of cities in line with the aspirations of an idealistic planning profession, which set out to define and implement social norms through the redevelopment of the built environment. This dispositif subjected those affected by clearance to a more formalised and mainstream lifestyle, and imposed on them a set of norms about how

they should behave; in exchange, residents received varying levels of material gain. However, this dispositif suffered from two fracturing divisions. The first of these was a mismatch between the institutional sources of financial and political support for planning and the aspirations of planners themselves. Secondly, the idealism of the planning profession led it towards a role as the enforcer of a social contract with 'slum' dwellers, but the terms of that contract increasingly disfavoured those it was supposed to serve. The need to reduce public spending which began in the late 1960s provides a key condition of possibility for the re-emergence of a discourse of economic Liberalism, which drew on the unpopularity of the urban environments created by post-war planning to justify substantial reductions in spending on housing. Finally, the election of New Labour provided the conditions for a re-emergence of the integrationist dispositif. It revived political links with inner cities policies in the 1970s, which were based on an integrationist understanding. Furthermore, it produced a demand for innovative responses to the fragmentation, centralisation and privatisation of governance which had occurred during the previous decades. The political and discursive manoeuvres outlined in the following chapter can therefore be seen in the context of New Labour's emerging network bureaucracy, which has aimed to co-ordinate the support of a network of public and private agencies at the local level with the policy prescriptions of central government.

The Origins of the Housing Market Renewal Initiative

5.1.1   Introduction

This chapter follows the development of the conceptual underpinnings which frame the housing market renewal initiative (HMRI), tracing its origins to Liverpool, where it was initiated as a response to sustained, city-wide population loss. The effect of population loss there can be understood as the continuation of a process noted by Eversley (1973) over thirty years ago. Eversley argued that providers of public services often find themselves supporting increasingly poor populations with fewer and fewer resources. Population loss in Liverpool had a particularly dramatic effect on the provision of social housing in the city because it led to vacant properties which generated no income and significant management costs. The pressure that housing vacancy placed on the Council and local housing associations led to a concerted effort to react to it in ways that would alleviate its negative impacts on those actors. A programme of research has been used to define and justify the new kind of housing policy approach that has emerged. This approach argues that public powers and funding are needed to 'intervene' in, that is to alter the workings of, housing 'markets'. Superficially, this argument represents the objective use of economic research to solve the problems facing the city.

The reality, however, is more complicated. This chapter follows the actions of a number of scholars at the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies in Birmingham University (CURS) as they struggled to build a network of support for tackling the problems arising from population loss. At times, the far-reaching statements these researchers attribute to objective research seem disproportionate to the theoretical and empirical grounds on which they are based. The researchers may have been aware of this but their power stemmed from their claim that, as esteemed academics, they possessed the skills necessary to gain a privileged perspective on the nature of urban processes. The use of the romantic perspective on society discussed in chapter three is instrumental to maintaining this position. The work of the CURS researchers built on earlier housing market studies discussed in chapter four. They presented themselves as experts on housing market processes because this enabled them to create research narratives which joined the interests of other actors into a network of housing policy action.

At times, the implications of the approach advocated by CURS seem socially divisive and unethical but what is interesting is that some of the figures who have been prominent in

developing the initiative and supportively commenting on it have a research history which champions the importance of social justice. Brendan Nevin is first author on most of CURS' housing market renewal research papers. Prior to his involvement with HMRI research he published a number of articles, which argued that economic 'boosterism' in post-industrial cities would not benefit disadvantaged groups, and that urban policies should be refocused on empowering communities (Nevin and Shiner, 1995; Loftman and Nevin, 1995; 1996). Similarly Ian Cole who, while not being directly involved in the development of the HMRI, contributed greatly to affirming and legitimising its narratives (Cole and Nevin, 2004) has a history of quite radical critique of housing policies (Cole and Furbey, 1994). In both cases, these are not people who are devoid of a social conscience, and serious attempts have been made to steer the policy agenda away from gentrification (Nevin, 2010) and towards sensitive relocation processes (Cole and Flint, 2007). However, the political and institutional environment described at the end of chapter four created a window of opportunity for a well-organised network of housing actors to secure funding for improvements and development that, it seemed, would assist housing associations and local authorities to continue to provide welfare services. This environment incentivised the construction of a simple and unambiguous framework for how to proceed.

This chapter describes the coming together of the HMRI network in a style that is often implicitly critical of the ethical decisions made by those involved. It is based on a detailed analysis of the formal reports produced by CURS that combines epistemological scrutiny with an awareness of the contextual pressures placed on the researchers. This approach yields evidence that the substance of the housing market research has more to do with the interrelationships between the researchers and the various state actors surrounding them than with the relationships between the researchers and the housing market processes they claim to have studied. The account here is not intended as a polemic but as a clearer view of the premises of the HMRI than is given by those embraced in its support. I do not claim to be able to fully understand the motivations behind the ethical choices that the CURS researchers have made as they have developed their research. It may be that an element of self interest is involved, but there is no doubt that there is also a large dose of consequentialism, or a means-justify-the-ends rationality. Where some of the claims made step well beyond a safe academic basis, the researchers may have rationalised this by assuming that ultimately this would be in the greater good of securing government funding for cash strapped local authorities in the north of England (Cole, 2008a; Webb, 2009a). The problem, however, is that the level of

factuality that has been granted to many of the HMRI's claims has resulted in a situation where certain interests and points of view are now systematically privileged in the policy making process. This in turn has led to an impoverishment of opportunities for proper scrutiny of the consequences that arise from urban renewal schemes. Further chapters on Liverpool and Whitefield, and later discussions of Teesside and Newcastle, highlight some of the implications of those problems for residents and heritage organisations with interests in the neighbourhoods affected.

5.1.2 Chapter structure

This chapter follows a chronology of research reports, which is presented in figure 5.1 (for titles of the reports see figure 5.5). The first housing market research reports were produced in Liverpool between 1999 and 2001 by researchers at CURS. Initially, Liverpool City Council had commissioned just one report. That report argued that further work was needed and as a result five more reports were produced to make up a core 'Housing Market Renewal Research Programme'. Reports from this research programme are numbered one to six consecutively in the diagram, for the purposes of easy reference in this chapter. A network of interests is brought together by the research programme's problematisation of certain parts and characteristics of the city, and by the responses that are proposed. The arguments that emerged to support these interests later become fundamental to the national case for the HMRI. They inform the design of further research (Nevin et al, 2001a), widely referred to as the M62 study, which was produced to support representations to government calling for the establishment of a HMRI.

This chapter progresses in three parts, which follow the significant reports in figure 5.1. Part 1 focuses on the early development of housing market policy in Liverpool, which is recorded in reports one, two and three. This part of the research programme is characterised by a pre-occupation with managing population decline in the city, which is expected to continue. The second part of the chapter concentrates on reports three and five. It explains how a change in the justification for the programme, from managing decline to pursuing population growth, generated a need for a more complex set of supporting narratives. Two new discourses are described which legitimise the use of housing redevelopment to pursue city growth. In part 3, these discourses can be seen in use beyond the Liverpool context. They guide the arguments of an alliance of organisations led by the CURS researchers in a bid to government for HMRI funding.

5.2 Part 1: Reacting to Population Loss in Liverpool

5.2.1 Liverpool City Council commissions research into housing vacancy

Part three of chapter four discussed controversies which existed around vacant housing in northern cities at the end of the 1990s. It argued that a diverse range of measures were being used to address vacancy, but that these increasingly became distilled into an approach based on strategic use of clearance and refurbishment. In Liverpool, population loss and housing vacancy was particularly high and the council had reacted by demolishing social housing in peripheral parts of the city. Brendan Nevin states that a number of high profile demolitions of new social housing estates prompted government to take measures to ensure value for money. As a consequence, the regional office of the Housing Corporation and the Government Office for the North West 'informed the city that they would cease to authorise further public sector investment in the area if a coherent housing strategy for Liverpool, *which ensured long term neighbourhood sustainability*, was not forthcoming.' (Nevin, 2010, p. 8, emphasis added). Liverpool City Council was thus directed to provide certainty to national government that investment in housing in the inner city would not be wasted as a result of lack of tenant interest. The need to respond to population loss and housing vacancy led Liverpool City Council's supply and demand team to commission CURS to suggest a response. The focus on maintaining the supply of grants for the housing improvement and development activity meant that the CURS research was delimited by clear conceptions of the tools which would be available to the housing strategy. The brief is summarised in CURS' research report (Nevin et al, 1999), which describes the key problem as the sustained and ongoing loss of population from the city. This phenomenon is blamed for the appearance of 15,000 empty properties, with concentrations in some residential areas. The proposed response to this problem is that some housing should be demolished to reduce the supply of housing in the city. The report notes that 3,000 properties were demolished in the five years that preceded it. It seems that a phase of intervention is desired, rather than a gradual and extended process of clearance, because the aim is not just to demolish housing which is unused at the time of undertaking the research, but to intervene in a way which will stem the loss of population. The researchers' approach to doing this tries to determine which neighbourhoods will become increasingly unpopular, so that decisive action can be taken there.

The researchers had been issued with the following objectives.

- to highlight areas that, with an appropriate mix of public and private sector investment, should have a sustainable future

- to develop typologies of areas which will include neighbourhoods vulnerable to change and settlements that will require radical interventions to produce a sustainable outcome

- to provide advice on the data needed to produce a local supply and demand model for the city, which can be subsequently updated

- to produce a final report that places the analysis within the existing policy context determined by the city and its partners (Nevin et al, 1999, p. 5)

While there is an ambiguous use of language here, some of the terms used can be clarified by relating them to the concerns articulated in the summary of the brief. One such term refers to 'settlements that will require radical interventions to produce a sustainable outcome'. Here, 'radical intervention' is closely associated with the use of demolition on a significant scale. Similarly, use of the term 'a sustainable outcome' refers to the ability of housing to maintain its occupancy levels, rather than to any environmental connotations.

Figure 5.1: Timeline of policy and research activity informing the lobby for a housing market renewal initiative
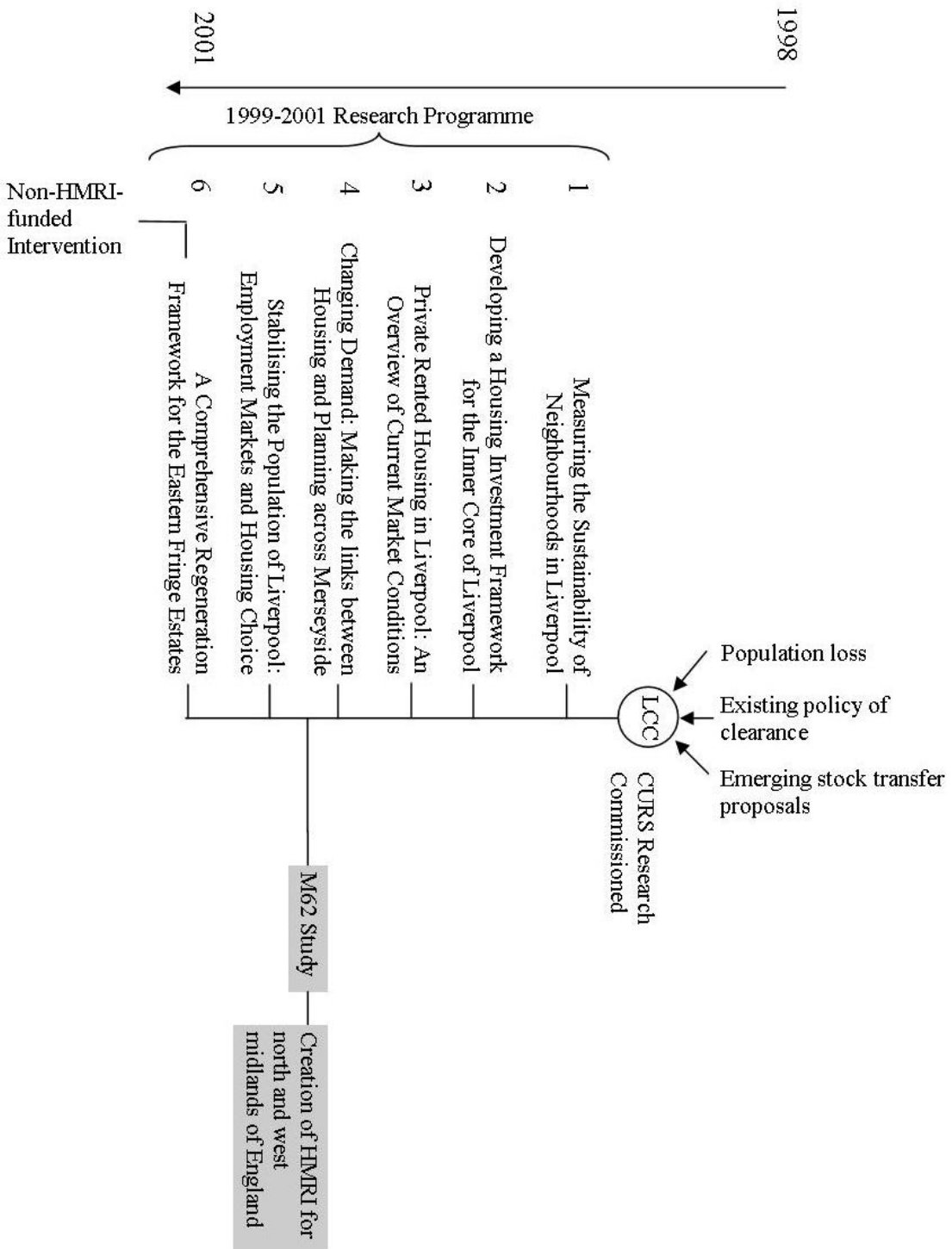
The consequences of population loss for the provision of social housing were viewed as so severe that the objective of maintaining a financially healthy social rented sector was given top priority in the research (and planning) approach. Once this judgement was made, the problem was then viewed as a technical process of deciding which areas were likely to decline anyway, and would therefore be suitable for demolition. Alternative responses were possible, but they were not investigated. The need to restructure social housing provision could, for example, have been seized upon as an opportunity to debate the future form of the city as desired by its citizens and politicians. Perhaps it was felt that such an approach might not have responded as directly to the interests of social housing providers as an approach directed solely by CURS. CURS' approach can be understood as the performance of an economistic discourse, which viewed events in Liverpool from the ontological position of a social housing manager. That position itself can be understood as being historically formed by the dispositif which was discussed in the previous chapter. From this perspective, the problem of population loss and unoccupied housing leads to a common sense solution: rationalisation of the housing stock by demolishing that which has least value in the market place.

The discourse which underpinned the commissioning of CURS is rooted both in a professional outlook towards managing large amounts of social rented housing and in established institutional approaches to reducing the amount of social rented housing in Liverpool. It is made up of two components: an economic explanation of housing markets in supply and demand terms and a prescription for how to balance the market to reduce or eliminate vacancy. As an argument for how to respond to unoccupied housing it is very convincing because it claims to speak for the collective will of society. It argues that if housing is unused then it is because it has no value in the market place. If the housing is not valued then it is acceptable to demolish it. In this way, the market can be used as an imperfect proxy for democratic approval.

One problem with the above discourse is that partial actors and techniques are relied on to determine how the market is defined and identify which areas the market either does not value or will not value in the future. Another is that the language of markets tends to emphasise the choices of those on high incomes while obscuring alternative, non-marketised ways of valuing the city. These are common. Had an environmentalist, an urban designer or a heritage professional been tasked with dealing with vacant housing it is likely they would have approached it in a very different way. It is possible an environment, design or heritage led

approach would still have made use of demolition, but there is no doubt that the logic leading to the identification of areas for demolition would have been very different. The potential for these alternative positions to exist highlights the partiality of the housing management discourse, which prioritises a certain route to neighbourhood viability, with its own political implications.

The 'research' carried out by CURS is actually a normative process of policy development which would normally be constrained by statutory requirements for democratic approval by formal planning policy processes. But the portrayal of this work as research, with the implicit argument that it is concerned with discovering causal facts about urban processes, means that it has escaped the scrutiny provided by these processes. In contrast with the way it was presented, CURS' response to the initial brief which commissioned their work was not a technical exercise of identifying the most appropriate areas to be demolished. It must instead be read as a process of problematising certain parts of the city. There are effectively two parts to this problematisation. The first is the common sense attitude that demolition will rationalise supply and therefore will respond most effectively to population loss. While there is clearly some truth in this argument, it conceals from discussion the possibility that alternative policies are possible and that neighbourhood blight might actually exacerbate population loss[7]. The second part of the problematisation is the partial selection and use of academic 'facts' and statistical techniques in an attempt to forecast future areas of housing vacancy.

5.2.2   CURS' first report: measuring the 'sustainability' of neighbourhoods in Liverpool

In their response to the brief, the researchers accepted that the use of demolition was the natural response to population decline. They developed and applied a methodology which was presented as a method for predicting which areas of the city would see the greatest increases in housing vacancy, and would therefore require 'radical intervention'. They began by assembling the findings of urban academic research. These findings provided narratives, against which local statistics would be used to rate individual neighbourhood areas. Two immediate consequences emerge: narratives had to be determined quickly (to allow sufficient

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[7] For example, a government report published at the beginning of CURS' research programme made the following comment 'Demolition must be used with care. We found instances where it triggered further decline and broke up communities.' (PAT 7, 1999, paragraph 1.30).

time for statistical manipulation) and they had to be assumed to hold to the same degree across the city. With limited time available, the quickest way to determine the narratives was to draw on existing qualitative and quantitative research findings, and in practice these were only available from locations outside Liverpool and often outside the UK. The consequence was that this extended the presumed applicability of these narratives from a city-wide to an international level of universality. It necessitated taking the position that universal patterns can be identified within society, and that these transcend cultural and spatial differences and local specificities. It was only by assuming that such patterns existed that universal guiding narratives could be assembled. These narratives would form the means of politicising statistical information about neighbourhoods in Liverpool.

Four sets of indicators, or 'domains' were created by the researchers, which they used in an attempt to place residential neighbourhoods on a linear scale with 'unpopular and unsustainable' at one end and 'popular and sustainable' at the other. The first of these domains attempted to gain an up to date picture of housing popularity across the city. It was then claimed that the remaining three domains would measure 'sustainability' (how popular different neighbourhoods would be in the future). The researchers decided how to measure the future by comparing statistical indicators with the causal narratives they had gathered from their review of academic work on urban and social processes. Figure 5.2 considers each of these narratives in turn and suggests a critical interpretation of the values embodied in them.

Figure 5.2: The problematisation of areas of housing in Liverpool

Domain one

Universal narrative: 'areas that are unpopular now are likely to remain unpopular'

Argument used: None given

Indicators used: proportion of average house prices; empty properties (it is unclear whether this indicator included private properties as well as social rented ones)

Possible social consequences of the statement: *we should demolish and rework areas where house prices are lowest, and where the greatest number of properties are vacant.*

Domain two

Universal narrative: 'areas that are unpopular or unsustainable will generally be poor' (Nevin et al, 1999, p. 7)

Argument used: a statistical correlation (Burrows and Rhodes, 1998) supports this, as does the literature on 'neighbourhood effects' (Wilson, 1987; Morris and Irwin, 1992; Perry 6, 1997)

Indicators used: housing benefit claimants; claims of free school meals; unemployment; death rate

Possible social consequences of the statement: *we should demolish and rework areas where there are more poor and out of work people, and where people die younger.*

Domain three

Universal narrative: 'areas that are unsustainable have high crime rates' (Nevin et al, 1999, p. 7)

Argument used: Chicago-based social control theories of crime (Perry 6, 1997; Gordon and Pantazis, 1997; Burrows and Rhodes, 1998)

Indicators used: property crime; crime against the person; population loss; voter turnout

Possible social consequences of the statement: *we should demolish and rework the areas suffering most from crime, where population loss is greatest and where people don't see representative democracy as a solution to their problems.*

Domain four

Universal narrative: 'unpopular and unsustainable areas have a poor environment and amenities' (Nevin et al, 1999, p. 8)

Argument used: A statistical correlation has been found between the presence of leisure facilities and neighbourhood satisfaction (Burrows and Rhodes, 1998). The researchers raise concerns that pollution causes ill-health, but can then find no local indicators of pollution, so use derelict land as a proxy.

Indicators used: Percentage of land that is derelict; number of shops and services

Possible social consequences of the statement: *we should demolish and rework areas with the most derelict land and the fewest shops and services*

It would be too simplistic to say that the 'possible social consequences' I have listed alongside each of the statements above are likely to automatically translate into outcomes of the HMRI in Liverpool: that is not what I am suggesting here. Rather, the purpose of my adding them is to highlight the impossibility of distinguishing facts from values. Approaches to planning in the 50s and 60s began from attempts to separate these elements and that premise inspired numerous critiques (see Davidoff, 1965; Dyckman, 1966) which have been reiterated and extended by more recent theorising.

> …natures, objects and facts matter in the sense that they are of concern or importance. In Latour's words (2004), 'matters of fact' are also 'matters of concern' because it is impossible to disentangle what is from what ought to be. Facts are value-loaded or charged matters.' (Moser, 2008, pp. 98-99)

CURS' approach to knowledge was to support their assertions with references to academic literature. In doing so they assumed the role of experts presenting council officers with the concrete and academically-sound 'facts' on which their technical exercise was based. Their goal, of placing neighbourhoods on a scale, required that a single narrative be adduced in support of each domain. However, academia is characterised by divergent positions and continual debate. Consequently, the researchers' methodology required a selective use of the academic literature that ignored critical commentary on the narratives they adopted[8].

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[8] The poverty and social exclusion domain provides an example of this selectivity. The phenomenon was said to be self-replicating, on the basis of claims that neighbourhood effects exist. But this has long been a controversial theory (see McGregor, 1979; Friedrichs, 1998). A year prior to the report's publication Musterd and De Winter (1998) had scrutinised the application of the neighbourhood effects thesis in Europe and concluded that policies targeted at addressing wider equalities would be more appropriate than area-based ones. Scrutiny of the linear nature of the neighbourhood effects thesis also existed (Bonetti, 1998). Nevin et al also claimed that a lack of social cohesion was said to lead to increased crime and that in turn to lower neighbourhood satisfaction. This argument drew on social control theories of crime, yet there was no explanation of why alternative criminological theories were not considered.

For CURS' research to place areas in Liverpool on a single scale of popularity and sustainability its authors needed to maintain that their work was based on objective, or neutral 'facts', rather than merely discourses or partial arguments. However, the researchers had actively selected which discourses to use. They understood this as a problem and made attempts to overcome it.

> We have recognised the problem of operationalising terms such as popularity and sustainability. Additionally we are conscious of the power implied in determining the meaning of these concepts- who determines sustainability? Areas that appear unsustainable on one dimension may not be recognised as such by their inhabitants or those with a stake in the area. For this reason the research team decided to build in focus group analysis so that local people could comment on the methodologies (read indicators) being used. (Nevin et al, 1999, pp. 6-7)

There are two interesting elements in this reference to power, which occurs just once in all eight of the CURS research reports on Liverpool. The first is the way in which consideration of power is confined to this part of their research. The second element of interest is the decision to use focus groups in an attempt to establish the use of certain transcendent indicators as facts. However, in contrast to what might be inferred from the quote above, the methodology (or method-of-logic) which was used to measure sustainability was never open to debate. Furthermore, it does not appear that the implications of the indicators were discussed, only the level of factuality that those indicators might themselves have.

It really does seem unreasonable to expect that, in the space of a couple of hours, a handful of focus group participants would agree on strong counter narratives that would challenge the pre-conceived 'knowledge'-base of the researchers. Ordinary residents are not normally concerned with developing their own grand, causal understandings of urban processes. In that context, it is unsurprising that the findings of the focus group discussions are far from conclusive. The discussions amount more to a range of likes and dislikes about where respondents live than any clear confirmation or rejection of neighbourhood effects or social control theories. Nevertheless, these observations are taken to confirm the applicability of the narratives used in the research. It is difficult to see this way of using focus groups as an instrumental part of the ethical and methodological approach because the residents' responses

have no impact on the narratives which were selected or the way in which neighbourhoods in Liverpool were problematised by the research. Rather than a means of addressing power inequalities, the focus groups might therefore be seen more accurately as a bid by the researchers to avoid taking personal responsibility for selecting the narratives their research would use.

With the exception of these limited focus groups, qualitative work was absent from the approach in the first report. As a result, the researchers abducted narratives from other locations in order to interpret statistical information about Liverpool. One such narrative was drawn from the work of Julius Wilson (1987), which was used to justify the claim that 'unpopular neighbourhoods will be poor'. Wilson's work cannot be viewed simply as an objective process of recording facts. It must also be understood as a treatise on black poverty in Chicago, an objection to right-wing research suggesting the withdrawal of welfare and an attempt to unite political parties in the US behind consolidated welfare support for racial minorities and the poor, yet none of this context was reflected in the way this work was used in Liverpool. Instead, the various narratives were reassembled as a 'methodology' for calculating the sustainability of neighbourhoods in Liverpool. The researchers were able to advise which neighbourhoods should see substantial demolition because in their choice of narratives they also defined a core set of values. The conclusions of their research were therefore conclusions *only* from the point of view of this set of values. Had they assumed different values they would have chosen different narratives and drawn different conclusions.

5.2.3   Problem areas: the application of narratives and values to neighbourhoods in Liverpool

Once indicators had been determined, the researchers gathered and synthesised statistics to produce a series of maps of Liverpool identifying areas in red where housing was judged to be unpopular and likely to remain least popular (figure 5.3). On this basis the city was divided into six zones, with radical intervention prescribed for the Inner Core and the Southern and Eastern Fringe zones. Of these, the Southern Fringe was seen as being of least concern because a stock transfer process was already underway there. The identification of the Eastern Fringe led to a similar process, based on stock transfer of the Council owned properties there. By far the most significant outcome of this report was therefore the identification of the mixed tenure Inner Core area for physical reworking. The report's problematisation of the Inner Core would focus a decade of extensive housing renewal action on this part of the city.

Figure 5.3: Areas of housing which were categorised as unpopular and likely to remain unpopular by the first CURS report
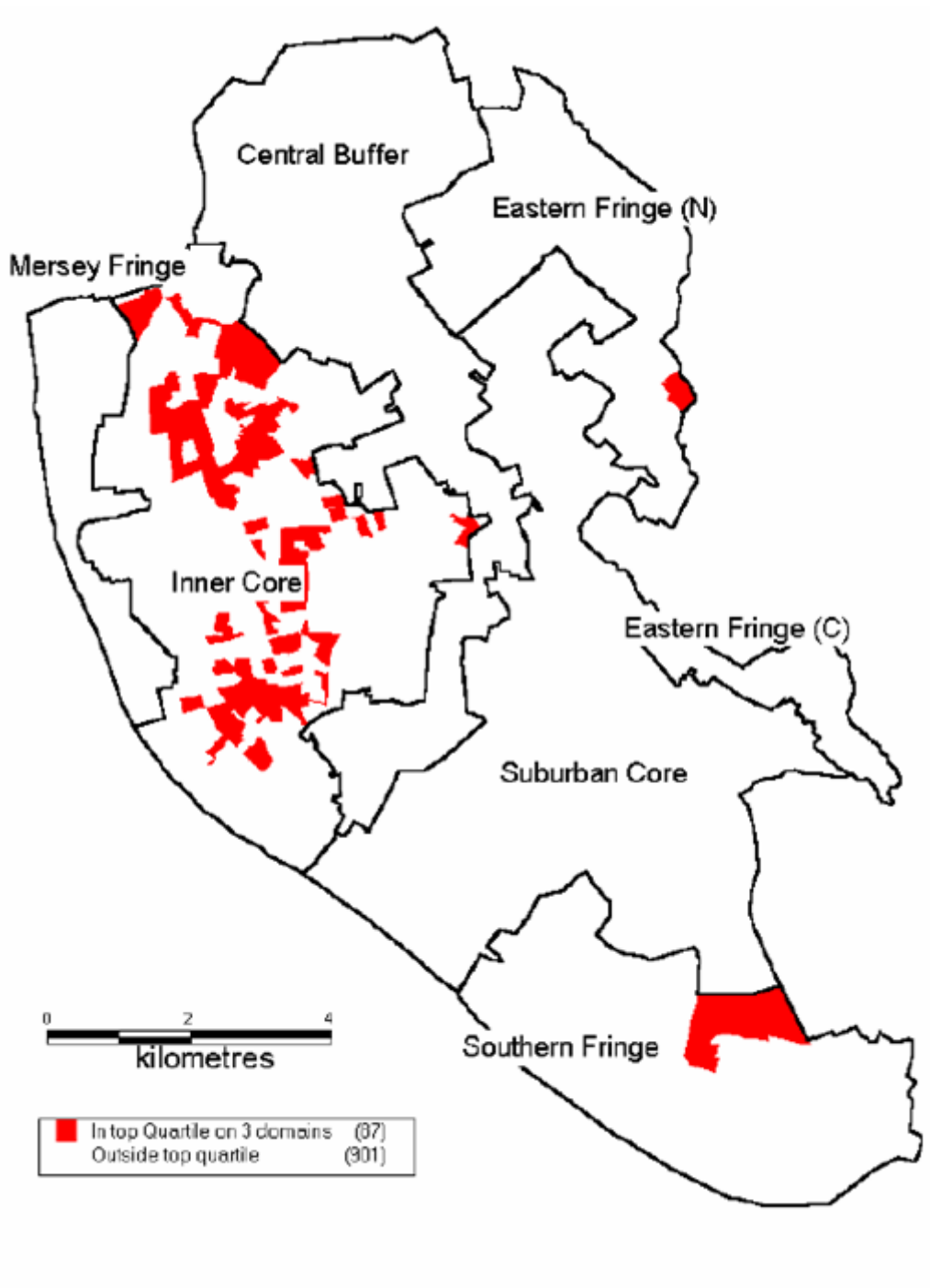
Source: Nevin et al (1999) p. 58

5.2.4   The effect of measuring neighbourhood sustainability

A number of functions were performed by the conclusions of CURS' first report. They lent academic legitimacy to what appear to have been existing representations of parts of the eastern fringe and southern fringe areas as problematic and in doing so explicitly supported ongoing policies of physical intervention and stock transfer in these areas. Furthermore, they extended the problematisation of these predominantly social rented areas to the mixed tenure areas in the Inner Core of the city. At this stage this might be seen as the bleeding of an extant programme of social rented stock rationalisation into areas where the majority of land holdings lay outside of the control of the public and third sectors.

The mapping exercise carried out in the first report was mainly a static representation of the city: on its own it might be seen merely as a broad-brush overview. It claimed to measure neighbourhood popularity and sustainability but, at the time of publication, it expressed only the voices of the academics who had been involved in producing it and the Council officers who had commissioned their report. Consequently, it included a set of recommendations for taking forward the report's 'findings'. This recommended work would link local actors more firmly with the evidence base supporting intervention and clearance and complement that evidence with additional research as necessary. Thinking back to Law and Callon's study of the TSR2 military aircraft project, discussed in chapter three, this stage of CURS' research can be understood as ensuring that the 'optimum scenario' that CURS was constructing responded accurately to the interests of the tight group of actors it was designed to serve. As well as providing leadership on the areas of Liverpool that should be reworked, CURS offered to negotiate a shared vision for what should replace housing in clearance areas and to advise on how to organise and manage delivery. The result of these recommendations was that Liverpool City Council commissioned a great deal of further work from CURS during the period 1999-2003.

5.2.5   Developing a housing investment framework for the inner core of Liverpool: negotiating outcomes with social housing providers

Liverpool City Council's intention to commence a new wave of demolition across the city meant that engagement with social housing providers was needed to avoid investment in housing that was expected to be demolished. Thus, while it was termed

as research, the second CURS report (Nevin and Lee, 2001a) was actually concerned with building momentum behind the stock rationalisation approach.

> A major objective of the research was to gain a consensus amongst housing agencies relating to the principle, which should govern future investment decisions. (Nevin et al, 2001a, paragraph 1.11).

The effect of this collaboration and partnership work was to complement the previous statistical exercise with the views of social housing providers about which neighbourhoods were problematic for them and what they would like done. Involvement in these negotiations was limited to the council and local social landlords. It was also complemented by a new statistical technique, 'nearest neighbour analysis', which extended CURS' normative model of where housing market intervention should take place to a more localised scale.

Figure 5.4: Extending the renewal technology and creating a negotiation space
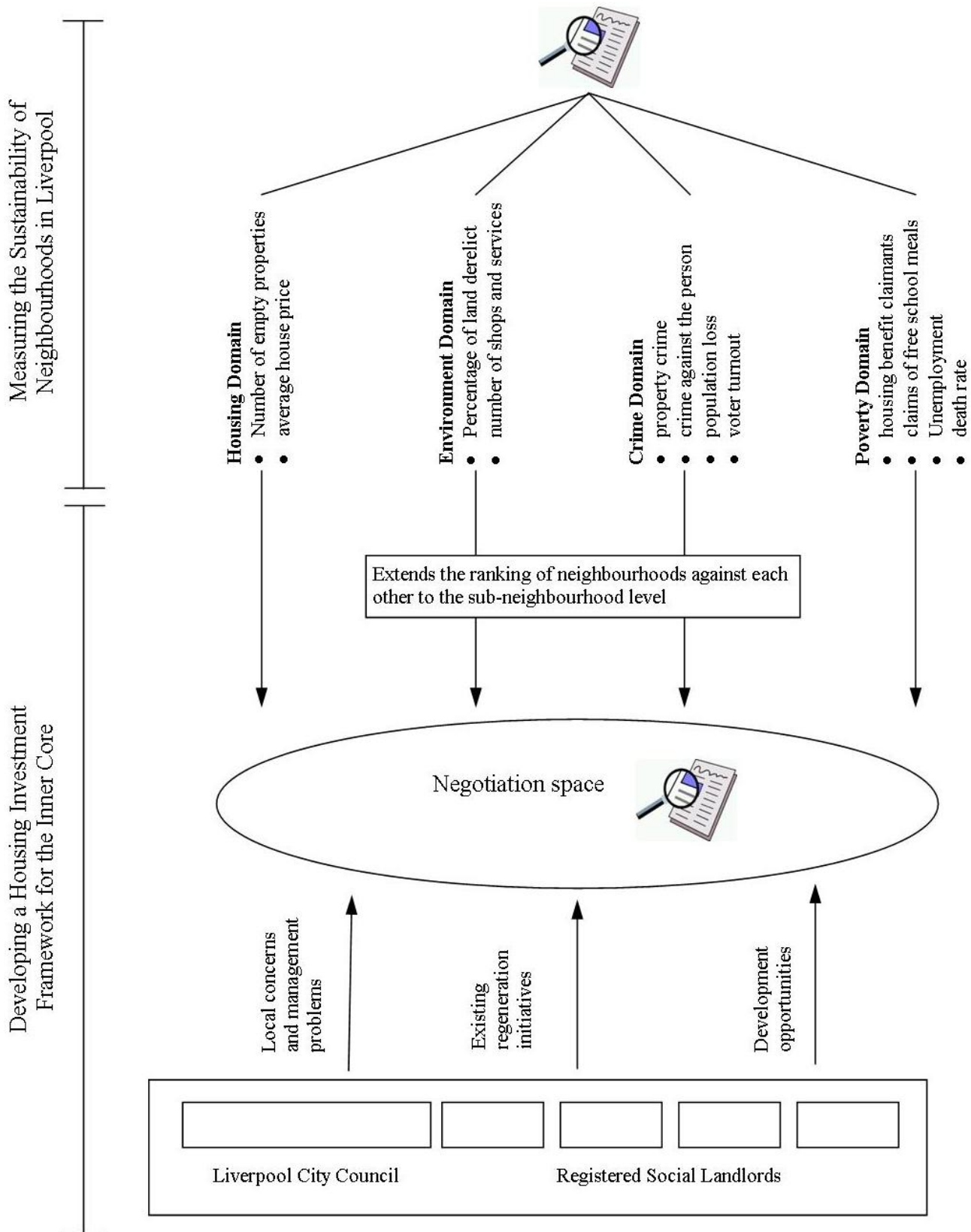
Figure 5.4 illustrates the consequences of the statistical and negotiation work written up in the second report. The researchers created an informal planning arena, or negotiation space, in which interventions could be designed and agreed on by privileged actors. Discussions with social housing providers revealed the existence of informal agreements between the Council and housing associations for clearance proposals in Anfield, Wavertree and Kensington.

> There is currently a £114 million committed investment programme in the Inner Core with the HAT, RSL[9]s and the City Council continuing to pursue principles outlined above particularly in Anfield/ Breckfield, Granby, and Everton where an urban village is proposed. A further £31 million is being sought from the New Deal for Communities Project to extend this approach into the Kensington area. (Nevin et al, 2001a, p. 31)

These proposals were integrated into the housing market renewal proposals as the areas which would see the greatest amount of clearance. Further interventions were discussed for the remaining parts of the Inner Core and, ultimately, support was gained from housing providers for a broad course of action

Interestingly, and despite the generality of the picture painted by the domain scores, there appears to have been an element of conflict between the statistics presented for the Kensington area and a desire to see redevelopment there. The report notes the following.

> …the Eastern Approaches contains an area of potentially serious decline. Whilst the zone, which intersects Kensington and incorporates the majority of that ward, has middle ranking scores on all the domains, a number of risk factors including the role of students and the private rented sector in that part of the Inner Core, present challenges. (Nevin et al, 2001a, p. 44)

> The part of the Eastern Approaches which intersects Kensington, has suffered population loss below the average for the Inner Core. However, significant population losses have been in the younger population

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[9] HAT: Housing Action Trust (a previous housing redevelopment programme); RSL: Registered Social Landlord.

> indicating that the prognosis for the future is continuing losses in
> population if not household demand. (Nevin et al, 2001a, p. 40)

The failure of the Kensington area to score badly against some indicators led the researchers to investigate other indicators: those of population age, level of private rented housing and the number of students living in the area.

What is interesting about this, and subsequent stages, of the CURS research is how the desires of different actors for urban intervention led the research, rather than the other way around. In this instance, the researchers were unable to fully support claims that Kensington was unpopular and unsustainable with the statistical model defined in the first report. As a result, a new narrative was produced specifically for that part of the city. In this instance alone, the researchers made a decision to depart from the sweeping narratives that were mobilised in the first report. The new narrative makes special reference to population losses from younger age groups in Kensington to argue that the area will decline because the student population is leaving. A desire to pursue this narrative is developed in more detail by further research into the private rented sector (Groves et al, 2001 (report 3 of figures 5.1/ 5.5)), which is used to justify intervention in the Kensington area. It is clear that this work, which is additional to the previous statistical mapping exercise, results from the ability of certain actors to secure amendments to the dominant narratives problematising neighbourhoods in the city. Actors who were not part of this limited group did not have the opportunity to secure any amendments of their own.

Changes were made to the research techniques because of a desire to problematise the Kensington area. That desire appears to originate partly from housing agencies' local knowledge of the area, which was more up to date than statistical information and which suggested falling demand for housing. However, it is also clear that funding for intervention was available in Kensington, and that links existed between the problematisation of the neighbourhood and proposals to improve access to Liverpool from the Greater Manchester area to the east. This main access runs down Edge Lane and through the heart of the Kensington area.

- The (Kensington) area forms a major gateway to the city and includes the Eastern Approaches Strategic Spatial Development Area;

- The policy zone includes the Kensington NDC initiative which
  will develop pilot approaches to restructuring local housing
  markets with full community involvement
  (Nevin et al, 2001a, p. 48).

The researchers were attempting to join up the recommendations of their housing market analysis with existing institutional concerns and priorities. This process ensured that the research would become more influential, but it required the research findings to adapt in order to take more detailed account of the actors it was designed to assist.

5.2.6 Housing providers support renewal, renewal supports housing providers

The smoothness with which the above negotiations progressed can be explained by a wider housing policy process which was taking place at the same time. Liverpool City Council was attempting to transfer all of its stock to a limited number of external social housing providers. This environment generated a unique level of shared interest between the council and other housing providers.

> A distinctive feature of housing and regeneration policy in Liverpool is
> the extent and depth of partnership working. This is also the case in
> respect of the Inner Core where RSLs are taking the lead in delivering
> projects in multi-tenure areas. (Nevin et al, 2001a, paragraph 1.13)

National government policy promoted stock transfer as a way to deliver investment and improvements in social rented housing and this was supported by Liverpool City Council. The successful transfer of stock from the council to local housing associations would be instrumental to securing these improvements. However, all parties were also aware that large parts of the housing portfolios owned by both the Council and the city's registered social landlords were difficult to let and/ or delivering a low return (chapter four has already discussed historical factors which led to housing associations having to adopt some of the most problematic housing stock). This meant that, even if local authority stock was transferred to housing associations for little or no cost, social housing providers would not be able to confidently loan capital against it. Conservative cuts to housing association budgets in the 1990s meant that such organisations became reliant on using the value of their stock to borrow from the financial markets (Malpass, 2000b). In the absence of sufficient stock value, the necessary capital could not be raised, housing improvements could not be secured

and local authority targets for investing in social housing would not be met. The result was that Liverpool City Council and the city's social housing providers' shared desire for housing stock improvements focused their actions on the goal of constructing financially viable social housing portfolios.

5.2.7   Neighbourhood interdependencies: new housing competes with the logic of stock rationalisation in the inner core

The third report in the research programme (Groves et al, 2001) is of note here because it identified a major weakness in the justification for housing intervention that had guided the research programme up until this point. The report sought to inform the stock rationalisation approach with an understanding of how the actions of landlords, developers and private tenants create, exacerbate or mitigate reductions in demand for housing. One of the concerns that this report investigated was the loss of students from the Kensington area, which had been identified through the earlier discussions with housing associations. The researchers found that a significant number of households in the Inner Core were made up of students and that a large amount of new student accommodation had been developed in the city centre. A consequence of this development was that, while the number of students studying in the city had approximately doubled between 1985 and 2000, that increase was more than compensated for by new student halls of residence.

The researchers found that the universities held policy commitments guaranteeing a place in student halls of residence to first year students, and that these had initially led to the boom in construction of this type of housing. However, that boom had continued to a point where there were now more bed spaces in student halls than the total number of first year students from all the universities in the city. The consequence was an overall reduction in the number of student households likely to be seeking accommodation from traditional private landlords. The researchers also identified instances where managers of the new city centre accommodation were struggling to fill their accommodation and were therefore marketing part of their offer to asylum seekers and key workers: households that might normally be found in the Inner Core.

It is clear that demand for housing in the Inner Core was viewed as weak. Furthermore, the researchers believed that accommodation in the city centre was in competition with it for the same households. Since the aim of the CURS research was to rationalise housing supply in the city, this raised obvious questions about whether development of new accommodation should be resisted. The existing policy to repopulate the city centre had been mentioned only briefly and uncritically in earlier reports, but it now attracted a franker statement about the effect of city centre redevelopment.

> The City Centre Strategy will produce attractive alternatives for the emerging professional and executive market in new locations in the inner city. One view is that this is an expanding market and rather than reducing demand elsewhere the developments will draw net increases in demand for private renting. *Alternatively it may draw some demand away from the more attractive properties in the private rented sector*. (Groves et al, 2001, paragraph 4.9, emphasis added)

The researchers identified two areas of conflict. The universities were seeking purpose-built accommodation for their students, which appeared to be undermining the demand for housing in areas which had traditionally offered private rented housing. Similarly, Liverpool City Council seemed intent on a strategy to repopulate the city centre with the support of private developers, who were gaining interest in the development of new apartment blocks. The researchers' response to these conflicts is documented in the following call for more information.

> We need more data on landlords and how they make decisions. We also need more information about the aspirations and choices of people who rent or buy the types of property that are mainly on offer for private renting… (Nevin et al, 2001b, paragraph 4.9).

However, although the need for more information was identified in the midst of 'the largest and most intensive research programme of its kind in any British city" (Nevin et al, 2001c, p. 1), it was never pursued. It seems that the researchers alone were unable to open up a discussion about the inconsistency between rationalising the housing stock in the city and building large amounts of new housing adjacent to areas with existing vacancy problems.

5.3.1 Part 2: Justification Shock: From Stock Rationalisation to Repopulation

Part one discussed the first three of the reports in CURS' research programme (listed in figure 5.5). This work was carried out in response to a brief which justified widespread clearance with the argument that a programme of stock rationalisation was needed. This would achieve equilibrium by matching the aggregate supply of housing in the city more closely to the available demand. However, identification of links between proposals to repopulate the city centre and housing vacancy in the Inner Core threatened to undermine this justification. It would be unlikely that external funding could be secured to reduce the housing stock while new housing was increasing the supply less than a mile away: it would look like different Council policies were working against each other. Consequently, a need arose for a narrative which would explain the differentials in development pressure in the city while supporting both clearance and an increase in the supply of housing through new development. The construction of such a narrative would clear the way for the extension of the city centre repopulation strategy into the Inner Core itself.

Figure 5.5: How housing market research in Liverpool contributed to building the HMRI network

1999-2001 Research Programme	CURS Research Report	Function of the Report	Reference
1	Measuring the Sustainability of Neighbourhoods in Liverpool	Maps values onto the city to problematise neighbourhoods	Nevin et al (1999)
2	Developing a Housing Investment Framework for the Inner Core of Liverpool	Opens a negotiation space with key actors	Nevin and Lee (2001a)
3	Private Rented Housing in Liverpool: An Overview of Current Market Conditions	Identifies links with city centre development and creates a discourse of neighbourhood decline	Groves et al (2001)
4	Changing Demand: Making the links between Housing and Planning across Merseyside	Shares and extends the proposed response to low demand with the sub-region	Nevin and Lee (2001b)
5	Stabilising the Population of Liverpool: Employment Markets and Housing Choice	Focuses attention on housing product characteristics and creates a discourse of stock obsolescence	Nevin et al (2001b)
6	A Comprehensive Regeneration Framework for the Eastern Fringe Estates	Guides non-HMRI stock transfer and rationalisation of social rented stock in the Eastern Fringe	Nevin (2001)

LCC

Population loss

Existing policy of clearance

Emerging stock tra proposals

The original justification for intervention located the cause of housing vacancy in the overall loss of population from the city: a factor which is largely external to the problematised neighbourhoods. From this way of looking at the problem, it did not matter that renewal intervention would treat only the symptoms of wider processes of population loss, because the wider processes at work were themselves viewed as insuperable, and therefore largely immaterial to the proposed intervention. The new justification, however, claimed that population loss could be reversed. This claim threatened the credibility of the researchers because it brought with it the possibility that neighbourhoods problematised under the original justification (the symptoms of decline), would not match with the features problematised by the new justification (causes of decline). By this time, considerable effort had been spent arriving at an early consensus with housing providers on the principles of where to direct and where to withhold housing investment. If the research went on to discover that the causes of housing vacancy were different to the symptoms they would have to renegotiate this consensus and simultaneously challenge the shared interest held by key actors in achieving financially healthy housing associations.

There were three components to the new argument, which would reconcile demolition with repopulation. The first was a new justification, which argued that repopulating the Inner Core would bring economic benefits for the city. Alongside this, two new arguments professed to explain concentrations of low demand. These narratives, recorded mainly in reports three and five of the research programme (see figure 5.5), located the causes of vacant properties in features internal to the neighbourhoods that had already been problematised by earlier research. The consequence of doing this is that new housing in the city centre becomes portrayed as part of the consumer's quest for a better quality (more modern) housing product, rather than as the result of speculative over-investment, which undermines demand for existing housing. Similarly, low demand in central locations became explained by consumers' flight to better suburban products, an explanation that purposefully ignores the substantial roles of the planning system, and the clearance and re-housing programmes of the post-war period. The evidence for the new justification and the internalising narratives are considered here in turn.

5.3.2   A new economic justification for intervention

The fifth report of the research programme presents the following calculation which is intended to provide evidential support for a new way of justifying housing market intervention by stressing the economic benefits that would be gained if Liverpool was to be repopulated.

> (Our figures show) a cumulative impact *derived from* persistent population loss. Therefore on average, housing investment would have been around £100million per annum lower at 1999 prices, and there were just over 500 jobs less on average each year over the thirty year period. It is likely, therefore, that any reversal of these trends should also aim to be cumulative, persistent and based around a long-term and realistic time frame. (Nevin et al, 2001d, paragraph 2.23, emphasis added)

The striking thing about the argument above is the way in which the generally accepted explanation for post-industrial decline has had a number of its causal features reversed. For most people, including one of the foremost authors of the Liverpool research, the story of decline in the city, and other post-industrial locations in the UK, is first and foremost about the decline of manufacturing employment (Loftman and Nevin, 1996; Couch, 2003). This is usually attributed, in the first half of the Twentieth Century, to the dwindling influence of the British Empire and, in the second half, to the use of information and travel technologies to relocate industrial production to places like the Far East. In CURS' quote above, however, the causality in this story is reversed. Lost jobs and investment are said to be 'derived from' population loss.

The context in which the HMRI is being justified largely defines whether or not the emphasis is placed on the traditional story of post-industrial decline or moved to the new account, that decline is the result of neighbourhood attributes. In the context above, CURS is keen to emphasise that the HMRI would be an effective way of repopulating Liverpool; as a result their argument strongly implies that population loss is responsible for loss of jobs. The power of conventional understandings of post-industrial decline, however, means that this narrative is of limited persuasiveness in a more general context. Therefore, the idea that neighbourhood attributes cause decline is usually positioned beneath the global explanation of events. It is usually claimed that the attributes of neighbourhoods exacerbate the consequences of wider processes for these neighbourhoods. Nevertheless, the decision to present these two narratives as being of equal importance in an explanation of decline is a decision to apportion

a substantial amount of blame for the causes of population loss to the neighbourhoods that were problematised at the beginning of the research programme.

This discursive shift makes it possible to assert two things. The first is that *it is possible* to use housing policy to achieve population growth in a declining, post-industrial city. The insistence that this is the case is a political act in itself because it curtails any debate about the potential risks associated with instigating a housing policy that does not achieve these ends. If the policies are implemented and do not seem to be effective, the discussion is removed from the democratic arena and is instead framed as a technical matter: how can we more effectively deliver our policies? The second assertion is that the consequences of the policy intervention being advocated can be likened to the consequences of post-industrial decline, but running in the opposite direction. The researchers thus invoke the discourse of urban regeneration, but it is not difficult to see how policies which pursue the eradication of a complex land use pattern, containing housing, community sector organisations and local businesses, and its replacement with large zones of housing and other uses with relatively high rents, might lead to economic degradation rather than growth (cf. Jacobs, 1961). None of these problems are considered, though, because the dominant arguments here are framed as part of a research programme and, unlike in a statutory planning process, no opportunity is provided for critical scrutiny.

The new claim, that redeveloping housing will lead to a more populous and affluent city, allows the researchers to maintain the substance of the policy directions they had recommended up until this point as well as, superficially at least, to maintain a coherent supporting justification. It also has the effect of dramatically increasing the level of ambition of the proposed policies. The promise that housing policy action can be used to holistically manage the future population trajectory of the city implies state intervention on a level that has not been seen since the post-war period of continuous economic growth. It is possible that the shift to the new goal of re-population was not just an attempt to reconcile new build with demolition, but a calculated decision arising from the relationship between local and central government. Having already tapped into a groundswell of institutional support in the city, and with local authorities in other parts of the north dealing with their own vacancy issues, it was an opportune time to market the emerging scheme as an urban panacea. A key advantage of doing this was that, while the benefits of housing market policies were not scheduled to occur until fifteen or twenty year's time, the benefits of claiming to have found a panacea were

immediate. Those actors, such as local authorities, housing associations and developers, with vested interests in the housing policy approach, had no reason to query the researcher's claims. Those who would later lobby for the initiative in government could make grand claims about the benefits it would bring, and could support this with academic research and a body of institutional opinion.

5.3.3 Internalising narrative number one: spirals of decline

As discussed earlier, the new claim that housing intervention could lead to economic growth and repopulation required two supporting narratives in order to maintain a consistent justification. The purpose of these narratives was to locate the cause of depopulation, and therefore of economic decline, in the neighbourhoods where redevelopment was desired. The first of these narratives can be found in the research programme's third report, which sought an understanding of the substantial private rented sector in the Inner Core. Its conclusions can be compared with the notion of collective deprivation that was developed by the Inner Area Studies of the 1970s, which argued that concentrations of poverty create synergistic effects which compound the poor quality of life of residents in these areas (Department of the Environment, 1977). Chapter four highlighted the importance of this discourse for the legitimisation of 'welfare' intervention at an area level. The idea of a spiral of decline works in a similar way by emphasising negative, self-reinforcing factors which are alleged to operate at an extremely localised scale and in the same neighbourhoods that suffer from vacancy. The consequence of seeking out and focusing on causal processes that are very tightly bounded in spatial terms is that attention is moved away from wider political and economic issues that are likely to be more controversial and harder to address (cf. Oatley, 2000). Ultimately, the function of the narrative is to suggest that the root cause of vacancy can be addressed with policy action that is located in those same neighbourhoods.

The investigation of the private rented sector in Liverpool began by arguing that generally stagnant and sometimes declining house prices were leading to the appearance of two new types of private landlord.

> Some owner occupiers in some parts of the city where property values have declined, have found difficulty in selling properties or selling them at a price which they consider appropriate. Rather than sell at a reduced price and perhaps at a price, which would not cover the outstanding debt, they have on the property, some of these owners choose to let the property. These 'reluctant' or

> 'non-business' landlords have formed one new element in the market. Another appears to be speculative purchasers buying properties at a very low price and seeking returns on that investment solely through the rental income from letting the property. (Groves et al, 2001, paragraph 2.22)

The argument that there were too many private rented properties, which were increasingly badly managed, was matched by a complementary claim that demand for tenancies from students and low income households was declining. The researchers hypothesised that a reduction in the level of housing benefit payments would make letting to tenants on benefits less financially attractive for landlords than letting to students or asylum seekers. As a result of this, the research predicted that those on benefits, being the hardest to manage and the least profitable, would become concentrated in those properties which were least desirable and in the poorest condition.

The researchers carried out interviews with landlord representatives in an attempt to understand the dynamics of what was happening. They then generalised from these interviews by taking a 'rational choice' perspective. In essence, they assumed that individuals act in a rational and calculated way in response to wider economic pressures, and that this helps them to define the course of action that they believe will maximise their financial return. This facilitated the construction of an argument which claimed that a combination of too much private rented housing, together with declining demand, was leading to the self-perpetuating process described below.

> …there are neighbourhood impacts of this over supply. One way of perceiving these impacts is to refer to a downward spiral. The characteristics of properties and neighbourhoods makes them unattractive for purchase by owner occupiers. This triggers a situation where property values fail to keep pace with other parts of the city or result in a natural decline. This further reduces the demand for purchase from owner occupiers who are seeking to invest in an appreciating asset. At the same time it makes it more difficult to sell properties and some owners will (therefore) choose to let properties… (Groves et al, 2001, paragraph 2.41)

I will refer to this narrative, here and in future chapters, as the 'spiral of decline' discourse.

There is of course some truth in the broad argument that declining house prices may prevent investment. We can say with confidence that a lasting decline in house prices will deter

property owners from investing in housing in instances where their reason for investing is solely motivated by an expected appreciation of their capital assets (although housing investment may still continue for emotional or functional reasons). However, in Liverpool's housing market research, this strand of logic is matched with the premises of rational choice theory. That theory is used to underpin and strengthen the assertion that spirals of decline are taking place, but the assumptions it makes about what guides human motivations are controversial (Swedborg, 2007: Allen, 2009). To have credence, the allegation that human behaviour is made up of independent, informed, rational attempts to maximise profit needs to be tested by gaining the views of those involved in the processes being studied. A limited number of interviews were used as part of the housing market research to test their hypothesis. Unfortunately, these investigations were limited to discussions with private landlords and did not include residents of the affected areas. The decision to highlight the spiral of decline argument can be contrasted with the selection of a different narrative by residents in the Kensington area of Liverpool. They drew attention to the social rented sector, which does not operate in line with the assumptions of rational choice theory; the residents argued that poor management and investment practices in that sector had had a negative effect on adjacent areas of private rented housing. In principle, it is possible that these processes were occurring alongside the ones alleged by CURS. It is not possible, however, that CURS could have reached the same conclusion as the Kensington residents because they adopted a conceptualisation of society as something made up of individuals operating independently to achieve financial goals through the market place. This meant that they could not have identified the effect of social rented sector management and investment practices on adjacent areas of private rented housing.

The privileged position that housing market researchers occupied within the planning process meant that it was them, rather than the residents of Kensington, who were able to define the narrative which should become dominant. As a result, the idea that spirals of decline are dangerous phenomena that must be tackled through proactive housing policy has become embedded into the architecture of the HMRI and this idea has persisted within a context of housing boom despite this providing financial incentives for housing investment. Even if we were to accept that spirals of decline were prevalent in Liverpool at the turn of the millennium, the concept remains problematic because it offers a very weak explanation of the *reasons for vacancy* and appears instead to be more of a theory of *the way vacancy spreads* in an area. Its function in the housing market research programme is therefore not to explain

how housing markets work, nor does it help to identify the most effective response. The greatest consequence of employing it is that a disproportionate level of importance then becomes placed on self-perpetuating processes that can be attributed to neighbourhoods that have already been problematised. This diverts attention from wider factors, such as the emigration of manufacturing jobs from post-industrial locations and the development of large numbers of new flats in the city centre, which policy makers were largely unable to prevent. What, in effect, this does is to provide the impression that the proposed housing policy interventions are capable of controlling and managing a process of repopulation when, in actuality, political and economic constraints present serious challenges to the achievement of this goal.

5.3.4 Internalising narrative number two: 'obsolescent' housing products

A less explicit, but significantly more influential narrative can be first sensed in the third report in the research programme. The view of individuals as rational, economic actors which characterised the spiral of decline discourse appears again, in a turn in the research towards explaining the demand preferences of households. The term 'product' is increasingly used to refer to housing and 'customers' to households. An example is the exploration of the relative popularity of new, city centre student accommodation. A survey of student preferences attributed this to better security and a more convenient location. One interpretation of how to stimulate demand in the Inner Core might therefore have been to initiate a strategy to improve the Inner Core's security and public transport services. However, a marketised interpretation was progressed instead, which compartmentalised explanations for differentials in housing popularity as elements making up the characteristics of housing products. A consequence of this is that the relative popularity of new build, city centre student accommodation can be attributed to the status of that housing as a 'better product', as judged by the market. Similarly, this view is used to subject unpopular housing to a causal narrative which asserts that unpopularity is a consequence of a poor quality product. An outcome of the conceptualisation of housing markets in this way is that it legitimises continued residential development in the city centre by portraying it as an activity which will improve the competitiveness of the city's overall housing offer. The corollary of this argument is that this approach must be matched by the demolition of poor quality products in the Inner Core.

A consequence of drawing heavily on the concept of a 'housing product' is a restriction of the possible causal factors resulting in vacancy to characteristics of that product. The best

products must then be identified by finding out which characteristics most closely meet the aspirations of consumers. The Liverpool research drew on interviews and focus groups to do this. One important point to note about this way of approaching the problem of vacant housing is that it differs substantially from the less constrained alternative of asking people what should be changed about the Inner Core to encourage more people to live there. Instead, the research began from the position that large parts of the Inner Core would have to be demolished (even though there was no longer an intention to rationalise the supply). Certain 'target customers' were then selected with the intention of asking them to define the replacement product. These target customers were located in the suburbs; they were asked the following question.

Ideal Type

To finish off, I'd like you to describe to me your ideal place to live?

First, anywhere in the country

Second, if it had to be in Liverpool

PROBE AREA RELATED AND HOUSING RELATED ASPECTS. (Nevin et

al, 2001d, page 77, capitalisation in original)

From the answers they received from suburban households, the researchers concluded that it was essential that terraced housing be replaced with a 'suburban environment'.

Not only does the approach described above seem rather abstract and predetermined, there still appears to be some discrepancy between the nuanced findings the research generated and the characteristics distilled from it for the purposes of the executive summary, and subsequent argumentation. The focus groups, for example, refer to: open space, housing 'quality', quietness, low crime rates, responsible neighbours, a cul-de sac layout and motorway access, as things they like about their neighbourhood. However, the executive summary interprets this as follows.

The Croxteth Park focus groups underline the popularity of suburban living for
many middle income households, especially families. It is difficult to attain this
ideal in Liverpool, given the paucity of quality, affordable family housing.
(Nevin et al, 2001b, paragraph 5)

Some of the significance of suburban living has somehow been gained in translation, while other factors were lost in translation. Customer research with more wealthy households, who lived in more peripheral parts of Merseyside but worked in Liverpool, recorded a significant

preference for a period property[10]. This preference, however, did not reach the executive summary.

As the previous paragraphs showed, the research which sought to develop the notion of an ideal house type was predicated on the assumption that redevelopment was needed anyway (this is why respondents were never asked what would make the Inner Core a more attractive place to live, or what they thought should happen to address vacancy in the Inner Core). Despite this, we can observe the emergence of a rather different use of the argument that emerged. The claim that 'terraced housing must be demolished, and the best thing to replace it with is suburbs' is turned around to read 'suburbs are needed, therefore the terraced housing will have to be demolished'. The reinterpretation of the argument in this way invokes a kind of deterministic, circular logic that seals the fate of terraced housing. The need to reach this conclusion conflicts with the finding of the first of the research reports, reproduced below, which concluded that the relationship between dwelling type and vacancy was relatively unimportant.

> For instance, when dwelling type is added into the model the explained variation in housing popularity increases to 62%. Dwelling type, therefore, accounts for just over 6% of the variation in popularity when accounting for other factors…
> (Nevin et al, 1999, paragraph 5.20)

Why were the market research findings so readily reinterpreted? One possible explanation is that the local authority officials who received them picked up on the obvious likeness with previous approaches to slum clearance, which were accompanied by the attitude that modern buildings and new technology are simply better (McKie, 1971). As the Liverpool programme progressed, the need to maximise site value and the new goal of repopulation led in some parts to the replacement of old terraced housing with new. This, in effect, results in in-principle support for any new housing development whatsoever. The very fact that developers want to build it has been seen as evidence that it will be a valued product in the market place[11]. One outcome of taking this position is that it ignores non-demand drivers of

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[10] A similar conclusion was reached by Townsend (2006) in his research on housing aspirations in Newcastle upon Tyne.
[11] It is interesting to note the contrast with an unrelated report by the Centre for Cities (2009) on how UK cities will fare in the recession. This uses a similarly statistical approach to CURS but assumes that those cities with a

new housing development. In Liverpool, this has meant that new flats with 12% vacancy rates in the city centre are seen as relatively unproblematic, while older housing is demolished less than a mile away, ostensibly because of its (lower) vacancy rates (Neild, 2007a).

In sum, the discourse of stock obsolescence is the pinnacle of a two year process of repeatedly seeking out discourses that problematised certain neighbourhoods in Liverpool in a way that drew together housing associations and council officers while targeting central government funding. The narrative that there are too many terraced houses is the ultimate problematisation because there is no escape from the argument that the problem with a house is that it shares its walls with other houses. The modernistic drive to create a better housing product then legitimises the use of the land which is provided by demolition to build new housing. From the point of view of the housing market research, as long as this new housing can attract new occupants then it represents an improvement to the competitiveness of Liverpool's housing market. Were it not for the mediation of the stock obsolescence discourse by other discourses through the planning system, and by limited finances, it would result in a blindness to design quality, tenure, affordability, sustainability and so on in the pursuit of the clearance of the old to make way for new.

5.3.5   The Liverpool housing market research programme

The five reports produced by CURS between 1999 and 2001 have defined the nature of the housing problem in the city and the proposed solution. All this has taken place apparently without the involvement of politicians in the city, at least to any significant extent. Large parts of the city were attributed representations which supported a view of these areas as places with a negative value that compelled redevelopment. The purpose of these representations was to respond to the concerns of key actors who had been involved in the process, notably council officers and housing associations. This is not to belittle the problems that were faced by those actors. Council tax receipts were low and servicing costs high (Nevin et al, 2001a), while representations later made to government show that some residents supported redevelopment as a response to environmental problems (Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions, 2002). Similarly, high management costs and

plentiful stock of affordable housing will fare better, presumably because cheaper housing allows households to spend more of their income in the local economy.

vacancy rates caused problems for social landlords. A response was needed to these problems, and the housing market research provided it. But it did so by constructing a dossier of allegations about how housing markets worked. A key function of this dossier was the need to secure financially viable social housing portfolios, not to accurately chart housing market processes. The result of privileging the interests of social housing providers in this way has been to marginalise alternative responses to vacant housing which were later proposed by a selection of the residents and property owners in the areas concerned. These actors were not asked what their own concerns or views were, presumably because it was felt that they would be unlikely to help solve the problems identified by the key actors. Instead the totalising argument, that citizens place a low value on areas suffering from vacancy, employed the market as a proxy for democratic consent. This narrative went on to form part of the argument to government that 'radical' intervention would be required to prevent a total collapse of the housing market in low demand areas. Those questions that remained for the researchers and policy makers in Liverpool were concerned only with how much new development could be secured, when and on which sites.

5.4.1 Part 3: Building a Lobby for a National Housing Market Renewal Initiative

During Liverpool's Housing Market Research Programme the CURS researchers had acted as a catalyst, bringing together a network of actors and discourses into a strong argument for housing market renewal. This network of relationships, which is summarised in figure 5.6, served as a template for action beyond the city of Liverpool. The extent of support which it generated is evidenced by a recent article which claims that the lobby for an HMRI was supported by over one hundred organisations (Nevin, 2004). It was comprised of local authorities, housing associations, the Housing Corporation[12], the National Housing Federation and the National House Builders Federation; all with housing interests in the North and West Midlands of England. The template of housing market renewal enabled these organisations to mobilise in a very short space of time. Nevertheless, the establishment of the HMRI is recalled as being more like a battle than a transition. Ian Cole, for example, notes that

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[12] Now part of the Homes and Communities Agency

> The HMR programme… has been an unwanted child from the start for those London-based policymakers in the CLG and the Housing Corporation and would not have happened without lobbying from defiantly Old Labour MPs and councillors unversed in Third Way discourses. (Cole, 2008a, pp. 6-7)

The role of this informal lobbying was to supplement official arguments, which were advanced within the formal arenas of government.

Two official processes were instigated and used to advance the political prominence of low demand and abandonment. The first of these was the submission of a report by the coalition-lobby to the 2003-6 Comprehensive Spending Review. This was accompanied by housing market research (Nevin et al, 2001a), which was widely referred to as 'the M62 study' because it was a case study of the area in the vicinity of the M62 motorway. The report formally requested the creation of a £6 to 8 billion, ten to twenty year programme to tackle low demand and abandonment. The second process was instigated by the decision of the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions Select Committee to accept the issue of empty homes onto their agenda and conduct an inquiry. A cross-party group of politicians considered expert evidence and visited areas where low demand and abandonment had occurred. By March 2002 they had prepared the Sixth Report on Empty Homes (Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions, 2002). The tone of the respective records of these processes suggests that the Select Committee functioned as a passionate forum in which the implications of the low demand problem were most forcefully spelled out. By contrast, the report to the Spending Review took a more technical style. This style functioned to distance itself from being seen as a 'matter of opinion' and, accordingly, reinforce the authority of the report as 'scientific', 'expert' 'evidence' about social trends and processes.

The Comprehensive Spending Review process is considered here first because it most clearly articulated the arguments on which the whole case would rest. The approach to analysis used here is an adaptation of the one used by Law and Callon (1988) in their study of the development of the TSR2 military aircraft (see chapter three). It begins by identifying a *forecast*: this plays a central role in extending the HMRI network because it sets out a dystopian 'anti-vision', which actors are encouraged to avoid by working together. Attention is then moved to the processes of *causality* which actors claim are leading towards the anti-vision. It must be possible to recruit the actors who are able to reverse these processes into

the network, otherwise the anti-vision cannot be avoided and provides no cause for a joint venture. Finally, an alternative vision, or *optimum scenario* is described, which the HMRI is designed to create. Further chapters will attend to the ways that proponents of the HMRI have emphasised the benefits of the optimum scenario in an attempt to recruit more and more actors into the network.

Figure 5.6: Renewal in Liverpool as a Template for the Construction of the HMRI
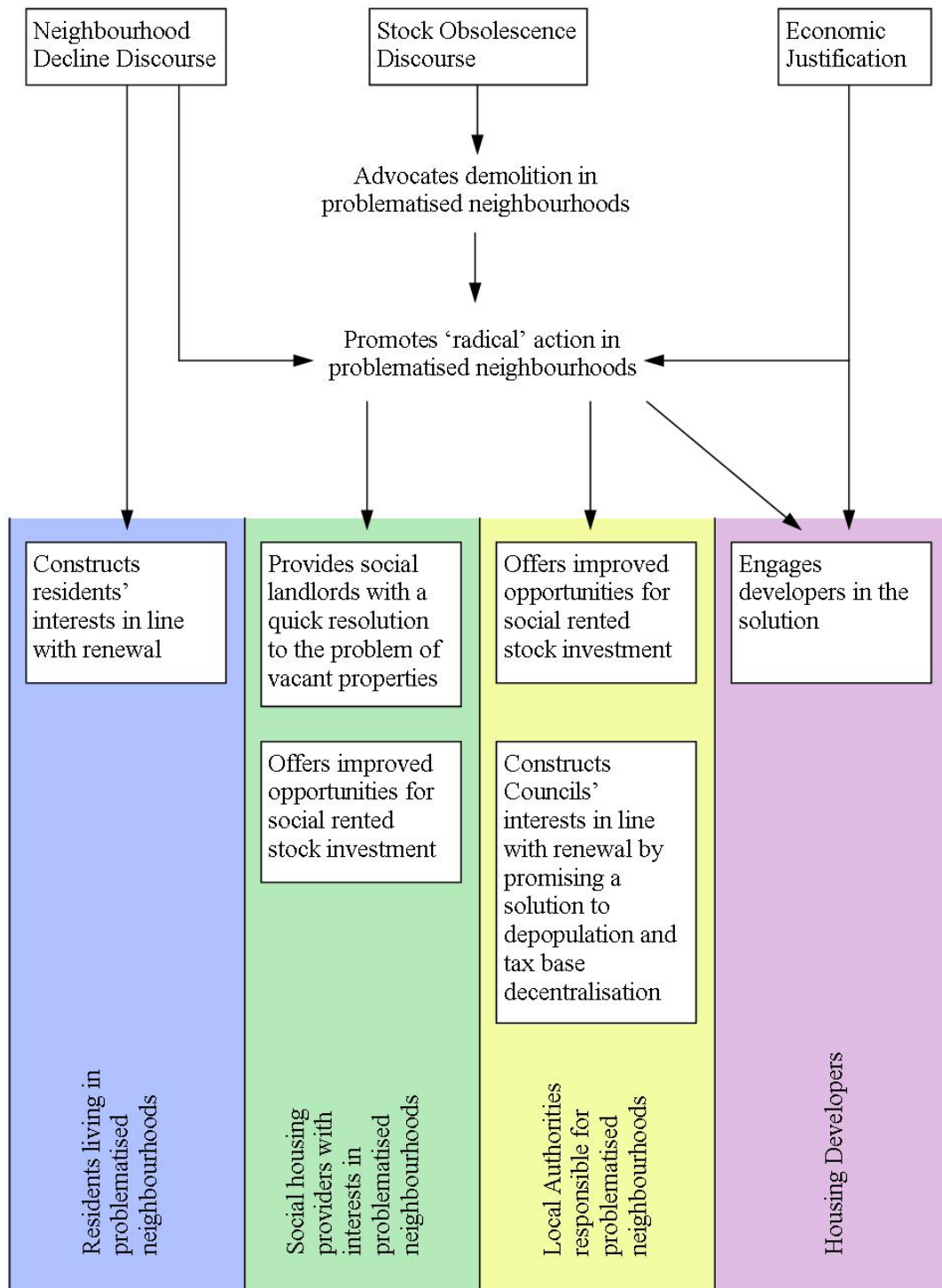
5.4.2   The forecast: perpetual decline

The report to the comprehensive spending review began by presenting a politicised description of what the world would look like if the HMRI technology was not implemented. An important feature of this description was its assertion that an abstracted, causal link existed between economic growth and neighbourhood abandonment. A defining feature of this link is that it is held to stand independently of the other causal claims made in the report.

> …there is an almost perfect statistical relationship between the fall in male unemployment and the fall in waiting lists for social housing over the period 1992-1999. This suggests that without measures to improve housing choice and quality in areas which have a historically high level of low income housing, economic regeneration will lead to the deterioration in popularity of the worst neighbourhoods as economically active people choose to leave. (Nevin et al, 2001a, p. vi)

An alternative interpretation could have been that rising incomes could lead to the gentrification of low income neighbourhoods for a new middle class (Allen, 2008a presents evidence that this has happened in Liverpool). Which narrative we choose depends on the approach we take to understanding society.

As part of building a case for a new housing policy, it was helpful to problematise the future of the cheapest housing in a way which would necessitate policy intervention. By deciding to compare the indicators of economic performance and housing 'quality', a transcendent relationship was sought between the cheapest housing and the economy. The assertion that such a relationship exists establishes a forecast that the scale of the problem can only get worse, and the worse it gets the greater the consequences, both for government and for a range of public sector institutions (for reasons that are discussed later). But the demonstration that unemployment and social housing waiting list indicators are correlated provides no information, in itself, about any relationship which may or may not exist between the activities that have been agglomerated to produce these indicators. An interpretation has been developed by assuming a romantic approach to complexity in the expectation that this correlation might reveal something of the mechanics of society. A rational choice perspective on human action has then been adopted in order to present the correlation of indicators as indicative of a causal link between economic growth and declining popularity of low income housing.

The decision to use rational choice theory to locate the causes of phenomena in an aggregation of the many, many actions of individual actors entails a decision not to locate causes in non-marketised relations such as institutional, political, cultural and historical phenomena. Instead, a model has been constructed which is free from the implications of multiple tenures and the existence of the public and third sectors. This precludes the generation of findings which may contain unhelpful political connotations. In the model, an individual seeking to maximise the financial importance of his/ her housing assets, and making calculated choices in the context of perfect information, operates in a linear housing market that has good, popular housing at one end and bad, unpopular housing at the other. As a result, he or she will always respond to an increase in income by abandoning the 'worst' neighbourhoods in favour of ones that are simply better. The model's assumptions, that people only relate with each other through rational market exchanges, result in allegations that causality can be found either in the attributes of products or the aspirations of consumers. These assumptions dictate the relational content of the world and therefore make the model unable to draw inductive conclusions about the implications relational processes of causality might have. To adopt this approach is therefore to make the claim that it is not important to investigate whether relational processes may exist in a manner which is different from the model. The result of taking this stance is that policy makers feel able to plan by statistics, using a standard business planning approach to respond to the interests of councils and housing associations.

5.4.3 Causality

The business planning approach is progressed by attempting to understand the characteristics of housing and residents that, across the board, are thought to reduce the attractiveness of neighbourhoods to households in the market for housing. The research decides to compare socio-economic data and housing profile information from areas exhibiting low demand with areas that do not have low demand. This leads to the identification of six factors that are coincident with the existence of low demand. The following explanations for these coincidences are then offered.

    i)   A predominance of rented accommodation in an area

A large proportion of this tenure in an area is deemed to make its housing market more fragile because a downward trend has been identified in the number of applicants for social housing across the region. This trend is attributed to the impact of economic growth and lower unemployment.

ii)   A predominance of 'low quality' owner occupied stock

No explanation is provided, but low income housing is expected to be less popular as wages and employment increase.

iii)   A predominance of houses with the same number of bedrooms.

It is alleged that individuals' housing careers will require a diversity of house sizes, and if they can't find them all in one neighbourhood they will have to leave, resulting in population loss.

iv)   A prevalence of flatted or terraced housing

The following explanation is provided

'…inner city housing built in the Victorian era may be less appropriate for housing contemporary households and lifestyle arrangements. At the same time, housing designed to accommodate an industrial working class (high density flatted accommodation, for example) will be less appropriate for contemporary, 'flexible' service sector households who are increasingly influenced by a consumer driven society.' (Nevin et al, 2001a, p. 41)

v)   The existence of many older residents

The study is concerned that the death of lots of older people would release a glut of properties onto the market in one place.

vi)   The existence of lots of people without jobs.

It is asserted that deprivation is a necessary prerequisite for spirals of decline.

The marketisation of housing that both the choice of data and the methodology are based on limits causal conclusions to those that explain why some housing is uncompetitive in the market place. In the process summarised above, housing product statistics were compared across different areas and, unsurprisingly, this resulted in the indication of some of these as being more prevalent in the areas of concern (low demand areas) than others. These can be read off as the first four processes of causality above. The cross-tabulation of areas where low demand is present against indicators of demand from customers similarly resulted in a number of factors being highlighted. These are listed as five and six above. The explanations set against each relationship have been created by the researchers, they determine whether each relationship is a causal process of concern to policy makers, essentially an irrelevance or can be explained by some unproblematic process.

The result of taking this marketised approach to understanding housing vacancy has been that, in the process of institutionalising the HMRI, the release of funding has become

contingent on meeting criteria which reflect the above claims that the solution to low demand can be found in certain characteristics of the housing stock. Figure 5.7 shows what housing market renewal funding must be spent on.

Figure 5.7: Constraints on the expenditure of HMRI funding

Market Renewal funds are not intended to replace existing funding streams and the ODPM has been careful to ensure that funding substitution is not integral to any of the market restructuring schemes it approves. Specifically, Housing Market Renewal funds can be used for:

• the cost of producing the Market Renewal Scheme and relevant associated

staffing and consultation costs

• targeted renovation and environmental improvement grants

• acquisition costs (land and property)

• clearance of surplus and obsolete property

• associated legal and professional fees

• gap funding for housing for sale

• site preparation and reclamation

• assistance with housing association new-build/renovation programmes

• environmental improvements

• enhanced neighbourhood management service for neighbourhoods in transition

and awaiting clearance.

Source: Cole and Nevin (2004, p. 15)

5.4.4 The 'spiral of decline' process

The M62 Study maps areas 'at risk' of low demand in the north west of England, based on the six processes of causality identified earlier. It also made use of the 'spiral of decline' argument discussed in part two, extending it from the Liverpool city level to a regional level, where it was assumed to hold, even though no further interviews took place with actors in different parts of the regional housing market. This made it possible to assert that spirals of decline contribute to low demand at a neighbourhood-wide level rather than at the level of individual properties. While it is unclear from the M62 study exactly what may be the initial trigger of a spiral of decline, the report to the Empty Homes Select Committee claims that a transcendent 'tipping point' exists beyond which events in the neighbourhood become mutually reinforcing. 'Expert evidence' for this is provided by David Cowans, Chief

Executive of the registered social landlord Places for People. He says the tipping point may be reached when turnover rates reach around 16 to 20% (Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, 2002). Later academic work would point towards a turnover rate of 14.5% and a vacancy rate of 16% (Nevin and Lee, 2003). It claimed to find statistical evidence for spirals of decline which validated the use of tipping points to categorise and prioritise certain neighbourhoods for demolition. Thus, any attempt there might have been to explore complex, heterogeneous and differentially perceived patterns of events within neighbourhoods was replaced by a simple exercise of reading off the health of the housing market from a chart containing just two statistical indicators. By asserting that tipping points existed, the researchers could categorise some neighbourhoods as areas of acute housing market failure. An important consequence of doing this was that resources would be focused first on neighbourhoods with the most vacancy, which were also those neighbourhoods viewed as most problematic by housing providers. It was claimed that demolition of these neighbourhoods would pre-empt an 'inevitable' process of housing market collapse.

The research in Liverpool, which had first constructed a narrative of neighbourhood spirals of decline, had confined its implications to actors in the private rented and owner occupied housing markets. Its purpose had been a greater understanding of how these markets worked. However, the ramifications of the spiral of decline narrative were extended by the report to the Empty Homes Select Committee.

> Where there is a higher percentage of families and individuals in an area who are surviving on very little income, with not much prospect of improvement, in effect trapped by the circumstances that they find themselves in, then local shops, small businesses and house prices will tend to suffer as there will gradually be less money circulating in the economy. The decline spirals faster as working families and homeowners sell starter homes and move out of the area as a natural progression. Those who remain have little chance of improving their circumstances, accumulating large debts, sinking into depression with little to motivate them, not having the money to invest in themselves or take pride in their homes, rented or owned. (Letter from a Sunderland resident, cited in DTLR, 2002, paragraph 43)

Universally, the above narrative functions to make low-return housing a problem for others as well as housing providers and to associate the idea of low demand, for which the indicators of turnover and vacancy rates stand in as proxy, with the existence or inevitability of a spiral of

decline. This makes it possible to argue for the existence of much larger numbers of homes at risk of abandonment than would otherwise be the case. For example, it justified the M62 study's claim that 16% of households in the M62 Corridor were in areas at risk of low demand (Nevin et al, 2001a). It later enabled Cole and Nevin (2004) to extend Bramley et al's study (2000a), which identified approximately 850,000 properties affected by low demand, to say that '5-6 per cent of homes in England are currently located in areas at risk of market collapse' (p. 10).

The spiral of decline concept forms a fundamental part of the methodology for identifying areas at risk of changing demand in the M62 study because, as well as giving low demand an area characteristic stretching beyond individual properties, it precludes the possible existence of a static and relatively benign form of low demand. When used in conjunction with the causalities of obsolescent housing it also results in an argument that certain areas are structurally and inherently uncompetitive (see Ferrari, 2007) and as a consequence there is no chance of them improving in popularity without state assistance. Steady population increases and massive house price increases across all parts of the north suggest that this has not been an accurate prediction (Leather et al, 2009). Indeed many of the local authorities receiving HMRI funding now also receive 'growth point' funding from government to facilitate an increase in their overall housing supply. The uncritical adoption of the concepts of 'structural competitive disadvantage' and 'spirals of decline' is dangerous because it potentially justifies housing providers to undertake 'pre-emptive strikes' without properly assessing localised or relational processes of causation. It marginalises the legitimacy of opposing perspectives and reconstructs residents' interests in line with the HMRI rationality.

5.4.5 Securing the commitment of government

In essence, three discursive components have so far been traced in the M62 Study research: a 'forecast' predicting the inevitability of future decline in low demand areas, a number of 'causalities' problematising certain housing and socio-economic characteristics and a discourse of 'spirals of decline'. Together, these made up the paradigm of the HMRI and held together the interests of the large body of housing associations, developers and local authorities lobbying for it. The task of connecting national government interests with this outlook fell to the covering report (Nevin, 2001) and the Sixth Report (DTLR, 2002). These documents make use of two key arguments to do this, and these are considered below.

The first argument relates to the previously discussed, highly controversial transfer of state-owned social housing to independent social housing providers, which the government was attempting to progress at the time. The government needed the compliance of local authorities and housing associations to do this. The first argument, articulated in both the M62 Study and the Select Committee Report, therefore mobilised the bleak forecast of a continued decline in housing demand, to raise the prospect that some social landlords may become unable to survive, or would run up large debts.

> There is also a danger that in some of the worst affected areas that [sic] local authorities may seek to transfer surplus housing to new RSLs because they do not have the resources to redevelop neighbourhoods given the current expenditure constraints. This may put the long-term financial viability of some new RSLs in doubt. (Nevin, 2001, p. 15)

The argument hints that such a situation would prevent them from taking on private finance to remedy under-investment in housing repairs, maintenance and refurbishment, effectively stalling the government's plans for stock transfer.

The second argument originates from a clear sense in the report to the Comprehensive Spending Review (Nevin, 2002) that opponents of the HMRI might point to existing urban renewal initiatives as sufficient to address the proposed problem of failing housing markets. During the late nineties there had been a swing away from the physical focus of Urban Development Corporations towards 'softer', collaboratively developed and socially focused action, with the New Deal for Communities programme represented perhaps the government's flagship response to deprivation. This was now challenged by what I term here as an 'adjacency effects' argument.

Existing urban renewal projects were criticised implicitly, and later explicitly (Cole and Nevin, 2004), for being unable to react to the problem on account of their 'inward looking' nature.

> Many of the areas now experiencing a spiral of decline in the local housing market are in receipt of funding from programmes such as the SRB, NDC and the NRF[3]. Considerable success has been demonstrated in achieving economic empowerment for individuals who have benefited from employment growth and training, however, the resources for housing market restructuring are currently inadequate to provide the environment within which households with increased

income would wish to stay. The introduction of a Housing Market Renewal Fund would deliver the change necessary to end the paradox where economic regeneration accelerates the long term decline of marginal neighbourhoods…

(Nevin, 2002, p. 3)

The focus on the characteristics of housing products which had been established by the obsolescence causalities was utilised in this argument to critique the logic of New Deal for Communities, even though a housing strand often formed one component of their activity. The imposition of an expert, scientific rationale was thus used to undermine attempts at community-led action, where a sensitivity to disparate local priorities militated against the adoption of grand, causal narratives. This sensitivity would be replaced by a requirement for sub-regional HMRI Pathfinders to ensure that the potential 'adjacency effects' which might arise from uncoordinated, localised action could be properly identified and tackled.

5.4.6   An optimum scenario based on a common public interest

So far, this chapter has documented how a fascination with markets and systems has led to the emergence of a number of complementary narratives. Taken together, these narratives direct the interests of key actors in favour of the HMRI proposal and set out distinct roles for those actors directly concerned with housing interventions. The table in figure 5.8 specifically identifies which of these arguments were used to engage the interests of each group of actors. This situation is referred to here as an optimum scenario. It is a vision of the future in which the careful selection and presentation of matters of concern binds actors together in support of the HMRI.

Figure 5.8: housing market discourses as components of the 2001-2 HMRI network

The table indicates where a direct relationship exists between one of the actors identified in the HMRI lobby documentation and one of the arguments identified in this part of the chapter. Where additional arguments were made in an attempt to position these actors these are also summarised. The following codes refer to the arguments identified in this chapter.

FOR: Forecast of future decline linked to economic prosperity

STOB: Stock Obsolescence causalities

DEC: Spiral of Decline discourse

VST: Voluntary Stock Transfer argument

ADJ: Adjacency Effects argument

Take no action	Implement HMRI
National Government	National Government
- stock transfer process aborted or social landlords become bankrupt (FOR/ VST)	- voluntary stock transfer incentivised (VST)
- social exclusion targets not met (DEC)	- social exclusion agenda advanced (DEC/ ADJ)
- other regeneration initiatives including New Deal for Communities programmes undermined by housing market collapse (ADJ)	- northern constituencies appeased
Local Authorities	Local Authorities
- unable to manage areas of 'housing market collapse' using existing tools (STOB)	- stock transfer more appealing (VST)
- unable to transfer stock, therefore unable to secure stock investment (VST)	- seen to be tackling 'problem' areas
	- implicit potential for a contribution to investment in services for these areas from developer contributions
Social Landlords	- implicit opportunity to deliver existing political projects
- unable to receive stock transfers (FOR/ VST)	Social Landlords
- additional vacancies increase costs and reduce revenues (FOR)	- stock transfer more appealing (VST)
- financial insecurity and resultant poor service/ high rents (FOR)	- resolution/ eradication of low-return stock (STOB)
Developers	- additional investment/ renewal of stock (FOR/ STOB)
- implicit scenario that zero housing growth means no new build	Developers
- volume house builders decline/ leave area	- implicit scenario that subsidy creates viable new opportunities (STOB)
Residents	- new sector created (STOB)
- trapped in a spiral of decline (DEC)	Residents
- suffering from house price decreases (DEC)	- increased residential mobility for low value home owners (DEC)
Local Businesses	- 'collapsed' prices avoided or tackled (DEC)
- population decline means fewer customers (DEC)	- Poor maintenance addressed (DEC)
- 'residual' population means less spending power (DEC)	- House values increase (DEC)
- falling profits (DEC)	Local Businesses

Public Services	- population decline addressed (DEC)
- population loss means services are used less and decline (DEC)	- more customers (DEC)
	- more wealthy customers (DEC)
- infrastructure becomes underused and inefficient (DEC)	Public Services
	- population decline addressed (DEC)
- increased inequality (DEC)	- more users (DEC)
	- indirect investment opportunities

The representation of interests in this optimum scenario is, however, only a discursively constructed image projected at a specific point in time. Its completeness can hold only as long as the actors affected by the initiative comply with the roles set for them in the scenario. This highlights an important characteristic of the scenario: it is only a representation of complexity. As such its translation into a fund for local authorities, housing associations and developers to draw on does not require that the interests linking that fund to the actors involved are maintained in the manner in which they are constructed. All that is required is that they are maintained discursively, are accompanied by an expert-led evidence base and that key actors remain committed to the outcome. As long as this occurs, the HMRI can proceed on the basis that it is operating in favour of a single public interest.

A crucial factor sustaining the HMRI network is a belief in the objective 'rightness' of the evidence on which it is based. But the notion that this evidence is objective is a facade. The research narratives are a product of a specific neo-classical societal perspective, interpreted through a romantic approach to complexity and produced in a highly political environment where outputs of a certain kind must be recommended to partner-actors made interested in delivering them. The veil of objectivity shields inherent values and assumptions from democratic scrutiny and displaces opposing narratives. Ultimately, the claim is a modernistic one: that restructuring housing markets will prevent abandonment in the interests of all.

5.4.7 Opposing narratives

The HMRI's problem is that the complexity of real life does not conform to the simplified and discursively constructed optimum scenario on which it is based. Sometimes narratives are expressed that are less amenable to the interests of those involved in delivering the HMRI. For example, prior to the HMRI's conception Kleinman and Whitehead (1999) identified a number of ways in which the policy actions of social housing providers might

cause neighbourhood decline, principally by concentrating anti-social tenants in particular areas. These, however, receive no attention in the case for the HMRI and could not have arisen from the marketised methodology it employed. Similarly, a Liverpool resident objecting to a compulsory purchase order rejected the narrative of stock obsolescence. Instead, Steven Ord cites a catalogue of events dating back decades which, in his eyes, represent a failure by the Council in their public duty to manage the area (Ord, 2006). He argues that the Wavertree area received inadequate maintenance by the Council, and that this was compounded by 'regeneration' in the 1970s, which degraded the environment by clearing 10,000 houses for a plan that never happened. Another scheme promised grants which never materialised, but acted as a disincentive to maintenance and led to the dereliction of properties that blighted the area.

It is difficult for such narratives to receive the attention of policy makers, but even if they do, they still have to fight clear of the paradigm created by the discursive structure of the HMRI if they are ever to have any influence. As long as the marketised findings of the M62 Study and its companion studies are seen as 'objective' evidence they will remain most persuasive. In such an environment there is little incentive for those involved in delivering the HMRI to credit or consider alternative narratives less amenable to the combined interests of the institutions they represent. Ultimately, rationalities which are critical of important partners are marginalised by the romantic, marketised narratives that underpin the HMRI.

5.4.8   Revisiting modernity

Up until the HMRI was announced the level of engagement with the residents and businesses it would affect was very limited. This is understandable given that the boundaries within which intervention would take place had not yet been determined. During the early stages of delivery, however, the existence of opposing narratives became apparent in a significant number of areas earmarked for intervention. At this stage, the marginalisation of weaker narratives that is an inherent part of the romantic approach to complexity became translated into the real life marginalisation of those whose interests were at odds with the ones served by the HMRI. Sadly, the marginalisation of opposing narratives was condoned and supported by leading housing academics who had, earlier in their careers, extolled the importance of empowering communities.

> …to bring coherence to urban policy, and to make it redistributive and effective in the delivery of sustainable regeneration, radical community empowering initiatives are needed. (Nevin and Shiner, 1995, p. 309)

In contrast with this position, an early review of the HMRI included a section aptly termed 'history of community engagement' which was concerned, not with any contribution that residents may be able to make to the construction of the programme, but with the 'ability to achieve a workable degree of community consent to the proposals' (Cole and Nevin, 2004, p. 33). It is clear from these early HMRI documents (see also Nevin et al, 1999) that the role of community involvement has always been thought of as confined to the delivery phase rather than as having any influence over the nature of how to conceptualise, understand and respond to low demand. For those adopting this position, alternative realities, values and priorities represent a danger of distancing delivery from the HMRI rationality, they are a threat to the scientistic nature of the HMRI, and must be risk managed.

Proponents of the HMRI may well believe that, on balance, maintaining the HMRI narratives will be in the public interest because it will continue the flow of money from central government. But we have been here before. In the 1950s, 60s and 70s vast areas of terraced housing were demolished so that housing would meet quality of life standards defined and set by experts but which would later be criticised for having got out of sync with the social needs of residents (see chapter four). HMRI Proponents have attempted to distance themselves from this by again invoking the argument that it is possible to model and respond to housing markets.

> Unlike the clearance programmes of the 1950s and 1960s, the initiative is responding to and anticipating market change. (Cole and Nevin, 2004, p. xi)

In doing so, however, they unwittingly demonstrate how similar the two policy programmes are. Both are characterised by a modernistic approach to planning in which transcendent facts and values are defined by experts. Beauregard (1991) defines a modernistic approach to planning as follows.

> It is 'a wide-ranging subjugation of society to the functional and aesthetic inclinations of a singular perspective rooted in a belief that social progress emerges through a combination of a unique vision, central control and scientific knowledge' (p. 191).

Public support for the HMRI often rests on the argument that the research which underpins it is a reflection of the true state of the world. What in fact is true, is that it is the construct of a partial methodology that conceals its function promoting selected interests over weaker ones.

5.4.9   The potential for governance mechanisms to mediate modernity

Following the direction given by the housing market research programme, the pathfinders may see themselves as tasked with delivering a relatively neutral, implicitly positivistic programme of 'housing market restructuring' (Nevin et al, 2001a, p. 1). Yet that very premise contains within it a host of assumptions, concerning the relationship of low demand with abandonment, the characteristics of those terms and their effects on different actors. The rebranding of political and value judgements as objective and based on the scientific conclusions of housing market assessment means that the Pathfinders might see themselves as trapped between an urge to deliver their programme and the realities of political life at both the national and local levels. In this context, it is unclear exactly what role the HMRI's governance mechanisms are supposed to fulfil, other than for negotiating how far contested interventions can be advanced.

The potential for partnership to offer a solution to political challenges from below, from the local level, might also be questioned by Wildavsky, who theorises the age-old problem of co-ordination.

> Participants in a common enterprise may act in a contradictory fashion because of ignorance; when informed of their place in the scheme of things, they may obediently be expected to behave properly. If we relax the assumption that a common purpose is involved, however, and admit the possibility (indeed the likelihood) of conflict over goals, then coordination becomes another term for coercion. Since actors A and B disagree with goal C, they can only be coordinated by being told what to do and doing it... To coordinate one must be able to get others to do things they do not want to do. Coordination thus becomes a form of coercive power. (Wildavsky, 1973, p. 55)

This raises the question of what it would mean to co-ordinate the successful delivery of a pathfinder programme. One answer might be that, following a scientific analysis of the housing market, all interested actors are persuaded (by various means) of the justness and validity of the pathfinder's aims and broadly by its proposed means of achieving them. Those actors could presumably then be relied upon for active support, and delivery could be

assured. As Wildavsky acknowledges, though, there remains the distinct possibility that, whatever methods are engaged, a pathfinder may find itself unable to persuade all actors that its purpose and actions are in the common interest.

In the event of disagreement there are only two options: flexibility or conflict. Flexibility advocates would be optimistic of the ability of local actors to temper scientific information on housing markets with local information more sensitive to a multitude of differing value judgements, and to adjust their selection of problems and responses accordingly. Such a view implies that a sense of ontological awareness might somehow become embedded in the pathfinders' activities. At the greatest level of clarity, this would comprise of, not just an ability to include alternative forms of knowledge in constructing an understanding of problematised neighbourhoods, but also of openness to possible limitations and variations within transcendent causal assumptions. This might mean a more relativistic view of expert knowledge: perhaps an acceptance that the discourse of spirals of decline for instance, or that of stock obsolescence may not apply in a particular case. Such an acceptance may, however, risk damaging the legitimacy of the entire pathfinder institution. What would happen if the romantic representation of sub-regional housing markets was found instead to be a hotch potch of local events with different problems, causalities and interpretations, in which the 'problem' could not even be agreed on? Without a unified narrative at the sub-regional level, how is the case for continued funding to be conveyed? Thus, at its most extreme, the possibility exists within a flexible approach that low demand may not be the most pressing issue in a locality. But what of the carefully crafted representation of low demand as the antithesis of a happy, 'sustainable' 'community' that has been so instrumental to the creation of the HMRI? Consequently if, as has happened in the case studies in this thesis, flexibility cannot be brokered, the positivistic delivery of the HMRI will only proceed against its opposition by emerging victorious from some form of direct conflict.

5.4.10 Discussion

This chapter has not argued that there is no truth at all in the claims made during the formative stages of the HMRI. Instead, it has maintained the theoretical position summarised by Cilliers (2002); that it is impossible to know complex things completely. Consequently, the focus here has been on how actors have manoeuvred themselves into positions where they have been able to make far-reaching and generalised statements about how housing markets work. Investigation of those statements has always revealed the use of techniques and

assumptions to produce a generalised and simplified view of society from one ontological position. This chapter traced the implications of making those arguments. It showed how they defined the criteria which now govern the release of HMRI funding and how, more broadly, they work to hold together the interests of a network of institutional actors concerned with urban renewal.

The research investigated in this chapter led government to administer HMRI funds to nine 'pathfinder' organisations in what were judged to be the most acute areas of low demand. Local pressure to tackle low demand has led to three additional areas (Tees Valley, West Yorkshire and West Cumbria) also being identified to receive funding in a similar manner to the pathfinders. The patterns of relations summarised above have direct implications for these twelve areas, but they also have a powerful influence over schemes which are funded from other sources such as English Partnerships (now part of the Homes and Communities Agency). In Tees Valley, local authorities have sought government funding by joining together to create Tees Valley Living, an organisation that imitates the formal pathfinder organisations. The approach has also crossed the border to Scotland, where Sara Glynn found many of the HMRI narratives in use to justify redevelopment in Dundee (Glynn, 2008). Furthermore, regional spatial strategies and regional economic strategies have tended to incorporate the HMRI technology as one plank of their strategies to pursue economic growth and housing funding. The result is that local authority planning documents then have to demonstrate compliance with the approach. In short, the HMRI approach has been advocated as the official and most effective way to tackle vacancy outside those regions in the south east with extremely high demand for housing.

The implications of the HMRI institution are explored through the following chapters, which attend to two of the many cases where the approach has sparked substantial controversy. Of particular interest here is the way that co-existing governance frameworks have empowered local actors to mediate or oppose housing market renewal schemes. The starting point for this further research is the template of actors and discourses which functioned so successfully to create the HMRI (see figure 5.5). However, this template is not viewed as static; rather it is assumed to be a constantly evolving and mutating network of interests, which will be manipulated by different actors in different parts of the country to suit their needs. The impact of the template in two different locations is therefore explored. The first of the case studies describes how this template was developed to guide the implementation of the HMRI

in Liverpool, which proclaimed itself the pilot of the HMRI (Liverpool New Deal for Communities, 2000). Liverpool has been a major recipient of area-based funding, including European funding, and has a highly organised governance structure. In contrast, the second case study describes the way in which HMRI narratives were translated to influence a pre-existing redevelopment proposal in Whitefield, Lancashire. Renewal proposals in Whitefield were less well co-ordinated and occurred in a tighter funding context. Further observations are drawn in chapter eight on the translation of the market analysis approach to Tees Valley and Newcastle upon Tyne.

Liverpool: A Pilot for Housing Market Renewal

6.1   Introduction

The previous chapter of this thesis considered the origins of the HMRI by tracing its beginnings to Liverpool City Council's housing market research programme. That chapter showed how the pursuit of central government funding led a relatively small number of actors to adopt a facade of objectivity while employing normative, economistic tools to construct proposals for the remodelling of areas of Liverpool. This chapter begins from these conclusions but shifts the question. Instead of exploring how selected actors were able to command what should be done, it asks how they were able to ensure that others would adhere to their prescriptions. This task is organised into two parts, the first part follows the actions of those seeking to implement the HMRI in Liverpool. It makes use of the concept of the black box and integrates this with an analysis of policy making and delivery in the city to explain how a city-wide programme of housing market renewal was developed comprising of four 'zones of intervention'. The second part of this chapter concentrates on proposals to redevelop housing in one of these zones. It traces the way in which a unified redevelopment proposal was built by reconciling the narratives and funding requirements of multiple partnership initiatives. In sum, the chapter asks how the housing market analysis approach to renewal has sought to deal with competing values and knowledge claims in Liverpool. The focus on institutional modes of organisation, in addition to opposition to proposals from residents, helps to explain the form by which housing market action has been organised in Liverpool.

6.2   Part One: The Institutionalisation of Housing Market Renewal in Liverpool

6.2.1   Housing market renewal's 'black box'

The approach to housing policy in Liverpool differs from the delivery of the HMRI in other locations because it is influenced by an institutionally embedded process of research carried out by CURS as well as by the normal, formal mechanisms of administering HMRI funding. This means that the use of housing market narratives to guide action was already at the front line of policy delivery by the time that the HMRI was announced. This situation differs from the case study of Whitefield in the next chapter, where urban renewal proposals were

progressed in advance of the HMRI being created and were, initially at least, much less strongly influenced by housing market research. In other locations such as Newcastle upon Tyne (which receives some discussion in chapter eight) these narratives were mediated to an extent by other path-dependent processes. Thus the HMRI approach in Liverpool was particularly strong, but despite this it was potentially weak because the scale and complexity of the research supporting it worked against its dissemination as a basis for action. This chapter begins, therefore, by exploring how housing market research recommendations were disseminated and implemented in Liverpool without diluting the strength of the dominant interests which had led to its construction. Evidence of the discursive processes which are discussed is drawn principally from Liverpool but, as chapter one discussed, the diversification of the objectives of the programme to justify it to different interests is a phenomenon which appears to have taken place to greater or lesser extents in different locations.

Explanation of the results of the research programme in Liverpool was assisted by establishing a discursive framework, which likened the recommended policies to the concept of a 'restructure'. The first use of the restructuring analogy can be found in the fifth report of the housing market research programme discussed in the previous chapter (see figure 5.5). The main argument of that report was to stress a need for greater spatial equality. It therefore presented information to support a problematisation of the existing spatial distribution of incomes.

> (We found) a skewed labour and housing market in the area. As salary levels increased, there was a strong tendency for employees to live in suburban areas or outside city boundaries. (Nevin et al, 2001b, paragraph 3).

The report then went on to use the concept of a restructure to integrate this argument with the arguments of the other research documents produced by CURS.

> This means that Liverpool will have to *restructure* its housing market to provide the range of quality housing necessary, from those designed for households making their first purchase to the luxury end of the market.' (Nevin et al, 2001b, paragraph 5.6, emphasis added)

The term 'restructure' is used here to improve the legibility and persuasiveness of the goal of repopulating the Inner Core by locating it within an older discourse, discussed in chapter four, that portrays regeneration as the pursuit of spatial equality. A function of doing this is

that the HMRI's argument that obsolescent stock must be replaced is presented as an aim which will also contribute to greater social and spatial equality.

Two years later, use of the idea of a restructure had become more firmly associated with one of the former goals of the Inner Cities policies of the 1970s: that of achieving 'balance'. This framework presented the existing state of the city as increasingly polarised and extreme, whereas the HMRI offered a temperate solution.

> The city's housing market is therefore, polarised and without sustained public sector intervention to restructure the residential environment this social and residential polarisation is likely to become more severe. (Nevin and Lee, 2003, preface)

Features of targeted neighbourhoods which were problematised by the CURS research could be 'othered' by resources such as high earners, new development or environmentally friendly building techniques which would be brought in by housing market policies. These resources were thus positioned as positive forces which would be used to mediate the extremes of a polarised city. As stated earlier, the key strength of this framework was its flexibility. This meant that it could easily be transferred to different situations and be extended to incorporate new concerns. The quote above only loosely refers to the narratives which make up the HMRI research programme. What is more important is that it brings these narratives together quickly and convincingly in a coherent framework. The framework is used to seek the compliance of those professionals who will need to be engaged in the delivery of the HMRI by appealing to their disparate interests and concerns. It punctualises, or condenses down, the complex assemblage of claims and actors which formed the beginnings of the HMRI into one single sentence.

Bruno Latour has argued that a specific kind of summary, otherwise known as a punctualisation or black box, is required if a complicated technology such as the HMRI is to be made both mobile and immutable (Latour, 1987). The black box functions as a summary to explain the package of narratives at the heart of the HMRI succinctly and convincingly to those who had not been involved in the initial research and policy making process, thus rendering the concepts mobile. It also maintains a policy outcome that meets the needs of the actors served by the HMRI narratives, thus rendering the technology immutable. Actors do not need to know everything about a technology to use it; they only need believe that given inputs will achieve certain outputs. In its early state, the housing market restructuring black

box contained three strengths which allowed it to carry out these twin functions in different ways.

The first strength was its ability to create associations with new (initially economic and social) concerns. By presenting policy, not merely as incremental change but as a process of comprehensive urban restructuring, proponents could claim that it would go beyond tackling low demand. It would tackle social inequality by creating neighbourhoods with a mix of incomes (Mott Macdonald, 2006) or, as Brendan Nevin would describe the situation after attending a seminar dealing with critical perspectives on the social mix agenda, address factors that were undermining the (assumed; universal) agglomeration benefits of poor neighbourhoods.

> The decades of differential population loss in Liverpool reduced population densities dramatically (Dorling and Atkins, 1995). This reduction in density and local incomes has led to the loss of shops, public houses and community facilities, adding commercial dereliction to the extensive stock of empty and frequently vandalised housing. The cumulative impact of this downward spiral in population and local expenditure has been to threaten the existence of many low income neighbourhoods in the inner city, undermining the agglomeration advantages these places provide for the poor (Nevin, 2010).

Similarly, presenting housing market renewal as a process of comprehensive urban restructuring has made it possible for the Northern Way to claim that housing redevelopment would address economic decline by attracting knowledge workers.

> ...economic growth should not be hampered by a lack of the right type of housing. The housing stock needs to reflect the needs of a highly skilled workforce. The current housing stock is acting as a barrier to in-migration and economic growth. The policy-steer should be towards providing 'aspirational' housing and tackling housing market failure. In relation to current housing stock, the study claims that the high proportions of pre-1919 housing and low proportions of detached housing in parts of the North East has serious implications on economic growth, as it limits the ability to attract and retain highly skilled workers. (Northern Way Sustainable Communities Team, 2006, paragraph. 3.5.6)

Such claims contributed to the mobility of the HMRI by discursively constructing it as being in the interests of many more actors than those who initially supported and created it. Actors

with a limited interest in housing, but with an interest in creating a more equal society, for example, might be convinced to support the initiative.

The second strength was style. It seems likely that the term 'restructure' contributed to the HMRI's mobility by appealing to higher tiers of local government managers, familiar with processes of local government restructuring. Like these processes of management restructuring, housing market restructuring was portrayed as something which was necessary if the city was to respond efficiently to new challenges, in this case the economic challenges of the 21st Century. The third and final strength of the black box was the association of housing restructuring with the creation of a more diverse range of housing. This could be used to position the HMRI as part of a choice-based agenda, which was becoming fashionable within both local government and government departments seeking to model public services on the private sector. In all of the three ways above, the substitution of eight research reports with a simple analogy contributed significantly to the adoption of the HMRI by distant actors in a form that would retain its core function of promoting the interests of local authorities and social housing providers. All of these strengths are a product of the additional functionality provided to the HMRI concepts by a process of discursive simplification which allows the initiative to respond to and incorporate new institutional interests and agendas as components of the HMRI's optimum scenario while continuing to direct policy in the same fundamental direction.

The previous chapter discussed how HMRI concepts, which had originally been produced to justify stock rationalisation in the Inner Core of Liverpool, adapted to incorporate pro-development interests. It described the creation of an anti-vision of decline and an optimum scenario of growth, with the HMRI positioned as a technically defined route towards the latter. The function of a black box in this context is to punctualise and close off debate about the allegedly technical constitution of the HMRI approach. This grants mobility to the concept by allowing its proponents to appeal to new interests; they must simply elaborate on the implications for these interests of allowing the dystopian anti-vision to prevail and, similarly, to extol the utopian benefits that delivery of the HMRI will bring. The chapter on Whitefield describes how heritage interests were propositioned: decline would simply result in the loss of heritage anyway, whereas growth would require a much smaller loss to achieve lasting sustainability of demand. In Newcastle, environmental concerns about the carbon cost of demolition were also responded to in this way, with a sustainability appraisal explaining

that this cost would be outweighed by the more sustainable transport pattern that repopulation would bring (Mott Macdonald, 2006). An early consequence of this in Liverpool is that the HMRI is easily embedded into a wider framework of 'regeneration' in the city, which has a similarly linear understanding of progress, and which is acutely receptive to initiatives that claim to be able to create jobs and economic growth while addressing social inequality.

The black box of housing market restructuring can be thought of as containing the HMRI's guiding narratives. In the event that a rival actor questions the premises of the black box, this package of narratives can be used to clarify the rationale of the initiative without revealing the full detail of how its narratives had been brought about. Instead, it can simply be claimed that they were the result of rigorous academic research. In this way, the academic, expert status of the narratives warns any sceptics able to trace their origins that scrutinising their construction would take considerable time and expertise. Latour (1987) conceptualises this as an escalated cost to rival actors of disputing the black box. In the case of projects receiving funding from the government's housing market renewal fund, the criteria for releasing that funding is, in any event, defined by the HMRI narratives (see chapter five, figure 5.7), and this further increases the cost of disputing the black box. Even if an actor is successful at revealing the partial construction of the research narratives within it, the bureaucratic division between national and local scales of government still restricts the ability of actors to renegotiate how funding should be spent and programmes delivered (this issue is tackled in more detail in chapter eight).

The creation of a black box of housing market restructuring stabilises the fragility of the HMRI network, but more importantly, it is essential if the network is to continue to expand.

> Black boxes never remain fully closed or properly fastened… but macro-actors can do as if they were closed and dark. (They) do not have to negotiate with equal intensity everything. They can go on and count on a force while negotiating for another. If they were not successful at that they could not simplify the social world. (Callon and Latour, 1981, p. 285).

Creating a black box allowed policy makers in Liverpool to go on and negotiate mechanisms to deliver urban renewal with the disparate actors making up the local state in Liverpool. New areas of policy activity could be influenced and the HMRI could be meshed with previously institutionalised rationalities and technologies (Jacobs et al, 2007; Latour, 1987). A diverse range of professions, from local government managers to planners and community support

workers, contain the skills necessary to implement the HMRI so this influence over professional ontologies beyond social housing management would be critical. Just as critical would be the HMRI's ability to secure the convergence of other regeneration funding streams and programmes with the strategic goals of the HMRI.

6.2.2   Implementing housing market renewal in Liverpool

Figure 6.1 illustrates the key reports governing the implementation of housing market renewal in Liverpool in the period 2002 to 2004. This period follows the completion of the six reports produced between 1999 and 2001, which made up CURS' housing market research programme. The 2002 to 2004 period can be thought of as the time in which the institutional mobility of the research programme's approach and interpretation was tested. DTZ Pieda replicated the economistic perspective and narratives of the CURS research to carry out a further housing demand study (DTZ Pieda, 2003). As mentioned in the earlier chapter on the origins of the HMRI, the approach and the narratives which the researchers used to interpret their results largely determined their findings. DTZ Pieda's study showed that others could use the same procedures to reach similar findings. Meanwhile, two more reports were commissioned from CURS, giving direction on how to implement the previous recommendations. The first of these reports provided the following advice on democratic consideration of the proposals.

> It is essential that elected members at the Parliamentary and local authority level are given the opportunity to understand and shape the evolving policy towards the Inner Core and influence any early action programme. (Lee and Nevin, 2002, p. 5)

Five policy documents, shown in the right hand column of figure 6.1, articulated the implications of the many CURS research reports for elected representatives to agree. It is likely that these elected representatives would have had only limited awareness of or involvement in the selection of methodologies and how they had been influenced by the interests and values of actors involved in the preparation of the CURS research. They were offered a black boxed programme of housing market renewal which promised, among other things, to repopulate the city of Liverpool, renew its economy and rescue homeowners trapped in spirals of decline.

An interview with one local objector suggests that the availability of funding from central government was a major influence which restricted local debate from straying towards solutions which lay outside of the black box. He was asked the following question.

[...the way that Councillors have received reports of what's been going on- has there been a kind of internal political debate between parties?]

I believe one or two of the Liberal Democrats have questioned the policy. But their leadership is committed to it, and that has been inhibitive. One of the leading, some of the leading Councillors are very closely involved with housing associations, who have a vested interest in house crusher, and I call this policy house crusher 'cos that what it is. The Labour group um, are very much keen on it and any dissent is seen as being anti-government which is always a problem for the Labour party which is seen as being very sort of hierarchical. And that has been a problem. [name of individual] has been critical of some of the impacts, but there's not been a great debate. And every time we catch a presentation they tell us why the officers are doing it but they never scientifically examine the assumptions behind it. There's no evaluation of... cost benefit analysis-: if we did something else how better could we use the money. Its 'government will give us money for doing this, therefore if we don't do this we won't get the money' [mm hmm]. And therefore its always tramline thinking... (Webb, 2009c)

Beyond the information above, it has been impossible to gather evidence of informal conversations between individual Councillors and others. On the basis of the available evidence, however, it seems that, having no firm reason to doubt the claims of the black box, and with a route offered to them that promised to attract a considerable level of resource to the city, senior Councillors were convinced to approve the policy documents and throw their support behind the initiative.

Figure 6.1: Research and policy development in Liverpool 2002 to 2004

Evidence base	Liverpool City Council Policy
Feb 2002: Renewing the housing market of Liverpool's Inner Core (Lee and Nevin, 2002)	Nov 2002: Liverpool Housing Strategy Statement 2005-8
Feb 2003: Understanding the Liverpool Housing Market (Nevin and Lee, 2003)	June 2003: Strategic Investment Framework for the Inner Core
Oct 2003: DTZ Pieda Merseyside Housing Demand Study (DTZ Pieda, 2003)	Oct 2003: Strategic Integrated Investment Framework
	Oct 2003) Merseyside Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder Prospectus
	Oct 2004: Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy

Of the five policy documents on the right hand side of figure 6.1, the Strategic Investment Framework for the Inner Core (SIFIC) (Liverpool City Council, 2003a) most explicitly set out the vision for action. It took a lead from Nevin and Lee (2003) and set out a programme of development, which was subsequently earmarked funding by the sub-regional Pathfinder Prospectus. The SIFIC's approach is the same as that advocated by the housing market research programme in the sense that it is single-mindedly dominated by one concern and directed purely by tools based on a particular market-based ideology. It seems to have been inspired by the modernistic principles of the stock obsolescence discourse in a way which led it to propose extreme, pro-development policies. It is concerned only with characteristics of the Inner Core that have market value, or which are perceived as having the potential to attract market value. Accordingly, any non-market value which actors might place on elements of the Inner Core falls outside the scope of the document and is ignored. The consequence is that chapter four of the document seeks to identify and promote any development which might possibly be secured on vacant sites or problematised neighbourhoods in the Inner Core and which officials interpret as potentially having a positive influence on the housing market.

The housing market research programme has dominated the approach taken in the SIFIC. Anyone who accepts that the views of people in society are not singularly dominated by an economic rationalist perspective and by an overwhelming ambition to tackle low demand by using the tools in the HMRI black box must believe in the existence of alternative perspectives and value positions. Some of these perspectives are likely to be at odds with the modernistic position of the HMRI. However, there is no sense in the SIFIC that any kind of collaboration is desired with those whose lives might be affected by different development scenarios. Three months later, Liverpool City Council published a follow-on document to the SIFIC, the Strategic Integrated Investment Framework (SIIF) (Liverpool City Council, 2003b), which did broach the topic of community involvement. That document does not accept that diverse positions exist in society. Instead it claims that the world is comprised of people who conform to and support the modernistic and partial premises of the HMRI.

> The new delivery vehicles are supported by local people and 'stem from a
>
> recognition both professional and community-led, that sustainable solutions lie
>
> in a radical approach' (Liverpool City Council, 2003b, paragraph 4.3).

No evidence is referenced to support this grand claim. In fact, as will later be demonstrated, there is substantial evidence which refutes it (see Allen, 2008). The chapter of this thesis which discussed the origins of the HMRI showed that its claims are not an objective response to shared problems in Liverpool but the glue which holds together a politically constructed network of institutional actors. The HMRI represents partial values and responds to the partial concerns of this network. It seems unlikely that all the residents affected by HMRI proposals, who had had no input into the creation of the HMRI black box, instantly chose to support its demands as the SIFIC states. The claim that the modernistic premises of the HMRI are community-led conflicts with the fact that eight research reports, none of which contained any community engagement, defined every detail of the policy approach implemented in Liverpool. At the time the SIFIC was published, there was clearly no interest in incorporating the agendas and values of actors outside of the tight network which gave rise to the HMRI. The interests of these actors were instead displaced by a supreme concern with achieving financially self-sufficient housing associations through the progression of a laissez-faire attitude towards the attraction of external investment that paid no regard to the implications for existing residents and businesses.

The SIFIC identified four 'cluster' areas of development opportunity, identifies land within them which is viewed as underused and proposes new uses. In this sense it functions in the

same way as a development plan, yet there is no reference to the statutory planning system and no process of formal consultation. Two factors made it possible to bypass the statutory planning system. One was that the SIFIC was produced while government was progressing a fundamental revision of the regulatory basis of the planning system, and this posed practical difficulties for local authorities seeking to progress statutory development plans. There was, however, a more fundamental reason for the disregard of statutory planning. The planning system is premised on a commitment to spaces of inclusion, through informal engagement and through formal representations and appearance. By contrast, the HMRI is predicated on absolutist claims to knowledge which devalue the importance of incorporating dissonant views and knowledge. Viewed from this economistic perspective, the purpose and contribution of statutory planning is simply unnecessary.

6.2.3   The meta-partnership planning regime

A new regime of planning has emerged in place of statutory planning, as the vehicle for making decisions on the nature of development and investment decisions in Liverpool. The characteristics of that regime can be observed in CURS' last two reports to the Council. Four recommendations were made which sought to integrate and focus different elements of the local state on the task of housing market renewal. The first of the four recommendations was that the stock transfer process should be accompanied by a strategic reduction in the number of housing associations operating in the city. This would ensure that, as housing policy action was implemented, unified decisions on housing management, investment and the relocation of residents could be reached more quickly (Nevin and Lee, 2003). The second recommendation advocated the redirection of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding, controlled by the city's Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) 'Liverpool First' to support the HMRI. The purpose of this would be to complement HMRI capital expenditure with revenue funding to manage and secure areas where clearance and improvement works were being carried out. The third and fourth recommendations compelled Liverpool City Council to co-ordinate their housing market proposals with neighbouring local authorities and to emphasise 'corporate operational management' of health, social care and education services in areas undergoing the most change (Lee and Nevin, 2002, p. 5). These recommendations can be seen as an attempt to appropriate different agendas and objectives in support of implementing a totalising, modernistic scheme.

The rationale behind the evolving planning regime in Liverpool is broadly the same as the rationale behind the government's drive for Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). Government introduced LSPs because it was concerned that a lack of joining up at the local level was leading to a lack of progress in tackling neighbourhood deprivation (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001). LSPs were therefore tasked with achieving a unified vision and direction among partners.

> …public, private, voluntary and community sectors should come together in a single overarching local co-ordination framework which: enables priorities to be set and services to be aligned; brings those who deliver or commission different services together with those for whom the services are provided; and ensures other local partnerships know how they fit into the wider picture...
>
> (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001, paragraph 5.5)

LSPs visualise the activities of partners from different economic sectors as functional and beneficial to achieving the overall social, economic and environmental improvement of cities. Consequently, they emphasise that these partners should work together to ensure that any opportunities to progress shared objectives can be harnessed.

The previous chapter discussed how the M62 study, which had made the case for creating the HMRI to national government, had crafted an optimum scenario and an anti-vision and had argued that the HMRI was instrumental to achieving the former. Different narratives were used to portray this optimum scenario as being in the interests of all the actors who would be involved. That chapter demonstrated how a singular view of societal progress was not something which existed prior to the HMRI but was in fact something which had to be carefully crafted through narrative. The analogy of the market was used in the HMRI's narratives to support a linear conceptualisation of societal progress and it is used again in the thinking which underlies LSPs, which conceives of the activities of public, private and third sector actors as the provision of services and of the actions of citizens as customers receiving those services. Like the HMRI, it constructs a theoretical harmony of interests in a conflict-ridden world.
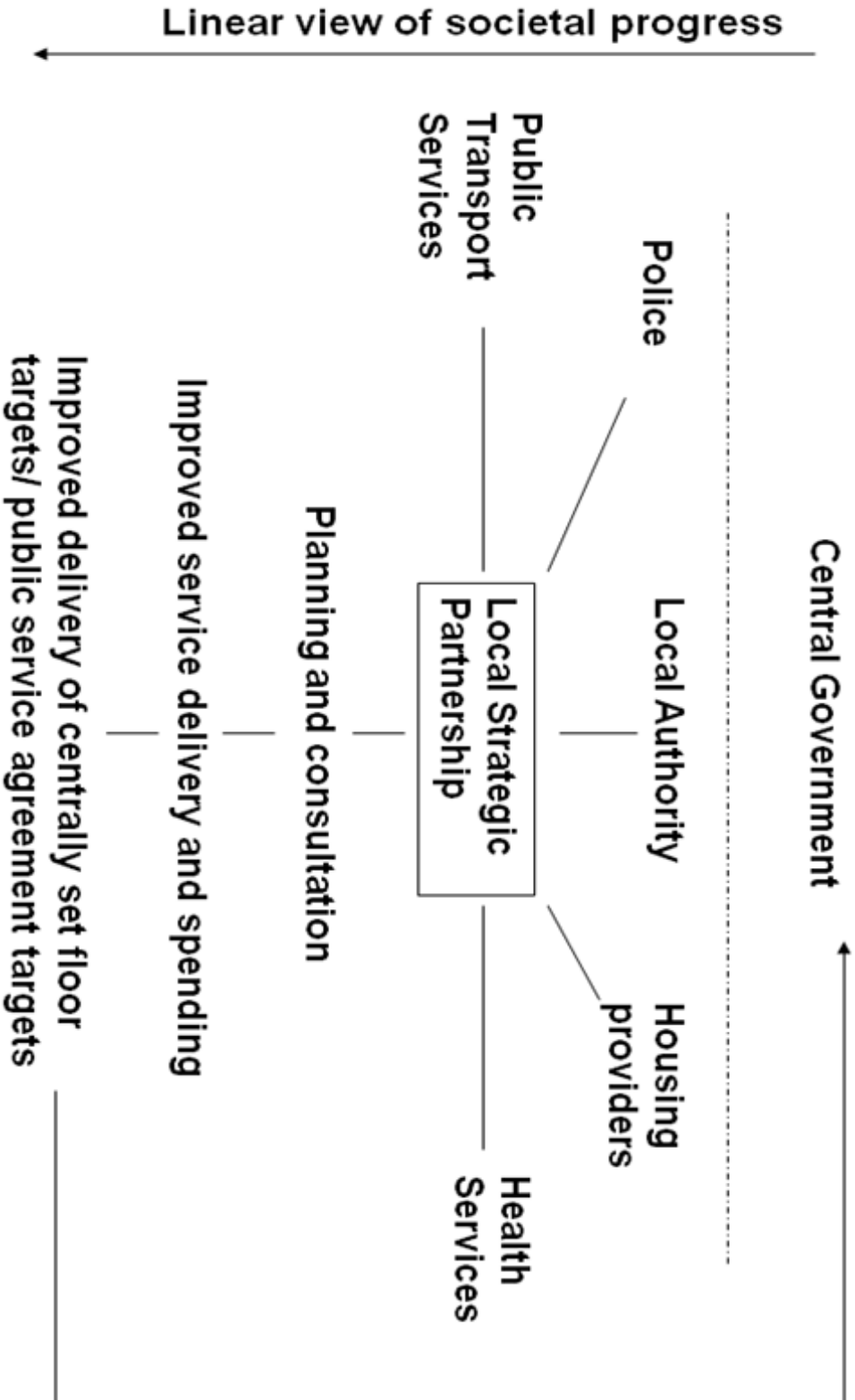
Figure 6.2: The local strategic partnership governance architecture

Figure 6.2 illustrates how LSPs work. National government uses statistical representations of society to set targets, such as the reduction of crime levels or the reduction of health inequalities. These targets are handed down to the LSP, which has the option of complementing them with further, locally set targets. Partners are then expected to agree how they can work together more effectively to meet these targets. Finally, wider consultation is undertaken about whether the right targets have been set and whether the proposed service improvements are appropriate. Partners involved in the LSP therefore have to work within a framework which presents the task at hand as one of achieving statistical progress. To use the example of crime rates, these statistical targets and indicators reduce the complexities of tackling crime to a choice between 'high' crime or 'low' crime. The decision to make use of statistical measures encourages the positioning of society on a linear scale. In the meta-partnership regime, national government desires statistical 'improvement', no doubt for reasons of party-political expediency. Actors in the local state are called upon to assist them in delivering that improvement.

The level of deprivation in Liverpool had attracted an abundance of fragmented issue and area based partnerships, which received national and European funding for 'regeneration'. Consequently, the meta-partnership style of working became instrumental to the HMRI's ability to permeate into and exert control over these disparate elements of the local state. The HMRI black box professed to offer economic renewal, repopulation and to promote socially redistributive patterns in society, all while maintaining its core set of narratives which dictated what would make housing market restructuring work. It was able to define the type of policy action that would deliver the statistical improvements desired by government. Furthermore, the flexibility of emphasis which the black box provided meant that the HMRI could be easily dovetailed with the objectives of other partnerships. As the case of Kensington will show, the joining up of action in the local state has meant that other institutional narratives have become absorbed into housing market renewal proposals and that housing market renewal narratives have become absorbed into non-HMRI proposals. One example of this has been the role attributed to the statutory planning system. Liverpool First's Sustainable Communities Strategy summarised its function as follows: '(the Local Development Framework) provides the physical land use interpretation of the Community Strategy' (Liverpool First, 2005, p. 4). A tension exists here between a requirement of the Local Development Framework to result in policies that are aligned with other city and regional strategies and a statutory process of plan preparation that emphasises the

collaborative identification of problems and solutions with the community and other stakeholders. In Liverpool, it seems that this tension has been resolved through a clear commitment to leadership from the Community Strategy, as the principal document of the Local Strategic Partnership, rather than from below through collaborative and communicative working. The planning system has been subsumed into a role subservient to the meta-partnership regime.

In Liverpool, the meta-partnership regime acted as a vehicle which engineered the co-ordination and support of multiple partnerships around those actors who were able to claim that they had the solutions which would achieve linear statistical improvement. This characteristic of the LSP's architecture appears predisposed towards assisting the permeation and dominance of grand, modernist narratives throughout the fractured local state. The consequence has been that an institutional consensus and momentum has built up behind housing market action. This has empowered the delivery of the HMRI black box by protecting it's narratives from scrutiny and marginalising dissenting voices, excluding them from a closed circle of institutional support. It has helped keep the black box closed and in part it has done this by suppressing the regulatory checks and balances of the statutory planning system. However, the cost of institutional acceptance and support for the HMRI has been inflexibility in its approach. Real life does not confirm to the optimum scenario of housing market renewal sold to government in 2002. Nationally, pressures have led to development boom and stagnation, challenging the assumption that new housing is always developed in response to consumer aspirations. Locally, dissident actors, including resident activists, heritage organisations and environmentalists, have emerged to further values that are not dictated by the market. The institutional acceptance of the HMRI black box has restricted its ability to adapt to new information about how housing and urban areas should work. The gap between comprehensive planning based on social scientific models and the realities of local areas and their politics has meant that centralised programmes cannot simply be phased and implemented in a way that will balance the model.

6.2.4   Housing market renewal in a multi-partnership governance environment

The Strategic Integrated Investment Framework identified four 'zones of intervention' in the city, these were: City Centre North, Stanley Park, Wavertree and City Centre South. Wherever possible in these zones, the potential was identified for partnership working which might assist Liverpool City Council to secure (i.e. fund) any development that it perceived as

likely to have a positive influence on the housing market. In the north of the city, potential was identified to work with English Partnerships to attract a 'major retail superstore' (Liverpool City Council, 2003a, paragraph 4.15) to the Great Homer Street area, even though it was acknowledged that this area already accommodated 'a Saturday market in which over 300 street traders gather in what is a popular local facility' (ibid, paragraph 4.13). In the Stanley Park area, Liverpool Football Club was seen as a potential way of assisting the redevelopment of the Anfield area. In the Wavertree area, both the Kensington New Deal for Communities programme and the European Union Objective One programme were identified as sources of potential support.

Within this portfolio of housing market action, the case of the Edge Lane West area, in Kensington, is of particular interest for a number of reasons. The case illustrates the use of partnership working to progress housing market action. Furthermore, it offers the potential to explore differences in approach between the HMRI, which argues that strategic/ top down co-ordination is necessary to guide housing market interventions, and the New Deal for Communities programme, which is premised on a commitment to community-led regeneration. Finally, acquiring information about housing market renewal action has often been very difficult. Regeneration companies are not subject to freedom of information laws and local authorities have at times severely restricted the information they will release on the grounds that it is commercially sensitive (Neild, 2007b). Despite this, a large amount of information is available about the disputes in Kensington. This portfolio of policy and research documents has only become available because of the fierce contestation of compulsory purchase orders there by local residents. A background to this dispute is provided by a detailed phenomenological research project (Allen, 2008), which offers valuable insights into the views of a number of residents who lived in Kensington and who have now left the area as a result of the regeneration proposals.

6.3.1 Part Two: The Redevelopment of Edge Lane West

Kensington is an area of approximately 5,000 homes, which lies one mile east of Liverpool city centre. Within it, controversy has centred on, but has by no means been restricted to, proposals to redevelop housing in the area known as Edge Lane West. These proposals have emerged from a complex pattern of relationships between those partnerships illustrated in

figure 6.3. They were initiated in 1996, when Liverpool City Council and the North West Development Agency instructed Speke Garston Development Company, a regeneration company which was seen as a local model of best practice, to prepare proposals for the use of Objective One funding from the European Union. These proposals would make use of stage two of this funding, which ran from 2000 to 2006, to carry out highways and economic development work. Shortly before this funding commenced, the government announced the creation of a number of New Deal for Communities projects, one of which was established in the Kensington area of Liverpool. This project would become known as 'Kensington Regeneration', and by February 2000 had produced initial proposals for bottom up, community-led action in its 'Pathfinder Delivery Plan' (Kensington Regeneration, 2000). Both of these partnerships would also be influenced by the HMRI policy programme, which concentrated on Kensington as one of the city's four zones of intervention. A further partnership emerged shortly afterwards, in 2003, charged with preparing Liverpool to become Capital of Culture 2008. However, the Capital of Culture initiative would have a more limited impact on the delivery of the proposals, and had a principal interest in incentivising their completion in time for 2008.

The development of proposals in Kensington was shared between the partners, with substantive policy influences highlighted by the arrows in figure 6.3. Initially, proposals for different aspects of the scheme were drawn up relatively autonomously by Kensington Regeneration and Speke Garston Development Company. As these developed and became more integrated they were also increasingly influenced by the narratives of housing market renewal. In 2004, Speke Garston Development Company was superseded by Liverpool Land Development Company, who commissioned Urban Initiatives to undertake a design review of their proposals. The outcome of this review was the formal integration of the previous two approaches into a design framework which would form the basis of subsequent planning applications and compulsory purchase proposals.

The result of this complex process would be the professional, regulatory and democratic legitimisation of proposals to re-engineer parts of the Kensington neighbourhood in accordance with the HMRI narratives. In the next part of the chapter, the complexity of the process is broken down by attending to how different parts of the proposals were developed. The origins of the European Union Objective One proposals are discussed first and it is argued that, like the HMRI, a top-down approach is taken which results in the emergence and

domination of a master narrative. This narrative is concerned principally with the city-wide role of Edge Lane which runs through the middle of Kensington, and it dictates the content of proposals where they run alongside it. Attention is then moved to the actions of Kensington Regeneration, which was tasked with developing the wider mass of proposals for urban renewal in Kensington. An analysis is undertaken of how the HMRI black box impacted on the allegedly community-led approach employed by Kensington Regeneration. All of the HMRI's prescriptive discourses are found to exist within Kensington Regeneration's approach and as a result there is no separate analysis of the HMRI Pathfinder stream outlined in figure 6.3. The final proposals which Kensington Regeneration sought to implement can be seen to advance the institutional interests and 'technical' prescriptions of the HMRI and EU Objective one narratives. Consequently, the chapter concludes with an outline of the processes ratifying the proposals and then takes a view on objections that were made to the principle of using compulsory purchase. Finally, the chapter draws conclusions on the likely course of 'regeneration' in Liverpool, as well as its implications for the interests of different actors in the city.

Figure 6.3: Partnerships involved in the production of redevelopment proposals in Kensington
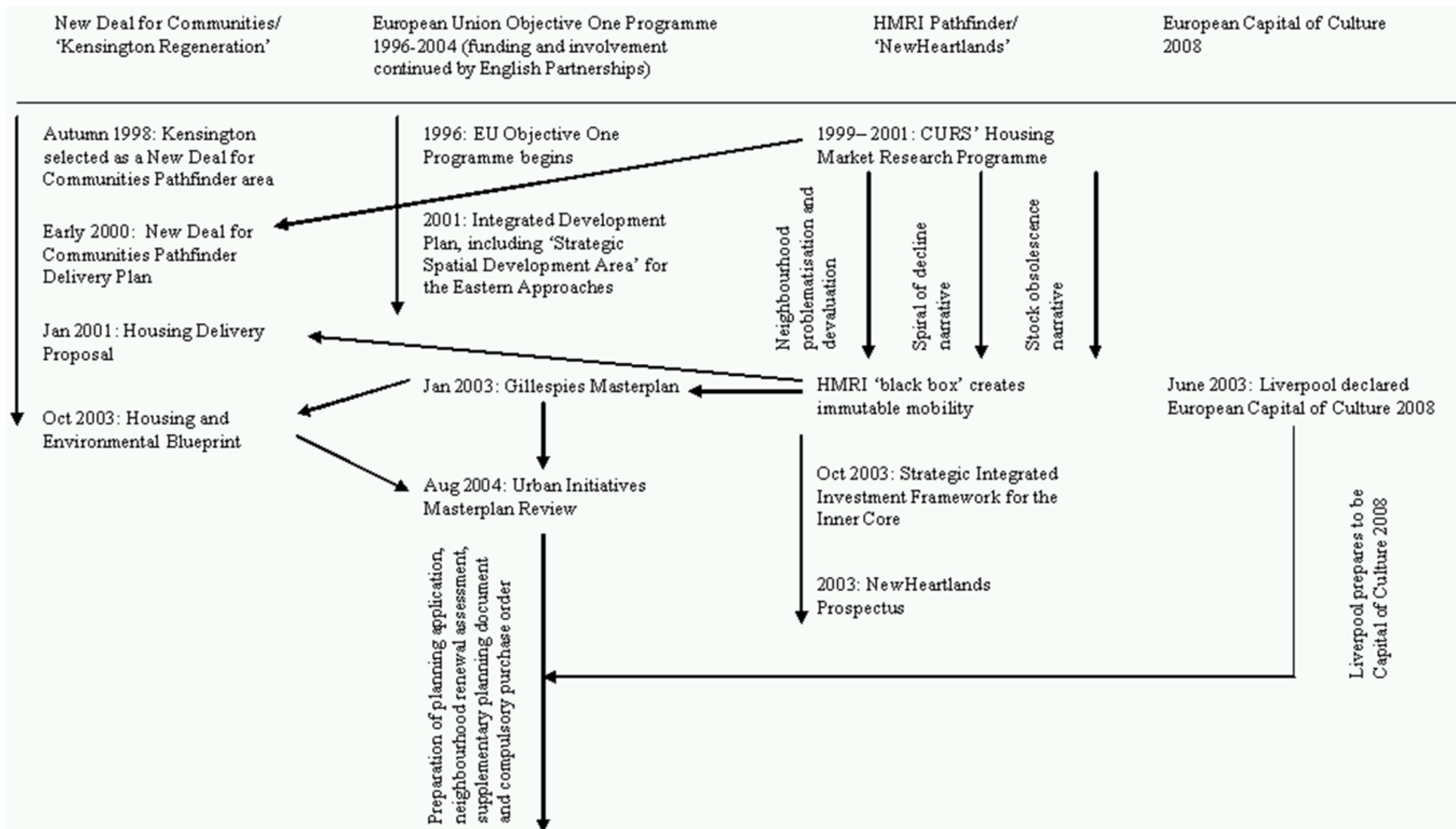
Figure 6.4: Boundaries of Objective One and New Deal for Communities Areas
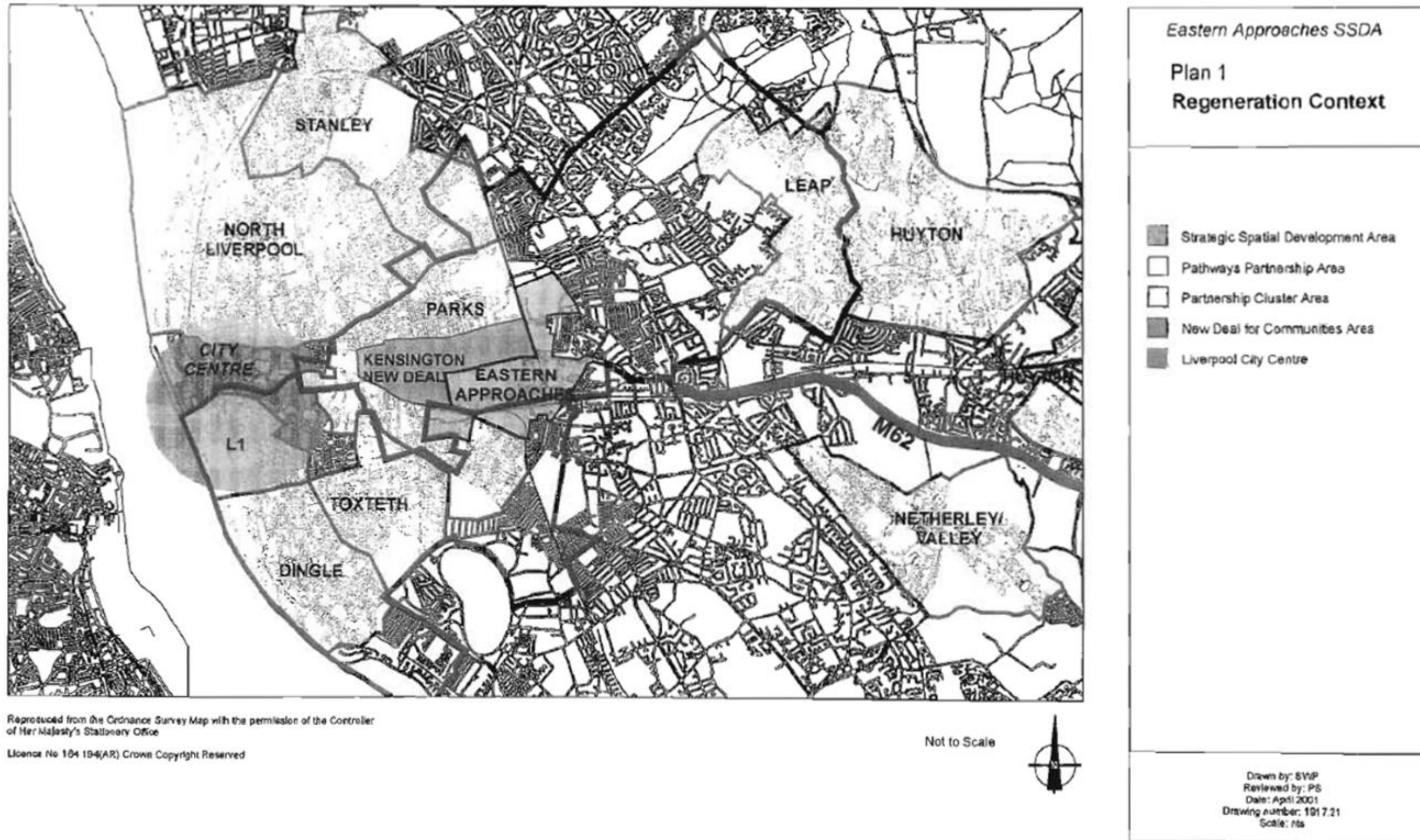
Source: City of Liverpool (2001)

6.3.2   The impact of the European Union objective one programme on the redevelopment of Kensington

In 1996, the European Union allocated an eight year programme of Objective One funding to Liverpool on the basis that its GDP per capita was more than 25% below the European average. A number of 'Strategic Spatial Development Areas' (SSDAs) were identified in the city, which were considered to have the potential for economic growth. 'Integrated Development Plans' (IDPs) were then produced for each of these to set out how Objective One action would generate new employment. One of the SSDAs covered an area referred to as the Eastern Approaches, which stretched along the Edge Lane route into the city (see figure 6.4, this shows the location of Objective One action relative to the area covered by the New Deal for Communities initiative (NDfC)). Two potential areas of employment creation were envisaged: expansion of a high technology business park and investment in an out of town retail park. However, the principal focus of the SSDA was on the Edge Lane route. It was stated that improvement of this road would generate new jobs by boosting the city's competitiveness. Very little detail is given by the key documents setting out the strategy (Liverpool City Council, 2001a; 2001b) about how its substance was arrived at, but later documents stated that the approach had been generated from a review of the economic environment in the area, together with interviews with local businesses. Community support is claimed, but it seems that this was provided by the representation of Kensington Regeneration on a board alongside nine other stakeholders (Liverpool City Council, 2001a).

The Objective One programme had two key impacts on housing proposals in the Kensington area. The programme's funding had been contingent on the attraction of 'match' funding, which had initially come from the Single Regeneration Budget, and was also attracted from NDfC and Liverpool City Council. Once Objective One funding finished, in 2004, a momentum of public sector funding would be continued by the national urban regeneration agency English Partnerships. The extent of English Partnerships' involvement, therefore, was largely influenced by the existence of the objective one programme. A further impact was that the programme introduced a belief which I shall call the 'economic gateway' argument, that Liverpool should increase its competitiveness and that road improvements were instrumental to doing this. The consequence of employing this new narrative was the problematisation of both Edge Lane's limited capacity for road traffic and the quality of the

environment adjacent to the road by holding these characteristics responsible for deterring inward investment.

> Anecdotally, the quality of (Edge Lane) has been a major disincentive to investment in Liverpool City Centre and a source of concern, vocally expressed by the business community. In terms of environmental quality and engineering, Edge Lane divides and detracts from the quality of life of adjacent communities. (City of Liverpool, 2001, p. 3)

The Liverpool City Council Unitary Development Plan, which was produced in Liverpool prior to the IDP, did not identify a need for such dramatic action along Edge Lane (Liverpool City Council, 2002).

A tentative conclusion, on the basis of the limited evidence available, suggests that the business community sought an improved gateway into the city centre to reduce journey times and market the city to visitors and businesses. What is clear, though, is that there has been no discernible public debate about the principle of how the SSDA should seek to create more jobs in the Eastern Approaches area. Instead, Liverpool City Council's Integrated Development Plan firmly defines the problem as Edge Lane's lack of road capacity.

> The focus of the Eastern Approaches is the Edge Lane corridor. This is the most important gateway to Liverpool City Centre, the greatest generator of jobs and economic activity for Merseyside. Its function, quality and branding are fundamental to the promotion and the actuality of Liverpool as a competitive, business friendly city (The City of Liverpool, 2001, summary).

Such assertions provided the platform on which the following vision for the Eastern Approaches SSDA was built.

> To create a premier gateway for the City of Liverpool which, acts as a catalyst for High Technology Business Growth Sectors (The City of Liverpool, 2001, p. 17).

This vision corresponded with three intended outcomes, two of which were concerned with improving the appearance and capacity of Edge Lane. A third was concerned with creating 'a heart rather than a divide for the surrounding residential neighbourhoods' (The City of Liverpool, 2001, p. 17). This aspiration was based on the claim that Edge Lane was worsening the quality of neighbouring residents' lives. What is interesting here is that there was no suggestion that the residents themselves had claimed that the road was worsening their lives only that, as a matter of fact, this was what was happening. There was no mention

of the Edge Lane roadway as a problem in the New Deal for Communities Pathfinder Delivery Plan, published a year prior to the Integrated Development Plan (IDP).

The scarcity of evidence about the origins of the Edge Lane proposals tells a story in itself. The road scheme seems to have arisen by combining the views of a small number of individuals in the business community with the EU's emphasis on business support and infrastructure development; there seems to have been limited consideration of the alternatives. It also seems likely that the narrative reflects Liverpool's relationship with neighbouring Manchester, which has been seen as an economic success story and a development model which Liverpool might seek to replicate. The outline application for the Edge Lane scheme (Development Planning Partnership, 2003) drew on the following regional planning guidance to stress the economic importance of Manchester for the proposals.

> Manchester City Centre is becoming an economic driver within the Region. The renaissance of Liverpool is a high priority: there is clearly considerable scope to develop Liverpool's role as a Regional Pole and in a manner which complements the progress made in Manchester/Salford in recent years. Both are becoming more attractive, but both will also need to sustain and develop their general attractiveness as places to live and work still further in order to perform their role as Regional Poles, to act as powerful catalysts for further regeneration of the nearby inner-city areas, to assist the urban renaissance of the North West Metropolitan Area, and to secure the prosperity of the Region.
> (Government Office for the North West, 2003, paragraph 3.2)

Whether or not the problematisation of Edge Lane originated in a view of Manchester as the potential economic saviour of Liverpool, it is clear that the proposed corridor improvements were central to the bid for European funding. Consequently, community engagement undertaken after the publication of the IDP in 2001 was concerned with the form the improvements should take, rather than the principle of increasing road capacity, or more broadly, of transport management in the city of Liverpool.

The IDP was followed, two years later, by a document known as the Gillespies Masterplan (Gillespies, 2003). That plan set out various proposals for the Eastern Approaches SSDA, which included the demolition of part of the housing in Kensington which fronted onto Edge Lane to allow two additional lanes and a central reservation to be added. The justification for these proposals began by appealing to two groups. The first was comprised of those passing

through the area who, it was argued, had to endure the unattractiveness of the existing route. This group was assumed to include 'investors' who would be more amenable to investing in business in the city if they were offered a more attractive first impression. The following quote identifies the features of Edge Lane which were said to be unattractive.

> The City's primary gateway route- Edge Lane- presents an image of decline characterised by poor quality housing, out-dated residential uses, vacant sites and poorly maintained parks. (Gillespies, 2003, p. 9).

Justification for the proposals also appealed to a second group of actors: those living nearby to Edge Lane.

Local residents and businesses that front on to Edge Lane *suffer* from (the nature of the roadway) (Gillespies, 2003, p. 47, emphasis added).

The argument here was that increasing the capacity of Edge Lane and demolishing the housing along it would be in everyone's interests, yet the route which is being problematised in the quote above is described by SAVE Britain's Heritage as follows.

> Edge Lane is a key route into Liverpool, from the west. First impressions count, and the rhythm and scale of the buildings on the road- three storey semi-detached houses as well as three storey terraces- sets the tone for the rest of the city. (Wilkinson, 2006, p. 19)

The Edge Lane route is illustrated in plate 6.1.

Plate 6.1: The problematised section of the Edge Lane route, this photo was taken prior to the acquisition and boarding up of the housing along it.

As well as the economic arguments discussed above, the Gillespies Masterplan makes use of the essence of the HMRI's arguments, which problematise and devalue housing in Kensington. The masterplan integrates the HMRI's narratives with the new economic gateway narrative, thus creating an increasingly solid base of institutional support for the proposals. The following quote goes as far as asserting a new process of causality to do this, which positions the nature of the roadway as a contributor to housing market collapse.

> Along some sections of Edge Lane Drive and Edge Lane (the nature of the
>
> roadway) has led to a deterioration in properties caused by stagnant property
>
> values and inadequate investment. (Gillespies, 2003, p. 47).

The allegation of this new process of causality was reinforced by the use of the HMRI's black box to support the Speke Garston Development Company's economic gateway argument. In essence, a vision has been constructed by bringing together those master narratives which have risen to direct Liverpool's meta-partnership regime. The signifiers of 'HMRI' and 'EG' are used below to indicate the contribution of these master narratives to this vision.

> The vision for the Eastern Approaches is an *economically vibrant* and *socially*
>
> *balanced* (HMRI) sequence of neighbourhoods flanking a central urban

> boulevard characterised by a *coherent and consistent landscape design* (EG)
> that unifies this important public thoroughfare. The Eastern Approaches should
> be an important net *contributor to Liverpool's economy* (EG/ HMRI) and
> *reveal the City's vibrancy, optimism and ambition* (EG) as one travels into the
> City Centre after leaving the M62 Motorway. The District has the potential to
> become *an important economic gateway* (EG) to the City Centre (Gillespies,
> 2003, p. 9, italics and signifiers added).

The black box appears in the references to 'social balance' and 'economically vibrant neighbourhoods', which signal the prescriptions of Liverpool's housing market research programme. Further elements draw goals from the problematisation of the appearance and the diminutive economic influence the road is said to have, both psychologically and functionally. There is no mention in the vision of any problems or opportunities which do not feature in these guiding narratives. This comes despite emphasis elsewhere in the masterplan on an extensive programme of consultation, backed up with a list of the many activities which were undertaken. In terms of influencing the vision, and thus the overall strategic steer of what the project aims to do, none of the views raised through this consultation process have gained any concessions from the master narratives that direct the nature of development in the city of Liverpool.

6.3.3   Constructing proposals for Edge Lane, Kensington: partnering with representatives of 'the community'

In 1998 the government announced a programme of regeneration initiatives entitled the New Deal for Communities (NDfC). The approach was intended to move away from the previous government's Urban Development Corporations, which had focused on attracting private capital and creating jobs through physical renewal. Instead, the NDfC programme would concentrate on intensive, community-led action in deprived areas as part of a wider agenda of progressive decentralisation of power. This was the context which informed the creation of Kensington Regeneration, and which is acknowledged in its own description of its approach. An interesting feature of this description, however, is the prominence of partnership working as a means to facilitate this.

> The NDC is based on partnerships that are firmly rooted in, and representative
> of, the community. These partnerships bring together residents, voluntary
> organisations, local authorities and other public agencies and business - all

those with a contribution to make to the regeneration of the neighbourhood. (Kensington Regeneration, 2008).

What is apparent is that, for Kensington Regeneration, there is no conflict of interest between these two commitments: to the local community and to local and city-wide partnerships.

The implicit rationale which justifies the pursuit of community and partnership interests is the same as that which was put forward by Cole and Nevin (2004), and which was considered in chapter five. In short, it assumes a consensus can be established among actors for a single approach to development, and that partnership working will persuade all actors of the rightness of this one approach. In the previous chapter it was demonstrated that, at times, this position is likely to lead to conflict. All actors do not share the same concerns, and different actors are likely to value different things and have different ways of looking at the world. Furthermore, the discussion of the meta-partnership regime earlier in this chapter noted its tendency to promote partial master narratives serving selected groups of actors. The question therefore arises of how regeneration officials in Liverpool were able to reconcile disparate local priorities, values and concerns with an all-encompassing agenda for top-down housing market and economic renewal in the city.

Kensington Regeneration's first report, its 'Pathfinder Delivery Plan 2000- 2010', provides some clues about how this problem was approached. It sets out the reasons for the selection of the Kensington area as an NDfC area.

> The area was selected as the City's New Deal Pathfinder in autumn 1998 not just because it is the second most deprived area in Liverpool, and has a strategic location with enviable potential for investment and improvement, but because the people who live here care passionately about Kensington and want to see it improved. (Kensington Regeneration, 2000, page 9)

The NDfC approach, to devolve leadership to communities, had emerged from an awareness of the politically contested nature of urban renewal projects and from a critique of top-down projects which had grown throughout the 1990s. However, the justification given for the location of Liverpool's NDfC project immediately restricts the ability of communities to take the lead on a key strategic issue because it decides, prior to the project being established, that it should seek to use its location to attract external private investment. Actors within Liverpool City Council therefore sought to limit the autonomy of the community before the project had even begun.

The limitations on community leadership that characterised the advent of Kensington Regeneration grew in significance as the project progressed because of the inherent contradiction within the organisation's identity. The official portrayal of Kensington Regeneration is as part of a co-ordinated, city-wide modernist project but also as a project led by the community, a definition that uncritically embraces a wealth of different and often conflicted interests. Clues about how these interests were mediated can be found by comparing the first two documents from the organisation, which set out its strategy for housing policy action. The Pathfinder Delivery Plan was published in 2000, and this was followed by a Housing Delivery Plan in 2001, which added clarity to some of the claims and objectives put forward by its predecessor. The first plan is a loosely worded document; it makes a number of upbeat, but equally woolly statements about a commitment to community control and accompanies these with an indicative plan of proposed action. The following statements set out the anticipated role for the community in developing housing proposals.

> Local people have embraced the New Deal for Communities initiative as the vehicle to enable them to control their own future. (Kensington Regeneration, 2000, page 10)

> Kensington Regeneration is working with local people to start to develop innovative approaches and projects. (ibid, page 5)

A comparison with the proposals which emerge from Kensington Regeneration's community engagement process shows that, while these statements cannot be demonstrated to be outright lies, they must certainly be interpreted in a highly selective manner. The following paragraphs deal with each statement in turn, comparing them with the schemes which were proposed and the justification supporting those schemes.

A superficial reading of the first statement gives the impression that the community, defined as those who 'live, own businesses, work or study in Kensington' (ibid, page 13), will actively control policy action in the area. However, the Housing Delivery Plan explains that this is not, in fact, the case. That plan sets out a clear diagnosis of housing problems in Kensington, from a market perspective. It appraises the extent and likely future demand for social rented properties in the area and concludes that this will deteriorate. It then turns to student housing and states that demand will similarly deteriorate for this market, as a result of the Council's decision to continue to permit purpose-built new accommodation in the city centre. It further assesses the private rented and owner occupied markets and judges these to

be weak. In essence, it employs an identical methodology and draws an identical set of conclusions to the CURS research and ultimately asserts that the Kensington housing market is destined for collapse. The claim that local people have embraced the NDfC 'as the vehicle to enable them to control their own future' (ibid) must therefore be read with a strong caveat that experts will use the perspective of economic rationalism, combined with statistical information to define, from their own ontological and politically situated position, what the future will look like if no housing action is taken. Local people can thereafter 'choose' not to accept the dystopian vision said to result from taking no action, but to support the prescriptions for avoiding it which are handed to them by the economists.

The second statement implies that the community will be involved in creating innovative approaches to housing problems. Some ideas for housing improvements, which might be thought of as innovative, were put forward at a conference in Liverpool by residents of the nearby Welsh Streets area (see figure 1.1), also threatened with demolition. These included installing free standing, energy generating windmills at the end of streets, growing vegetables in street planters and converting a small number of houses from residential use to the production of renewable energy (Edge, 2008). This, however, was not what was meant by 'innovative approaches and projects'. All of the types of action which characterised the housing proposals were derived from the recommendations of Liverpool's housing market research and responded to the HMRI master narratives. They aimed to 'restructure' the housing market by removing obsolete house types and building new suburban housing for owner occupation (Kensington Regeneration, 2001). It is difficult to see how these actions might be considered innovative. They do not attempt to further original, local ideas; rather, they seek only to progress radical action in instances where it furthers powerful institutional interests.

Finally, the Pathfinder Delivery Plan contained the following promise.

> Nobody wants the area ripped down and the community decimated. Local people want sensitive redevelopment and refurbishment so that local communities can stay together. (Kensington Regeneration, 2000, page 19)

The contrast with the view of one resident eight years later is evident.

> Our community is finished really, I've been told I mustn't say that but it would be stupid to say otherwise 'cos you can see there's hardly anybody there. (Pascoe, 2008)

It is clear, simply from following the claims in Kensington Regeneration's documents and comparing them with this thesis's analysis of the city's housing market approach, that the declaration of support for community-led regeneration is misleading in the extreme. The question therefore arises of how key figures were convinced to support Kensington Regeneration's proposals. Richard Kemp, former Liverpool City Council Executive Member for Housing and Neighbourhood Services, used his Statement of Support for the proposals to highlight two sources influencing the content of the proposals. He says:

> It is truly community led. This is not a remote bureaucracy making decisions but an *empowered community having their say* about their area… (the plan) addresses the demand issues for the area based on *thorough research and informed discussion*. It will therefore contribute effectively to solving the overall housing problems of the City. (Kensington Regeneration, 2000, italics added)

It is assumed here that Councillor Kemp's statement is a relatively earnest point of view. If so, his failure to see the incompatibility of assembling two different sources of leadership adjacent to each other in his statement is a testament to the successfulness of the HMRI black box at concealing the competing interests of different actors. Within the institutional framework of the local state the black box was efficiently portraying the housing market research as the normative prescription of objective analysis. It seems that a belief in the scientifically-led progression of society could still be made to hold over those involved in urban renewal in Liverpool.

The overwhelming strength of official support for the prescriptions of the black box in Liverpool sometimes seems difficult to explain purely on the basis that it linked the interests of local institutional actors together. This discrepancy was suggested to one of the objectors to HMRI proposals Liverpool. He emphasised the importance of public funding, as well as a local network, to keeping the black box closed.

> Its a bit like the Catholic church's belief in papal infallibility- we can never get it wrong. [its just a lack of critical thinking?] No, its actually a total subservient mentality that spending public money is good. If the government will only give us money for this venture we've got to do exactly what they want, and we cant question what they want. Its just, spending is good in itself; typical socialist psychology. And we've got a government who says 'we're spending all the

> money, we're doing good, and the community want it because the council tell us its what they want. So, the government's saying the community wants it because the Council says it does, the Council says it does cos they want the money from the government, and nobody will take responsibility for the stupidity of the decision. Hallelujah! (Webb, 2009c)

The black box is strong because it receives support from central government, and reciprocal support from a local network of institutional actors who benefit from renewal. Nevertheless, it would not convince everyone; Pascoe (2008) revealed how a number of useful but confidential documents were posted anonymously through her letter box. It seems that some of those employed in Liverpool's local state can still see through the HMRI's feigned objectivity and, furthermore, still retain the compulsion to act on their judgements.

6.3.4   Mining support from 'the community'

The HMRI black box clearly held great sway over those working in the organisations which partnered Kensington Regeneration. However, the question remains of how community representatives serving at the various board meetings which comprised Kensington Regeneration's governance structures were made to comply. Many of the answers to this question have already been provided by Chris Allen, who undertook detailed, face to face research with those involved in the community engagement process. His book (Allen, 2008) analyses the relationship between those who sought to engage with and direct this 'community-led' project and those working for the institutions charged with implementing it. Allen's work represents an important contribution to the story in this chapter because it is the result of a methodology which is partly compatible with the perspective maintained in this thesis.

Allen takes a class-based, phenomenological approach to his work. In other words, he combines his own senses and experiences of becoming immersed in the arguments and activities which characterised the community engagement process with a broader perspective on society which views it as structured and driven along class lines. The phenomenological aspect of Allen's work identifies and discusses many of the same concerns which are raised in this thesis and, most importantly, is aware of multiple and conflicting ontologies. Allen does ultimately argue that ontological perspectives in Kensington can be grouped using a predefined category of social class. Importantly, though, the groups of interests and outlooks that Allen uncovers in Kensington are formed from his empirical observations, only then are

the labels of working class and middle class assigned to them. By removing these labels, Allen's work contributes greatly to this thesis' wider understanding of the effects of governance decisions. The book is useful for two reasons: it charts the impact of different ways of being with the world on events in Kensington and it recognises and documents the influence of what the author calls the 'HMRI doxa'. What Allen recognises as doxa, this thesis understands as the black box of housing market restructuring.

Chapter eight of Chris Allen's book is entitled 'housing market renewal and the politics of middle class domination' and attends to class-based patterns of domination. He conceptualises the use of HMRI doxa as a tool which is being used to support a middle class outlook, one which views housing as an investment and a means of accumulating capital. He argues that, in contrast, Kensington's working class community views housing principally as a tool of practical value in the daily struggle to make ends meet. This thesis takes a different position to Allen, in that it locates the origins of HMRI doxa in attempts by Liverpool's fractured local state to manage population loss and respond quickly to a pressing collective interest in ensuring financially sustainable housing associations. The excellent qualitative material in Allen's book can be reinterpreted from this position, whereupon it becomes a valuable resource for understanding how institutional interests in Liverpool imposed the black box of housing market restructuring. Furthermore, it helps provide some balance to this thesis by addressing a recognised tendency in accounts influenced by actor-network theory to focus on the doers rather than those who are done to (Haraway, 1991; Star, 1991; Strathern, 1991). The following paragraphs follow Allen's description of community engagement processes which undermine residents' abilities to understand, discuss and control the development of proposals while at the same time facilitating the imposition of a dominant rationality. Additional evidence is used where available to verify Allen's claims.

Communication between Kensington Regeneration and local residents initially took place through structured meetings where representatives attended on behalf of the wider community to discuss proposals and raise concerns on behalf of others. These discussions were intended to contribute to the development of draft proposals which would later be opened up for wider comment through structured consultation directly with residents. Allen describes how 'neighbourhood planning groups' were replaced by 'neighbourhood assemblies'. Kensington Regeneration used these assemblies to frame communication between them, their partners and the community in a way which enabled them to mediate

relations in their favour. In the new assemblies, residents were no longer allowed to appoint their own chair, and this role fell instead to officers of Kensington Regeneration. Command of the chair position allowed them to set the agenda and to decide who was allowed to speak and for how long. One residents' representative, who was studying for a doctorate in greening aspects of regenerating cities, explained her impression of the process.

> I tried hard for up to five years, going to up to up to seven meetings a week, and although I'm quite articulate, not quite as assertive as I am now but I wasn't afraid about speaking up. Um, not one word I ever said was recorded. And I wasn't saying what I thought, because I knew that was business. I was engaged, I tried to engage because I thought the idea was wonderful, grassroots, I tried to bring forward what my neighbours were saying but they didn't want to know. (Pascoe, 2008)

As well as controlling agendas and the format of meetings, Allen talks of employed representatives being excluded from partnership meetings held during working hours and gives examples of sparse and conflicting information confusing residents. One interviewee summed the situation up in the following way 'yeah, they know it all anyway, but no one seems to know what's going to happen' (Allen, 2008, p. 189). It seems that such practices were used not just to promote institutional interests above residents' interests, but to exploit differences between local residents. Allen's interviewees claimed that those representatives most amenable to the outcomes desired by Kensington Regeneration were appointed by it to sit on the assemblies. He also claims that a reverence of a particular way of saying things, in a professional language of scientific investigation, functioned to raise the status and credibility of what was being said while simultaneously denouncing the legitimacy of anecdotal accounts or information assembled by lay actors. This 'Kantian disinterested aesthetic' was used to guard the HMRI doxa, in other words, the partial perspectives in the black box. The subtle crafting of communication in these ways was then complemented by bureaucratic control of those sitting on the assemblies to ensure that residents' representatives were always in a voting minority.

An interesting feature of the above account is the way in which different and competing elements are highlighted in what is often conceptualised as a relatively homogeneous set of interests contained within 'the community'. The preconception that communities exist is part of a Communitarianist approach to urban policy which has been characteristic of New Labour

(Driver and Martell, 1997). It functions to make the disparate views and dispositions which exist among those affected by urban policy more manageable by homogenising them under one heading. In reality, however, communities are far more complex. Allen's account, for example, argues that the residents picked out for representative roles were often those with more positive views on the proposals, or those who were advantaged by what was proposed. These representatives were viewed as having an 'I'm alright Jack' attitude by other residents. In other words, the way in which the proposals affected residents differentially according to where they lived is likely to have contributed to persuading some residents to receive them positively and others to resist. This heterogeneity within 'community' interests is also acknowledged by Nina Edge, an activist fighting demolition proposals in an area approximately one mile from Edge Lane. She asked herself who benefitted from the proposals to demolish her street and those around her and freely admitted that they might benefit a minority living in properties in the worst condition.

According to Allen, the way in which those residents most amenable to the HMRI rationality were privileged with responsibilities to represent other residents served to encourage these residents to absorb, and then communicate dominant narratives to the rest of the community. What Allen is actually charting here is the way in which processes of communication were used in an attempt to extend the black box of housing market restructuring into the base of residents affected by the proposals. He shows, with reference to the following account of a regeneration manager, how differences in opinion between residents were used by Kensington Regeneration to further the HMRI project.

> If a lot of proposals are to be sold to the community… and sold in the right way, you actually want the community leaders to be working alongside you so that they're actually able to bring other residents in. If the community leaders feel as though they're not part of the process it can be quite destructive, mainly because of misinformation going round… We rely quite a lot on the community network to keep sort of lifting the spirit of these other people and helping them through the process that they're going through… We are spending a lot of time getting them to understand the issues so that they can go out and help other members of the community… [resident representative name] chairs the group so she doesn't allow residents to become too negative. She keeps people on board, so it's good. (NDC physical and environmental regeneration manager, cited in Allen, 2008, pp. 185-6)

In the field of regeneration and planning, importance is often placed on the conceptualisation of the community as a relatively homogeneous set of interests. However, the community engagement activities in Kensington were not an attempt to gain a representation of the interests of a group for the purpose of integrating them into regeneration proposals. This was an attempt to influence the interests of a group through the careful selection of 'representatives' whose task was to be ambassadors for the imposition of the black box of housing market restructuring. Their purpose, it seems, was also to gain the appearance of community support for the proposals by disseminating narratives and promoting them by claiming that the end result of the regeneration process would be beneficial for the majority of residents, even if some would have to endure a bit of pain along the way.

At the beginning of the NDfC process, the commitment was that the initiative would be 'truly community led.

> This is not a remote bureaucracy making decisions but an empowered community having their say about their area.' (Richard Kemp, Liverpool City Council Executive Member for Housing and Neighbourhood Services, quoted in Kensington Regeneration, 2001, Statement of Support)

The residents were misled. As local objector Elizabeth Pascoe explains, the idea that this was a remote bureaucracy having their say about an area was actually a very accurate description of what was really happening.

> The starting point for me was before we knew we were going to have a compulsory purchase order dumped on us. The starting point was a thing called Kensington New Deal for Communities and from the early days of that we knew it stank. Several of us, you know, were complaining to everybody that it wasn't right, we weren't being represented. But through that sixteen million pound process that was supposed to benefit our community, um, plans evolved to demolish almost everything and the money sort of dissipated into consultant's pockets. Consultants telling us what we wanted but we knew what we wanted and it wasn't what they said. I fear the Greeks, especially when they come bearing gifts. So this idea that somebody comes along and says 'we've got £62 million for you, we're going to do good with it is nothing new. It was new to me but this idea of a Trojan horse is an old one. Be suspicious when somebody comes bearing gifts. (Pascoe, 2008)

On a number of occasions, some residents felt so disenfranchised by the process that they walked out of meetings altogether and attempted to persuade others to do the same, but enough residents always remained committed to the flawed process of community engagement for it to continue. Nevertheless, the existence of a significant level of dissent became impossible to deny.

Allen discusses the official reaction to a critical mass of dissent in the following way.

> At the point when communicative efficiency is no longer effective, because opposition to HMR persists, institutional denial of the legitimacy of opposition to HMRI becomes manifest in a rigid adherence to HMR 'no matter what' ...the perception that HMR will inevitably produce 'something better' has produced a level of institutional arrogance that is quite literally breathtaking. This is because doxa compels these institutions to interpret working-class resistance in terms of a communication problematic; the objectives of HMR need to be communicated more efficiently and effectively. This has compelled them to define a key implementation task in terms of a need to 'sell' HMR to working-class people. (Allen, 2008, pp. 192-193)

The above account explains why the attempts of residents' representatives to influence the proposals had been so frustrated. Before an NDfC project was even created in Liverpool, the decision about where it should be located embodied a sharp conflict of interests between a commitment to community leadership and a commitment to the meta-partnership regime. Leadership from the community was allowed only where it did not seek to challenge the prescriptive master narratives which guided the meta-partnership regime. Those who persisted to challenge the master narratives' prescriptions were regarded as holding illegitimate views and labelled as unduly negative. Kensington Regeneration's answer to these people was to continually seek to reinvigorate the appeal of the housing market restructuring black box to these new actors. The failure to understand interests as disparate and in conflict is a consequence of a paradigm of action which emphasises the creation of hegemonic interests through modernist research and sees social action as occurring on an institutionally defined linear scale.

The process of engagement with residents' representatives was a time limited one which yielded to a more formal stage of consultation on 'housing and environmental blueprints'. The nature of consultation undertaken at this stage illustrates the degree of autonomy that was

allowed to actors in the community. A quantitative, holistic picture of the views of 'the community' was sought by opening up options for residents and local businesses to engage with directly, rather than through representatives. This was done by producing 'Housing and Environmental Blueprints'. These blueprints consisted of a collection of four documents of which consultation was sought on just one. The remaining three documents set out an environmental audit, an implementation strategy and an urban design guide. In essence, they dictated the 'facts' and principles which would guide the proposals. The environmental audit and strategy listed aesthetic issues relating to the local environment and set out a programme of intended improvements. The implementation strategy tackled more contentious issues; it combined statistical indicators including void rates, house prices and housing condition surveys with advice given by CURS on how to appraise the housing market from a neo-classical perspective. The result was a breakdown of different parts of the Kensington Regeneration area and a prescription for intervention in each of them. Prescription was also provided by the urban design guide. It sought to reconcile the creation of suburban environments, idealised by the housing market research programme, with a desire to increase the population of the Inner Core. However, even taking into account levels of vacancy, it would not be possible to replace high density housing and vacant industrial sites with low density suburbs without reducing the population (Liverpool City Council, 2003a), so the design guide proposed a mix of high and low densities. It also sought to reconcile these objectives with New Urbanist design principles, which emphasised the aesthetic value of continuity in floor heights and set backs between existing and proposed buildings.

Once all of the above prescriptions had been accounted for, options were presented in a consultation document for 'the community' to choose between. The consultation options, however, were all very similar and they left very little of substance for the residents to choose between. Those issues left on the table were concerned only with whether certain buildings in the redeveloped area should be 'landmark buildings' and whether, out of a comprehensive redevelopment of fourteen streets of housing, four streets should be retained or a similar amount of land turned over to open space. A relationship which, in 2000, had been branded as community-led, was now described differently.

> Through the process, a consensus building approach was adopted to tackle the wide ranging opinions and interest groups within the Community. Key stakeholders were consulted in parallel and the team have attempted to resolve conflicting interests into a consensus based plan for consultation. Following the

> consultation events… it is clear that a high level of support has been gained for
> the overall plan. (Kensington Regeneration, 2003, pp. 3-4)

While the above quote seeks to locate differences of opinion within the community, what is apparent is that the consultation options actually left the community with very little material to disagree on. Prescriptions about how to renew housing markets and boost the economy with an economic gateway had dictated what action to take and then urban design principles had been used to set out the details of how the vision would be implemented. The choices offered to residents therefore did not reflect the principal area of disagreement: residents were not allowed to challenge the master narratives associated with the HMRI and the European Union Objective One programme. Viewed in this way, the engagement process was an attempt to extend a pre-defined institutional consensus supporting the HMRI technology by working selectively with residents.

The conceptualisation of urban renewal as an apolitical, linear process facilitated the growth and dissemination of master narratives aligning institutional interests in a powerful assemblage. Accounts of those master narratives in Kensington show that they functioned to marginalise and exclude those whose interests ran counter to the dominant prescriptions. However, this process was not about the straightforward imposition of institutional housing interests onto the urban environment. If it had been, the potential might have existed to create innovative, context specific solutions that responded to both resident and institutional interests in new ways. It has been suggested, for example, that empty properties could be used to house grey water recycling facilities and generate combined heat and power (Edge, 2008). This might, with a small amount of conciliation, have been seen as benefitting the council and housing associations by rationalising the social housing stock. The urban renewal process in Kensington differed from the straightforward imposition of interests in that it was based on a highly technocratic framework of housing market renewal which still claims to know the 'truth' about how society works and how to respond efficiently. Such attempts to know the truth obscure the interests of those involved, and consequently prevent their mediation with the interests of others.

6.3.5 Delivering the ambitions of the meta-partnership regime

It has been shown that a catalogue of tactics was used in an attempt to impose the HMRI black box on those living and working in Kensington. Despite the political appropriation with the engagement processes, the sheer extent of community engagement activities gave the

impression that the process had been thorough. No amount of engagement, though, could overcome the fact that many residents and businesses were diametrically opposed to the delivery of the redevelopment proposals. Furthermore, these actors would resort to the regulations and guidance governing how the Secretary of State would assess requests for compulsory purchase powers. The procedures enshrined in these regulations could not be directly manipulated by institutional actors in Liverpool. While Kensington Regeneration and its partners developed a platform of site-specific policy and evidence to support their case, those actors who objected to the proposals geared up to challenge them.

In some parts of Liverpool, the intention to acquire property compulsorily had not been officially declared and as a result objectors did not benefit from an arena at which they could raise their concerns. There are a number of reasons why residents of Kensington benefitted from official compulsory purchase procedures. In June 2003, Liverpool was declared Capital of Culture and the opportunity was recognised to contribute a new partnership-based source of funding to the proposals of existing partnerships (see figure 6.3). Equally, attempts were made to co-ordinate this new partnership within the meta-partnership regime by claiming that the appearance of Edge Lane would be greatly improved by the proposed redevelopment and would therefore contribute to the city's cultural offer during 2008 if development was completed by that time. There were also other reasons for urgency in Kensington. Housing market research had earmarked the area for early action, probably because this would allow time-limited funding from the EU and NDfC programmes to be exercised. The desire for speed and the existence of dissenting property owners and residents in the area proposed for demolition meant that compulsory purchase powers would be required. If the proponents were to benefit from these powers they would need to demonstrate alignment with the requirements of legislation and guidance used by the Secretary of State to make decisions on whether the compulsory purchase of property should be allowed.

The first task in preparing the compulsory purchase order (CPO) case was to demonstrate clarity and detail around what was proposed. Urban Initiatives was commissioned to integrate the work on housing and environmental blueprints more fully with the EU-funded proposals set out in the Gillespies Masterplan. The revised masterplan which resulted (Urban Initiatives, 2004) was then supported by a Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment (NRA) (Professional Partnership Services, 2004). Undertaking the assessment gave partners supporting the scheme the option to pursue a CPO under powers available in the Local

Government and Housing Act 1989 and also provided a raft of statistical information, which was interpreted in line with the HMRI master narratives. Different options were appraised and the HMRI master narratives were used to direct what was thought to happen under each scenario. An example is the following prediction of what the future would hold if no action was taken.

> Option 1 – Statutory Action Only. (This option) assumes that the area will receive no attention whatsoever other than that required by legal process to intervene where warranted. This would inevitably condemn the neighbourhoods to a continuing spiral of decline with a growing need for more statutory intervention in future years... It would totally fail the residents of the two primary focus neighbourhoods (Edge Hill and Holt) and would do little to address issues in the other neighbourhoods. (Professional Partnership Services, 2004, pp. 82-3)

The NRA was produced by consultants following years of work on proposals for Kensington. Not only were the consultants told that the NRA should support the regeneration process but the assessment itself was characterised by a kind of circular logic. The narratives produced by the housing market research programme had led to the proposed scheme, which by now was well advanced. The NRA now set up a number of options ranging from do nothing, to various levels of improvement, to the approach proposed in the scheme, and assessed them using the same logic and narratives which had led to the scheme in the first place. Nevertheless, the NRA was yet another plank in the 'evidence base' supporting the proposed scheme. That evidence was subsequently complemented by a planning application, which Councillors who had signed up to the housing market renewal process by agreeing policy for the city and the Inner Core were asked to agree. Finally, a supplementary planning document was produced after the request for CPO powers was made, to show further institutional support for the proposals.

In addition to the Kensington CPO, three other CPOs were being progressed in other parts of the Inner Core area of Liverpool. Liverpool City Council had asked for those orders to be dealt with together and had supported much of their case with the same housing market evidence base. This approach was a tactical one which emphasised the city-wide importance the proposals were claimed to have. The approach to compulsory purchase in Kensington also seems to have been directed by an attempt to elevate the importance of the proposals by conceptualising them as having a wider than local significance. The decision was made to use

the powers of a national organisation rather than the generic planning powers available to Liverpool City Council. The two main justifications for the scheme both attach a supra-local level of importance to it. The economic gateway narrative stresses that, by connecting Liverpool to Manchester, Edge Lane has an important function within the regional economy. In addition, the housing market restructuring black box conceptualises markets as operating sub-regionally. The use of hypothetical spatial scales to raise the significance of proposed actions functions to portray opposition as parochial and unaware or unconcerned by the wider benefits which it is alleged that the scheme will provide. As highlighted previously in the discussion of Chris Allen's work (2008), the implicit argument here is that the objectors do not have a legitimate basis for complaint. Thus, even if they are able to make coherent and rational arguments why the scheme should not be supported by compulsory purchases, the reasons why they have made those claims is regarded with suspicion.

English Partnerships, a national organisation normally tasked with assembling disused non-residential sites, was called upon to make the request for compulsory purchase powers. This would be the first time since the legislative basis of English Partnerships was introduced that it would seek to use its powers to assist the redevelopment of a residential area. Unlike an underused industrial area, Kensington was, with the exception of some vacant properties, home to hundreds of people. Nevertheless, English Partnerships pursued CPO powers on the basis that the land required by the proposals was 'under used or ineffectively used' and that the proposed scheme was in the public interest. Following a legal challenge by one of the objectors the initial decision to allow the use of compulsory purchase powers was found to be wrong in law. This was because, in confirmation of the order, the Secretary of State had referred to the affected land and properties as 'predominantly' under used or ineffectively used. By applying this caveat the determination did not comply with the requirements of the law and the order was quashed to prevent a precedent being established.

As a result of the above process, two CPOs and two public inquiries would result from the actions of the local state in Liverpool that have been described in this and the previous chapter. A body of dissent had grown in response to the content of the proposals and was represented at the first inquiry. However, by the time the second inquiry was held many of the residents who had initially objected failed to appear. Many had moved out of the area as more and more properties were emptied and boarded up, either by the local housing association or by residents who accepted offers to purchase their properties. But while the

number of objections from residents decreased, this was more than offset by new support from academics and practitioners who disagreed with what was happening in Kensington. A core set of resident-activists who had guided objection to the first CPO were gradually making connections with other actors whose values and ways of understanding the world differed from the market-based values of the dominant institutional narratives.

In the face of such an enormous institutional momentum, it seems that there was only ever a small chance that the affected residents might challenge the status quo, and a public inquiry on a second CPO led to its eventual confirmation in 2008. Those who objected to the proposals for Kensington faced more problems than most because Liverpool was inextricably linked with the HMRI approach, funding for which had been rolled out across the country. Furthermore, the partners involved with Kensington's proposals had taken great care to assemble policies and evidence relating to planning, housing, local strategic partnerships, housing association policy and the corporate policy of English Partnerships itself. With the proposals supported by such an extensive framework of multi-partner policy support and government-recognised academic research the Secretary of State would have had difficulty justifying refusal without being seen to prejudice the HMRI approach more broadly. This would inevitably have raised difficult questions about the use of public money and the treatment of communities. The illustrations in plate 6.2 show some of the buildings which have been confirmed for demolition as a result of the decision to grant Liverpool compulsory purchase powers.

Plate 6.2: Housing confirmed for redevelopment in Kensington

Source: Better Environmental Vision for Edge Lane (2009)

6.3.6   Conclusion

This chapter has described the emergence of a new meta-partnership planning regime in Liverpool. This regime has successfully displaced the statutory planning process, appropriating its leadership role and confined it to a merely operational function. This is not the first time that the planning process has been amended to encourage development; urban development corporations (UDCs) were previously given statutory powers which enabled large degrees of autonomy. But what is crucial about the regime change in Liverpool is that this is the first time the statutory planning system has been challenged so fundamentally with so little public debate about the consequences. Unlike the UDCs, which resulted from legislative changes made by central government, the ready availability of external funding in Liverpool has financed and incentivised the use of partnerships to dictate what the future of the city should look like. In the case of the HMRI, academics have contributed to the marginalisation of democratic accountability by producing pseudo-scientific research

narratives, which the new meta-partnership regime uses to legitimise, control and co-ordinate development activity.

The trigger for the change in planning regime in Liverpool has been an institutional obsession with maximising the receipt of external funding, something which has possibly been brought about by the prevalence of such funding. The sheer scale of funding available, through avenues such as the HMRI and the EU's objective one fund, has precipitated a need for a stringent form of control. The political dynamics induced by that funding are described in the following report by local journalist Larry Neild.

> No sooner had the (EU objective one) money been agreed than the local squabbling started. An action group led by a group of local businessmen formed their own alliance to demand greater involvement in the spending process. They feared a Civil Service-led body to allocate the cash could harm the potential of Objective 1. (Neild, 2004, p. 1)

It is likely that this situation would have privileged those with the capacity to make their voices heard, while simultaneously drowning out quieter voices from deprived communities. In such a politically contested environment, officers need to reinforce their legitimacy to make impartial decisions, they also need to assure funders of lines of accountability and be able to make quick decisions that meet funding deadlines. All of these factors encourage reliance on a form of legitimacy based on technical case building rather than deliberative and democratic process. While this form of technical legitimacy gives the impression of legitimacy that officials require, it also results in the impoverishment of true legitimacy for decisions by removing an important plank upon which such legitimacy can be built. One result of this has been that those who have objected to the decisions made under the meta-partnership regime have become increasingly suspicious of corrupt practices. This is not to say that practices have actually been corrupt, rather it is to say that decision making processes have simply been so opaque as to justifiably arouse suspicions. Opacity can be a consequence of experts seeking whichever means possible to achieve outcomes which they believe are in the public interest. At the same time, however, the practice of concentrating decision making in the hands of a few high profile officers and politicians while favouring collaboration between the public and private sector does seem to predispose decision making processes to possibilities of corruption.

The extent of Liverpool's focus on attracting funding has resulted in a lack of attention to whether that funding is being spent effectively. The new planning regime has entailed a marginalisation of democratic scrutiny in order to focus on the task of delivery, but the lack of scrutiny means that delivery has had to respond to a party line about what will bring progress for Liverpool. The use of a party line is important because consistency is one of the few remaining resources left to officials who must reinforce the legitimacy of their decisions. In Liverpool, consistency has been provided by a pro-funding and pro-development attitude. Importantly, this radical political stance has emerged from the opportunities presented and denied to Liverpool City Council, rather than from any kind of local political decision. Public sector funding has been pursued by using master narratives to argue that different initiatives and funding pots are being co-ordinated in a strategic way to deliver clear local objectives. Private funding has been courted by scouting for development opportunities and using public funding to bring them forward. Ultimately, bringing private development forward has become more important than deciding whether private development is in the public interest. There is the potential here for some to pursue opaque agendas which they believe to be, and no doubt sometimes are, in the interests of those affected by renewal. However, this situation also results in the potential that public funds are used to further private interests. This may not be corruption in the strict sense of the term, but it certainly signals a fundamental problem with the way we approach urban policy. The biggest problem with this way of working is of course that it marginalises diverse ways of valuing the city, and creative approaches to maximising its potential. Instead, it concentrates on pursuing short term development activity which may well impoverish the city, socially, environmentally and possibly therefore also economically, in the long term.

The Translation of Housing Market Renewal to Whitefield, Lancashire

7.1   Introduction

Chapter five followed the political process which led to the creation of the HMRI. This story began in Liverpool, but quickly extended across the north before ultimately becoming centred in parliamentary processes in London. Chapter six returned to Liverpool to investigate the HMRI in its home city. The fact that these narratives were constructed and implemented in the same place has meant that they were able to respond to specific local problems such as the need to address vacancy in the mixed tenure part of the inner city. This chapter extends the thesis's investigation of the HMRI by exploring the impact that the initiative has had on the Whitefield area, in the town of Nelson in Lancashire. Like many of the areas affected by the initiative, Whitefield has its own history of urban renewal and area-based action. The area became earmarked for clearance prior to the HMRI being announced and, as the premises of the initiative became clearer they can be seen reflected in attempts to inscribe the dominant housing market renewal narratives onto the proposals. Although there are similarities between Whitefield and Liverpool in the way that both places have sought to maximise regeneration funding, there are also important differences. Objectors to renewal in Liverpool faced a policy framework that had been steadily developed from a large base of academic research, which sourced support for clearance from housing associations and regeneration partnerships across the city and which aligned closely with centralised prescriptions. In Whitefield, attempts to progress renewal preceded the stabilisation of a national case for the HMRI and there was no significant housing association interest influencing the process. Proposals for clearance were grounded instead in the perception that the regional supply of housing needed to be rationalised. The apparent poor condition of housing led to the assumption that it was losing residents and had little local or regional value. However, objectors were able to valorise and politicise historical characteristics of the area in order to mobilise a network of heritage actors in support of their objections and develop a more localised housing market evidence base. This evidence, together with community and heritage arguments, was used to successfully pre-empt and challenge dominant housing market understandings.

The chapter is divided into three parts. The first of these describes the conflict over clearance proposals which existed prior to the creation of the HMRI; it discusses Pendle Borough Council's (PBC) approach to planning for the area and charts the formation of networks of objection. Part two shows how the strategies of pro and anti redevelopment actors adapted to respond to the discursive frameworks that were popularised by the announcement of government support for the HMRI. It describes how those who objected to clearance were ultimately successful in preventing PBC from gaining access to compulsory purchase powers. A consequence of this, though, was the development of a stand-off between the two sides, and part three considers how a way forward was brokered. The story which runs throughout the chapter is one of different regimes, which have governed how planning in the area has been carried out. Some important similarities exist between Whitefield and Liverpool, with a more traditional approach to planning, based on scrutiny and utilitarian deliberation, jarring with the introduction of the HMRI's funding-based governance regime.

Plate 7.1: View from the top floor Lomeshaye Bridge Mill, looking across housing in Whitefield to St Mary's Church.

7.2.1 Part One: Clearance Proposals in Whitefield Prior to the HMRI

Whitefield is a local authority ward in the Borough of Pendle in East Lancashire, and lies immediately to the south west of Nelson town centre, which is located just to the north of the area shown in plate 7.2. The environment is made up almost entirely of smaller terraced housing of the style shown in plate 7.1, developed in the mid to late 19th century to house workers in the cotton industry, mainly those employed in the local Lomeshaye Bridge Mill. According to the 2001 census, 72% of households in Whitefield ward were owner occupiers, 17.5% were private tenants, 4.5% rented from the local authority and 2.8% rented from housing associations. Unlike Liverpool, the significance of housing associations as a landowner and stakeholder was therefore limited in the Whitefield area. The way the area is laid out reflects the economic base at the time, with the mill to one corner along the canal and a mix of housing, shops and services stretching to the east. The only building to rival the scale of the mill is St Mary's church, which no longer functions as a place of worship. Employment in Nelson is now scattered between a great many more locations than when the area was built and the population, a mix of white and Pakistani communities, is served by other churches in Nelson and a local mosque in the town centre.

Plate 7.2: The Whitefield area, showing Lomeshaye Bridge Mill, St Mary's Church and the phase one 'priority housing' that was subject to public inquiry. Nelson town centre is situated in the north east corner.
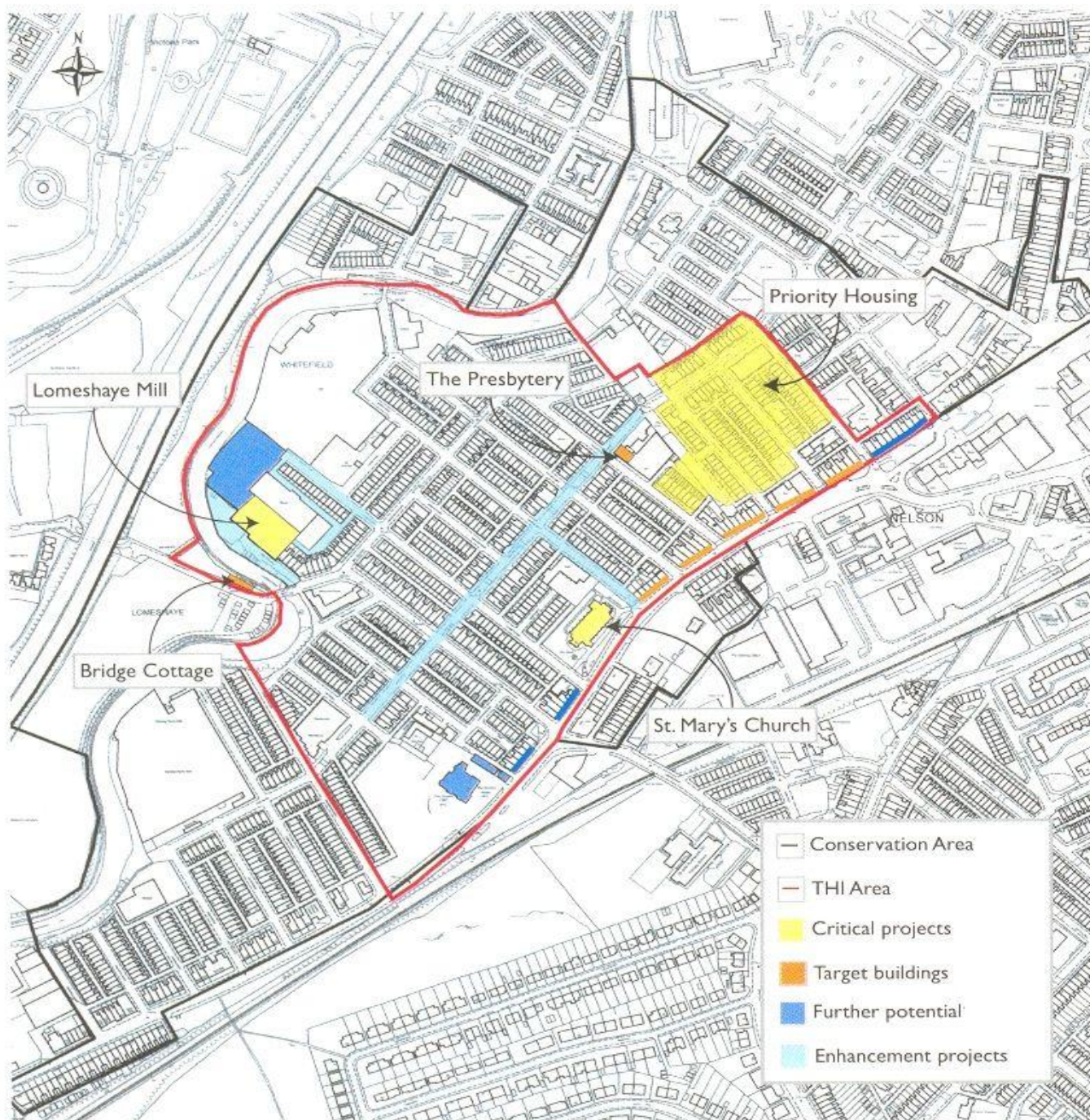
Source: North West Heritage Trust

Implementation of PBC's intentions to redevelop and refurbish part of Whitefield's housing began in 2000, when the council sought to buy homes from residents by agreement. In October 2007, I interviewed a number of those who had been involved with the process since it began. The people I spoke to had attended two public inquiries, a community enquiry by design and numerous partnership and community forum meetings since. Despite this, there was a great deal of uncertainty and disagreement about what had led to proposals for clearance in the first place. Kathy Fishwick, who represented the Ancient Monuments Society at the inquiries, was first involved with the area in the 1970s, when it was proposed for a slum clearance scheme that never materialised. In her view, policies to restrict the level of new house building on green field land in the borough were resulting in pressure to redevelop low value areas of existing housing. A different view was put forward by a representative of a local heritage organisation and also by the chair of the community group Homes Under Threat. They both dated the proposal to a desire in around 1996 to 1997 by PBC to clear the area to make way for expansion of the neighbouring industrial area. It was at this point that the North West Heritage Trust began objecting to demolition proposals. But the idea for an industrial park turned out to be short lived:

> ...the Council then started abandoning its idea for the industrial park because
> they found it sloped down to the canal; it wasn't an ideal land to develop for
> that. So they then thought about all this slum clearance. (Webb, 2007a).

Yet another view was put forward by English Heritage's representative at the public inquiries, and by a local resident, who later became chair of Whitefield Community Forum. Both suggested that PBC had concerns about the proportion of Asian ethnicity households in the area, and that these had arisen as a result of race riots which had occurred in nearby Burnley. Evidence in support of this assertion can be drawn from PBC's case at the second inquiry.

> The specific needs of Asian Families have been taken into account in the
> formulation of the redevelopment proposals. However, the community is
> ethnically mixed and the Council would not wish to see increasing segregation
> as a result of an increasing congregation of the Asian ethnic community.
> (Asquith, 2003, paragraph 28)

The reasons for the clearance proposals become even more unclear when the views of these resident and heritage activists are compared with the claims expressed by Councillors at the

time. In 2000 Pendle Council's Labour Group Leader Azhar Ali said the following of his own party's proposals:

> This has been on-going for almost 20 years and 10 years' [sic] ago Southfield
> was selected for clearance ahead of Whitefield' (Mott, 2000).

Other reports of Councillors' statements show that their justification for the demolition of Whitefield tended to focus on issues of poor housing and deprivation

> The wards, ranked as fourth and fifth most deprived in the country, suffer from
> high unemployment, poor health and poor housing. (Richards, 2000a)

> …it is the 19th worst area in the country when it comes to poor housing
> (Richards, 2000b)

> Councillor Azhar Ali said… 'Whitefield was named the 19th worst ward in
> England and it is important that the Council does something about that' (Mott,
> 2000).

The common factor in all these statements is a view of redevelopment as necessary to improve housing standards and the quality of life of the poor. Implicitly, they locate redevelopment within the traditional discourse of slum clearance.

The reasons given by Council officers have similarities with those given by Councillors, but there is a different emphasis. A neighbourhood renewal assessment was undertaken by consultants two years before housing acquisition commenced, and this forecast a decline in the condition of the area. The report argued that a concentration of low incomes would be likely to lead to reduced spending on maintaining housing and supporting local shops and services (Symonds Group, 1998). A similar argument was reported in the local newspaper which covered the visit of Nick Raynsford MP, the then minister for housing, to the area (Marshall, 2000a). It summarises what are likely to have been the comments of the officers guiding Mr Raynsford around the area. The paper says he heard the need for £200 million to tackle the problem of 'more than 3,000 empty and fast decaying privately owned homes' and goes on to describe Pendle Partnership as 'leading the drive to win government cash'. The second day of the minister's visit is reported in a second article in the paper. Both articles demonstrate the use of a narrative of decline in the foreground of arguments for increased national government funding for housing, something that has also been a common theme in the way the low demand 'problem' has been discussed, both by the HMRI lobby (Groves et

al, 2001) and the Empty Homes Select Committee (Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, 2002).

> The minister spoke of the 'spiral of decline' he had witnessed in Burnley and Pendle's problem areas...Pendle Council chief executive Stephen Barnes told Mr Raynsford: 'You give us hope.' But he warned that, without help, the area's housing decline would be so swift it would be unstoppable. (Marshall, 2000b).

What is clear is that a climate of distrust between some of those who objected to clearance and PBC means that great suspicion remains about the real reasons for the official problematisation of the area. This was articulated in one of the interviews with Sylvia Wilson.

> The Council have their own agenda. They don't tell us what they're doing but they try and work it so as it's in their favour. Our Council is not alone on that, all Council's are the same. They wanted the land in order to rebuild a new estate basically. They wanted the money, they wanted the money in the coffers once they'd sold the land to the builder and they would have got a percentage off every house that was built so in order to get the land they would make up anything they thought they could to get away with it. (Webb, 2007b)

It is possible that a financial motive did influence those who sought redevelopment in Whitefield. The language of decline and the decision to connect Whitefield with racial conflict certainly function to impress an urgency on the need for central government to fund change in the area. Similarly the argument that new, rather than refurbished, housing was needed might be seen as part of an attempt to maximise the scale of funding brought to the borough. There is no firm evidence that PBC was involved directly in the lead up to the HMRI but its actions are consistent with a wider bid for government funding that was happening at the time. The council was also apparently happy to be described as 'leading the drive to win government cash' (Marshall, 2000a) just one year before representations would be made to the spending review that triggered the HMRI.

As chapter five showed, a characteristic of the research which led to the HMRI is its use of the term stock 'obsolescence' to problematise particular types of housing in the north as likely to be at risk of low demand. A council report in 2000 used very similar language, arguing for the need to replace 'outworn and socially obsolete' housing with 'housing that is attractive to the existing residents, and which will encourage the appropriate social mix'

(Pendle Borough Council, 2000a, paragraph 13.5.13). The fact that a similar language was being used in Nelson at exactly the same time as the HMRI research was being carried out suggests that PBC had a level of engagement with the HMRI lobby. Although at this stage the justification for housing market renewal was not fully developed, the timing suggests that PBC's intention was to act early to maximise their receipt of the forthcoming funding. Striking similarities also exist with an example case study used in the HMRI lobby's submission asking government to set up a housing market renewal fund. A case study of a 'free standing northern town' is used, that bears remarkably similar characteristics to Nelson. It describes a context where home ownership predominates and over half of the properties were built before 1919, 40% of which are unfit. In the example 'Small-scale renewal and clearance is already having an impact in some localities (and) residents and communities are committed to long-term renewal' (Nevin, 2002, p. 21). As a result, the generation of around £351 million is envisaged 'which would secure the future of around 20,000 properties and downsize the total housing stock by approximately 2,000 units.' (ibid).

The limited availability of evidence about this period of Whitefield's past, and the decision by PBC to replace their regeneration staff when they realised their CPO had been refused, mean that it is impossible to know with any certainty what the trigger was for PBC's clearance proposal. However, what appears to have happened at this early stage in the development of proposals for Whitefield is that longstanding ideas about housing management in the borough combined with new opportunities to secure funding from central government. The Councillors' comments, and the positioning of Whitefield within an ongoing, twenty year programme of housing redevelopment in the area, signal a view of this kind of action as instrumental to raising housing standards for low income households. Clearly, this is a legacy of the post-war attitude towards slum clearance and can be associated with the discourse of decline which was used to problematise Whitefield as an area on its way to becoming slummy. It is not difficult to see how Burnley's race riots might be used in combination with this narrative to emphasise the implications of allowing a slum to develop in a racially mixed area. In combination, these ideas contribute to a powerful case for government funding. From PBC's perspective, this would benefit the borough by bringing in valuable investment and improving the housing stock. Displacement was not seen as a problem because the housing to be cleared was viewed as being in the worst condition in Nelson. Consequently, residents could simply move to 'better quality' private housing or seek council rented accommodation (Asquith, 2002; Pendle Borough Council, 2000a). Like the

approach to housing exercised in Liverpool, however, this perspective assumed that housing could simply be regarded as a product, and that it could be placed on a universally accepted, linear scale with poor housing at one end and good housing at the other. Such a perspective omits any consideration of other ways of understanding and valuing housing that link it to community, family networks or affectual relationships, that might be produced through adaptation and personalisation, for example.

7.2.2   Preparing for clearance

In March 2000, and following community consultation on the general principles of carrying out improvements and potentially some demolition, Pendle Borough Council declared parts of Bradley and Whitefield wards a Neighbourhood Renewal Area (Richards, 2000a). In theory, a Neighbourhood Renewal Area does not itself prescribe fixed plans for redevelopment but contains statements about problems faced in an area and signifies a long term commitment by the Council to addressing them. Consultation had been undertaken on this basis. It had shown some support for the principle of carrying out some demolition, but the location or extent of this had not been specified. In contrast to this, the report that fed back consultation findings to the Pendle Services Committee contained information about a much more detailed proposal, which had not been made available to residents during the consultation. An appendix of that report shows housing identified for clearance that covers an area almost identical to that of the order land that would be proposed for compulsory purchase nearly a year later. In addition, while it was proposed that clearance of 371 houses would begin immediately, the report gave no indication as to how many houses would be improved. Noting only that '…resources for Major Group Repair Schemes will not become available until Year 6 of the Renewal Area… Terraces will be selected in consultation with local residents.' (PBC, 2000a, paragraph 13.5.18). The principal outcome of the NRA report was therefore to immediately commence demolition of a large number of houses over the next five years.

In July 2000 PBC consulted on draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). This was intended to add design guidance to the policy framework already in place in the Pendle Local Plan and emerging Regional Planning Guidance 13 for the North West. The draft SPG did not consult on the principle of whether or not to go ahead with clearance, nor was it adapted to take on board objections from English Heritage and local residents to the principle of redevelopment. Despite this limited level of engagement, the Council gave authority to their

officers to issue a CPO on 16 November 2000. The (then Labour controlled) Council did this despite calls from the Liberal Democrat opposition to allow English Heritage to carry out consultations into the architectural and historical importance of the area, and letters and three petitions which said that 'demolishing the houses would rip out the heart of the community' (Mott, 2000). Once agreed by Council, the CPO followed the statutory procedure for requesting the legislative power to acquire properties by force. In the meantime, Council officers began offering to buy properties in the proposed clearance areas from their owners. On 15 February 2001 the CPO for Nelson (West) was formally declared and the legislative process began.

7.2.3   Two routes to redevelopment: voluntary and compulsory purchase

Figure 7.1 illustrates the two ways in which PBC attempted to acquire housing in phase one for redevelopment. Funding from the Single Regeneration Budget enabled PBC to purchase housing with the agreement of the owners, and swift progress was made negotiating the purchase of housing from a sizable proportion of the owners of property in phase 1. By the time the inquiry was held the Council was noted as owning 68 'parcels of land' out of a total of 181 in the order land, with terms agreed on a further 26 (Asquith, 2002). PBC's success could be attributed to the fact that it was offering higher than market prices for the houses (Richards, 2000c). Since it was operating in a low-income area with very low house prices it is likely that this would have provided a significant incentive for some owners, particularly if they could find a house in similar or better condition elsewhere and have money to spare. For those in better-kept housing, or with emotional attachments to it, it is possible that the low price of housing and lack of housing for sale in a good state of repair may have made moving more expensive and less attractive (Marris, 1974). This is particularly true of one resident's house where, owing to her disability needs, expensive adaptation work had already been carried out to her home (Webb, 2007c).

Figure 7.1: Attempts to control ownership of the Whitefield phase one housing
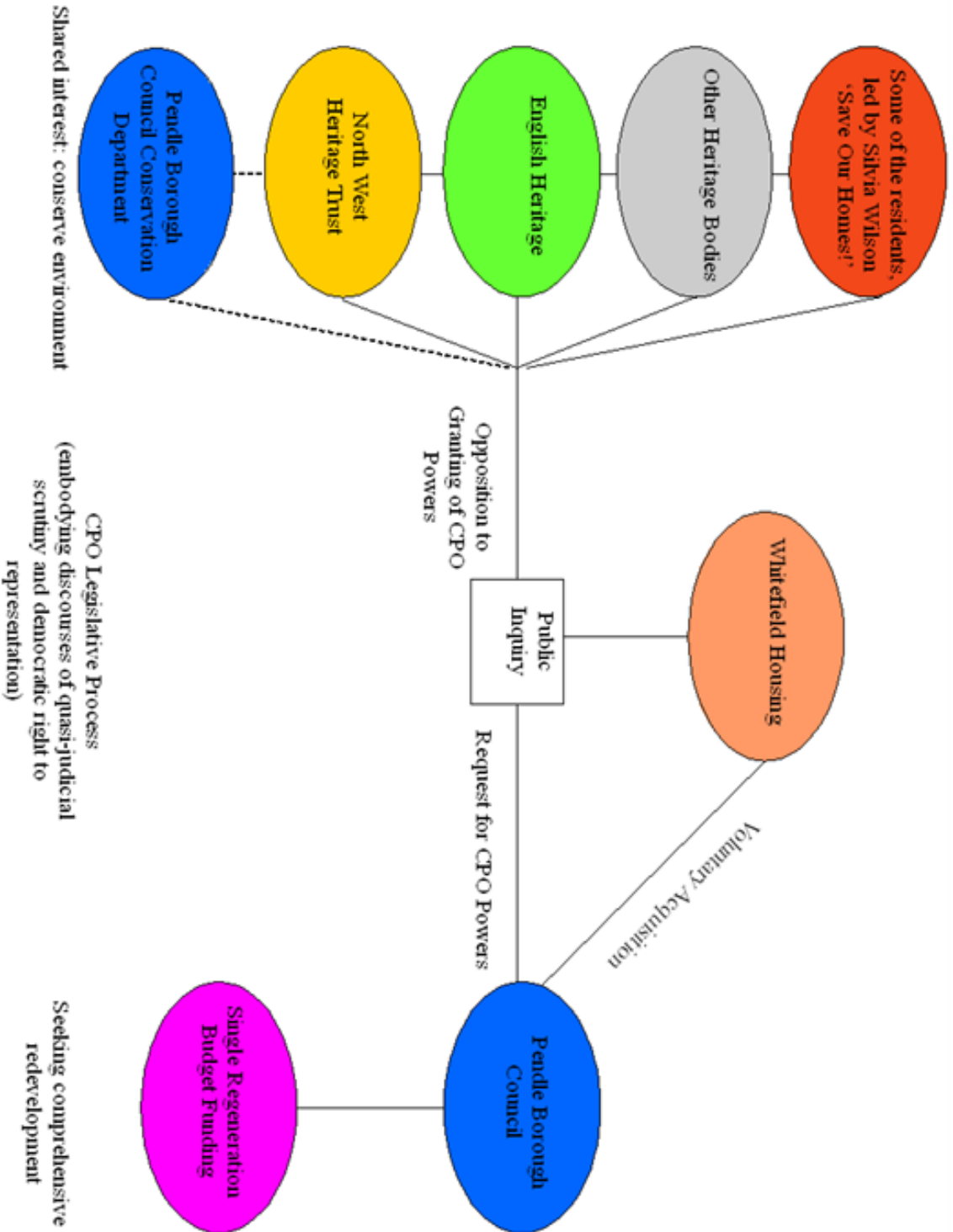
PBC had successfully bought a substantial number of properties in Whitefield, but there remained a significant number of owners who did not wish to sell. The need for compulsory purchase was compelled, not just by these human actors, but by the agency of the houses themselves, and the legal institutions running through them. The physical form of the housing meant that unbroken rows of ownership were needed before demolition could begin. Furthermore, the age of the housing meant that many of the titles bought by PBC were leaseholds, with freeholds often held by absent and untraceable owners. The result was that compulsory purchase powers were needed to acquire these property rights. Legally, local authorities can make CPOs using either housing or planning legislation, but if contested both ultimately result in a public inquiry, which is principally tasked with determining whether there is 'a compelling case in the public interest' (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004a, paragraph 17). PBC used the 1985 housing act to apply for compulsory purchase powers, on the basis that redevelopment was needed to tackle poor housing conditions.

7.2.4 Routes to objection: a network of heritage and resident interests forms

Prior to the clearance proposals being announced, a separate planning dispute in Whitefield had aroused the interest of heritage organisations in the area, and this had an important influence on the way objectors received the plans for demolition. In 1996, the possibility that St Mary's Church, which lies on the fringe of the Whitefield area, might be demolished was identified by the conservation section of the Council. According to its Chief Executive, the North West Heritage Trust (NWHT) was asked to carry out a feasibility study. He recalls the threat to the church in the following interview extract:

> *It was an owner whose name was Dr Sinner, nice name [laughs], and he erm, had no respect for the William Morris/ Burne Jones windows in the church and he was a building, he was a doctor who owned his own building and he wanted to convert it into a nursing home and he couldn't do that so he said can I pull it down and build houses on the site, erm, and I mean everyone wants to save St Mary's Church, that's the one good thing I mean nobody objects to that… it all started with this church, about the council asking us to, they've only got themselves to thank for it, if they hadn't asked us to come and look at it this we probably would never have seen this (right, so they started building the bones of a heritage lobby before...) that's right, they didn't know they were doing that* (Webb, 2007a).

The planning dispute over the future of the church was firmly framed by an art-history heritage discourse which represents heritage as a valuable legacy to be passed on to future generations. This discourse charges experts with defining what is and is not heritage, and with the role of ensuring the preservation of this legacy in a form which reflects it's valued artistic or historical significance (Smith, 2006). This discourse dictated the meaning of St Mary's church to both the conservation section of PBC and the North West Heritage Trust. Consequently, they worked together to respectively protect the church from redevelopment and instead seek a new use more compatible with the values of the art-history heritage discourse. The North West Heritage Trust saw themselves as the guardians of a heritage legacy that they believed was generally undervalued by local authorities in the region. The consequence was that the North West Heritage Trust acquired the church and used it to advance a heritage-led vision for the future of the area by developing it as a training centre to build skills in refurbishing historic housing.

The connection of North West Heritage Trust with the heritage issues around St Mary's Church appears to have been one explanation for the strength of the heritage network opposed to the demolition of Whitefield. Another is undoubtedly the work of a prominent local activist and resident in lobbying for appreciation of the area. Having secured the support of proponents of an art-history heritage view of Whitefield, this activist set out to establish links with other heritage institutions. Something of the mindset framing this route to objection can be gleaned from a letter of representation which would later be submitted to an inquiry by the residents' group of which she was a part.

> 10.6 *We* are the ones to have suffered because of Pendle's decision. *Why* is it that we have to pay obeisance to others thinking when we *know* our own *homes, area, culture, community,* better than anyone else*?* This Local Authority and this Government do not understand this Community or the workings of Whitefield. We are unique. And it is on this basis that:
>
> 10.7 *I ask and invite the Secretary of State to come and see for himself as <u>our</u> (residents) guest. Then he will know that the decision to clear the area by Pendle Council has been the wrong one.*
>
> (Whitefield Conservation Action Group, 2003, own emphasis)

An individual's understanding of themselves is produced through a process of self-subjectivation which is often unstable, indeterminate and subject to change over time. Residents, in particular, are not defined by structured forms of hierarchical or professional

control in the way that those working in organisations often are and therefore it is more difficult to point to a fixed subject mode. However, the quote above indicates a disposition that is referenced in a refusal to accept the subject position provided by PBC, that residents were merely household units that could be decanted from one housing product to another.

The generation of alliances was fundamental to the chance of resident activists to resist the role assigned to them by PBC as households which could simply be used to absorb vacant housing stock in other parts of Nelson. The approach to building such connections is described in the following response to an email interview:

> Question: You mentioned that you contacted the following organisations to ask them to assist. Was that in the following few weeks after the letters were received?
>
> Response: *No, well before then! - In 1997-8 the whole of Whitefield (1,285) and part of Bradley Wards (415) consisting in total of 1,700 dwellings, were put into an Urban Renewal Area. I had been in touch with (the North West Heritage Trust) on and off during 1998 with re, to the NRA. I asked (them) in 1999 officially to help us! I could see that the Council was gearing-up with the preparations for the case of clearance, so I asked NWHT first, then contacted Princes Foundation/Regeneration Trust, English Heritage, Victorian Society, Council for British Archaeology in that order, others including (representatives of) SAVE Britain's Heritage and the Ancient Monuments/ Civic Trust- I didn't meet (the representative of the Ancient Monuments Society) until the first day of the Inquiry in 2002, (the representative of the NWHT) had spoken to her and asked her to attend, which she did willingly - I also asked him to lean his weight on all the other Heritage Bodies (which he did) in case those "bodies" did not listen to me, I need not have bothered as they were fully behind us all the way!*
>
> (Webb, 2007d)

In addition to involving the heritage bodies, local residents set up Whitefield Conservation Action Group. The group appointed an independent surveyor to assess 12 houses using the same definitions of unfitness as the Council. The group told English Heritage about their results and it in turn commissioned architectural consultants Tuffin, Ferreby and Taylor to undertake a wider assessment of the area. The Heritage Trust for the North West, the Prince's Foundation, English Heritage and Whitefield Conservation Action Group came up with alternative plans to show that the Council had not considered the potential for a conservation-

led repair scheme as a more appropriate course of action than redevelopment. The North West Heritage Trust proposed a '50 house roll-over' whereby they would carry out batch refurbishment using original Victorian materials, designs and specifications.

As well as building a lobby and resource base to present to the inquiry, objectors were also careful to organise themselves to maximise their effectiveness, as the following email response from a resident activist shows.

> *We held meetings with the Heritage bodies either in Manchester (at English Heritage's head quarters, Canada House) or Heritage Centre at Barrowford on an almost regular basis...*
>
> Another interview respondent said you worked together as a jigsaw with English Heritage as the straight edge. What were the first things you worked on and why?)
>
> *Actually, I said that because we all worked together, we were like a jigsaw puzzle, if one of the pieces was missing we would have failed. (She) is wrong in saying that EH was the straight edge, it never was. Don't make them the hero's when we all helped! We the residents were the glue that held it all together, without the residents EH would have backed out! Don't get me wrong, we are all grateful for everyone's help and all they did for us, but as I said, if any one piece of the jigsaw was missing we would have failed!* (Webb, 2007d)

Prior to the first inquiry the heritage network had armed themselves with independent actors and evidence relevant within the frame provided by the CPO legislation and established working relationships that would ensure a synergy between various parts of the case made to the inquiry.

7.2.5 The arguments made to the inquiry

While some residents had opted to sell their houses, a small number of strong-willed activists remained, who were effective at mobilising a more general feeling held by residents that they were in danger of losing out. Prior to the inquiry 'Around 240 objections to the clearance scheme and 7 petitions' were sent to the Council (Richards, 2000c). By the time the inquiry was held this number had reduced but still represented a substantial opposition. In addition to heritage and community groups, 42 owners and/ or residents objected from within the clearance area and a further 29 from outside the clearance area; a 146 name petition was also submitted in support of the proposals by residents from outside the area.

The public inquiry into PBC's request for compulsory purchase power over the Whitefield phase 1 order land was held in January 2002. Figure 7.2 illustrates the four principal narratives that were applied to the area by different groups. Those objecting to the order formed an alliance. Residents tended to explain why they liked living in the area and why they were opposed to its demolition, while organisations such as the North West Heritage Trust argued that the area should be saved on the grounds that it is an intact example of a planned settlement built around a Victorian mill. A notable feature of these arguments is the way that the objectors' arguments emphasised the values they attached to place, whereas the arguments for clearance, illustrated on the right hand side of figure 7.2, concentrated on a factual problematisation of the area by introducing a discursive technology which they claimed could predict the future. The case for clearance rested on proving that the area was in decline and that intervention was necessary to prevent the rise of social problems and the aggravation of poor housing conditions.

Figure 7.2: lines of argumentation used at the Whitefield CPO inquiry
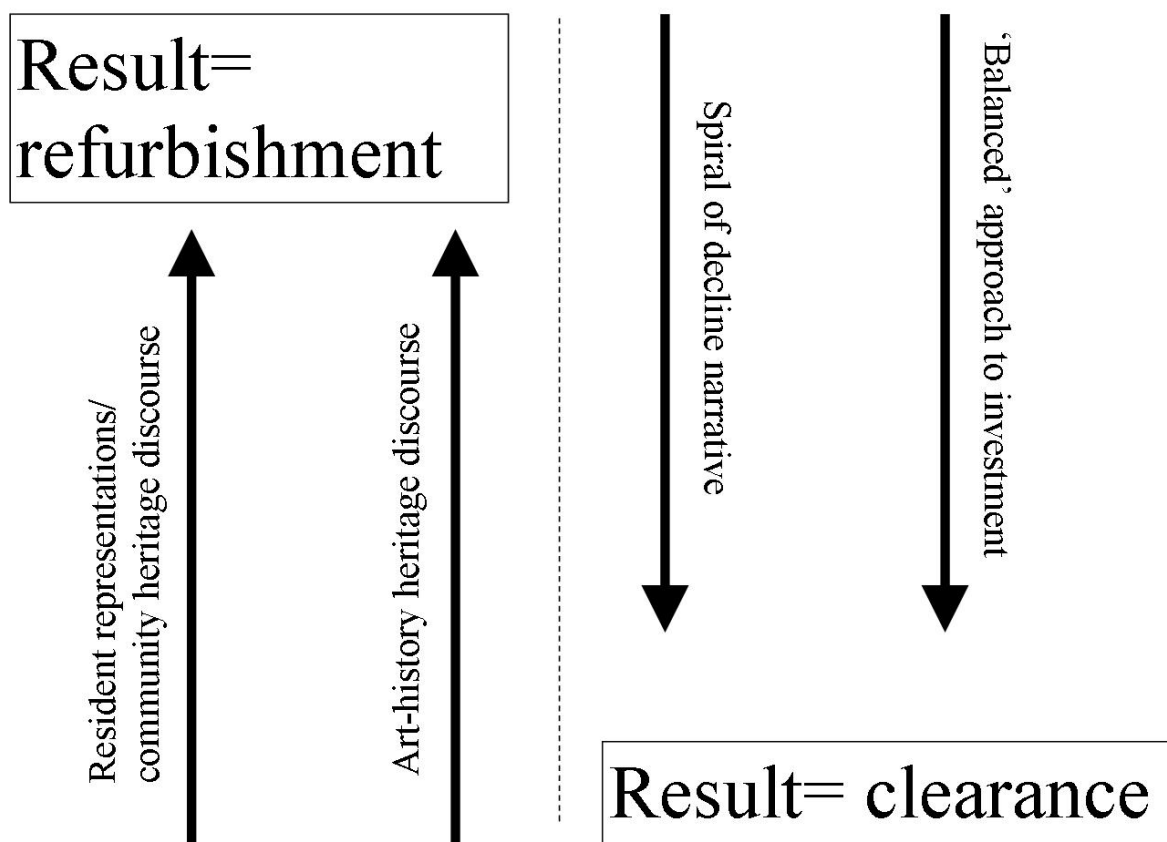
7.2.6   The case for Pendle Borough Council

PBC's decision to pursue a CPO followed survey work to identify community needs and a neighbourhood renewal assessment which had surveyed housing conditions. While a number of issues were raised as a result of these processes, the principal concern which went on to frame the case at inquiry was the condition of housing in the area. The council proposed a 'balance' of clearance and refurbishment in response to this problem, but in fact the proposals were dominated by clearance for the first five years. The Council began by claiming that clearance was necessary because the scale of the housing problem was so great that the cost of refurbishment alone would be prohibitive.

The way in which PBC framed their approach to renewal shows great similarity with the slum clearance era, which was discussed in chapter four, and the legislation used to make the CPO is explicitly intended to facilitate 'slum clearance' (UK Parliament, 1985, section 290). This approach, which to an extent is continued in housing guidance and legislation on the declaration of neighbourhood renewal areas, has traditionally resulted in a lack of attention to the causal processes that led to poor housing conditions[13]. Local authorities have a duty to monitor and respond to poor housing conditions and PBC claimed that it was merely attempting to fulfil that duty within the context of limited access to funds. From PBC's perspective, then, Whitefield was an area of high vacancy in a town that was losing population, and regional policies appeared to encourage clearance in these situations. They cited the draft Regional Planning Guidance as stating the following:

> Draft RPG policy UR6 supports clearance in areas where there are problems
> with housing that is:
>
> - Unfit;
> - Beyond economic repair;
> - Life expired and unsuitable for modern living;
> - In areas of extremely low demand; and
> - Necessary to assist the overall improvement and regeneration of the
>   area;
>
> (Pendle Borough Council, 2000b, paragraph 6.2)

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[13] Since the use of this legislation in Whitefield, ODPM has revised neighbourhood renewal assessment guidance, using housing market assessments and a 'consensus among partners on the strategic direction for the neighbourhood' (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004b, p. 4) to locate the assessments within a wider understanding of causal processes.

PBC's actions indicate that it was simultaneously attempting to improve housing conditions and attract investment to the borough by appealing to as many potential sources of funding as possible. The Council's dependence on limited external funding was illustrated by a question at one of the consultation events on the renewal proposals. When asked what would happen if funding for refurbishment was withdrawn, the director of services confirmed that work would cease (Pendle Borough Council, 2000a, appendix B). Reports to the Council also made repeated reference to funding they were able to access (Pendle Borough Council, 2000a; 2000b). The single regeneration budget was already running in Whitefield and the East Lancashire Housing Strategy was identified as a possible additional source of funding.

> In 'Changing East Lancashire- The Housing Market, February 2000' the first conclusion was that large scale regeneration targeted on particular areas is necessary to tackle *dissatisfaction with the neighbourhood, the environment and housing*. Housing redevelopment combined with other uses is required. The Consultants DTZ Pieda Consulting recommended a critical size of 4 hectares below which private housebuilders would not be prepared to be involved. Funding from East Lancashire is likely to be available to the Council, through implementation of the East Lancashire Housing Strategy.
> (Pendle Borough Council, 2000b, paragraph 4.2, emphasis added)

The scale of clearance, beginning at 181 properties in phase one and rising to 371 for the Whitefield area of Nelson, is broadly consistent with that recommended by the above research. As the highlighted section of the quote shows, the research advanced a negative image of the cheapest housing in the region as unsatisfactory for those living in it.

The consequence of understanding Whitefield through the discourse of improving housing standards meant that it was portrayed throughout PBC's case to inquiry as a place which lacked value because it had a deprived population and poor condition housing. There are strong parallels here with the attitude which dominated Liverpool's Strategic Integrated Investment Framework for the Inner Core (Liverpool City Council, 2003b), that low priced housing in relatively poor condition was valueless and it was therefore appropriate to replace it with something more economically viable. This representation responds to a professional disposition which is chiefly concerned with the poor condition of the housing stock. However, in section 7.2.1 documentary evidence from newspapers, reports and interviews was used in an attempt to explain the institutional dominance of this attitude. On the basis of

these sources, which highlight moments of publicity connected with the early development of proposals for Whitfield and unfortunately do not provide a more complete account, it seems that the institutional dominance of a concern with the poor condition of housing in Whitefield was largely due to the potential for PBC to access regional housing funding, as well as any HMRI funding which might be announced. The consequence was that a representation of Whitefield as problematic undoubtedly dominated PBC's official position, but this understanding of Whitefield as valueless was also matched by a more positive narrative.

> Caring for the heritage of Whitefield and improving the natural environment are part and parcel of regeneration. There are areas of real beauty in Whitefield, although large parts are affected by problems of decay and dereliction. The best buildings should be conserved, cleaned and improved using other grants where these are available or through block repair and conservation/ improvement grants. (Pendle Borough Council, 2000a, paragraph 13.6.2)

The quote's selective approach to valuing place initially appears to reflect the values of an art-history led heritage perspective; it claims that certain parts of Whitefield's built environment were better than others, and therefore worthy of retention and improvement as part of PBC's aim to care for the heritage of the area.

Through interrogation at the inquiry, English Heritage's regional director demonstrated that the real reason for PBC's selective approach to valuing Whitefield was the availability of funding from English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund. He did this by showing that PBC officers had wrongly advised councillors that a conservation area could not be declared inside a renewal area. Furthermore, although PBC had declared two conservation areas within Whitefield as part of the renewal proposals, they had also twice ignored English Heritage's advice that the boundaries of these areas were too tight, and that a single conservation area should be made to cover the majority of Whitefield. The Chief Executive of PBC wrote to English Heritage in response to this advice to provide the following explanation.

> … given the Council's declaration of a Clearance Area certain elements are known and fixed. There is a considerable difference between the houses, those in the excluded streets are manifestly unfit… The Council is not 'wrapping' the boundary around the clearance area, as you suggest. Rather, there are two elements to the Councils proposal, the linear canalscape and those parts of Lomeshaye Road and adjacent buildings which link up to the

> St Mary's Conservation Area… *The conservation area boundary has been*
> *chosen to allow a concentration of limited financial resources*, extending it
> further would conflict with the desire of the Borough Council to prepare
> proposals for the preservation and enhancement of the area… (letter from
> Stephen Barnes, cited in Ratcliffe, 2001, p. 19, emphasis added)

English Heritage's guidance is that conservation areas should be declared solely on the merits of the area. If there is a need for clearance, these merits can then be assessed against it. However, PBC were attempting to use heritage funding to progress refurbishments while at the same time pursuing regional funding, matched with single regeneration budget funding, to finance the clearance element of their proposals. The decision to do this indicated a belligerent view of the area proposed for clearance as valueless and a concomitant refusal to consider whether it might have a positive heritage value.

In a bid to maximise their receipt of funding, PBC used a language of 'balance' to reconcile the availability of funding for valuing Whitefield with the availability of separate funding which saw Whitefield as valueless. Heritage funding was thus seen merely as an opportunity to assist the delivery of a wider strategy.

> The proposed declaration of this (Lomeshaye Conservation Area) and the
> existing St Mary's Conservation Area is a response to the desirability of
> preserving the architectural and aesthetic interests in Whitefield. It is part of
> the *balanced* regeneration of the area involving improvement, clearance of
> unfit properties, support of business and the community, and active
> conservation of the most interesting and attractive parts. To designate a
> conservation area that includes unfit houses would not achieve the
> regeneration aims of delivering homes that are fit for the 21st Century,
> coupled with an attractive, safe and stimulating environment which
> promotes a healthy community, as set out in the SRB6 bid. (Asquith, 2002,
> emphasis added)

At the inquiry, PBC claimed that their principal aim was to improve general housing conditions in the borough, and this argument responded closely to the requirements of the housing legislation on which the CPO had been made. However, the tendency for PBC's case to wander to include new areas, and the tendency for a different justification to be provided outside of the public inquiry both suggest that the case made at the inquiry reflected only one element in a broader set of reasons which compelled PBC to pursue clearance in Whitefield.

There is reason to doubt the sincerity of PBC's arguments at the inquiry because the case they presented was extraordinarily weak. PBC's argument for pursuing redevelopment, rather than refurbishment, was based on an economic, which was no more than one side of A4 paper and consisted simply of a matrix of values filled in by officers, and a socio-environmental assessment of the relative merits of the approaches. While the level of rigour of these assessments and the accompanying condition surveys was limited their substance was strongly contested. One consequence of this was that the inspector at the inquiry took the exceptional decision to visit each of the houses that were alleged as unfit to judge fitness for himself, rather than rely on the contradictory evidence of the Council and the objectors. Furthermore, there were obvious problems with the overall argument. The assessments established the aim of intervention as physical not social: to improve the standard of housing stock in the area. This aim did not therefore consider the issue of who would be living in the improvement to be relevant to the proposal. In the desire to improve housing standards, little consideration was given to the impact of clearance on the deprived residents who would be affected. PBC resolved to offer them no financial support above their legal entitlement and assumed that they would simply move to the next worst area of housing.

> Unless local households have sufficient income they will be unable to purchase or rent new or improved housing in the area and will simply move from the clearance area to the next worst or cheapest housing. Without sufficient income households remaining in the area will struggle to maintain or improve their properties even when the external fabric has been tackled. The distinction between new and existing housing could divide the communities within the Renewal Area. (Pendle Borough Council, 2000a, paragraph 13.8.1)

Thus, even though clearance may well have been the most efficient way of improving statistical representations of housing standards PBC, somewhat strangely, admitted that it would not directly improve the lives of those who would be relocated. PBC's own economic assessment estimated the cost of clearance at £600,000 less than the cost of refurbishment. Being just over £3,500 per property, this difference was relatively small; it seems to account for PBC's desire not to offer additional financial support for relocated residents, as this would have resulted in a similar cost for the two options.

PBC's opening statement and their statement of case focused almost exclusively on the cost of upgrading the housing and environmental conditions in the area (the occupants of the new environment were considered unimportant). As a consequence of adopting this perspective, PBC relied solely on their economic and socio-environmental assessment as justification for progressing clearance over refurbishment. However, the closing remarks of PBC's counsel introduced new arguments in an attempt to strengthen the case.

> The heritage objectors have made comparisons with the preservation of terraced housing in areas where there is a high demand for housing... this ignores fundamentally the different situation in Nelson. It is far from being a prosperous area with demand for housing and an increasing population. Before the renewal area was declared the Order Land already had a vacancy rate of 20% and house prices were falling. Nelson's population is declining. Renovating the existing houses will move the problem of high vacancy rates, decreasing prices and overall decline elsewhere, thereby perpetuating human suffering and leading to further burdens on public revenue. (Jones, 2002, paragraph 23 and 24)

These new arguments introduced a causal explanation for poor housing conditions which had been articulated in earlier documents and referred to alongside other issues in public consultation material (Symonds Group, 1998; Pendle Borough Council, 2000a). However, while these arguments had been used implicitly to frame the case for clearance, they had not been subjected to consultation or previously been made explicit at the inquiry. The reason for this may have been the Council's choice of legislative powers. The Council's use of the Housing Act required it to argue that clearance was needed to address housing conditions in the area. Other factors, such as population loss, could be weighed into the decision about whether clearance or refurbishment were preferable responses but it was important, for legal reasons, that the Council maintained that the main problem in the area was the condition of the housing.

The roots of the causal process which was alleged lie in concerns that can be dated back to the days of slum clearance, that housing action must be undertaken to prevent areas of poor housing declining to form slums. In Liverpool, the CURS researchers had updated this idea by using the principles of neo-classical economics to model what were felt to be the likely processes at play. The same approach was used by consultants working on Whitefield's

neighbourhood renewal assessment report, which preceded the decision to pursue a CPO. It stated that:

> ...the viability of any area, at least in part, depends on the spending power of the residents. Low income levels and low numbers of people in work results in limited expenditure on property repairs, in local shops and on local services (Symonds Group 1998:27 paragraph 6.3.10)

Rather than undertaking qualitative research about where people shopped, and how housing was bought, sold and maintained in Whitefield, the report used the above narrative to assert that, because the housing in Whitefield was cheap and in poor condition, and because its inhabitants were poor and the population of the town as a whole was declining, Whitefield must also be in decline. Positioning Whitefield within a discourse of decline was important, because it allowed PBC to locate it within regional policy understandings of how to respond to failing housing markets.

What can be seen emerging within PBC's argument is a similar line of reasoning to that used by CURS in their housing market research in Liverpool, which was published shortly before the Whitefield public inquiry. Like the early Liverpool research, which had begun by attempting to rationalise stock, replacement of housing in Whitefield with lower density housing was seen as a solution to wider population decline.

> New houses '…will be of a size and type which will take into account the Housing Needs Study completed in 1998, and the Asian House Needs Survey currently being prepared on behalf of the council. They will be of a much lower density.' (Asquith, 2002, paragraph 23).

Both Liverpool and Whitefield also sought to explain low house prices and vacant properties by drawing a correlation with characteristics of the housing stock. However, unlike Liverpool, which focused on the characteristic of housing type and developed the concept of stock obsolescence, arguments in Whitefield initially sought to correlate low demand with poor housing conditions.

In summary, a number of factors indicate that the case PBC gave at inquiry, that clearance was the best way to improve housing standards, was an incomplete representation of the factors which were really motivating the council. There was a poverty of evidence supplied in support of the case for clearance in Whitefield, which contrasted with the reliance placed on regional policy statements. Furthermore, the way in which PBC attempted to dovetail

heritage and housing funding, and their evident reliance on external funding to carry out renewal activity, all suggest that the real agenda driving the clearance proposal was an attempt to maximise receipt of public funding. In order to receive that funding, PBC was intent on a portrayal of Whitefield as a declining area of poor housing. However, the consequence of mobilising this representation is to render immaterial all of the fine grain social, community and economic relations that occur in and through Whitefield. Any values which exists, either in the environment or in these relations, is constructed by the decline narrative as inevitably on its way to dying out.

7.2.7   Representations from residents

Prior to the inquiry, the reaction to clearance from the residents of Whitefield was varied. It would be a mistake to assume that a coherent, ready-made community existed, although it is clear that there were strong friendship and family ties in the area. Whether or not they agreed with the clearance proposals, a substantial number of residents chose to sell to the council. A significant number also chose to protest outside Pendle Borough Council with placards and banners demanding to speak to the Chief Executive. The Nelson Leader reported:

> Whitefield residents applauded when he added 'the Council's Chief Executive
> is not willing to meet us so we will continue having Friday protests and if they
> still don't listen we will go on hunger strike until death.' Mr Manzar Butt said
> 'when the Council declared the Nelson West renewal area it said it was going
> to improve living standards, but instead they are putting us out on the streets.
> They are not giving us any money so we can buy houses in good areas.
> (Dewhurst, 2001)

A prominent issue of concern in the above paragraph is the feeling that the residents would not be re-housed satisfactorily, and it is likely that this concern was aggravated by PBC's authoritarian handling of the proposals, and its decision not to pay relocation compensation.

The residents' concerns about the impact of clearance on their housing situation remained an important issue at the inquiry, but it was complemented by another argument, that Whitefield was a stable and valued area. These arguments can be seen as an attempt to refute PBC's assertion that housing in Whitefield was valueless, and its subjectivation of residents as households to be moved around in ways that would best fill the available housing containers. They did this by addressing the model-based argument that the area suffered from an over-

supply of housing in declining condition. PBC justified its decision not to offer relocation compensation with the claim that there was already too much housing in Nelson.

> For those households who wish to find their own accommodation, there are more than 120 vacant houses within the Neighbourhood Renewal Area outside the area for redevelopment. (Asquith, 2002, Paragraph 21).

Although there were other reasons why the council did not wish to pay compensation, the argument they used to defend this decision was that the principal basis for understanding and valuing housing is its condition. From this perspective, a unit of housing is interchangeable with any other nearby product of a similar condition. The strength of local opposition to this way of portraying the residents was interpreted by English Heritage as evidence that the residents placed value on the historic environment in ways that were more diverse than those legitimised by the established, art-heritage discourse. Thus, while English Heritage's own arguments remained firmly led by the art-history discourse, a representative openly admitted that the only reason they expended considerable time and resources on objecting to clearance was because of the level of similar objection voiced by residents.

Some residents challenged PBC's rational and material view of housing by stressing emotional factors.

> My father left me this property as security. I am proud to own it and the fact that I own my home gives me self-respect and pride. I will not feel the same way if I was forced to move into a council or housing association house.
> (Khan, 2003, page 2)

Other objectors emphasised relational factors which are not reflected in the view that housing is merely a functional product. A community economic development worker, who had previously been employed by the Council to work in the area, used the notion of community cohesion to do this. She acknowledged that 'community cohesion is often rooted in crisis' (Asquith, 2003, paragraph 391) but emphasised the strength of community in Whitefield.

> Despite its ranking in the Indices of Deprivation Whitefield has a far greater sense of community and belonging than most other areas in Pendle. The area's substantial South Asian heritage population, coming from mostly one area of Pakistan, is extremely close, with neighbours, friends and families knitted together. (Asquith, 2002, paragraph 390)

Whitefield Conservation Action Group (WCAG), which was formed for the purpose of objecting to the CPO also mobilised the notion of community, this time to directly challenge the council's decision not to pay compensation.

> The Council decided not to pay relocation grants… The only conclusion that can be drawn is that the Council is simply not interested in keeping the existing community together…The community is to be sacrificed and dispersed in the name of regeneration. (Asquith, 2002, paragraph 368).

As well as seeking to break down PBC's marketised representation of housing, the above claims appeal to a different policy discourse of community cohesion in an attempt to add strength to their arguments.

The characteristics of the community were also used to challenge PBC's allegation that the area was in decline.

> The majority of this population comprises children and young people. The mix of ages and needs is promising in terms of keeping the area alive. It contrasts sharply with areas of Burnley, for example, where the loss of families and young people has set in train a spiral of decline that has resulted in a depleted core of residents who are too old or poor to move out. (Asquith, 2002, paragraph 390)

In the statement above, Ms Yacoub can be seen to carefully acknowledge the general belief in the existence of decline processes, which underpins the legislative and professional legitimacy of housing renewal, but also to firmly distance it from the Whitefield area. She did this by introducing new factors which the council had ignored. Others proposed alternative interpretations of the indicators PBC had relied on. Razza Hussain, chair of the local residents association, argued that many properties were deliberately kept empty to avoid paying council tax (Hussain, 2002). He also opened up an entirely new way of interpreting housing statistics by proposing the existence of housing market processes unique to the Asian community. He argued that vacancy was concentrated in certain property designs because they made it difficult for Asian households to separate men and women and because kitchens were small. Further vacancy was explained by a low turnover which, he argued, encouraged households to buy nearby or adjacent houses opportunistically and leave them vacant until they were needed by their family. He also claimed that racial discrimination led to undervaluing of housing that was more popular than it appeared.

> The Council claims that low house prices are a sign of the area's unpopularity. All areas occupied by coloured minorities tend to be undervalued by estate agents as they are labelled 'rough areas'. In reality these areas create their own internal housing market and houses often sell quickly and above the value estate agents put on them. (Asquith, 2002, paragraph 386)

The arguments used here are considered in more detail later in the chapter because they are crucial to the way the objectors fought the housing market justification that more firmly supported the second public inquiry in Whitefield.

The final way in which residents opposed the proposals was by developing alternative frameworks for valuing place that contrasted with those of the market. Seven objectors stated explicitly that their housing enabled them to live as an extended family to provide support and/ or meet care needs, either in the same house or same street. One of these objectors was disabled and lived in a large house which had been developed to meet her needs and enable her family to live with her. More generally, the adaptability of the houses was valued because it allowed larger families to live in affordable housing by creating one house from two neighbouring properties. Other objectors talked of support they had received from the community when a member of the family had died, and the community was also presented as a safety net which currently existed for those with drug and alcohol problems, which were recorded as high in the area. Some simply referenced the proximity of services in the town centre as valuable. Razza Hussain (2002) attempted to summarise the feeling by citing the Council's own report on the Asian community, which recorded that the vast majority of residents were satisfied with the area. PBC had attempted to demonstrate a negative causal process in which poor housing contributed to health problems in the area, but these representations sought to highlight more positive causal processes by arguing that the housing, and the area more widely, was instrumental to their ability to live comfortably on low incomes.

7.2.8 Representations from heritage organisations

The chief characteristic of Whitefield brought into focus by heritage organisations was the completeness with which the built environment has survived its 120 to 150 year history. A representative of the North West Heritage Trust talked of its value while referring to the map in plate 7.3.

> …we also discovered this was a great historical area. Nothing had been destroyed or altered in it. Do you know Saltaire in Bradford (no) well that's a world heritage site, and if you look at this here that's Saltaire. It's very similar to this with all the streets, the canal, the railway, the shops, the churches, the terraced houses, everything, and it's all intact, and that's what this area is, except that was done by Titus Salt as a model village (uh, huh) and, it's a very well known site, you ought to know about it (yeah) and, he erm, he built this for the workers in 1830, 1840 and the textiles in Bradford was wool, they were far more wealthy really and, this, they didn't have the same amount of money to do it. But nevertheless Ecroyd built, has this plan built, and it's a state village so suddenly we're looking at something that has this, potentially, I'm not saying it's a World Heritage site but its er, it's certainly not an industrial site (hmm, yeah, certainly of some value) so we're raising the profile of it, yeah, nothing wrong with the houses, structurally sound, furthermore, it's a very historic area. (Yeah, and...) we actually, we discovered that map in the library, Silvia found that, and we look at these old maps, early map of Nelson and its shows that that old mill there is the very first, it was called Brierfield cotton factory then and it's the very first mill of Nelson. (right). We bought it, you know, we bought the very first mill and we bought the church at rock bottom prices and now we're showing the value that these places have. (Webb, 2007a)

Plate 7.3: plan for Whitefield model village, laid out in 1880 by William Ecroyd, owner of Lomeshaye Bridge Mill

Source: North West Heritage Trust

The historical development of Whitefield and aspects of its historical individuality and interest are thus brought to light using the tools of architectural research. In this case, the way the settlement had developed gained importance. English Heritage completed an extensive report charting the development of the prevailing industries of the time and the different stages, forms and designs of terraced housing which reflected stages in the development of the town (Wray, 2001). On a guided visit with representatives of Whitefield Conservation Action Group and the Ancient Monuments Commission, they emphasised that Whitefield includes some of the first working class terraced houses to be built with separate, outrigger kitchens, which were added in response to concerns about the health hazards associated with back to back housing (see plate 7.4). They also drew attention to features such as the distinctive treatments of locally worked and sourced sandstone and the characteristics of large, decorative paving flags (see plate 7.5).

Plate 7.4: examples of some of the first outrigger kitchens attached to working class housing.

Plate 7.5: Representatives of local conservation groups explained that porous sandstone had to be carefully placed, pointed and grooves cut to ensure water flow down and off the wall, keeping the building free of damp.

Attention to artistically and historically significant features of the environment in Whitefield was linked into the case for retention by scrutinising the way PBC had approached the designation of conservation areas and by developing an evidence base which documented buildings and features of heritage importance. The argument here was that PBC had failed in its duty to consider the potential value of heritage (as defined by the art-history heritage discourse) as part of its regeneration proposals. In light of the architectural evidence, PBC was asked to re-assess the options in its neighbourhood renewal assessment in order to show more thoroughly how heritage concerns would be addressed. English Heritage claimed that, if this was done impartially, it would lead to a preference for refurbishment. It reinforced that claim by critiquing the economic appraisal on PBC's own terms, arguing that important costs, such as the cost of filling in cellars, had been left out, and suggesting that inclusion of these costs would make refurbishment a more cost-effective way of improving the environment than redevelopment.

The normative logic underpinning the above argument is that the historical significance of an area should be accorded weight and balanced against considerations that might otherwise indicate a need for clearance. Consistent with this rationale is the idea that decisions about what should or should not count as significant in heritage terms can be taken by heritage experts on the basis of architectural and historical research. This traditional approach to defining heritage receives support from policy guidance such as PPG 15.

> The physical survivals of our past are to be valued and protected for their own
> sake, as a central part of our cultural heritage and our sense of national identity.
> They are an irreplaceable record which contributes, through formal education
> and in many other ways, to our understanding of both the present and the past.
> Their presence adds to the quality of our lives, by enhancing the familiar and
> cherished local scene and sustaining the sense of local distinctiveness which is
> so important an aspect of the character and appearance of our towns, villages
> and countryside. (Department of the Environment, 1994, paragraph 1).

Such arguments refer to the heritage value of the area in terms of scale, calling into play ever greater pools of heritage-interested people as the perception of the built environment artefact moves from local to international 'significance'. Thus, buildings on local authorities' 'local lists' often identify structures which are valued locally or make a local contribution to character and sense of place. These designations yield to conservation areas, which may have a similarly 'local' importance in that they do not contribute to understandings of history

which are judged to be of interest and relevance more widely. Listed buildings and world heritage sites attempt to position features as having interest to historians and curators with an interest in national and international histories and the buildings and monuments which they have produced.

This art-history understanding of heritage seeks legitimacy by referencing invisible bodies of heritage-interested parties in geographically and temporally remote locations. A professionalised base of heritage advocates with skills in researching and interpreting the historic environment achieve legitimacy by claiming to act in lieu of these remote interests. They operate within a discourse which represent heritage experts as the guardians of a heritage legacy which cannot future generations cannot fail to appreciate because of its intrinsic value. However, while English Heritage's official heritage commentary was allied to this expert-led view of heritage, the motivation of some of its staff to engage in the conflict over Whitefield's future can be explained by an alternative understanding. This understanding sees heritage value as grounded more explicitly in the way people use and talk about the built environment. This 'community-led' valuing of heritage emphasises the importance of different aspects of the environment; in Whitefield, particular emphasis was placed on the social ties built up over years and the low price and adaptability of the housing. It constructs a more humble professional identity based on the arbitration of different ways of valuing the environment, but it is institutionally weaker than the more established convictions of the art-history led conception of heritage.

7.2.9 Contested futures

Figure 7.3: Representations of future population and investment in Whitefield
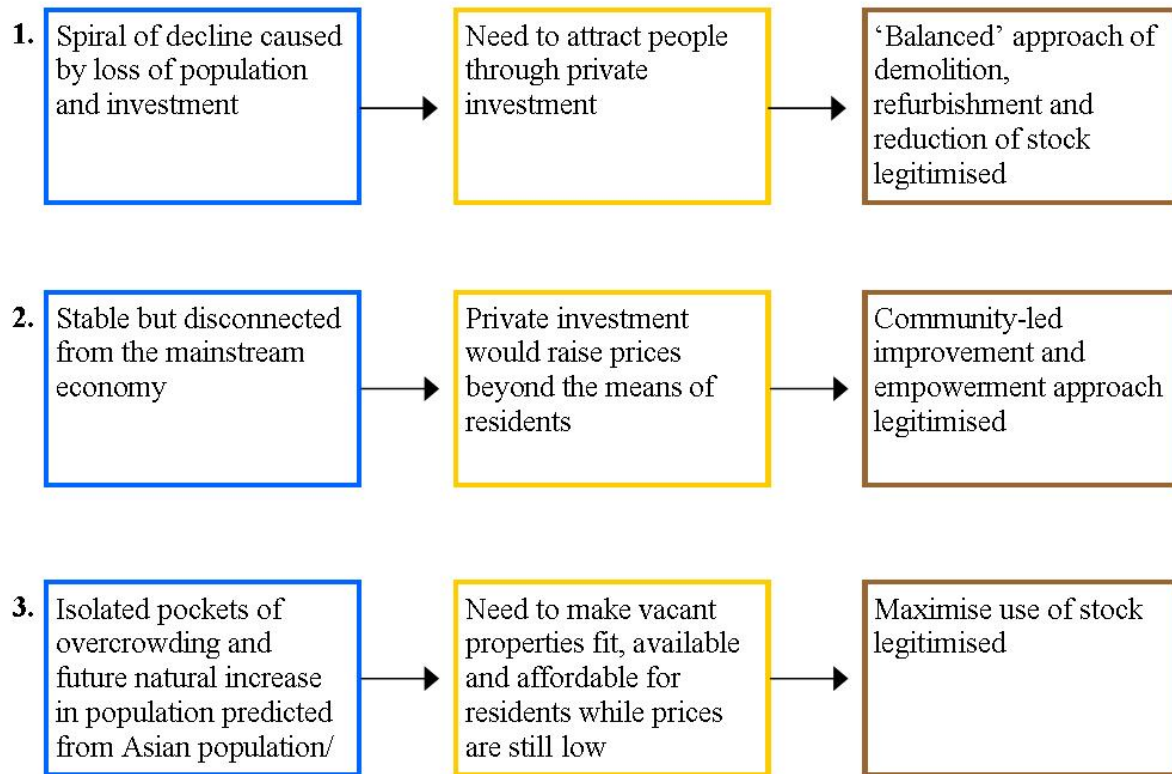
As a result of PBC's insistence that Whitefield was in decline, contest over the value of place developed to become a contest over the likely future of the area without intervention. Figure 7.3 illustrates three separate constructions of the future which were presented to the inquiry and which were still maintained during interviews five years later. The first row in the diagram responds to the official image of Whitefield presented by PBC and largely borrowed from regional research and advice on housing market processes.

> The housing strategy recognises the need to tackle the worst housing conditions in the area in an attempt to halt any further decline and to provide a stimulus for sustainable long-term investment by house owners and the restorations [sic] of confidence in the area by the residential and business communities. (Pendle Borough Council, 2000a, paragraph 13.5.1)

Even though population loss could not be demonstrated in Whitefield, PBC seemed content to assume that population was declining, based on information on vacant properties and declining house prices (Webb, 2007e). The second construction of the future was put forward during an interview with a representative of the Ancient Monuments Society (Webb, 2007f).

Despite not living in Whitefield herself, she described a situation where, for a long time, there have been few opportunities for employment. She talked of an equilibrium between the housing and local economy, which enabled residents to live relatively well on low incomes. Although much of the housing was not in the best condition, her view was that it was far from being a slum, and that the council's obsession with labelling and categorising conditions as unfit or uninhabitable had caused discontent with those who had not previously aspired to unrealistic commodities. While the inspector concluded that many of the houses complied with the technical definition of unfitness, the reasons given were often of a relatively minor nature including cracked kitchen sinks and inadequate bathroom ventilation. The consequence of Kathy's view is to question the idea that increasing the connections between relatively self-contained economies and higher value external locations will result in necessarily positive outcomes for the community.

The third portrayal of Whitefield's future was given by a representative of the Whitefield Community Network, who strongly opposed PBC's view of the area. Rather than emphasising the importance of vacant properties, he pointed to the fact that many of those who lived in occupied housing in Whitefield were regarded by the census as suffering from overcrowding.

> How can you have an area, every time you write a bid, with these areas you talk about overcrowding (yeah) so how can it be overcrowding and be vacant at the same time?... (Webb, 2007g)

In contrast to PBC's prophecy of decline, he saw the potential for a population boom in the area.

> You look at the Census figures for Whitefield what is the age of, how many proportion of people live under the age of 30? (mm hmm) About 60%. Under the age of 18: probably 40%. We've got twice as many young people in this ward. (So, in terms of the future, the population?) In the future, what's going to happen? Where are they going to live? So it's not, this is what they try to say and one of the Councillors said it to me as well, all the people are moving out and they don't want big houses. Well, who says? They haven't even tried it. 'Our research shows' which research? (Webb, 2007g)

The three accounts reflect differences in concerns and methodological approaches and illustrate the uncertainties that are often inherent in attempts to understand the likely future of

urban areas. PBC relied on statistical indicators in an attempt to support its allegation of decline. In contrast, Kathy Fishwick's claim that residents had learned to live within their means was supported by the way many of them objected to the classification of their homes as unfit, and by the relatively minor nature of many of the problems identified. Census statistics confirm the existence of overcrowding and a youthful population. An obvious component of each of these constructions of the future is the potential for them to be used as justification for a particular course of action that benefits certain actors at the expense of others. The adversarial nature of the conflict in Whitefield has encouraged actors to generate different constructions of the future to defend their positions. Rather than setting out to consider the likelihood of such factors as children returning to the area by speaking to residents and discussing the risks of different approaches, issues have simply been dismissed because they have had the potential to challenge the dominant construction of the future, and the proposal it supports. Some might view the level of controversy in Whitefield as exceptional, and argue that in most cases it is possible to gain a greater level of agreement about what the future of an area might be like. What is certainly exceptional about the area, however, is the level of scrutiny to which dominant ideas of how to identify and respond to population decline were subjected. In many other parts of Pendle, and of the north more widely, such scrutiny has been prevented by the incorporation of particular ideas about how housing markets work into prescriptive, sub-regional research and policy frameworks. This level of prescription, and the false certainty it implies, potentially results in damaging policy outcomes by obscuring consideration of the risks to different actors of progressing different courses of action.

7.2.10 Reflecting on processes in Whitefield: a collision of regimes

Housing market research in Liverpool, which was discussed in the previous chapter, developed a complex and extensive base of support for narratives which legitimised the approach desired by institutional actors in the city. That research was used to generate a shared response to tangible problems affecting housing and neighbourhood services, and to lobby government for funding to support it. It was then extrapolated to form a wider case for intervention across the north. By contrast, action in Whitefield was far less well informed by precise housing market arguments. PBC's decision to use slum clearance legislation to justify compulsory purchase directed its arguments towards a concern for housing conditions, accompanied by a relatively vague discourse of decline. The proposal for clearance seems to have been motivated by the appearance of funding, including funding from the HMRI, which

was seen as a way of delivering a pre-existing local project. The apparent consequence was a distancing of the reasons for pursuing clearance from the evidence and choice of arguments used to justify that decision.

Events in Whitefield provide an insight into the characteristics of two conflicting approaches to managing public sector-led re-moulding of the built environment. Although the council's intention to pursue a 'balance' of redevelopment and refurbishment was partly an appeal to established institutional aspirations for clearance, it was also a response to perceptions about the kind of action desired by funders. The council's commitment to securing funding from whichever sources were available, and its emphasis on ensuring rapid delivery, can be seen as part of a funding-based system of central government control. By contrast, the planning inquiry regime is based around the use of scrutiny in an attempt to decide what kind of development will be in the public interest. It implies a focus on whether public funds are being spent effectively and on whether projects are appropriate to local circumstances.

The two approaches, funding-based and scrutiny-based, draw legitimacy and institutional support from different areas. A funding-based approach exploits the potential, described in earlier chapters, for institutional actors to influence representative democratic processes by lobbying and building a strong supporting case. Local actors then address the arguments in this case in an attempt to secure funding, and this provides central government with the impression of control. However, it also empowers transcendent arguments and technologies to dictate the content of local actions at the expense of other matters of concern and alternative ways of interpreting evidence, which central government has not had the benefit of considering. The potential therefore arises, as shown in the previous two chapters, for private interests to dominate how the public interest is constructed. By contrast, a scrutiny-based approach responds to government's need to demonstrate it is acting in the public interest and respecting human rights, but its focus on case by case determination potentially conflicts with the transcendent frameworks of the public interest which funders strive to maintain. In situations such as Whitefield, planning inspectors are placed in highly vulnerable political situations because, perversely, it is not necessarily in the interests of politicians to ensure that their policies operate in the public interest, particularly if doing so places them in situations where local evidence and representations challenge the prevailing policy consensus to which they have subscribed.

7.2.11 The planning inspector's consideration of arguments made at the planning inquiry

The planning inspector addressed the main areas of dispute as: the adequacy of community involvement, the condition of the properties, heritage considerations, regional and local planning policy considerations and considerations relating to the economic case. In this way, actors' representations were framed by interpretations of the requirements of national planning policy and compulsory purchase legislation, and by the professionalised discourses of housing and heritage. The inspector's construction of this framework can be understood partly as a result of previous training and experience and partly a response to bids from actors that certain concepts should be included (e.g. heritage). Similarly, actors used their own predictions of the make-up of this framework to position their claims at the inquiry.

This framework of professionalised discourses and policies can be seen, from the point of view of the inspector, as an attempt to construct benchmarks against which to assess the competing positions of actors. It is with the use of this framework that his final recommendation was made. However, while the process of community involvement could be scrutinised against its requirement in legislation and regional planning guidance, the substance of residents' representations in fact lay outside of the professionalised decision making framework. Nothing is prescribed in policy about how the representations of residents should be measured and weighted and they do not have a profession to draw upon to add authority to their views. Nevertheless, representations must be summarised in the inspector's report and they are too great in number to be ignored. In his report, the inspector resolved this problem by positioning their representations under a section at the end headed 'social and human rights considerations'. This method of incorporation, given the absence of clear professional or policy foundation, can reasonably be viewed as a personal judgement.

The concept of community cohesion was used by the inspector in place of a specific supporting policy. The use of this concept translated the disparate expressions of residents into a neat representation of how the majority of 'the community' felt about the qualities of where they lived. In so doing, it both offered an accessible image of the feelings of the residents and located a conceptualisation of them within a wider Communitarianist understanding of resident neighbourhoods. This position also selectively legitimised those representations which characterised the area in a particular, positive way and raised the potential of the loss of that characteristic as a result of the proposal. Those representations

which raised matters of individual choice or affect, such as fear of financial loss, a desire not to have to move house (new houses possibly seeming alien or needing unknown repairs) or not to have to borrow money against religious principles therefore received little consideration or were perceived to contribute to the representation of Whitefield as cohesive. In this sense, the inspector can be seen to impose a judgement that collectivised understandings of how an area functions matter more than individual gains or losses, even when those gains and losses are accumulated among many households, and even though those gains or losses are likely to impact dialectically between individual circumstances and the social characteristics of where people live.

The Inspector's Report of 10 May 2002 recommended to the Secretary of State that the CPO order not be confirmed. Rather, Inspector Asquith advocated that a policy of refurbishment of the housing in Whitefield should be pursued, stressing that this could be done quickly, given the Council's considerable experience of carrying out housing improvements, to avoid further disruption to the community. Flawed community involvement, doubts about the economic case for redevelopment and concerns about the effect redevelopment would have on both the heritage value of the area and the cohesion of the community were all cited as reasons for the recommendation.

7.2.12 Consideration by the Secretary of State

Events leading to the announcement of the HMRI now coincided closely with the publication of the inspector's recommendations. On 5 March 2002 the Empty Homes Select Committee reported their recommendations that hundreds of millions of pounds a year be made available to fund a long term programme of housing market renewal. The case for the HMRI depended on being able to apply the narrative of decline to large parts of the north of England, and on convincing politicians that the implications of decline would be serious enough to warrant multi-billion pound government intervention. The success of the HMRI lobby at doing this was reflected in government policy issued at the time.

> Radical intervention is needed in some inner urban areas where the housing market has collapsed to make them attractive to a broad mix of existing and potential residents…The alternative is that our northern cities will consist of a city centre surrounded by a devastated no man's land encompassed in turn by suburbia. (Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, 2002)

The government's response to the Select Committee Report was delivered on 8 May 2002, two days before the inspector's report was released recommending that national government should not sanction clearance in the Whitefield area. It took three months, until the 5th August 2002, for Secretary of State John Prescott to respond to the report, and when he did so he issued a letter explaining that he required the public inquiry to re-open, to more fully investigate a number of issues.

> The Secretary of State is unable to come to a decision on whether or not to confirm the Order until he has further information on:-
>
> i. whether the collapse of the local housing market and the high vacancy rate would affect the future viability of the Inspector's preferred option of repairing the dwellings rather than clearing and redeveloping the area; and
>
> ii. whether the collapse of the local housing market and high vacancy rate affects the evidence on the economic case for the clearance and repair options submitted to the inquiry; and
>
> iii. whether the collapse of the local housing market and the possibility of houses remaining empty in the long term affects the heritage arguments for repairing the dwellings rather than clearance and redevelopment. (Bishop, 2002)

The Secretary of State had just announced support for a major urban renewal programme on the basis of research, which claimed that the north, including East Lancashire, was suffering from widespread decline in population and housing demand. The statistical indicators of vacancy rates, condition surveys and house prices that were contested at the Whitefield inquiry were the same as those used to support the wider claims of the HMRI research. The Secretary of State therefore clearly found it politically, and possibly also conceptually, difficult to accept the argument that Whitefield was not in decline.

The second public inquiry re-opened in February and March 2003. It concentrated on housing market issues and how these might impact on the viability of refurbishment, the economic case for it and the implications for heritage, although the terms were later clarified to allow consideration of new information or a change of circumstances. The Secretary of State's concerns related exclusively to the alleged collapse of the housing market and the forecast rise in vacancy levels associated with it. Prior to this, however, clearance had been proposed principally on the grounds of poor housing condition. PBC had used housing rather than

planning powers to request the CPO and the focus had been on the best way to address levels of housing unfitness. The Council's case, though based around a narrative of decline in Whitefield, had offered little evidence of poor housing conditions. PBC had preferred to concentrate on the practicalities of pursuing a balanced approach to attract as much investment as possible. The Secretary of State's letter, which asked for housing market issues to be investigated, thus represented the replacement of PBC's problematisation of Whitefield, predominantly on the grounds of poor stock condition, with the HMRI's wider problematisation of low-priced terraced housing. Question three of that letter can be seen to reflect the attempted incorporation of heritage into the future scenario put forward. It implies that the historic environment could in any case be lost to neglect and abandonment even if the repair option was implemented. Crucially, the letter fails to explore what the effect of this scenario would be on the interests of residents, and the inquiry is consequently not briefed to investigate it. Drawing conclusions on wider events from the text available in one letter is risky and requires the research to suppose what the most probable explanation might be. The explanation which seems to be most likely here is that, in contrast with the HMRI and heritage lobbies, the interests and opinions of residents were not deemed threatening enough to warrant consideration in the letter.

His requests for more information meant the Secretary of State was not placed in a position immediately at loggerheads with either the heritage movement or the housing market renewal coalition he had so recently pledged massive support to. Yet it meant that a decision was not reached until over a year later, on 18 September 2003. By the time the inquiry re-opened PBC noted that, of the 181 properties in the Order Lands, it had now acquired 120, in contrast to the 68 properties owned at the time of the initial inquiry. These properties still remain empty, surrounding the homes of those residents who refuse to move. Whitefield Conservation Action Group noted the consequences in their representation to the re-opened inquiry.

> …Blight has set in with a vengeance with the boarding up of houses by Pendle Council; it has spread a look of abandonment and is giving the area a forlorn, neglected and vulnerable air… the streets are filthy and littered, front and rear walls jemmied and pushed over by the Council, rear yards filled with rubbish and builders rubble and oft times ignored, houses/ buildings left unsecured for days, sometimes weeks, at a time before anything is done to secure them. It is a constant battle to keep residents safe and healthy. (Whitefield Conservation Action Group, 2003, paragraph 4.1)

7.3   Part Two: Attempts to Impose the HMRI Narratives

7.3.1   The re-opened inquiry

In the period between the Whitefield inquiry closing and it being re-opened ,a pathfinder organisation had been established for the East Lancashire area. PBC's arguments were more internally coherent at the second inquiry because they were largely borrowed from the newly created East Lancashire pathfinder. Professor Phillip Leather, one of the researchers who had worked on the CURS research in Liverpool that had led to the creation of the HMRI, was called to give evidence. He drew on regional housing market research he had undertaken to conclude that, according to his model of how low demand progresses, 100% of properties in Whitefield were 'at risk of low demand'. PBC further attempted to situate Whitefield at the heart of the HMRI approach by noting that the area had the highest rate of vacancies of any ward in Pendle and that the Order Lands had the highest rate of vacancies in the Whitefield ward. Despite PBC's ability to draw on this new base of support, the shift in justification to housing market issues resulted in inconsistencies with the case that had been advanced at the first inquiry. PBC had previously framed the main problem in Whitefield as being one of poor housing conditions, and had simply claimed that redevelopment was more cost effective. But they now argued that 'the Order lands are the subject of highly problematic low demand, high vacancy rates and market collapse. Disrepair is not a substantial cause of this... Even with repair, low demand and high vacancy rates will persist.' (Asquith, 2002, paragraph 21). English Heritage pointed out that, up until the second inquiry, none of PBC's supporting evidence had referred to the existence of housing market collapse. Up until the submission of closing statements to the first inquiry, PBC had relied solely on its economic and socio-environmental assessments to justify clearance over refurbishment.

The East Lancashire pathfinder did not engage directly with the inquiry, but it had undertaken housing market research which was used by PBC's representatives in support of their arguments (DTZ Pieda, 2002). An important consequence of this research was a much stronger suggestion at the second inquiry that low demand in Pendle could be associated with an over-supply of terraced housing. The DTZ Pieda research used the same methodology and assumptions as were used by CURS in Liverpool in order to reproduce their problematisation of housing product characteristics. The stock obsolescence discourse was used in

combination with an alleged need to rationalise the housing stock in the region, to reinforce the institutional problematisation of housing in the areas covered by the CPO as valueless and in glut. The implicit argument was that rationalisation of the housing stock would maintain demand and prevent future spirals of decline. The Whitefield clearance area was presented as an opportunity to contribute to a regional reduction in stock because its housing was low value, terraced and in poor condition. This argument was incorporated into a wider strategy which responded to the Secretary of State's concerns by maintaining that the area was in decline, but this time decline was articulated using a language of housing market collapse. PBC maintained that refurbishment would not address collapse because the root cause was an oversupply of smaller terraced housing.

PBC's housing market evidence suffered from a lack of locally grounded accounts of what statistical information about the area meant. Indeed, housing market narratives which had been constructed in Liverpool, and greatly influenced by important housing association interests, were now directly imported into an area with minimal housing association involvement. Objectors had already exploited this weakness at the first inquiry. They had predicted that a decline narrative would be used and had argued that the area was stable and likely to grow in population. These arguments had disputed the accuracy of statistics on house prices and vacancy rates, but most importantly the objectors had also proposed alternative ways of interpreting what those statistics demonstrated. The lack of evidence to support PBC's interpretations of statistical information for Whitefield meant that it continued to be vulnerable to such claims. Despite taking place after the announcement of multi-billion pound support for the HMRI, the second Whitefield inquiry would be the first time that the interpretations placed on statistical data by CURS would be actively scrutinised.

7.3.2 Challenging holist interpretations of housing market statistics

A key area of debate at the second inquiry concerned definition of the terms low demand, housing market collapse and abandonment. Causal processes were alleged in an attempt to place these terms within different constructions of the future. PBC argued that population loss in Nelson meant that low demand would yield to abandonment and market collapse unless the amount of housing was reduced. Conforming with the interpretation of housing markets offered by the CURS research, the council alleged the existence of a process of residualisation in the area.

> No longer would those who have aspirations to live in housing other than terraced houses have to make the choice between leaving an area in which they are generally happy, or living in a house type that suits. Some residents who once would have left would be inclined to stay. (Asquith, 2003, paragraph 27)

PBC's approach was essentially to paint a picture of regional decline; Whitefield was assumed to fit within this general narrative because of low house prices and signs of vacancy. The objectors, however, displaced this general illustration of housing market processes by arguing that a process of Asianification was occurring which showed that Whitefield was valued by a growing section of the population, who were moving into the area and converting the housing for their cultural needs[14]. This was an effective strategy because it mounted a challenge to holist ideas about how housing markets worked. The Asianification thesis highlighted the possibility that local, as well as regional, patterns might exist within the housing market. This offered the inspector a way of distancing Whitefield from the wider meta-narrative supporting the HMRI funding-based regime. In opposition to the general notion that Whitefield's built environment was resulting in forced out-migration, the objectors argued that what existed in the area was not a problem of low demand but a problem of high demand which, because of low incomes, was not reflected in high house prices.

Part of the case for the objectors amounted to a critique of house prices as an indicator of demand and/ or popularity. They argued instead that the area suffered from overcrowding, but that residents were simply too poor to pay higher house prices.

> …if (as PBC state) there is over-crowding on the one hand, it stands to reason that more houses are needed and once the houses are renovated, they will all be occupied. (Whitefield Conservation Action Group, 2003, paragraph 6.7)

> According to Pendle Borough Council Management Team Report to Pendle Services Committee dated 1st November 2000 a total of three hundred and eighty eight (388) people were living in the clearance area. These numbers aren't a sign of a 'ghost town' with high vacancy rates. These figures show that

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[14] There are similarities here with Allen's (1996) account of the Paddington Association of Tenants and Residents Association, who made use of a 'creeping hotelisation' thesis at a planning public inquiry to similarly highlight knowledge that could not have been seen by formal methods of inquiry that focus on certain land uses/ categories of groups within the housing market.

> the area was overcrowded, full of life and energy and bustling with people. It
> truly gave a feeling of a cohesive community. (Hussain, 2003, page 4)

Razza Hussain challenged the linear assumptions within the regional housing market model by suggesting an alternative model that included the influences of race-based choices by buyers and sellers. For him, low house prices were the result of white flight from a racially mixed area. He submitted evidence of estate agents profiting from encouraging 'white flight' in East Lancashire. He also argued that an internal market for housing existed in Whitefield within which

> Members (of Asian households) are willing to pay above market value to
> remain close to other family members. Dwellings immediately next door tend
> to sell at even higher premium as the seller realises the importance of his
> property to his neighbours. (Hussain, 2003, page 3).

In contrast to PBC's model of housing market decline, Hussain's model suggested that a high proportion of young Asian family members indicated a likelihood of population growth in the area.

As with the previous inquiry, the residents organised to present an image of Whitefield as a valued place supporting family and community ties.

> My community is generally a poor community. We live in the houses within
> the Order Land because they are cheap, (that is within a range of prices we can
> afford.) In addition, the way these houses are built suits us. They are adaptable
> because we can start with a small house. We can then buy houses next door and
> gradually 'extend' our houses to suit our expanding families. We can also
> knock rooms through to make the rooms bigger. This is important because we
> regularly have big family gatherings. These gatherings are part of our tradition,
> religious worship and life style. In addition, the way the houses are organised,
> the street patterns suit us. It is easy for us to move from one house to another,
> through the front or back. We feel close but at the same time we can be
> separate. (Khan, 2003, page 1).

Jamilla's representation supported an alternative, racially-oriented explanation for the high levels of vacancy and low house prices recorded by statistical data about the area. The alliance of objectors supported her claims with expert witnesses with long term experience of the housing market in Whitefield and other areas with a significant Pakistani-origin population. The objectors were careful not to completely dispute dominant understandings of

how housing markets work. Instead, they simply argued that Asian cultural practices had not been referenced in these understandings and therefore that they did not apply in Whitefield.

The objectors' references to Asian cultural practices were used to explain why 33 properties in the order lands were vacant. Some properties were shown to be vacant only while repairs were being carried out. Of the remainder, 22 were identified as vacant because they were of a specific design that had no hallways and lacked separate kitchens. The objectors argued that these features were valuable to the Asian community because visitors could remain in the front, living room while women could remain separated, and have enough space to cook. Other vacancies were attributed to a cultural practice of buying property with the expectation that children would seek a bride in Pakistan and that property ownership would expedite the immigration process. Housing might be left vacant to avoid council tax as children grew up or while funds were accumulated to improve properties. It was argued that, for religious reasons, borrowing from banks and building societies was discouraged and community savings schemes were often used which could delay the availability of funding (Webb, 2007g). Thus, the residents did not deny that in relative terms the price of the housing was low, or that some of the housing was vacant, but they strongly challenged the assertion that vacant housing in the area signalled the beginning of an inevitable decline towards market collapse and neighbourhood abandonment.

In summary, the resident objectors attempted to protect Whitefield from a discourse which labelled it as valueless by advancing an alternative portrayal of housing market processes. This alternative explanation of the local housing market was extremely powerful because it specifically addressed some of the assumptions underpinning PBC's argument that radical changes to the housing stock were the only way of responding to regional population decline. A characteristic of the argument for regional stock rationalisation is a distinct image of the way households behave. Stock rationalisation is proposed as a solution, despite the negative consequences for place quality that might arise from lengthy processes of clearance and rebuilding, because it is seen as a way of matching a regionally aggregated number of households to a similarly aggregated number of dwellings. Implicit in this logic is a view of households as mobile within a travel to work area and strongly influenced by the nature of the available housing products, which must compete for their dwindling numbers. The resident objectors' representations challenged the uniformity of this assumption that households are footloose and motivated by the individualised characteristics of housing products. Instead,

their Asianification thesis viewed households as tied to valued cultural and place factors and part of a sub-population which demonstrated a high birth rate and a capacity for a natural increase. A strong political dimension governs the decision on which behavioural assumption to employ. A view of households as individualistic and regionally footloose favours the replacement of vacant homes with 'better' housing products that will appeal to those on higher incomes. The dominance of this view originated in Liverpool's bid to justify redevelopment by arguing that existing housing should be replaced with products that better match the general aspirations of consumers. The normative goal here is the remaking of low income, valueless communities into sustainable communities by encouraging development. In contrast, the assumption that households have a strong affinity with a local community emphasises the importance of nurturing existing social ties to ensure the future sustainability of the community.

PBC's arguments at the inquiry placed Whitefield within a regional pattern of homogeneous housing market processes, but their assertion that households behave in a marketised, footloose and regionally homogeneous way was based on assumptions which had been fed into a model, rather than on any evidence to indicate a lack of diversity in housing market behaviour. This assumption has become so powerful that it has come to define the very boundaries and jurisdictions of the sub-regional pathfinder organisations and the scale addressed by the evidence they produce. It is important to remember the point made in chapter five, that proponents of the HMRI have attempted to build flexibility into the initiative (this issue is considered further in chapter eight). They have pointed out that different sub-regions are seeking to achieve different balances of tenure, using a range of methods. This characteristic of the HMRI can be seen as an attempt to respond to the need for case by case consideration by incorporating diversity into the funding-based approach to planning. However, the evidence presented by resident objectors to the Whitefield inquiry shows that the romantic principles of the HMRI's approach to knowledge prevent it from being able to respond to the possibility that, within sub-regions, households behave in diverse ways that are germane to an understanding of local as well as sub-regional housing decisions. Despite this, the location of sub-regional housing market assessments within a regime of funding delivery encourages local actors to comply with the assumptions which underpin these assessments for fear of losing funding or weakening the overall case to government that funding is needed to tackle population decline that exists on a sub-national scale.

The resident objectors' emphasis on local over regional concerns was reinforced by English Heritage, who argued that heritage issues associated with housing in the locality should be weighed against more general, regional considerations.

> Finding the correct approach in each case requires a full and balanced assessment of the local as well as regional considerations. (Asquith, 2003, paragraph 30).

In doing so, English Heritage sought to use the public inquiry process to distance the Whitefield project from the prescriptions of the wider funding-based regime of renewal action which was developing across the north of England.

7.3.3   Consideration of the arguments at the re-opened inquiry by the inspector and the Secretary of State

The inspector's report, of 7 May 2003, was structured in accordance with the questions set out by the Secretary of State. It concluded that the evidence suggesting that the Whitefield housing market had collapsed was not sufficiently compelling to change the original recommendation not to confirm the CPO. Great attention was paid to the arguments for and against the collapse of the housing market. Consideration of the impact on the heritage value of the area led to the same conclusions as the earlier report. These were that, since the heritage value was considered to arise from the totality with which the original street pattern and townscape remained intact, it was more likely to be damaged as a result of redevelopment than low demand. Consideration of the residents' arguments was limited to a discussion of the legal points that had been raised by their Counsel. There was no further consideration of the effect redevelopment or improvement might have had on the financial or cultural interests of the residents. The implication was that these issues had been adequately addressed in the inspector's first report, which had referred only to the existence of a cohesive and content community and had not considered either the individual or cumulative impact of issues of personal circumstance.

The inspector's recommendation forced the Secretary of State to take a final decision on whether to confirm the CPO. Heritage organisations attempted to maximise their chances of success by using contacts to lobby those who might have influence.

> the second time round we did lots of lobbying erm in the house of commons with other peers and so-on and erm the house of lords and the Prince of Wales then got in (laughs) and the up-shot of all that was the second time round Mr

> Prescott said they had to stay (you talked about lobbying in the house of lords)
> Well I went to um, people like um, the former secretary of state for health um...
> and he introduced me to erm, we had the Princes Foundation involved, it was
> quite a complicated lot of people really (yeah, it sounds,) but I did the lobbying
> in London and they realised then that it was a totally different story to what
> they'd heard, they began to change their opinions then, it's getting the story
> over really …We've had the press involved. Every national paper, the Times,
> the Guardian, and television… (Webb, 2007a)

It is impossible to assess whether this lobbying was effective, but on 13 September 2003 the Secretary of State ordered that the CPO be not confirmed.

In the reasons for refusal, the Secretary of State accepted that PBC had failed to demonstrate substantive evidence either of long term voids or abandonment, of a clear downward trend in house prices, high turnover of population or demographic decline. He did appear to take community representations into account in his decision letter, recognising in paragraph 7 the evidence of 'community cohesion' in the area and the financial strains redevelopment would place on low income households. However, he was careful to distance the decision from the wider operation of the East Lancashire pathfinder.

> He (the Secretary of State) accepts the Inspector's view that until there has
> been a full assessment of the implications of low demand within the wider area
> and a strategy formulated to deal with this it would be premature to sanction
> the Council's proposed approach in this particular instance… He agrees with
> the Inspector that the Pathfinder initiative may provide the means and
> mechanism for fundamentally addressing any broader weaknesses in the
> longer-term. The initiative, when developed and worked up may indicate that
> the demolition of some terraced housing in the region is necessary to
> restructure the market. However, in advance of a developed strategy the
> Secretary of State accepts that there is a case for protecting the Order
> properties by virtue of their contribution in heritage and townscape terms…
> (Bishop, 2003, paragraph 12)

This sentiment was reinforced in paragraph 20.

> *Without prejudice to any other initiatives that might be made to tackle housing
> problems in the East Lancashire Pathfinder area*, the Secretary of State agrees
> with the Inspector's conclusion that in this instance the Council has not made a

compelling case in the public interest why these properties should be compulsorily acquired. (Bishop, 2003, paragraph 20, emphasis added)

7.3.4 Lessons from Whitefield: the need to democratise housing market diagnoses

As discussed earlier, the public inquiry process in Whitefield can be seen as a clash between two rationalities, or regimes, which attempt to dictate how management decisions about public sector-led planning projects should be made. The Whitefield case is particularly interesting because PBC's early decision to pursue compulsory purchase, and English Heritage's extensive involvement, provided a rare opportunity for residents to challenge the assertions of the HMRI research. The CURS researchers had devised a method, based on statistical indicators and the 'nearest neighbour' approach they had used in Liverpool, to earmark whole swathes of northern England as areas 'at risk of low demand', and this model placed Whitefield firmly within that category. As part of their case to government for the need for an HMRI, CURS had integrated this model with an optimum scenario which portrayed refurbishment and redevelopment as being in the interests of all. It argued that areas at risk of low demand were only lived in by a residuum of residents, and that these people were trapped in negative equity and spirals of neighbourhood decline and abandonment. However, these assertions were not challenged because the representative democratic process did not reflect the views of residents who would later be affected by the portrayal of their interests in this way.

The dispute in Whitefield provided an opportunity for residents to reject the roles ascribed to them by the HMRI optimum scenario and confront the causal assumptions underpinning the HMRI narratives. They mounted a defence which challenged both the HMRI's claims to knowledge and its underlying values. By combining with heritage organisations, they made a strong case that the area was valued for reasons that were not reflected in market prices, and they supported their distinction between low price and low demand with data on overcrowding. Instead of agglomerating statistical information on vacant properties into regional descriptions and seeking correlations with a limited range of indicators, the objectors visited the properties that were vacant and sought locally distinct explanations. Finally, rather than building a narrative of doom and decline in order to justify the need to spend as much public funding as possible, alternative, more optimistic futures were explored. The public inquiries in Whitefield provided a forum for the expression of these alternative values and possibilities; one that does not exist within the institutional infrastructure of the HMRI. In

fact, the dominant narratives of the HMRI actively stifle possibilities for scrutinising the values and accuracy of the model they uphold by requiring actors to maintain a party line in order to secure continued government funding.

The Whitefield case reaffirms the problems with using a guarded model of housing market processes to impose a homogeneous, linear understanding of how places work. It was apparent from the nebulous and shifting reasons given for clearance that PBC had decided on a clearance approach very early on, and on the basis of very limited information about the area. Attempts by residents and heritage organisations to reason with the Council about what was proposed were rejected out of hand. This was not an example of an authority making careful attempts to understand an area and planning accordingly, nevertheless, if the objectors had been less well organised and resourced, the CPO could easily have been confirmed. Perhaps the greatest threat to the objectors was the emergence of the HMRI case, and its positioning of Whitefield as one of the most likely areas in the borough to suffer from future decline and abandonment. Yet, ironically, the emergence of the HMRI in the middle of a public inquiry process provided the objectors with a valuable opportunity to dispute its housing market case. By contrast, in many parts of Liverpool, extended processes of voluntary acquisition have been used in a way which has prevented residents' recourse to a public inquiry process.

This lack of scrutiny is part of a wider over-confidence in, or alternatively a lack of concern about, the ability of the HMRI technology to predict future housing demand. The big problem with the HMRI's claim to be able to technically prescribe future decline is that it encourages a portrayal of places as valueless regardless of whether non-market driven reasons exist for valuing place. This directs officers working in local 'regeneration' services to construct arguments and recommend decisions to councillors that align with this portrayal if the service is to have any chance of receiving funding. This regime of funding-based control encourages the homogeneous imposition of a 'balanced' policy of clearance and refurbishment regardless of the reasons for social and housing related problems and regardless of the trajectory of those problems. In the case of Whitefield, the objectors presented feasible and carefully evidenced alternatives to the HMRI master narratives, and asked for the negative impact on their interests to be considered in light of uncertainty about the future. Their arguments convinced the planning inspector that, despite the high status of the HMRI research, the case for decline and market collapse in Whitefield was not secure enough to warrant clearance

action. However, PBC remained tasked with resolving the future for housing in Whitefield. The next part of this chapter considers the impact that evidence had on the continued development of proposals for Whitefield.

7.4.1 Part Three: Brokering a Way Forward for Renewal

The Secretary of State's decision not to confirm the CPO put PBC in a difficult position. It had already acquired the majority of the housing in the Whitefield Order Lands using money from the Single Regeneration Budget. The North West Heritage Trust in particular had pledged its support for a heritage-led group repair scheme at the inquiry, and English Heritage had consistently argued for the housing to be included in a conservation area. However, alternative funding was now coming on stream through the East Lancashire Pathfinder, later to be called 'Elevate'. By the time of the Secretary of State's decision on Whitefield, Elevate had already submitted its Prospectus outlining its request for HMRI funding for refurbishment and redevelopment. The objectors, however, had been in contact with the Prince's Foundation which, after several trips to the area, proposed an alternative way forward. The objectors managed to persuade PBC to commission the Foundation to hold an 'Enquiry by Design' to bring together the parties who had previously been at odds during the inquiries. The report of the event, held for five days between 22 and 26 November 2004, notes that this was jointly funded by Elevate, English Partnerships and English Heritage (Princes Foundation, 2004a). Appendix 4 of the Final Enquiry by Design report states that the intention was that 'the process would be led by a heritage agenda and place design and quality of vision at the forefront of any regeneration proposition' (Princes Foundation, 2004a, page 83). However, a notable outcome of this approach to joint working was that it required English Heritage to accede to Elevate's criteria for releasing HMRI funding.

7.4.2 The enquiry by design process

The Enquiry by Design began by attempting to define problems in the area for which solutions could be pursued, and by trying to reconcile hitherto opposing perspectives. Up until this point the problematisation of Whitefield had moved in response to opportunity, but had always been defined by PBC, who then attempted either to ignore dissenting voices or portray the proposals as being in their interests. The Enquiry now attempted to instigate a process which might be referred to as meta-problematisation, whereby the community were

asked to think about what they wanted for the area. This also helped persuade them to buy into the process and identified issues around which a shared vision could be built. A range of community priorities were recorded including a desire for more open space and leisure facilities. Other actors, including PBC, were also asked to participate in this process, and attempts were made to reference existing policies and strategies.

Most startling within this early process of meta-problematisation, though, was the continued application of a narrative of decline and a discourse of stock obsolescence to Whitefield by PBC's housing officers.

> The existing market has an oversupply of terraced housing that no longer meets the needs of local people. This has precipitated a general decline in the demand for terraced housing in the town and Whitefield in particular and is responsible for the dramatic decline of the area in recent years. This is a widely held belief and one that is supported by the Government through its Housing Market Renewal initiative, which is underpinned by the work of the recently completed ADF. (Princes Foundation, 2004a, paragraph 4.1.1).

> In assessing the regeneration requirements for the Whitefield area, the local housing authority is of the view that some demolition of dwellings in the area is the key to successful regeneration. (Princes Foundation, 2004a, paragraph 4.1.2).

> (There exists) a tendency for supply of terraced housing to outstrip demand significantly over the next five years. The Local Authority believes this oversupply of housing is set to continue as terraced housing will only meet 50% of the housing needs of local people. The Council believes rising demand for housing is likely to be for semi detached and detached homes. (Princes Foundation, 2004a, paragraph 4.1.3)

Numerous references accompanying these statements illustrate a popular perception that demolition was required in order to access HMRI funding (see plate 7.6).

> The new Government initiative (HMR) now coming forward would not easily be able to accommodate the heritage aspirations for the area without the need for demolition. (Princes Foundation, 2004a, Appendix 4)

Elevate is noted as stating:

> Elevate… is charged with supporting the redevelopment of housing decline areas such as Whitefield. (Princes Foundation 2004a, paragraph 6.2.5a)

> Whitefield although a priority must demonstrate a implementable vision [sic] and provide a series of action plan [sic] that fit with the national and sub regional policy requirements of housing market renewal. *Significant resource is available through Elevate but the case for their intervention into Whitefield must be established.* (Princes Foundation 2004a, paragraph 6.2.5b, emphasis added)

Such statements demonstrate that the commitment to working in partnership with Elevate entailed i) acceptance of their representation of Whitefield as an area in decline, and ii) subscription to a problematisation of the housing market in Whitefield that could be defined and responded to with the use of the stock obsolescence technology. This effectively meant disregarding the Asianification thesis, which had been so influential during the public inquiry. The objectors were thus forced to accept Whitefield's position within the official, regionalised understanding of housing markets which had failed to convince the inspector. The significance of locally generated information and representations of the housing market was again demoted, in favour of partial, expert-led policy narratives. The shift from an evidence-based (but conflict-ridden) to a negotiation-based mode of planning enabled the process of renewal to continue in spite of a total absence of any substantive new evidence to suggest that Whitefield was in decline, or that the profile of its housing stock had any connection with its issues of deprivation.

Plate 7.6: Elevate's funding requirements (Princes Foundation, 2004b, slide 7)

The concerns which motivated PBC throughout the neighbourhood renewal and public inquiry process seem to be neatly summarised by a statement of the views of key actors, which was logged in the enquiry report.

> The Council throughout the process was extremely keen to see a solution to the redevelopment of Whitefield… One of their major requirements was to ensure additional resources were secured for Whitefield. (Princes Foundation, 2004a, paragraph 6.2.1-2).

Despite having to accept the regional understanding of housing market processes that they had refuted at the inquiry, the report stated that 'English Heritage are extremely positive and bought into the vision evolved from the enquiry by design' (Princes Foundation, 2004a, paragraph 6.2.9). Interview evidence uncovered that English Heritage had been reprimanded for its actions at the inquiry by senior politicians in national government with the ability to influence future budgets of the organisation (Webb, 2007h). English Heritage's move from a scrutiny-based to a more co-operative role in Whitefield would later be matched at the national level where outspoken remarks made early on, that there was no link between terraced housing and low demand (Morris, 2005) would give way to a statement that the organisation 'had no problem with housing market renewal" (Planning Resource, 2006, p. 1).

The Princes Foundation acted as mediators between the position now defined as 'retain the heritage' (Princes Foundation, 2004b, slide 7) and the need to meet the stock obsolescence problematisation imposed by Elevate. They began by putting the assumption that the area was dominated by two bedroom terraced houses to the test. Site visits were undertaken to identify more accurately the number of bedrooms in each property across the area, concluding that, at 53%, the proportion of two bedroom properties was lower than expected. The visits also found that two-into-one extensions and loft conversions meant that restructuring was already happening to provide larger dwellings. It was then proposed that Elevate funding would be used to restructure the profile of the housing stock by accelerating the conversion process. A further outcome of the enquiry was some demolition, limited to the 20 smallest houses, which were recognised as being undesirable to the Asian community, with investment in the remainder, as well as the introduction of new open space. The enquiry also recommended a new boundary for the designation of a conservation area, covering almost all the Whitefield area. The masterplan that resulted from the Whitefield enquiry is illustrated in plate 7.7.

Plate 7.7: The enquiry by design masterplan. Source: Princes Foundation, 2004b, slide 17)
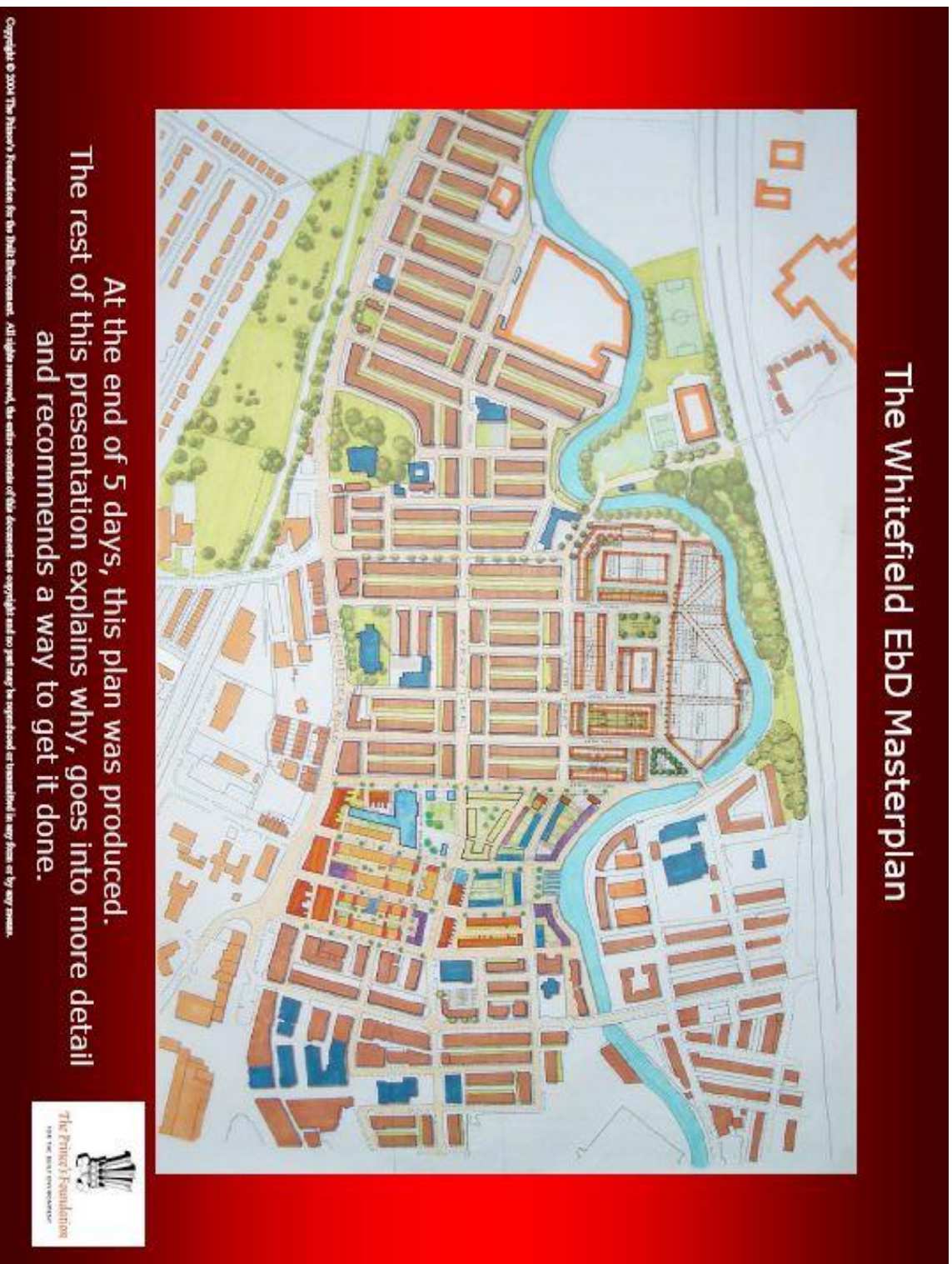
The outcome of the enquiry by design was a form of proposal that all the key actors who had been involved in the dispute over Whitefield's future could sign up to. However, the enquiry process was significantly different to much of the academic support for communicative planning practices. Rather than providing a forum for honest and rigorous testing of knowledge claims, the enquiry resulted in compromise between different positions. Rather than using the public inquiry disputes as a source of reflection on the values and assumptions underpinning housing market evidence, the planning officer's report on a planning application which followed the enquiry, simply saw the event as an opportunity to broker a trade off between different political interests.

> This must be a balance of benefit and harm, too little intervention and nothing will change, too much intervention and Whitefield will lose a large part of its identity and the benefits of the centre ground is that a successful community develops. (Whittingham, 2007, page 6)

The enquiry masterplan, and the subsequent planning application, reflected a continued insistence that Whitefield was in decline, and that the only solution was to restructure the housing stock, but combined this with a greater level of attention to claims from the community and from heritage interests. It is unclear how far this position reflected a genuine incapacity to reflect, or whether it was simply a result of PBC's need to maintain its adherence to dominant narratives of decline and regional depopulation in order to access funding.

The enquiry by design event marked the beginning of a new kind of relationship between actors in Whitefield, based on negotiation and consensus building. Under this new arrangement, the use of various strategies can be observed to secure the progress of HMRI schemes in Nelson and elsewhere in the region. The public inquiry process outcome required PBC to adopt a new policy position on phases two and three of its clearance proposals. The North West Heritage Trust had claimed at inquiry that it was capable of carrying out refurbishment to blocks of 50 houses at a time. PBC attempted to show a willingness to work with the trust by offering it the opportunity to carry out this proposal in phase two, but no funding was provided and only very limited action has materialised. Similarly, Elevate offered to work with English Heritage to promote good practice in the use of heritage appraisals across the region to inform planning documents. While this incorporated art-history heritage considerations more substantially into decisions about the most appropriate

action in renewal areas, it also prevented English Heritage from contesting future compulsory purchase orders in the region. This effectively meant that English Heritage resources would no longer be used to scrutinise the evidence justifying HMRI schemes in East Lancashire. It firmly shifted English Heritage from a potential force in future scrutiny-based approaches to public sector led renewal to a new role as part of a consensual, funding-based approach. It also meant that English Heritage's role became more strictly limited to that of advising on traditional, art-history notions of heritage rather than more contemporary ideas (Gibson and Pendlebury, 2009) that heritage value should be assigned by communities rather than heritage experts.

Under the new consensus-based arrangement, conflicts over whether Whitefield had been stable, growing or in decline (see earlier figure 7.3) were marginalised in an attempt to negotiate a way forward. The Whitefield Regeneration Board was created and used to bring together representatives from key organisations with community representatives, and to take key decisions about the nature of the proposals. PBC was careful to work with heritage and resident interests in the further development of proposals, but the emphasis on consensus replaced the scrutiny of housing market evidence which had characterised the public inquiry process. Regional housing market evidence and the requirements of funders again rose to dominate the direction of the proposals. As has already been discussed, the first outcome of this new consensus regime was a reversion to the official framing of Whitefield as in decline. But the dominance of this perspective, which emphasised the need to rationalise the housing stock in Whitefield, jarred with the new commitment to retaining the majority of housing. The result was that the scheme was left particularly vulnerable to changes to the regional vision for East Lancashire, which shifted from a principal concern with population loss and stock rationalisation to incorporate the idea that modernisation of the housing stock could be used as a route to economic growth (Elevate East Lancashire, 2004; 2005).

The stock modernisation discourse was first identified by Cameron (2006), and is discussed in more detail in the next chapter. Its impact in Whitefield is similar to the way in which renewal proposals in Liverpool also moved from a concern with stock rationalisation to attempts to repopulate the city by encouraging as much development as possible. The idea is that repopulation can be achieved by bringing the housing stock more closely in line with survey information about people's ideal choice of housing product. Because of Whitefield's history, this discourse has not manifested itself in the replacement of terraced housing with

detached housing, but in the way that the housing stock is being remodelled. Proposals have been made to extend housing upwards by using large dormer windows and flat roofs. These have conflicted with heritage led visions for Whitefield because they introduce a new design style. Similarly, plans to attach two or three storey extensions to the rear of terraced properties are at odds with the desires of some actors to retain the traditional form in a similar style to when it was originally built. Although these heritage ideals are shared by only a proportion of residents, the proposed remodelling of the housing appears to be motivated by a desire to attract higher income households to the area, rather than to sustain what may have been a relatively stable and coherent community. At the time of visiting in 2007, a row of seven houses had been remodelled to incorporate an open plan layout with a mezzanine floor, design features which directly contradict the arguments made at the inquiry that hallways and separate kitchens were needed to support the Asian community. Only one of these houses had been occupied, with the remainder having sat on the market for between three and six months (Webb, 2007b).

What is ironic about the story of renewal in Whitefield is that PBC's obsession with maximising external funding has resulted in the unnecessary blight of a low income community with a small amount of vacant housing that was viewed as far less problematic by many residents than the policy measures that were proposed to address it. In its desire to pursue a particularly radical scheme, PBC misjudged the strength of opposition that could be mobilised, and the fickleness of the wider housing market. The lead developer in support of the revised masterplan for Whitefield has recently pulled out of the scheme as a result of the housing market down turn.

7.4.3 Discussion

The second of the research questions outlined in the introduction asked how the housing market analysis approach to renewal sought to deal with competing values and knowledge claims. In the previous chapter, Liverpool was found to exhibit a highly centralised and tightly organised decision making regime. This chapter's investigation of Whitefield has provided a contrasting example. Furthermore, it has identified how decision making in Whitefield has been subject to three different stages, or modes of decision making, each of which have attempted to reconcile the competing interests involved. In the first stage, Pendle Borough Council attempted to define and impose a vision of the area that was formulated between officers and politicians. This vision appears to have been informed by professional

judgements, the existence of a political pet project and the availability of regeneration funding to rationalise the housing stock in East Lancashire. Whereas other compulsory purchase orders in Pendle had received little opposition, the formation of an alliance of statutory objections triggered a second decision making stage. The public inquiry processes attempted, and to a large extent succeeded, in focusing the dispute on competing understandings of the housing market and on different ways of valuing place. The inquiries did not prevent actors on both sides from applying political pressure by lobbying the Secretary of State and involving celebrities and the media. However, they did contain this activity to an extent. The Secretary of State's delayed decision to refuse compulsory purchase powers triggered a third stage of decision making, in which generating consensus was prioritised. Although objectors were able to use this process to secure significant concessions, a consequence of consensus-building was to increase the leverage available to actors with control of the resources for development action. The influence of interests expressed by individual residents and those encapsulated within the community heritage discourse faded; decisions instead became framed by a need to protect the (expert-defined) heritage while restructuring the housing market in line with official prescriptions.

A common factor which has strongly influenced all of the stages outlined above has been the unbreakable alliance between official understandings of housing markets and control of the funding which has been made available for housing investment and redevelopment. The institutional location of that alliance, within regional bodies that were not represented at the public inquiries, has shielded it from direct scrutiny at inquiry. In this sense, the alliance has been self-accountable: accountable only to politicians and auditors from above and to internal reflections from regeneration staff. Those accountability processes have not encouraged reflection on the accuracy and values embedded within the research on housing markets that their actions have been axiomatic upon. Rather, there has been an interest in maintaining the blacked box nature of housing market narratives at the regional level as a basis on which to argue for maintained funding. These institutional dynamics are the subject of the next chapter, which argues that they amount to the operation of a self-perpetuating bureaucratic regime.

A Critical Analysis of the use of Market-Based Theories in Urban Renewal Practice

The purpose of defining primary and secondary research tasks in chapter one was to address the acknowledged gap which exists between theory and practice. The aim has therefore been to explore why practice differs substantially from theory and then to use this knowledge to develop practical suggestions for practitioners and others engaged in planning. To this end, research question three asked 'why does the state continue to pursue a housing market analysis approach despite the controversy that has surrounded the initiative and its changing objectives?' In response to this question, this chapter argues that the form of governance which surrounds the HMRI has led actors to utilise theoretical resources to add legitimacy to existing structures of co-ordination, rather than as a means to open up possibilities for more just and effective policy making. This argument is developed by drawing out common findings from the previous case study chapters and combining these with other examples of HMRI schemes (Walker Riverside in Newcastle upon Tyne and Gresham in Tees Valley) to develop an understanding of the relationship between central and local government in more depth. The intention here is to provide a position statement about the way government attempts to control the HMRI and how criticisms are dealt with by this regime.

8.1 The institutional consequences of a centralised system of representative democracy

So far, this thesis has described the events which led to the announcement of the HMRI by government. It has showed how an optimum scenario was constructed, which presented a particular course of action as mutually beneficial for a powerful network of actors; the thesis then explained the implications of this scenario for renewal in Liverpool and Lancashire. Chapter five argued that the HMRI research and approach rapidly gained support from organisations across the north of England, who faced similar problems of population loss and vacancy. This is true, but the CURS research was not the only approach which had been taken to addressing these problems. In Newcastle upon Tyne, a city-wide response to population loss had been initiated at the same time as in Liverpool, but it did not lead to the same level of pressure on national government. If we look at the possible reasons for this we find that Newcastle City Council did not employ economists to define solutions. Instead, it set out three options which were felt to be the only viable ways of responding to population

loss. There was then a discussion about whether to manage decline, seek stabilisation or pursue growth. This discussion received extensive criticism for being vague, poorly publicised and for not engaging with a sufficient number of stakeholders (Webb, 2002), but it did at least take place at some kind of public level. Ultimately, Newcastle followed a similar course to Liverpool by defining its ambition as 'Going for Growth', a long term initiative to increase population (Newcastle City Council, 2000). Like Liverpool, the city council set about an area-based programme designed to strategically manage and join up the disparate pots of funding it received from central government. Unlike Liverpool, there was some form of open, though firmly bounded, debate about how to approach population loss. By contrast, the extraordinary level of reliance that was placed on academic 'research' in Liverpool can be seen as the product of a greater level of need or ambition for government funding. This in turn is partly attributable to a concentration of vacant properties in mixed tenure areas of the city, where the costs of intervention surpassed the means of the local state. The resultant dependency on national government provided a powerful incentive for actors in Liverpool to define strong discourses that would be more likely to shape central government policy and funding criteria.

The CURS research which was analysed in chapter five was shown to be the result of a process of case building which adapted to, rather than directed, the needs of actors in Liverpool. The need to develop a supportive case in this way is one product of a model of representative democracy, which Patsy Healey describes as follows.

> The model encourages the development of hierarchically structured bureaucracies, focused around technical and administrative expertise, in which officials justify their actions and decisions upwards to their seniors and the politicians to whom these are accountable, rather than outwards to 'people'…
> This model provides fertile ground for a form of policy planning which emphasises technical and legal reasoning, in relation to policy objectives.
> (Healey, 1997, p. 221)

In principle, one advantage of representative democracy is that it creates clear lines of accountability for decisions, with politicians responsible for pursuing the public interest and accountable to the public through the ballot box. But a widely recognised problem is that officials 'cannot "know enough" about issues and our concerns about them to advise politicians sufficiently' (ibid, p. 222).

This thesis' account of the construction of an optimum scenario is directly related to this issue of what we can know about urban problems. It described how the public interest was defined by those who lobbied for the creation of the HMRI. It showed that ways of moving policy forward are not found; they have to be constructed in an environment of partiality that privileges certain actors' approaches to, and constructions of, the public interest. While this process can lead to debate between alternative constructions of the public interest, it can also generate systematic marginalisation, since access to decision makers and the resources need to build convincing cases is unequal. The government's policies on vacancy and population loss also illustrate two further problems with this approach to democracy. Politicians need to defend their decisions, and this can create a party political momentum behind a particular way of framing the public interest that inhibits flexibility. Furthermore, the system of representative democracy favours the creation of prescriptive, transcendent rules, rather than diverse and creative local solutions, and this tendency is reinforced by the highly centralised system of government in the UK.

If we view the public interest as something which actors must actively compete with each other to discuss and define then it allows us to consider periods of policy agreement in a new way. The discussion of the history of urban renewal in chapter four discussed the creation and maintenance of the slum clearance consensus in the 1950s, 60s and early 70s and the approach to the inner cities that was manifested in the Inner Area Studies of the late 1970s. There are clear parallels between these policy approaches and the HMRI's path to intervention. I argued that an underlying integrationist way of thinking framed the public interest in a way which supported the profession of urban management and the financial interests of inner city local authorities.

Like the examples above, the HMRI's optimum scenario offered a distinct reading of the public interest to government. The partial nature of the interests served by the HMRI's optimum scenario was concealed under a veil of technical rationalism, a black box which sought to displace resistance with the claim that research had found an objective solution to post-industrial decline. Earlier policy consensuses, around slum clearance and the inner cities, were also founded on a shared understanding of how the world worked and, across the board, what the required policy response was. An example of this is the notion that working class incomes do not produce an acceptable standard of housing, and that the state's response must be to directly provide (or replace) housing, rather than to redistribute income. After a time,

notions such as this become a settled part of the psyche of the housing and planning professional and can be read off from work such as Gibson and Langstaff (1982). Politically constructed, transcendent notions of the public interest receive institutionally stability and rigidity as they become embedded in the outlook and set of skills of certain urban professionals.

The achievement of habitual ways of thinking about housing, such as the idea that there are too many terraced houses, can be understood as the product of a successful endeavour of black boxing a particular policy stance and view of the world. Much of central government activity can be thought of in this way, as a process of generating particular constructions of the public interest and seeking to black box them by presenting them as the best response, while disguising the nature of their construction and the interests they respond to most. Transcendent, top down policy 'consensuses' result, some of which are fastened more securely than others and are therefore able to endure through wider periods of political change, stifling alternative constructions of the public interest. This is not to overly dramatise the nature of government; attempts to discursively expand the basis of support for a particular policy approach are only natural and are perfectly consistent with the route to accountability advocated by the model of representative democracy. But a representative democratic system requires certain controls and guarantees to ensure that funding and policy decisions are carried out in accordance with the wishes of elected representatives. The need for these controls leads to forms of governance that encourage policies to respond rigidly to a simplified, politicised and abstracted representation of events. The existence of these processes means that we should not be surprised when policies do not change the world in the way their proponents profess that they will[15].

A conceptualisation of democratic process in this way is not widely understood or accepted, but the more general argument, that top-down processes of governmental control can lead to rigid and ineffective policy, is well-established. One of the principal reasons for this is the failure associated with high rise social housing provision in the 1960s and 70s. It appears that

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[15] One consequence of the UK's democratic infrastructure was highlighted by a friend of mine who used to work as a local authority community development worker. He said that he began the job with the impression that he would be finding out about issues and needs in the community and then looking for solutions. He quickly came to realise, however, that the nature of the job was actually to approach the community to say 'we have funding for x, y and z, do you want it or not?'.

those who designed and advocated the HMRI had some awareness of these problems. Shortly prior to beginning housing market research in Liverpool, Brendan Nevin himself published articles extolling the need for communities to be in control of regeneration (Nevin and Shiner, 1995). Furthermore, researchers at CURS did attempt to build diversity and flexibility into their approach. We might empathise with the HMRI proponents, who found themselves trapped between a need to produce a 'factual', air tight case and the knowledge that doing so would be likely to result in an inflexible approach with damaging consequences for communities and the environment. The proponents' answer to this dilemma was examined in chapter five. They claimed that 'unlike the clearance programmes of the 1950s and 1960s, the initiative is responding to and anticipating market change' (Cole and Nevin, 2004, p. xi). The argument here is that pathfinders have aims which are specific to their sub-regional areas: some pathfinders, for example, are seeking to increase owner occupation, while others are seeking to reduce it.

Although there is some diversity in the pathfinders' actions, they all argue that their aim is to balance housing markets by reordering characteristics of the housing stock to align with consumer aspirations. Furthermore, they all define this goal using the same epistemological approach, which combines statistical information with a menu of transcendent, political narratives about how markets work. This is a uniform architecture which responds to the public interest constructed by CURS (analysed in chapter five). The research environment in which sub-regional housing market assessments are carried out selects romantic, marketised discourses such as those discussed in chapter five, and uses them to decide how to interpret sub-regional statistical information. In its very early form, this scientistic environment was used as a foundation for strong, city-wide leadership; there was some logic to this because at this point the HMRI was effectively a stock rationalisation exercise that responded to population loss. As the initiative developed, however, the combination of top down leadership with transcendent discourses has instead been used to privilege certain institutional interests. In Liverpool, it has been used to promote the goal of creating financially healthy housing associations above other planning considerations. In other locations, such as Whitefield, HMRI schemes have been forced to comply with the initiative's funding constraints, which reflect the interests that research in Liverpool evolved to support during 1999- 2001. The initiative's path-dependent nature means that its discursive legitimisation supports a particular configuration and expression of institutional interests. The maintenance of this support prevents the integration of observations and concerns from other actors which

would lead to a more honest interpretation of housing market activity. In sum, attempts to introduce flexibility within the HMRI have been stifled by a structure of control that is biased in favour of expert knowledge and pro-development interests. This control structure's monopoly on knowledge production offers government an imperfect means of control at a distance through audit processes that align themselves with the partial premises that underpin the initiative's rationale (see figure 8.1).

8.2   The conflicting roles of housing market assessments

Chapter six described how a black box grew up in Liverpool to co-ordinate action with other programmes in the city. The evidence discussed below explains the use of that black box in locations throughout the north of England, Scotland and Northern Ireland[16] as an integral part of the way in which government has sought to control and regulate the initiative. The cornerstone of this approach to control is the use of sub-regional housing market assessments. These assessments provide the 'evidential' support required by the statutory planning process and, if the scheme is a direct recipient of HMRI funding, they provide legitimisation for the kind of interventions that funding will be spent on. This process is described in figure 8.1 and is illustrated by the approach taken in Tees Valley, where a partnership was set up to mimic HMRI processes in the hope of attracting government funding. A 73 page housing market assessment carried out by consultants presents a host of statistics that are purported to describe the market situation in Tees Valley (DCHR with Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners, 2005). Interpretation of that information, however, is drawn from the idea that the terraced housing stock is in oversupply.

> Research confirms that vulnerable areas are typified as having poor neighbourhood conditions, a high proportion of small terraced housing, a high proportion of social rented stock and low property values. (DCHR with Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners, 2005, p. 48)

The argument above is produced by conceptualising the world in terms of housing products and consumers. This mode of thought has been packaged and transported from its origin in CURS' Liverpool research. Replication of the approach invokes the same circular logic that was used to justify demolition of Liverpool's Inner Core after the decision to pursue demolition had already been taken. In both Liverpool and Tees Valley, consultants chose to

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[16] See Glynn (2008) for a discussion of these discourses in Dundee. They have also been used in Ulster (see Williamson Consulting, 2009) and in urban renewal schemes across the north of England.

ask households about their ideal type of housing. In doing so, they sought to use the answer to the question 'new housing is needed, what should it be like?' to support the assertion that 'new housing is needed'.

The process of black boxing occurs when the instrumental logic and political premises of the above approach are concealed, and the result is rebranded as objective research for the purpose of informing planning policy making and government funding decisions. This task has to be continually performed for the black box to remain closed, and the government's guidance on housing market assessments currently assists this performance. It states that

> A robust and credible evidence base is identified by PPS12 as being necessary for a plan to be sound. In line with PPS12, for the purposes of the independent examination into the soundness of a Development Plan Document, *a strategic housing market assessment should be considered robust and credible if, as a minimum, it provides all of the core outputs and meets the requirements of all of the process criteria in figures 1.1 and 1.2.* In such circumstances, there is no need for the approach used to be considered at the independent examination. Any discussion at independent examination should focus upon the assessment's findings and its relationship with the proposed spatial policies for housing set out in the draft submission development plan document. (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2007, p. 9, emphasis in original)

The figures 1.1 and 1.2 that the above quote refers to are reproduced in appendix three for information, but they require the definition and measurement of the housing stock and a pool of households according to certain categories. The approach which is advocated is therefore closely allied to the one developed in Liverpool, which begins with a predefined intention to identify problems with the housing market in a lack of balance between housing offer and consumer aspirations. The consequence of embedding this approach in the above guidance is that the HMRI black box is transported to locations across the country, where the approach is encouraged as part of developing strategic housing policies. Although guidance encourages community involvement, housing market assessments are presented as technical documents; critical scrutiny of their neo-classical economic foundations is a highly specialised and skilled task. Indeed, one of the defining characteristics of a black box is that it increases the cost to rival actors of disputing its premises (Callon and Latour, 1981).

Figure 8.1: mediating central and local government relations: the role of housing market assessments
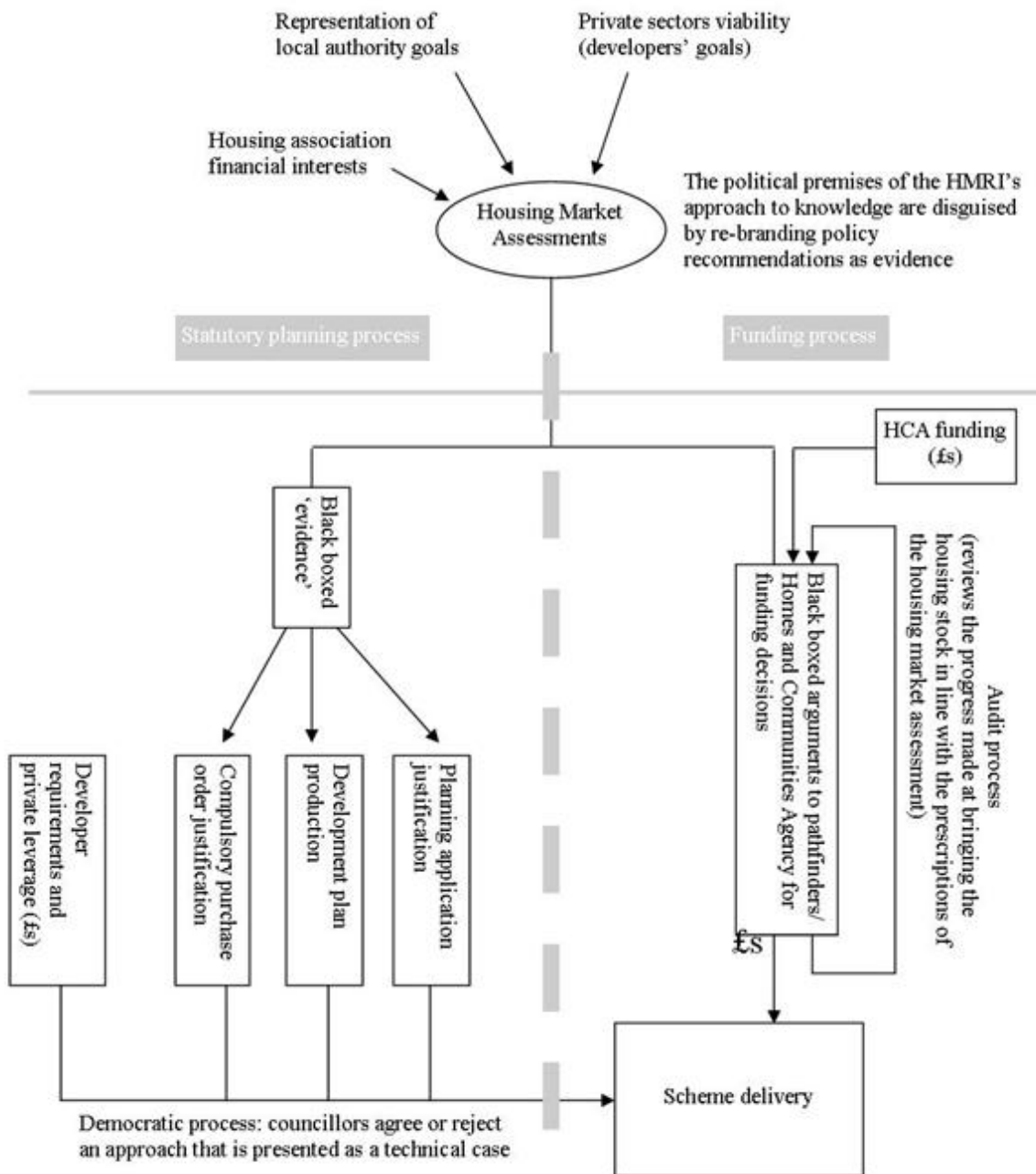
The funding criteria for HMRI spend, and the requirement for local partnerships to show co-ordinated strategies and present a compelling case both result in the reification of a 'better mix of housing'. These elements can be seen as part of the control structure which government has used in an attempt to retain command over the amount of funding given to local partnerships and what it can be used for. Instead of embracing local priorities and concerns as a vehicle for identifying opportunities for renewal, the control structure uses the guise of expert knowledge to assert central government's priorities about how development should be managed and incentivised.

Figure 8.1 illustrates the uneasy relationship that has evolved between the HMRI's black box and control structure and the very different premises of the statutory planning process. The planning process is premised on the idea that issues, and options for how to respond to them, should be worked up collaboratively. But the consequence of having an expert-led process of housing market assessment running alongside, and effectively competing with it, is that the choices available to communities become highly constrained. One way in which these constraints are maintained is through the sub-regional architecture of housing market assessments. Sub-regional working has been a characteristic feature of the HMRI approach, linked to its claim that housing markets operate across sub-regional travel-to-work areas, and that a sub-regional response is required to address the potential 'adjacency effects' of uncoordinated action that were discussed earlier. However, a consequence of using housing market research at this level to inform funding decisions is that the basis of these decisions is elevated beyond the scrutiny that might otherwise be provided by opposing local rationalities. Elected members are usually represented on the boards of sub-regional pathfinders but the bottom line is that, regardless of the personal beliefs and desires of those involved in them, they must convince national government that they are responding comprehensively to an accurate assessment of market conditions.

The planning process in the Walker Riverside area of Newcastle upon Tyne provides an illustration of how power is exercised through the sub-regional funding structure. Legislation guiding the development of an area plan for Walker Riverside required the preparation of options, or alternative ways of doing things. This legislation has developed from a commitment to considering alternative, and possibly marginalised, ways of framing and

responding to problems. Furthermore, the institutional environment in Walker Riverside was optimised for this kind of approach; it was characterised by weak support for the HMRI[17] and a commitment to community engagement. Despite the fact that this actively encouraged deviation from a social science led planning process, funding was only available on the basis that the HMRI's linear view of society was adopted. That view asserts that the only way of reaching a growth utopia is to balance housing markets using the HMRI's architecture of expert-led housing market assessment. The conflict between these different planning rationalities resulted in a one year delay followed by consultation on three linear options which, instead of exploring different interpretations of urban issues, merely asked residents how much development they were prepared to accept. The HMRI architecture resulted in a choice between no development or a method of housing intervention that responded to the assertions that there was an oversupply of council housing and that spirals of decline needed to be identified and tackled.

In Walker Riverside and elsewhere, the dominant function of housing market assessment is as a technology for mediating central government's need to manage its finances and policy commitments with bids from local actors for financial and political leverage. This function conflicts with the official claim that the purpose of housing market assessments is to guide objective policy responses to housing market change. Housing market assessments cannot be objective because information on housing and neighbourhood issues must be synthesised through the HMRI black box, which is used to impose an overarching rhetoric of how housing markets work. The uniformity of this rhetoric provides central government with the comfort that progress can be accurately recorded and project-managed, but it also results in a powerful incentive for local partnerships to maintain the party line about how housing markets work. Housing market assessments must be prepared in such a way that they appear to be a reflection of reality while also presenting to government a suggested form of policy action that is consistent with their understanding of urban events and the delimitation of their involvement that this entails. The governance resources of the state are thus largely consumed by attempts to reconcile the politics of control with the politics and realities of delivery, which often emerge from the vociferous contestation of schemes by local actors. Ironically,

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[17] These reflections are based on past experience working at Newcastle City Council. At one point the liberal democrat administration threatened to reject and send back HMRI funding. It later continued the housing market renewal but placed a policy emphasis on community involvement.

given the HMRI's claim that it is a technical response to housing market phenomena, this results in a particularly poor level of attention to the task of actually understanding housing and neighbourhood problems. Its consequence is action that will not balance housing markets because, as the chapter on the origins of the HMRI showed, the discourses of housing market action correspond with political demands and entrenched, habitual responses to problematised housing, not with the kind of research approach that is genuinely committed to finding out about political, cultural and institutional drivers of housing phenomena.

In summary, we can think of the HMRI as compromised because it must perform a role as political mediator that conflicts with the image it likes to project as an objective response to housing market change. This political role is encouraged by the Northern Way, an organisation designed to give a stronger voice to northern local authorities in Whitehall and to prioritise economic development. The Northern Way acts as a catalyst, shoring up the HMRI's success at extracting funding from central government by releasing ever more claims and 'research' that attempt to demonstrate that the HMRI is an effective route towards the economic renewal of the north. In 2004, The Northern Way's 'Moving Forward' report did this by playing up the number of homes that fell into the 'at risk of low demand' category, and would therefore require demolition. Research between 2006 and 2009 (Northern Way Sustainable Communities Team, 2006) has since introduced the argument that terraced housing will need to be demolished regardless of levels of demand, in order to provide a better quality suburban housing offer that will attract knowledge workers to the north. These claims distance the housing market evidence base still further from its popularly presented role as an attempt to understand and respond to the market.

The use of master narratives to co-ordinate the actions of fragmented parts of the local state has recently also been reinforced by the government's white paper 'Transforming Places; Changing Lives' (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2008). Here, government reiterates the need for a coherent case for funding by stating that a 'single conversation' will be sought between government and sub-national and local organisations.

> The (Homes and Communities Agency) will enable local authorities to engage in a single conversation across a range of issues concerning housing and regeneration programmes... We expect the Agency's programmes to be developed by working closely with sub national delivery partners, for example RDAs and local authorities, in line with regional and local priorities, which will include measures and

> development necessary to support economic renewal. (Department for Communities
> and Local Government, 2008, p. 18)

What this amounts to is a form of long distance control that can be described as a part linear, part network regime. Government's quest to match the dissemination of funding with rapid delivery and assurances of value for money has led it to rely on strong cases, supported by a secure evidence base. These cases must also demonstrate support from disparate local and sub-regional development organisations. The flaw in this approach is that these cases are necessarily constituted in response to an opportunistic judgement about the kind of interventions that government is expected to fund. Furthermore, they are developed by officers who typically work in environments, such as sub-regional partnership organisations, where accountability is weak. Detailed scrutiny of the coherency of these cases, let alone the values they entail, is absent. Thus, while government seeks local/ regionally tailored policy what it receives is a case which repeats its own commonly held understandings, but merely overlays them onto statistical evidence from the locale. In short, the process works to inadvertently centralise decision making and prevent sensitive attention to local dynamics and the needs and values of local actors. It also works to co-ordinate numerous organisations on a singe task of maximising development in the HMRI areas.

8.3   Attempts to drive open the black box of housing market restructuring

The HMRI is just one example of the way that this part linear, part network regime distances an understanding of local places, people and politics from sites of decision making. If the principal purpose of the HMRI really was to respond to market activity, it would have been seriously challenged by the 2001 census results which, in contrast with CURS' forecast that economic growth would provoke further abandonment in 'poor quality' neighbourhoods, showed population growth or stabilisation in northern cities such as Manchester, Liverpool and Newcastle. Even those involved in the early stages of the HMRI have now suggested that vacancy and abandonment no longer provide sufficient cause for driving forward large scale housing market restructuring proposals.

> In 2007 uncertainties in the market did not seem to be any greater in pathfinder
> areas than elsewhere. Concentrations of very low value properties and of
> abandonment had almost been eliminated. One of the major concerns at the
> outset of the programme – that house prices in intervention areas had become

detached from those in the wider market – was by and large no longer justified

by 2007. (Leather et al, 2009, paragraph 1.22)

If the HMRI had really been a technical response to housing market change, then evidence of private re-investment and population increases should have been seen as a substantial challenge to many of its premises. This is not least because the return or stabilisation of population undermines the assumptions underpinning the idea that spirals of decline are taking place, logically replacing this with the idea that rising values provide an incentive for upward cycles of private re-investment. However, this information was not seen as a challenge to the HMRI rationale. Proponents of the initiative merely shifted to a new argument that 'structurally uncompetitive' housing must still be restructured to avoid future problems (Ferrari, 2007).

The problematisation of areas of housing as structurally uncompetitive is one example of how arguments have emerged for a perpetual need to encourage development and redevelopment despite issues of housing vacancy having been largely resolved. In the Walker Riverside area of Newcastle a different argument was used, but it performed the same function. Population loss began to reverse and demand for social housing increased just as the planning framework for the area was being finalised. Justification for the scheme had previously been that a response was needed to low demand, but the emphasis was simply transferred to a justification which stressed the importance of a mix of incomes. Similarly, Stuart Cameron's research of the views of those working on housing market renewal in Tees Valley discovered a new argument in use which said that, regardless of demand, a better quality housing product or modernised housing offer was needed to attract knowledge workers to the area (Cameron, 2006). This trend was also noted in a review of the initiative completed in 2007.

It is striking to note how programmes for economic development and initiatives to stimulate commercial and residential growth were more prominent concerns for several pathfinders in 2007 compared with two years earlier. (Leather et al, 2009, p. 58)

(Pathfinders) may need to do more to bring home to stakeholders that market restructuring and housing growth can be complementary objectives. (ibid. p. 11)

Arguments which stress the importance of social mix or of the economic contribution of redeveloping housing function to justify the continuation of schemes that were originally drawn up to tackle vacancy, but which have lost their raison d'être in the face of population

increases and a national housing boom. The desire to take action and, in so doing, to subsidise housing construction and draw down billions from central government, has become more important than the need to demonstrate that public sector-led action is in the public interest. There is a striking similarity here with the expansion of slum clearance policies through the 60s and 70s and the tendency for redevelopment to increase housing waiting lists and create demand for additional redevelopment. The difference is that, whereas the values of social reformism drove central government to make funding available for slum clearance, it seems that funding for the HMRI has continued to be made available because the initiative aligned with a pro-development ideology that pervades within the treasury (Minton, 2009; Webb, 2009d).

In the 1960s, local authorities such as Newcastle appropriated national slum clearance policies to support local projects to modernise the built environment, with T. Dan Smith famously seeking to recreate the city in the image of a new Brasilia. Again, there are similarities with the governance processes underpinning the HMRI. There is evidence to suggest that local authorities have seen the HMRI as a means to fund local projects and priorities, despite central government's extensive attempts at control. The incentive of gaining funding for such projects potentially stymies a more critical view of the conditions attached to such funding. Pendle Borough Council, for example, sought to use HMRI funds to advance a pet project for the redevelopment of Whitefield, while in Middlesbrough there are suspicions that the demolition of the Gresham area is proposed as a means of expanding retail provision in the town centre (Communities Under Threat, 2005)[18]. The extent to which these agendas guide local action is often unclear because they are disguised by the foregrounding of HMRI discourses and the lack of scrutiny over the process. What is certain, however, is that these local agendas are matched by the pro-development ideology of the stock obsolescence discourse, which supports the input of private finance and potentially incentivises redevelopment with the prospect of releasing latent land values from central urban locations. This has led to accusations that renewal in Liverpool, Tees Valley and elsewhere has been overtaken by a desire for a 'land grab' of high value, edge of city centre land to support the financial interests of local authorities and mass developers (Allen, 2008:

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[18] Mike Gahagan, Chair of Transform South Yorkshire, gave the following evidence to the 2005 Select Committee on empty homes: '...there is a lot of master planning going on. Also, in our case- and everybody else would say the same- we have already started, I have to admit, with projects that were already on the shelf, to an extent, because you cannot launch major capital projects like this instantly.' (House of Commons, 2005, p. Ev1.)

Allen and Crookes, 2008). Anna Minton (2009) may be right in arguing that the incorporation of global capital in this way potentially overrides democratic concerns with a need to respond to developers' bottom line. The lack of scrutiny of the HMRI discourses, and the closing down of routes for communities to advocate alternative policy actions, leaves the proponents of renewal schemes wide open to this kind of criticism. The absence of effective scrutiny is, yet again, a consequence of the use of the HMRI to press government for resources and government's desire to support development. Within this regime, criticism comes to be viewed as causing potentially more damage than good: it might lead to less financial support and a legacy of blighted neighbourhoods.

If critical reflection from within the body of professionals who deliver renewal is discouraged by the regime they work within, scrutiny might instead be expected to emerge from the regulatory safeguards that guide planning processes and the delivery of government funding. Each of these processes is illustrated in figure 8.1. Common regulatory processes must be followed by areas in receipt of HMRI funding, and the left hand side of figure 8.1 shows how these are guided by the prescriptions of housing market assessments. Planning policy documents, applications for compulsory purchase powers and applications for planning applications are supported by the sub-regional housing market assessments. These assessments are made up of a comparison of housing aspirations and supply and a prescription for balancing these that locates necessary change within the housing stock. The opportunity for locally elected representatives to instigate policies that deviate from this process is extremely limited; they are faced with a choice of accepting the 'technical' case put to them or rejecting the opportunity of funding from central government. Similarly, project-level audit processes which aim to judge whether renewal is effective and whether it represents value for money tend not to address foundational issues with the basic premises of the HMRI, but instead to assess interventions on the basis that these premises are correct.

The Audit Commission has a role across government driving economy, efficiency and effectiveness in local public services, and it undertakes regular reviews of the delivery of HMRI projects. However, reports from the Commission have tended to be delivery focused and measured in their critique (see Audit Commission, 2009). This has contributed to a general lack of critique from within the government institutions responsible for administering the initiative which contrasts markedly with the verdict of organisations such as the National Audit Office, which is accountable to the queen rather than to government. In 2007, the

National Audit Office referred to the initiative as a high risk, top-down approach and compared it with previous slum clearance policies. It also queried the level of emphasis placed on housing action to address housing vacancy.

> ...there is no guarantee that intervening in the housing market in this way will address the causes rather than the symptoms of the problems experienced in these neighbourhoods. (National Audit Office, 2007, paragraph 15)

In spite of the efforts of the National Audit Office, critical reflection on the discourses which guide the interpretation of housing market assessments has not as yet permeated the culture of the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). Having committed £2.2 billion to the initiative, the government appears to have an interest in re-affirming its location within a discourse of social regeneration and economic restructuring. It is perhaps this that explains its decision to carry out an 'independent' review of the HMRI by employing a consortium of four consultants, two of which (Ecotech and CURS) have close ties with the original researchers that lobbied for the HMRI.

The DCLG's inability to reflect on the problematic effects of its method of control is mirrored in the non-departmental bodies, which government relies on to deliver renewal. Until recently, English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation were closely involved with housing market renewal, but both have now been subsumed within the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). Like the HCA, English Heritage is a non-departmental body and is largely reliant on government for funding, but it is not intrinsically involved in the delivery of renewal and is responsible to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport rather than the DCLG. This seems to have allowed it to act in a more critical capacity, at times making some very outspoken remarks (Morris, 2005). Policy guidance has been cautiously critical, emphasising the potential of existing buildings to contribute to government objectives, rather than the problems with the case for redevelopment. By contrast, Save Britain's Heritage, which operates independently from government, has been significantly more radical in its critique and in 2006 published a substantial report which directly attacked the premises underpinning the HMRI.

> At the root of this was the work of a number of well-meaning academics. Their work created a series of self-perpetuating bureaucracies and pseudo-professions in an industry based on demolition, funded by the Government…
> One questions the motivation behind their research, then as now.
> SAVE Britain's Heritage (2006. p. 75)

Critical attention to the rationale and governance processes at work in the pathfinder areas has been deflected from government institutions to independent and semi-independent organisations whose arguments have had a very limited impact on policy–making within government departments.

The HMRI control structure has been extraordinarily efficient at closing down public scrutiny and debate of the programme. Despite this, critics were able to secure a review of key elements of the initiative by the ODPM's Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee, which included membership from across the three main political parties. The committee heard evidence from heritage and residents' groups critical of the initiative, including Sylvia Wilson and Kathy Fishwick who talked about the handling of renewal proposals in Whitefield, and from groups such as the Welsh Streets Home Group in Liverpool. Among the arguments made by these critics was that the research underpinning the HMRI had been conducted at a time when the, notoriously cyclical, housing market was at its lowest ebb. Since then, vacancy rates had dropped and house prices had increased. The Committee found that the reasons for a drop in the number of empty homes were not clear and that 'the scale and duration of the market up turn are not yet known' (House of Commons, 2005, paragraph 35). They therefore suggested caution and recommended that 'If there is strong evidence that the rise in housing demand is sustained and not just the result of an artificial boost to the market due to speculative activity, the Pathfinders should review their demolition programmes as a matter of urgency and concentrate on neighbourhood management and housing refurbishment.' (ibid, paragraph 36).

The ODPM's response to the Select Committee's recommendations was essentially to shift responsibility for debating the merits of widespread clearance as a valid tool of urban policy to the pathfinders. It emphasised the importance of 'accurate housing market information' and community involvement, but made no suggestion that communities might actually be instrumental to understanding housing markets. There was no suggestion that the upturn in the housing market might prompt a re-appraisal of the dominant, pro-development discourses through which vacancy had come to be understood during a period of general decline. Rather, the factuality of these discourses was reiterated. An introductory section of the response titled 'general remarks' set out a universal framework for understanding housing markets based on the CURS research; this was then followed by all the usual arguments which had come to justify housing action as a response to vacancy. Paragraphs 28 to 33 argued that a balance of

improvement and redevelopment was needed, that some housing characteristics were obsolescent, that some areas suffered from crude oversupply, and that spirals of decline were problematic. This response was made possible because the Select Committee's critiques had failed to penetrate the core 'research' technology underlying the HMRI approach. The Committee had witnessed strong challenges from objectors, particularly to the factuality of the stock obsolescence discourse. It had received a list of factors contributing to vacancy which lay outside the housing stock and heard allegations that vacancy in some areas was closely linked to problematic management practices in the social housing sector. Crucially, though, these concerns were not articulated in ways that addressed the legitimacy of the expert-led housing research on which the HMRI is based. By not explicitly requesting that communities should be involved in negotiating the values behind housing market assessments, and the risks associated with their findings, the Committee allowed the government simply to revert to the standard political line of positivist rhetoric about the machinistic workings of the housing market.

In its response to the Select Committee's call for a more cautious approach to demolition, the ODPM argued that:

> (Pathfinder strategies should) be sufficiently flexible to respond quickly and appropriately to changes in their local housing markets. Indeed, this is one reason why we consider that long term funding commitments would not be entirely helpful. (Deputy Prime Minister and First Secretary of State, 2005, paragraph 61).

This statement contained two important messages. The first was that it was the pathfinders who were to be responsible for adapting their programmes to market changes, based on their housing market studies. The second was that government would continue to oversee (control) their actions with the amount of funding made available and the constraints placed on it. The consequence of this approach was to side step processes of parliamentary scrutiny by relocating decision making within the architecture of the HMRI's governance regime. Conversations between ministers, ODPM officials and pathfinder officers would become the new institutional spaces in which decisions on funding and programme content would be made. Thus, the part-linear, part-network regime was used as a tool to absorb the ODPM Committee's criticisms by privileging certain claims as fact where they supported the continuation of the initiative. The official logic behind the approach then, and now, is that the HMRI is a process of long term housing restructuring which requires a long term

commitment. There is certainly some sense in taking this position: the prevention of a blighted and fragmented environment does require an ongoing approach. However, when this argument is combined with a guarded attitude to certain elements of instrumental 'knowledge' it results instead simply in an ideological inability to reflect on bad policy.

The way in which the constructive criticisms of the ODPM Committee were sidelined and disregarded demonstrates that the inability of local politicians or audit agencies to secure amendments to the approach cannot be attributed solely to the synergistic effects of the HMRI's regime of control. For the regime to operate, it requires strong political and financial support from the top. Rather, the power of the part-linear, part-network regime can be felt in a lack of institutional willingness to critically reflect on policy that is intrinsically associated with a wider cultural shift, catalysed by the HMRI, towards the technicalisation and associated de-politicisation of local urban policy making. On the one hand, the blight which now exists across many of the areas affected by top down renewal requires an urgent response, rather than further prevarication. On the other, government's current structure of control has resulted in long term strategies which direct large amounts of public funding towards ineffective projects and often towards the financial interests of housing associations and developers, rather than the long term interests of communities and the effective stewardship of places. Ironically, despite the failure of attempts to challenge the level of demolition proposed, the more general rise in the housing market has raised site assembly costs to such an extent that the HMRI's original ambitions have had to be dramatically scaled down (Leather et al, 2009).

So far, this chapter has emphasised the power of command that has been made possible by a set of pro-development, expert narratives, strong central government support and a depoliticised, consensus-based control regime. It has explained the alignment of interests within this consensus principally by referring to the way the interests of housing associations, local authorities and developers were constructed by the CURS research explored in chapter five. That research presented the HMRI as a solution to issues which were controversial for central government in 2001, such as its proposals for voluntary stock transfer. What has not been fully explored is why central government has continued to provide funding and strong support for the HMRI, even as its value as a solution to these issues has diminished. An

answer to this is provided by journalist Anna Minton, who draws on informal discussions with Brendan Nevin and other government contacts (Webb, 2009d)[19].

> Many policy experts and officials were becoming uncomfortable about the introduction of a policy which they feared would herald the return of the post-war slum clearances that destroyed so many communities, only this time without the excuse that these architecturally sound properties were overcrowded, unsanitary and needed to be pulled down. Behind the scenes a power struggle ensued between the Treasury and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, the department responsible for communities, under John Prescott. Needless to say, the Treasury won, determined to promote a property strategy which would fuel housing markets and the regional economy. (Minton, 2009, pp. 97-98)

When placed within the context of this thesis' analysis, it is clear that an explanation is needed for the level of financial support given to the HMRI in its early days, as well as for government's enthusiasm for sustaining it. Minton's suggestion seems to be a convincing explanation for these actions.

The nature of Minton's claim, that control was being exerted 'behind the scenes', means it is difficult to find evidence that would suggest more conclusively whether the treasury was seeking to use the HMRI to support housing market boosterism. However, ODPM policy does seem to support her allegations. In 2005, its policy document 'Homes for All' was unconcerned with rapid rises in northern house prices that had occurred in the years since 2001. It noted that 'In 2004 the average house price across all market renewal pathfinders was about £65,000 compared with a national average of £176,000'. (ODPM, 2005, p. 48). This would suggest that buying a home in a low-income pathfinder area in 2004 would have required an income of around £16,714[20] in areas where the average regional income in 2008 was around £18-19,000 (National Housing Federation, 2009a; 2009b)[21]. Despite plans elsewhere in the document to pilot a £60,000 home to tackle affordability problems, 'Homes for All' continued to treat prices of £65,000 in the pathfinders as problematically low.

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[19] The incorporation of these discussions helps to address an issue discussed in chapter three, that a reliance on formal documentation has the potential to limit the information available to this thesis.
[20] Based on calculations used by the National Housing Federation which assume a 10% deposit and 3.5 times income mortgage.
[21] The average price for a home in a pathfinder area in 2007 was £96,132 and this increased into 2008 (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2009, p. 25)

Furthermore, although the government's official line has been that the HMRI should not just be a housing programme, this is somewhat distanced from the way it actually allocates funding. Funding is made available in a way which ensures that HMRI funding is principally spent on the construction and improvement of housing. One way in which the government encourages this focus is by placing a particularly strong emphasis on pathfinders' ability to meet outputs (in terms of numbers of homes demolished, improved and built) over wider outcomes that might arise from co-ordinated renewal action. This stance has continued despite suggestions to the ODPM committee (and acknowledgements by advisors Cole and Nevin, 2004) that the factors causing housing vacancy often lie beyond the housing stock. In 2005, an ODPM Select Committee recommended that more HMRI funding should be made available for revenue costs to respond to causes of market failure that lay outside the housing stock, but government did the opposite, prioritising capital expenditure on housing interventions and placing restrictions on revenue spending. The management of the HMRI in this way focuses funding on certain activities associated with the improvement of housing and the clearance and renewal of housing sites, which would seem to meet the objectives of a policy of housing market boosterism above those of more integrated renewal.

8.4   Discussion: conclusions on the rise of a self-perpetuating regime

There is nothing deterministic in this thesis' story of the last decade of urban policy making. Quite the opposite, the forces leading to the creation of the HMRI were the result of intense struggles to mould disparate interests together, marginalise the opposition and apply political leverage to enlist hostile actors. Nevertheless, the HMRI's journey through the representative democratic system has revealed important structuring forces within the way that system maintains control. In order to make and implement policy, government needs both to close down contestation and to manage the imposition of universal instructions on a diverse and changing environment. These needs can result in the development of professions, policy technologies and bureaucratic cultures which work to depoliticise and technicalise governance issues, black boxing the political construction of debate into operational institutions. If this can be done effectively it allows elected representatives to rely on support for an issue while they move on to address more pressing concerns. In the case of the HMRI, the technicalisation of policy has grown to such a scale that the initiative is able to repeatedly reinvigorate its core premises by creating new pseudo-scientific discourses. These function to refresh support for the initiative by binding together the evolving networks which constitute today's fragmented local states and their relationship with government. This effectively

means that decision making about how to respond to ever-changing social, demographic and economic issues has been removed from the democratic arena and captured within the inter-organisational relationships that take place in the context of the HMRI's governance architecture.

What this situation of course amounts to is that of a self-perpetuating bureaucratic regime; in John Law's terms, a 'monster' that has developed an agency of its own (Law, 1992). There are obvious parallels here with the self-perpetuating momentum which surrounded earlier slum clearance policies. Like slum clearance, extensive physical renewal in the north of England was only made possible by a prolonged period of economic growth, which allowed government to make £2.2 billion available through the HMRI. In both cases, networks of institutional and political interests have been united with a utopian vision, of a balanced housing market or a minimum standard of accommodation. The top down prescription of problems and causal processes requires an abstracted representation of the reasons why a policy is needed, and its concomitant severance from the different possible ways of responding to the needs of those for whom a policy is intended. Once generated, these abstractions become resources that are open to others to advance fresh demands on the state. In the case of the HMRI, the availability of funding has incentivised local authorities to use an abstracted understanding of how to balance the housing market as a means of pressing central government for funding and the result has been a loss of control to the relational dynamics between tiers of government. Central government has increasingly sought to manage these relationships by requiring a strong, evidence-based case for funding from local and sub-regional organisations. The result has been a proliferation of experts and technical reports that attempt to appropriate academic status in order to 'prove' the need for housing and/ or economic intervention. This expansion of bureaucratic capacity has only been made possible by economic growth, which has facilitated both public funding and private sector delivery. However, as the realities of the recession and a possible change of government set in, new ways may need to be found to provide leadership on urban policies.

Some Problems and Future Directions for Planning Theory

9.1 Introduction

The governance dynamics explored in the previous chapter differ markedly from the way in which government controlled urban policy just fifteen years ago. The Conservative governments of the 1990s used a combination of discrete, private sector focused partnership organisations, such as urban development corporations, and vertically administered funding, which aimed to distribute funding for area-based initiatives on the basis of the 'quality' of the proposed scheme. That regime was criticised for leading to an unequal distribution of resources and to fragmented, piecemeal approaches to area-wide problems (Jones and Evans, 2008; Cole et al, 1999). Labour's part linear, part network approach to co-ordinating the interests of fragmented local states with central government concerns can be seen as an approach which grew up to respond to that criticism. Despite the huge differences between these two regimes of control, debates about planning theory too often occur on an abstract level, implying that some form of transcendent process heuristic can be found and rolled out in planning environments across the world (Watson, 2003). An actor-network theory reading suggests that it is important not to lose sight of the relational dynamics that incentivise the innovation and justification of new planning theories. A careful reading of some of the theories of planning which are often summarised in text books on the subject reveals the importance of these dynamics. One example can found in an article by Patsy Healey (Healey, 2003) in which she reflects on her motivation for writing 'Collaborative Planning' (Healey, 1997). She argues that the book was part of an attempt to improve the quality of places by joining up discrete, vertically administered government initiatives, but questions remain about whether a focus on co-ordination within government is still the best way to advance social justice objectives. The mid-twentieth century theories of rational scientific management can also be seen to have moved from situated to abstracted theory. They began as part of an attempt to introduce accountability into a 'pork barrel' political system that was thought to be characterised by favours and pay backs (Hillier and Healey, 2008a). However, these theories went on to prescribe a transcendent process that all planners were asked to follow, regardless of local dynamics.

If we accept that planning theory cannot be separated from the situated nature of its construction then it forces us to critically enquire about the reasons why such theories become widely used as 'successful' technologies of planning. This line of thought is followed

in part one of this chapter, which responds to research question four: 'How has planning theory affected the way evidence has been used to inform housing market renewal decisions?' It is argued here that, in the case of the HMRI, planning theories that attempt to construct a rational basis for decisions are appropriated into the HMRI to provide support and legitimacy for the power relations embodied within it, rather than to earnestly pursue better decisions. The chapter looks at the way that planners involved in the creation of the HMRI have sought to legitimise their actions and compares the results with the logics made available by planning intellectuals. In this way, it explores how planning theory has filtered down to inform the practice of urban renewal professionals working within the part-linear, part-network regime.

In part two of this chapter, the critique of rationality as a basis for decision making informs a search for new ways of articulating planning theory. This, then, is a reaction to research question five, which asks 'if forces exist that are preventing policy makers from exploiting intellectual opportunities to respond more equitably and effectively to contemporary urban policy challenges, how might it be possible for planning theory itself to adapt to challenge these forces?' Two post-structuralist theories of planning are considered to this end. Part two concludes by setting out the principles of Hillier's Deleuzian-inspired, multi-planar theory of planning. These principles inform further exploration in the epilogue, which seeks to extrapolate the relational understanding developed in this thesis in order to arm planers with foresight that might be used to pursue more just and effective urban interventions.

9.2 Part One: The Use of Planning Theory in the HMRI's Part-Linear, Part-Network Regime

9.2.1   Defining planning theory

Much of the academic literature which is commonly referred to as 'planning theory' might actually be better understood as a collection of normative frameworks for planning based on social theory. The aim here is to highlight selected areas which have a substantive influence on current practices of urban renewal policy making and delivery in the UK. Two forms of legitimisation can be discerned from the case study chapters. The remainder of this chapter reviews the use and academic foundations of these sources of discursive legitimisation. The first of these claims, implicitly, to develop policy from a 'comprehensive rationality' about

how the world works. The second seeks to position policy as the result of a kind of 'communicative rationality' which can be achieved by encouraging processes of deliberation, mediation and collaboration between actors. Before turning to the specifics of these theories, it is necessary to reflect a little further about the nature of the relationship between planning theory and planning practice.

An important point to stress is that almost nowhere can theory be found in practice in its pure form, in other words the form that an academic envisaged a theory might take when they proposed it as a normative framework. It would therefore be methodologically clumsy to attempt to analyse empirical evidence solely by comparison with these ideas. What can be observed is the use of these normative frameworks both to guide the way actors behave (a kind of common, tacitly understood model of appropriate planning practice), and as a conceptual point of reference which has the potential to provide discursive legitimisation for that model of behaviour (Allmendinger, 1996; Connelly et al, 2006). Drawing on Lyotard (1984), this discursive legitimisation can be understood as implicitly connected to a wider meta-narrative: the foundational, normative assumptions and goals of a planning theory. In this way, the planning theory literature might be used by actors to place their actions within a strong normative basis that has presumably been well defended in deliberative terms by its academic proponents. In circumstances where they are under less pressure to justify their actions they may well disregard any reference to planning theory, or rational argument more broadly (Flyvbjerg, 1998). Where theory is used, however, its effect is to increase the costs to rival actors of challenging what the planner does. Of crucial significance, though, is that the behaviour of planners often differs from the actions prescribed by the theories they rely on for legitimisation. Of equal importance is that the way in which actions depart from theory is typically not readily apparent to those outside the immediate professional and political world of the planner.

Within each mode of operating that a planning theory provides there is therefore substantial scope for leverage which allows a planner to advance proposals that meet the interests of those actors he/ she needs to keep on board. For Allmendinger, this internal leverage is complemented by the existence of a market in planning theories, which enables practitioners to, to some extent, pick and choose which theory they use.

> Planners and others who 'use' theory (even if implicitly) benefit from being
> able to advance theories that cannot be 'proved' but nevertheless are to their

benefit… This is not to take a totally nihilistic view of theory; on the contrary,

it is to locate theory in a political context (Allmendinger, 2002, p. 21).

Two types of theory are available as resources for planners (Grant, 1994). Empirical/ substantive theories that seek to model or explain processes in society can be used to justify a specific course of action as more favourable than an alternative; examples of these are documented in the case study chapters. However, what is perhaps less well recognised is the potential, and often the necessity, for planners to make political use of the procedural theories of how planning should operate. This brings me back to the two ideal-type theories of comprehensive and communicative rationality which have been observed within the field work. I will discuss each of these in turn, focusing both on their theoretical premises and the resources which they provide to planners in society. The aim here is to provide a critical analysis of how planning theories are entangled in the power struggles that surround the HMRI. The final chapter of this thesis proposes a planning theory response to the HMRI that is embedded in this analysis.

9.2.2   Comprehensive rationality

The majority of theoretical debates about planning are concerned with the nature and role of evidence and the weight that should be given to different interests. The mid twentieth century period was characterised by a particularly strong emphasis on the former. Evidence was seen as a route towards designing the optimum planning approach in the public interest, and some discussion of this has already taken place in chapter four. The relatively early planning theories accompanying this period included 'systems theory', a 'choice theory of planning' and 'rational comprehensive planning' (McLoughlin, 1969; Davidoff and Reiner, 1973; Lindblom, 1959) but these are often now referred to collectively as a rational theory of planning (Allmendinger, 2002) or as rational scientific management (Hillier and Healey, 2008a). These contemporary descriptions stress the importance of social-scientific techniques and coherent interpretations of society as a basis for effective planning. The reverence attached to gaining a clear and untainted understanding of society was reflected in the level of ambition which characterised planning proposals. The scale of planning activity was such that planners were able to position themselves as the managers of capitalist processes and the agents of societal development.

Rational theories of planning provided guidance and discursive legitimisation for this way of planning. The details of the ideal processes proposed by different theorists differ, but all can be thought of as roughly according with the following broad stages.

1. A commitment to rigorous scientific inquiry and plan review as a means to furnish elected representatives with facts

2. The use of this evidence, regarded as the best possible understanding, by politicians to inform their decisions of which route to take

3. Comprehensive implementation of that route (see McLoughlin, 1969; Faludi, 1973)

The above process was conceptualised as a comprehensive one which would guide the overall planning strategy for an area. In practice, however, the comprehensive application of this model is often contested by alternative discourses that also seek to prescribe how planning should be done. The result is that approaches to planning which are based on understandings derived from social science attain different levels of comprehensiveness. At one extreme, studies such as open space needs assessments or studies of housing affordability may be used to open up discussions between stakeholders. At the opposite extreme, technologies such as housing market assessments can be used in an attempt to dictate the nature and scale of a local development strategy. The critiques of comprehensive rationality are extensive and well rehearsed (Healey, 1997; Taylor, 1998; Allmendinger, 2002), some have pronounced it a broken paradigm (Alexander, 1984) while others believe it may still be the dominant paradigm (Huxley and Yiftachel, 2000), but these debates alone will not help society to decide whether to adopt or reject this model, whole scale. The answer to this question will never be decided by rational debate alone, but by continuous and diverse political action. Instead, these debates provide an important, and relevant, record of some of the difficulties that have been associated with the forceful adoption of this approach. Awareness of these difficulties may be useful in foreseeing what the fate of the HMRI is likely to be and what opportunities exist to sway the initiative towards more equitable, creative and effective policy directions.

This section seeks to develop a view of theory that is grounded in the specific, relational context of its use, rather than abstracted from practice. Nevertheless, there is a discursive interplay between theory and practice which has implications for how theory is used. As mentioned above, rational planning is largely seen by planning academics as theoretically discredited. How, then, do planners justify its continued use in practice? The remainder of this section reviews three areas of critique and considers how proponents of the HMRI

anticipated, and attempted to overcome these as potential challenges to their authority. The following critiques are discussed.

i.   The loss of confidence in essentialism and the new attention to diversity

ii.   Concerns with rational planning as a means to concentrate power in the hands of elites

iii. The potential for a lack of public confidence in the diagnoses and comprehensive responses that result from rational techniques

i.   The loss of confidence in essentialism and the new attention to diversity

In the 1960s and 70s, the theoretical proponents of a comprehensive rationality saw the planner as a knowledgeable leader, skilled in the use of social scientific techniques to advise decision makers on possible and realistic policy directions. Politicians and others would set out problems which the planner would seek to address through empirical research to suggest policy solutions. There is a great deal of similarity between this model and the comprehensive understanding of society that CURS claimed to produce through their housing market research, and which has been institutionalised in the form of directions to local authorities to produce Strategic Housing Market Assessments (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2007). But while the approach has similarities with the mid twentieth century, there can now be much less confidence in social-scientific methods as a tool for revealing the truth (Cilliers, 2002). Back in the early 1970s the situation was different and Faludi was able to argue for the essential virtue of scientific method as a means to 'elevate man' and as an alternative to merely 'drifting into the future' (Faludi, 1973). As the following quote demonstrates, such claims are made possible only if science is reified as objective and society's interests are seen as unified and essentialised.

> Planning and science can be seen as twin sisters born from the same desire of man to free himself from the strictures of ignorance and fear. Planning and science propel this process of man becoming master over his world and himself along a path towards further human growth. (Faludi, 1973, p. 35)

Arguments such as these are unlikely to be accepted in the twentieth century. Many would point to the evident tension in talking about the world in such speciously masculine terms at the same time as arguing for the essential unity of humanity's interests. A heightened attention to language and a greater emphasis on diversity mean that a recourse to essentialism is no longer persuasive.

Diversity makes it much harder for planners to avoid a more explicit consideration of the impacts schemes may have on different social groups. But it does not preclude the possibility that planners may seek to assert their own interpretation of what the consequences of an action on others will be. The continued ability of planners to do this, and to justify their arguments with social science, is evidenced by CURS' early arguments for establishing the HMRI. Chapter five outlines the narratives that were used to position the interests of residents and local businesses in support of the proposals and the limitations placed on the deliberative scrutiny of these. The risks of excluding and marginalising less powerful voices are clear. But this evidence also highlights one of the potential strengths of practicing planning in a way which is so similar to earlier rational comprehensive planning practices. Both CURS and Faludi are well aware of the existence of conflicts between different factions in society, but they place importance on the early generation of shared goals. For Faludi, social science should help direct these goals by providing politicians with a range of realistic planning scenarios to choose between. Similarly, for CURS, early negotiations with housing providers and other cities in the north provided a crucial base of interests from which to develop research used by the lobby for government funding. Both authors felt that an early conciliation of interests would be advantageous for rapid progression, and this does indeed seem to be the case. CURS' ability to present a united front to government and back this up with an apparently coherent research case was instrumental to securing the creation of the HMRI.

ii.   Concerns with rational planning as a means to concentrate power in the hands of elites

The use of social science to present politicians with a coherent normative description of an often incoherent and conflict-ridden world has had clear political benefits. Nevertheless, this thesis has highlighted the gap between the actual research practices undertaken by CURS and their claims that the knowledge they produce is impartial and scientifically valid. There is some formal recognition that this gap exists. Ian Cole was not involved in the CURS research leading up to the HMRI, but has since been involved as a reviewer and critical friend supporting its development and urging a greater sensitivity to the disruptive impact of relocation (Cole and Flint, 2007; Cole and Nevin, 2004; Leather et al, 2009). He defended applied research in response to a critical article by Slater (2006).

> Call me naïve, but I persist in believing that, in these more modest times for
> social science, a commitment to applied social research – *as robust, coherent,*
> *critical and reflexive as one can manage* within the all too obvious constraints

> - can be still be a force for positive change for the losers rather than an abject
>
> apology on behalf of the winners. (Cole, 2008a, p. 7, emphasis added)

Cole also talked of the benefits of the HMRI in terms of tipping the balance of state investment towards northern neighbourhoods that had 'been neglected for forty years or more' (p. 7). Thus, Cole recognises that a researcher's influence is a highly constrained one, but seems to believe that, on the whole, it is one that can lead to positive change.

> ...despite the attention given to some flashpoint schemes (the HMRI) has led to
>
> the improvement *in situ* so far of some 40,000 homes, as part of a £2 billion
>
> programme. (ibid, p. 7)

The quote above suggests a need to make a judgement call about whether the positive aspects of a policy approach outweigh its negative aspects. This is consequentialist reasoning, an ethical stance that is arrived at by judging whether the consequences of an action will lead to a better or worse outcome than would otherwise have occurred (Campbell and Marshall, 1999). There are parallels here with claims made by Faludi who, when defending rational planning against claims that it is unworkable in practice (Schoeffler, 1954; Simon, 1957), concluded that the importance of following a formal planning process is secondary to the ability to justify the proposed scheme in rational terms.

> A person wishing to present conclusions convincingly outlines rational
>
> considerations that might have led to them in an orderly fashion. He does not
>
> normally claim that this is the actual process he used, but only that others
>
> should agree with his conclusions because they appear to be derived from
>
> reasoned argument. (Faludi, 1973, p. 81)

A rational argument is of paramount importance to Faludi because his philosophy is of a single truth, which can be found using formal, social scientific methods. The function of this is to privilege the arguments of planners who are trained in formal methods of knowledge creation and to confine any deliberation which may occur to those with a similar training and approach to knowledge. This thesis highlights empirical problems with CURS' research. Faludi's reaction to this might have been to call for new scientific research on housing markets, and request that professional bodies reject current research on housing markets. But a new programme of positivist research would inevitably be subject to similar political and methodological pressures. For it to be taken up by local authorities and housing associations it would need to respond to their needs, not the reality of the world. Rational comprehensive planning has therefore been criticised for concentrating too much power in the hands of an

elite profession, and for ignoring the knowledge claims of diverse groups outside the institutional establishment. Chapter four has already discussed some early uses of this critique, that social scientific techniques incorporate persistent, normative judgements. Dennis (1970) highlighted that rational procedures for determining population predictions and levels of 'slum' clearance were not only normative, they were carried out in ways that were more likely to result in high population forecasts and the continuance of slum clearance. Equally, Davies (1972) highlighted how planning's ingrained favouritism towards introducing new technologies upheld capitalistic interests over ordinary workers and householders. The normative judgements in social science have consistently been found to uphold dominant interests such as capital and bureaucratic power.

Faludi's suggestion that planners should be able to proceed with any scheme they can justify rationally, therefore opens the door for decisions to be taken behind closed doors and then given a gloss of scientific objectivity (Allmendinger, 2002). In the case of the HMRI, social science functions as a discursive cloak which has allowed government to openly discuss how to support the interests of certain local authorities and housing associations while maintaining the facade that housing market intervention is in the interests of all. To date, there is a political and institutional refusal to accept the normative nature of the premises on which the HMRI's 'knowledge' base and approach are built. This is partly because the smokescreen of objectivity is still felt to protect these institutional interests and partly because the loyal partnership between this smokescreen and powerful institutional interests has granted a level of factuality to the smokescreen itself. As the HMRI knowledge base ages, however, new spaces are opened up which have the potential to challenge this alliance of knowledge and power. The economic downturn in particular precludes private sector leverage; national government may face increasing pressure from the public as the promised benefits to the public interest fail to materialise.

iii.   Issues of public confidence in the diagnoses that result from rational techniques and the comprehensive solutions that often follow

For CURS, the principal function of their housing market research was to persuade government of the importance of institutional concerns in the north and west midlands of England. But it also created an economic model of society on which a new regime of planning has been created. Actors in sub-regional partnerships and local authorities have then been urged to use that model as if it was an objective basis for delivering a technical solution

to a social problem. One of the problems that has historically been associated with this kind of exaggerated reliance on social-scientific tools has been it encourages actors to be over-confident that their schemes will achieve the desired ends. This occurs when the normative elements of social science methodologies are ignored. In such circumstances schemes can be produced which far exceed the reliability of the scientific findings on which they are based. In short the logic goes that, if a comprehensive understanding can be generated, why not plan comprehensively to prescribe a future ideal state of affairs. Such notions can be compared with the various utopian ideals that guided planners in the early twentieth century. However, aspirations for utopia are an outcome and not necessarily a driver of the process, at its heart is the imposition of a single rationality for what will improve the world over and above competing demands. The CURS research, for example, uses techniques such as housing market assessment to imply that a techno-utopia can be reached when a properly balanced housing market will bring benefits for all. Most alluring for a government seeking to defend its policy choices is the (far fetched) promise of regeneration: a harmonious, prosperous community that is self-regulating and self-sustaining. The architecture of government, which forces local issues up and down an artificial scale hierarchy, seems to force and lock together specific assemblages of interests and discourses, thus resulting in the unceasing creation of elusive utopias (Murdoch and Marsden, 1995).

The problem with utopias is that they are abstracted visions, detached from the complex and conflict-ridden realities of life. Authors such as Barrett and Fudge (1981) stressed that the technical representations created by early rational comprehensive attempts at planning offered little guidance for those undertaking the messy business of implementation and argued against any separation of policy making from implementation. The reasons for this can be seen in prescriptions for balancing housing markets that describe a specific end-state, defined in terms of housing quantity and proportions of tenure and house type. Such end-states suffer from an over simplistic view of government planning functions as capable of coordinated, supreme control, and this leads them to assume the unproblematic implementation of plans. In reality, however, complex practical, financial, regulatory and political problems intervene (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973). The tendency of demolition and relocation to blight neighbourhoods to cause social instability (Gibson and Langstaff, 1982) highlights that the very action of implementing a plan can frustrate the logic on which it is based. In principle, there is therefore an inherent tension and problematic in the delivery of the HMRI which cannot be resolved by the sole use of a rational comprehensive approach

alone (Cole and Flint, 2007[22]). More importantly, however, the distance between an expert, top down and social science led prescription of how the world should be and the politics and values of those affected presents problems for sub-national actors, who must show delivery in order to maintain positive, reciprocal relationships with government. As a result, tactical ways of working are needed that will facilitate implementation regardless of the local political dynamics. The case study of Kensington in Liverpool showed that community engagement was fundamental to presiding in this act of depoliticising renewal action, demonstrating its potential to provide an additional source of legitimacy for HMRI proponents.

9.2.3   Communicative rationality- towards a decentring of power in the planning process

This section will take a critical look at how ideas about collaboration and consensus have been used in the development of the HMRI. Although these ideas have a history going back at least to the 1960s, the focus here is on the more recent and theoretical developed theories of collaborative planning and communicative rationality (see for example, Forester, 1989; Throgmorton, 1996; Innes and Booher, 1999; Healey, 1997). The impact of these theories on planning practice in the UK has been diverse, and there has been some debate about the transfer of concepts of communicative rationality into planning practice and its confusion with managerialist ideas of consensus (Healey, 2003; Hillier and Healey, 2008b). An explanation must be sought for the turn in practice towards collaboration and consensus, however, this is not easy because a base of detailed academic work in this area has often found its way into practice merely as a rhetoric of community involvement and participation that holds nothing of the same depth. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, for example, compares quite closely with communicative theories of planning, while the role of community involvement and consensus in the HMRI compares only superficially. In both instances, however, the same emphasis on collaboration, engagement and partnership prevails. All the practical problems with engaging actors cannot be laid at the door of communicative rationality as a theoretical concept. But the concept can be associated with the popularisation of consensus-building as an alternative to some of the problems with

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[22] But note that Ian Cole changes his mind here about the contribution of community knowledge, as he moves from the objective of achieving 'a workable degree of community consent (Cole and Nevin, 2004, p. 33) to somehow incorporating local knowledge.

instrumental rationality. This section begins with a look at the theoretical underpinnings of communicative rationality as an academic concept. The section discusses a limited number of relevant academic critiques before drawing some conclusions on the usefulness of the concept in the context of the HMRI.

9.2.4   A description of communicative rationality

Communicative rationality can be seen as part of a 'late modern' wave of thinking, which was broadly inspired by the work of Jurgen Habermas but which was flavoured by others including Michel Foucault and Anthony Giddens (Healey, 1997), John Dryzek (Innes, 1995), Michael Polanyi and Donald Schon (Sandercock, 1998; 2003). Unlike post-modernists, who are sometimes accused of total relativism, late modernist theory retains a faith in scientific inquiry, albeit radically reworked, as capable of leading society in the direction of progress. Communicative rationality sought to pursue this aim by removing the privileges previously assigned to expert studies of society. Justification for this reformed relationship between experts and others in society is drawn from a Marxian phenomenological view similar to that taken by Chris Allen in his study of the HMRI in Liverpool (Allen, 2008). This view conceives of 'people actively and interactively constructing their worlds, both materially and in the meanings they make, while surrounded by powerful constraints of various kinds' (Healey, 1997, p. 35). Such a position clearly runs counter to the idea that objective, static representations of society can be created using statistical techniques and impartial assumptions. Adopting the phenomenological position obviates the possibility of a comprehensive understanding of the world; it considers all knowledge as partial because it emanates from the world view/s of those espousing it. Communicative rationality was also informed by Giddens' (1984) ideas that people's habits and assumptions are constructed through path-dependent interaction, and that these institutions ultimately maintain wider societal distributions of power and material privilege. These structural forces might, then, be overcome by an approach to planning that set out to challenge them through dialogue. The idea is that, by carefully deliberating the assumptions that cause different actors' world views to come into conflict, planners might challenge the ingrained ideas and dominant discourses that uphold structural inequality.

The collaborative planning project draws on Habermas' theory of communicative action to propose some situations of ideal speech which might be used as an aspiration to guide constructive deliberation towards consensus. In essence, the argument was that planners

should shift from seeking a full knowledge of society and its problems to a new role as facilitator (Hillier and Healey, 2008b). Pluralist, interest group politics, which promote adversarial conflict and mutual suspicion, and mask power relations, would be replaced by discursive practices in which 'people learn about each other, about different points of view and come to reflect on their own point of view' (Healey, 1997, p. 33).

9.2.5 Theoretical conclusions on the usefulness of collaborative planning

One of the critiques of the turn to communicative processes, has been that it assumes a very specific idea of the kind of end user who will adopt its principles (Rayner, 2003). Innes (1995), for example, argues for the implementation of communicative rationality by comparing its subject matter with the concerns of 'typical' planners documented by Thomas and Healey (1991). In her account, planners

> ...struggle to be ethical, but are beset by competing loyalties and mandates. As a group they are uncertain about what authority or knowledge gives them the legitimacy to act as they do. They are uneasy about the capacity of elected bodies to represent the public or to make morally acceptable, informed decisions. They are uncomfortable with the expert role for themselves, recognizing that they have their own biases and that expertise has its limits. (p. 186)

To summarise, collaborative planning is a guide for what the socially conscious, state planner should aspire to. It provides inspiration to all planners who want a practical way to make a positive difference.

So, at the heart of collaborative planning is a standardised idea of the planner as socially conscious and in search of a method for improving things. Similarly, the policy turn towards public participation has been criticised for adopting a standardised idea of the citizen as:

- Socially embedded in a community
- Locally knowledgeable and intuitively reflective about society and nature
- Interested in common good as a core value of public life
- Reliant on inclusionary deliberation to reveal truth (Rayner, 2003)

These ideal roles seem to be the product of a particular view of the relationship between planning theory and society. While communicative research is based on empirical work into the communication practices of planners, these observations lead to the construction of

transgressive prescriptions for practice. There are continuities here with the modernist conception that science should tease out universal features from particular contexts with the aim of re-applying these features in different environments. That approach, however, necessarily requires some idealised prior notion of the relations which constitute the environment that the framework will be used in. For communicative planning, the ideal roles discussed above point to an imagined environment in which the professionalised planner is employed by the local authority to develop a statutory plan with the aim of advancing the public interest. The way the theory has operationalised ideas from social theory might therefore be construed as aimed at providing legitimisation for a profession that has been described as founded on a waning positivist ethos (Alexander, 1984; Allmendinger, 2002; Healey, 2003). In the 1990s, this ideal vision of how communicative planning theory might be used led some of its proponents towards a paradigmatic view of the use of theory in practice, in which comprehensive rationality might be overtaken by communicative rationality (Innes, 1995; Mandelbaum, 1996).

The formulation of ideal roles for planners and citizens, and the aspiration for an arena of planning based on a paradigm of communicative rationality, are goals which are derived from Habermas's optimism in science as a route towards a more just and harmonious society. The use of Habermas in this way has attracted considerable academic critique. A characteristic of his late modernist attitude is that it seeks to build an alliance of actors that will move planning and other forms of governance closer towards an ideal process, and that this will lead to a more just society. This agenda has attracted criticism from scholars who are more sceptical of the unifying power of transcendent ideas. Aligning themselves more with Foucault than Habermas, they stress that academics must be careful about how ideas are taken up by the state, and should embed their ideas in understandings of power dynamics rather than develop them from idealised images (Flyvbjerg, 1996, Fischler, 2000). In short, they see dangers in recourse to a process-based humanism and would instead seek to highlight the social divisions surrounding the implementation of communicative processes. Scholars in this camp are wary about relying on professional planners, who are themselves employed by organisations with interests and political agendas, to identify and challenge power structures. They stress that, even for well-meaning planners, certain factors are likely to remain beyond their control. Any use of communicative ideas in planning is likely to be imperfect, and it therefore has the potential to result in negative as well as positive outcomes.

As Tewdr-Jones and Allmendinger (1998) have argued, 'There is a danger (if not inevitability) that seeking consensus will silence rather than give voice.' (p. 1979).

Proponents of communicative planning have argued that their tools are not being employed properly (Innes, 2004). Patsy Healey has commented on being shocked at how the operationalisation of communicative planning has in many instances led to the distortion of its original arguments.

> the metaphor 'collaborative planning' became used and misused by politicians
>
> and policy makers in the UK from the mid-1990s onwards to describe their
>
> ambitions for a new form of governance (Healey, 2003, p. 7).

It seems unfair to blame communicative planning for the way it has been misinterpreted in practice. The turn towards communicative processes can perhaps best be considered as an understandable reaction both to an over-reliance on expert knowledge and to a need to respond to a smaller and increasingly fragmented state. The reconstructed, Habermasian pursuit of progress aligns well with this goal. In the longer term, though, there is of course a need to reflect on how collaborative processes have been taken up by the state. Latour might have asked for a critical understanding of the reasons why certain planning theory 'technologies' become successful while others fail. It is interesting, then to find that Friedmann (1973) proposed a set of communicative planning concepts twenty years before the peak of the theory's academic popularity (Hillier and Healey, 2008b), but that they received relatively little attention. If the relationship between theory and society is viewed as non-linear, this might direct us to an analysis of differences in the relational nature of practice between the 1970s and the introduction of community-focused policy in the late 1990s and 2000s.

One difference between these periods that has already been discussed is the intellectual attack on instrumental rationality that was escalated by post-modernist critiques in the 70s and 80s. It might be hypothesised that ideas of communicative planning addressed a gap in legitimacy that was left by this attack. Another explanation, however, might associate consensus building ideas with modes of network bureaucracy that have arisen in response to the privatisation and increasing fragmentation of services. In this environment, any methods that seek to focus diverse interests on a common goal are potentially valuable, and this is particularly the case for methods that are accompanied by a persuasive, normative ideal. Indeed, Healey (2003) notes that her book 'Collaborative Planning' was in part a response to

poorly co-ordinated government initiatives, which she saw as responsible for a neglect of 'place quality' in poorer areas (Healey, 2003).

Events in practice therefore illustrate some of the problems with seeking to comprehensively implement communicative rationality as a basis for planning decisions. Lobbying and argumentation remain firmly engrained in the political culture of representative democracy and instrumental rationality is relied on to add legitimacy to points of view. Communicative rationality has not replaced comprehensive rationality as an overarching method of planning; it has had a partial impact, adding to other possible justifications for action. In fact, a major industry of spatial consultancy is regularly drawn upon to support arguments with studies based on the positivist tools of instrumental rationality (see the work of CURS in this thesis and similar economistic work for organisations like the Northern Way, 2004; the Northern Way Sustainable Communities Team, 2009). The commercial success of these case-building researchers is based on their ability to claim they can find solid facts about society through their methods. Furthermore, the reaction of politicians is too often to set out fixed, substantive demands that are difficult to negotiate with or challenge through communicative action. In this context, it seems highly unlikely that communicative rationality will ever replace instrumental rationality to lead society towards a more just future.

A decade into the twenty first century, ideas of communicative rationality have left a powerful, if partial, imprint on planning and governance. The objective of consensus-building through public participation has become widespread as a means of adding legitimacy to public-private partnerships which have been criticised for lacking the transparency and accountability normally associated with representative democracy (Swyngedouw, 2007). Similarly, Uitermark (2007) has understood the focus on building and working with communities in the Netherlands as part of a governmental strategy of social control, aimed at supervising the behaviour of those marginalised by industrial decline and restructuring. Where concepts of communicative planning were developed in response to a lack of co-ordination, the case studies in this thesis have highlighted a situation of over-co-ordination. Here, the institutional momentum behind powerful ideas becomes such that it is very hard for any one institution to re-assess whether a scheme remains an appropriate response to changing urban problems.

The findings in this thesis illustrate the synchrony that exists between instrumental rationality and consensus-building processes within the part-linear, part-network regime. The relatively weak political position of CURS in 1999 was elevated to one in which over £2 billion was secured from government. The story of how CURS achieved this reflects Flyvbjerg's assertion that as power increases, the need for rational legitimacy reduces, and vice versa (Flyvbjerg, 1998). A (superficially at least) highly rational, case-based argument was supported by combining extensive research with academic status to exclude alternative value-based understandings of urban events. The priority for the CURS researchers was to construct a strong, coherent lobby voice to support their demands for a response to urban problems. Communicative planning's prescription, to engage with alternative sets of values and conceptions of the nature of the problem simply runs counter to the task these researchers had to undertake. It is not surprising, then, that communicative planning tools were not employed at this stage. Once a rational framework had established certain givens supporting the interests of key actors, communicative planning tools were employed in an attempt to generate consensus around issues of detail. This happened in Kensington, where the existence of leverage from the supposedly community-led New Deal for Communities scheme obligated an extensive level of involvement. In Whitefield, Pendle Borough Council's assertion that there were too many terraced houses did not stand up to scrutiny at public inquiry, but it was then re-asserted, together with the argument that 'aspirational' forms of housing were needed, through collaborative process of community enquiry by design.

When the concept of communicative planning is imported into state institutions it therefore comes into conflict with other technologies of government. Institutions of guarded rationality and representative democracy provide boundaries which are difficult for deliberative processes to cross. In this context, the field work in this thesis has shown that certain understandings become isolated from communicative debate by these institutions. This has led to appropriation of the normative foundations of communicative rationality to serve a new normative position which upholds particular interests. Instead of the goal being to encourage human flourishing, the goal is to encourage open debate around *selected* issues while restricting debate on the issues that structure the real substance of the conversation. Hence, a well intentioned effort at structuring creativity into planning processes, and attempting to boost the power of weaker voices, risks creating a process which structures-in support for already dominant interests and practices. Fundamental to the institutional structuring-in of support in this way has been the separation of debates at national and local levels, which

leaves many funding and policy issues determined by distant processes acting on imperfect information. Another is the existence of actors who will seek to achieve ends, either for themselves or for the interests of others as they understand them, by by-passing or seeking to subvert communicative processes.

9.2.6   Conclusions on collaborative planning

Collaborative planning asks a lot of its planners. It in effect asks them to be diligent and socially conscious in order to deconstruct discourses and black boxes through idealised communicative practices while holding off the often pre-determined political and organisational agendas they work within. But planners find themselves surrounded by competing demands and immersed in the blur of different policy directions, some upholding participation, others technical process. There is little to help them decide what to rely on and what to open up to communicative process, even assuming they are diligent and socially committed. However, it seems impossible to seriously expect proponents of an abstract planning theory to foresee how it might be taken up and used by actors in the future, and then to create strategies to defend its principles. A possible response to this problem is to move away from abstract theories, and instead to immerse the academic insights we can gain from them in a relational understanding of particular planning cases.

This argument is not new. Many scholars have argued from a similar point of view, claiming that collaborative planning has been appropriated by the power dynamics in which it has been introduced (Lauria and Whelan, 1995, Richardson, 1996; Flyvbjerg, 1996; Purcell, 2009, Irazabal, 2009). But the perspective that these authors advance tends to be more narrowly focused on a structural understanding of politics as necessarily tied to the progression of capitalism. Consequently, the power dynamics referred to often seem to be understood as relatively fixed, structural entities rather than as the consequence of contextualised networks of relations which constantly have to be performed and legitimised. The former view often constrains opportunities for the development of planning theory by a system in which strong links are envisaged between powerful interests (usually business) and government that are shadowy, sinister and largely deterministic. This often leads researchers to apply a label to these assumed alliances.

> 'neoliberalization produces important democratic deficits, and neoliberals must seek creative ways to overcome these deficits.' (Purcell, 2009, p. 141)

The act of labelling renders the enemy static and visible and allows those who (rightly) are appalled by the social injustice they observe to register their otherness in reference to this enemy. But an outcome of setting up arguments in this way is often that injstices are always attributed to a structurally produced ideology of neo-liberalism.

If we seek to embed communicative planning in a firmly post-structuralist understanding of the world, the links between powerful actors are not seen as fixed and deterministic, but as knowable and contextually determined. Neoliberal attitudes might be understand as an ideology (particularly in the US perhaps), and certainly as one which has developed an agency of its own, but they sit within an ever-changing relational environment which constantly constrains and opens up opportunities for political actors. This environment only ever occasionally provides the means for any hegemonic ideologies such as neoliberalism to be exercised in any coherent sense. From a post-structuralist position, it is possible to understand more clearly the performance of relations that is necessary to the continuation of certain dominating alliances. Challenge becomes possible if it can be convincingly demonstrated in the public sphere that these alliances serve mainly private interests. This position maintains the critical argument that communicative planning needs to be understood in the context of wider relational practices, but offers a new way of pursuing Healey's (2003) goal of creatively challenging powerful interests at the level of agency. An alternative to pursuing this aim through an abstract, process-based heuristic is to ground challenges in relational analyses and open up the implications to a debate that allows actors with different value judgements to define their own conclusions of what the response to situations should be. This alternative is consistent with a wider move away from universal, rational principles and towards a more contextually aware democratic framework (Watson, 03).

9.3   Part Two: Situating Planning Theory

The second part of this chapter addresses research question five, as set out in the introduction, which asked how planning theory might challenge the forces which prevent policy makers from using academic insights to pursue more equitable and effective policy. It builds on the arguments of the last chapter, that action to evolve and improve urban renewal action in the north of England needs to begin from a relational understanding that is cognisant of the forces surrounding it. Since these forces cannot be fully comprehended or anticipated by

abstracted prescriptions for planning practice, it is hoped that the investigation within this thesis will provide fuel for more effective and equitable renewal action. The purpose of this part of the chapter is therefore to explore how the knowledge in this thesis might be used, and by whom. It begins by reviewing the merits of two relational planning theories, which have been proposed as possible ways of appropriating practical tools from post-structural theories. A shared relational, or baroque, outlook should mean that the use of such theories in planning displays synchrony with the goals of this thesis. The chapter argues that Hillier's use of Deleuze to develop a multi-planar planning theory offers great potential to provide local authorities with foresight, which they might use to pre-empt political and economic planning challenges, at the same time as seeking to incorporate alternative understandings of urban problems.

9.3.1   The implications of post-structural theory for planning practice

Discussion about the use of post-structuralist theories in planning is relatively young, and seems to have been frustrated by the conceptual difficulty of translating descriptive frameworks of analysis into an environment that is accustomed to receiving normative directions. Surrounding this tension between description over prescription is a wider struggle between a practical desire to draw out universal/ transgressive lessons to guide planning and a theoretical suspicion of using immanent events from one time and place to generate a template of action that might be applied elsewhere (Hillier, 2005). This tension reflects the issues discussed in the last chapter; which noted the tendency for ideas to become universalised, and to mutate in ways which betray the intentions which originally underpinned them (cf. Healey, 2009). Post-structural theorists understand knowledge as contingent and as something that only ever holds momentarily. Consequently, as John Law describes, to abstract out a theory from practice runs counter to the baroque approach that informs actor-network theory (ANT).

> First, it is possible to describe ANT in the abstract. I've just done so, and this is often done in textbooks. But this misses the point because it is not abstract but is grounded in empirical case-studies. We can only understand the approach if we have a sense of those case-studies and how these work in practice. Some other parts of social theory (for instance symbolic interactionism) work in the same way and arguably that's how natural science is too: theory is embedded and extended in empirical practice, and practice itself is necessarily theoretical. (Law, 2007, p. 1)

As a consequence of the danger of abstracting from post-structuralism to the point of transgression, planning theorists have wrestled with the question of whether it is possible to say anything substantive about general processes of planning and urban renewal without compromising a baroque approach to complexity, and the resistance to modelling that is inherent within it. As Hillier (2007) has noted, it sometimes seems unavoidable that some form of transgressive statement, however limited and contingent, will need to be made if post-structuralism is to meet the demands of planning practitioners and theorists.

The following discussion reviews two attempts which have been made to find a way forward through this apparent divide between the inherent immanence of knowledge and the demand for transcendent principles. Both ask 'how can knowledge about the state of the world help those who are tasked with planning its future?'. The first approach seeks an answer by drawing on ANT, while the latter principally references Deleuzian assemblage theory. Deleuzian theory is included here because, as will be discussed below, there are clear similarities and overlaps with ANT's emphasis on relational patterns, (i.e. networks or assemblages). I turn first to the normative impact that ANT has had in this respect.

9.3.2 Actor network theory and the science of planning

Concepts from ANT have had most impact in the theory's field of origin, where its approach to understanding the relationship between scientific/ expert knowledge and society has inspired new directions about how such knowledge might be governed. A particular focus has been on the role of experts in environments of uncertainty, where decisions have to be made even when knowledge of an issue is limited or untested (Callon et al, 2009). Nowotny et al (2001) argue that we are entering a new age of uncertainty where such contexts are increasingly prevalent. Since we can no longer rely on a universal framework of what makes for good science, we can only judge scientific knowledge on the merits of specific research. Furthermore, the difficulties of making such judgements will mean that trust in good science will become increasingly scarce, and therefore increasingly valuable. This leads Jasanoff (2003) to call for a new regime of humility to prevail in situations of uncertainty, in which scientists from different disciplines meet with key stakeholders to explore the socially embedded aspects of knowledge creation and to embrace the potential for social knowledge to inform scientific analysis. She proposes that four questions need to be asked: what is at issue?; who will be hurt?; who benefits?; and how can we know?. The aim here is for a shared ethical and empirical project to achieve 'socially robust knowledge' (Nowotny, 2003),

yet at the same time there is a recognition that collective pursuit of this aim is often not easily achieved. Politicians may seek to hand pick experts (Jasanoff, 2003) or, as in the case of the government's recent treatment of the drugs advisor Professor Nutt, fire those who refuse to tell them what they want to hear[23]. In this sense, the laudable aspiration for socially robust knowledge that has been prompted by a more sociologically aware account of what science does is still insufficient to regulate the inherently messy and political entanglement of science and society. There is clear resonance here with collaborative planning's aspiration for communicative rationality; both projects pursue a positive, normative ideal of how robust knowledge should be produced, and this necessarily involves collaboration and deliberation with stakeholders. However, while the development of such an ideal is undoubtedly valuable, it does not help us to manage the things that go wrong when the world and its politics do not live up to our hopes.

In a recent article in Planning Theory, Yvonne Rydin (2007) draws on the normative use of ANT in science studies to propose a model which might be used to specify the knowledge that planners need (figure 9.1). By suggesting what is relevant and necessary to inform a planning strategy, Rydin's contribution sets the ground for further work on how planners might 'close down' knowledge claims. Immediately, however, it generates an ambitious list of knowledge demands including the following.

- The current state of society/ the environment (state A in figure 9.1)
- The likely future state without any change in planning/ renewal policy (state B)
- An understanding of the social, economic and environmental processes moving us from state A to state B
- Normative knowledge of what should be aspired to (state B1)
- Knowledge of the powers and tools available to planning and what the implications of their use might be
- Hindsight/ later reflection on what actually happened; how state A was turned into state B2

Rydin is explicit that, in identifying the requirements above, she is seeing to build a bridge between modernist and post-modernist approaches to planning. However, the successfulness

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[23] Professor Nutt was asked to resign from his position as chair of the Advisory Council for the Misuse of Drugs after pointing out contradictions between government policy, that drug classification is based on the harm of substances, and the available research evidence (Tran, 2009).

of her approach rests on the assumption that sufficient reliable knowledge can be gathered to maintain the overall level of coherence and usefulness of the model she suggests. In this sense, it clings to Habermas's late modernist faith in the transformational potential of collaborative action to build a single, shared knowledge that will overcome political conflict.

Figure 9.1: knowledge(s) and the planning process
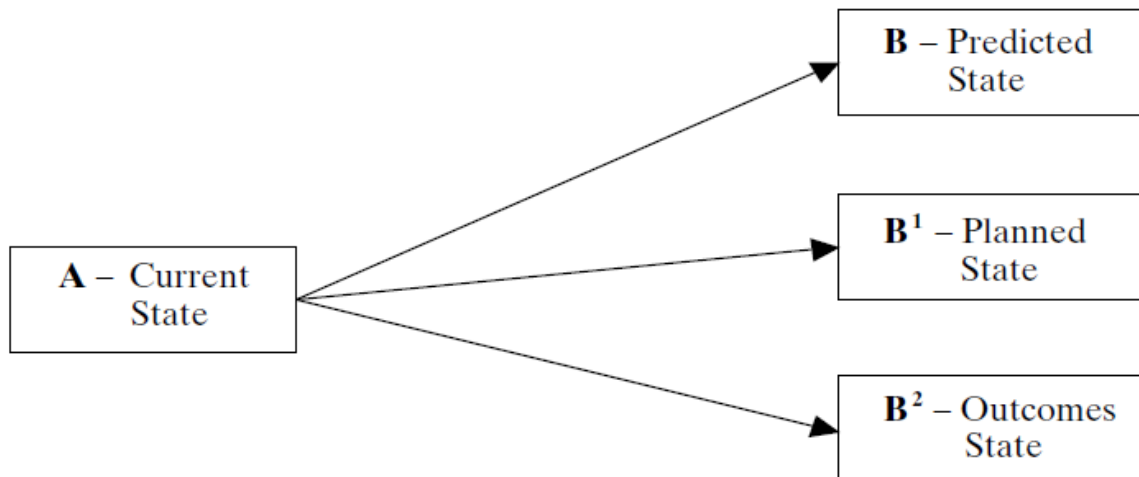
Source: Rydin (2007, p. 60)

The focus of Rydin's article is on knowledge management, which explains her use of the science studies literature to inform her model. However, as mentioned in the earlier discussion of that literature, problems can arise from the decision to separate out a project of knowledge generation from the wider political environment. In Rydin's defence she does not propose her model as a fully fledged planning theory, only as a reflection on knowledge processes. Nevertheless, the abstraction of knowledge processes from the wider political and cultural context in which planning takes place means that nothing is said about how planners might seek to cope with important, and perhaps overriding, political issues. This situation occurs because Rydin starts from a blank canvas in which, theoretically, anything is possible. This deviation, away from the principles of a baroque perspective, enables her to prioritise the pursuit of universal lessons, however, the cost of this is a need to artificially clean up the messy state of the world.

9.3.3 Hillierian multi-planar theory: an attempt to endow planning with political 'foresight'

In order to create a model, Rydin is forced to hypothesise an idealised planning environment which is uncompromised by political conflict. This might be understood as an attempt to create a new beginning, with circumstances which allow theory to be progressed. For Hillier (2007), however, there are theoretical problems with this. Drawing on Deleuze, she demonstrates that the creation of a new beginning is inevitably a normative task that will lead to an epistemological distance between theory and practice. Instead, she sets out to start in the middle.

> I cannot begin from the whole as a whole is never given or giveable (Hallward, 2006). So I must write a middle. 'It's not beginnings and ends that count, but middles... Things and thoughts advance and grow out from the middle, and that's where you have to get to work, that's where everything unfolds'. (Hillier, 2007, p. 1 citing Deleuze, 1995, p. 161)

Implicit in these different starting points is a different perspective on hope: what expectation can we have that planning decisions will be based on the best possible knowledge about urban events? Do we think, for example, that political control, professional mindsets and policy black boxes can be suspended in order to go through the best possible evidence-based process? Alternatively, would we rather set out to understand the, often cynical, political world in which we are immersed and devise strategies that take account of it?

Where the normative use of science studies has often tended towards plurality of scrutiny, social robustness and deliberative rigour in the face of uncertainty, Hillier's theory searches for possibilities to inspire future processes of becoming, in which more progressive constellations of actors might be favoured. She defines it thus:

> Mapping in strategic spatial planning would entail attempting to select and facilitate potentially 'good' encounters and to avoid 'bad' ones. This is a pragmatic exercise in which strategic planners would attempt to map relational forces and their ethologies of potential connections, conjunctions and disjunctions, their possible trajectories, bifurcations and mutations. In other words, to diagnose becomings (Bergen, 2006, p. 109). This is of course, impossible. Nothing eventuates precisely as anticipated. 'Becoming is directional rather than intentional' (Massumi, 1992, p. 95). The aleatory is often a powerful force. Strategic planning involves working with odds,

    guesses, predictions and judgements but not ever with certainty (Rose, 2007, p.

    468). (Hillier, 2008, p. 11)

In this sense, emerging research into Deleuzian-inspired planning approaches has the potential to go beyond the current normative use of science studies to encourage socially embedded scientific processes. By refusing to apply abstracted, transgressive directions without a prior, relational understanding of case studies, it resists the urge to artificially separate knowledge from its surrounding politics. This logically leads to the necessity for planners to struggle and engage with that politics. Implicit here is encouragement for planning theory to rejoin with critiques that are reminiscent of political economic theory. In so doing, however, it comes up against some of the problems that are inherent in understanding and addressing the dominatory performance of power (Hillier refers to this type of power as pouvoir) that is often associated within structural forces, black boxes and leviathans: the relatively limited agency that planners seem to have in the face of such processes.

Despite the difficulties that come with working in the face of powerful forces I, like Hillier, take the position that it is more constructive to recognise the problems associated with social, political and economic obstacles to better planning than either to ignore them or encourage wholesale activism against the system. Her understanding of the political as interwoven into the work of planners mirrors the empirical conclusions of this thesis. It has traced a world where democratic institutions encourage the systematised creation of black boxed professional ideologies and reductionist governance regimes that facilitate attempts at centralised control. In the case of the HMRI, those regimes currently have dramatic consequences for the way the programme is delivered and for the lives of some of those affected by it. Rather than being seen as separate from attempts to improve the state of politics and governance which surrounds and contributes to planning decisions, planning theory must take account of these dynamics if it is to be effective.

9.3.4   Lessons for urban renewal from a Deleuzian-inspired, multi-planar theory

Using Deleuze, Hillier is piecing together a methodology which aims to help planners to work with others to find approaches to subvert pouvoir (power of domination) and to instead stimulate 'forces/ capacities of becoming' (puissance) (Hillier, 2007, p. 107). In order that the search for such approaches does not prevent planners from getting on and continuing to take decisions about development, she suggests two planes of planning activity. The first, a

transgressive plane, recognises the need identified by Callon et al (2009), Nowotny et al (2001) and others for decisions to be taken on the basis of limited and uncertain knowledge. At the same time, a plane of immanence is proposed within which it is suggested that relational maps are built and connections are explored which might lead to the ability to frame problems in different ways and make better decisions in the future. It is this plane of immanence that is most useful to this chapter, but it does not come without its problems. It is occupied by the task of attempting to divine the future, the intense complexity and difficulty of which is illustrated by Hillier's selection of the following quote by Salmon Rushdie.

> He looked into the water and saw that it was made up of a thousand thousand and one different currents, each one a different colour, weaving in and out of one another like a liquid tapestry of breathtaking complexity; and Iff explained that those were the Streams of Story. ...And because the stories were held here in fluid form, they retained the ability to change, to become new versions of themselves, to join up with other stories and become yet other stories. (Hillier, 2007, p. 225 citing Rushdie, 1990, p. 72).

With so many currents, even the primary task of deciding which issues may be important to follow is daunting. The future evolves from the present, so clues to its content must be around somewhere, yet the sheer complexity of how the present yields to the future seems to defy enquiry.

We need responses to the question 'which attributes are important, and how will they gel together to inform the future?' Hillier suggests a number of goals which are connected with the aim of stimulating creative possibilities for more effective planning. These goals are informed by a hugely diverse body of theory, which contrasts with the more limited premises of this thesis' analysis of urban renewal. Fortunately, ANT overlaps with much of the theoretical support employed by Hillier. There are many similarities between terms such as constitutive outside and ANT's focus on absence presence discussed in chapter three. Similarly, there are differences but also many parallels between ANTs' focus on networks/ associations and Deleuze's interest in assemblages/ agencements. Thus, while there is not space here to explore the full meaning of terms within Hillier's more diverse conceptual framework, the theoretical consistency is sufficient to use Hillier's approach to inform an extrapolation of the ANT approach taken here.

It is therefore possible to simplify and adapt the goals suggested by Hillier to facilitate foresight into the way in which governance and decision making about physical renewal in the north of England might be adapted. Hillier (2008) suggests that the following tasks or questions might assist such a goal.

- A relational understanding of events that goes beyond the ways they are represented;
- knowledge of the conditions/ pre-requisites/ supports that allow something to be represented in the way that it is;
- why do those supports exist?;
- in what instance will change occur;
- how might the disguises of representation be overcome? (adapted from Hillier, 2008, who references Williams, 2003)

Many of these questions have been addressed as part of the exploration of the housing market restructuring black box that was carried out in chapter six, as well as through the analysis of Liverpool's meta-partnership regime in that same chapter. Beyond Liverpool, chapter eight's analysis of the part-linear, part-network funding regime which exists across the north of England explores the way in which a specific mechanism of long distance control has developed, and the interests it serves. There is a need, however, to complement this analysis with speculation about forces that are likely to facilitate change in this situation. Hillier proposes that four knowledges are needed to inform such speculation. The following points are a simplification and adaptation of these.

- An understanding of network patterns and their directions of flow;
- a map of the potential for regimes to transform or be translated;
- potentialities that might be anticipated/ expected (including areas where unknown forces might impact);
- new assemblages that might emerge (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 146 cited in Hillier, 2008, p. 4).

These points provide a guide as to how the knowledge in this thesis might be operationalised. The remainder of this chapter uses the spirit of Hillier's theory to develop one understanding of a foresight (future set of events and possibilities) that might emerge. This understanding is unlikely to be accurate and should be seen as fluid: it will need to be reformulated to account for the likely impact of new events and information about the way that governance regimes and institutions of practice are evolving. Nevertheless, it can be used to form a basis for further deliberation and speculation. Others may reach different conclusions by applying

different weightings to the importance of events, and assuming different likelihoods that new regimes and assemblages might emerge.

9.3.5 Discussion

This chapter has questioned the relationship between planning theory and planning practice in order to ask what impact planning theory has had in the context of housing market renewal. It has argued that abstracted planning theories must be understood in the context of the principal challenges which they grew up to address. Both comprehensive and communicative forms of rationality have been used to successfully address particular governance problems. However, the review in this chapter also indicates a tendency for idealised processes to migrate towards serving interests other than those which were intended by advocates of those processes. In the case of the HMRI, intellectual resources have been drawn on to provide legitimacy for decisions that have been largely determined by pressures resulting from the part-linear, part-network regime identified in the previous chapter. The use of an instrumental form of rationality to legitimise redevelopment proposals in Whitefield drew selectively on the case-building strengths of social scientific research, but failed to follow rational planning theorists' directions to present different options to politicians. Indeed, the very possibility of different options for urban intervention was largely closed down by assumptions about the kind of housing action that would represent value for money for central government. Selected aspects of communicative techniques were similarly drawn on in Liverpool. Residents of Kensington were informed about proposals, and encouraged to comment on details, but key decisions remained off the table. In both cases, theoretical techniques were drawn on selectively and instrumentally, but were nonetheless heavily relied upon in public inquiries to strengthen support for redevelopment proposals.

Part two of this chapter sought to identify new forms of planning theory that might acknowledge and work within the constraints and opportunities available to policy makers. It identified potential within Hillier's Deleuzian-inspired, multi-planar theory, and set out the key principles of that perspective. These principles provide a foundation for thinking about how the empirical work in chapters four to seven, and the analysis in the previous chapter, might be used to respond to the secondary task outlined in the introduction. This was defined as follows:

> *What might regeneration actors do to re-arrange governance towards a form*
> *that is capable both of commanding funding to respond to urban problems and*

of engaging with the practical and ethical dilemmas raised by different knowledge claims?

The epilogue to this thesis employs these principles to suggest how planners might seek to work within the evolving part-linear, part-network regime. Suggestions are developed for how planners might generate and use foresight to adapt urban renewal activity towards changing problem definitions, and to face shifting economic, political and governance challenges.

Concluding Discussion

10.1   Introduction

This chapter reflects on the arguments made throughout this thesis, explicitly links these to the research questions posed in the introduction and draws some final conclusions on the key arguments made. It begins by reminding the reader of the primary task of the thesis, and the different positions on housing market renewal which shaped this agenda. Attention is then shifted to the first three subsidiary research questions, outlined in the introduction, and a summary discussion is provided of the arguments that have been made in response to those questions. The subsequent section then attends to the secondary task, also outlined in the introduction, which sought to mobilise empirical conclusions to challenge and develop planning theory. This discussion sets out the basis for the suggestions made in the epilogue which follows this chapter. Together, these sections make the case for a constructive critique of the HMRI that acknowledges contemporary political and economic pressures and seeks to shift the agenda of urban renewal towards new problem framings and more just and innovative forms of decision making. The chapter concludes with a discussion of some of the limitations of this thesis's research, and a reflection on what would be done differently if it was to be repeated.

10.2   The primary research task

When research began on this thesis in 2006, academic and stakeholder views on housing market renewal were divided. They remain so. The second public inquiry into the compulsory purchase of properties in Kensington attracted academic objections from 13 different universities, including Professor Anne Power, who had been an influential force in defining New Labour's urban renaissance agenda at the end of the 1990s. Save Britain's Heritage continues to lobby fiercely for a turn towards eco-friendly refurbishment in the HMRI areas, and Brendan Nevin continues to support and defend the initiative. Academic debates in journals such as Housing, Theory and Society have adopted increasingly heated language.

This thesis has interrogated the epistemological credibility and value basis underpinning the different perspectives outlined above, and has further sought to explain the forces which have consistently favoured a particular way of perceiving and analysing housing markets. The introduction defined this primary task as follows:

Why does persistent, institutional demand exist to define places in line with reductionist research narratives, rather than to facilitate interrogations of the values and credibility attached to multiple knowledge claims?

The context for this task has been provided by an approach which has followed the emergence and de-territorialisation, or concretisation, of the professional and political understanding of housing markets which has dominated urban renewal over the last decade. Drawing on Foucault and actor-network theory, the approach has treated this understanding as a governance device or technology. The task has, accordingly, been one of tracing the emergence and use of a housing market analysis technology to translate the interests of local authorities, housing providers and others into a stabilised network. This thesis has paid the cost (Latour, 1987), in terms of time and investigation, that has been necessary to make visible the black boxed components of this technology. Those components have then underpinned an explanation of the technology's success at maintaining an assemblage of local policy makers, housing associations, funding and politicians. This thesis has argued that the housing market analysis technology has proven successful at maintaining an institutional alliance. However, the thesis has also raised serious concerns about the HMRI's claim that it will successfully restructure sub-regional housing markets.

There is resonance here with Patrick Dunleavy's investigation into the development of high rise council housing blocks thirty years ago (1981). Dunleavy demonstrated that there were alternatives to building high, and that a 'rationality gap' existed between the kind of housing that local and central government pursued and that which might have been welcomed by council housing clients. Similarly, this thesis's scrutiny of the rational justification given in support of housing market intervention highlights a gap between its legitimating rhetoric and the kind of policy actions that are actually facilitated. The various problems in the HMRI areas, including housing vacancy and high turnover, have not led to the use of rational planning processes (either instrumentally or communicatively) to consider a wide range of problem framings and solutions. Rather, a predetermined solution has been used to define the problem. Giles Deleuze has argued that such practice is common.

> …solutions do not suppress problems, but on the contrary discover in them the subsisting condition without which they would have no sense. (1990, p. 56).

The empirical work in this thesis, particularly in chapters four and five, shows how the solution of housing redevelopment and investment preceded and subsequently directed the arguments that were provided by, supposedly rational, housing market research over the last

decade. The persistence of these kinds of rationality gaps, both in the 1970s and the 2000s, suggests that future attempts to explain why policy action has occurred must necessarily attend to the work of network building and maintenance, rather than seeking merely to test the rational justifications provided for housing market intervention.

10.3   Subsidiary research questions

The introduction set out a number of subsidiary questions in order to explore the contention that the manner in which the HMRI has grown up and been maintained reflects institutional and discursive pressures and opportunities, rather than any kind of 'rational' approach[24]. The first three of these questions enquired into the relational constitution of the HMRI, its treatment of alternative values and understandings and, crucially, the forces which have sustained it. The response to these questions is outlined below.

The first research question asked 'What kind of networks of actors and arguments led the state to pursue a housing market analysis approach to renewal?' The thesis addressed this question by historicising the initiative's approach to urban renewal. In chapter four, the a priori underpinnings of a historical concern with an integrated society were explored. These were traced to bourgeois-Liberal concerns to civilise problematised parts of the city. In chapter five, the conditions and events were then investigated which enabled housing market researchers to revive that attitude as a device for addressing housing management problems at the turn of the millennium. This thesis contends that the resurrection of an integrationist dispositif reinforced a rigid understanding of the nature of urban problems as matters to be resolved through a prescriptive, expert-led approach to area-based intervention in the housing stock. The housing market research analysed in chapter five revived the post-war view of planning as combining comprehensive, expert knowledge with comprehensive (sub-regional) intervention. This market research devised a template of prescriptive, causal narratives about how cities work, which was then used to justify a programme of housing redevelopment and refurbishment. This approach implied the ability to achieve a utopian optimum scenario of a restructured housing market, and this vision was used to unite a lobby-alliance of institutional actors, and to focus their efforts on a visible and coherent claim for housing funding. What began as an institutional lobby-alliance with claim on the government later became organised

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[24] 'Rational' is understood here in the broadest sense as an ideal process.

through a networked partnership of public, semi-public and private actors, co-ordinated largely at the sub-regional level.

The funding claims of sub-regional partnerships have been framed by the terms of the original agreement with government, which was to make funding available to restructure housing markets and address low demand and abandonment. The term 'pathfinder' which was given to the sub-regional partnerships initially implied the encouragement of diversity in approach. However, a unified methodological perspective and template of housing market narratives, was combined with centralised expectations of what funding could be spent and, it would seem, a desire to boost the housing market in the north. This has resulted in the imposition, through the sub-regional partnerships, of a rigid template of prescriptions for housing intervention. The template has formed the basis for a part-linear, part-network governance regime. Central government has operated on the linear plane of this regime; it has sought to restrict what funding can be used for by basing statistical indicators and targets on the template. On the network plane, local organisations have worked together, using housing market research to build cases that will maximise funding for redevelopment and refurbishment of the housing stock in their areas.

The second subsidiary research question asked 'how has the housing market analysis approach to renewal sought to deal with competing values and knowledge claims?' On the one hand, the governance dynamics of the part-linear, part-network regime have encouraged local authorities and partners to develop strong cases for funding based on established methodological lines of argument. On the other, a revised planning system has been introduced which (initially at least) encouraged planners to explore stakeholders' understandings of the 'issues' and 'options' facing the areas they lived or worked in. A clash of rationalities has resulted, with ostensibly objective housing market research being used to identify a set of given issues and responses, on which planning strategies have been premised. In the case of Liverpool in chapter six, the prescriptions of a template of housing market narratives also clashed with the rationality underpinning the New Deal for Communities initiative. A specific, meta-partnership regime was used to co-ordinate funding among area-based partnerships; interview evidence provided by Chris Allen suggested that this regime operated to shield certain issues from public debate. These events led to a backlash of objections to attempts to compulsorily purchase housing in Kensington. In Whitefield, some of the residents whose homes were earmarked for clearance successfully challenged

compulsory purchase. However, those who controlled access to public funding remained committed to fixed perspectives about how to assess and respond to vacant housing, which reflected centralised understandings of how to control housing market intervention. The use of sub-regional partnerships to control funding, separate from the planning inquiry process, protected dominant institutional perspectives from scrutiny. In Whitefield, this dynamic became manifest in the re-assertion of housing market prescriptions following the refusal of the compulsory purchase order. This in turn led actors to compromise with each other, rather than focus on the multiple constructions of housing market knowledge available to them. Similarly in Liverpool, objectors were told that the only available funding was for the proposed redevelopment of Kensington, and that their 'plan B' was therefore unfeasible. Again in Walker Riverside, where extensive consultation on an HMRI scheme took place, planners and residents were restricted to options defined by ostensibly objective housing market research. Community involvement has been regarded in the same way that Patrick Abercrombie regarded it in 1945: as something to be welcomed, providing that it supported the approach that had already been defined by the policy makers (Ravetz, 1980).

The analysis of the governance dynamics surrounding the HMRI in chapter eight discussed the 2005 Select Committee, which considered the early progress of the pathfinders. Residents, community groups and heritage organisations raised concerns about the evidence base the programme was based on, and these were partly accepted by the members on the committee. The third research question asked 'Why does the state continue to pursue a housing market analysis approach despite the controversy that has surrounded the initiative and its changing objectives?' This thesis argues that the confinement of housing market analysis to expert assessments has resulted in assessments which respond to the template of hegemonic housing market understandings outlined above. Chapter eight noted that, the Select Committee did consider the objection that some causes of vacancy, such as poor housing management and planning blight, were not reflected in housing market analyses. In response, the Committee recommended that 'If there is strong evidence that the rise in housing demand is sustained and not just the result of an artificial boost to the market due to speculative activity, the Pathfinders should review their demolition programmes as a matter of urgency and concentrate on neighbourhood management and housing refurbishment.' (House of Commons, 2005, paragraph 36). However, the Select Committee failed to challenge the hegemonic control of housing market evidence within sub-regional partnerships, no new routes for challenge and scrutiny of the basis of that evidence were

opened up. Consequently, housing market studies and auditors have continued to work on the basis of black boxed narratives about how housing markets work, and these have similarly informed government policy. There has, further, been no incentive for sub-regional partnerships to weaken their claim for government funding by finding that housing market problems have eased in an area, or that they require different responses. Indeed, further research from organisations such as the Northern Way has sought to increase funding for redevelopment by arguing that the modernisation of the housing stock is instrumental to economic restructuring. This thesis has therefore argued that the specific arrangement of the part-linear, part-network governance mechanisms surround the HMRI has created a self-perpetuating dynamic which has encouraged institutions to use housing market evidence to reinforce their claims for public funding.

10.4   The secondary research task: directions for the future

Any attempt to set out constructive advice for the management and development of renewal schemes has to begin from a solid analysis of the political and governance issues which have marked the recent history of the housing market analysis approach to renewal. The primary task of this thesis was to provide this kind of analysis. In response this thesis has concluded that the dynamics of political relationships between central and local government have led to an institutionalised inability to consider alternative ways of responding to urban problems. These dynamics are themselves the product of path-dependent historical decisions to centralise funding for social housing as a means to reduce public spending. Under-funded housing associations and local authorities at the turn of the millennium were struggling to provide housing services in a context of sustained population and economic decline. Restrictions on the autonomy of these institutions pushed them to find ways to mount claims for funding. Those claims were articulated by housing market researchers at the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies. A fear by central government that HMRI funding would be appropriated to support 'mainstream' service provision led to a firm demarcation of what that funding could be spent on. The period between 2002 and 2010 was therefore marked out by attempts to maximise funding through that route. An important consequence of so much political and institutional energy being taken up with the reconciliation of central and local agendas has been the marginalisation of alternative ways of understanding and valuing the built environment.

It would be possible to find evidence to support an indictment of proponents of housing market renewal, such as Brendan Nevin and Ian Cole for merely repeating the mistakes of the 1960s and 70s. However, this thesis has identified a dichotomy at the heart of the HMRI. On the one hand, rigid problem framings and monitoring mechanisms have been necessary to garner institutional support, forge alliances and project confidence that central government spending will achieve value for money. On the other, the very rigidity of these problem framings has stifled attempts to open up the dominant response to urban problems (refurbishment and redevelopment) to alternative problem framings and policy opportunities. This environment has created a dilemma for practitioners and policy leaders seeking to respond to problems in HMRI areas: funding has been available for certain things only, regardless of whether there are good reasons why they are unlikely to use public money effectively. The lot of the chief proponents of housing market renewal has, too, been one of being able to secure funding on particular terms for tightly delimited activities. This has created a consequentialist dilemma: whether it is better to accept, and continue to pursue funding on these terms, or to open up urban renewal activity to diverse understandings of urban problems, only to risk evaporation of funding, and of the basis of legitimacy which has been secured for existing projects. It is, to some extent, understandable that proponents of the HMRI have continued to support the shape of the initiative in the face of huge controversy over some of the schemes involved, and the erosion of democratic rights: the scheme has channelled funding to institutions and to some of the affected residents. The nature of the dilemma identified above raises problems for critiques of housing market renewal such as this one: is it better to be critical and risk undermining financial support for the initiative or to remain silent? Alternatively, however, one might focus on asking how critique can contribute constructively to the future of urban policy.

The problems outlined above are encapsulated within the secondary task that has guided this thesis. This task was articulated as follows,

> *What might regeneration actors do to re-arrange governance towards a form*
> *that is capable both of commanding funding to respond to urban problems and*
> *of engaging with the practical and ethical dilemmas raised by different*
> *knowledge claims?*

The final two subsidiary questions were then explicitly charged with testing the contribution that planning theory might make to this problem. This was done by revisiting the core empirical material as a basis for further analysis. Subsidiary research question four asked

what impact existing planning theories had had in the context of the HMRI and question five asked, 'If forces exist that are preventing policy makers from exploiting intellectual opportunities to respond more equitably and effectively to contemporary urban policy challenges, how might it be possible for planning theory itself to adapt to challenge these forces?' In response to these questions, chapter nine reviewed the use of instrumental and communicative forms of rationality within the approach to planning that has been pursued by the HMRI. It concluded that selected aspects of these abstracted suggestions for how to go about planning were appropriated to provide legitimacy for the part-linear, part-network regime surrounding the HMRI. Furthermore, by acknowledging the usefulness of these ideas as a response to problems at the time of their creation, chapter nine emphasised the situated nature of planning theory, and therefore argued for the need to similarly situate a response to the challenges posed by the HMRI. The epilogue to this thesis illustrates how the principles of such an approach might be employed, arguing for local authorities to make use of opportunities in their areas, together with insights from this thesis, to pro-actively respond to oncoming challenges emerging from the change of government and the oncoming 'austerity drive'. This chapter is certainly not intended as a prescription; rather its purpose is to highlight the potential to reframe problems and advance new ideas for the practice of urban renewal. The aim is not that people might follow, but that planners and others might develop their own innovative responses to the approaching problems, as they see them.

10.5   Limitations of the research

This thesis has sought to strike a clear line of argument in an environment that has been characterised by strong and competing convictions. As the research progressed, it became increasingly clear that rational argument, and convictions about how to address housing vacancy, have accounted for only part of the story. The other side of the story has been characterised by judgements about what can realistically be achieved for problematised areas, and by efforts to secure those achievements through the building of alliances and political influence. In the early stages of the research, efforts were made to contact officers working within the Department of Communities and Local Government, but these proved unsuccessful. Subsequent investigation focused on documentary evidence, which was essential to an appreciation of the epistemological limits of the narratives guiding the HMRI. So many post facto arguments have been made for and against the initiative that the investigation could not have taken place without close scrutiny of the actual arguments that were made in the lead up to government's announcement to support the initiative. This was

an effective approach to investigation. Nevertheless, there have perhaps been two significant disadvantages of taking this route. The first has been that the focus on documentary evidence has limited the ability of the research to penetrate the informal alliances and links underlying political decisions at the national level. Coverage of these events has been restricted to second hand information, gained where possible from actors with connections in Whitehall. The research is therefore heavily reliant on how the official legitimising arguments evolved, at the expense of an understanding of the fine grain political battles, tough choices and dilemmas which were no doubt going on behind the scenes. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that it is very difficult to gain this kind of information without established and reliable contacts. The second disadvantage, or consequence, of an emphasis on documentary evidence has been that the focus was shifted away from the disparate claims made by proponents of the HMRI. This was intentional, because attention had to be focused on the central arguments which went on to construct the way the initiative has been governed. The focus on documentary evidence facilitated a network analysis of how arguments have evolved, but it downplayed attention to the ethical outlook of those lobbying for the HMRI. Ethical outlooks are a significant concern for Foucault and are far less prominent in the actor-network theory literature which, with its focus on description, can be quiet on the emotional issues surrounding motivations. However, contact made with a key proponent of the HMRI towards the end of the research aided a better understanding of the pressures and judgements being made. This revealed the way in which these actors were caught up with longstanding ideas of how to go about urban renewal and the institutional consequences of political decisions on housing policy during the last 25 years of the twentieth century. Were the research to be undertaken again, earlier and more substantial contact would have been sought with academic proponents of the HMRI and with those partner agencies involved in the initiative's development.

Epilogue: The Potential for Foresight in Local Authority Practice

This final epilogue develops the approach to foresight that was outlined in chapter nine as a basis for estimating how urban renewal activity in the north of England might evolve. It begins with a short summary and review of the key forces benefiting from, and supporting, the present urban policy regime. This understanding is then complemented with a search for forthcoming events which are likely to impact on and collide with the relational picture drawn up in the earlier part of this thesis. We can be confident that some of these events, such as the recession, will have a huge impact on renewal processes. However, the way in which these issues will change the processes and substantive outcomes attached to urban renewal is far less clear and still undetermined. The following approach begins with a discussion of some of the ways in which it seems likely that events might pan out into the future; it seeks opportunities that might be grasped to further more effective planning outcomes.

11.1   Knowing the present

In the first few months of research leading to this thesis an attempt was made to clarify the objectives of the HMRI. This task proved impossible because the HMRI's objectives have constantly been redefined as the initiative has progressed. When it began, the HMRI was a response to real problems of housing vacancy affecting local authorities and housing associations in parts of the north of England at the turn of the millennium. In a very small number of areas, low demand still causes problems for housing providers (see table 1 later). Nevertheless, affordability figures (NHF 2009a-d), the case studies in this thesis, and a review of the pathfinder by some of its original proponents (Leather et al, 2009), suggest that the broader picture is one where low demand is no longer a key concern. It seems that, in many places, wider economic and demographic trends have meant vacancy problems were eased shortly after the announcement of the HMRI. For these areas in particular, the HMRI has brought mixed fortunes. On the one hand, a substantial amount of funding has been used to undertake facelift improvements to existing housing and develop new infill housing. On the other hand, action in many areas has been characterised by inflexible prescriptions, which have subsidised housing development and redevelopment regardless of local needs or the values attached to the built environment. A genuine attempt to address vacancy has mutated

towards a self-perpetuating urge to replace old housing with new that looks unlikely to survive the recession.

A detailed inspection of the HMRI shows that the initiative blends together an incredibly complex mix of political interests that do not always combine well. Constant tension between these interests has resulted in vague and meandering objectives, and often the exclusion of less powerful framings of urban problems. The current, dominant approaches to urban renewal in the north of England can be explained as the outcome of political contests between the following sets of interests:

1. Local states trying to maintain the long term feasibility of housing and neighbourhood services;

2. Local authorities attempting to use the situation to their advantage as a way of drawing in external public investment from central government;

3. Housing associations and developers attempting to use the situation for financial gain;

4. The treasury, which (anecdotally) has quietly sought to take advantage of the initiative to boost house prices and boom the northern economy (Minton, 2009; Webb, 2009d).

Not only has there been internal competition between the actors listed above, but two further sets of interests have fought to redefine approaches to better reflect their desires. These are:

1. Heritage organisations attempting to safeguard a, variously defined, notion of the historic environment;

2. The day to day needs and lives of some of the affected residents and local businesses who have political and/ or personal interests in a different approach.

The effectiveness of different HMRI pathfinders has depended on how well they have been able to understand and prioritise the importance of responding to these interests. In parts of NewcastleGateshead, more collaborative approaches have been taken to doing this but, together with other factors, these have slowed 'delivery' and have consequently attracted criticism from the Audit Commission. Other areas such as Liverpool have received praise for making rapid headway, however, 'progress' has been made possible by an uncompromising attitude to community involvement and a reliance on expert knowledge that may have left these areas particularly vulnerable to the equally uncompromising nature of the recession. Those pathfinder areas which have taken the more expert-led route, and have relied on the prescriptions of housing market assessments to manage the process of political bargaining,

have created technicalised governance structures, which have concentrated decision making in the hands of unaccountable urban consultants. Often, this has led to attempts to neutralise local interference rather than learn from their arguments. The current situation, therefore, is not a hegemonic one. There is an element of diversity in the quality of the mediation that has taken place between the different interests involved. However, there is a pressing need to reflect on how forthcoming events might strengthen or undermine dominatory forces over programmes in the HMRI areas as we enter a period of substantial political and economic change.

11.2 Possible futures

In the next two to three years two forces threaten to overhaul the future of housing market renewal pathfinders and similar renewal schemes that have arisen to exploit the government's part-linear, part-network funding regime. The most significant of these is the current economic recession, which the governor of the Bank of England has termed the worst in modern history (Conway and Wallop, 2009). A recent study on the effects of the recession expected it to have a dramatic impact on urban renewal in the north.

> A significant worry is that housing-led regeneration activity will not rebound in 2010 or 2011, even if the economy emerges from recession. The period of abundant private sector credit has come to an end and banks are likely to be reluctant to lend for what they see as marginal or risky projects for several years. This could be a severe blow to housing-led efforts aimed at regenerating deprived areas within northern cities unless an alternative source of funds can be found. (Dolphin, 2009, p. 15)

A similar message was reiterated by the British Property Federation, which described the impact on urban renewal in the following way.

> …the model by which (renewal) has been achieved, heavily underpinned by rising land values and the easy availability of credit, has now been swept away, at least in the medium term, by an economic recession and financial crisis that have prompted the severest downturn in both the house building and commercial property sectors for decades. (British Property Federation, 2009, p. 2).

The implications of the recession are particularly severe because the scale of public borrowing means that public funds for renewal will become increasingly scarce. In addition, recently announced cuts to public spending have disproportionately affected physical renewal

schemes. Even before the election, senior officials such as Richard Kerslake, chief executive of the Homes and Communities Agency, were referring to the HMRI in the past tense (Garlick, 2009a) and moves were mooted to combine its funding, which has traditionally been a discrete allocation, with other regional pots (Garlick, 2009b). The new government has now announced that the HMRI budget will no longer be ring fenced. The recession therefore looks set to threaten the availability of both developer interest and public sector funding.

In 2009, the Audit Commission went on record to say that the recession could not have hit at a worse time for the pathfinders, which built a total of 3,734 new homes between 2002 and 2009 but demolished 16,000 (House of Commons, 2009). Many sites have been cleared and/ or boarded up in anticipation of development but developers are now faced with negative, or much lower margins than were envisaged. This situation has arisen because, as this thesis has shown, renewal schemes have been founded on research which has encouraged local authorities to attempt to comprehensively restructure housing markets. A characteristic of this social science led approach to strategy making is the development of a long term goal or vision that is detached from the political and economic conditions required for its delivery (Barrett and Fudge, 1981, also see chapter eight). Since these visions were designed in times of growth they are based on the flawed assumption that delivery will be underpinned by strong private sector development pressure and economic growth.

In the private sector, house builders have reacted swiftly to the dramatic changes in demand for housing, but inertia surrounds the current regime of central government control. The approach to strategy making, and the arguments that justify particular schemes, still assume that long term targets for future levels of tenure and house type mix are achievable, even as the prospect of delivery appears ever more distant. Under the part-linear, part-network regime of central government control, local and regional networks have built strong cases for financial support for various housing schemes. The new government is implementing steep cuts in development funding for regional agencies. At the local and sub-regional levels, regeneration professionals are maintaining their efforts to achieve (now unreachable) housing targets, resulting in a continued fixation on attracting unsustainable public and private funding. In the UK's period of growth, this system forced localities to assume central government priorities in order to access funding. However, in the new era of austerity, this

habitual practice maintains the dependency of localities on the centre, preventing them from turning to face more pressing problems.

The inflexibility of the part-linear, part-network regime is illustrated by the way regeneration professionals have responded to the recession. The principal risk faced by the north of England is that, in the medium term, cuts in public funding will mean that many renewal schemes will have to be dramatically curtailed or aborted. Far from renewing economies, the resultant legacy of blighted neighbourhoods is likely to damage the economic and demographic prospects of the region. But a technocratic regime of control has been built up, based on the notion that localities should develop comprehensive understandings of what they require and look to central government for funding. Consequently, regeneration professionals and advisors have downplayed the likely effects of the recession. When questioned by Inside Housing magazine, for example, Brendan Nevin predicted that public funding would continue to be made available to the HMRI in line with expectations.

> 'We've just committed 19 per cent of our GDP to rescuing the banks, after all –
>
> but I wouldn't say that pathfinders will be affected,' (Brandon, 2008, p. 1)

His comments are representative of a wider reaction by the renewal profession, which has concentrated on making sites 'oven ready' in optimistic anticipation of the return of private sector development pressure from large house builders (Cole, 2008b; Parkinson, 2009). Before the may election, a £388 million package was made available in an attempt to kick start development on sites that have been mothballed as a result of the recession.

The previous government's package of funding for mothballed sites is a short term measure which ensures that some development will continue on sites in the earlier phases of pathfinder intervention. However, it seems highly unlikely that such lucrative funding will be available to subsidise house building in the medium term. Despite this, many local authorities are offering no assistance, and are indeed actively preventing, residents from re-occupying and rehabilitating potentially affordable housing which has been emptied for these future phases. Their reliance on central government means that they are still seeking to attract funding to replace such housing (for example Kensington in Liverpool, Derker in Oldham and Gresham in Middlesbrough). However, there are already signs that what is being delivered on HMRI sites is at significant variance from what was planned for. The current emphasis on the nationwide affordability crisis, and the inability of individuals to attract credit, means that it is affordable housing for lower income households that is currently being

built in place of housing that has been demolished; this is particularly ironic given that the assembly of sites has in many cases been justified by an objective to attract higher income households to deprived areas. A further irony is that, while the recession is making it increasingly difficult to deliver new housing, the collapse in housing demand has also acted as an incentive for property owners to sell, thus making it easier for local authorities to assemble sites. The current governance regime acts in combination with this improvement in local authority purchasing power to act as a disincentive to authorities to explore less expensive ways of stewarding built environments in a time of austerity. Instead, they are continuing to pursue long term projects to comprehensively change parts of the north, even though the expectation must be that public funding for this endeavour is likely to dry up in the short to medium term.

In combination with the recession, the second force which will impact on the future of the HMRI is the new Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government. Despite two months in office and an emergency budget announcing 25% departmental cuts, there is still little detail in the new government's policies. Prior to the election, Conservative policy responded to the bleak economic outlook with suggestions that they would maintain a weaker level of support for physical renewal schemes. They announced in July 2009 that 'The days when a lot of bespoke regeneration programmes could be underwritten by the Treasury have gone for the time being.' Garlick (2009c) and have pledged a performance-based review of the future of the HMRI if elected (ibid). Responding to popular concern about unethical use of MPs' expenses, they also pledged a 'bonfire of the quangos' as part of a wider cost-cutting agenda which would remove the regional planning tier, thus completely overhauling the way government currently works with local authorities. Letters have already been circulated informing local authorities that yet another restructure of the planning system will be used to remove the regional tier and facilitate 'localism' and a 'big society', although there remains little clarity around either of these terms.

Commenting in the independent, Stephen Richards has claimed that the impact of the Liberal Democrats on coalition policy has so far been limited (Richards, 2010). This does seem to be the case, and it is perhaps therefore worth focusing mainly on Conservative policy. While the Conservatives have made a number of outspoken criticisms of government's use of targets and regional planning, the logic underpinning their suggestions about how they would improve decision making has been vague, opportunistic and somewhat disjointed. Their

proposal to disband regional development agencies was accompanied by a suggestion that county councils could be reinstated, but the party later backed down by saying that local authorities would be able to vote to keep regional development agencies if they thought they were working well (Garlick, 2009d). At other times, the focus has wandered towards support for a linear system of distributing renewal funding, similar to the single regeneration budget process of the 1990s, in which local authorities would be encouraged to submit competing bids (Garlick, 2009c). But this, like the party's commitment to being 'unapologetically pro-development' (Wilding, 2009), seems at odds with a further proposed move to localism and community-led regeneration, founded in tools such as community enquiries by design. The enforcement of a universal, pro-development stance would require the Conservatives to find ways to limit the decisions that can be taken locally, but no information has yet been provided about how they would do this. In short, while the Conservatives are likely to want to move away from a reliance on targets and regionalism, they seem undecided about how they would manage urban renewal differently.

The continuation of funding for the HMRI will depend on the ability of development actors in the north to bring government's interests more securely in line with the initiative. The initiative's origins as a response to housing vacancy, and its political connections with the voluntary stock transfer programme, are now distant memories and no longer provide a convincing reason for continuation. Housing associations have successfully used the initiative to secure their balance sheets by offloading most of their problematic stock. As was discussed in chapter eight, the HMRI's longevity is already reliant on lobbying from agencies in the north and from the Northern Way to re-assert the need for government funding, usually by associating it with the economic revival of the region. While Conservative-Liberal Democrat policy is still evolving, many of the political connections between Labour-dominated HMRI areas and central government are now lost, and the strength of the northern lobby is substantially weakened. This situation is aggravated by the moves away from regionalism and target-based control. It seems likely that the whole regime of control that has grown up around the HMRI is in the process of being overhauled. However, with the north of England unlikely to be seen as a good prospect for vote winning, the quantity of funding diverted to the north under the label of regeneration is likely to decline, exacerbating a decline in private sector funding for renewal.

While a decline in funding for physical renewal is inevitable, the new government has not been overtly hostile to the HMRI since taking power. There are three factors which might lead to continued support for some kind of housing market renewal policy. The first factor is the momentum which has been established; the complexity of the initiative may make it difficult for politicians to understand the effect that alternative policies would have on existing schemes, possibly leading to a delay in the redirection of funding (Webb, 2009b). Cutting funding without a full understanding of the initiative could also invite the political opposition to claim that a perfectly workable programme had been undermined, and to evidence this with the quorum of voices from regeneration professionals who now sign up to housing market doxa. Secondly, the existence of blight in HMRI neighbourhoods may introduce a moral impediment for continued action, and politicians may fear the consequences of cutting so much funding that they are blamed for the social consequences of long term blight. Finally, any remaining potential to secure profits from the assembled housing sites may be seen as beneficial to the wider development sector. When these factors are taken into account, the true legacy of the HMRI seems likely to be a flurry of subsidised development on the most profitable sites over the next five years, with limited environmental work to the remaining sites. There are again stark parallels here with the 1970s, when the ever-intensifying surge of slum clearance was finally countered by an unsustainable draw on government funds at a time when government's ability to pay was constrained by a recession prompted by the 1973 oil crisis. In many places, the built environment still records the result: the incomplete replacement of coherent stretches of housing with a patchwork of retained housing, new estates and vacant land.

11.3   Normative action

This thesis has made a number of substantive arguments about the content of housing market renewal schemes in the north of England. The study of Whitefield showed that the way in which technocratic tools are used to identify decline is partial, cumbersome and open to manipulation. Further studies of policy processes in Liverpool and Whitehall demonstrated that the causal understandings which are embedded in housing market assessments, and which have developed to direct responses to decline, are insecure. They hold together a policy regime which serves particular institutional interests by channelling funding and development activity towards certain, low income neighbourhoods. To date, local authorities have enthusiastically participated in the sub-regionally administered governance regime which has surrounded the HMRI because they have seen it as a way to attract the maximum

amount of funding to their areas. However, focusing too heavily on attracting funding has often led to poor decisions about how to adapt urban environments for new economic and demographic challenges.

The biggest danger now facing local authorities across the north is that an addiction to the plentiful stream of boom time central government funding prevents them from turning to face the challenges to their neighbourhoods and economies which are presented by the recession. Authorities in the north of England have been hugely successful at extracting funding from government, and have rationalised this with the claim that physical renewal is essential to the long term restructuring of housing and economies. In order to react effectively to the recession, local authorities must take care that they do not succumb to their own rhetoric about the merits of 'housing market restructuring' and should instead undertake a realistic appraisal of their priorities now. Central government funding will remain important, but new goals will need to be identified that more carefully exploit local opportunities for action and delivery and which are less reliant on large amounts of external funding. In general, there will need to be a shift to look to sources of agency that lie beyond central government and large developers. While the amount of funding received by the north will decline, a more careful level of attention to how money is spent might actually yield more equitable and effective action to improve social and built environments.

To suggest an agenda for practitioners and politicians involved in urban renewal is a normative practice and I therefore have a responsibility to make clear the position and assumptions which underpin the suggestions I make here about the kind of policies which I believe local authorities should now focus on. This position and these assumptions should be open to interrogation and debate. I am making a judgement that the political and economic climate will become increasingly austere and geared towards the free market. The most likely danger associated with this anticipated scenario seems to be that centralised enforcement of market boosterism will lead policy to continue to generate abstracted, centralised directions. It looks as if local authorities and other parts of local states will continue to wrestle with the contradictions between, increasingly private sector focused, central government initiatives and gaining the local understanding they need to deliver effective urban policies.

My position is that local authorities should lay foundations so that in the future they will be able to make locally sensitive decisions that, as far as possible, address a negotiated public

interest rather than particular private interests that tend to be prescribed by an agenda of economic competitiveness. To that end, Councils need to attempt to safeguard a degree of political autonomy from central government, encourage positive, proactive decision making by local politicians in response to local needs and to identify the social and financial opportunities at their disposal to help them do this. In order to achieve this, there is a need to refocus on an open consideration of the way problems in the HMRI areas are understood from different ontological positions, and to acknowledge the unequal effects such problems have on different actors. This does not mean beginning a new and expensive, open book phase of community engagement to re-problematise the HMRI areas. If we work on the basis that grand housing market narratives are fallacious or no longer relevant, it leads us to conclude that the structures supporting urban renewal may be the cause as well as a potential part of the solution to urban problems. From this perspective, a number of intertwined issues seem likely to have significant resonance in many HMRI areas, providing a useful starting point for further local exploration. These issues include: the effect that the part-linear, part-network governance regime has had on local democracy, the need to face up to the recession and the need to address the policy-led blight which now exists in many HMRI areas. The following paragraphs set out the potential ways in which each of these issues might be addressed.

11.4   Moves that are needed to reinvigorate local democracy and recapture expertise

Chapter five of this thesis showed how academic status and the illusion of expert knowledge was used to build a northern institutional power base and to mount pressure on central government to create an HMRI. The corollary of constructing an institutional network with command over urban renewal has been to create a part-linear, part-network regime. The regional demands that uphold this regime are legitimised by expert 'knowledge' about housing markets that, in reality, merely cement together a particular understanding of the interests of central and regional actors. This prevents flexibility by trapping decisions in rigid funding criteria based on technocratic cases about how housing markets work. The result is the affirmation of a wider trend, whereby local politicians are robbed of the autonomy to take pro-active decisions about how to respond to issues in their localities. Despite assurances from the Conservative party to the contrary there is a very real danger that, in the wake of the HMRI, the technicalisation of decision making that it has catalysed will remain. If this happens, urban policy will increasingly respond to abstracted, central government priorities and understandings rather than brokered local ones.

For decisions on urban renewal to be effective, local authorities must revive their ability to debate the different values and understandings that actors place on environments and possible policy actions, as well as their means to respond to these debates. It is easier to describe what needs to happen here than to identify the ways these goals might be achieved because opportunities may be diverse and may appear differently in different places. Nevertheless, local authorities across the north need to find ways to ditch thematic representations and statistics in order to open up these understandings. This will enable them to explore the potential for creative new policy actions (cf. Albrechts, 2005) which might be more effective at addressing or mediating between these different understandings and positions. Where hard choices result, the options must be informed and debated and politicians must be forced to choose, give reasons and be accountable for them. What I am suggesting here is that senior officers and local politicians collaborate in the light of the knowledge in this thesis, to find ways of bringing political decisions into the agora rather than concealing them within technocratic discourses. The aims should be for this to lead to bespoke local urban and social strategies, rather than to negotiate the imposition of identikit centralised understandings. Local debates are needed about how the relationships between politicians and officers might be managed and these should take precedence over the formal institutions implied in legislation on the organisation of local government, which tends to encourage officers to serve fait accompli recommendations to local politicians. In order to achieve this, I propose that local authority actors need to engage in an element of betrayal. The reason for this is that the cost of effective, sensitive and locally brokered planning is currently felt in the need for a two faced attitude towards central government. This is where the real challenge comes in for local authorities; they must work to two agendas, one which responds fluidly to local concerns, and another which superficially accepts and seeks to divert funding from thematic government initiatives. Yet in the long term, this is the only way that local government will prove its readiness to accept devolved power and accountability from the centre. In short, local authorities must fight for (Institute for Public Policy Research and Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2009) and deviously pursue the right to set out their own agendas and understandings of problems in their areas.

Local authorities need to be supported by the professions and the academy if they are to stand a chance of claiming the ability to direct effective renewal policies. The first way in which these institutions can do this is by providing support. Sites of discussion need to be

established between academics, residents and other local actors, regeneration professionals and local politicians to catalyse a move in thinking in as many areas as possible beyond the part-linear, part-network regime which has grown up over the last decade. There needs to be a concomitant lift in awareness within the regeneration profession, through organisations such as the British Urban Regeneration Association, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and the Royal Town Planning Institute. Just as the economic underpinnings of urban renewal in the 2000s have been dismantled, so to we need to dismantle the traction that has been gained by the modernistic discourses of the period. As part of this, there needs to be a positive move towards the historical contextualisation of these ideas and towards a greater awareness of the ethical and political nature of practitioners' roles. This needs to be combined with a meaningful decentralisation of power in the long term in order to undermine the incentive which currently exists for academics and professionals to build grand, universal cases about urban phenomena and direct them towards central government.

If we are to take the role of urban experts seriously, and if we want to attempt to base policy on evidence rather than just hearsay and political positioning, then we also need active scrutiny over the way we go about planning. This thesis has demonstrated the value and importance of the Planning Inspectorate at attempting to hold urban policy to account in Liverpool and Whitefield. But chapter six also showed how the delivery of centralised urban policy based on funding, rather than planning policy, has helped to circumvent these controls and ensure the progression of schemes offering to meet the financial interests of housing associations, local authorities and developers. Consequently, the integrity of schemes such as those progressed in Liverpool has suffered from a lack of institutional space in which to interrogate and hold supporting knowledge claims to account. At a meeting with prominent planning inspectors involved with the HMRI, it was widely agreed that the initiative was top down and at times problematic[25]. However, there were concerns that inspectors were only involved at the very end of a process, by which time there was often a strong political and institutional resistance to anything other than what was proposed. Perhaps, then, energies should be directed into the question of how and where we can insert institutional spaces of constructive scrutiny into urban policy processes. One option could be to hold concentrated discussions, informed by critical academic research and involving stakeholders in agonistic,

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[25] This took place in Bristol in March 2009 as part of a move to feed back results from this thesis to practitioners.

respectful debate rather than the two sided battles that tend to result from representational party politics. Academics can have a key role here explaining the need for this, finding out when it might not work and exploring possibilities.

Government has increasingly been calling for research to be more relevant, and this provides an important opportunity to create a new stream of work in which academics engage critically with local authorities and the professions. The emphasis within the forthcoming research excellence framework on community impact could allow academics to spend more time on this kind of work. An early example has already been provided by Planning Network UK's publication of a 'disorientation guide' for planners. To have impact as academics we must avoid abstracting out or imposing our ideas of the best substantive policies to pursue, we must instead act as enablers to improve democratic processes and accept and consider feedback from practice that may be critical of academic critiques. However, bringing democracy and expertise closer together is only useful if it leads to the identification of substantive issues; it must result in practical ways of evolving renewal schemes to meet new challenges that are not just well thought through, but are also deliverable. The next section attempts to set out some positive pointers for local authorities and others about how to move on from the current state of urban renewal in the north of England.

11.5 The economic recession, policy led blight and the need for a less politically dependent local state

As discussed earlier, a perspective which sees many of the concerns of urban renewal schemes in the 2000s as fallacious and outdated leads to the need to try and identify more contemporary concerns, which schemes should adapt to address. Housing market discourses have been useful to local authorities seeking funding from government, and in some cases to private developers seeking to make super profits from rent gaps in disinvested housing areas. However, I envisage that the following recommended focuses for policy action are more likely to meet the long term interests of local authorities and residents.

The most obvious need which now exists in HMRI areas is an occupation for those who have recently been made unemployed. Research has suggested that the recession is disproportionately affecting those in low paid, insecure jobs in the manufacturing sector (Tunstall, 2009; Dolphin, 2009). Those with the fewest marketable skills will suffer the most, as will those leaving education and being unable to find a job. It seems sensible that local

authorities should explore the potential opportunities which exist in redundant labour in the HMRI areas, in order to see whether such skills can be used to facilitate policy objectives while providing stop gap occupations/ skills upgrading over the next few years. Ideally, ways should be found to empower and bring on expertise during this period.

The last five years have seen worsening affordability and increasing demand for social housing across the north of England. There has been active debate about how far this trend has been the result of property speculation and the buy to let market or, conversely, how far it has reflected real population gains and increased housing need as recorded in the 2001 census (see chapter eight and Ferrari, 2007). The National Housing Federation (NHF) has argued that, to date, these factors have created a surge in demand for social housing (BBC News, 2009). The scale of this change in demand is underlined by the actions of the NHF, previously a front line member of the lobby for the HMRI in 2000/ 2001, which is now preparing another request to the government's comprehensive spending review. This time the federation is arguing that a 55% rise in the number of households on waiting lists for social housing over the past five years means that government should make money available to fund a major programme of new social housing (BBC News, 2009; NHF, 2009a). It has collected information on affordability and social housing demand (see table 111) which illustrates a substantial level of demand across many of the HMRI pathfinder areas. Such trends compare with arguments made by Neil Smith (2002) that, particularly in the US and the global south, low income housing is increasingly being residualised to the peripheries of cities as neoliberal economic positions reduce funding for social housing. In this context, and in an era of global competition between cities, having a plentiful supply of affordable housing, regardless of whether it is terraced or detached, might well bring substantial benefits of competitive advantage. While we cannot know how housing demand for the HMRI areas will be affected by the recession in the long term, in most areas it now seems highly unadvisable to persist with attempts to reduce the amount of low income housing in the face of such demand.

Table 11.1: Social housing waiting lists for local authorities in which HMRI pathfinders are located

Local authority area	Number of households on waiting list
Bridging NewcastleGateshead	

Newcastle upon Tyne	8,473
Gateshead	10,048
Manchester Salford Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder	
Manchester	20,955
Oldham	8,634
Rochdale	4,819
New Heartlands (Merseyside)	
Liverpool	12,866
Sefton	13,444
Wirral	15,066
Elevate East Lancashire	
Burnley	238
Hyndburn	2,831
Pendle	2,745
Rossendale	2,253
Hyndburn	2.831
Gateway (Hull and East Riding)	
Kingston upon Hull	12,416
East Riding	9,975
Transform South Yorkshire	
Barnsley	6,097
Doncaster	15,973
Rotherham	20,826
Sheffield	92,515
Tees Valley	
Middlesbrough	11,934
Hartlepool	3,696

Source: NHF (2009b-d) based on CLG figures or Housing Corporation data. Information not available for Newcastle under Lyme, Stoke on Trent or Birmingham/ Sandwell.

As was discussed earlier in this chapter, the wider, macro-economic trends that have presented issues of unemployment and housing affordability have also raised serious doubts about how much of the new housing development planned by the HMRI pathfinders is

deliverable. It is likely that a large amount of further demolition would be counterproductive to the aim of improving affordability during the recession, so schemes which still have waves of clearance programmed for future years need to be revised to concentrate on stock retention. Nevertheless, there may still be good reasons to progress with small amounts of demolition in areas that are now severely derelict or where the vast majority of a coherent site has already been cleared. There may also be local reasons and support for limited, selective demolition, and there could be a case for collaboratively investigating stock rationalisation alongside other measures in Burnley, where social housing waiting lists are extraordinarily low. Despite the need to accommodate these practicalities there must be scrutiny-based safeguards to ensure that demolition is no longer used purely as a way of attracting public and private funding for new development.

11.6   Opportunities for the pathfinder schemes

The need to refocus schemes on improving affordability and addressing the recession provides local authorities with opportunities to think more creatively and progressively about how delivery can be facilitated. In the majority of pathfinders, the condition of the housing stock has not been seen as a problem and demolition has been proposed for other reasons. Heritage organisations have argued for some time that older, terraced housing continues to suit modern needs well, and research is ongoing into the various ways in which the stock can be adapted to make it more energy efficient and reduce its carbon footprint (English Heritage, 2008). We can be certain that there are more cost effective ways to reduce emissions than state subsidised redevelopment. Furthermore, the traditional construction of terraced housing is an asset, because it means that the skills to undertake improvements and repairs are widely known and available.

Pathfinders might ascribe to new goals which move from a view of housing as a problematised product in the market place to a valuable asset and opportunity for addressing affordability and providing work to those who need it most. This change of direction brings possibilities because it implies a substantial reduction in the level of ambition of HMRI programmes. Even the scale of development that has taken place to date, at less than 4,000 new homes built across nine pathfinder areas and over the course of nearly a decade, suggests that there is no reason why mass house builders need to be involved in the initiative. But a consequence of working with large developers is that a huge amount of resources are consumed by solicitors and accountants. Agreements are drawn up that attempt to foresee all

possible future scenarios and put in place contractual arrangements for each of them that regulate the different interests of the public and private sectors. Removing the need for these contracts could make huge efficiency savings. A possible way of doing this could be to work with bespoke, charitable and locally based development organisations, or with subsidiaries of housing associations, which operate to constitutional objectives rather than private profit. These constitutional objectives, together with simple checks to see if organisations are being run in accordance with them, could replace lengthy and complex legal instruments and provide more resources to improve the quality of development. Clearly, central government has an ideological favouritism towards working with large private sector organisations to deliver improvements and development in renewal areas. At the level of local democracy, however, moves might be made to explore a greater diversity of vehicles that might use public resources more efficiently by addressing multiple goals in a co-ordinated way.

With large house builders largely disabled by the recession a new delivery mechanism is needed that is less reliant on the ability of individuals to obtain credit for private housing, and which can use increasingly limited public funds more effectively. A very similar situation in the 1970s led to community-based housing organisations, some of which were very successful at both resisting demolition, but also at developing to provide a range of community services. One of the best examples of such developments actually comes from Liverpool where The Eldonians, a small but established community in the Vauxhall area of the city, successfully resisted demolition and started a housing co-operative that later formed the base for a range of ventures in the voluntary and social enterprise sectors (Cameron, 2009; Leeming, 2002). There is no reason why such examples, and the lessons learned from them (Clapham and Kintrea, 2000), could not be revisited as inspiration for moving forward within the current recession. Of particular interest might be the potential to create co-operative construction companies, underwritten by the local authority. One of the greatest opportunities for local authorities is that they now own housing and land, acquisition of which has been paid for by HMRI funding; there is therefore the potential to use these assets to help finance remediation. Bespoke housing organisations, ring fenced from central government subsidy and regulation where possible, could be provided with free holds at a nominal price and paid by the local authority to remediate vacant housing using local labour made redundant by the private sector. This would stimulate supply while loan products, which are already being used by the pathfinders to enable home buyers to enter into equity sharing, could be used to increase demand. Further demand might come from government

funding, which has been announced to support the delivery of more social housing and which is already impacting in the pathfinder areas. The use of local labour by co-operatives could be matched by engagement with local community projects, universities, arts groups and youth groups to cheaply add character and local distinctiveness to improvements and generate buy in from the community with the aim of combating vandalism and anti-social behaviour during construction. There is great potential here to build up stocks of positive social capital that are increasingly valuable during a recession, and to create institutional links that might be drawn on in future to diversify and contextualise central government initiatives.

11.7 Possible forces for achieving post-HMRI renewal

Aspirations such as those listed above cannot be achieved by making plans and drawing up arguments in a doctoral thesis. However, setting out what might be achievable at least provides a starting point from which to argue for a change in the current approach to renewal. Such approaches may never be achieved, but perhaps they might prompt less radical and more incremental advances to be made along the way. Moving towards progress seems to depend on raising awareness among politicians and professionals about the inherent problems which beset the current approach to housing market renewal. A two pronged approach is needed which addresses professionals and politicians locally, at the same time as building the networks necessary to react opportunistically to opportunities for national policy change. This action can take place at a number of scales, which correspond with the scales at which governance mechanisms are currently organised. Each of these scales is addressed here in turn, moving from the local authority to the sub-regional level and on to the national level.

Crucially, local authorities already have the powers they need to begin adapting HMRI schemes towards contemporary challenges. The quicker that local authorities wake up to the unsustainability of future government funding for renewal, the more likely it is that they will be able to divert seed funding into local actions with the aim of providing resilience during the recession. Effort must by concentrated on using government funding creatively to trigger positive spin offs for local businesses and community organisations in the hope that these will capture resources within the local economy. Opportunities are needed to make contact with politicians and senior officers to make them aware of the current situation and give them the opportunity to react. A flagship project is needed to lead future renewal initiatives back towards meeting public, rather than private, interests and, consequently, there may be
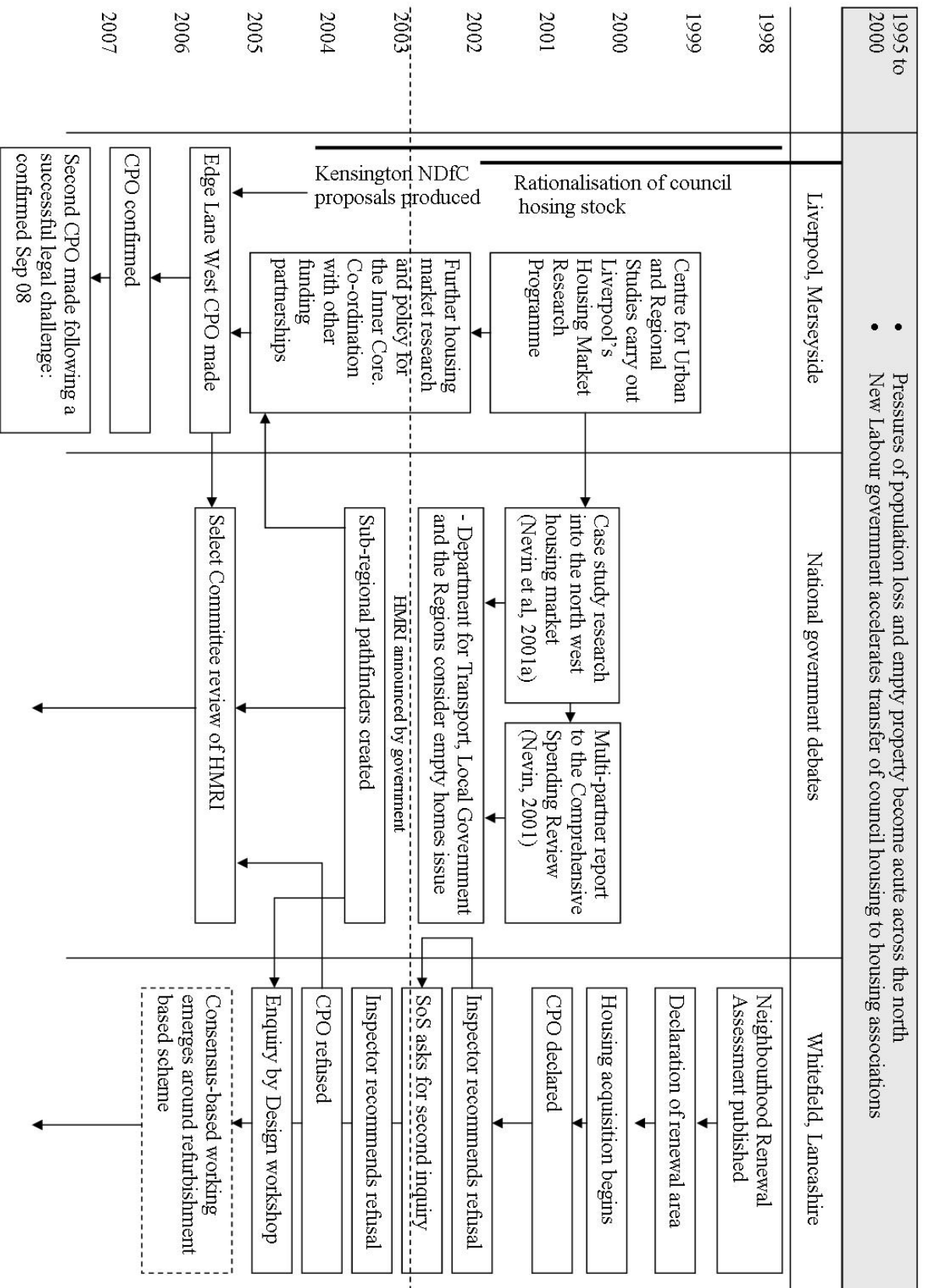
opportunities for those who react first to gain a visibility that increases their potential to draw in funding.

At the sub-regional level, there is the opportunity to review the methodology which underpins housing market assessments in order to support creative local responses to the recession. Housing market assessments have achieved great power as a result of the pivotal institutional position in which they are now placed, between regional networks and central government. There are opportunities to revise these assessments, ostensibly to account for the recession, in order to make the case for greater creativity and adaptability within local schemes. This thesis's critique of the methodology which underpins housing market assessments brings with it the potential to reframe and remake such assessments through more deliberative processes. Revision brings the potential to make new arguments that respond to more pressing central government agendas in ways that are also helpful to the adaptation of local schemes. This may also help to maintain a stream of external public funding.

The need for local planning to be two faced means that pathfinders and local authorities must be careful about the arguments they use to request additional funding from government. Informal strategies are needed that set out to meet government concerns while allowing sufficient flexibility to adapt local schemes. The best strategy in each case will depend on the resources and opportunities available to redirect delivery. In some cases, the best strategy might be to be upfront with central government about proposed changes to schemes, in other cases it could be more advantageous simply to ask for greater flexibility or innovative phasing within a longer term programme in the full knowledge that it will not be realised, in order to provide the resources needed to turn schemes around. In the longer term, the only way to prevent the need for a two faced attitude towards government is to place a greater emphasis on devolving real power and decisions to local political leaders (rather than officials) in order to replace government's need for awkward processes of long distance control. In light of this, advance action might be take to pre-empt the audit processes which are currently used to monitor renewal schemes, which often use statistical information about how areas have changed, alternative methods of monitoring might be suggested to audit agencies that place a greater level of reliance on critical investigations of the logic which is used to justify renewal.

Until now, the principal critique of the HMRI has come from residents and heritage organisations. These groups remain important but there needs to be an awareness raising exercise about the changes that are needed in the urban renewal profession. The forums at which proper critiques of existing policies should be raised and discussed, such as the Northern Regeneration Summit, have become consumed with the practical tasks associated with delivering policy, rather than the merits of policy itself. Similarly, academic events are guilty of operating in isolation from practice and of focusing too much on critiques that are insufficiently constructive. Empirically driven warnings about the negative consequences that renewal can have need to be more widely distributed among practitioners and alternatives suggested. The way forward is to carefully explain where things have gone wrong and offer practical suggestions of how things can change a little for the better.

Appendices

Appendix one: tabulated timeline of material in the case studies

	Liverpool, Merseyside	National government debates	Whitefield, Lancashire
1995 to 2000		• Pressures of population loss and empty property become acute across the north • New Labour government accelerates transfer of council housing to housing associations	
1998	Centre for Urban and Regional Studies carry out Liverpool's Housing Market Research Programme		Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment published
1999			Declaration of renewal area
2000			Housing acquisition begins
2001	Rationalisation of council hosing stock	Case study research into the north west housing market (Nevin et al, 2001a) — Multi-partner report to the Comprehensive Spending Review (Nevin, 2001)	CPO declared
2002		- Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions consider empty homes issue	Inspector recommends refusal
2003	Kensington NDfC proposals produced	HMRI announced by government	SoS asks for second inquiry
2004	Further housing market research and policy for the Inner Core. Co-ordination with other funding partnerships	Sub-regional pathfinders created	Inspector recommends refusal
2005	Edge Lane West CPO made	Select Committee review of HMRI	CPO refused
2006	CPO confirmed		Enquiry by Design workshop
2007	Second CPO made following a successful legal challenge: confirmed Sep 08		Consensus-based working emerges around refurbishment based scheme

Appendix two: list of organisations contacted informally for information about the HMRI

English Heritage (CASE partner): approximately five regional officers were contacted and interviews were also carried out in London with policy officers as part of collaborative engagement with the CASE partner.

SAVE Britain's Heritage: a face to face interview was held with a representative of the organisation at the beginning of the research and later telephone conversations were held with his successor.

A telephone conversation was held with a journalist who has written on the HMRI.

A telephone conversation was held with a scholar at the London School of Economics.

A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the Victorian Society.

Appendix three: interviews* which were carried out as part of research on Whitefield in chapter seven

A member of a residents' forum

A former representative of English Heritage

A representative of the Ancient Monuments Society

A member of Homes Under Threat

A resident of the Whitefield area

A regeneration officer for the Whitefield area

* Interviews lasted between thirty minutes and six hours and were usually recorded. They were all unstructured, although respondents were probed for their views on regeneration proposals, how they justified these views and about the action they had taken during conflicts over the proposed schemes.

Appendix four: guidance on undertaking a housing market assessment

Figure 1.1: Strategic Housing Market Assessment core outputs (further details are set out in Table 2.1, Chapter 2)	
1	Estimates of current dwellings in terms of size, type, condition, tenure
2	Analysis of past and current housing market trends, including balance between supply and demand in different housing sectors and price/affordability. Description of key drivers underpinning the housing market
3	Estimate of total future number of households, broken down by age and type where possible
4	Estimate of current number of households in housing need
5	Estimate of future households that will require affordable housing
6	Estimate of future households requiring market housing
7	Estimate of the size of affordable housing required
8	Estimate of household groups who have particular housing requirements eg families, older people, key workers, black and minority ethnic groups, disabled people, young people, etc.

NB. Estimates of household numbers (3, 4, 5 and 6) may be expressed as a number or a range.

Figure 1.2: Strategic Housing Market Assessment process checklist	
1	Approach to identifying housing market area(s) is consistent with other approaches to identifying housing market areas within the region
2	Housing market conditions are assessed within the context of the housing market area
3	Involves key stakeholders, including house builders
4	Contains a full technical explanation of the methods employed, with any limitations noted
5	Assumptions, judgements and findings are fully justified and presented in an open and transparent manner
6	Uses and reports upon effective quality control mechanisms
7	Explains how the assessment findings have been monitored and updated (where appropriate) since it was originally undertaken

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