

**The Impacts of Public Participation in  
Area-Based Urban Regeneration:**  
A Case Study of the London Borough of Newham

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## **Abstract**

Public participation is a key part of the urban regeneration policies in Britain strongly promoted by the New Labour government. The main aim of this study is to investigate the impacts of public participation in area-based urban regeneration where poverty and multiple deprivation are prevalent. The case study area is the London Borough of Newham, a borough that benefits from many of these policy initiatives for a variety of aspects of social, economic and environmental regeneration. Following the completion of their budgeted project life, however, the outcomes of many of the regeneration initiatives in Newham and elsewhere are not always sustainable. One of the many possible explanations for the failure of initiatives to secure a long-term improvement in the quality of life of the residents is the lack of ownership by local people which is a consequence of non- or little public participation in the regeneration process. This often reflects the almost non-existence of social networks among communities undergoing regeneration and the lack of empowerment of residents from the outset and throughout the lifetime of projects.

The thesis argues that a good stock of social networks and well developed community empowerment will lead to a higher level of participation that could help regeneration initiatives to become more sustainable. It is based on a programme of research that used a range of mixed methods, including surveys, interviews and observation, to investigate the nature of participation in Newham regeneration settings. The findings explore the extent of participation and consider the views of a range of stakeholders on its role in the regeneration process. As well as critically evaluating current Newham regeneration initiatives in relation to the degree to which they meaningfully encourage public participation, the study also sets out to develop ideal models of participation. It explores different approaches to engaging with local people and social networks at neighbourhood level, and emphasises to the importance of evaluating regeneration in relation to its participatory goals. The thesis concludes by reiterating the importance of a meaningful public participation in the national and local policy regimes. It also sets out the significance of the research in understanding the role of participation in Britain's area based urban regeneration strategies.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Setting out the context of the research

Public participation within the structure of local governance is part of the policy packages of urban regeneration in Britain strongly promoted by the current *New Labour* government. The policy has also involved the devolution of power from the centre to the periphery, with the aim of enabling local people to be involved in the decision making process. This concept of devolved power has been materialised in a variety of ways, such as through newly instituted partnership structures like Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). The devolution of power has not only taken place within the government structures at higher central and regional levels. At local level “the hegemony of elected local government” has been challenged by other elected bodies like boards of Foundation Hospitals and New Deal for Communities, although these boards “do not carry with them the same representation of broad community interest or the range of opportunities for political engagement that are delivered by multi-purpose elected local government” (Pratchett, 2004:359). These different forms of representation, local governance structures and complex strands of power distribution have put the notion of public participation under close scrutiny. Participation is expected to benefit the public in a variety ways through networks, improved power relations and governance. The benefits of participation, as Burton (2004:193) puts it, range from “... better policy through greater social cohesion to enhanced self-respect for those who get involved”.

There have been different perceptions of public participation, serving different purposes during the different eras of both the Conservative and Labour governments over the past four decades. For example, although the Conservatives maintained locally elected government they used quangos (non-elected committees of business people and other individuals) for urban regeneration initiatives. Hence, most of the quangos that were at the forefront of delivery of the urban policy and regeneration were accountable to the central state that determined the policies and their resources (Imrie & Raco, 1999). Local people had little power to influence or alter policies or resource allocation. Consequently, such local governance arrangements were “frustrating any real chance for local citizens to determine who should take responsibility for policy success or failures” (Stuart and David, 1999:263).

A significant policy shift has been observed both in the purpose and implementation of public participation at local level since the election of the New Labour government in 1997. Since the New Labour government came to power, a new approach to partnership working at local level has become a hallmark of its urban policies. Following the devolution of power to regional levels, the local government working arrangements have been drastically changed to give more executive power to locally elected representatives and by empowering other local actors to give them more meaningful involvement in local issues and in the decision making process. At the same time, such activities have demanded ‘joined-up’ thinking and working for many of the local social and economic area-based regeneration initiatives. The new approach is not only about developing and introducing new participatory methods but also includes new arrangements to strengthen partnership networks and make local participation more appropriate and effective. The policy is embedded in the fundamental philosophy of *localism* where the state arguably has less control over issues of a local nature, while local communities

and institutions are empowered to be more fully in charge. The 'new localism' is more than policy rhetoric. One of the good examples is where the New Deal for Community (NDC) programmes are enabled for locally-led responses to national priorities. New institutional arrangements like Local Strategic Partnerships for local joined-up working are another good example, although there are some fundamental differences between these and the NDC partnership arrangements (Geddes, 2006:79-81).

In practice, the new localism policies become effective "by involving wider stakeholders in the finance and delivery of policy" (Ludlun and Martin, 2004:174). As the authors continue "a focus on civil society might, by spreading information, encourage other groups to make greater use of available opportunities". In addition, the greater use of opportunities means that when performing well, other public service providers like schools and health services will be given greater freedom in making decisions and extra incentives.

In principle, local actors are setting the agenda and identify priorities for local problems of a social and economic nature. Residents and different community groups are encouraged to strengthen their social networks to generate strong views in the decision making process about their local areas. Hence the participation of the public and other agencies in the implementation of local regeneration programmes and projects is considered as crucial for success. The devolved power of government machineries at the regional and local levels by New Labour has also raised questions around how public and community participation hinders or enhances power relations within groups of local actors and the practices of institutions of governance. The challenge however is that the complexity of the meaning of 'the public' or 'communities' and the level and model of their involvement poses theoretical and practical difficulties. In practice, local governance involves of a range of actors other than the central and local government, including

voluntary and community groups, business communities and individuals. Therefore, public and community participation will be a prominent and important focus in the analysis of urban regeneration presented in this thesis. Focusing on a case study of the London Borough of Newham, the urban policy and the urban regeneration strategies are reviewed in the context of these complex relationships of local governance, power and participation arrangements.

The nature of urban policies in relation to addressing many of the problems in cities from the vital role of central and local government, has taken several directions. First is to the neo-liberal solution which argues for greater reliance upon market forces (as under the Conservatives) and second, to a more local approach which involves encouraging the partnership of many relevant actors including private businesses. The effects of these shifts and changes are reflected in the overall level of public and community participation in local regeneration initiatives. This is one of the main reasons for this study. According to Stuart and David (1999:246) 'Under the Conservatives from 1979–97, local governance was 'reinvented' in a non-democratic direction'. Here, Stuart and David argued that 'choice is maximised through the market, not through politics, and it was locally that this assumption found its fullest expression'. They further pointed out that 'the quasi-markets of a reformed public sector were to provide a realm of efficient and responsive services for local 'consumers' in contrast to the rule of 'domination and manipulation'(Stuart and David, 1999) in local government, where popular control, 'exercisable in theory, was routinely subverted in practice by producer interests' (Waldegrave 1993).'

As a matter of fact, neither the direct intervention of the state nor the domination of the market has solved many of the complex inner city problems (Davies, 2004). Despite the good intention of arrangements for public participation and local governance,

the question of power among local actors – the extent to which they can shape, influence and exercise urban regeneration initiatives – is still a matter of concern. In particular the participation of local people poses more questions than answers. Furthermore, the empowerment and participation of organisations and a few selected individuals may not be the empowerment and participation of the wider public at best. At worst it may actually represent disempowerment and exclusion. These arguments also raise questions about issues of representation and direct participation which this thesis will address through its empirical findings. However, some indicators and tendencies show that a more localised approach to urban regeneration in which local people and institutions are actively engaged might have more lasting results (Hemphill and et al., 2006). This research explores and critically interrogates the notion of power and empowerment of individuals and institutions in relation to public and community participation in local level regeneration initiatives.

The outcome of the dynamics of new local governance arrangements which are aiming to empower local people and local institutions is not fully understood. The inter-related issues of power, governance, community participation and social networks require closer investigation to unpack their impacts on local regeneration initiatives. There are some measurable outputs that have emerged from different local regeneration projects across the country that are reflected positively in terms of their area coverage and the number of people who have benefited. However, it is still difficult to conclude whether the new local governance arrangements are the cause of some of the successful projects. Moreover, more evidence is required to assert or dispute that all these successes are consequence of increased participation as the changes to improve the effectiveness of urban regeneration over the years are multi-faceted. For example, the property-led urban regeneration of the 1980's has now evolved to place greater emphasis on

comprehensive socio-economic regeneration strategies. This has seen a shift from market-led regeneration approaches to partnership working arrangements of local actors in a much more integrated manner (Davies, 2004). A change in local governance arrangements which include local institutions, communities and individuals 'gives prominence to issues of responsibility as well as power' (Kearns and Turok, 2000). According to Kearns and Turok (2000: 178) the new urban policy has several implications including that it 'attempts directly to influence the number and articulation of local players with a role in policy implementation in the field of urban regeneration' and also that it 'alters the nature of the relationship between the central and local government, a neglected area in recent debates about local governance'.

The different notions and functions of power are reflected in the arena of public and community participation (Digeser, 1992). If we use both Foucault's and Lukes's concepts of power, then it is possible to explain the place of public participation within the notion of power relationships. According to Foucault power can be actively and positively used which means that the power that is used in the public participation exercise may also result a positive outcome. Furthermore as power does not according to Foucault emanate from a single source (Loomba, 2005), individuals and certain groups may not dominate the direction of the decision making process (Newman, 2004). However the question is who benefits from the decision making process and how outcomes are evaluated in public and community participation. Furthermore the notion of empowerment also includes access to decision-making processes, through which people become aware of their own interests and how these relate to those of others, in order both to participate from a position of greater strength in decision-making and to influence such decisions.

As the approach is new, the role of local governance arrangements in enhancing public and community participation, power sharing and the actual implementation of policies is complex and the issues require close study. Certainly, the fundamental shift from local government to local *governance* in the recent British urban policy has given greater impetus to the discourses of public participation, institutional and community empowerment than ever before.

This study aims to unpack some of these new roles for local residents and institutions, their complex relationships and their impacts on area-based initiatives. More specifically, the main aim of this study is to investigate the impacts of public participation and local governance arrangements in an area-based urban regeneration context where poverty is prevalent. The case study area is the London Borough of Newham, a borough that benefits from several of these policy initiatives for all aspects of social, economic and environmental regeneration. However, following completion of their budgeted project life, the outcomes of many of the regeneration initiatives in Newham and elsewhere may not always be sustainable. One of the many possible explanations for the failure of initiatives to secure a long-term improvement in the quality of life of the residents is lack of ownership, which is arguably a consequence of no, or little, meaningful public participation in the regeneration process. This often reflects the power imbalance between all local regeneration 'actors' and residents, the disconnected nature of organisations' efforts and the almost non-existence of social networks of residents from the outset and throughout the lifetime of regeneration projects. In short some of these new local governance arrangements appear not to be fully working.



## **1.2. Locating the issues of the research**

This study presents theoretical and empirical discussions on interrelated issues of participation, local governance, power relations and social capital that have impacts on area based urban regeneration in general, centred on the case study example of the London Borough of Newham. The focus of the research is on the impacts of public and community participation in local area-based urban regeneration initiatives. However, participation can not be discussed in isolation without addressing its contextual multiplicity and interconnectedness with governance, power, empowerment and social networks. The interplay of these concepts will help in exploring the impacts of participation in a more grounded way. Initially, I look at the theoretical and empirical debates around issues of participation, governance (mainly local governance), power and empowerment as well as social capital in the context of British urban policy in general and regeneration strategies in particular. Then, the interconnectedness of these concepts is discussed with particular reference to participation and local governance, participation and empowerment and the role of social networks in participation. Finally, I explore how policies are implemented to enhance the participation of the public in local area-based initiatives drawing upon some of the empirical evidence obtained in the London Borough of Newham.

The London Borough of Newham has been chosen for a number of reasons. Newham was one of the first inner London boroughs to adopt the new local government arrangements based on the devolution of power, where an elected Mayor has both executive and non-executive power at the council level. This means that the role of other elected councillors has qualitatively changed from the traditional Town Hall direct decision making process. Local people through different local governance institutions arguably have more say in the decision making process. Furthermore, Newham has bene-

fited from many social and economic regeneration initiatives over the last four decades and is one of the boroughs of London hosting the London Olympics of 2012 (itself frequently presented as a major regeneration exercise). However, it is a borough that is still characterised by multiple deprivation as compared to other inner London boroughs. The diversity of cultures and linguistic groups also makes Newham an interesting case. This is because the demographic shifts as a result of different cultural groups over the years have impacted on the constantly changing needs of the people. By taking into account such characteristics of Newham it may be possible to unpack some of the issues of participation in inner cities settings. The choice of Newham as a case study area is further considered in chapter four and five.

### **1.3. The reasons for carrying out the research**

Over the years urban policy has sought to address the ‘pathological ills’ of the inner cities. According to Jones and Ward (2002:473) despite many initiatives in the past, Britain’s cities remain centres of ‘low economic activity, possess high (but at times hidden) unemployment and welfare dependency, contain large areas of physical dereliction, and are witness to increased crime and social disorder’. The new urban policies are arguably much more comprehensive in identifying problems, but also in designing solutions. Hence, the emphasis is now to empower local institutions with a new kind of governance arrangement. Political and administrative powers are devolved towards local levels to enhance the participation of the public.

Participation as a concept is a process by which people exercise their rights directly or indirectly in decision making. Public and community participation in the context of British urban regeneration have evolved in different forms driven by different ideological presumptions. Public and community participation has entered a new phase

since the emergence of the New Labour government in late 1990s (Foley and Martin, 2000). This phase of participation has been strongly influenced by the new localised governance arrangements. Here, governance as a concept is the process where policies and decisions are executed in a society with or through a claim to power and authority (Daly, 2003). The exercise of governance helps to forge interaction between formal government institutions and civil society. Here, civil society refers to organisations such as charities, community groups, faith-based organisations, professional associations, trades unions, self-help and advocacy groups. The governance process takes shape through the empowerment, participation or representation of the public.

In the context of local governance, the public, private and voluntary institutions will play an important role in facilitating public participation as mediators and advocates. Participation is seen as one of the characteristics of good governance (Gaventa and Valderrama, 1999). As participation is an important element of good governance the role of civil societies is very important. In spite of globalisation, it is suggested that 'the new local governance' approach offers an alternative to tackling important social and economic problems of a local nature, effectively and efficiently. Local governance is advantageous as it brings together 'intersecting institutions' at local level in addressing issues of a local nature (Ward, 2000). When institutions and individuals are able to work together their networks will strengthen further. Moreover, good governance will not be achieved without ensuring that power is equitably distributed between all actors. Hence the interconnectedness of empowerment, networks and local governance is fundamental for participation. Furthermore the remedies for multi-faceted urban problems not only include economic-focused physical regeneration, but also the full participation and ownership of the public and local institutions.

However, some indicators are not encouraging when it comes to public and community participation in the process of decision making. For example, national and local election turnouts are arguably one good indicator of the level of public participation in general. To some extent, they can be used to identify why people are interested or dis-interested in participation. Although there is a difference in political participation in elections and participation in local issues like regeneration initiatives, there is common ground in relation to the reasons for participation or non-participation by certain groups in society. According to the Electoral Commission report, for instance, in the 2001 General Election, voter turnout was at its lowest level since the election of 1918. Furthermore, there were five million fewer voters in 2001 than in 1997. This indicates a national decline in political participation. Low turnouts are also evident in Newham. For example, in May 2002 the Newham Mayoral election the total turnout was 27.6%. According to Geoffrey Evans (in Dunleavy, 2003:82):

*“One of most immediate and substantial problems for the British political system has been the level of voting in recent elections. ... But it was remarkable in one way: voter participation fell to 59 per cent, down by over 12 per cent on levels in 1997, and down over 18 per cent on the (admittedly quite high levels) in 1992. This change followed a significant decline in voting in the local and European elections in the 1997–2001 period.”*

Moreover, research has suggested that certain groups of people are more likely to vote than others and that there is variation of turnout by area, age, gender, ethnicity, social class and education. For example Geoffrey Evans (in Dunleavy, 2003:82) raised what has become a wider concern in recent years: the extent to which political participation is socially inclusive:

*“Are particular types of groups, such as the working class, ethnic minorities, women, and the young, more politically disengaged than others? Differences in participation between social groups have long been in evidence, but the suggestion in media commentaries is that have they been exacerbating”.*

In general, the older, the affluent and the better educated are more likely to register and vote. People who are living in Newham are relatively young, poor, less educated, and a high proportion come from ethnic minorities meaning that they are less likely to participate in voting and consequently other local issues (Marriott in Butler and Rustin, 1996). The national picture shows that women, young people, black and minority ethnic groups, people in the lower strand of social status, the unemployed and those living in private rented accommodation are less likely to actively participate in voting (Evans, G. in Dunleavy, 2003). Although the breakdown by different groups is not available for Newham, the figures are unlikely to be significantly different from the national picture. If the trend is similar to the local elections and other forms of participation, then it has implications for the decision making processes of local regeneration initiatives. The question here is whether one particular group in a society is more socially connected, economically and politically empowered and likely to use local resources more effectively than another group. Perhaps it is possible to suggest that those socially excluded, less politically empowered and who benefit less from the resources of local institutions, not only miss having their views heard, but are also disadvantaged in terms of not being able to gain from local regeneration initiatives.

In exploring some of the above issues, the study focuses on the interplay between participation, power and empowerment and local governance. More specifically, it examines the impacts of participation in different governance arrangements, power relations and social networks. Through focusing on the possible hindrance of participation on the one hand and good practices on the other, this thesis aims to understand the impacts of public and community participation in area-based urban policies and regeneration strategies. This involves an examination of the theoretical debates and of origi-

nal empirical evidence. Particular attention is paid to the different scenarios of power relations and social networks within which the actors of local governance operate. Finally the study examines the future of public and community participation in relation to its impact on urban policies.

At a theoretical level the study seeks to address the question of governance, empowerment and the role of social networks in participation. In focusing on these issues, it explores the inter-relations and dependence of one on the other to make participation more effective. The thesis presents a number of fresh insights into the impacts of participation in small scale urban regeneration. In summary the main reasons I carried out the research were that firstly, regeneration strategies have been deemed to be unsuccessful in terms of alleviating poverty and inequality because of poor participation or a lack of participation; this perception stems from political debate as much as academic argument. Secondly, public participation is a much under used tool in urban regeneration policy despite its importance. A study of Newham, part of the global city of London, offers some important insights for the academic and policy arenas.

#### **1.4. Framing the study**

Using the London Borough of Newham as a case study, this research is designed to test the following assumptions which, in turn underlie specific research questions:

**Assumption I:** Lack of public and community participation is likely to be a problem in places and communities that are particularly susceptible to deprivation and exclusion.

**Assumption II:** Current area based regeneration initiatives have not made effective use of participation due to the lack of clarity and the complexity of the local governance arrangements, power relations and social networks.

**Assumption III:** The effective use of local governance arrangements, empowerment and social networks could help in building confident and active groups and individuals who participate in issues that affect them.

Hence, the research is geared to answer the following interrelated questions.

1. What types and levels of participation in groups, communities and voluntary organisations have been and are being used for regeneration initiatives in Newham?
2. Are there innovative strategies likely to make participation work better in the study area?
3. Can we identify ideal model practices of participation (based on pre-existing social networks, empowerment methods and governance arrangements) for small area inner city regeneration?

By finding possible answers to these research questions, it will be possible to test the assumptions outlined above and develop evidence-based conclusions.

Hence, the thesis begins with an introductory chapter setting the context for the research, outlining the main issues and reasons behind the research. The next chapter discusses recent theoretical perspectives on and empirical studies of participation, debates around local governance, power and empowerment and social capital; mainly within the context of British regeneration processes. This is done in order to highlight the main issues of public participation and how they relate to governance arrangements, empowerment and social networks. Based on the most recent examples of area-based urban regeneration strategies and policies, it is argued that good local governance, an equitable distribution of power and a 'mature' stock of social networks will lead to a higher level of participation that eventually could help regeneration initiatives to become more sustainable.

Chapter three introduces the role of public participation, governance and empowerment in British inner city regeneration programmes over the last four decades. The chapter highlights why different regeneration strategies have different approaches to public participation and discusses the connection with other agents of local governance and to the issues of power and empowerment. Furthermore, the chapter discusses examples of structured and community led participatory activities that contribute to the implementation of policies and local initiatives in the London Borough of Newham. The role of social networks as a foundation for participation is also discussed in chapter three.

Subsequently, chapter four sets out the research framework and methodology I used for studying the impacts of public participation. The chapter unveils the philosophical approach, objectives and justifications for the research and also highlights the importance of a mixed methods approach in order to tackle the issues from different perspectives. The reasons for selecting Newham as a case study area are also discussed alongside the details of methods of data collection and analysis. Additionally, the strength and weakness of the research methods are interrogated and some ethical and positionality issues in relation to the research are considered.

Chapter five discusses the findings of the study in determining the level of public participation, participatory process and responsiveness to local issues. This chapter develops arguments about governance structures, and the challenges and limitations of participation in Newham. It is followed by chapter six which focuses on thematic issues that emerged from the main findings and the reviews of relevant literature. Through a detailed examination of findings, chapter seven discusses policy-related issues in the context of small-scale area based regeneration focusing on the issues of participation, local governance arrangements and social networks. Particular attention is paid to the



way in which regeneration strategies in small scale-areas could be made more sustainable through a meaningful engagement of communities, institutions and the public as well as other interested actors.

In chapter eight, the thesis concludes by reiterating the importance of a meaningful public participation, local governance, empowerment and social networks in the national and local policy regimes. It also sets out the significance of the research in understanding the role of participation in Britain's area based urban regeneration strategies.

### **1.5. Conclusion**

The aim of this study is to provide insights into the impacts of public and community participation in urban regeneration and to shed light on the interplay between participation and governance, power relations and social networks in local settings. The thesis offers a close exploration of the processes that make participation meaningful in urban regeneration strategies. Furthermore, through the study of British urban policy in local governance, the concepts and practicalities of empowerment and social capital, it aims to show the importance of participation in area-based urban initiatives. Hence, the study explores new ways of thinking about public and community participation that have been at the centre of recent debates in urban policy and regeneration strategies. It also suggests some specific areas for the future direction of public and community participation within the complex set of institutions that are part of local governance structures. As well as contributing to debates about participation, the thesis also provides some empirical evidence that should be taken into account when addressing the issues of power and empowerment, social capital and local governance.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

The key aim of this chapter is to discuss and establish a conceptual framework for investigating participation, empowerment and social networks and their importance in the decision making process and in enhancing local governance. In the first part of the chapter, I explore the meanings of public and community participation within the context of area-based regeneration. Then, the typology of Arnstein's ladder (Arnstein:1969) of citizen participation is reviewed to establish some background against which to assess the levels and types of community and public participation during the different periods of British area-based regeneration initiatives. Furthermore, theoretical debates mainly concerning political participation are reviewed, helping to identify and signpost some of the problems and good practices that have emerged in area-based regeneration projects. Social networks and empowerment as means to enhance participation and local governance as well as a means of generating active citizenship, are other themes that are explored. There is a section that discusses the recent Labour flagship initiative of the *New Deal for Communities* programme as a new paradigm in local governance, which through empowering residents to participate, is qualitatively different from its predecessor policies.

The main line of argument I develop from this review is that by moving to a higher level in Arnstein's ladder of participation – via an improved stock of social networks, good local governance arrangements and empowerment – area-based regenera-

tion initiatives will generate sustainable, long term changes and a sense of ownership to the intended beneficiaries. The review also helps to understand the complexity of participation and its interplay with power and empowerment, local governance arrangements and social networks.

## **2.2. Participation**

The terms ‘consultation’, ‘participation’, ‘involvement’ and ‘engagement’, are used interchangeably to describe a certain type of process by which individuals and groups interact among themselves and with others by using different means of communication to deal with issues that directly or indirectly affect them. Public participation in the planning, implementation and evaluation of area-based regeneration activities is fundamental to ensuring that projects are carried out with the full support of the local people. Participation is not only about gathering evidence and opinions but is an educative, discursive and inclusive process to create an active relationship and dialogue between the public, power holders and among other actors.

The levels and types of different forms of participation will be discussed in the next section, as there are conceptual distinctions between them. Public and community participation have assumed varying levels of significance during different eras of area-based regeneration initiatives in Britain. There were particular projects such as the Community Development Projects of the 1960s which directly targeted communities by enhancing their capacity for direct participation (Loney, 1983; Crawshaw et al. 2003). There were also initiatives that gave a low profile to the direct participation of communities, such as the Urban Development Corporations of the 1980s (Foster, 1999). Even within projects that encourage participation, the term ‘community’ or ‘the public’ is defined or understood in a variety of ways (Imrie and Raco (ed), 2003:9-12). Curtis

(2004:279) points out that the complexity of communities in poor areas of major cities as:

*“... not only traditional, ‘place based’ coalitions. They include, for example, minority ethnic group networks which are often based on ties stretching across continents. Other groups may be orientated around marginalized lifestyles such as use of illicit drugs, or travelling.”*

The lack of a clear definition of ‘participation’ and ‘the public’ creates confusion when many regeneration initiatives referred to communities and their involvement in ways that probably meant different things to different people. For example, North (2003:124) argued that due to lack of definition of the meaning and role of community:

*“Local people – whoever they were, for it is never spelt out – were placed front and centre in partnership.”*

Therefore, the concepts of *public* and *community* require some level of accepted definition when discussing their actual or perceived role in the context of participation. Very often the terms ‘public’ and ‘community’ are used interchangeably to address certain group of interests in a given time and place. The word ‘community’ has been a word in the English language since the fourteenth century. Initially, community referred to the ‘ordinary’ (common) people to make distinction from people of authority and rank, within ‘a state of organised society’. However, by the sixteenth century the meaning of community changed to refer to ‘the quality of having something in common’ and to ‘a sense of common identity and characteristics’ (Mayo, 1994:49; Williams, 1976:75-76).

Moreover, community as a subject of discourse has long been debated among libertarians, liberals, individualists and communitarians alike. For instance, Putnam (2000:274) points out that our deepest sense of belonging among the various communities to which we might belong ‘is to our social networks, especially family and friends’. Families and friends could therefore be the starting point of a community. However, for

the community to be a functioning entity it needs to be interacting in a wider social realm. Etzioni (1995:ix) went further to argue that the definition of community rests on the function of this interaction in maintaining social control:

*“Communities are social webs of people who know one another as persons and have a moral voice. Communities draw on interpersonal bonds to encourage members to abide by shared values. ... Communities gently chastise those who violate shared moral norms and express approbation for those who abide by them.”*

One can derive from the above citation from Amitai Etzioni important characteristics of a community including its role in providing boundaries, interaction between individuals, purposes and responsibilities and rules and obligations. The boundaries could be in the form of geographical boundaries delineating areas, or social boundaries distinguishing interest or belief systems, while the interaction may be formal or informal.

The purpose binds members of the community together; while rules help to regulate the behaviour of individuals in the community. Etzioni (1995: 168-176) listed attributes of a community including:

*“...wholeness incorporating diversity; a reasonable base of shared values; caring, trust, and teamwork; participation; affirmation; institutional arrangements for community maintenance”.*

Etzioni sees participation by members of the community in collective activities as one of the features of recognisable communities.

Generally speaking and for the purpose of participation, the public (including communities and citizens) is a collection of individuals or groups that possess common attributes and are organised or unorganised at different levels and with a capability to deal with issues that commonly affect them (Connelley, 2005:13-24).

Despite the fact that the beneficiaries of regeneration programmes are restricted by geographical boundaries, the needs and aspirations of communities are best defined

by other attributes within the boundary. “Communities” and “the public” in regeneration areas are very often referred to in terms of their participative role in the decision making process. On the one hand, communities are groups that have a shared area of interest due to where they live. On the other hand, however, communities could also be defined with reference to: ‘personal attributes (age, gender, ethnicity); beliefs (political, cultural or religious); economic positions (employment status); skills; relationship to local services (tenants, patients); and geographic place (e.g. neighbourhood)’ (Connelley, 2005). Some attributes are deemed to be independent of geographical boundaries. Different communities exist in the same geographical zone that a regeneration programme covers. In this case, though the geographical boundaries are predefined for operational purposes, it is the specific attributes within the boundaries that define individual communities within an area.

In the context of urban regeneration, communities have always had a role to play even if different political persuasions at different periods tried to give them different meanings and roles. For example, as Imrie and Raco (2003:4) put it, the core of the New Labour’s approach towards urban regeneration is “the revitalisation of cities, the revival of citizenship and the activation of communities to spearhead urban change.” Here the role of communities as a core aspect of regeneration is defined by giving more emphasis to the citizenship aspects. The Office of Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM, December 2003) defined community very broadly as: “any group of individuals with a common bond above the family unit and below the first level of municipal administration.” It also put geographical limitations of communities as ‘primarily those people living or working in a defined area’. Therefore, area based regeneration tends to favour communities that share attributes that bring them together within a given geographical location.

However, care needs to be taken when treating communities as geographically defined groups, as opposed to groups that are identified by certain characteristics within the physical boundaries of the area. The individual attributes that will bring individuals and groups together and create a strong bond are imperative to make participation meaningful. Furthermore, the concept of public and community could change from one form to another in different situations depending on the strength and weakness of these attributes. However, it is possible to say that communities are members of the wider public, as 'the public' embraces different communities within itself (Mayo:1994; Craig and Mayo, 1995; Barnes et al. 2003).

Having discussed working definitions for 'the public' and 'communities', it is also necessary to consider 'participation' which, as an idea, has also had a long history that is relevant to its current social and political applications (Catt, 1999; Held, 1987). It evolved historically from democratic practices at the time of the great Greek thinkers of democracy between the sixth and fourth centuries B.C. In ancient Athenian society the political system of democracy created a theoretical base as well as institutions to implement public participation, despite the fact that women and slaves were not allowed to participate. Little has changed in the fundamental concepts of democracy since its first inception. Dahl (1989:232) affirmed that democracy was the 'oldest form of government' in which 'our ancestral hunter-gatherers governed themselves by discussion and by leadership that depended on continuing consent'. In more specific terms, Held (1987:17) suggested that the Athenian concept of citizenship has been taken as unrestricted participation of the *demos* (the people, except women and slaves, of course) in the 'legislative and judicial functions' of the state. Some of the reasons why one should review this far back to the Athenian democracy are that it can be compared to the current public and community participation, in that (a) the size of the *demos* and town meetings

were small, which perhaps resembles community forums in small regeneration areas, and (b) the experience of direct involvement of people in the past has relevance to the modern debate on the types and nature of participation at the present time.

Of all the thinkers on democracy, Jean Jacques Rousseau has advanced the notion of direct public participation most by arguing that representative systems are non-democratic, 'because one will never be represented by another'. Rousseau (1762) through his work concerning *The Social Contract* has developed participatory democratic theory that advocates decision making by public participation through direct, face-to-face discussions leading to consensus. Catt (1999:40) succinctly describes the process as 'face-to-face meetings where possible solutions are proposed and discussed until agreement on the best solution emerges'. He suggests that the necessary condition for participation to be effective is 'the involvement of all members of the group in each step of the decision making process'. Bacharach and Botwinick (1992:57) have identified the two important aspects of participation which could be applicable to other areas as well as in politics. These are participation through direct involvement and participation through representatives. In a representative political arena, for example, participation is achieved partly by the act of voting during elections. Between elections the role of the public is to question those elected about whether they have delivered their public responsibilities (Held, 1987:75). Bacharach and Botwinick (1992:57) point out that 'citizenship' has to be gained from participation and individuals are developed more fully as citizens through 'participatory experience'. However, Pateman (1970:1) suggests that close attention is necessary to identify 'the place of participation' in a modern, viable theory of democracy.

In summary, communities and the public are at the centre of regeneration as far as participation is concerned. The nature of issues where participation is required could



include, for example, political, environmental, social and cultural matters. Participation could focus on issues affecting certain groups of society or it could well concern the whole nation. Participation could be collectively accomplished by organised groups, on one hand, or achieved through an individual contribution towards issues affecting many other people. The effectiveness of participation could be measured in terms of changes or influences it has brought to its intended purpose, or sometimes in terms of its unintended impacts. It could also be measured by the level of commitment it secured for actions eventually taken or not taken by individuals, institutions or a government. By experiencing the process of participation one may learn or accumulate knowledge about how to participate or not to participate (Duncan, 1983; Held, 1987; Reason, 1994; Catt, 1999). In the past participation was simply associated with political participation. Much of the research literature has referred to political participation including public participation in elections. Modern concepts of participation should not be confined within this framework of 'formal' political activity.

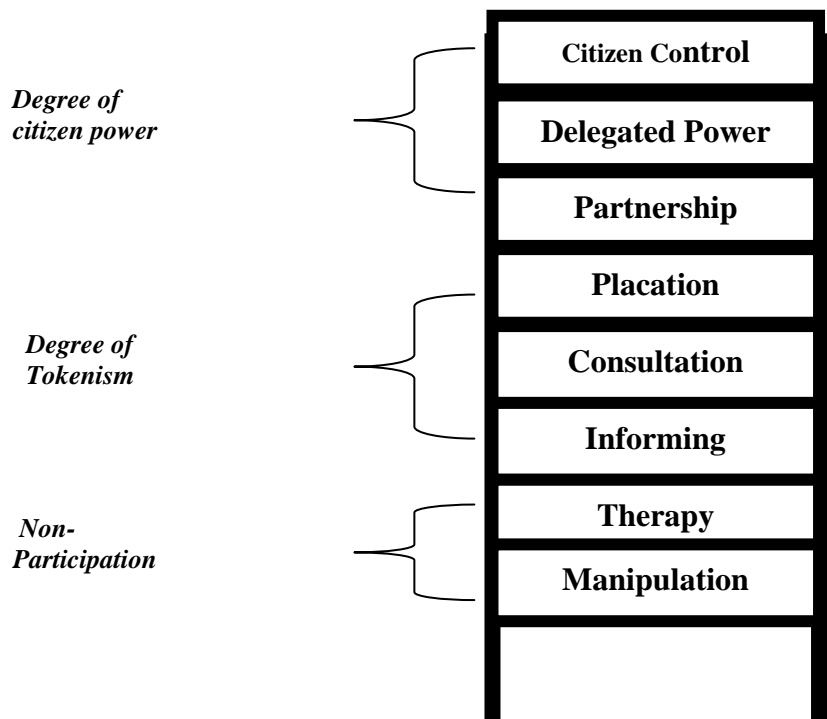
This section has established a range of different definitions of ideas and concepts central to the thesis. In chapter five I will explicitly state which of these definitions I use to interpret my findings in Newham. I will also examine the way that these different ideas about participation are invoked and used by different actors from whom I collected field data.

### **2.3. Levels of participation**

Different levels of public/citizen participation result in different outcomes (directly for the benefit of the project or indirectly for participants) depending on the type of participatory method that is used and the nature of the issue being dealt with (Stukas and Dunlap 2002). Most of the models or typologies of participation draw upon a metaphor

of a ladder or continuum. These are prescriptive and idealistic in that participation is assumed to be a process of climbing from one stage to the other. However, the range of participatory methods used by different groups and organisations at all levels makes it difficult to depend on one model or typology to describe the level of participation. Although it is not free from the above criticism, however, one of the models that clearly shows different levels of participation was developed by the American sociologist Sherry Arnstein (1969:216-224) and is called ‘a ladder of citizen participation’(see Figure 1 below). The ladder helps to evaluate the type and level of participation and the type of outcome each level may or may not produce.

**Figure 1. Arnstein ladder of citizen participation**



Source: Arnstein (1969:216-224)

Arnstein (1969) described a ladder of citizen participation with eight steps. *Manipulation* and *therapy* are non-participation exercises aiming to educate participants in order to win their support. For example, Towers (1995:158-159) argues from an architect's point of view that participants in the planning process relating to the built environment are frequently 'manipulated' by activists for their own personal or political ends and subjected to the 'therapy' of professionals paternalistically imposing preconceived solutions to powerlessness and poverty.

The third stage is *informing* the public with the necessary information on the ongoing activities followed by *consultation* as the first step of engaging people with different methods, like meetings, preliminary surveys etc. The fifth stage according to Arnstein, is *placation*, which is the seeking of advice by technocrats or power holders from the public through fairly structured settings. However, decisions are still made by those who have the power and resources. At the *partnership* stage, decision makers and power are shared between participants and the power holders. At the seventh stage of *delegated power* citizens are delegated to exercise decisions on their own. At the final stage of participation ladder, i.e. *citizen control*, the public will be in charge of all aspects of planning, managing and decision making. The public will have direct management of programme funding, monitoring and implementation.

While the first two 'rungs' on the ladder (i.e. manipulation and therapy) are elements in the process of participation, they do not offer the public a say in the decision making process. The rest of the 'rungs' could be considered as different stages and levels of participation due to the fact that all have practical links with one another. It is apparent that many of the participation policy statements and guidelines of the government and other organisations do not go beyond the promotion of consultation, which accord-

ing to Arnstein's ladder, is a degree of tokenism (Watt, Higgins & Kendrick, 2000:120-132). The ladder metaphor is criticised (Burton, 2004:196) because of its prescriptive nature that starts from one low strand of the ladder and moves 'towards participatory heaven'. It has been noted that and the ladder may not fit all situations and participatory methods (Evans, 2007). Furthermore the model is mainly for direct participation where the public is involved in the decision making process. In a representative or a more institutionalised participation process the model may be meaningless.

However, from a more positive perspective, the Arnstein ladder of participation helps not only to identify the level of participation, but can be used to evaluate the change or influence each stage makes in a local decision making process. The ladder also helps us to understand and compare individual urban regeneration policies with regard to public participation, as there are differences among each of them. The level of participation can be regarded as a determining factor in the level of positive impact projects will bring and the level of ownership the public will have. For example, 'partnership', 'delegated power' and 'citizen control' serve the interests of participants, while the remainder of the ladder's stages mainly serve the interest of power holders.

The participation ladder is a potentially useful tool for evaluating the new local governance arrangements which depend upon local residents and institutions playing a meaningful partnership role. The emphasis that is given to the local decision making arrangement means that participation on the ladder is expected to be at the level of partnership or delegated power. The partnership aspect has led to the emergence of 'the local' as the site of empowerment for local actors including residents and community groups. The new localism approach of the state gives more delegated power to local actors in the decision making process and in the implementation of policies.

In chapter three the weaknesses and strengths of different programmes and projects of area based regeneration initiatives over the last thirty to forty years, are reviewed in terms of the levels and types of public and community participation. I will also discuss the policies in relation to participation during the different periods of urban regeneration in a later part of chapter three. In the next section, I will highlight some of the theoretical debates about participation.

#### **2.4. Theories about participatory democracy**

Public and community participation as an ideal tool for achieving long term development, and its applicability and effectiveness in a modern society, is very debatable. Pateman, (1970:1) suggests that close attention is necessary to identify ‘the place of participation in a modern and viable theory of democracy’. Participation plays a pivotal role in contributing to the development of a democratic society. Participatory democracy theorists believe that by participating in action on issues affecting them, people develop responsibility for themselves and others; ensure political equality; and are empowered to take part in “social action” (MacKinnon, 1973:7). Participation has an educative role for developing the individual to be an active citizen for the benefit of themselves and others. Bachrach and Botwinick (1992:20-21) argued that by participating, ordinary people could attain maximum self development and hence “have the capacity to develop not only their internal selves but also a potential for expanding their self-interest to encompass an identification with and a commitment to the well-being of others”.

There are two distinctive views concerning to participatory democracy. The classical theorists (Pateman, 1970:1-21; Schumpeter, 1942 and 1962) view it as a direct form of participation where individual citizens are empowered to be involved in the de-

cision making process. According to these theorists, empowerment could be achieved through social training and education. The individuals will benefit from the support of democratic institutions in facilitating a favourable basis for participation. Pateman (1970:42-43) discussed the educative role of participation in the theory of participatory democracy as ‘the gaining of practice in democratic skills and procedures’. Hence, the more individuals participate and as their capacity for participation improves, so the participatory system will become more stable, ‘self-sustaining through the educative impact of the participatory process’. On the other hand, Putnam (2000:342) discussed that if participation declines and ‘if fewer and fewer voices engage in democratic debate – our politics become more shrill and less balanced’. He further argued ‘when most people skip the meeting, those who are left tend to be more extreme, because they care most about the outcome’.

Nevertheless, contemporary theorists have argued (based on empirical findings) that people are less interested in the day to day business of the government (Kelleher & Wolak, 2007). The assumption is that the elected representatives are doing the job on their behalf. Therefore, voting for the election of leaders is where citizens’ roles in participation are needed and required. Hence, the liberal and contemporary theorists (democratic revisionists) define participation as the role of the private citizen in ‘the selection of leaders and, for those in position to do so, attempting from time to time to influence their action’ (Osburn, 1985). This might be viewed as democracy through ‘indirect’ participation. The theoretical and empirical findings of many contemporary researchers strongly support the idea of ‘indirect’ democratic participation (Pateman, 1970; Duncan, 1983; Holden, 1993). Contemporary theorists agree that only in ‘small and primitive communities with a simple social structure’ is it possible for all the individuals to participate ‘in all the duties of legislation and administration by means of debates carried

out in the physical presence of all, as they did, for instance, ‘in the Greek polis or in the New England town’ (Holden, 1993). In contrast, this direct participation is not feasible in today’s larger more complex societies.

Despite the fact that the mainstream theory of democracy had never neglected participation conceived as personal active involvement, nevertheless, some argued that public participation is unnecessary as ‘the magnitude increases, and as we move from small groups all the way to the level of the political system, participation neither explains nor suffices to sustain the edifice of representative democracy’ (Sartori, 1987:113-114). Gould (1988:87) argued that both methods of representation and direct participation could be considered, depending on the size of institutions, ‘for example in large-scale and centralised policy-making in government, industry and cultural affairs what is required is a system of representation based on participation at the lower levels’ where every member of the group or institution has an equal right to participate in the election of representatives’.

The revisionists of classical democratic theory argue that ‘government by the people’ should be substituted by ‘government approved by the people’ (Schumpeter, 1943:245-246). Therefore, the unique feature of democracy is the competition for leadership in a free election. Dahl (1989:225) agreed and argued that ‘the ancient democratic ideas’ cannot be made to fit with ‘the modern democratic forms and institutions’. The counter argument however is that informal ‘institutions’ are spontaneously created by citizens who will be affected by the policy decisions of the state. Good examples are derived from the experiences of groups of citizens that have organised to protest government actions in welfare and poverty in 1960s British urban history (McKay and Cox, 1979:274). In such situations, small group networking replaces structured institutional arrangements. Such participatory actions could well be democratic. Neighbourhood as-

sociations, community and informal self-help groups could contribute to democratic activities while still remaining independent and not becoming institutionalised (Knight, Chigudu and Tandon, 2002:163-166). Through recent empirical findings Knight, Chigudu and Tandon (2002:118-123), argue that the notion of a 'free election' is subject to close scrutiny as in many new and even in established 'democracies' elections are hardly free. It is not only the rigging of votes and the intimidation of voters that should be considered reasons to make some elections void; but also unfair persuasion of the electorate by economically powerful election candidates who could easily mislead the electorate. Such a reality could also be true at a local level and in non-political public engagement, whereby a few 'usual suspects' are hand picked to dominate the memberships of management committees and partnership boards. Therefore, it is difficult to define the distinctive features of democracy as only a free election for representatives.

Other revisionists like Berelson (1954: 314-15) argue that for democracy to work it is a requirement that a heterogeneous group exists which is contrary to the classical theorists who 'demand homogeneous citizens in their behaviour and attitude'. Furthermore, according to Berelson, limited participation and apathy are considered as a 'positive function for the whole system by cushioning the shock of disagreement, adjustment and change' (Berelson, 1954:315-16). Although there is strong element in Berelson's arguments about heterogeneous citizenry, however, the dynamics of participation of any magnitude (scale) should contribute towards the democratic process, not slow it down. On the other hand, the small numbers of voters turning out at elections should not be considered as a failure of democracy, as long as it makes the election possible and ensures equal opportunity to participate. In this regard, Dahl (1956:145) discussed political equality through votes as 'the existence of universal suffrage (i.e. one person, one vote) with its sanction through the electoral competition for votes'. He fur-



ther argued that different groups in the electorate make their demands heard or else 'expect to suffer in some significant way if they do not placate the group, its leaders, or its most vociferous members'. Dahl's argument is based on the premise of a polyarchal system (rule by the many) which could be developed in social training through a range of agencies and institutions such as family, school, church and newspapers. The social training will help voters to reinforce their knowledge of issues and situations to be positive, neutral or negative in their behaviour. Polyarchal democracy differs from other forms of democracy due to its 'characteristics, such as political parties, rights to form political organisations to influence or oppose the existing government, organised interest groups, and so on' (Dahl, 1989: 218). Dahl's discussion is important when it comes to the notion of social training in general, but may be controversial when it comes to the assurance of political equality through social training to vote. One reason is that in contemporary, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies it will be difficult to make this social training standardised and equitable. Therefore, the result of the training may lead to a highly divided society both in perceiving and using democracy and in other social, political and cultural interactions aimed at securing the common good.

In summary, theoretical debate over the need for, level of, method and purpose of participation or non participation is changing. These theoretical debates have direct and sometimes indirect influence on shaping policies of public engagement in regeneration. At the moment, citizens' participation is still an important aspect in British urban policy for community development and regeneration. Most of the recent initiatives have considered public participation as an important component of regeneration policy initiatives (Foley and Martin, 2000; Haughton, 1998) aiming to address complex problems of unemployment, poor housing, crime and environment. The weaknesses of sustainable

urban regeneration in the 1980s included a lack of active public and community involvement. According to Simmons and Birchall (2005:261):

*“Participation first gained prominence in the UK as far back as the 1960s. Following a decline in the 1980s at the height of the New Right agenda, the 1990s witnessed a revival of interest (Stoker 1997). Enhanced user participation was widely promoted as a feature of administrative reform strategies—at least in rhetoric (Pierre 1998; Peters and Savoie 1998). More recently, this agenda has been developed by the New Labour government in the UK, in a range of initiatives that has seen participation emerge as a significant policy theme (Newman 2001; Bochel and Bochel 2004).”*

Hence, in contemporary Britain, the call for more meaningful participation of local people is justifiable. Furthermore, as discussed elsewhere in this chapter, there are common local issues which regeneration projects are addressing that demand the contribution of local people for the common good. Therefore, there is a clear mutual agreement of participation whereby citizens need to show interest, because they are directly affected by the decision that is taken on their behalf. Therefore, the theoretical debates in participatory democracy are evidently helpful in understanding the type, levels and outcome of public participation at a policy and operational level. Above all, as Leonard (1975:95) asserted:

*‘community control and citizen participation were hotly debated and poorly defined. Citizen participation and community control are ideas that can be adapted to a wide range of programmatic and political objectives’.*

A fundamental question here is what levels of participation (be it direct or representative) should be counted as meaningful participation? Is consultation sufficient to be called participation, as is very often implied by many of the government’s policy documents, both the past and present? These questions lead to consideration of the criticisms of participation and some of the practical difficulties attached to it, considered in the following part of the review, which explores power and empowerment in relation to participation in urban regeneration initiatives.

## **2.5. Discourses of power and empowerment and their relationship to Participation**

### **2.5.1. Power in the context of participation**

In this part of the chapter, I will discuss the discourses around power and empowerment in relation to public and community participation in the decision making process associated with area based regeneration programmes. The power relationships between the public and other stakeholders in the regeneration process (e.g. the local state or national government) are matters that should be taken into account in any area-based urban regeneration decision making process. It is essential to fully understand the dynamics between these forces including the sources and functions of power and their impacts on participation and the regeneration process. Initially, I will discuss different thinkers' perspectives on power which will lead to a discussion of the related concept of 'empowerment'. I will explore the two concepts and their functions in a real world example of public and community participation in a decision making process.

Power in the context of public participation is a complex concept. It carries different and sometimes conflicting meanings when viewed from different philosophical and ideological perspectives. Some agree that power implies a level of authority 'to limit the range of actions that others can perform, or constrain their choices'; therefore, it requires a level of interaction with others to manifest itself (Lukes, 2005:73; see also Haugaard, 2002). Such a notion arises from the conception that power is emanating from 'a central, symbolic place or position in society' (Newman: 2004:139). The manifestation of power is also seen through the interaction process of the powerful and powerless, constructed in a way that power is to be given and received from a centralised place in a society. In this way of thinking centralised power is considered as more symbolic, 'functioning as a way of organising power relations around sovereign institutions

and laws' (Haugaard and Lentner, 2006:171). Marxist thinkers also agree on the notion of the centrality of power and often consider it as 'an oppressive and illegitimate arrangement' (Dahl, 1989). For the Marxists the legitimate arrangement is the centrality of proletarian power. Hence the centrality of power remains the same except that the sovereign is replaced by the proletariat.

Perhaps it is Foucault who has done most to dispute the notion of power as a sovereign, unitary, centralised and repressive construct. He argued that 'power permeates at all levels of society' (Fox, 1998:416). Foucault differs in three main areas from other thinkers. Firstly, according to Foucault, power is not a negative and prohibitive phenomenon, rather it is active. Secondly, power does not originate from one particular source – it emanates from many sources. Thirdly, Foucault indicates that power is not held by any one person, group or class. Hence, power is neither a possession nor something that is acquired. Therefore, Foucault summarises power as a relationship or a network of relationships, distributed throughout society, affecting individuals in various ways. However, Foucault acknowledges that 'the effects of power ultimately support a certain social class, regime and economic system' (Holub, 1985:250).

Lukes (2005: 29), on the other hand, summarises three conceptual views that explain what power is. These are the pluralist view (which he calls the one dimensional view); the view of critics of pluralism (the two dimensional view); and a third view of power (which he calls the three dimensional view). Accordingly, in the first dimension, power is to do with 'the use of superior resources (by A: the relatively powerful) to reward or punish the behaviour of those with fewer resources (B: the relatively powerless)'. Hence power is manifested when resources are used by the relatively powerful 'to overtly coerce (B) to do what (A) wants' (Dahl 1969; Culley and Hughey, 2008: 101-102). The first dimension concerns observable decision-making behaviour in socie-

ties, especially when this involves deciding between contested policy options; that is, how are decisions taken and conflicts resolved? (Kelly, 2006: 2119). This is a zero-sum assumption, as what the powerful achieves and gains is at the expense of the powerless. In this particular view power could emerge from personal skills, technical expertise and knowledge, money or wealth to be used over those with limited personal skills, knowledge or money.

Unlike the first dimension the second dimension of power is generally understood as the ability to determine who participates and what is debated in decision making about key issues. This dimension manifests itself through setting agendas or constructing barriers to participation by preventing the less powerful from raising issues, resulting in their withdrawal from participation (Bachrach and Baratz 1962, 1970; Cully and Hughey, 2008: 101-102). The relationship between parties reflects one in which the 'rules of the game' (e.g. institutional procedures or agendas) are used to systematically benefit one group (A) over another so that one group (B) is less able to defend and promote its interests. Therefore, the second dimension concerns the determination of which issues or options are presented to decision makers; that is, how is it decided which issues are included on the decision-making agenda and which issues are not? (Kelly, 2006: 2119; Bachrach & Baratz, 1970).

Steven Lukes (1974) discusses the first two dimensions of power i.e. pluralist and elitist views before he argues for the third dimension. Firstly, according to pluralists like Robert Dahl (1956) power is manifested as the relative influences of various interest groups over executive decision-making. Secondly, according to elitist theorists like Mills (1956) power is the ability to set the agenda prior to any decision making taking place. Although there are some similarities (but for different reasons) between the elitist and pluralists' models mentioned above, Lukes argues that power has a third

dimension which is the ability to shape an agent's preferences or perception of their 'real interest'. Lukes suggests that the powerful can control the weak by influencing their 'real interests' (Ron, 2008). Lukes distinguished between 'perceived' and 'real' interests and suggested that the powerful can control the weak by causing them to misperceive their real interests (Young, 1978). Their influence includes the power to prevent the formation of grievances by shaping perceptions, cognitions, and preferences in such a way as to ensure the acceptance of a certain role in the existing order. Whereas the pluralist and elitists models assumed that agents can always identify and articulate their own interests, Lukes' view of the third dimension of power refused to take that for granted (Heyward, 2007:48).

The third dimension according to Lukes is generally thought to manifest itself as the ability of the relatively powerful (A) to control and disseminate myths and ideology which are used to shape the very thoughts, desires and interests of the relatively powerless (B) (Gaventa 1980; Lukes 1974; Parenti 1978). The perception of what is possible or imperative is thought to be a key feature of the third dimension of power (Culley and Hughey, 2008: 101-102). Here one can argue the Foucauldian influence is recognisable through the idea of discourse. A discourse, in Foucauldian terms, is a way of thinking and speaking about some aspect of social life which shapes the possibilities for human action. Power is given special importance in Foucauldian approaches. Power is everywhere, not held by persons, but claimed in interaction through discourse with persons occupying complementary subject positions. Knowledge is also closely integrated with the concept of discourse in Foucauldian power analysis. The third dimension concerns the forces that determine what needs people recognize themselves as having; that is, how do I decide what my own needs are? (Lukes, 2005). In Foucauldian terms these forces can be characterised as discourses. This third dimension, then, concerns individu-

als' perception, cognition and self-view in such a way as to (a) shape the needs they perceive themselves as having; (b) determine the demands and requests the individual makes upon his/her self, others and society and (c) determine, at least in part, which issues may start to reach the political agenda (Kelly, 2006: 2119).

Furthermore, Lukes introduces and stresses the importance of the concept of latent conflict (Lukes, 1974). A latent conflict consists in a contradiction between the interests of (A) (those exercising power), and the real interests of (B), who are excluded. He asserts the conflict is latent because those subject to power do not express or even remain aware of their interests. This means that the interests of B are very difficult to trace, because those concerned either cannot express them or are unable to recognize them.

Critics of Lukes point to the difficulties of using the three dimensional view of power in empirical research (Hardy and Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998; Lorenzi, 2006). First, the exercise of power may involve inaction rather than observable action. For example, due to financial constraint following a consultation exercise with the public, power holders may take a course action other than what the public want. The point here is how to find a casual link between inaction and its consequences, such as the non-appearance of a political issue. Some of the questions that might arise here include justifying the claim that B would have thought and acted differently, and specifying the ways or mechanisms in which A acted or abstained from acting in order to prevent B from doing so. In order to gather evidence to support the claim that an apparent case of consensus is not genuine but imposed, one must investigate inaction, consider structural and institutional power, and investigate ways in which demands are prevented from being raised.

The second problem of Lukes' three dimensional view is how to identify the process or mechanism of the alleged exercising of power. The exercising of power may

be unconscious. This may be the case where A exercises its power over B yet remains unaware of its consequences. In this case there is an exercise of power only where A could have discovered the consequences of its behaviour.

Third, power may be exercised by groups or institutions. This entails a crucial question: how and where does one draw the line between structural determination and the exercise of power? However, Lukes refuses the conceptual assimilation of power to structural determination. Within a system characterized by total structural determinism which is essentially a one dimensional view of power, there would be no place for power. Power, Lukes claims, is about alternatives, and that to identify a given process as an exercise of power is to assume that within the process lies the possibility to act differently. This holds for individuals as well as groups or institutions. His conclusion is that locating power is to fix responsibility for consequences that flow from the action, or inaction, of certain specifiable agents (Kernohan, 1989).

The different notions and functions of power are reflected in the arena of public and community participation. If we use both Foucault's and Lukes's concepts of power, then it is possible to explain public participation in terms of power relationships. According to Foucault, power can be used positively; accordingly the exercise of power within the context of public participation may also result in a positive outcome. Furthermore as power does not emanate from one single source according to Foucault, individuals and certain groups do not always dominate the direction of the decision making process. As checks and balances could be put in place and the source of power varies it is difficult for power to become concentrated into the hands of few, hence power could be used as a productive rather than repressive tool to accommodate the needs and views of different groups. Therefore the question is more to identify who benefits from the decision making process through the participation of the public or the communities.



The most important issue to be considered when power is the question in public and community participation, is the evaluation of both the process where the actual exercise of power matters and the outcomes that results from the process.

On the other hand, when we use Lukes' approaches to power to explain public and community participation we identify at least three important issues. Firstly, many of the public and community participation exercises are subject to the quality and quantity of resource availability which determines the direction of their results. As most of the time material, technical, financial and human resources are held by power holders, this means that the direction of the public and community participation exercises tends to be influenced by the resource holders. Secondly, the powerful could be selective in deciding who is to participate or not to participate and issues to include and exclude (Rowe and Frewer, 2005). This means that the powerful will be in a position to control the rules of the game. Hence the result of the participation agenda obviously favours the powerful. The third aspect is more complex as the influence of the powerful is about shaping the perception, cognition and preferences of situations and events. Here the participation is carried out in the environment where the real interests of the public and communities are influenced by some other ideological, political or cognitive thinking. These are more embedded in emotional and current issues that instigate feelings on certain issues and conditions. These influences may not have a long term life span, but they have immediate impacts. In a local political participation arena current and populist issues could win the support of people who are directly associated with the issue.

### **2.5.2. Concepts of empowerment**

Empowerment concerns people's ability to claim and exercise power and frequently entails securing greater access to resources and the acquisition of skills to enable individuals and communities to assert control over their circumstances. Moreover empowerment leads to building networks that promote participation and social action at individual and community levels. This thesis addresses the issues of power and empowerment in relation to participation.

It was Paulo Freire (1973) who promoted empowerment as a social theory when he discussed how oppressed people could be educated to liberate themselves through local and community based initiatives (Parpart, Rai, & Staudt, 2003). Empowerment is not only about liberating oneself. According to Friedmann (1992) there are two important steps that lead to empowerment. The first is mobilising the poor to be a social force. This ultimately transforms into the second step of political power which is a step that enables participation in the decision making processes.

Authors like Banyard & LaPlant, (2002) describe the path that leads to empowerment as having three steps. The first promotes an interpersonal sense (of empowerment), or encourages participation. The second step builds community connections or integrates diversity. The final step promotes social action for community building or fostering involvement in the community. At the first stage empowerment practices within a community have led to changes from a situation of community diversity to one where there is unity of purpose in order to secure a common goal (i.e. integration). The second stage is that the intermediate step before community integration or community building is participation in or involvement with community activities.

The other approach to understanding the concept of empowerment is what Starkey (2003) categorises as the two distinct models of empowerment; these are: 1)

The consumerist approach to empowerment – focusing upon individual change and control; and 2) The liberational model of empowerment - concerned with tackling unequal social structures. However, Traynor, (2003:135) criticised the first approach by pointing out the contradiction of some notions of ‘empowerment’ which place emphasis on personal responsibility rather than considering the ‘structural constraints on the life and consciousness of the individual’. Traynor argued that ‘empowerment’ can perpetuate an ideology that ‘tells the individual subject that he or she is free while at the same time constructing the possibilities for thought and action’. Therefore, theory of empowerment needs to address the wider structural constraints.

However, I tend to agree with and use in this thesis a different perspective: Hur (2006: 524) views empowerment as ‘multidimensional’ in that it has different meanings; it also functions ‘at various levels, such as individual, group, and community’; ‘is a social process because it occurs in relation to others’; and is ‘an outcome that can be enhanced and evaluated’. Individual empowerment emerges when people attempt to develop capabilities to overcome their psychological and intellectual obstacles and attain self-determination, self-sufficiency, and decision-making abilities (Becker, Kovach, & Gronseth, 2004). Collective empowerment develops when people join in action to overcome obstacles and attain social change (Staples, 1990). Groups become empowered through collective action, but that action is enabled or constrained by the power structures that they encounter (Parpart et al., 2003).

The notion of collective belonging: “belonging to the social networks of their peers, and an emphasis on autonomy while being part of the collective and social solidarity vis-à-vis establishment” (Boehm & Staples, 2004:274), is one of the most frequently reported elements of collective empowerment in the literature. However, Boehm and Staples (2004) identify three components of empowerment: (a) collective

belonging, (b) involvement in, and (c) control over organisations in the community. Involvement in the community means taking part in community activities or events that may lead to effecting change in/affecting the power structure in communities (Boehm & Staples, 2004). For example, tenant associations, and neighbourhood watch schemes have structures to make decisions at neighbourhood levels. Such decision making at neighbourhood level is an example of empowerment through community engagement (Baillie et al., 2004; Zaldin, 2004) and coalition building (Boydell & Volpe, 2004).

Control over organisations in the community (Boehm & Staples, 2004) was considered as one of the critical components of collective empowerment. Control over organisations means gaining forces to influence representative groups, plus ensuring the efficacy of those organisations. Control of organisations in a community can refer to group support and advocacy (Bellamy & Mowbray, 1999) and political control (Itzhaky & York, 2000; Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991). Tenant associations are good examples of controlling organisations, raising their own funds to run them and taking decisions necessary for their estates.

Finally, the notion of community building was one of the critical components of collective empowerment (Boehm & Staples, 2004). Community building refers to creating a sense of community among residents that will increase its ability to work together, problem solve, and make group decisions for social change (Fetterson, 2002; Mattessich & Monsey, 1997). Some authors describe it as social cohesion (Peterson et al., 2005) and a sense of personal freedom (Gutierrez, 1990). According to Gutierrez (1990), the goal of collective empowerment practices is to help communities develop the ability to change negative situations and prevent the recurrence of the problems that created those situations. This goal cannot be accomplished without the establishment of community building.

Hur (2006: 535) identifies the goals of empowerment: “The goal of individual empowerment is to achieve a state of liberation strong enough to impact one’s power in life, community, and society. The goal of collective empowerment is to establish community building, so that members of a given community can feel a sense of freedom, belonging, and power that can lead to constructive social change”.

In the context of the conventional definition, empowerment must be about bringing people who are outside the decision-making process into it. This puts a strong emphasis on access to political structures and formal decision-making and, in the economic sphere, on access to markets and incomes that enable people to participate in economic decision-making. It is about individuals being able to maximise the opportunities available to them without or despite constraints of structure and state (Rowlands, 1995: 102). Empowerment also includes access to decision-making processes by which people become aware of their own interests and how these relate to those of others, in order both to participate from a position of greater strength in decision-making and to influence such decisions.

In summary, empowerment refers to the development of understanding and influence over personal, social, economic and political forces impacting on life situations. Individual concepts of empowerment refer to an individual’s ability to make personal life decisions, and are related to constructs such as self-efficacy and personal competence (Schulz et al, 1995). Schulz et al (1995:310) further argued “Empowering organisations provide opportunities for individual growth and access to decision-making processes. Empowered organisations are those with influence over their environments, and the ability to affect the distribution of social and economic resources. The concept of community empowerment used in this framework considers communities to be made up

of individuals and organisations. Individuals experience personal change through work to create change within the community or through influence on public policies”.

### **2.5.3. Empowerment and participation**

I have discussed some concepts of empowerment in a wider sense. This section discusses some of the specific implications of empowerment in public and community participation. Generally, empowerment in the context of participation entails awareness building, consciousness raising and formal training activities that can lead to more assertiveness, determination and active involvement in the challenges and decision making process of local and national issues.

Most of the popular movements of the 1960s and early 1970s emerged from the premise that viewed power as held by those with access to resources of capital and finance as well as to legal, political and social institutions, which were used to enforce power and control over the powerless. Therefore the movements sought the participation of the disfranchised public in the decision making process through mobilisation and protest. The outcome of such movements was the emergence of vocal community leaders who worked hard to include local people in the decision making activities. For example, most of the protests in late 1960s and 1970s were started and led by well informed and politicised Trade Unions and organised groups before spreading among the ordinary citizen.

Public participation may be defined at a general level as the practice of consulting and involving members of the public in the agenda-setting, decision-making, and policy-forming activities of organisations or institutions responsible for policy development (Rowe and Frewer, 2004:512). This suggests that people can be empowered through their meaningful participation in the decision making process. However, to-

kenistic participation exercises have a long term detrimental effect that produces suspicion and mistrust in the relationship between the power holders and the public. To avoid such suspicion and mistrust it is important to design a participation strategy that will make the public confident about the process of engagement in local regeneration initiatives. The strategy needs to centre on empowering people and enhancing their capacities to participate through more flexible and appropriate methods. The flexibility of the strategy is necessary to accommodate those people who may not be within the system of the mainstream society due to a variety of reasons. This is to say that, where people are not directly able to participate, there needs to be a system that will enable them to air their views, at least through their representatives or advocates. On the other hand, for those who are able to manage issues by themselves, direct participation could be appropriate with different means of support and empowerment mechanisms. As a result of such participation methods people might feel empowered to take greater responsibility for the care and maintenance of regeneration initiatives in their neighbourhoods, from the outset.

Nevertheless, they might not take responsibility and ownership if regeneration is imposed upon them with only minimal or non involvement. One possible way to make public participation more effective could be through the empowerment of individuals who directly or indirectly have interest in the local initiatives. The local partnership arrangement using different actors (including external individuals or advocates) could be starting point for empowering local people in the decision making process. According to Atkinson, (1999:62) “Partnership and empowerment are central to the current phase of urban regeneration; however, the manner in which these terms have been defined and put into practice is frequently (and perhaps deliberately) some what opaque.”

When partnership is discussed, one cannot rule out the inputs and expertise of external agencies in support of the participation process and decision making by local (powerless) people. The contribution of external agencies and other professional groups is vital in order to educate local people about issues that are to be addressed by the regeneration initiatives. They could also help in developing positive attitudes about the initiatives and in identifying the role that individuals and groups could effectively play and, eventually, in assessing the level of further support required by local people to make their participation more effective.

In addition to the inputs of experts, independent voluntary and community organisations can also have a real influence in empowering local people through practical support, particularly when there is suspicion and mistrust of the motives of external agencies. The pace of the decision-making process within regeneration initiatives also needs to be sensitive to accommodate the different levels of understanding of the issues by individuals and community participants. McArthur, (1993:313) argued that: 'For external agencies this may often mean that slower progress has to be accepted in order to increase the potential for an effective contribution by local people and their representatives. However, this is an issue which cannot be separated from the question of resources'. Providing local people and communities with the opportunity to shape the strategy at an early stage helps to build trust and good relations between partners. It also provides encouragement for people to take participation seriously.

## **2.6.Social capital and participation.**

Social capital as a product of social networks has a direct relationship with the public and communities who are participating or not participating in issues deemed to affect them. In this part of the literature review, I will discuss the benefits and drawbacks of



social capital and its links with participation and its contribution to sustainable area based regeneration programmes. While recognising that theories of social capital have some shortcomings, the review will highlight that social capital (developed through norms of reciprocity, trust and networks) enhances public participation (Gilchrist, 2004). Accordingly, measures designed to enhance social capital (or drawing on social capital) will make for more effective practice in participative methods.

In the following section, I will review some concepts and definitions of social capital and then consider how they relate to participation in regeneration schemes. As to its origin, DeFillipps (2001:782) points out that it is not clear who first used the term ‘social capital’, however, he indicates that ‘it has evolved through its use by Loury (1977), Bourdieu (1985), Coleman (1988), and then, ultimately, Putnam (1993a, 1993b, 1995, 1996, 2000) and his followers’. Nevertheless, Putnam (2000:19) gave the credit to Lyda Judson Hanifan (1916), the state supervisor of West Virginia’s rural schools as the originator of the concept of social capital though his use of the term was not identical to its current meaning. Hanifan was particularly concerned with the cultivation of good will, fellowship, sympathy and social intercourse among those that ‘make up a social unit’. It has taken some time for the term social capital to come into a widespread usage. Robert Putnam is more explicit when he points out that the idea of social capital reinvented itself at least six times over the last century ‘each time to call attention to the ways in which our lives are made more productive by social ties’ (Putnam, 2000). It is worth noting that the Ex-British Prime Minister Clement R Attlee during his election broadcast for the Labour Party on the evening of 6<sup>th</sup> June, 1945 mentioned social capital in his speech when he said “We need a planned location of industry to give a balance to the country and to preserve social capital” (personal communication with my previous academic tutor, 2005).

The concept of social capital has been widely used in different academic disciplines to describe a wide range of phenomena. The American sociologist James Coleman (1988:98) for example, gives a comparative definition that unlike other forms of capital 'social capital is not completely fungible but may be specific to certain activities. A given form of social capital that is valuable in facilitating certain actions may be useless or even harmful for others'. Coleman (1988) further discusses that unlike other forms of capital (physical and human) social capital 'inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among actors'. In the above citation, Coleman indicates some features of social capital: it is productive; it is a means to achieving ends; it is social in its nature; and that it is good for specific activities, but may be harmful to others. Print and Coleman, (2003:123) agreed with James Coleman. They point out that social capital is 'often seen as an indicator of the effectiveness of a society. Societies that are healthy and functioning are also well stocked with social capital'. They further argue, however, that more divided societies 'demonstrate less trust, less civic engagement, less positive networking and less cooperation among members' i.e. less social capital, hence, they conclude that 'the quality of life of members can be negatively affected'. The above argument suggests unequal societies have weaker social capital.

Pattie et al. (2003:444) argue that social capital as 'a sense of duty' can encourage participation in regeneration or other initiatives and that people are likely to be influenced by 'the social norms' of those they live among: the more that friends and family think participation is a waste of time, the less likely it is that people will participate. Social capital is created through connections among individuals, and the associated norms of reciprocity and trust. However, Newton (1997:575) argues that to include two or three of these concepts in the same definition creates 'conceptual confusion, makes unwarranted assumptions, and is likely to muddle empirical questions'. Therefore, I will

discuss these concepts based on their individual merits and how they support each other. According to Newton when social capital is defined in terms of norms and values then it is ‘a subjective phenomenon’. Hence, social capital is a combination of different kinds of values and attitudes of citizens that ‘influence or determine how they relate to each other’. Therefore, the difference between networks as compared to norms and values is that networks are ‘objective and tangible’ whereas norms and values are ‘subjective and observable’ (Brehm and Rahn, 1997). Social capital that emerges from norms of reciprocity and shared values will create trust and networks that apparently help citizens to co-operate for their common good.

Theoretically, then, social capital binds society together and enhances a common spirit and a sense of mutual obligation and hence provides the basis for participation. However, the above assertion needs to be supported by empirical evidence, although measuring different aspects of social capital (including norms of reciprocity and trust) is difficult. Likewise, in a modern and heterogeneous society where one has more individual power and freedom for oneself, it is difficult to determine how different norms, attitudes and values can relate to each other to produce social capital. The meaning and benefits of social capital have been addressed by economists, sociologists, political scientists and researchers of other disciplines. International monetary institutions like the World Bank have recognised the importance of social capital, compared to other forms of capital as a means to economic prosperity and sustainable development. The World Bank (1998b) offers the following definition:

*“Social capital refers to the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society’s social interactions. Increasing evidence shows that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable. Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society – it is the glue that holds them together.”*

The World Bank (1998b:1) definition has three main points. Firstly, social capital helps in shaping the quality and quantity of social interactions. Secondly, social capital helps in holding society together. Thirdly, social cohesion is a product of social capital that plays an important role in sustainable development and economic prosperity. However, Fine (2001:155-174) has provided an extensive critical analysis of the ‘glue that holds societies together’ metaphor and how and why the World Bank uses social capital as a notion that ‘fills out everything that is not already taken care of in terms of standard economic analysis’.

Cattell & Herring (2002:63), referring to the works of Coleman, Bourdieu and Putnam summarise the meaning of social capital as a ‘phenomenon embodied in social relations, a resource produced when people co-operate for mutual benefit’. Social capital as compared to other forms of capital is obviously social in its nature and individuals benefit from it. It is to be shared or used. As far as the benefits of social capital are concerned, there are different views and debates. On the one hand, there are arguments that social capital contributes positively to better health, low levels of crime, better educational achievement and better environments for public participation (Putnam, 2000:317). On the other hand, however, groups may use it for un-social purposes and just to promote their individual interest and gain at the expense of others. For example, educational under-achievement could be associated with the absence of positive social capital among adolescent peers that encourages truancy and apparently discourages achievement for some young people.

Social capital is a complex concept when defined as ‘capital’ and ‘social’ at the same time. The individual’s social network may help to produce capital for the benefit of the individual self. But the said ‘capital’ is not the sort of thing that the whole society can own and have access to. It could be argued, however, that the sum of individual so-

cial networks is collective (social) capital. Fine (2001:37-38) concludes that due to ‘the fluidity of capital between its different forms’ in economic and social structures, social capital comprises ‘non-economic aspects of capital as it is social and created in non-market situations’.

In the next sub-section, I will discuss certain facets of social capital which relate to participation in regeneration schemes. Trust, reciprocity and networks are important aspects of social capital. Social capital helps the process of participation and, at the same time, the participation processes may also build or conserve aspects of social capital. Therefore, the relationship between social capital and participation is reciprocal. This reciprocal relationship could emerge from trust; as contemporary social capital writers point out that trust helps networks to develop or vice versa.

Classical writers like de Tocqueville and Mill also place emphasis on networks of voluntary activities as a means to create trust and co-operation. However, for contemporary writers like Putnam (1995:166) trust is something, which encourages the individual to be ‘a joiner to organisational networks’. According to Josselin and Wallace (2001:129) networking helps promote ‘solidarity, loyalty, trust and reciprocity’. Moreover, according to Skelton and Valentine (1998:235) social networks play an important role in

*“social learning and contribute to an individual’s general ‘social and cultural capital’—that is the set of social norms, reciprocal relationships, expectations and ways of communicating understandings of the world that an individual builds up through their social interactions.”*

Social interaction is part of participation. Whichever comes first, trust and networks have a social dimension. Putnam (2000:136) discussed *thick trust* that is ‘...embedded in personal relations that are strong, frequent, and nested in wider networks...’ and *thin trust* that ‘... rests implicitly on some background of shared social networks and expect-

tations of reciprocity. Thin trust is even more useful than thick, because it extends the radius of trust beyond the roster of people whom we can know personally.’ Thin trust, also referred as *social trust*, as Putnam (2000:135) put it is ‘... strongly associated with many other forms of civic engagement and social capital’. He went on to point out that:

*“... people who trust their fellow citizens volunteer more often, contribute more to charity, participate more often in politics and community organisations, serve more readily on juries, give blood more frequently, comply more fully with their tax obligations, are more tolerant of minority views, and display many other forms of civic virtue. .... In short, people who trust others are all-round good citizens, and those more engaged in community life are both more trusting and more trustworthy.”*

It is also important to note the drawbacks of these aspects of social capital. Some aspects of social capital do not have a room for ‘strangers, competitors or potential enemies’ (Newton, 1997:576). As indicated by Newton, social capital is not always accessible by all parts of a society if they are out of the realm of a certain type of network and not trusted by the membership of the network. Different levels of networks i.e. closed (dense) or open (sparse) exist to serve different social purposes.

The sense of community goes far beyond the desire to help each other. The sense of community is reinforced by reciprocity and with the relationships among members extending to other communities and networks. Smaller communities with smaller groups with stronger ties and acquaintances extend to other smaller groups with weaker ties. Through weak ties, other people and organisations come into contact with each other beyond their respective social boundaries. Social capital in this case involves a transfer of resources in the form of information, throughout a network of individuals and organisations that dealt in some capacity with local issues. Therefore, the social network will extend to include individuals who may never have had face-to-face contact with one another (or any contact, for that matter) before the network was activated which creates

a sense of community. However, such a sense of community may not always in develop.

The type of network can determine the strength of ties, and hence the level of social capital that is shared. Closed or dense networks have strong ties within a small group of people where the level of their social capital is limited within that circle only, however, information can disseminate more rapidly in a dense network than in a sparse one. People in a dense network are likely to know each other and be relatively isolated from the outside world. The same information and knowledge is circulated within the dense network. New ideas and views are unlikely to emerge as they share similar information and knowledge. Open or sparse networks, on the other hand, cover many social connections but with weak ties. In open networks, although the ties are weak, people share their knowledge and experience with many other people, which produces a wide range of social capital. Hence, it may be better to have connections to a variety of networks rather than many connections within a single network. It is important for this study to ask which types of social networks are most frequently associated with public participation and which norms promote co-ordination and co-operation in the general interest of a group, individuals or both? Should the same types and levels of networks be considered in all situations and to all parts of the community? What are the criteria to assess the effectiveness of open or closed networks in terms of public participation?

Thus, people and groups that are engaged in participation may face a trade-off between having sparse networks, which enable diverse input and dense ones, which enable extended engagement. According to Warr (2006:502):

*“The looser the structure of bridging networks means they are more likely to link individuals across diverse circumstances. Empirical evidence suggests that bridging networks are important social structures for facilitating heterogeneous social contacts and new opportunities, and for circulating fresh ideas and information (Granovetter 1973; Erickson 1996; Aguilera 2002)”.*

Pretty and Smith (2004:633) identify three types of connectedness important for “the networks within, between, and beyond communities”. These are bonding, bridging, and linking types of social capital. Bonding social capital according to Pretty and Smith (2004:633) describes “the links between people with similar outlooks and objectives and is manifested in different types of groups at the local level”. They give examples like guilds, mutual aid societies, sports clubs, credit groups and literary societies (see also Cernea 1991; Flora 1998; Woolcock 1998 and 2001; Pretty & Ward 2001). On the other hand, bridging social capital describes “the capacity of groups to make links with others that may have different views, particularly across communities”. Furthermore, according to Pretty and Smith (2004:633) “such horizontal connections can sometimes lead to the establishment of new platforms and apex organisations that represent large numbers of individuals and groups” while, “linking social capital describes the ability of groups to engage vertically with external agencies, either to influence their policies or to draw on useful resources.”

De Carolis (2006:43) also pointed out that “The bonding social capital perspective explores the impact of a collective’s internal ties and the substance of the network relationships within that collective (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Leanna & Van Buaren, 1999)”, while bridging social capital “focuses on individuals and their network relationships (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Burt, 1992, 1997)”. According to De Carolis (2006:43) as compared to the bonding social capital approach, “the bridging social capital’s focus is on an individual’s external social ties and how the social capital, as a resource within this network, is used for the individual’s private benefit.” The advantage of bonding social capital is “for undergirding specific reciprocity and mobilizing solidarity ... Bridging networks, by contrast, are better for linkage to external assets and for information diffusion .... Moreover, bridging social capital can generate broader identities and re-



ciprocity, whereas bonding social capital bolsters our narrower selves .... Bonding social capital constitutes a kind of sociological superglue.” (Putnam, 2000:22-23).

In societies where there are high levels of ‘bonding’ (social capital within particular groups) but low levels of ‘bridging’ (social capital between groups), this may result in conflict rather than co-operation between communities (Gilchrist, 2004; Coates and Heckelman, 2003). High levels of bonding social capital relative to bridging social capital may also adversely affect groups such as ethnic minorities. Many ethnic minority groups have strong ties to their own families and communities but less networks with the wider community which will put them in a disadvantageous position to benefit from the stock of bridging social capital. Putnam (1993:175-176) argued that interactions of people in ‘civic association and organisations create horizontal networks of civic engagement’ that help participants solve dilemmas of collective action. These same networks ‘strengthen the performance of the polity and the economy’. He asserted that ‘horizontal networks contribute to the formation of social capital whereas vertical networks inhibit it’ (Putnam, 1993). Although, there are many unsocial networks that are organised hierarchically - vertical networks, (e.g. mafia, drug dealers). However, not all vertical networks inhibit social capital (e.g. the Scouts). The Scouts are groups organised in a strict hierarchy with vertical networks and yet their resources and services are viewed as part of social capital.

Fine (2001:159) points out that social capital, similar to human capital ‘is both input and output but it is attached to groups not individuals’. Here the emphasis is that groups as a force of collective individuals make social capital work. At the same time social capital is functioning only when the groups use it. It ‘increases with use and atrophies or dwindles into depleted stock unless it is used (Putnam 1993:169).

According to Newton (1997:575-576) reciprocity is a “cognitive” element of social capital, referring to the provision of resources by an individual or group to another individual or group, and the repayment of resources of equivalent value by these recipients to the original provider. Generalised reciprocity in contrast, argues Newton, (1997:575-576)

*“... does not entail tit-for-tat calculations in which individuals can be sure that a good turn will be repaid quickly and automatically. Generalised reciprocity is based on the assumption that good turns will be repaid at some unspecified time in the future, perhaps even by an unknown stranger”.*

High levels of social capital are argued to give rise to a higher level of reciprocal relationships and so lead to more cooperative and well functioning societies. According to Das (2004:30) (quoting from (Putnam 1993:172)) there are two types of reciprocity; ‘specific’ and ‘generalised’. Specific reciprocity is “a simultaneous exchange of items of equivalent value (e.g. workmates exchanging holiday gifts).” However, generalised reciprocity refers to ‘a continuing relationship of exchange that is at any given time unrequited or imbalanced’. Each individual act of generalised reciprocity is usually characterised by a combination of short-term altruism and long-term self-interest: ‘I help you out now in the ... expectation that you will help me out in the future’. Reciprocity is a means of non economic social exchange and inter-dependence. According to Roberts (2004:283)

*“... the idea that networks of mutual obligations are constructed through the belief that ‘someone else will do something for me down the road’ (Putnam 2000, 21) ”*

According to Wollebaek and Selle (2002:34)

*“Putnam tends to focus more on how networks generate other types of social capital, namely, trust and civic engagement, through direct interaction between the participating individuals. Networks also act as vehicles for trust, as information about the trustworthiness of other people “become[s] transitive and*

*spread[s]: I trust you, because I trust her and she assures me that she trusts you” (Putnam, 1993:169).*

It is important to note that Coleman (1993a and 1993b) and Bourdieu (1980) consider social capital an attribute of the individual and their family. For example the children’s educational attainment could depend on family resources including the following: socio-economic status, ethnicity, number of siblings, number of residential moves, whether or not mother worked before children started school, the mother’s expectation of children’s level of educational attainment, the level of communication between children and parents about personal matters, and whether or not both parents were present in household. However, Putnam (1996:56) has developed it as an attribute of communities. Putnam defines social capital as “networks, norms, and trust that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives.” Hence, Putnam’s argument helps us to measure social capital through participation of individuals: for example, through membership of political parties, social clubs, faith groups etc.

Having reviewed some of the key concepts of social capital, I now discuss some of its relevance to regeneration and its role in public participation. Social capital as a potential resource of connections is essential for local regeneration to have a long term effect, particularly in communities where there is lack of social cohesion, high levels of social exclusion and where individuals and groups have little or no trust in each other.

Morrow (2001:58-59) wrote:

*“Social capital in the form of networks and associational activity can be an important resource in tackling poverty and social disintegration and in assisting in the effective delivery of social welfare. But it is no substitute for policies designed to achieve a more socially integrated society through redistributive measures and sound economic policies”.*

Dhesi (2000: 199-214) discussed extensively the idea that most forms of social capital are a result of ‘the combined actions of several or many people. ...So it is an attribute of

social structures and it exists only when it is shared'. A communally available stock of social capital helps residents in area-based regeneration initiatives to invest their potential to the benefit of the whole community. Social capital is an important enabler to 'participants to act together more effectively and to pursue shared objectives' (Putnam, 1996:56). This could be achieved when strong but sparse networks within communities create, strong social cohesion (inter group relationships) which apparently helps to create social inclusion. An inclusive community accommodates the participation of its members in creating a sustainable economic and social development for mutual benefits.

The concepts of bonding and bridging social capital discussed above are important for the work of area based regeneration; first to reinforce the trust within communities and develop the necessary networks within and beyond the community. Hence, bridging social capital may be more important for participation. Murray (2000:99-108) points out that:

*"... strong participatory citizenship, whereby people are involved in planning and in implementation, in facilitative leadership roles and in creating better futures for their own communities, is inextricably linked to the existence of social capital networks of engagement".*

Participation can range from consultation to structural participation in which lay people are the driving force of initiatives. One important component of measures of social capital is the extent to which people participate in social and civil activities. Debates concern the extent to which institutional support, including from the state, is essential to maintain a strong civil society. There are also considerable debates about how institutions of the state (especially health, welfare, and other human services) can best encourage citizen participation. Some argue that neo-liberal reforms of government have meant fewer opportunities for citizen participation, with consequent impacts on levels of

social capital (Baum and Ziersch, 2003:320-323). This shows that there is a 'reciprocal' relationship between social capital and participation in that each helps to build the other and that these relationships can be mediated by the state. Recent public policies in the urban regeneration arena to tackle poverty and social exclusion tend to recognise the need for social capital mainly stocked through networks within and among communities (Levitas, 1998:169; Hill, 2000:121-122). Some of these policies are encouraging bottom-up partnership working with self help groups, encouraging public participation in the decision making process and active citizenship through voluntary work.

The term social capital highlights the benefits that can be obtained from membership in more or less dense social networks or groups. Social networks and membership of groups are often part of the definition of social capital. The notion of social capital reflects, at the individual level, outcomes facilitated by social ties and the individual's position in the social structure. The concept of social capital is closely related to the membership of groups as it accounts for some advantages, which can be obtained through social relations at individual, as well as at community levels. The active participation of communities at local level has got the potential to create an inclusive society and hence to strengthen social cohesion. The norms of reciprocity, trust and networks that enhance public participation in local regeneration programmes could have a long term effect in creating sustainable communities. Newton (1997:577) indicated that 'social networks of individuals, groups, and organisations' are 'the crucial components of social capital because an ability to mobilise a wide range of personal social contracts is crucial to the effective functioning of social and political life'. In practice, local networks in socially fragmented communities are relatively weak and not strongly bonded together, let alone bridging across other networks. According to Colclough and Sitaraman (2005:492) this is due to the fact that:

*“the nature of ties strongly relates to the issue of trust as well. In communities, trust and reciprocity are fundamental characteristics of community relations. Trust is based on common experiences that have forged strong bonds and attachments among members, and transcends other possible divisions or conflicts that may arise.”*

In most cases, social networks are created on current or fashionable issues that lack permanency of purpose. When the issues are exhausted, then it is apparent that the lives of networks quickly wither away. Such networks are not built on a long term basis. This is particularly common in areas where poverty and inequalities are prevalent, as in the West Ham and Plaistow *New Deal for Communities* area. It is a vicious circle in which lack of social capital and public participation results in lack of long term regeneration outcomes and lack of such long term socio-economic development has itself weakened social capital and participation.

Cattell (2001:1501-1516) asserts that ‘both social exclusion and concentrated poverty imply some form of impoverished social networks ... Both informal and formal social networks are essential components of ‘social capital’, a resource produced when people cooperate for mutual benefit’. The regeneration activities in inner cities should address the need for social inclusion, empowering marginalised groups to fully participate in issues that directly and indirectly affect them. Networks among individuals in a community could expand to formal social networks among other groups as well. Mainstreaming the idea of social capital in government regeneration policy through groups and community networking and active engagement in the decision making process could help to enhance the culture of meaningful participation and minimise social exclusion. As Smith (2002:167-177) put it there are two different views about the role of ‘community’

*‘the most cynical interpretation is that the ‘community’ provides cheap or free labour in the welfare roles that the state and the taxpayer are reluctant to fund. A more generous view is that a healthy civil society develops norms of trust and*

*reciprocity, and networks of mutual aid not governed by crudely rational market calculations*'.

A regeneration policy aiming to strengthen social capital should also include a regulatory tool to monitor whether it serves the intended purpose. It is worth noting that sometimes social capital may be used for unintended purposes. Putnam (2000:22) wrote that social capital 'can be directed toward malevolent, antisocial purposes, just like any other form of capital'. Therefore Putnam suggested that 'it is important to ask how the positive consequences of social capital – mutual support, co-operation, trust, institutional effectiveness – can be maximised and the negative manifestations – sectarianism, ethnocentrism, corruption – minimised'.

In summary, social capital 'encourages voluntary collective behaviour and it generates the goodwill and understanding that enables citizens to resolve their conflicts peacefully' (Newton, 1997:576). These aspects of conflict resolution contribute to strengthening social cohesion and mutual benefits such as greater social inclusion. Social inclusion is one of the key objectives of regeneration (as discussed in the next chapter of this thesis). In small area based regeneration projects, residents live closer to one another, sharing communal public services, places and spaces. By and large, social capital reinforces the notion of communality and reduces exclusion and inequality (Helly et al. (2003). Dense networks (though they sometimes can be excluding) and trust provide a strong foundation for any community and a stock of social capital. Networks that create strong social cohesion are essential for regeneration schemes to be successful, particularly in a multicultural and multiethnic place such as Newham because they help in creating bridges between communities. In such places bonding social capital *glues* together individual communities for a common purpose; this could eventually lead to bridging social capital which could help to build a sustainable local regeneration proc-

ess. Despite the fact that social capital could create a situation which benefits some groups exclusively, however, in most instances its benefits will be shared among all individuals and groups in the community. Lowndes et al. (2006) argued that:

*“In recent years, social capital models have identified the importance of relationships in explaining participation. Analyses of social capital are based upon the claim that patterns of formal and informal sociability build up relations of trust and reciprocity, which then enhance individuals’ capacity to join together in collective action to resolve common problems (Putnam 1993, 2000).”*

Public participation is strengthened by aspects of social capital. Social networks are a starting point of individual participation in a group. In regeneration areas like in Newham where communities are required to participate in the process of project design and delivery, the role of individual and community networks is of vital importance.

## **2.7. Public participation as a process**

We consciously or unconsciously participate socially at different levels in our daily lives. We ask questions which require clarification or simply to satisfy our curiosity. We involve ourselves in answering questions that we think we know about or have views on. In an ideal environment, public participation would be organised in such a way that everyone could fairly express or represent their views on issues affecting their community. In practice, participation is not free from problems both at the conceptual and the practical level.

The theoretical debate, as discussed in the previous section, is reflected in practical aspects of participation. Although it may seem simple to identify the practical problems of participation, their solutions are more complex. Although there are convincing reasons (reviewed in the last section) that suggest the importance of and need for participation in many important public affairs, lack of awareness of the long-term



benefits or effects of participation has hindered meaningful engagement by many people. Dahl (1963:80) points out, viewing it from political involvement perspective, that

*'the rewards of political involvement are distant and vague, whereas the rewards of other activities are more immediate and concrete'.*

Therefore, one practical problem is how to motivate people in the community to participate in social enterprise activities like urban regeneration. In politics, indeed in other areas as well, if the results of participation do not have an immediate and significant impact on the day to day life of potential participants, then it is unlikely that people will bother to actively participate. Moreover, those in charge of organising the participation process (mainly bureaucrats and technocrats) may only be interested in the 'successful' completion of the process and not in its actual benefit and outcome.

Many citizens may not consciously be aware of what activities are going on around them that might require their active participation. Such lack of awareness could be due to lack of access to the necessary and required information, even though this should have been made readily available in the public arena. This often happens in the areas where there is little or no information available for residents about how, when and where to take part in active participation. Furthermore, even if the information is available, it may not be in a format that will win the interest of residents. Sometimes, it is not only lack of awareness of the outcome, but also an over-awareness about the process that could also deter many potential participants from participating due to 'participation fatigue' or lack of interest. Knight, Chigudu and Tandon (2002:152) discuss the need for access to information which enables 'citizens and activists to play their valuable leadership roles in society' by accessing 'information about their situation, about government policies and schemes and about emerging opportunities or threats'.

Too much information is as bad as too little or no information. Too much information means that there are few who could have time to use it. In the same line of argument, insufficient information will not serve its purpose to inform the public fully. Moreover, the quality of information is crucial for the public to acquire the required degree of understanding about the situation around them so that their participation is meaningful. Maltz (2000:111) asserts that “empirical inquiries into the antecedents of new product success have consistently shown that the quality of cross-functional information flows correlates positively with new product success”; the same could be said for public participation.. Local information on the Internet could help a lot, however it has to be regularly updated, authenticated and easily accessible to all members of the public. It is worth noting that the Internet could be irrelevant if some members of the public have no fair access to use it.

The most important information may be held by officials or power holders in a form that ordinary people may not have access to. This could sometimes be interpreted as a deliberate attempt to lessen the level of public participation, particularly when the exercise is expected to result in controversy. Some officials and bureaucrats may take this as a means to minimise the challenge from informed citizens. In such circumstances information could easily be the source of power and influence but for the wrong purpose. In this situation, the level and importance of participation will remain in the hands of ‘power holders’. The more the information is shared to the public, the more power and influence are voluntarily relinquished.

Some people may rely fully on their elected or selected representatives so that the participatory role and decision making is done on their behalf no matter what the extent and magnitude of the decision would be. On the one hand, it is true that everyone cannot speak in a large participatory exercise and it is practically impossible to take

notes of everybody's view and reach a decision. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to take the views of representatives as the views of the public. On the other hand, representatives cannot address all the issues of the public due to the fact that the needs, aspirations and views of individual members of the public are vast, as compared to the small number of representatives. Therefore, representatives take their own personal judgement or the judgement which they think is the view of the majority. In some circumstances when politicians are acting as representatives, they may choose to be loyal to their party instead of their electorate.

Lack of material resources and support systems may prevent citizens from active participation. Gittell (1980:253-254) argued that by lowering the cost of participation including monetary (e.g. travel and child care expenses) and non-monetary (e.g. time and skills) costs, the poor could benefit. Ordinary residents may be happy to hold informal meetings in their neighbourhood and address certain current and local issues. The more the participation structure is formalised, the more it is restrictive and selective, which can apparently make redundant certain individuals or groups (Adams, 2004: 43-54). A highly structured form of participation could easily alienate and exclude a large group of people from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds who may not have the skills or training to enable them to participate in this way.

Smith (1980:166) observed that people of the lower end of the socio-economic status spectrum 'participate less actively in the informal or quasi-informal aspects of community shaping and planning than do those at higher SES [Social and Economic Status] levels. Furthermore Smith (1980) points out that 'race and gender show differing relationships to participation, often depending on type and location of the activity in question'. Participation may be dominated by certain outspoken individuals who have their own agenda and whose ultimate goal might be different from the need of the silent

majority. This is a fact of life in many community based consultation activities, particularly when the agenda is not systematically set to encourage individuals to actively participate. Etzioni (1995:175) asserts that 'among those who do participate, there will be a small group of activists who come to dominate and a large number who play less effective or down-right passive roles'. Etzioni (1995:175) suggested that one cannot change that reality but 'can design the system so that the small guiding group is required to act openly and is held firmly accountable by others'.

Citizens may be simply disinterested in participating even if the issue will affect them directly or indirectly. The reasons for this could be due to other priorities in their lives. People may be disinterested if they feel that their contribution will not be of benefit for their personal or community development (Gould, 1988:85-86). The number of participants in a group could be a detrimental factor for the success or failure of a given participation exercise. Small groups of people could make discussion more lively as everybody will have a chance to speak about his/her view. In large meetings, some of those attending feel unsure of their abilities to express their views. Therefore, they take a passive role in the discussion. There are cases in public participation where some people intentionally intimidate others. Such individuals might hijack the whole ethos of meaningful participation by treating others with hostility and humiliation. Such behaviour may discourage many people from any participation altogether.

Etzioni (1995:174) points out some of the complexities of the subject by emphasising that participation is 'never total, and those who do participate are always a self-selected group'. Etzioni (1995) argued that some have a higher than average 'self-interest' and 'energy' that participation requires and some are more 'zealous (or dogmatic)' on the issues, while others thrive on 'emotional intensity and combative talk' and some have more of the 'physical or psychological stamina' required for intermina-

ble meetings'. One aspect of the problem of participation which is overlooked by many organisers is the time and venue of consultation events. It is very difficult for a person working during the day time to attend day time consultation meetings. On the other hand, meetings in the evening may present problems if participants are apprehensive about being out in the neighbourhood after dark. A person with physical disabilities inevitably couldn't participate in events at venues without disabled access. Similarly, a person with child or other domestic care responsibilities cannot attend meetings unless an arrangement is in place to relieve him/her from their care responsibility. Some people may even be intimidated by a venue at an imposing building like the Town Hall but feel at ease in their community centres. Based on his own experience Dahl (2000:111) wrote that town meetings are not probably ideal places.

*"Town meetings, it appears, are not exactly paragons of participatory democracy. ... Although my own town in Connecticut has largely abandoned its traditional town meeting, I can recall questions on which citizens were sharply divided and turned out in such numbers that they overflowed the high school auditorium; a second meeting scheduled for those unable to get in to the first proved to be equally large".*

Any meaningful participation process indeed requires time to research and grasp the content of the participatory issues even before the full engagement is committed. For many people the lack of time is an important problem that can not be ignored. People could be engaged themselves in other pressing priorities and decision making schedules often require swift responses. Selman (1996:157) asserts this by writing that 'wider participation involves greater time, may result in slow progress which can lead to frustration among the public'. However, sometimes the issue is not so much lack of time but a bad fit between time and venue of participative activity compared with a person's daily activities – e.g. child care, work commitments for those with inflexible working hours.

Some participatory exercises may require exchanging personal experiences or stories to establish facts for further discussions. Unless there is a way to develop trust in sharing information of a personal nature to the public, the participation exercise will be meaningless and the intended purpose may not be achieved. The skill of organisers and facilitators is decisive in clearly setting guidelines on how meetings should be managed. Interpreters or other similar facilities should be in place for people with a language barrier. However, in practice it will be an expensive activity in terms of financial costs and time. Participation could be in an organised or unorganised form. In addition, the most marginalized groups of society may not be represented at all although these may be the very groups with which social policy and regeneration are most concerned (Levitas, 1998:173). Some of the practical problems could be overcome to make participation more meaningful and effective rather than just a tokenistic gesture. These aspects of good practice will be discussed in the next section.

## **2.8. Good practices in participation**

To develop guidelines for good practice in public and community participation based upon past experiences of area based regeneration is a difficult exercise. Firstly, there may be confusion about the concepts of community-led and community-focused initiatives. Although the purpose of an initiative may be to improve the living conditions of communities by focusing on their needs, the same initiatives may lack leadership from those communities. Secondly, many of the past initiatives have never involved local communities beyond a 'degree of tokenism' on Arnstein's scale, and hence it is difficult to draw on many examples of good practice. Nevertheless, I will discuss the minimum requirements that lead to good practice.

In most cases, people like to have some explanation and information about the issue before they commit themselves to participate (Hill, 2000:114). Although information giving is just a 'degree of tokenism' in the Arnstein ladder, nevertheless, to bring the motivation and enthusiasm for participation to an acceptable level, citizens need to be fully informed about the issues around them and how they are affected. In some cases, they like to be assured about what difference they are going to make by committing their time and local knowledge (Pateman, 1970:63). This may help motivate participants. As much as possible, physical, material or psychological barriers to participation should be avoided. Social training through locally available networks, material and human support and equal access are important enablers of participation. Selman (1996:157) points out that participation processes 'entail a lot of patience, effort and money in setting up meetings, managing the overall process and reporting on outcomes'. Hence, resources (in terms of money, materials and facilities) and a feedback loop are good practices that make participation more effective. Facilitators of public participation need to be aware of the different levels of confidence, assertiveness and knowledge that exist among different groups of individuals depending on their experience and exposure to different methods of participation. In certain situations, the interest of participants may depend on their closeness to the issue that addresses their particular interest. Some issues may attract certain groups and exclude others. For example, in areas where unemployment is relatively high, projects that are designed to help unemployed people may attract many job seekers to participate but may not be relevant for those who are already in employment. Projects that are designed to improve access to local services, most likely will motivate people with social care needs. Therefore, to maximise participation it is essential to clearly identify which groups or individuals are concerned by the issue requiring action. However, the agenda is not always set else-

where then the community is invited to participate in discussion. One might also argue that, theoretically, if the public sets the agenda, then they are more likely to be engaged.

Sometimes the level of individual participation could be dependent on the length of time that people have lived in a locality. The longer they live in one particular place, the more likely it is that they will be part of local networks and the more they will tend to care about local issues. This is likely to enhance their participation. In this context, regeneration initiatives need to consider how to create a conducive situation for residents to live in a given area for longer and enhance their participation. It is imperative to understand that a community is not a homogenous group. There are differences within communities (Chamber, 1997:183). As they have their individual differences, they also have individual needs in participation. These varying needs should be addressed or taken into consideration when seeking their participation.

Because of individual differences, groups may have internal 'conflicts' and 'divisions' (Curtis, 2004:279). Therefore, it is extremely important to take into consideration how such conflicts should be resolved or handled, before a group's engagement is sought. To tackle the problem of divisions and conflicts it is important to consider, as Hill (2000:108) points out that when people do wish to participate, 'the processes and procedures are there to be made use of, that they have the resources (individual or group) to enable them to take part, and that positive action is taken to discover the attitudes of the non-participants'. When public participation is to be carried out in local project initiatives, the full use of existing communication channels, network systems and infrastructures will be more productive. The development of effective and reliable information technologies is fast growing. These technologies have brought a new means of engaging the public in different types of issues and situations by increasing their access to information and by enhancing the levels of informed decision making. This has



helped in creating communities who are participating or not participating, acting and interacting in a variety of ways. To take an example from the health sector, patients are increasingly well informed about their illness and the availability care services. As a consequence the culture of the doctor-patient relationship has changed. The health promotion approach to public health has also created an environment of awareness about the causes and prevention of illnesses. Such levels of communication have helped patients to reposition themselves from passive recipients to active participants in their health care. (Biley 1991:415; Playle, 1998:305; Florin, 2006:1498-1508).

The training of participation facilitators and advocates will be crucial to pave the ground for smooth participation to be carried out. Some of the local problems that hinder individuals from participating could be identified during training. Formal and informal meetings will be a good opportunity to know each other and develop trust among facilitators, advocates or representatives.

Any participatory exercise (be it small or large) requires a physical environment which is relaxing to participants. The people leading participation need to be friendly, approachable and yet professional. Well informed and resourced networks are likely to encourage their members' participation. Therefore, it is imperative to support local community networks to be part of the participatory process. This can be done through local umbrella groups and a consortium of groups. Tailored participatory methods designed to suit the groups involved are more productive. Therefore, choices of different methods need to be in place to accommodate across all ages, gender or ethnic groups. Sometimes participation may not need a highly structured formal approach (Lupton, 2003:168). It can be achieved in a less structured and less bureaucratic manner. For instance, it is more appropriate for younger people to make participatory events more informal and fun while still retaining some structure. When direct participation is com-

pletely impossible it is worth approaching representatives who could either give potential advice or input on the views of the community or group they represent. It is always a good practice for facilitators as well as representatives to use plain language that is free from technical or bureaucratic jargons. This is particularly essential for participants who speak English as their second language. Towers, (1995:162) argued:

*“Speaking plain English is difficult enough, but in some circumstances even that is not enough. In many urban areas in Britain there are significant communities from many parts of the world. Many ethnic minorities do not use English as their first language and quite a lot of people, particularly among first generation of immigrants, have a limited understanding of it. Participatory projects are commonly of a multi-cultural nature, and ethnic minorities are frequently client groups for community projects”.*

The earlier the public participate in any local or national initiatives of decision making process the better the result would be. Early involvement helps people to take them out of defensive, reactive and sceptical position and offers them a responsible engagement. Carter & Stokes (2002:174) point out that what distinguishes emerging theories of deliberative democracy from most of their predecessors ‘is the view that democracy requires not only equality of votes, but also equal and effective opportunity to participate in the processes of collective judgement’. It should be possible for participation to make a difference to the decision making process. In many cases public participation activities should not be carried out over decisions that have already been made. This is because such practice will seriously damage the trust between the public and ‘power holders’. The participation methods that should be used are dependent on the type and nature of the group. The methods could also vary depending on the resources available. There are many participatory methods including public forums, citizens’ juries, community newsletters, exhibitions, focus groups, brain storming or future searching sessions etc. The best practice aims to achieve the higher forms of meaningful participation. Good practice in public and community participation is developed from past experience and learn-

ing. By and large, the best practice of participation is the one that has all the mechanisms in place to ultimately give the public real control over issues affecting them rather than just a tokenistic gesture.

## **2.9. Conclusion**

This chapter has sought to map out the theoretical basis of the research. It has unpacked some of the ongoing debates around participation and social capital. A particular emphasis was given to the different levels of participation based on the typology of Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation. This has clearly set a prism to look at the levels and types of participation that are carried out in the area-based regeneration in the London borough of Newham. There was also discussion about different views on political participatory democracy which has provided a wider picture on of ideal models of participation and social networks relevant to area-based and small scale regeneration initiatives. A particular emphasis was placed on contemporary and classical debates around direct and representative participation which have been a source of research for many years. Beside the theoretical debates the chapter has also discussed issues in relation to the practical nature of participation and social capital based on some empirical evidence. This part of the discussion has also raised points that are relevant to area-based regeneration in Newham neighbourhoods. Furthermore, some good practice models of participation have been discussed. The good practice models have some practical hands-on benefits and impacts on local and national policy formulations and will be returned to in chapter seven.

The next chapter looks closely at the role of participation and social networks in contemporary British area-based regeneration initiatives. A central contention of the chapter is that many of the participatory approaches in the past have evolved through different political and ideological persuasions.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE ROLE OF PARTICIPATION IN BRITISH AREA-BASED REGENERATION PROGRAMMES AND THE NEWHAM EXPERIENCE**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

In this chapter I will review the literature which has assessed the role of local participation in regeneration programmes since the early 1970s. This discussion will explore how the approaches and policies have changed according to different political and ideological persuasions. In this chapter I will interpret the level of participation in recent British urban regeneration by using Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation. Finally, I will discuss some examples of community and local authority led participatory initiatives in the London Borough of Newham to understand the approaches, power relationships, governance arrangements within structured and non-structured public participation in area-based urban regeneration settings. The concepts and role of public participation have been through different phases in the history of British urban regeneration. Since the late 1960s the issue of public participation has been associated with urban regeneration but with a varying level of importance. For example, the 1970s Community Development Projects that targeted deprived areas were models of urban regeneration initiatives in which the public were supposed to participate in order to solve the problems in their local areas. Much emphasis was placed upon self-help activities, which apparently demanded local involvement. However, many of the urban problems persisted in spite of the community-led approach, partly because not all the problems were due to local factors and hence amenable to local 'solutions'.

When the Conservative government came to power in 1979 the emphasis shifted towards market solutions to tackling poverty and inner cities problems. The election of a government with a different ideological persuasion meant a change in the basic philosophy of public participation in regeneration initiatives. Critics of this approach argued that urban regeneration initiatives were dominated by private investments where local people have no control or involvement (Widgery, 1991 and 1992). The fundamental focus was to attract private investors by promoting free market solutions. The free market solutions approach was to encourage private investors by minimising excessive regulatory control and land use restriction. Hence private investment could be 'leveraged' by public funds, increasing the total amount of funds available for redevelopment and economic revitalisation by introducing more profitable economic use of land in the city. Several programmes, such as the regeneration of London's Docklands achieved significant urban change. A version of this market-led strategy – the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) – is still running. Additionally private companies are still involved in services such as social housing. However, this approach was proven to be a partial failure as the poverty gap appeared to become wider and wider in spite of regeneration attempts (Butler and Rustin , 1996). More relevant to this thesis, this approach to regeneration has been criticised because the participation of the public became insignificant (Foster, 1999). The new approaches to regeneration that developed in the 1990s have begun to address the involvement of local people through the inclusion of local representatives and through partnership working with local actors.

Since the election of 1997 which brought a new Labour government into power, the emphasis again changed so that the public and communities were to have a more significant say in regeneration initiatives in deprived urban areas. As well encouraging grassroots organisations to participate in the decision making process, new policies also

introduced a “third way” approach that gave emphasis to the importance of social capital and local governance in enhancing participation and the decision making process in area-based regeneration.

### **3.2. Participation in the British inner cities regeneration**

The efforts of the British government in tackling urban poverty and multiple deprivation through small area-based initiatives go back to the late 1960s and 70s. Since the publication of the White Paper on the *Policy for the Inner Cities* in 1977 (Department of Environment, 1977) many regeneration initiatives throughout Britain have been undertaken. The main purpose of this section of the chapter is firstly to discuss the rationale behind area based urban regeneration in Britain. Secondly, the section discusses different levels and types of public and community participation in area based urban regeneration focusing especially on the approaches of the *New Deal for Communities* initiative, (a recent policy) and the lessons that have been learnt from it.

The purpose of area-based regeneration initiatives has been to tackle geographical concentrations of social exclusion. Kearns (2003:37-38) identified key characteristics of social exclusion and discussed that in the social inclusion agenda “individuals and communities come to the fore in two ways”. First, by considering poverty as about skill deficiencies and culture not only about material deprivation and secondly “the impacts of exclusion are often psychological, including loss of status, power, self-esteem and expectations”. Due to this new approach Kearns (2003) concluded that “this perspective on exclusion implies that, among other things, the government can help people to help themselves through social, educational and training programmes”.

It is important to note that poverty, material deprivation and social exclusion are considered to be closely interrelated although conceptually they represent rather differ-

ent aspects of disadvantage. The definition of '*absolute poverty*' which is a 'minimum or subsistence' level of need for food, clothing, heating and rent was the original basis of the welfare state's service provisions by central and local governments (Townsend, 1970). Jones (1979:17) points out that in late 1960s the debate on the concept of poverty and deprivation took a new direction among academics, with a growing interest in notions of 'economic and social inequality'. Hence, during the late 1960s the definition of poverty began to explore more fully the social and cultural context within which it exists.

Townsend (1979:59-60) criticised the idea of absolute poverty by arguing that 'In practice, previous definitions have represented narrow conceptions of relative deprivation sometimes associated only with what is necessary for the physical efficiency of the working classes'. Blackburn (1991:25) agreed with Townsend, that poverty is not only about issues of physical need, but encompasses 'social and emotional needs, relative powerlessness, and lack of freedom'. Townsend (1979) therefore argued for a concept of 'relative deprivation' in which 'poverty' is interpreted in terms of dominant social norms. He also encouraged a clearer distinction between material deprivation i.e. the ownership of items regarded as 'necessities' by a majority of the population and other aspects of social disadvantage. Alcock, (1997:4) asserted that poverty is a contested concept in spite of the fact that academics and politicians continue to seek an accepted definition. However, Alcock (1997) agreed with others that poverty is a 'problem' which made it a basis of 'action or policy' and as the view of the problem of poverty changed, so do the policies related to it. Different area based urban regeneration initiatives over the last 30-40 years have sought to reduce poverty and inequality by deploying a variety of approaches. Furthermore, these initiatives have planned for, and achieved different levels of public participation or non-participation, depending on the

type of scheme and objectives that each individual project or programme aimed to deliver.

In chapter two, I explained that public participation has been represented as a way to address both relative deprivation and social exclusion. The level or type of participation or non participation intended by these policies has also been dependent on the ideology of the government of the day. The history of area based social and economic regeneration schemes has included efforts at tackling absolute poverty and social disadvantage in the inner cities with initiatives designed to alleviate many of the social problems of the 1960s and 1970s (Foley & Martin, 2000; Shaw & Martin, 2000: 401-413; Leonard, 1975). These inner city regeneration policies including *Education Priority Areas* and *Housing Action Areas* addressed some of the issues that had not previously been addressed by urban policies (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2001), including race relations, education and social services (McKay & Cox, 1979:234). The concentration of the new immigrants of the 1960s in the inner city areas and the problems associated with their new settlement in terms of employment, education and housing led to new and innovative initiatives to help their isolated circumstances.

The *Educational Priority Areas* (EPAs), *Housing Action Areas* and *General Improvement Areas* set up in 1967 and 1968 were inner city initiatives in the areas of education and housing and were mainly aimed at the new settlers (Hill, 2000:23). The initiatives were run and administered by the Home Office, hence the public did not have direct participation in the whole process. Although initiatives such as *Education Priority Areas* (EPAs) targeted immigrants who happened to be congregated in inner cities, the core problem was identified as material disadvantages, rather than social exclusion or racism. Generally, the programmes targeted 'general poverty' and they focused on material poverty (like poor housing) and lack of education and skills; as specific ways to



deal with this, but failed because their concept of the “causes” of poverty was confused with “symptoms” (Hill, 2000). Root causes like social exclusion/racism were not addressed as important factors. Therefore, the emphasis on one particular issue (e.g. education or housing) and targeting certain groups (immigrants) was found to be too narrow to be effective and was replaced by other initiatives which had more comprehensive objectives to tackle multiple deprivation and social inequalities.

Subsequently, the Community Development Projects were undertaken (as action research programmes) ‘to examine community issues in smaller areas of between 10,000 and 40,000 people’ (Lawless, 1989:7) and to regenerate the capability of communities by supporting them through ‘improving services and organising self-help schemes’ (Foley & Martin, 2000:480; Duffy and Hutchinson 1997:349, McKay & Cox, 1979:238). Loney (1983:60) points out that the twelve Community Development Projects (CDPs) were intended as ‘a catalyst to break up social pathology by revitalising the poor and involving them in constructive plans for improvement’. Loney also argues that ‘increased local involvement would assist in the development of more relevant social services’ (Loney, 1983). McConnel (1992:108-109) highlights the close historical relationship between community development as part of regeneration and the emergence of public participation, especially through ‘planning and decentralisation and consumer participation in the management of local authority services’. This was the time when new power relationships between the local authorities and residents and a different local governance arrangement in which the public contributed to decision making issues in relation to services, began to take shape. The CDPs were linked to local authorities who provided 25% of the funding and with local universities who were to provide research and evaluation. This partnership based service delivery arrangement was also the basis

for many partnership working arrangements. There was to be a central team to co-ordinate the whole project and draw out its lessons for future policy-making.

Although the *Community Development Projects* (CDPs) gave great emphasis to tackling poverty and social exclusion through public and community involvement, however, they were not without weaknesses and problems. Community Development Projects and Inner Area Studies (Policy for the inner cities - 1977) programmes were based on the idea of a 'culture of poverty' in which 'poverty is transmitted from generation to generation in families concentrated in certain parts of cities' (Lawless, 1989:8). This culture of poverty thesis seemed to 'blame the victims' of poverty, because it saw the causes of poverty as located in the communities themselves, rather than in 'wider society'.

Therefore, Community Development Projects were wound up in 1976 'after clashes between area teams and local and central government over the purpose of such efforts' (Hill, 2000:23). This was due to some of the features of the twelve designated areas for the CDP which: a) were no more or less deprived than the surrounding areas; b) were not predominately populated by poor people; c) in some cases were seen to have fundamental problems of deprivation related more to patterns of poor commercial and industrial development than to poor social service provision; d) were limited by the hierarchical and highly stratified nature of the local government structure, preventing meaningful results from being achieved. The CDPs were replaced by other programmes of various sorts like *Housing Action Areas* and *Urban Partnership Programmes* to channel the central government's funding to local regeneration programmes through local authority management (Rhodes et al, 2003; Roberts and Sykes, 2000).

After the victory of the Conservative government in 1979, the emphasis on tackling urban deprivation was driven by a different ideological stance and characterised by

economic regeneration, deregulation and entrepreneurship. The main focus was seen mainly as the need to address the ‘problem’ of market failure to invest in the development of land and property. The deregulation agenda aimed ‘to remove physical and economic regeneration powers from local authorities’, and give them to separate appointed bodies, the so-called quasi-non-governmental organisations: Quangos’ (Hill, 2000:25). This shift in policy had an important influence on the approach to issues of public participation and urban governance. The marginalisation of the local authorities and local people were an indication that representative or direct public participation was not on the agenda of the government’s inner city development policy. The Urban Development Corporations were good examples of Quangos: they were outside local authority control and mainly focused on regenerating ‘derelict tracts of land’ and attracting private investment back to the inner city through the use of state subsidies (Fearnley, 2000:568). According to Brindley et al (1996:115):

*“The main political characteristic of the LDDC [the London Docklands Development Corporation] is its insulation from existing local government institutions and therefore from local democratic accountability. The independence of the Corporation causes a great deal of uncertainty, and a degree of resentment, in its relationship with local government.”*

Brindley went on to say:

*“...Decisions are made by small elites within the Corporation itself and among large private developers and financial institutions, based principally on market criteria.”*

The point here is that these were non-democratic (non-elected) bodies, so that governance was based on a ‘corporatist’ model rather than a ‘democratic’ one. This explains the relative lack of public participation in the activities and decision making of the *London Docklands Development Corporation* (LDDC). Foster, (1999:97) explains how this approach met with ‘grassroots’ resistance at the community level:

*“Despite the powers vested in the Corporation to pursue development in any way they saw fit, without recourse to local residents, opposition was not deterred, not least because experience on the Isle of Dogs in the 1970s had shown that grassroots pressure could influence policy makers and encourage them to change their minds.”*

In 1988, the Conservative government launched ‘*Action for Cities*’ to be overseen by a Minister for Inner Cities. The idea behind *Action for Cities* was to empower individuals and their families to achieve personal economic advancement through the extension of the role of the market and self-help. The approach was individualistic, not community based. The role of communities was downplayed and consequently community participation was not a priority; the involvement of the private sector was the main prerequisite for the local area regeneration under the *Action for Cities* scheme. However, the actual problems associated with social exclusion and poverty were certainly not improving (Robson et.al, 1994; Kleinman, 2000:52). Some of the initiatives that were geared to resolve social, economic and/or environmental problems did not appear to achieve a lasting solution to the problems of poverty and social exclusion in some pocket areas of deprivation.

In early 1990s, however, the government approach to area based regeneration showed a shift as local authorities were brought back to the scene of programme delivery. Local authorities were encouraged to work in partnership with key local players including voluntary and community organisations in drawing up plans for regeneration in order to bid for competitive for funding (Hill, 2000:31). For example the City Challenge initiative aimed to promote partnership working ‘between local authorities and all those who had a stake in the area including local communities, to deliver the regeneration programmes’. The *City Challenge* brought back local authorities to the central stage whereby a range of local organisations and people were invited to take part in partnership working, adding impetus to incorporating their views. Although local authorities

were expected to work with local agencies, however, there was no explicit explanation of how the views of local people would be heard (Fearnley, 2000:569). Nevertheless, the level of participation of local people in the *City Challenge* programme through their representatives was argued by government to be better than its predecessor initiatives. This also required a new local governance arrangement and reconfigured power relationships in the delivery of local regeneration initiatives. The approach to participation was mainly institutional or sectoral (the business, the local authorities and voluntary and community sector organisations) rather than the direct involvement of the public. This principle is asserted by the *Department of Communities and Local Government's Interim Evaluation (1998)* which stated:

*“City Challenge increases levels of trust and understanding between different sectors. Private sector players have been won over to a comprehensive approach and the value of community involvement. The inclusion of the voluntary/community sector in regeneration is more novel.”*

Reflecting the change in government after only two rounds (1991 and 1993), the *City Challenge Partnership* was replaced (1998) by the *Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) Challenge Funds* in which active participation from local communities through their representatives was an essential component of the initiative. This was again a new arrangement in terms of the power relationships between the public and other local actors. Here, the public representatives were directly involved in the process of competitive bidding for project funds. Furthermore, the public was consulted through its representatives for any significant bidding decision to be taken. So the public had a level of representation in the decision making process. Barbara et al (1997:1) discuss how representation and participation in different sectors including community agencies became a requirement in SRB bids:

*“Partnership for regeneration between the public, private and voluntary/community sectors constitute the ideological and operational heart of the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB). Extending the model of competitive bidding established by City Challenge, the SRB requires bid projects to reflect local interests through the representation and participation of a range of agencies spanning sectoral divisions.”*

Under the new approaches of the SRB, and unlike the previous regeneration initiatives, the size and area of the programme was entirely decided by local partner agencies in which local communities had representation. The bids for regeneration funding were open to all local regeneration players and submission did not only come ‘deprived areas designated by government’ (Rhodes et al, 2003: 1402). Hence, the concept of public and community involvement was explicitly part of the principle of partnership working and it was critical to making the bid successful. However, Tilson et al (1997:1) argued that the creation of many new partnership and new working methods created a series of ‘marriages of convenience between disparate factions’ rather than building on existing communities.

The discussion above has shown that by and large, public participation has been at the sidelines of British urban renewal for many years. However, after the Labour government assumed power in 1997 public participation became the basis of local democracy, community empowerment and the modernisation of local governance.

As there was always confusion in the definitional usage of the ‘public’ and ‘community’, both are used interchangeably in my thesis. The government policy guidance in relation to participation in regeneration under the title of *Involving the Community in Urban and Rural Regeneration* (published in September 1997) was the first of its kind. It was followed by *Our Towns and Cities: the Future* an Urban Policy White Paper of November 2000. These introduced a variety of community involvement objec-

tives summarised as: establishing public and community involvement in the decision making process as the people's right; helping to overcome alienation and exclusion; and hence maximising the effectiveness of services and resources; which eventually helps sustainability (Row and Frewer, 2004).

By and large, urban regeneration initiatives, over the last four decades have gone through different states of development and level of prioritisation to public participation. The levels of public participation could be categorised in six different periods; as summarised in the table below (See Table 1).

**Table 1. Examples of past and present area based regeneration initiatives and their levels of public participation.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>The Regeneration initiative</b>	<b>Key Actor(s)</b>	<b>Participant Actor(s)</b>	<b>The level of public Participation by Arnstein (1979) scale</b>
Early to mid 1960s	Education Priority Areas Housing Priority Areas	Home Office	Local community	Non-participation
Late 1960s to late 1970s	Community Development Projects	Mainly Home Office	Local Community	The highest stage of degree of tokenism i.e. placation
Early 1980s to late 1990s	Urban Development Corporations	Quangos	Private sector	Non-participation
Early 1990s to late 1990s	The City Challenge	Central Government, Local Authorities, Local Business, voluntary agencies and public reps.	Community and voluntary Organisations and groups	Degree of tokenism
Mid 1990s to early 2000s	Single Regeneration Budget Challenge Fund	Central Government, Local Authorities, Local Business, voluntary agencies and public reps.	Community and voluntary Organisations, businesses	Degree of tokenism

Late 1990s to date	The New Deal for Communities	Central Government, Local Authorities, Local Business, voluntary agencies and public reps.	Communities, voluntary organisations, Businesses	Early stage of degree of citizen power i.e. partnership
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### **3.3. The renewed emphasis on public participation**

Before discussing the contemporary situation, it is necessary to trace the origins of participation in British urban policy. As discussed in the previous section, in the 1970s greater emphasis was given to the ideas of supporting community participation in tackling urban social, environmental and economic decline. This is the time when the priority for regeneration was mainly community development schemes set up for the benefit of targeted communities, not to individuals. At this particular period, through its Town and Country Planning Act 1968, the then Labour Government showed a commitment to public participation. However, McKay and Cox, (1979:48) argued that:

*“while these provisions were hardly revolutionary – only the well informed were likely to take advantage of inquiries – they do represent an important innovation in the planning field”.*

The Skeffington Report published in 1969 on the general problems of participation in planning and its support for public participation was a landmark step. In the 1960s public participation was carried out mainly in the form of protest by middle-class groups and organisations like *Shelter* and *Child Poverty Action Group* (McKay and Cox, 1979:274).



### Excerpt from the Skeffington report on public participation

‘People should be kept informed throughout the preparation of a structure or local plan for their area.’

‘Representations should be considered continuously as they are made while plans are being prepared; but, in addition, there should be set pauses to give a positive opportunity for public reaction and participation. . . Where alternative courses are available, the authority should put them to the public and say which it prefers and why.’

‘Local planning authorities should consider convening meetings in their area for the purpose of setting up community forums. These forums would provide local organisations with the opportunity to discuss collectively planning and other issues of importance to the area. Community forums might also have administrative functions, such as receiving and distributing information on planning matters and promoting the formation of neighbourhood groups.’

‘Community development officers should be appointed to secure the involvement of those people who do not join organisations. Their job would be to work with people, to stimulate discussion, to inform people and give people’s views to the authority.’

‘The public should be told what their representations have achieved or why they have not been accepted.’

‘People should be encouraged to participate in the preparation of plans by helping with surveys and other activities as well as by making comments.’

Imrie and Raco (2003:197) identified some of the reasons for such protest actions as “a thinking drawn from community development literature of the late 1960s”. They added that,

*“around this time, Arnstein developed the ‘ladder’ of citizen participation, which involved a redistribution of power that enables the ‘have not’ citizens, presently excluded from political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future”.*

However, the demand of the public for inclusion in the decision making process did not produce significant results beyond the degree of ‘tokenism’ represented by the ‘rung’ of the Arnstein ladder. In the second period of the late 1970s to the late 1980s as explained above, the inner cities regeneration programmes have been based on the market driven approach and the public and community involvement were non-existent.

Nonetheless, the fundamental causes of poverty and deprivation in the neighbourhoods were not fully addressed. This is to say that social exclusion i.e. powerlessness and non-participation (Roberts and Sykes, 2000) in the decision making process are also important factors when discussing issues of poverty. Hence, a policy that does not facilitate participation is failing to address underlying causes of poverty and deprivation. Participation in the 1970s and 1980s was at a lower level, perhaps at the ‘therapy’ or ‘manipulation’ level according to Arnstein’s ladder.

The third period of the late 1980s and late 1990s was mainly dominated by ideas of partnership at the local level, but mainly in the form of competing for government funding. Although the earlier Quangos approach for partnership was superficial, generally it is worth emphasising here that partnership practice as a local governance arrangement had been considered as an advanced contribution in the facilitation of greater democracy and citizen empowerment. There were advances during this period (1980s and 1990s) in ‘indirect’ rather than ‘direct’ public participation. However, the practice of partnership and consultation brought the issue of power relations between the state and its public to the fore (Atkinson and Cope, 1997:207). As Imrie and Raco (ed) (2003: 193) put it:

*“... those citizens that were engaged in this process in an urban context from the late 1980s to mid 1990s were much the representatives of the traditional local governing elite – local politicians, businessmen, and established third sector and voluntary leaders. Engagement with citizens was therefore selective and constituted a representative elite drawn from the multiple communities of interest present or at least those considered acceptable.”*

After New Labour took power in 1997 many of the local regeneration programmes brought back elements of direct public and community involvement and introduced a wider concept of partnership working which placed ‘joined up government’ at the centre stage. The joined up working approach is founded upon new power relationships and

governance arrangements. In this period policies were based on an ideology of inclusiveness and with strong community participation as part of 'third way' communitarian principles, which will be discussed in the next section. This seems to reflect the upper rungs of Arnstein's ladder i.e. 'partnership'.

As discussed in the previous section, beyond the academic discourse on poverty and social exclusion, successive British administrations have designed and implemented different policies to address the problems of inner city poverty through area-based regeneration initiatives. Since the 1960s, many of the government initiatives to tackle urban decline in Britain have been carried out in selected geographical areas covering a wide range of different issues including health, education, crime, environment and access to economic development. Although all of the regeneration initiatives directly or indirectly aimed to reduce poverty, nevertheless, some lacked focus on the *root causes of poverty*, such as social exclusion, powerlessness and lack of participation. Therefore, some urban areas still have more concentrated poverty than other areas. Perrons and Skyers (2003:271) argued that 'despite more than four decades of regeneration policies, spatially concentrated areas of deprivation and 'social exclusion' remain'. Hamnett (2003:189) also argued that:

*'contemporary London may have a much smaller working class than it had forty years ago, and far less absolute poverty, but poverty, deprivation and social exclusion are widespread. .... Despite the fact that Inner London is now one of the most prosperous areas in Western Europe according to recent EU figures on GDP per capita, Inner London has one of the highest concentrations of deprivation in England'.*

Most of the local regeneration initiatives since 1997 are based on the principle of engagement with local people and local community-based organizations through partnership working and community involvement. Of course, the introduction of City Challenge and the Single Regeneration Budget under the Conservative Government also had elements of community engagement through partnership with the public, private and

voluntary sector organisations as a pre-condition for their funding. When it comes to local governance arrangements as Diamond (2004:181) put it “From 1979 to 1986 a number of Labour-controlled urban local authorities introduced initiatives aimed at decentralization of their services. In spite of national government policies, this era, known as local socialism, saw a large number of local authorities experiment with physically decentralizing the operational base of their services (moving from ‘city hall’ to neighbourhood offices) and encouraging greater participation in decision-making (setting up neighbourhood/area committees).”

These approaches advocate radical change in the organization and management of local services (Burns, Hambleton and Hoggett, 1994). This fundamental change was the basis for the governance arrangements for some of the subsequent regeneration initiatives including in the SRB/NDC. The approach emphasises partnership working (multi-agency groups), a shared neighbourhood management structure with more accessible arrangements for local residents and a commitment to include local residents in discussion about service priorities. Although some of the changes in local governance developments predate the election of New Labour in 1997, the new local governance arrangements advocate a ‘new localism’ (Filkin *et al.*, 2000) with its emphasis on devolved service delivery and a reform of the decision-making structures at the local level. The new local governance arrangements have also drawn a new role for local government, working in ‘partnership’ with the community and voluntary sector with a new negotiated balance of power. The New Labour reforms of political decision-making in local government and the creation of the ‘cabinet system’ in some boroughs have resulted in the effective ‘exclusion’ of local councillors from the process.

At the time of this present study, the most recent regeneration initiatives, including the New Deal for Communities (discussed further below) have aimed to create a

conducive environment for working in partnership and empowering local people to be involved in the planning process (Perrons and Skyers, 2003:271). The 'New Deal for Communities' includes 17 pathfinders and 22 programmes, which have been chosen on the basis of two criteria. Firstly, the areas were chosen due to the degree, intensity and extent of deprivation, based on the (1998 and 1999) Index of Local Deprivation. Secondly, the distribution of the programmes across the whole country was taken into consideration. The total budget allocated for all the NDC Programmes is £1.9bn.

For example, the West Ham and Plaistow NDC (one of the ten London based programmes in the London borough of Newham) received £54.6m for a ten year period. The West Ham and Plaistow New Deal for Communities have a working structure designed to ensure that local people are given the chance to participate with the support of a staff team and through an empowerment strategy with allocated funding and tailored training for different sections of the community. Furthermore, one of the unique features of the NDC is that it requires the participation of local communities for a programme to be carried out. Failure to create the necessary conditions, which enable local people to participate, could lead to funding being withheld.

Local people and grassroots organisations have been offered direct involvement and a level of ownership, through partnership working with local public, private and voluntary sector agencies, to set their own agenda for regeneration projects to be implemented. According to the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit of the then Office of Deputy Prime Minister (subsequently called the Department of Communities and Local Government), the key characteristics of the New Deal for Communities are:

- Long-term commitment to deliver real change. Communities are at the heart of this, in partnership with key agencies.
- Community involvement and ownership.

- Joined-up thinking and solutions. Action based on evidence about what works and what does not.

The fundamental aim of the NDC programme is to tackle inequalities and multiple deprivation from different angles by using the inputs of local people. Regeneration programmes like NDC have set public and community participation as an important strand of their working strategy. As indicated earlier, one of the weaknesses of past area based regeneration initiatives has been limited or no public and community participation, or a weak strategy to empower the public to participate. Therefore, as part of the New Labour's 'third way' political project, many of the current area-based regeneration initiatives are innovatively designed to give local people more say (Haylett, 2001:45). The central theme of the "third way" in urban policy was set around the relationship between the government, the economy and communities of civil society that 'need to be constrained in the interests of social solidarity and social justice' (Giddens, 2000:51). The Third Way political thinking advocates that 'the new relationship between the individual, the community and a welfare state' has to be on the basis of rights and responsibilities' (Giddens, 1998:65-66; Levitas, 1998:122; Dean, 2004:72). According to Giddens (1998:79)

*'community does not imply trying to recapture lost forms of local solidarity; it refers to practical means of furthering the social and material refurbishment of neighbourhoods, towns and larger local areas'.*

Programmes like the New Deal for Communities are social interventions that are mirroring a fundamental policy shift of the New Labour government by facilitating opportunities and enhancing the rights and responsibilities of individuals in a community, instead of direct provision of welfare. In other words, it is a contract "based on partnership between individuals, organisations and government" (Powell, 2000:50). In 'third way' political and policy thinking, the agencies in civil society need to work in partner-

ship with the government ‘to foster community renewal and development’ (Giddens, 1998:69). Giddens says this is supposed to be achieved through a ‘mixed economy’ where the state and civil society act in partnership. This means that it requires a new dimension to local governance arrangements in order to give the public a level of shared authority and responsibility. This is one of the reasons why public participation is central to the NDC programme.

The partnership structure in NDC programmes is not just about competing for funding, as had been the case in the City Challenge and SRB, but includes the aim of involvement of communities throughout the decision making processes. Furthermore, partnerships in the New Labour policy are a ‘search for efficiency within an organisationally fragmented and fiscally constrained government landscape’ and ‘for new responses to the “wicked issues” (i.e. intractable, complex problems) facing government’ that cannot be tackled by one organisation (Lowndes, 2001:1962).

Thus partnership working is an integral part of the ‘third way’ strategy for mobilizing civil society in pursuit of economic and social renewal (Davies, 2001:217-18). However, in relative terms, except in the case of the most recent area based regeneration initiatives including New Deal for Communities, commentators suggest that many of the previous public participation exercises did not go beyond the degree of tokenism as stated in the Arnstein’s ladder of citizen participation. Even the New Deal for Communities initiatives have failed to make clear how communities are defined and how their partnership is ensured. Imrie and Raco (2003:124) point out that “In many regeneration partnerships, levels of community involvement stayed at fairly low levels on Arnstein’s (1969) scale.” These authors argue that communities were informed about change, and often subject to what Arnstein called ‘therapy’ in which they would be made to feel central to policy development, while in reality decisions were made elsewhere. Health Ac-

tion Zones, Sure Start and New Deal for Communities were part of a more holistic local regeneration programme where pockets poverty and health inequalities were systematically tackled using strategies with more advanced 'levels' of participation.

In summary, the New Deal for Communities programme is a flagship initiative of New Labour urban policy. The Programme is based on the 'third way' political and policy thinking in which responsibilities are shared between the government and communities of civil society with a new local governance arrangement. Partnership working and public and community participation underpin the NDC programme, which is compatible with the third way philosophy. The NDC programme approach is holistic in its attempt to tackle poverty and the causes of poverty from different angles.

These approaches have created an environment in which theory and evidence based practices are supposed to be working hand-in-hand to shape local strategies and policies. Hence, the fundamental philosophy of 'the third way' and the holistic approach to regeneration in which the NDC programme is based put it in a unique position to promote participation through a new form of governance and through new power arrangements, as compared to previous regeneration initiatives.

#### **3.4. Community initiatives of public participation in Newham**

One of the research questions of this thesis is to identify current good practices and initiatives of public participation directly or indirectly associated with regeneration activities in the London Borough of Newham. The assessment of participatory good practice is based on the accessibility and follow-up methods that are in place. This section explores some examples of local initiatives that produced good practice that could provide models for other similar socio-economic areas. This is based on background research on the focus and activities of these groups and of my observation of their meetings. At the



time of this research i.e. 2003-07, communities and voluntary groups in collaboration with the local borough council had different methods of engaging local people in local issues. The following examples (Community Links, Aston-Mansfield, London Citizens-TELCO, and Community Forums) offer insights into the contributions from some of the Newham based local voluntary and community organisations.

- **Community Links**

Community Links, a charity founded in 1977, was running a number of community-based projects in Newham for and with children, young people and adults of all ages. Besides direct service delivery, the charity was working towards evidence-based policy development. According to the information from Community Links, public participation is the core principle of the organisation. One of its projects called “What if ...” had a direct public involvement element. “What if...” is an approach developed by Community Links in 1998 with two objectives: first to ensure that the needs of people are met through efficient and effective use of public resources; and second to research and campaign for national policy changes which affect local people. The idea was to look at how local services like job centres, schools and other public services providers could be made more efficient and effective through user participation. Moreover, the project was looking at how to make national policy work better at a local level.

The project had a three-staged plan. The first stage was to hold a “What if ...” conversation, which ventured preliminary research with local residents, service users, staff and managers of services to find out what were their aspirations, the barriers and the solutions. The project aspired to be solution and practice focused, so it was not just concerned with doing pure research, but aimed to do applied participatory research. During the initial stage of public engagement, informers open up conversations to iden-

tify specific issues as a starting point for tackling the problem and to suggest possible solutions. Then the project collated the issues and solutions and moved on to the second stage which was to develop those ideas and solutions into actual practical projects. The subsequent step involved disseminating and sharing these evidence-based experiences among providers and decision makers. At the national level the evidence was used to lobby for changes in policies for local services. Some of the success stories from this project are that it involved the public in the whole process and implementation at local level and included setting up of an independent disability benefits help-line and a new claim support service at local job-centres. The “What if...?” project has worked with the Social Regeneration Unit and other Newham Council departments, local job-centres, HM Treasury, Inland Revenue, the Department of Work and Pensions, Micro-credit organisations, and private and voluntary sector organisations.

“What if...?” has also helped to develop and support resident led groups such as “No More Limits”, “Chatsworth Action Group” and Tenant Residence Associations (TNAs). These groups are local resident groups working closely with local agencies for the welfare of their members e.g. in facilitating access to local services or crime reduction. Community Links is an organisation that works directly with the public to influence decisions but also to empower the public to take part in the decision making process. Community Links has become a partner in many of Newham’s social and economic regeneration activities and initiatives.

- **Aston-Mansfield**

Aston-Mansfield is one of the oldest registered charities and has been working in East London since 1884. The charity provides local resources and facilities and help in developing supportive networks and encouraging practical participation. For example, at

the time of this study, Aston-Mansfield provided support to community, faith and voluntary sector groups in the London Borough of Newham via its Community Involvement Unit (CIU). As a branch of Aston-Mansfield, The Community Involvement Unit (CIU) was established in 1991 to develop and support community and voluntary groups and enable them to access services, funding and information through direct engagement in the decision making process. The Unit was working closely with different groups and organisations in a variety of services that benefit the wider public.

The Unit gave particular emphasis to newly organised groups (e.g. refugee groups) who were desperate for information and funding to start up their activities. The Unit offered expertise and material resources to provide guidance and training and to direct groups towards the source of resources that can help them to grow. The Unit offered shared office accommodation and material support to new groups “to develop and expand when they first start up their activities”. The Unit’s Community Research sections have undertaken research that directly affects the wider public through involving beneficiaries and service providers. The fundamental objective of the Community Involvement Unit of Aston Mansfield is empowering disadvantaged groups to maximise their capacity in participating in service planning and decisions that affect them. It has also directly and indirectly involved in many of the Newham regeneration initiatives as member of regeneration committee representing community groups and their interests.

- **London Citizens – TELCO**

London Citizens is the ‘largest and most diverse alliance of active citizens and community leaders’ in London (<http://www.londoncitizens.org.uk/> - access March 11, 2005). At the time of my research London Citizens had over 83 member organisations, including faith groups, schools, student and trade unions, community associations and resident

groups. Members of London Citizens share a commitment to action for the common good, and to nurturing community leaders. The East London Communities Organisation (TELCO) is one of the groups of London citizens based in east London that also covers the London Borough of Newham. As part of the network of London Citizens, TELCO promotes active citizenship through organising strong networks and campaigns. TELCO-London Citizens have been organising and campaigning for over ten years. More recently, TELCO launched a public enquiry into the proposed redevelopment of the Queen's Market in Newham, ensuring local people and traders have a meaningful say in its future. London Citizens develop skills and leadership capacity in the neighbourhoods where they work, through the hands-on experience of taking action for change, through formal training, and with the support of professional organisers. When members identify an area where change is needed, London Citizens look together at who can make it happen, and how to enter into a constructive relationship. Members make decisions together democratically and on a regular basis through *'developing skills and leadership capacity in the neighbourhoods through formal training and with the support of professional organisers in taking action for change'* (London Citizens, 2005).

Unlike Community Links and Aston Mansfield, TELCO is exclusively a membership group. Most of its activities are based on direct campaigning and training community leaders to enhance their leadership skills while working in partnership with other actors in their respective communities.

All these local initiatives mentioned above are independent of local council structures with limited or no direct interference from councillors or council employees. Such public participation arrangements are a good starting point for looking at the future of local regeneration policies and how they could be made more inclusive to take in

the views of local people into account. What we learn from the work of the above organisations is that the independence of these groups gives them potential to take the views of local people and include them as part of the decision making system.

### **3.5. Examples of ‘structured’ forms of participation that exist in Newham**

In addition to the voluntary and community sector participatory initiatives, the Newham Civic Partnership, the West Ham Community Forum, The NDC Steering Committee, and the Mayor’s Question Time meetings have been more structured, Council led and financed participation initiatives. They were all different in their individual structure and purpose. The overarching purpose for all of them was to enhance the participation of Newham residents concerning issues affecting them through a council-led structure. However, there are a number of problems when public participation takes place through such a rigidly structured top-to-bottom approach. The problems include meetings that reflect the overarching power structure; how some dominant figures influence the course of the decision making; how important decisions are made in a hasty manner; and the lack of follow-up and feedback on joint decisions. These power dynamics were obviously reflected, for example, in the seating arrangements of all of the four groups. The illustrations in this section show seating arrangements of the four different ‘structured’ public participation initiatives (see Figure 2a – 2d below).

#### **- The Newham Civic Partnership**

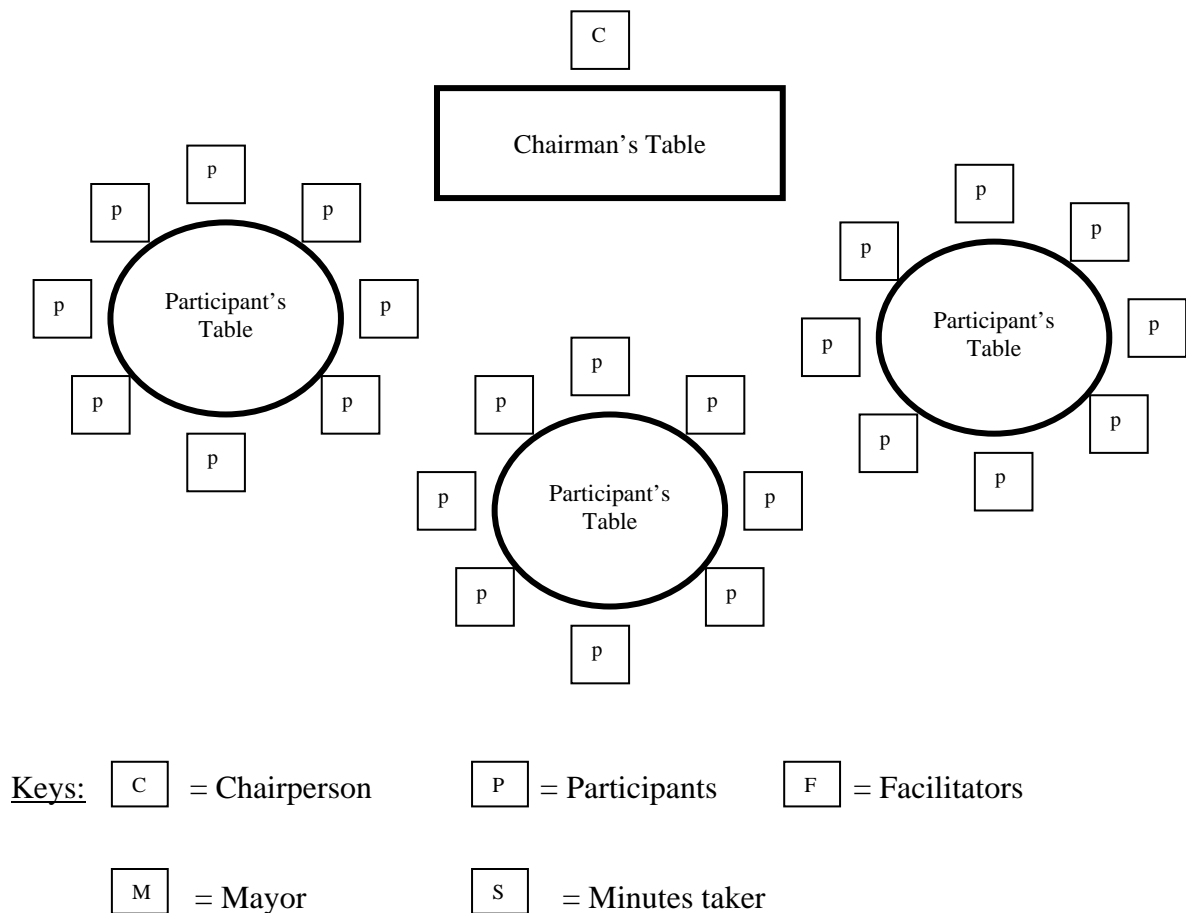
The Newham Civic Partnership is one of the Partnership Committees of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) of Newham. Purdue, (2005:123) summarised the role of LSPs as:

*“Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) were introduced to develop Neighbourhood Renewal strategies to cover the 88 most deprived areas in England. LSPs*

*bring together the major players in each locality. Community Empowerment Networks (CENs) have been funded to encourage and coordinate community representation in the LSPs and their families of partnerships.”*

The Newham Civic Partnership as a body of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) was set up in 2000 to bring together at a local level the different parts of the public, private, community and voluntary sectors. The Newham Civic Partnership as part of the LSP was a multi-organisational partnership and its focus is ‘to operate at a level that enables strategic decisions to be taken, and is close to individual neighbourhoods in order to allow actions to be exercised at community level’. (Apostolakis, 2004:106)

**Figure 2a. Newham Civic Partnership – Seating Arrangement**



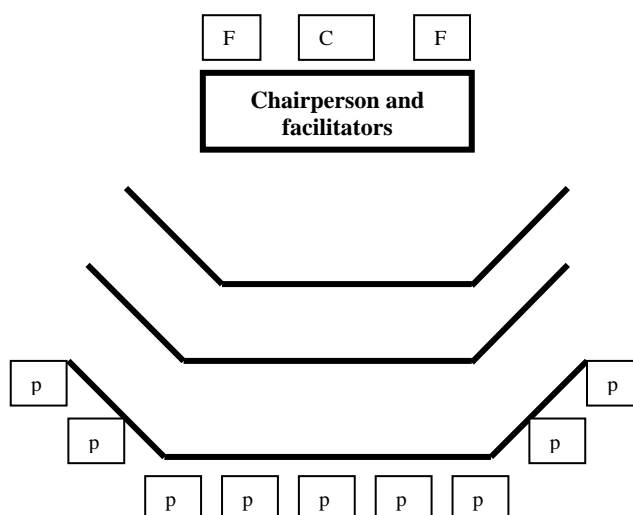
The attendees of the Civic Partnership meeting were representatives of each of the 10 Newham Community Forums, faith and voluntary groups, public sector organisations,

invited guest speakers and the Council officers. The meeting was chaired by the Mayor of Newham, or in his absence, by deputy chairs elected from the membership.

- **Community Forums**

Community Forums have different mechanisms by which to feed their issues to the higher authorities and decision makers – notably through their representation of the different Committees of Local Strategic Partnership boards. In 2006 there were ten Community Forums in Newham. Community Forums convened by the Council are regular public meetings and events for people to discuss local issues. The issues could be anything that matters to local residents. However, each Forum set priorities through its *Neighbourhood Action Plan*, which focuses on the issues that local people wanted to tackle. Local councillors also played a leading role in the Forums and they were there to listen to residents' concerns and help resolve problems.

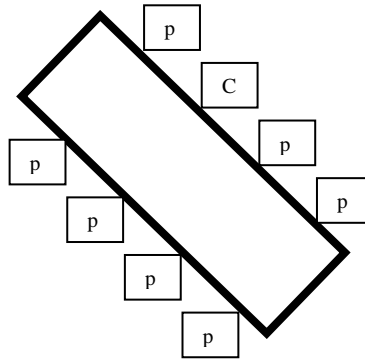
**Figure 2b. West Ham Community Forum – Seating Arrangement**



In contrast to the Civic Partnership meetings, the main attendees at the West Ham Community Forum are ordinary residents of that particular neighbourhood. In addition, elected Councillors from West Ham ward are regular members of the Forum. As an

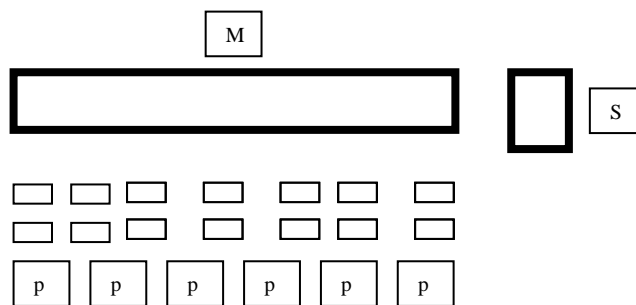
open meeting to all interested residents from the West Ham area of Newham, there is no membership list. The chairperson is elected from among the residents.

**Figure 2c. The NDC Steering Committee Meeting – Seating Arrangement**



In the case of the NDC Steering Group, the attendees were a mix of elected resident representatives, representatives of stakeholders who are working in West Ham or who have an interest in working with the West Ham and Plaistow New Deal for Communities Projects.

**Figure 2d. The Mayor’s Question Time – Seating Arrangement**



The illustrations above show how seats at the meetings were arranged. To some extent it hints at how power is distributed and shared. For example, The Mayor’s Question Time seating arrangement shows that people who have power are in a dominant position sitting in front of the audience to answer questions. On the other hand, the steering com-



mittee meeting seating arrangement shows that power is shared more equally without the dominance of one over the other. The Civic Partnership and the Community Forum arrangements suggest power is fairly distributed among attendees as there is no dominant sitting position that is able to control the activities of participants.

The Mayor's Question time meeting was meant for people who were living or working in the Stratford and West Ham areas. However, it was difficult to establish who was attending from which part of Newham. From the questions raised, it was apparent that most of the attendees were local people who took the opportunity to quiz the Mayor about issues affecting their particular community.

In the case of the Civic Partnership and the NDC Steering Committee meetings, the procedures were always standardised and formal; including asking for apologies, approval of minutes of the previous meeting, a brief discussion of matters arising and discussion of the agenda of the day. In the Civic Partnership the chair invited one or two guest speakers who spoke on a particular subject that concerns the whole of Newham, followed by two to three general questions from attendees. The attendees split into three small groups to discuss some of the issues raised by the guest speaker(s). The discussion points were provided by the guest speakers and involved looking at the general and specific issues relating to the topic. The small groups were expected to feedback their thoughts to the whole group. If any attendee had a general point to make they could do so after the feedback from all the discussion groups was heard. The role of the participants was to ask questions and respond on the themes that the speakers asked for comments on. The speakers' presentations and points of the participants' feedback were recorded as a minute and appeared on the Council's website as a public document.

The activities of the NDC Steering Group were similar to the Civic Partnership except that the discussions were about issues in West Ham neighbourhood only. At the

West Ham and Plaistow Community Forum most of the questions and discussion points were again about local issues raised directly by residents and shared with other residents.

In the case of the Mayor's Question Time, in addition to questions directed to the Mayor, a caseworker from the Mayor's Office was on hand to take notes of the issues raised and help people with specific concerns. The meeting was composed of questions and answers, between the Mayor and residents. Some of the questions were complaints and others were compliments relating to the performance of the council services in Stratford and West Ham neighbourhoods.

At the Civic Partnership meetings, the guest speakers were – in most cases – the ones who were in full charge of the meeting and were expected to make clarifications, give answers and take notes. Occasionally, senior council officers, and more rarely elected members responded to some specific questions. Certain individuals were more vocal and persuasive than others. During group round-table discussions some took more time to talk, hence others had little chance to participate. In most cases people wasted time on one question or an issue that was raised by the first commentator, and hence lost the main discussion points. Mostly, the discussions were in line with the points raised by the guest speaker to discuss. In some cases the main issues were rushed in the last five minutes as time was lost discussing unnecessary issues. It is clear that the level of understanding or the grasp of the issues varied from one individual to another.

In the case of the Community Forum meeting attendees were mainly listening to what the guest speakers were saying. Such guest speakers were invited from time to time. The small group discussion was to give residents a chance to raise questions and explanations. However, I observed that most of the issues came from the two elected Councillors who attended the meeting. Most of the forum members seemed passive lis-

teners rather than active participants. At the NDC Steering Committee meeting, given the small size of the group, everybody actively participated in a non-confrontational manner. Information and action points were shared accordingly among members of resident representatives and stakeholders. All seemed to have prior information on the topic that they were talking about.

I observed during the Mayor's Question Time that some resident attendees were highly passionate about the topic or issue they raised. There were very few who complimented the work of the Council and the Mayor. Most of the questions were very local and specific and participants raised a wide range of issues. In the case of the Civic partnership, there was no mechanism to follow-up what happened after the meeting closed, except as a 'matter arising' at the next meeting. As the next meeting dealt with an absolutely different topic and there was a three month gap in between, it was impossible for attendees to raise follow-up issues. Therefore, it is difficult to set out what goals the individual participants wanted to accomplish. As all of the attendees were representing their respective group I observed no mechanism in place except to report back to their constituent groups.

The Steering Committee for West Ham and Plaistow New Deal for Communities was a well organised group which they had specific agenda and action points for follow ups.

It was difficult to know the initial objective of the Community Forums and the Question Time Meetings. Therefore, it was difficult to assess what their specific goals were or whether they had been achieved or not.

As far as the meeting places are concerned, local community centres and schools are usually attractive meeting places to which different communities feel no difficulty in accessing. Such places are central to the community and can be perceived as neutral in

areas which are socially divided. The Town Hall is a bit intimidating for an ordinary person who has never previously attended a meeting in such a setting. For instance, the West Ham Town Hall is not like an ordinary community centre. The Hall is very clean, with big curtains, expensive lamps and the floor covered by comfortable carpets. The ceiling is high and well decorated. Unlike community centres one has to register a name, organisation and the time of arrival at the reception. During the four consecutive meetings I attended, I observed important issues to be noted. The good part of the Civic Partnership was two fold. On one hand, the group was composed of many sections of the community, thus revealing its representativeness. Moreover, the group was able to hear issues of community concern from people who have first hand information and experience. The small group discussion was a good format to look at the issues more closely in a non-intimidating environment. The support given by the council officers was appreciable.

However, my observation and field notes from the Civic Partnership Meetings show weaknesses in areas of follow-up, accountability and feedback. Firstly, the purpose of the civic partnership in terms of linking the wider community with decision making is not clear, if not non-existent. It is more of an information exchange forum. Exchanging information is obviously at the lower strand of Arnstein ladder of citizen participation. I have also observed that the discussions are mainly dominated by certain individuals. At one of the meetings, I noted that almost half of the discussion time was covered by an individual representative who was able to manipulate the course of discussion in his own way. Such a dominant individual will overshadow the whole process of participation.

There were similarities between the meetings of the Community Forums and Question Time. There was a clear divide between the power holders and residents. Even

the seating arrangements reflect the divide in the distribution of power. The meetings were largely about information giving and receiving rather than genuine public participation, which again indicate that these for a are placed at the lower rungs of the Arnstein ladder.

The NDC Steering Committee meeting seemed more productive in terms of setting a system to follow up decisions and action points raised by resident representatives. The power seemed shared among resident representatives and stakeholders. There seemed to be checks and balances in terms of accountability. One could feel a level of partnership between residents (through their representatives) and stakeholders who were working for residents. The representation also covered a wide range of local interests including the voluntary sector, police, health and businesses. The numbers of participants gave a good indication how individuals are acting in such social gatherings. On the one hand, members of the small size groups like the NDC steering group knew and had confidence in each other. They respected each other and listened to the opinions of every member of the group. Their decision is based on consensus. On the other hand, if small groups are highly structured – for example in the case of the civic partnership – then it is likely to be elitist and decisions are dictated by those with political and informational power.

### **3.6. Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter has been to demonstrate the ways in which public participation in urban regeneration schemes evolved from the early 1960s to the current time. The chapter discussed how public participation and partnership was conceived during different periods of regeneration in Britain. It also indicated how the power relationship between the public and power holders changed during these periods. Public participation was at times placed at the ‘centre stage’ to contribute to the decision making process of

area-based initiatives and at other times completely marginalised. The government political ideology of the time influenced how public participation should operate in the realm of regeneration. The chapter also discussed the most recent approaches of *New Deal for Communities* as an example of the New Labour ‘third way’ approach in which the public are expected to play an important role in local regeneration initiatives by sharing responsibilities and by being directly involved in the decision making process. The final sections looked at different forms of participatory activity in practice.

The chapter has identified a) the intention of policies, as stated by government (to show that a varying degree of emphasis has been given to participation and aimed to achieve it using different mechanisms); and (b) the actual outcomes of the policies which, as reported by critical reviewers, have sometimes not been quite in line with the original aims, partly due to problems in using different definition of public participation. It was also discussed how some features of urban policies have given attention to the need for social capital (social networks) to enhance the effective use of participation in each round of policy. The next chapter discusses the methodological frameworks that are applied to my research to conduct the gathering of field data and systematic analysis.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THE RESEARCH FRAMEWORK**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

In the previous chapters, I reviewed the literature on participation and related issues of power, empowerment and social capital in small-scale regeneration areas. In general, levels of participation in urban regeneration schemes have been low or the nature of participation ineffective. I have also outlined the potential benefits of active participation to successful regeneration within the context of new governance arrangements, power relations and social capital.

This chapter sets out the methodological framework for the research. It describes how the issue of participation in area based regeneration was researched using different methods of inquiry. The chapter will discuss the strategy used to establish empirical evidence regarding different levels and types of participatory methods that would impact on area based regeneration in the London Borough of Newham.

The research is designed to test three assumptions. Firstly, in places and communities susceptible to deprivation and social exclusion, there is likely to be low levels of participation in urban regeneration initiatives. Secondly, current area based regeneration initiatives have not made effective use of participation due to lack of clarity and complexity of the local governance arrangements, power relations and social networks. Thirdly, the effective use of local governance arrangement, empowerment and social networks could help in building confident and active groups and individuals that participate in regeneration issues that affect them.

Hence, the research is geared to answer the following interrelated questions.

1. What types and levels of participation in groups, communities and voluntary organisations have been and are being used for regeneration initiatives in Newham?
2. Are there innovative strategies likely to make participation work better in the study area?
3. Can we identify ideal or model practices of participation (based on pre-existing social networks, empowerment methods and governance arrangements) for small area inner city regeneration ?

By finding possible answers to the research questions, it will be possible to test the hypotheses outlined above and develop evidence-based conclusions. In the next section, I discuss the purposes and objectives of the research and the reasons behind why I selected the London Borough of Newham as my case study area. Later on in the chapter, I discuss pragmatism as the philosophical basis of the research, followed by the reasons why I chose both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. The details of the purpose, objectives and the research strategy are presented, including the methods of data collection; the pilot survey, postal questionnaires, in-depth interviews and systematic observation of participatory activities that I have undertaken. I also explain my approach to analysing the data collected using these different methods. Finally, the chapter considers the ethical issues and limitations of the research project.

#### **4.2. Purposes and objectives of the research**

As discussed in the previous chapters, participation is, to a varying degree, an important element throughout the process and progress of area based regeneration. It is



important to emphasise that the level and types of participation and aspects of the local governance arrangements, power relationships and social networks may partly determine the quality and sustainability of the outcomes of regeneration programmes. Therefore, it is essential to fully understand how and why different levels and types of participation and related issues of governance, power and social networks influence the magnitude and direction of local regeneration initiatives on the one hand, and the benefits to individuals and communities on the other. My research used a case study and developed ideal models of participation based on the experience of the types and levels of participation and aspects of social capital that have been and are being used in the London Borough of Newham. It identified the gaps and ultimately found ideal models and policies that will help towards improving the outcomes of urban regeneration, mainly in relation to social and economic initiatives. These findings are, by and large, consistent with the literature reviewed that has identified some possible features of ideal models. My field work explored whether these ideal models seem relevant in the specific context of Newham.

Moreover, the final outcome of the research inquiry has helped in developing local, evidence-based policies for participation which could be considered for implementation in small-scale urban regeneration programmes in general and in relation to social and economic initiatives in particular. The following were the main objectives that the research was designed to address, providing a basis for answering the questions and hypotheses described above:

- a) to identify the current types and levels of participation and social networking that were contributing to urban regeneration in the London Borough of Newham;
- b) to identify whether or not participation empowers local people for further involvement;

Based on the findings of the above two objectives:

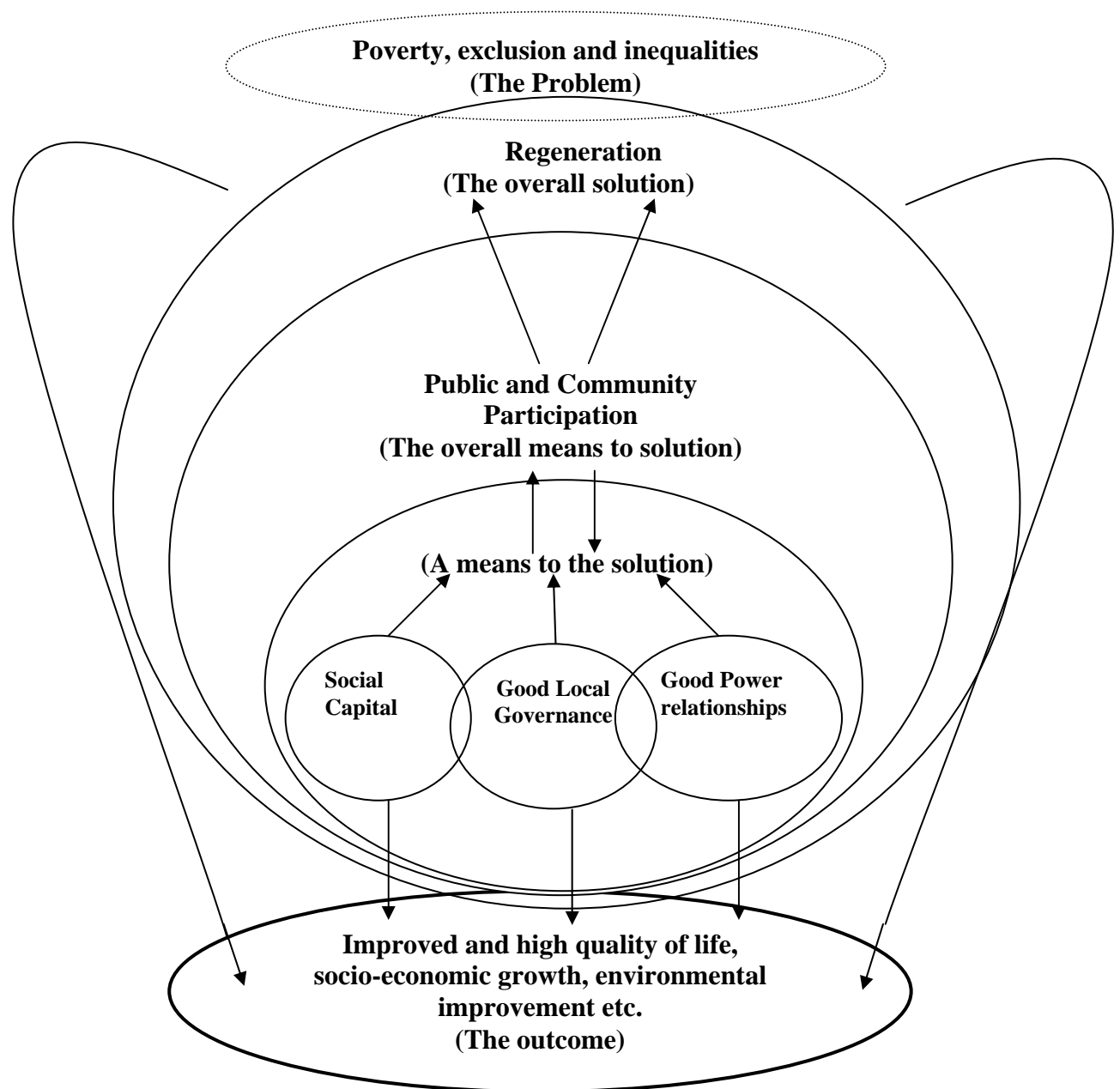
- c) to develop ideal models of participation, power relationships, local governance arrangements and social network systems that can successfully empower people in small area based urban regeneration where poverty and social exclusion is found to be prevalent;
- d) to contribute to the success of local and evidence-based participatory policy in a small-scale urban regeneration area.

Generally, as indicated in the diagram below (see Figure 3), the research project is based on the fundamental assumptions that concentrated and localised poverty, exclusion and inequalities could be tackled by area-based small-scale regeneration programmes. To achieve the intended outcomes, regeneration projects need to seek the participation of the public and communities from their outset. A good local governance arrangement, suitable power relationships and stock of social capital created from norms of reciprocity, trust and social networks enhances participation and brings it to a higher level as defined by the Arnstein Ladder (1969) (see chapter 3). In the same way, participation itself benefits (strengthens or conserves) good governance, good power relationships and social networks, which contribute to a better quality of life. As has been argued above, a regeneration initiative that uses the participation of the public and communities and benefits from good governance, power sharing and a stock of social capital will be able to create improved and good quality life as well as sustainable social, economic, environmental growth and development for the whole society.

Figure 3 shows the conceptual framework that underpins the research and indicates what the main problem is, that is to be addressed, the possible solutions, the means to these solutions and what the ultimate outcomes would be. The problems under discussion are poverty, exclusion and inequalities that are to be addressed by the overall

regeneration strategies. Public and community participation are considered as part of the overall means to a solution, as public and community participation could be complemented by good local governance, power sharing and social capital which entail networks of reciprocity and trust. Conceptually the aggregated outcome of the whole regeneration exercise will be improved well being, higher quality of life, socio-economic growth, and environmental improvements.

**Figure 3. Conceptual Framework (Casual Pathway) of the Research**



### **4.3. Why Newham?**

The research aimed to make a critical assessment of the types and levels of public participation that have been, and are being used for regeneration initiatives in Newham. It aimed to investigate whether there are innovative ways to make participation and social capital work better in the study area. It sought to identify an ideal model of participation and establish ways to generate effective local governance, power relationships and social networks for small area, inner city regeneration.

As a resident of Newham and someone working in the area of participation in a professional capacity, I was always questioning why the outcomes of regeneration initiatives were not always sustainable and why we still witnessed, in some areas of Newham, more ill-health, uneven wealth distribution and social inequalities after many years of regeneration initiatives. These are some of the reasons why I wanted to pursue this particular research. I also hypothesised that the failure to produce any improvement in such persistent wealth and social inequalities – despite the effort invested in the socio-economic regeneration of Newham and other inner city areas – is due to the lack of the feeling of ownership which is influenced by low levels of participation from the outset and throughout the life span of budgeted projects.

In this part of the chapter, I provide some background information about Newham to justify my choice of the study area. I review the reasons for selecting the study area and why it has attracted a number of regeneration initiatives as compared to other areas. I discuss past and present regeneration initiatives to gain a fuller understanding of renewal activities carried out over recent years and the impacts that they have had.

The selection criteria for my case study area were that it should: have a high level of multiple deprivation, diversity of communities and have been the focus of various area-based regeneration initiatives. Due to its long history of regeneration, Newham has the experience of using different types and levels of participatory methods, involving consideration of the views of local people, communities and organisations. I believe such a range of experience and diversity could help to answer my research questions. The London Borough of Newham met the criteria I set for selection, as discussed below. Chapter three discusses, in addition to the brief description of the study area, a review of the past and present examples of the socio-economic regeneration initiatives and examples of participatory activities carried out by dedicated local voluntary and community organisations in the London Borough of Newham.

#### **4.4. The research approach**

The research is based on a pragmatic philosophical knowledge-claim that is interested to learn from results and consequences based on action and experience. Pragmatist inquiry asks the question ‘does it work?’ rather than ‘is it right?’. For pragmatists ‘if it works, it’s true’ (Smith, 1984:357). The research approach is based on the principle that ‘the future has to be made by the intervention of human will, implemented against a background of knowledge that can never be final, and bringing both intentional and unexpected consequences’ (Smith, 1984:367). Hence, for pragmatists truth is tentative, learning is a lifelong activity, knowledge, then, is ‘an emergent property of inquiry’. Kitchin & Tate (2000:13) added that pragmatism:

*‘tries to understand the world through the examination of practical problems, believing that studying a particular real-world situation is important for providing both theoretical understanding and practical solutions’.*

Pragmatism is a late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century movement that aimed to ground philosophical debate in the practicalities of daily life. It was born in the wake of ‘intractable ontological disputes’ concerning the nature of reality and sought to resolve the differences between idealism and materialism, and between rationalism and empiricism, by focusing on the practical consequences (rather than the metaphysical origins) of intellectual activity (Smith, 1984:355). In the context of a pragmatic philosophical approach, area-based urban regeneration initiatives are seen as real world situations; projects are implemented in real neighbourhoods; they are intended to solve real problems. When regeneration projects are implemented to deal with problems of an urban nature, then experience is accumulated. What is known about regeneration then, is based on what has happened so far and is happening now through actions, consequences and experiences. Pragmatism determines the value of an idea by ‘its outcome in practice and conduct and could stimulate inquiry that complements one paradigm with another’. A pragmatic approach stresses ‘critical analysis of facts, applications and outcomes rather than abstraction and verbal solutions’. Furthermore, a pragmatic approach calls for ‘theory to be designed and tested in practice’ (Weaver et. al., 2006:466). The pragmatist perspective advocates the uses of ‘whatever philosophical and/or methodological approach works for the particular research problem under study’ (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998:5), and often implies a mixed method strategy. Mixed methods have been used for over a century; however, pragmatism as a philosophical approach in social geography was adopted in the late 1980s as a response to the ‘paradigm wars’ dividing researchers into positivist vs. constructivist camps (Creswell, 2003, Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

Indeed, to fully understand how far public, community and public participation are important in alleviating poverty, inequality and exclusion through regeneration, the use of different methodological approaches would be helpful. The use of different

methods would help to uncover things that cannot be fully explored by one particular method or approach. Hence, the pragmatic approach justifies the use of mixed methods and different forms of data collection and analysis in order to understand participation in regeneration from multiple angles (Creswell, 2003). Therefore, my research addresses public participation and related issues from a range of angles: social, historical, political and other related perspectives that exist in regeneration targeting small areas.

As Hoggart, Lees & Davies, (2002:67-70) put it, the multi-method approach is ‘the employment of different data sources and collection procedures to examine the same research issue’. Denscombe (2002:23) argues that ‘empirical social researchers’ recognise that the methodologies within their discipline ‘have specific strengths and weaknesses and that no single approach is perfect’. Denscombe (2002) further points out that social research has moved towards pragmatism. The guiding principle for research is not how well it sticks to its ‘positivist’ or ‘interpretivist’ epistemology, but ‘how well it addresses the topic it is investigating’. Under pragmatist mixed research methods, the design and implementation are dependent on which methods best fit the practical demands of a particular research question through ‘complementarity rather than compatibility’ (Creswell, 2003).

In my mixed research approach the quantitative inquiries were mainly to collect and analyse secondary data, while the qualitative methodologies were geared towards collecting and analysing views, beliefs and attitudes about the research questions through, questionnaires, in-depth interviews and materials from observation exercises. At an early stage in the research, I collected and analysed the quantitative data which was followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data. This is a strategy that Creswell, (2003: 215) categorises as a ‘*sequential explanatory strategy*’ which implies collecting and analysing first quantitative and then qualitative data in two consecutive

phases within one study. In a '*sequential explanatory strategy*' research design, the researcher first collects and analyses the quantitative (numeric) data. The qualitative data are collected and analysed second in the sequence as they help to explain, or elaborate on, the quantitative results obtained in the first phase. The second, qualitative, phase builds on the first, quantitative phase, and the two phases are connected in the intermediate stage in the study. According to Ivankova et al. (2006:5) the rationale for this approach is that:

*“the quantitative data and their subsequent analysis provide a general understanding of the research problem. The qualitative data and their analysis refine and explain those statistical results by exploring participants' views in more depth (Rossman and Wilson 1985; Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998; Creswell 2003).”*

At a later stage there was a need to use a *concurrent triangulation strategy*: which is when multiple methods are used as a means to off-set the weaknesses inherent within one method with the strengths of the other. This triangulation approach has helped me to confirm and cross validate findings throughout the study (Hoggart et al, 2002:67). For example, I combined postal questionnaires with interviewing and observation.

Denzin (1989:307) argued that by combining multiple observers, theories, methods, and data sources researchers can hope to overcome 'the intrinsic bias that comes from single-methods, single-observer, and single theory studies'. The mixed method design has helped me to tackle the research questions from different theoretical and philosophical perspectives. Patton (2002:585) also pointed out that researchers use both quantitative and qualitative methods because they need 'to be responsive to the nuances of particular empirical questions and the idiosyncrasies of specific stakeholder needs'. By using a mixed research approach, I was able to combine complementary approaches, which compensated for weakness in the individual methods when used in isolation. Carr (1994:720) argued that:



*“Although quantitative and qualitative methods are different, one approach is not superior to the other; both have recognised strengths and weaknesses and are used ideally in combination. It can therefore be argued that there is no one best method of developing knowledge, and that exclusively valuing one method restricts the ability to progress beyond its inherent boundaries.”*

The quantitative research approach, described in section 4.6.1, involves basic analysis of the census in order to assess the ecological associations between health and poverty. It has helped me to identify where in Newham the living conditions were worst and to choose these target areas to study. Also it helped me to put Newham in context within London as a whole, offering further justification for choosing Newham as a case study. The analysis of demographic and electoral data provided me with information about trends in participation and social networking.

The qualitative approach helped me to study how people understood, interpreted and attempted to make sense of situations, events and activities of regeneration in Newham in general and West Ham & Plaistow NDC in particular (the case study area). The latter was especially helpful in trying to understand the nature and importance of participation, local governance, power relations and social networks. When both methods are combined they enrich the type, quality and quantity of the evidence obtained. Generally, quantitative research is criticised due to its tendency to oversimplify causal relationships, while qualitative research tends to be selective in reporting and is not generalisable. For example, by using a qualitative approach (questionnaires, interviews and observation), I was able to take into account aspects of the political, cultural and social environment which quantitative approaches tend to neglect. By doing quantitative analysis of socio-economic conditions of Newham, I was able to avoid the criticism of qualitative methods as unreliable, impressionistic and not objective (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998).

Furthermore, I was able to apply both methods to some of the initial questions about the nature of the population in Newham and levels of poverty. Census data and qualitative views have helped me to build up a picture of the key characteristics of the population and show that socio-economic factors matter for wellbeing. However, it is worth noting that some types of questionnaires (including, perhaps, some of the ones I used) are quite structured and designed to collect systematic information – these could be seen as intermediate between quantitative and qualitative. Therefore it is sometimes difficult to try to represent each part of my study as wholly quantitative or qualitative. Therefore, mixed methods are found to be essentially helpful in making my research inquiry more rounded and complete. Moreover, the issue of power relationships between myself as a researcher and the wider communities that were the focus of this inquiry was another reason for choosing a mixed research approach (see the discussion of ethical issues, below). By using mixed methods, I was able to encourage the research subjects, (very often underrepresented in the research process) so that they took on some role. For example, through the interviews with residents and their representatives, it was good to hear their views, problems and possible solutions directly and from their own perspectives.

Nevertheless, one significant problem with undertaking both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis, is the increased time and cost (Robson, 2002:370). To minimise the risks attached to time constraints:

- a) I did parallel quantitative and qualitative inquiries as much as possible and whenever appropriate.
- b) I was also as clear as possible about what each method was for and how each relates to the other.

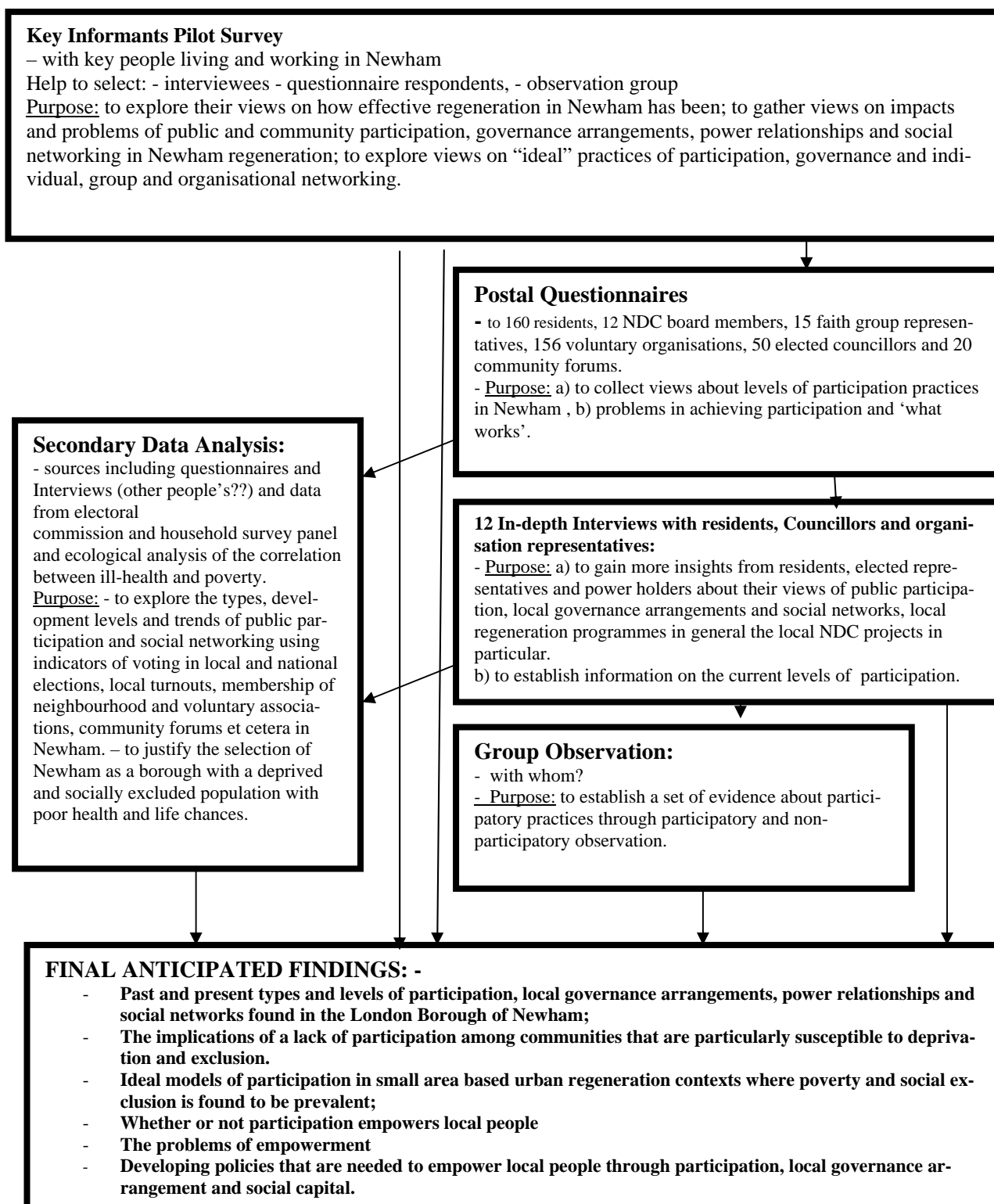
In the following sections, I will discuss the strategy of the research in the context of the mixed methods approach.

#### **4.5. The research strategy**

As discussed above, due to the multi-faceted nature of the research inquiry, I chose a mixed method approach to data collection. The table below (see Table 2) shows how each research method informed the other and how the final result would develop. Firstly, the key informant survey helped to establish the direction of the research inquiry. Some of the research questions required ‘hard’ data to justify why the case study area was selected. Therefore, the ecological association of ill health and poverty as well as material on demographic changes were based upon the analysis of the 2001 Census and other relevant data. Some of the findings from the census data informed the design of the questionnaires, interviews and observation undertaken with different participants in the study. These different methods of inquiry served different purposes as shown in the Figure 4. However, all contributed to the findings of the research project by helping to show one or more of the following:

- Past and present types and levels of participation in regeneration undertaken in the London Borough of Newham;
- The implications of a lack of participation among communities that are particularly susceptible to deprivation and exclusion.
- Ideal models of participation in small, area based urban regeneration projects.
- Issues of empowerment and whether or not participation empowers local people
- The role of evidence-based participatory initiatives, local governance arrangements, power relationships and social networking policy in a small-scale urban regeneration area.

**Table 2: The Research Strategy Flow-Chart**



## **4.6. Data collection and analysis procedures**

### **4.6.1. The statistical data collection and analysis**

The main purposes of the statistical data collection and analyses were:

- a) to investigate the trends in the movement/displacement of the population of Newham which may influence the development of social networking and active participation (see section 6.5).
- b) to help in explaining the context to the research questions and findings that emerged from the focus of qualitative inquiries about participation, local governance and power relationships and social networks in the local area of the study.

The data were extracted from various sources: the Office of National Statistics; the Greater London Authority; London Borough of Newham (household survey); the Electoral Commission and other relevant statutory and voluntary agencies.

The specific objectives of the statistical analysis include:

- a) to use socio-economic indicators for small areas to describe the prevalence of poverty and social exclusion in some areas of Newham as compared to Greater London. The analysis also aimed to show relationship between indicators of participation or non- participation and material poverty and the level of social networks.
- b) to use area measures of population turnover to identify demographic change, mainly due to migration and immigration of certain age and ethnic groups, considering their importance in understanding social exclusion in Newham as compared to Greater London as a whole. This is particularly helpful in exploring the relationship between population mobility and low levels of participation and social capital.
- c) to use published survey data to explore the types, development levels and trends of public participation and social networking using broad range of indicators of voting

For the analysis of ecological relationships at the scale of small areas, socio-economic and ethnicity data were downloaded from Office of National Statistics (ONS), Neighbourhood Statistics Web-Site ([www.ons.gov.uk](http://www.ons.gov.uk)) for Greater London. The socio-economic variables chosen were households with no car or van; people who are economically inactive; household spaces in a shared dwellings; and people on state benefits – unemployed – lowest grade workers (class E). For the purpose of statistical comparison, household spaces in an unshared dwellings; people with higher and intermediate managerial – administrative/professional occupations (class AB); households with 4 or more cars and vans; and people who are economically active, have been included.

These indicators are broadly consistent with the Townsend (1988) Index measuring ‘material deprivation’, although the Townsend Index provided a material measure of deprivation and disadvantage based on four different variables (unemployment as a percentage of those aged 16 and over who are economically active; non-car ownership as a percentage of all households; non-home ownership as a percentage of all households and household overcrowding) combined to form an overall score.

Due to the large numbers of black and minority ethnic groups in Newham, I included ethnicity as one of the independent variables to see its association with the health of the London population in general and also to make a comparative analysis with the Newham population in particular. I standardised the socio-economic and ethnicity data to the values of the z-score using a Microsoft Excel function, to normalise the distribu-

tion of the data. Standardisation was used so that some variables that are highly variable and very skewed, would not produce misleading associations in the analysis. As a result of the standardisation to a z-score, all values produce a mean value of zero and a standard deviation of one. The z-score therefore expresses the percentage value for a variable in a ward as a multiple of the standard deviation above or below the mean for Greater London. As discussed above, the standardisation to morbidity ratio and the z-score were used to normalise the values of dependent and independent variables after controlling for age and sex differences in the demographic composition of the areas of 624 London wards. The data were then used to identify areas where ill health and poverty are most prevalent (see appendixes 7-10).

#### **4.6.2. The key informants pilot study**

The key informants pilot study was a pilot stage intended to help formulate questions for the main study. The purpose of the key informant surveys was to gather views on how the effectiveness of area based urban regeneration in Newham in general and the effectiveness of public and community participation, local governance arrangements (mainly the Mayoral system), power relationships and networks in particular (see Appendix 1 for preliminary questionnaire to key Informants). The key informants were people with a good knowledge of the area due to their direct involvement as residents or leading organisations working in regeneration initiatives in Newham. Surveys were mailed to 10 selected people and these were followed up with interviews. All participants of the pilot study were people who have connections with the past and present regeneration initiatives and either living or working in Newham.

**The specific purpose of the pilot study was:**

- a) to explore their views of how effective regeneration in Newham has been;
- b) to gather views on impacts and problems of public and community participation, local governance arrangements, power relations and social networking in Newham regeneration;
- c) to explore views on “ideal” practices of participation, governance arrangements and individual, group and organisational networking.

Initially, to seek their co-operation, I telephoned all ten participants who were either living and working in Newham or involved in one or more aspects of regeneration programmes in the Borough. Upon their agreement, I sent a questionnaire to all participants either by e-mail or by hand and booked a meeting individually. Then, we went through all the questions (see appendixes 1 and 4 for questions and for the invitation letter) using a semi-structured interview approach which allowed flexibility to ask follow-up questions and to get clarification if necessary. Subsequently, the responses were summarised and analysed.

The informants were key actors who were able to provide me with more details on the wider aspects of participation which were difficult to discuss in other research settings. They also identified issues that would not be revealed in a large public settings. The views of informants helped to guide the direction of my research and what themes to focus on. They were helpful in getting details of the community and in understanding residents' priorities in past and present Newham regeneration schemes. Generally, the key informants also helped to inform some of the methodological challenges that this research addresses, including:

- The need for *inclusive research* (addressing ‘hard-to-reach’ groups)



- The need for *mixed research methods* to reach as many people as possible using different approaches
- The need for *non-participatory observation* (particularly with stakeholders) to include how participants act and react in the process of participation.

This preliminary survey also helped to identify some of the following fundamental questions that have been considered throughout this research project.

1. How do I assess the impacts of public and community participation, governance, the issues of power as well as social networking? Do I have to set my own criteria?
2. What makes local community participation different from other types of participation (e.g. household panel surveys) in the context of regeneration?
3. How do I ensure the research strategy is inclusive of a wide range of ideas?
4. How can the advocacy role of community and voluntary groups be included in the research process ?

#### **4.6.3. Postal questionnaire**

The research then used postal questionnaires (see appendixes 2 and 3) that were sent to potential respondents and which were followed up by interviews. The purpose of questionnaire data collection and analysis in this research was to study the views and feelings of residents, their representatives and mediating institutions in their capacity as beneficiaries, providers and partners of regeneration initiatives in Newham. The desire was to carry out the research in ‘natural social settings and to collect naturally occurring data’ (Bowling, 1997:352). This approach obtains descriptive information from individuals or a group of individuals about their perceptions, beliefs and attitudes towards participation or non-participation and other issues relating to regeneration which helped

to produce a critical interpretation and explain its relationships with some of the established theories. Individual participants were expected to give their own understanding of situations ‘consciously and coherently into frameworks which make sense of their experience’, even if it may contradict with what others had to say on the same issue (Hakim, 1987:26). The qualitative data collection and analysis included a key informants’ survey (pilot study), in-depth interviews, and inquiry through observation of participatory activities.

Respondents to the postal questionnaires and interviews have been drawn from key groups of stakeholders and individuals which included: residents, West Ham and Plaistow New Deal for Communities Board Members, faith groups, voluntary agencies and elected members of Newham Council. All these groups of participants had a stake in past and ongoing regeneration initiatives in the borough. The questionnaires were intended to deal with the basic issues of the types and levels of participation in a straightforward way.

The questions aimed to obtain a broad insight into public and community participation in the regeneration of Newham and to investigate respondents perceptions of:

- a) the nature and extent of public participation in local regeneration initiatives in Newham;
- b) whether better governance arrangements, power relations and social networks are developed as a result of regeneration or *vice versa*;
- c) whether participation improved the quality of regeneration by making it more responsive to local needs;
- d) whether improving the decision making process has helped the local public and community participation;

- e) the level and types of public participation, local governance arrangements, power relationships and social networks in relation to different local regeneration initiatives in Newham.

The questions were designed both in closed and open-ended formats and slightly different questions were used for different groups of respondents. The postal questionnaire method was selected for the following reasons:

- a) It enabled me to contact relatively large and targeted numbers of people easily and quickly.
- b) It was relatively easy to standardise, code and analyse.
- c) It gave the respondent anonymity, which increases the chance of them answering questions honestly and without being intimidated by my presence as a researcher.

However, I am also aware of some of its limitations: getting answers for more complex and detailed issues from semi-structured, self-completion questionnaires is difficult. It cannot be known whether the respondent has understood the questions properly. There is also uncertainty as to whether the questionnaire is filled in by the right person, particularly when sent to large organisations. I am also aware that if the response rate is low, then the responses received may only be the opinions of highly motivated people, which may lead to a level of bias. As summarised by Bryman, (2004: 134-135) the disadvantages of self-completion questionnaires as compared to the structured interview are:

- a) there is no one present to help respondents if they have difficulty answering a question; it is not possible to prompt;
- b) there is no opportunity to probe respondents to elaborate an answer;
- c) one cannot ask many questions that are not salient to respondents;

- d) it is not possible to know who answers the questionnaire;
- e) it is not possible to collect additional data;
- f) it is difficult to ask a lot of questions because of the possibility of respondent fatigue and long questionnaires are rarely feasible;
- g) the method is not appropriate for some kinds of respondents e.g. respondents whose literacy is limited;
- h) there is a greater risk of missing data, because of a lack of prompting;
- i) response rates are usually lower.

To improve the response rate, the questionnaires were accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope, a good covering letter that stated clearly the purpose of the research, and e-mail and telephone follow-ups for organisations with such facilities (see appendix 4 for a covering letter). Moreover, the questionnaires were designed and tested with my academic colleagues for their clarity and to ensure that they were free from any potentially confusing jargon. Open ended questions were limited to minimise unanswered questions. Postal questionnaires were sent to 160 residents, 12 NDC board members, 15 faith group representatives, 156 voluntary organisations, 50 elected councillors and 20 community forums. The selection criteria for each group is discussed below.

### **Residents**

The reason I chose to attempt to survey residents was based on the idea that this part of the study aimed to provide views from residents who might not be involved with the community groups I had previously surveyed. Although the response rate was not expected to be high, I felt it was important to try to contact potentially 'hard-to-reach' residents by a door-to-door survey method (I had no other way to contact them). In the

event, the response rate was too low (10%) to give any impression of a representative response. On a positive note, it did provide me with 16 responses, which I could use as 'qualitative' data even though they do not comprise a statistically useful sample.

Initially, questionnaires were distributed door-to-door to 160 households in 20 selected streets of three different post codes (7 streets from E13; 5 from E15 and 8 from E16) of the NDC area based on their higher rate of poverty indicators as analysed from the 2001 census output areas. The questionnaire was distributed door-to-door due to the fact that these residents may have been the least interested in active participation. Therefore, door-to-door distribution ensured that they received the questionnaires. These respondents were approached personally thereafter. An average of 8 households (odd or even numbers respectively) were selected from each street. After giving them a couple of days to fill the questionnaire I approached all the households to ask if they had completed it. The majority seemed not to be interested in the survey as they claimed that they were 'over-researched'[sic] by different organisations, the most recent survey being from the NDC office. A significant number of people were not even responding to my door knocking, despite the fact that I tried it at different days and times. A few others were not willing to talk to me at all. Relatively few filled in the form, either, while I waited at their door or asked me to come back to collect it. Hence, the response rate was not encouraging at all. Only 16 residents were able to fill the questionnaire and five of them also agreed to be interviewed.

There are a number of lessons and conclusions to be drawn from this experience in order to help in the design of surveys of this kind.

- a) It was impossible to get access to the personal details of residents. However, the response rate to the survey would perhaps have been better had residents been contacted by telephone for a reminder.

- b) Personal door-to-door contacts to obtain the required information and their co-operation were quite helpful although sometimes resulted in a risk of hostility.
- c) I do not know the extent to which the recipients of the questionnaire were interested or had the knowledge or capability to respond about initiatives within their local area. Indeed, my inability to judge this is likely to be one reason why response rates to this postal survey were low.
- d) I realised that to achieve a fair response rate, considerable effort and a flexible approach were required. It was necessary to make direct contact with residents at their door step although it is sometimes extremely time consuming to persuade them to co-operate, and to encourage and allow them to ask for further information that may help them respond.
- e) Research, such as this, which involves residents needs a motivational strategy in terms of incentives.

As the resident questionnaire did not provide the intended result, I redesigned my strategy to give more emphasis on data collected from voluntary organisations and agencies that represent and work with residents. However, I have not totally discarded the materials I got from the residents who responded to my questionnaires and interviews, because these provided some insights into views of respondents who do not already belong to community groups.

### **Voluntary and community groups**

Regarding voluntary and community groups, I used names and addresses of organisations from the database of the Council, which is publicly available at its web-site (<http://www.newham.gov.uk/>). During the selection of potential participant organisations, I deliberately discarded organisations whose address postcode was not in the

London Borough of Newham and those without proper postal addresses, telephone numbers or e-mail addresses. Hence, I selected 126 organisations which have valid addresses and telephone numbers. These 126 organisations were believed to be active from the Council database. Questionnaires were sent out with stamped-addressed envelopes to facilitate a response. There were also telephone and/or e-mail reminders for those who did not respond between a week and ten days. About 20 questionnaires were returned as 'unknown address', or because the organisation had moved from address held in the Council's database.

### **Other respondents**

Similarly, postal questionnaires were sent to all of the 12 NDC board members (the total number of Board Members) 9 (75%) of whom responded while, from the 20 community forums in Newham, 10 (50%) responses were received. From the sample of 15 faith groups who were sent questionnaires, 7 (47%) responded. Out of the 50 elected councillors 16 (32%) responded. Generally the average response rate was about 48% from all informants contacted.

To conduct the analysis, each questionnaire received was given a unique identity number to identify who said what, for the purpose of citations. Questions with tick boxes were entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.. All open ended responses were converted into categories that corresponded to each question to make the analysis easier and more meaningful. I have also identified main themes from open ended questions and entered the responses to the relevant themes accordingly. For those questions with closed answers it was possible to put them in tables, graphs and use basic descriptive analyses, such as reporting percentages.

#### **4.6.4. In-depth interviews**

The questionnaire responses provided useful information and helped guide the in-depth interviews as discussed in the next section. A further round of in-depth interviews was necessary to build on the knowledge I gained from postal questionnaires. The interviews aimed to gain more insights from the questionnaire respondents – residents, elected NDC board and council representatives, voluntary and faith groups – about their views of public participation, local governance, power relationships and social networks in urban regeneration programmes in general and the local NDC projects in particular. The interviews helped me to establish the current levels of participation. Initially, it was planned to conduct a total of 30 interviews, proportionally sampled from 15 voluntary and community groups, 5 board members, 5 faith groups and 5 councillors. The selection of interviewees was voluntary and based upon individual consent. The questionnaire surveys had included a section asking people if they could indicate their willingness to be interviewed. Hence, those interviewed were those who indicated their willingness to be interviewed. Nevertheless, it was only possible to interview 23 people out of 30 initially planned as the rest were not available to be interviewed. Where possible, these interviews were recorded using a Dictaphone. A total of 23 people were interviewed as follows:

Voluntary & community groups = 10 (7 recorded and 3 not recorded)

Faith Groups = 3 (not recorded)

Elected Councillors = 5 (not recorded)

Board and Forum members = 5 (4 recorded and 1 not recorded)

Total = 23 (11 recorded and 12 not recorded)



The interviewees' experiences, stories, views and feelings about public and community participation and related issues in the past and the present were assessed. The key themes of the interviews followed-up details from the initial questionnaires and explored the type, levels, problems and opportunities of participation, local governance arrangements, power relationships and social networks experienced by the interviewee as individuals or as part of a group. Half of the interviews were tape recorded. All interviews that were not recorded were noted in writing while the interviewee was speaking. All the main points were noted and written up immediately or on the same day that the interview took place. The main themes of the questions were the same for each category of people regardless of whether the interview was recorded. All tape-recorded interviews were transcribed. However, answers that were not directly relevant to the question were discarded. The text was analysed using a coding strategy.

#### **4.6.5. Non-participatory observation**

The purpose of the **observation** was to collect evidence on ways in which people participate in the decision making processes and to analyse whether the participatory procedures and individual behaviours are consistent with findings from previous research. The observation site/group was selected based on the views initially collected from the pilot survey, questionnaires and interviews. One of the core points emphasised by most of the respondents was the strength of community forums and their potential for partnership work with other voluntary and statutory agencies in Newham. Therefore, I decided to attend the meetings of the West Ham Community Forum and the West Ham and Plaistow NDC Steering Committee meetings on two separate occasions. However, due to the similarity of the organisation of all the ten Community Forums in Newham, I found it to be a too repetitive and an extremely time consuming exercise to observe all.

For this reason, and based on the experience of West Ham Forum, instead of observing all of the ten community forums, I chose to attend all the meetings of *Newham Civic Partnership*. This was because representatives of all community forums, councillors and representatives of voluntary and faith groups, are members of this partnership. In addition to the above two sites for observation, I also observed on two different occasions the Newham *Mayor's Question Time*. As a researcher, my role on both occasions at the Community Forums and Civic Partnership meetings was non-participatory in activities and meetings of the group. As Bowling (2002:358) puts it, observation is one of the research methods in which the researcher 'systematically watches, listens to and records the phenomenon of interest'. To avoid the ethical questions of concealment, I was honest about my role in the group. However, I did not participate in discussions to influence the directions of decision making in one way or another. I sought consent from the group organisers to carry out my non-participative observation.

To make the observation systematic and consistent, I prepared a checklist to record each activity and meeting and a rating scale to evaluate the outcomes of the participation exercises (see Table 3). Both the checklist and the rating scale covered the following areas:

- the styles, the purpose, the individual and group dynamics and the methods of the participatory activities;
- the level of power relationships and mechanisms of empowerment of participants i.e. in relation to Arnstein's ladder (Arnstein, 1969);
- the mechanism by which decisions were executed and the types and levels of feedback and follow-ups undertaken.

Each checklist and rating was documented for reference and analysis and was eventually used as evidence for my research. The checklist helped to record activities and

situations as they were happening. Moreover, it was important to make a comparison between different participatory activities, and to consider how a certain type of activity is more appropriate to certain groups. Another key focus was to locate the level participation in the Arnstein ladder of citizen participation. Generally, the observation exercises helped to analyse empirically what is known in theory regarding the behaviours of individual participants and power holders in a variety of participatory settings.

**Table 3. Sample Standard Observation Checklist**

Date				
Venue				
Time of meeting	Start		Finish	
Number of Attendants	Committee Members		Newham Council Officers	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Pre-meeting activities	e.g. refreshment, networking, counselling			
Chaired by				
Discussion – entry	e.g. introduction to the agenda, guest speakers			
Discussion – exit	e.g. setting the date for the next meeting			
Individual dynamics	- The active or passive participation of individuals			
Group Dynamics	- The active or passive participation of small groups			
Guest speaker's topic				
The quality of information given	a) high b) moderate c) low			
Time allocation for questions	a) sufficient b) not sufficient			
Time for discussion on issues raised	a) sufficient b) not sufficient			
Decision on issues raised				
Level of participation (ranking rate)	a) high b) moderate c) low			
Follow-up mechanism	a) exists b) not existed			
Meeting settings				
Meeting goals	a) achieved b) not achieved			
My general impression (rating)	a) high b) moderate c) low			
Comment on weaknesses				
Possible remedies to weaknesses				
Comment on strengths				
Lesson to learn from strengths				
General Comment				

#### **4.6.6. Data analysis**

As each of the data collection methods was aimed at a particular area of the research, it was possible to tally similar answers to similar questions. Then the answers were categorised into themes, which helps to identify the most relevant materials from a large text of answers. The main issues raised by initial in-depth interviews also helped me to identify the key themes, which my observation needed to consider.

One of the respondent groups for the postal questionnaire was the voluntary organisations in the London Borough of Newham. The majority of these organisations have engaged their service users and members in a variety of ways. These organisations have used different engagement methods of which the most popular were special consultation events, surveys, open days, workshops, information stalls and users forums. A total of 56 voluntary organisations (44% of the 126 contacted) completed the questionnaires, representing a wide range of activities and interests among the residents of Newham. The majority of these respondents were working for young and older people, families, refugees, lone parents, homeless people and other community groups (see Table 4). There were a few agencies working with people with mental health problems, substance misuse, the unemployed and carers. From the respondent organisations 34 (69%) were members of a local or national umbrella organisations (e.g. Newham Voluntary Sector Consortium, or London Citizens) while the rest did not belong to any umbrella groups.

**Table: 4. Organisations responding to the postal questionnaire by the type of their service users.**

	<b>Organisation Service Users</b>	<b>Total number of organisation</b>	<b>%</b>
1	Young People	27	55
2	Older People	25	51
3	Women	25	51
4	Men	25	51
5	Children	22	45
6	Refugees	21	43
7	Lone Parents	16	33
8	Faith Groups	12	24
9	Homeless People	11	22
10	Community Groups	4	8
11	People with Disability	4	8
12	Other Voluntary Groups	3	6
13	Black & Ethnic Minority Groups	2	4
14	Carers	2	4
15	People with problem of Substance Misuse	1	2
16	Unemployed People	1	2
17	Tenants	1	2
18	Parents	1	2
19	People with problem of Alcohol Misuse	1	2
20	People with Mental Health Problem	1	2

As far as the legal status of the organisations is concerned, 34 (69%) were registered charities, 11 (22%) were both registered charities and limited companies by guarantee while 2 (4%) organisations were associates of a national organisation. However, there were 8 (16%) organisations who were constituted but not registered. The participating organisation had been in existence for between 1 year and 125 years, the average being 26 years. The annual budget also varied from organisation to organisation. A total of 20 (41%) of the organisations had an annual budget in excess of £250,000, while 15 (30%) of the organisations had a budget of less than £50,000. The rest 13 (26%) had a budget between £50,000-£250,000 per annum.

In summary, (as shown the Table 5.) the overall strategy hangs together as follows (as a sequential approach to mixed methods research):

- a) a pilot phase comprising:-
  - i) the statistical analysis of the small area data on Newham which helped me to select my study area and to see the local conditions in Newham in the wider London context,
  - ii) an initial key informant survey to identify important issues about participation as seen by respondents on the ground.
- b) a more extensive survey phase, using semi-structured and unstructured surveys (questionnaires and interviews) to collect information on perceptions of a wide range of stakeholders in the Newham regeneration areas that were studied, comprising:-
  - i) an extension of the 'key informant' survey to include more informants in a wider range of agencies and organisations in the local system;
  - ii) an attempt to use a door to door survey to collect 'lay views' from members of the public who may not belong to any of the voluntary interest groups I have covered in the study (although the response rate was very low, I attempted to survey a relatively large number; the small sample meant I only obtained selective impressions of public opinion among local residents);
  - iii) a survey of all the voluntary groups I have been able to identify representing community groups in Newham (not all of which replied, but which provided a reasonably large sample).
- c) observation of participation processes on the ground to explore how my impressions of participation compared with the views of my informants.

The different elements in (b) and (c) were used as part of a triangulation strategy to get a good understanding of participative processes from different points of view.

**Table 5. – Summary of data collection process**

Type of data	Source	Purpose	How does it inform this thesis
Demographic (age, sex, Ethnicity etc.) for small areas in London including for Newham (see chapter 4 section 4.6.1)	Census (Office of National Statistics)	- to establish the changes and trends of the demographic composition of Newham population and its association with poverty and inequalities	- ethnic, gender and age variation in relation to poverty and health inequality small areas in Newham and relevant for this project. The data helped to identify areas in Newham with high levels of poverty and deprivation. - the association of ill-health and variables of poverty/deprivation relevant to this project
Indicators of public Participation and social networking (see chapter 6 section 6.5)	Trends of Local and London-wide electoral data, ONS (migration related data)	- to establish the level of participation and/or non-participation as well as the strength of social networking	- the scope and level of public and patient participation and social capital locally
Key informants/ Pilot survey	People living and/or working in Newham who are involved in or who have knowledgeable about regeneration	- to explore their views of how effective regeneration in Newham has been; - to gather views on impacts, and problems of public and community participation and social networking in Newham regeneration; - to explore views on “ideal” practices of participation and individual, groups and organisational networking.	- The need for <i>inclusive research</i> (addressing the issues of hard-to-reach groups) - The need for <i>mixed research methods</i> to reach as many people as possible using different approaches - The need for <i>co-operative inquiry</i> (residents and stakeholders) to include participants in the research process.
Postal Questionnaires	Residents, NDC Board members, voluntary Organisation representatives, faith groups, elected councillors	- to identify the level and types of public and community participation in the London Borough of Newham  - to explore gaps in the levels and types of participation practices	- The extent to which participation is seen to be contributing or not contributing to local regeneration activities - The participation level of the public in localised regeneration initiatives. - identify whether respondents believe participation would influence changes in local policy intervention
In-depth Interviews	Residents, NDC Board members, voluntary	- to gain more and detailed insights from respondents who participated in the questionnaire	- The interviewees experiences, stories, views, and feelings about public and

	Organisation and faith group representatives and elected councillors.	survey about their views of public participation and social networks in local regeneration programmes.	community participation, and levels of social network in past and present. - covers details of the type, levels, problems and opportunities of participation and social networks experienced by the interviewee as individuals or as part of a group.
Group Observation	Representatives of Residents and Regeneration Stakeholders in Newham	- to establish a set of evidence in a practical participatory situation.  - to identify the style and level of participation in representative settings against other forms of direct participatory activities in Newham.	- the styles, purpose, the individual and group dynamics and structure of the participatory activities - the mechanisms of empowering or dis-empowering participants - the mechanism in which decisions are executed and the types and levels of feedback and follow-ups undertaken

#### **4.7. Positionality**

I have lived in different parts of Newham for more than fifteen years. I have worked half of these years in Newham in a Community Development role. I have witnessed many aspects of change. Consequently, I was aware that I may be positively or negatively influenced by my past and current experience while doing this research. I was also clear that my male gender and black ethnicity may have some influence. McDowell and Sharp (1997) argued that in some circumstances researchers are precluded from gathering certain types of information because of their gender or ethnicity. This was anticipated to be the case in my situation as a male and black researcher. However, it was also anticipated that I may be well placed in this particular research project due to my previous professional background or as a resident of the area. Therefore, I regularly assessed my research position to assess whether my gender, ethnicity or residence had any negative or positive influence in gathering information which was of vital importance to my research. Generally, my previous knowledge of people in the



study area was helpful in order to access their time or to gain the information I needed. However, I did not compromise ethical issues due to my position in the research settings, as is discussed in the next section.

#### **4.8. Ethical issues and limitations**

As my research was empirical rather than purely theoretical and it involved other people, ethical considerations were unavoidable (Burton, 2000:73). Initially the main ethical issue that I anticipated might arise from this research was the relationship between myself as a researcher and the research participants. As basic ethical principles (Bryman, 2001:479), I carefully considered issues such as the risk of harm to participants, the need for informed consent, the need to avoid invasion of privacy and deception.

Although broadly concerned with aspects of the well-being of Newham's population, this research did not use patient-based NHS records for analysis and hence did not require Medical Research Ethics Committee approval.<sup>1</sup> Instead, I adopted a relevant professional code of conduct (i.e. that of the Royal Geographical Society and the Social Research Association) to follow in close consultation with my academic supervisors. I also needed to consider the legal and insurance-related implications throughout the research process.

The Social Research Association, for example, has stipulated that ethical principles in research are based on an 'obligation to society; funders and employers; colleagues and to subjects'. I carefully considered how to balance these obligations fairly and properly. All research has ethical dimensions and poses ethical questions.

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<sup>1</sup> This research commenced prior to the introduction of new procedures for dealing with ethical issues in research introduced at Queen Mary, University of London. See <http://www.qmul.ac.uk/research/ethics/> (site Accessed 6 December 2008).

For example, it was difficult to consider the research free from a degree of value judgement or in a politically neutral way. As Robson, (2002: 72) points out, ‘the actual choice of a research project and the kind of research questions asked involves value judgement’. Robson further argued that ‘a topic is chosen because it is viewed as more worthwhile than another’. However, by doing a regular self assessment of my position in the research and implementing professional codes of conduct, I aimed to ensure that the ethical issues have been properly dealt with. For practical purposes, I had prepared and used an ethical considerations checklist (log-book) to ensure and monitor whether the ethical guidelines I was following were properly implemented. The criteria I used before and after the field work included:

- ensuring voluntary and informed consent to participate or not to participate in the research process,
- keeping the identity of participants confidential,
- ensuring that the research did not inflict physical or psychological harm on participants or beneficiaries of the research,
- avoiding invasion of privacy during and after the process of the research,
- avoiding taking information from participants in a deceptive way or deliberately mis-using the information.

Given the nature of the research, there were no sensitive data of a personal nature to be analysed and interpreted. Therefore, the question of confidentiality was not paramount in relation to exposing the research subjects to social, physical or psychological harm. Nevertheless, as people expressing frank views to me might compromise themselves professionally, I decided not reveal their identity.

The guidelines of The British Social Research Association, (2003:27) state that “inquiries involving human subjects should be based as far as practicable on the freely

given informed consent of subjects”. Hence, I required voluntary consent from participants by sending a letter individually. The letter sought their full consent and made them aware of the risks associated with involvement in the research.. The letter (Appendix 4):

- informed participants in advance about the purpose of the research,
- clearly stated that they have every right to refuse to take part,
- informed participants about the College procedures that they can follow to complain about any concerns they might have
- informed them that they can obtain feedback on the results, conclusions and recommendations if requested.

The role of participants in interviews and questionnaires has been acknowledged at all stages of the research. I was clear from the beginning that findings, conclusions and recommendations could be shared with those involved if needed

#### **4.9. Conclusion**

This chapter has mapped out how the research questions were addressed through different research methods and approaches of inquiry. This has been demonstrated firstly by drawing upon the reasons behind the selection of Newham as the case study area. Being the most deprived borough, Newham has attracted many regeneration initiatives over the years. As a borough where more than one hundred different languages are spoken and where there is a great diversity of ethnic and cultural groups, the chapter has highlighted how Newham offers a particularly instructive context within which to explore issues of public participation in local regeneration initiatives.

To address the research questions in full, the approach used mixed methods including secondary sources, pilot surveys, postal questionnaires, interviews and observation. The data analysis has also applied the principles of pragmatic philosophical approach to make the study complete. The advantages of the mixed methods approach for this kind of study has been discussed. Finally the chapter has critically outlined the issues of my position as a researcher and resident of the area as well as some of the ethical issues and limitations attached to the study.

The next chapter sets out some of the main findings of the research including the impacts of area-based regeneration in Newham, the levels of participation, and the nature of participation and local governance within the study area.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **AREA-BASED REGENERATION AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF NEWHAM**

#### **5.1. Introduction**

For socially and economically excluded people, their priority in their day-to-day lives is likely to be the individual struggle to survive, rather than to be part of wider societal engagement with the process of economic development. Therefore, the impacts of poverty, inequality and exclusion on the participation of individuals and groups in urban regeneration processes are significant. Public participation in a society would arguably help regeneration initiatives to be more responsive. Participation also helps society to take responsibility for the decisions mutually decided upon and to monitor the outcomes of these decisions.

The chapter examines the role of public participation in urban regeneration in the London Borough of Newham. It starts by offering a general introduction to the borough and examples of current and past regeneration initiatives. It critically analyses the impacts of these initiatives. The chapter also explores some of the perceptions of my informants in relation to previous area-based regeneration in the borough, highlighting areas of achievement and concern. Additionally, it discusses the existing levels of public participation as the research respondents perceive them. The chapter describes and critically assesses some of the structures that have been set up in Newham to support public participation in policy making for regeneration, and it also reports the views of my informants concerning the local governance arrangement in executing the decision making process. These findings are considered together with the results of my field observa-

tions of selected arrangements for the current engagement of local people in regeneration initiatives. This forms a context to some of the recommendations made later in the thesis. In chapter seven there is further discussion of some of the exemplary practices reported by local voluntary sector organisations working to enhance public participation. The final section also discusses the level of public participation in relation to initiatives in Newham over the years. Overall the chapter outlines some of the key findings of the study in determining the level of public participation, participatory processes and the way that local governance structures are responsive to local issues.

## **5.2. The London Borough of Newham**

The London Borough of Newham is located in the East End of London. In 1965, the two independent boroughs of East and West Ham merged to create the current London Borough of Newham. According to the mid-2001 population estimate released in October 2002 by the *Office of National Statistics*, Newham has a total population of 244,300. This includes the highest percentage of young people (16- 24 of age) (26%) and the lowest percentage of working age population (63%) among inner London boroughs.

Furthermore, Newham has the highest proportion of non-white ethnic groups in the country, with 61% of the population drawn from Mixed, Asian or Asian British, Black or Black British, Chinese or other minority ethnic groups. Newham has the second highest proportion of Asian people among local authorities in England and Wales, with the second largest proportion of Bangladeshis in England and Wales (ranked second only after Tower Hamlets, an adjacent borough). According to a local history published by Newham Council web page (<http://www.newham.gov.uk/Topics/RegeneratingNewham/>), during the World War II,

a quarter of the dwellings were destroyed as a result of bombing and the population had declined. For example, in 1939 West Ham had a total population of 294,278, while after the war in 1951 there were only 170,993 in the same area.. Many of the houses existing today were built after the war. By 1959, about one third of the houses that have been destroyed during the war had been replaced including the biggest development: the Keir Hardie Estate in Canning Town neighbourhood. The same source indicated that the migration of people from Commonwealth countries in the 1960's to fill the labour shortages. East African Asians who were expelled from Uganda by Idi Amin in mid 1970s brought new settlers into Newham. In the late 1980s and the whole of 1990s many refugees from Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe have settled in the borough which also influenced the ethnic, demographic and socio-economic landscape of Newham.

Newham has attracted significant public and private investment through different regeneration programmes since the end of the war. It is difficult to determine the exact amount spent on regeneration and what proportion of total government investment it accounts for. However, according to Butler & Rustin (1996), over the last twenty years Newham received a huge amount of regeneration investment mainly through government schemes. In 1981 the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) was set up to regenerate Docklands and adjacent areas including the Newham neighbourhoods of Beckton and the Royal Docks (Foster, 1999). They were active in the area until 1998, building houses, community facilities, specialist Community Centres, entertainment complexes, but principally promoting commercial developments in partnership with the private sector. The opening of The *ExCel Exhibition Centre* in 2000 was part of the regeneration of the area. Furthermore, Stratford Town Centre and the Green Street area have benefited from the 1990s regeneration activities like City Challenge and the Single Regeneration Budget Fund. Many of the transport improvement

programmes including Stratford Station and the Jubilee Line extension are part of the regeneration initiatives from which Newham has benefited over the last fifteen years. London City Airport, built in the former docks and opened in 1987, links Newham with the rest of the country and Europe.

At the time of undertaking the principal fieldwork for this research (2006–2007), the Forest Gate Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) 6 programme, the West Ham and Plaistow *New Deal for Communities* Scheme, and other local initiatives were being carried out to respond to the socio-economic needs of local residents (some of these are discussed in more detail below). Nevertheless, the borough is still one of the most deprived in London. There are still significant health inequalities and high levels of deprivation in pocket areas of Newham, as discussed in chapter five of this thesis.

I found it necessary to review some of the recent regeneration initiatives in Newham for the following reasons. Firstly, Newham, as one of the most deprived boroughs of London, has attempted various regeneration strategies to improve the life of its residents. Secondly, there was a range of different regeneration initiatives undertaken (and many more had been undertaken in the past); this varied experience of regeneration initiatives is relevant to some of the research questions I posed for this project as it indicates future trends as well. As indicated above, the London Borough of Newham has a long history of tackling problems of an urban nature (Butler and Rustin, 1996). Central government initiatives which benefited the people of Newham include those focused on rehabilitating the physical infrastructures after the Borough was devastated by World War II. Following the war, a large stock of housing was built to replace that which had been destroyed during the hostilities. However, since 1960s the regeneration emphasis shifted to tackle the decline in industries previously based around the old docks in Newham, and urban poverty in selected geographical areas, like Canning Town and the



south of the Borough. Since then, Newham has had various projects that address many issues of poverty and multiple deprivation through central government support and area focused regeneration activities. These initiatives include; the work of *Urban Development Corporations* (1981–1998); *City Challenge* (1992–1998); Single Regeneration Budget Fund (SRB) (1994-2006); different *Action Zones* for Health (1997), Education (1998), etc; *Sure Start* (since 1998); and *New Deal for Communities* (since 1999). All these programmes had different specific objectives, approaches and implementation schedules but shared a common goal of tackling inner city social and economic problems (Parkinson, 2001:47-51; Fearnley, 2000).

*The Urban Development Corporations (UDCs)* as a regeneration initiative were established under the *Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980*. Their specific aims were to regenerate land and buildings for the use of existing and new businesses that enable people to work and live in the area with much improved living conditions. As far as the governance of the corporations was concerned, the management Boards who ran the UDCs were appointed by the then Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions. The UDCs were accountable directly to the government department with no public participation element at the local and/or national level (Brindley and et al. 1996). The *London Docklands Development Corporation* (LDDC, 1981-1998), which covered parts of Newham, was one of the first two urban development corporations (the other was on Merseyside). According to Brindley et al (1996:96) the role of the LDDC was

*“the preparation and marketing of development sites, often involving major reclamation works and the provision of suitable infrastructure, thereby turning large areas of worthless and derelict land into viable propositions for speculative property developers.”*

In Newham according to Brindley et al. (1996:111) the last area to attract commercial redevelopment by the LDDC was “the Royal Docks...drained in the 1970s and regenerated to become a residential suburb.”

The LDDC programme facilitated the development of large numbers of family houses, community centres and superstores like ASDA were built. By the end of 1987 some 3,700 new houses had been completed, adding considerably to Beckton’s 6,500 population. A lot of activities were carried out in Newham by the LDDC without the input of the public in the decision making processes or activities associated with it. This was due to the fact that the governance arrangements were such that the LDDC took over legal planning powers from the local authority, which divorced area planning from the local democratic processes.

Some of the activities had direct as well as indirect benefits to the people of Newham. For instance, the LDDC were involved in a range of activities, including the development of the Canary Wharf commercial complex (in adjacent Tower Hamlets), the Jubilee Line Extension, and Docklands Light Railway (which connects Newham to Canary Wharf), construction of about 30,000 new houses, including those in the Beckton area of Newham and creation of jobs for local people. The UDCs, and hence the LDDC, were phased out in 1998 following the Labour government’s change in urban policy which gave more emphasis to social inclusion and neighbourhood renewal (Jonas and Ward, 2002; see chapter 3 for further discussion of shifts in urban policy).

Other initiatives during the 1990s included the introduction of *City Challenge* in 1991 as a new urban regeneration initiative. This was an indication of a shift in urban policy from an emphasis on commercial property development carried out by Urban Development Corporations to an approach directly addressing the problems of inner urban communities in a more ‘people-centred’ way (Fearnley, 2000). Yet, consistent with

a free-market approach, *City Challenge* funds were sought through a competitive bidding process.

As an area-based regeneration initiative funded under this scheme, *Stratford City Challenge* was selected on the basis of the significant urban problems in the area as compared to similar areas in Newham, which included high unemployment and high crime rates. The main objectives of the *Stratford City Challenge* regeneration initiative were to regenerate the area, which was viewed as having significant development potential, and provide disadvantaged residents with access to decent housing, employment opportunities, leisure and community centres. The latter were to be achieved by adopting specific projects like *Stratford Village* i.e. a housing project and *Stratford Advice Arcade* (a multi purpose office facilities). Although *City Challenge* initiatives limited the role of local authorities and encouraged the involvement of the private sector, nevertheless, there was a new emphasis on involving and giving power to the local community i.e. the idea of community empowerment (Davies, J.S. 2003; Fearnley, 2000). The scheme aimed for a 'joined-up' partnership of local authorities, local businesses, the voluntary sector and local communities. The development of the *Stratford Shopping Centre*, which improved the facilities for many new businesses and their customers, is one of the significant achievements of the *City Challenge* regeneration initiative in the area.

In 1994 another regeneration policy initiative was put in place. About twenty independently operated regeneration programmes across different departments of the central government were brought together into a *Single Regeneration Budget* (SRB) to be run by a single government department (Osborne et al. 2006; Davies, 2003). The SRB was the direct responsibility of the government department and has two main operational divisions, with two different delivery mechanisms. On the one hand, *English*

*Partnerships* was concerned to bring about economic regeneration, particularly in urban areas, through land and property-driven initiatives. On the other hand, the largest sponsor in terms of expenditure was known as the *SRB Challenge Fund*. Unlike other regeneration strategies the *Challenge Fund* was operated solely by the then Department of Environment, Transport and Regions (DETR) with no other agency involved. The ground rules, strategy and overall funding allocation were determined by the government. At the local level, a partnership involving community input was a requirement (Smith and Beazley, 2000). Newham has benefited from different phases of SRB regeneration initiatives in many parts of the borough, including Green Street and, most recently, a SRB 6 programme dedicated to regenerate Forest Gate area (SRB 6 was the final phase of the Single Regeneration Budget Challenge Fund).

In 1997, as a Labour Government flagship policy, *Action Zones* were set up as area focused social regeneration programmes, mainly for the most deprived boroughs and localities such as Newham (South, Fairfax and Green, 2005; Geddes and Root, 2000; Perrons and Skyers, 2005). In Newham, these included an *Education Action Zone*, *Enterprise Action Zone*, *Community Safety Action Zone* and a *Health Action Zone* for the East London and City Health Authority. Action Zones were a key component of the government's urban policy agenda and have played an important role in urban regeneration. For instance, *Health Action Zones* put innovative programmes in place to deliver improved health and welfare in some of the most deprived communities, through collaborative working. This results in better health outcomes, improved services and more efficient use of resources. In a similar way, *Education Action Zones* have helped to build constructive relationships between training and education service providers and local authorities. . As one of its strategic objectives the *Education Action Zone* gave emphasis to partnership working between different agencies – empowering people and

giving them the tools to take greater responsibility for their own education and training needs.

The regeneration initiatives in Newham gained further momentum following the award of *Olympics 2012* to London in July 2005. East London as a whole and Newham in particular will benefit from this new and huge regeneration programme. Together with neighbouring boroughs Newham will be a key location for the staging of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympics Games. According to the master-plan from Newham Council, the venues for eighteen of the sports from a total of twenty six will be located within or in close proximity to the Olympic Park to be created in the Lower Lea Valley. Almost two thirds of the land area of the Olympic Park lies within Newham including the sites of key facilities such as the Olympic Stadium and the Aquatics Centre. A large proportion of the Olympic Village including the International Broadcasting and Media Press Centre will also be within the Borough. It is claimed that this huge development will not only be an opportunity to establish infrastructures through physical regeneration but also help in creating jobs for local people (The Newham Council, 2004). At the time of writing, in addition to initiatives related to Olympics, there is the wider programme of regeneration of the Thames Gateway London Partnership that consists of 12 local authorities managed by London Development Agency will help to develop new commercial and residential areas and create jobs. According to Keith 2004:1

*“the Thames Gateway sub-region has been described as the largest urban regeneration programme in Europe and the heart of this transformation. By virtue of its tracts of brown-field ex-industrial land, the area is cast as the location of both the greater part of London’s economic development and the site for somewhere between 50,000 and 100,000 new homes in the next 15 years”.*

Newham will be one of the key beneficiaries of this regeneration initiative. According to *Focus in Newham*, published by the London Borough of Newham (2005), most of Newham including, Stratford, Canning Town, Silver Town, Royal Docks and East

Beckton will be regenerated by a range of initiatives in the coming fifteen to twenty years time. New and existing transport links that include the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (opened 2007), planned extensions of the Docklands Light Railway and the proposed Thames Gateway Bridge will bring a significant social and economic benefit for the people of Newham. However, several of these initiatives, including extensions to the Docklands Light Railway and the construction of the Thames Gateway Bridge, were shelved by the Mayor of London in November 2008, in preference to other transport projects, such as Crossrail. These various initiatives do not include any radical new approaches to public participation and mainly involve the usual information giving method which is lower strand of citizen participation according to the Arnstein (1969) ladder.

Various regeneration initiatives are currently underway in Newham. A 1.2 million sq metres mixed development, which will form the core of a new metropolitan centre for East London in Stratford, north west of the Borough is to be constructed. This development will include the 4,800 new homes (30% of which will be affordable housing); a retail shopping centre; hotel and leisure facilities; offices and commercial spaces; and community provisions including health and education facilities. Parks, open space and water features are also incorporated into the master-plan. It is claimed that these regeneration activities in Stratford city will attract a huge amount of inward investment aimed at improving the quality of life of local people in a comprehensive manner (London Borough of Newham, 2005).

In the South of the borough Canning Town and Custom House are areas of post war council-built housing stock which are being regenerated mainly through Council led initiatives. In the process of these regeneration initiatives residents were informed about the plans and their elected Estate representative consulted. A 60 hectares area has

been identified for redevelopment led by the Council itself to create a high quality residential environment as well as for infrastructure improvements and the re-design of the actual town centre of Canning Town. It is a programme based on investment of over £2bn of development funds from the government and local authority. When completed there will be a higher housing density and therefore a larger population than currently, with up to 6,200 new homes and apartments replacing 1,900 existing dwellings. This particular regeneration initiative is aimed at bringing Canning Town Station to the heart of the town centre and redeveloping the area as a residential quarter. This is a programme which is being carried out where there is a high rate of deprivation. It will be the first significant regeneration programme in the Canning Town area. Canning Town has strong neighbourhood groups who have been invited to comment on Master-plan. At the time of writing, the Canning Town and Custom House Regeneration Project Residents' Charter, which detailed how the local residents would be engaged in the decision making process, has been put fully in place. The regeneration will provide a large stock of housing for the existing residents and for new comers.

*The Silvertown Quays regeneration*, which is located on the south side of the Royal Victoria Dock and comprises 20.4 hectares of land, aims to construct about 5,000 new homes, including key worker and social rented housing, approximately 800 hotel bedrooms, office space and local shops as well as community facilities including a primary school, library and new health centre (London Borough of Newham (2005). This is a London Development Agency initiative in close collaboration with Newham Council and most of its initiatives are planned to be completed in late 2008 (The London Development Agency, 2005).

*The Royal Quay waterfront development* is located adjacent to the Royal Albert Dock Basin at Gallions Approach, which is in the south of the Borough. The develop-

ment is mainly residential with proposals for 444 residential units of which 15% will be shared equity units, 5% social rented units and a further 5% rented offsite (London Borough of Newham, 2005 and The London Development Agency, 2005). The London Development Agency in collaboration with interested business is the owner of this particular initiative. The development is due for completion in late 2009.

*The Royal Albert Basin* comprises a group of sites located at the eastern end of the Royal Albert and King George V Docks forming one of the most significant regeneration opportunities in London Docklands. A development framework has been prepared for the London Borough of Newham and the site owner. The London Development Agency proposes a space for 2,530 residential units and 500 live/work units, of which up to 50 per cent would be 'affordable housing'. This particular regeneration initiative, in addition to a total of 71,000 sq m. of commercial/industrial floor space is planned to create around 2,700 jobs in the area (London Borough of Newham, 2005; Royal Dock Trust (London), 2005 and Mayor of London, 2004). This regeneration is led by Royal Dock Trust (London) in collaboration with the London borough of Newham.

Major hotel developments totalling up to 1,200 beds have been completed at the *ExCel Centre* adjacent to the Royal Victoria Dock. Planning permission has also been granted for approximately 1,400 residential units and much of this is now being developed (Georgian House Hotel - Excel Centre Docklands, 2005). Currently these residential units are completed.

*The Royals Business Park* is a development underway on a 20 hectare (50 acre) site on a mile long waterfront stretch to the north of the Royal Albert Dock. The master-plan for the site proposes eight development phases of which the first phase of offices was completed in 2005. Upon completion, the whole development is projected to ac-



commodate approximately 8,000 office workers (The London Development Agency, 2003 and The London Development Agency, 2004).

All of the above regeneration initiatives have their own areas of particular emphasis. For some, the main emphasis is affordable residential houses while for the others it is about building offices and community facilities. All of these regeneration activities are partnership initiatives between Newham Council, the London Development Agency and the Royal Dock Trust (London). As with many other regeneration initiatives, public participation is limited in terms of direct participation in the decision making process of the above initiatives. However, local businesses, voluntary and community organisations and local elected councillors are represented as board members on individual programmes of the initiatives. The level of direct public participation in these regeneration activities varies. For example the Canning Town Regeneration programme seems advanced in setting mechanisms of public participation through four neighbourhood groups instead of heavily rely on its board members.

*New Deal for Communities (NDC)* is a recent government programme to tackle multiple deprivation as a result of poor job prospects; high levels of crime; educational under-achievement; poor health; and problems with housing and the physical environment. The programme was established to achieve its objectives through community involvement and ownership, joined up working and long-term commitment to deliver real change (Foley, 1999; Foley and Martin, 2000; Hulls, 1999). *The West Ham and Plaistow New Deal for Communities* is one of such initiatives in the London Borough of Newham (which I will discuss in detail later on ) that aspires to involve residents from the outset. The programme will come to an end by the year 2010 with a total budget of £54 million to benefit 4,000 households in the West Ham and Plaistow neighbourhoods of Newham (West Ham and Plaistow New Deal for Communities, 1999). The West

Ham and Plaistow NDC is one of the major regeneration schemes currently underway in the Borough. This regeneration programme has a clear business plan which includes involvement of local people in the decision making process.

The London Borough of Newham, as one of the most deprived boroughs of London, has benefited from initiatives that emphasise different aspects of regeneration. The West Ham and Plaistow NDC programme is a unique initiative in its implementation structure and the areas it covers. Such a variety of initiatives with different levels of public participation approaches are some of the reasons why Newham has been chosen for this particular study.

Generally, the current and the forthcoming regeneration initiatives in Newham are expected to impact positively on the lives of local residents. The Olympics and the Thames Gateway schemes will hugely change the built environment of Newham in the coming years. As a result of this regeneration initiative, the profile of the residents of Newham will continue to alter in years to come. As part of the rhetoric of these regeneration agencies, it is claimed that many of jobs and business opportunities will help to boost the local economy for good. When more people choose to work and live in Newham social cohesion and networks will likely be strengthened. Strong social cohesion and networks will help to enhance individual and group engagement in issues of communal nature. Well engaged and well connected communities are expected to develop a sustainable and prosperous society. At the same time it is likely that some people will be displaced from their residential area – both voluntarily and involuntarily – and lose their established social networks. This displacement will be mainly as a result of high housing prices and the associated potential risk of gentrification as a result of the attraction of new social groups to the area. According to Buroni, (2004) based on his Health Impact Assessment of the Olympics areas, there are other social, demographic

and environmental factors associated with some regeneration programmes that may be damaging to health/wellbeing of local people. These impacts include “risk from communicable disease, exposure to increased pollution and risk from construction activities and traffic” (Buroni, 2004:68). Some of the major regeneration programmes will have a positive impact for the people of Newham. On the other hand, unless the local population are fully engaged from the very beginning in the decision making processes, all this regeneration effort may be of little social or economic benefit.

It is evident that poverty is still prevalent in many areas of Newham despite a number of previous initiatives. The question is why these area-based regeneration efforts did not reduce the poverty gap and cut the circle of multiple deprivation. Symbolically, it is significant that Newham is only a few miles away from the well-known landmark of Canary Warf where multi-national corporations and media groups are congregated. How can poverty exist alongside such exuberant displays of wealth? My research argues for the importance of public participation, good local governance, equitable power relationships and well developed social capital in influencing the success of area-based regeneration initiatives in places like Newham. The role of locally based voluntary and community groups in helping the capacity of residents to participate and strengthen the decision making process is proved to be of vital importance. By learning from the past initiatives, it is possible to develop ideal models of participation, good governance and empowerment and social networks and hence this is one theme my research seeks to address (see research questions, chapter 1).

### **5.3. Area-based regeneration in Newham and its impacts**

In the first phase of the field research, key informants were asked ten sets of questions (see Appendix 1) followed by detailed face to face interviews to investigate

their views about the fundamental issues of regeneration in Newham in general, and the issues of public and community participation in particular. The questions cover the present and past regeneration initiatives in Newham; whether residents are informed and involved in the decision making process; factors that hindered community participation; which groups were thought to be under-represented in the participatory process; what effective participation meant to local people; and the role of partnerships in the context of Newham regeneration.

The participants of the pilot survey (key informants survey), identified what they thought were achievements by the past and present regeneration programmes in Newham. These included: physical regeneration and infrastructure development, significant inward investment for public services and helping people back to work. The physical regeneration of derelict and run-down areas with new office, residential and business buildings, improved transportation facilities are seen in many parts of Newham. Similar questions put to other participants at later stages in the research also produced similar responses about what had been the achievements of past regeneration schemes in the Borough. An interviewee from a voluntary sector agency pointed out:

*“The inward investment coming into Newham through regeneration is significantly high as compared to other neighbouring boroughs. Newham received more money for regeneration compared to other authorities in the whole of England and Wales. There have been regeneration programmes in Newham for 30 to 40 years” (In-11).*

Although difficult to establish the exact amount of financial investment coming into Newham, nevertheless, respondents were well aware of physical regeneration and infrastructure developments in many parts of the borough over the last twenty years or so. Informants referred to some of these significant physical developments: the upgrading of the shopping centres, the improvements to streetlights, the improvement of the rail link in Stratford, the Green Street area regeneration, the rebuilding of West Ham Foot-

ball Ground, and the SRB6 project in Forest Gate, as good examples. Respondents also agreed that the improvement of West Ham Station and Silverlink Services (now part of the London Over-ground network) and the extension of the Jubilee Line have helped the economic and social development of Newham.

Furthermore, informants of the pilot survey also identified developments in the local built environment and housing, including the improvement of accommodation in the north of Forest Gate that increased the availability of houses for larger families and 'key workers'. The physical development and improvement of certain areas of Newham like Beckton by the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) had more direct benefits to the residents. Big stores and supermarkets are available within the vicinity. Community and children's centres, entertainment facilities, landscaping and public amenity schemes are at easy reach. There is a good connection with public transport facilities.

Informants also identified issues yet to be addressed by the current and future regeneration initiatives. One respondent to the pilot survey went even further, doubting the very purpose of the overall regeneration strategy of the London Borough of Newham, who she felt simply aimed "to raise domestic property values." She argued that due to the effect of continuing regeneration initiatives on house prices over the last twenty to thirty years:

*"... low income and new arrivals to the housing market have little chance of getting a decent place to live whether they are refugees, low paid migrant workers or the children of existing residents on low or no pay" (Vol-21).*

According to the above respondent, this will have a huge effect; not only by forcing individuals to leave the area, but also it may create the shortage of a necessary work force that is needed to cover the demands of small businesses. On the other hand, it will only be the vulnerable and economically inactive residents left behind in social housing, en-

trenching patterns of inequality between wealthy home owners and these vulnerable people. Such differences will have a negative effect on social cohesion. It was argued that the sense of community will be diminished; shared activities, shared public spaces and shared institutions will disappear quickly. Respondents feared that in the absence or diminished sense of community a long term problem of mis-trust among the communities will emerge.

What respondents also argued is that some of the regeneration initiatives have a long term negative implication for the lives of residents on low incomes and on new arrivals who rent their homes. This is mainly due to the fact that when the area is being improved through many of the regeneration opportunities the quality and cost of rental accommodation also increases. A resident interviewee expressed his view about the implication of regeneration on house rents:

*“If regeneration is about improving the residential housing stock without considering its long-term effects, then, I am not sure how it benefits low income residents. They [low income residents] have to leave the area for those who can afford to pay a high rate of rent. Do not misunderstand me. Housing improvement with the help of regeneration money is an excellent idea. My worry is about affordability; about poor people who are systematically pushed out from the area” (Res-14).*

It is inevitable that improved housing stocks will have higher price ranges and attract new buyers. The continuous rise of housing prices (a feature of London’s housing market until relatively recently) will push out some people and pull others in. The fundamental debates raised by respondents include how urban renewal should be managed when certain aspects of development may effectively disadvantage others. Set against a long period of house price inflation in London (maintained until very recently) this is a difficult issue for regeneration agencies to manage.

From the local authority point of view it seems clear that if more people are able to afford to live and work in the borough, this will help to increase revenue from local

tax, which can then be used for further improving local services. However, respondents thought that when house prices are shooting up, it is likely that people will be tempted to sell their houses and move to an area where they can attain a more affordable life style. Another resident argued that:

*“The housing price in Newham is heating up un-proportionally, as compared to neighbouring boroughs. Newham is one of the nearest and well accessible boroughs to the City. A lot of people have sold their properties and moved out from Newham. Some moved to [The London Borough of] Barking and Dagenham; others even further. It is an interesting paradox; Newham is improving and its residents are selling their housing and moving out. It is interesting. Isn't it?”  
(Res-11)*

Moving to other areas effectively means people losing their long established social ties and networks. This will have effects on participatory activities of local people as new people have little knowledge about the area and other people (Mayer, 2003:110-132).

The other areas that concerned pilot survey respondents included the low level of public and community involvement; the issues of tackling the root causes of poverty and crime; the lack of an attempt to ‘regenerate’ people’s attitudes and values; and the level of support provided to the work of the voluntary and community sectors. Despite all the success stories of development, however, it was said to be very difficult to establish the direct involvement of local people in the initial planning and subsequent development of the area. Such low levels of involvement, as identified by respondents, are ensuing from the failure to educate residents on pressing local issues and from a lack of trust of power holders. It was claimed that what residents want and said were being ignored in preference for economic priorities. A respondent to the initial survey explained:

*“The notion of common good through active participation seems the thing of the past.... People lost track of what is going on between one election period and the other.... The Council intends to implement what they think are OK. They didn't brief residents about progress or difficulties facing to implement the project. The Council approach towards local plan or project is that “We knew it*

*all". Written policies do not reflect the need at the ground. The borough is becoming more and more economic driven." (In-07).*

It is crucial that physical regeneration in inner cities should be fully integrated with social and economic development. This will help to address the wider concerns of communities. The ethnic diversity of the Newham population also demands that regeneration efforts should be holistic in their approach to address varying social and cultural needs. Physical regeneration and infrastructure development alone could not offer a mutual community identity unless social and cultural regeneration helped residents to actively connect with each other. When we look at the said problems in more detail the perception of their importance varies from one group to the other. Hence, it is difficult to make a generalised statement. The following section, therefore, discusses the variations among different groups.

#### **5.4. Levels of public participation in Newham regeneration**

The experience of area-based regeneration initiatives in the past showed that their long term sustainable objectives could comprehensively be achieved when the inputs of local people in the decision making process is at a higher level. According to Walljes and Ball (1997:197) the holistic process of sustainability could be described according to "the four values it presents". These four values are "futuraity, environmental protection, quality of life and equity". Equity is defined by Walljes and Ball (date and page) as "community empowerment participation, fairness and sharing" and quality of life as "linking to community, cultural and social well-being (not just material wealth)". When there is a mechanism to involve local people or their representatives in all aspects of the decision making process, then it will be far easier for local regeneration related issues to be tackled at an earlier stage.



The respondents to the research in Newham have indicated different views concerning their participation. For example, questionnaire respondents (14 councillors, 7 representatives of faith groups and 10 members of community forums) were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that they had been informed about new regeneration initiatives in the borough.<sup>2</sup> A total of 24 (77%) respondents agreed that they have been informed while 7 (23%) said they have not been informed (Table 6.)

**Table 6.** Responses to how informed are you in the decision-making about issues affecting you in Newham regeneration programmes?

Respondents Sampled from	Well informed or Fairly Informed	Not informed Or Not Informed at all	Non response
	Number (%)	Number (%)	Number (%)
Councillors	11 (79%)	3 (21%)	0
Faith Groups	6 (86%)	1 (14%)	0
Community Forums	7 (70%)	3 (30%)	0
<b>All N(%)</b>	<b>24 (77%)</b>	<b>7 (23%)</b>	

Although the overall numbers in each category are small, faith group representatives appear to better informed about Newham regeneration programmes as compare to other groups. Out of the 14 elected councillors who participated in responding to the questionnaires, 3 claimed they were not well informed. This shows that more than a fifth of councillors were not well informed about regeneration activities in their areas although they are considered elected representatives by local residents. Theoretically, they (Councillors) should be aware of initiatives even if they may not be directly participating in the decision making process. It is equally important to note that community forum members are basically local residents. They are members of respective forums be-

<sup>2</sup> As noted above the sample of questionnaires from residents was too small to draw any general conclusions from; accordingly they are not considered here.

cause they are interested in local issues. However, more than a quarter of those responded said that they are not well informed.

When it comes to the question of their personal participation then, out of 31 those responded 11(35%) said they did not participate or get involved in the process of regeneration, while the rest 20 (65%) did participate (see Table 7).

**Table 7.** Responses to how involved are you in the decision-making about issues affecting you in Newham regeneration programmes?

Respondents	Well involved Or Fairly Involved N (%)	Not fairly involved Or Not involved at all N (%)	Non response
Councillors	10 (71%)	4 (29%)	0
Faith Groups	5 (71%)	2 (29%)	0
Community Forums	5 (50%)	5 (50%)	0
<b>All N(%)</b>	<b>20 (65%)</b>	<b>11 (35%)</b>	

As shown in the above table, all respondent groups indicated that even if they were being well informed, this does not guarantee their participation. However, there is a strong indication that those well informed elected councillors are also likely to be involved. Again it is the faith group representatives and community forum members who are informed about the local issues but who are also most involved in the process. This is a good indicator to locate group variation on their level of participation which ranges from non-participation to tokenistic engagement according to the Arnstein (197?) ladder of citizen's participation, which has been discussed in the previous chapters.

Although the numbers are small, those actively involved are also positive that their views are taken into consideration (see Table 8). Among the 24 respondents who are involved in the decision making process, 20 (83%) of the them thought that their views are taken into account while 4 (17%) do not think their views are included in the regeneration project process (Table 8).

**Table 8. Responses to ‘would you say that your views have been taken into consideration when planning local regeneration initiatives’**

Respondents	Strongly agree Or Agree – N(%)	Disagree Or Strongly Disagree – N(%)	Non response
Councillors	10 (100%)	0 (0%)	0
Faith Groups	5 (100%)	0 (0%)	0
Community Forums	2 (40%)	3 (60%)	0
<b>All N(%)</b>	20 (83%)	4 (17%)	0

Councillors and faith group representatives are the two groups of respondents that are positive about their participatory contribution. Those involved from these two groups thought that their views are also taken into consideration in the decision making process. Members of the community forums are likely to doubt whether their views are fully taken into consideration. As expected, those who thought that they had not been informed and who did not participate, also suggested that they did not think that the views of those involved were taken seriously. Generally, results from this small sample suggests that residents in community forums tend to be marginalised from the participation process.

The pilot survey respondents (the initial informants to this survey) were asked who they thought were under-represented in participatory exercises in Newham regeneration. They identified people with disabilities, women (particularly Muslim women), young people and non-English speakers as the most under-represented groups. Subsequently, councillors, representatives of faith groups and members of community forums were asked about these categories of people identified by the initial pilot survey and whether they agree or disagree that certain groups are under-represented in direct participation in issues of local concern. From the categories given they identified groups like refugees and asylum seekers 34 (77%); non-English speakers 33 (72%); Muslim

women 28 (70%) and young people 31 (66%) who they thought were not represented in the local participation process. However, men, women and ethnic minorities, 39 (88%), 29 (63%) and 27 (57%) respectively are thought to be well represented (see Table 9).

**Table 9. Groups under represented in participation exercise (as identified by the key informants)**

Group of people	Well represented or Fairly Represented	Not Fairly Represented or Not Represented at all
	All N(%)	All N(%)
Refugees and asylum seekers	10 (23%)	34 (77%)
Non-English Speakers	13 (28%)	33 (72%)
Moslem Women	12 (30%)	28 (70%)
Young people	14 (34%)	31 (66%)
People with disabilities	16 (37%)	27 (63%)
Ethnic minorities	27 (57%)	20 (43%)
Women	29 (63%)	17 (37%)
Men	39 (88%)	5 (11%)

However, respondents thought that personal contacts, outreaching, peer support (e.g. young to young people) and a diversity/inclusion strategy could enhance the participation of residents and the ‘hard-to-reach’ groups. Some of the suggested potential areas for improvement could be addressed at the local level. However, issues like the inclusion strategy need to be addressed and reinforced at the level of national policy formulation due to the fact that such endeavours have resource and political implications.

The same respondents were asked about the effectiveness of different participatory methods in Newham. Leaflets and local newspapers were found to be the best sources of information and means of communication. At the time of the research, internet and local service centres were not popular choices among respondents as good sources of information. However, internet, word of mouth and local service centres could potentially be a medium for communication to encourage residents’ participation. Internet facilities are increasingly becoming a source of information and medium of

communication for certain group of people. The Internet could reach many people at a time, locally and globally (Roessner and Wise,1992; Dutta-Bergman, 2005; Stern and Dillman, 2006). The advantage of Internet is not only reaching many people but covers a wide range of views at a time. However, it is not free from its own shortcomings, according to Stern and Dillman, (2006: 409):

*“Some argue that use of the Internet tends to pull people’s interests away from their local area and weaken community ties (e.g., Kraut et al., 1998). Others argue that the Internet is frequently used to strengthen local ties, and is becoming a tool for helping communities organize to achieve local interests (Hampton and Wellman, 2003). Our results from a 2005 random sample mail survey of 1,315 households in a rural region of the Western United States suggest that increased Internet usage is positively related to nominal and active levels of community participation while at the same time supporting effective networks outside the local area.”*

Councillors and Board members of West Ham and Plaistow *New Deal for Communities* were asked about the effectiveness of different participatory methods in Newham. All 23 (i.e. 14 councillors and 9 board members) respondents agreed that by listening to different groups through regular meetings and by financially supporting participation activities it is possible to enhance the level of participation. Moreover, respondents thought that by setting local priorities together with residents and by outreach work, residents’ participation could be improved.

Thirty respondents (14 councillors, 9 board members and 7 faith groups) were asked to rate the effectiveness of some participatory methods currently undertaken in Newham. Neighbourhood meetings, community forums and public meetings were rated effective, by 17 (57%), 16 (53%) and 12 (40%) respondents respectively. Although the response rate is low, the youth parliament and the Mayoral Question Time were considered by the respondents as less effective means of public engagement. Residents were asked to tick any items that applied to them on a list of possible effective sources of information and means of communication and leaflets were most frequently selected (by

11 (69%) of respondents) followed (not by a large margin) by local newspapers and word of mouth. However, most residents did not find other means as useful.

The above results suggest that those representatives with a level of power, including councillors, board members and faith group representatives seemed to want public participation to be more structured through forums and formal meetings. Whereas for interviewed residents the most effective way was seen to be through more informal and personal means of communication like leaflets, word of mouth and local newspapers. The main question here is why, unlike elected councillors and faith group leaders, residents (i.e. the main stakeholders of local initiatives) are more sceptical about participation in general and their contribution in particular? In the following and subsequent sections, I will discuss some of the possible explanations with particular reference to Newham using more in depth interviews and my own observations of different participation fora.

One of the common concerns in relation to public participation that was repeatedly mentioned by participants in this study was the local leadership structure set up following the *Local Government Act 2000*, where the residents of Newham have elected their Mayor. This issue adds a peculiar dimension to representative democracy in the context of Newham, where the borough was the first local authority in the country that opted to be run by an elected Mayor and a Cabinet structure. Local residents have different views about the leadership of the mayor and local democracy in general which has an impact on how decisions are made and which has wider effects on the different initiatives in the borough. For example, an interviewee from a voluntary organisation criticised the lack of effective opposition parties who could have brought different views into the debate in addition to the Mayor and his Cabinet. Therefore, the interviewee argued that the problem lies in the lack of different representative views.

*“I think, the problem is not necessarily the mayoral approach. I think it is the fact that we are working within pretty much; like; a one party state which has been here in Newham for a generation. If you do not have competition within different political parties; if you do not have opposition, then, who is going to challenge you? Who is going to tell about your mistakes? Who is going to question or criticise the work you do or policies you put forward? Who is going to monitor your strength or weakness if there is no opposition? I think that is the chronic deficiency of local democracy in Newham” (In-11).*

Another interviewee from community groups is also sceptical about the effectiveness the current arrangement of local democracy in Newham and said:

*“Local democracy doesn’t work here because they don’t care about which personality is in power as it is always Labour” (In-06).*

An interviewee from a faith group also identified the lack of competing ideas and views, which could have been beneficial in developing the best policies and services for the local people in Newham.

*“Competition does make sharp people more sharper. I think, services and policies would be better delivered in a competitive environment. Because they will be scrutinised, they [the power holders] have to justify rigorously what they are doing. Unfortunately there is no competition in Newham; it is all Labour - and all the time” (In-01).*

All the above interviewees argued that for a healthy and forward-looking democracy then opposing views should be entertained. These opposing views will help local people to forward their individual views. Different views will help to identify the best ways of tackling particular problems. Furthermore, ordinary people will learn and take action from a variety of views tabled to them. The above respondents argued that due to the fact that Newham local authority has been a Labour stronghold for many years, then

opposition parties do not have much influence in the structure of political decision making process.

Some respondents took a more critical view of the personality, leadership style and party loyalty of the Mayor. This might have implications for understanding the way that influential people can dictate the direction of public views towards their own way of thinking. This also shows the complexity of the debate between direct and representative participation in relation to crucial issues that affect local people. A respondent from a community forum wrote to say:

*“There are specific, sensitive and important issues that are only dealt by the Mayor. Some people tend to say it is about leadership. I think it is about controlling for political purposes. At times, decisions are made purely for political reasons. A good example is the Queen’s Market regeneration. Many people recognise that Queen’s Market needs improvement. But the way the Mayor handled the opinion of residents has not been helpful. He has not taken the community with him. The community split because of this one issue. There were various ways of doing things without creating such a public uproar” (GS-08).*

Some respondents were also critical of the very purpose of the arrangements of *the Local Government Act 2000*, which gives executive power to elected Mayors. They argued that this has important implications for the relationship between other elected councillors and the local residents. As the power of decision making is mainly concentrated at the Mayor’s office and a few of his advisors, hence, local elected councillors have very limited opportunities to voice the views of their electorate. This poses questions about the effectiveness of representation. Again a community group representative pointed out that:

*“One of the damages inflicted in Newham’s local democracy is that ...you have officers with a lot of responsibility and no power. On the other hand, what you got is people with power but no responsibility. So nothing is getting down to the people. Because elected representative cannot address his/her views unless he or she is a member of the Cabinet [of local government]. Furthermore, a member of the public cannot go to the council meetings and ask questions. In fact, you couldn’t get into the council meeting at all. So the councillors are remaining*



*powerless because the Cabinet got the power and the Mayor is in full control of the Cabinet” (In-06).*

Another interviewee from a voluntary sector organisation summarised the situation by saying:

*“Unfortunately by having the Mayor many of the councillors have lost their credibility within the community. In the past when people have a problem with the council they lobbied individual councillors for support. That is not the case anymore; as the Mayor has the ultimate authority to make the final decision” (In-05).*

However, an interviewee from one of the community forums had different view:

*“So far, [name omitted] is an elected Mayor. Next year, there is another election if anyone is there to challenge him [the Mayor]. ... Those who tend to challenge him have their own views. Someone told me that they do not like him because they considered him acting as a dictator. Some Councillors have already resigned. My view on this is simple; If they do not like him the best way is to oust him through the ballot box. Empty criticism is not good enough” (In-10).*

An elected Councillor has also brought a different perspective by raising the questions of accessibility, effectiveness and transparency the Mayoral system *vis-à-vis* community leadership and argued:

*“What is an "easier and effective" decision making process? Is the Mayoral system quicker? Yes. Is it more "transparent". Yes.”*

He went on to answer the questions by posing more questions:

*“Is it "easier" - Easier for whom? Is it "effective"? By what measure? In terms of your question “How is it possible to make community leadership effective and efficient in decision making processes relating to local initiatives in Newham?” Which community leaders are these? You mean councillors I suppose? I've worked in the past in "community-led" regeneration schemes, and I'm aware that community empowerment is the desired outcome by many (particularly academics). I also know just how impossible this is to deliver” (Cllr-15).*

The above citations are consistent with the debates in direct and representative participation I discussed in chapter two.

In summary, the level of participation in Newham regeneration is influenced by a number of factors as identified by respondents to this research. Although the public are in-

formed about initiatives, it doesn't guarantee participation in the decision making process. Furthermore, there is scepticism among those who have participated as to whether their views are included in the decision making process. The governance arrangements of Newham Council – its mayor and cabinet – were also considered problematic in relation to the effectiveness of representation in the decision making process.

### **5.5. Conclusion**

The London Borough of Newham, as one of the most deprived local authorities in the country, has been the focus of a number of regeneration initiatives. Over the last four decades there have been significant developments in the infrastructure which provide a good basis for enhancing the quality of life in the Borough. Most of the problems that have emerged from the field observations and analysis of the informant comments have both local and universal characteristics. For example, a consistent finding from informants of various aspects of the participatory process in Newham has revealed that certain individuals dominated over others to influence decision making. The problems in relation to public participation were very varied and so were their possible solutions. However, all have implications for policy review both at local and national levels. Although it may require further study, the deficit of local democracy because of local political structures has a direct impact on the success of regeneration initiatives in places like Newham. This chapter has set up a number of thematic issues that will be developed in the following chapters. The next chapter interrogates how local people could be empowered to enhance their participation and networking by exploring what participation and empowerment means and how it could function in the context of area-based regeneration.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **EMPOWERING LOCAL PEOPLE THROUGH PARTICIPATION: TOWARDS A MORE SUSTAINABLE AREA-BASED REGENERATION**

#### **6.1. Introduction**

One of the challenges for enhancing public participation in local regeneration initiatives is to ensure greater equity among all citizens in the decision making process. On the one hand, by virtue of their ability to access information and resources, people who are well educated, well informed and well-off are very likely to participate in issues of local and national concern. On the other hand, the hard-to-reach and vulnerable groups, (e.g. many ethnic minorities, older people, people with mental illness and physical disabilities and those for whom English is not their first language) will probably not participate as much as they could. This raises the issues of inequality and powerlessness, as people who are marginalised in society are also likely to be excluded from decision making processes. Furthermore, excluded groups are more disadvantaged not only in the decision making but also in sharing locally available services and resources. This chapter addresses some of these issues.

Furthermore, most area-based regeneration initiatives are not initiated and led by the local communities at which they are targeted (Smith and Beazley, 2000). In most cases they are planned, introduced and led by central and/or local government departments or external associate agencies. Even if there is a small degree of public participation, it is often the case that this is not intended to empower local people, but to seek

approval and give legitimacy, aiding the easy implementation of government policies (Rowe and Frewer, 2004).

In the previous chapter, I indicated that the respondents to my questionnaire surveys and interviews had identified problems of lack of empowerment, deficiencies in both direct and indirect representation and lack of representation for the most disadvantaged groups in Newham. In this chapter, I review the strategies that some of the informants suggested to address these issues. This chapter also explores the importance of empowering local people through meaningful participation in local regeneration initiatives. Initially, different definitions of participation and empowerment offered by my informants are discussed to set a common ground for understanding the two concepts. Then, my informants' views about different types of participatory processes will be discussed. More specifically, I will consider the advantages and disadvantages of both direct and representative participation or a combination of the two, within the context of local regeneration initiatives. These different approaches are configured in a variety of ways so that some are well organised and structured while others are loosely structured to make the process more informal. Additionally, the chapter discusses the perceptions of my informants concerning the importance of social networks as a tool for empowering local people that enables them to participate in local regeneration initiatives for the mutual benefit of all the stakeholders. However, rather than merely discussing participation at a conceptual level and theorising about the factors that make social networks important, here the discussion is based on points raised by the research respondents in the London Borough of Newham which are consistent with the theoretical debates that are discussed in chapter two. As noted in that chapter, some empirical evidence suggests that when people are empowered and well connected, engaging with different networks, they can improve their opportunities for participation and *vice versa* (Gilchrist, 2004).

As Passy and Giugni (2001:127) outlined

*“... formal and informal ties influence the intensity of participation in distinct manners and have a varying impact on differential participation”.*

They further develop this observation (2001:139) by saying

*“One the one hand, while both formal and informal networks do have a direct impact on the intensity of participation, they intervene in distinct ways. Informal ties influence participation through both their socialization and structural connection functions, whereas formal ties intervene only through embeddedness in networks. On the other hand, both to be embedded in and to be recruited by social networks has a significant impact on differential participation.”*

Participation in decision making may both increase the individual's understanding of events and enhance trust in further engagement in local initiatives like area-based regeneration. This is one of the key issues considered in the chapter.

The chapter also challenges the position of existing social networks and empowerment arrangements. It concludes by reiterating that different means of empowerment will enhance the participatory capability and capacity of local people which eventually will help to address the questions of ownership and sustainability of regeneration schemes. It is also concluded that the benefits of social networks far outweigh some of the concerns of network sceptics.

## **6.2. Varying perceptions of the nature of participation**

As discussed in chapter 2, the word participation means different things to different people. For the purpose of common understanding and clarity, public participation in the context of area based regeneration is taken here to be participation in all aspects of individual projects from the initial planning stage and throughout life time of the project.

Rowe and Frewer (2004:514 ) outlined that

*“Public participation may be defined at a general level as the practice of consulting and involving members of the public in the agenda-setting, decision-making, and policy-forming activities of organizations or institutions responsible for policy development.”*

Such a wide range of meaning makes the idea of public participation a complex concept “the scope and definition of which is open to debate” (Rowe and Frewer, 2004).

Despite a continuous debate around the justification of direct or indirect participation, this research found that there is a clear gap among people in terms of understanding what participation is and what it is for in the first place. Furthermore, my research with informants in Newham showed that the perception, interpretation and expectation of participation by members of the public and officials are not always the same. However, it is necessary to understand how different groups of people understand the concept of participation and its role. This will help as Barnes (2005:248) put it

*“To engage in debate about many of the critical issues of public policy, citizens require access to knowledge that has traditionally been restricted to particular scientific or knowledge communities. This is evident in, for example, health care and environmental policy making”.*

It is not only the ordinary citizens that interpret participation in many different ways, but also people with authority including local officials and elected councillors. The various perceptions, understandings and expectations of participation among different people has left room for an open-ended interpretation of its meaning, purpose and the processes by which it might be secured. There is also some historical background. For example, Sinclair (2004:107) observes that:

*“The consumer movement, which first came to prominence in the 1970s and is now reflected in terms like ‘user involvement’, has succeeded in so far as consumers have more power in exercising their preferences and in influencing the nature and quality of the goods and services made available to them. Indeed the consumer or user mandate for participation now stretches beyond the concerns of individuals to challenge more broadly policy making and resource allocation for service provision and how this impacts on users collectively”*

Fundamentally, the divide is created by different understandings of the purpose of participation. For many ordinary people participation is nothing more than receiving information about the ongoing initiatives in their vicinities. Some people believe that participation is just sitting in a public meeting and hearing what the experts say about certain initiatives and then asking questions and getting answers, while for others participation is a matter of getting involved in every aspect of a particular initiative and influencing the direction of the work as necessary. These reflect different definitions on the Arnstein (197?) scale. A faith group representative stressed that by supporting people, then it is possible to make participation meaningful.

*“Participation is not just receiving information and sitting on it as some people thought. Participation is meaningful only when it influences decisions. Some people need some help. It is important to give special attention to certain groups to enhance their level of participation. Help will give them the confidence to be included rather than just create small and ineffective ghettos everywhere” (Faith-9).*

Some people consider participation as a right for all citizens. Another faith group respondent suggested that:

*“We need more active citizenship where people are able to organise their own response to community need. A good example is the work of London Citizens where faith institutions work with schools and trades union branches to campaign and work for the common good”. (Faith-4)*

For others it is the privilege of a few – those have access to the right information at the right time and in the right place. A voluntary organisation respondent to this research wrote to say that:

*“The focus is more on powerful players and very little on marginalised groups. The structure is not group friendly which deters small, local organisations to play a full role” (Vol-09).*

Some people think that participation is a matter that is open to the public during election time and for political purposes only. Others dispute this as they see it as being beyond

the political arena. The purpose of participation for some people is to change the situation while for others it is just to air their views and then not worry about the result or the outcome. A resident pointed out that:

*“Our ‘listening’ Mayor and local decision makers seem to have limited frequencies! They amplified plaudits, but drown out criticisms. They seem to listen carefully for reactions to their proposals, but would only be influenced if they faced such a massive opposition that it threatened their plans. The scales are very heavily biased toward those in power, and it is difficult for dissenting voices to get themselves organised as an effective opposition” (Res-9).*

Recently, public and community participation has been clearly on the regeneration agenda in Newham and elsewhere. In Newham as well as other places, a variety of participatory methods were implemented, though, they could currently be described as a degree of ‘tokenism’ or non-participation according to the Arnstein (1969) citizens’ ladder. In relative terms, however, the most recent regeneration activities (e.g. New Deal for Communities) are more innovative in taking public participation seriously as compared to the previous ones.

The research respondents from local voluntary and community groups were asked about their perception of the current level of user participation in their organisations which is thought to be a good indication of the organisation’s attitude towards participation. Respondents from voluntary and community organisations claimed that their service users were the primary source for prioritising their project services – i.e. they are ‘user’ driven. However, some respondents felt that it was a different matter when it came to the regeneration agencies’ approach towards participation. For example, a faith group respondent claimed:

*“The [regeneration] approach] is flowing from top-to-down. The public are kept as recipients of project services rather than the designers of it. The word ‘partnership’ is widely talked about. However, it has never been a practical partnership” (Faith-9).*

A resident respondent also agreed that:



*“I feel that the people who run this committee of residents are doing it according to their way of thinking. When I did get involved with the project at the early stages, they made out that they were interested but carried on with building the buildings which I feel are white elephants. They have not in my opinion done anything to bring this community together but just made people feel more lethargic than they were before” (Res-1).*

As noted earlier, this research found that there is no common understanding or definition as to what participation is and what it is for. However, it is possible to categorise people’s understandings of participation as active and passive. Active participation processes could include initiating and forming ideas and executing them; taking part in activities; sharing ideas in decision-making and taking collective responsibilities; expressing views, speaking out about issues, seeking information or needing explanation.

A board member respondent pointed out:

*“People are not only interested in what should be done but also what shouldn't be done. People are intelligent enough to suggest brand new ideas [rather] than just ticking boxes in multiple choice questions about their future and needs” (Brd-9).*

On the other hand, a passive participation process would include just listening to what others are saying; being informed about activities and processes; and giving information e.g. through surveys. Many individuals feel happy with this kind of passive participation. Participation demands transparency in order to create a conducive climate for open communication and for building a meaningful dialogue. Furthermore, participation ideally demands that authority and power be evenly distributed among all stakeholders to avoid the domination of one over the other. Therefore, one way of defining participation is the sharing of responsibility for decisions made that have a wider implication and promote mutual learning. Participation is also about inclusion of all who have different levels of skill and ability; it will be affected by the results of a decision or a process.

An elected Councillor wrote:

*“If someone wants genuine participation from the public they has to be able to change the attitude of council bosses, so that local people are fully included in the decision making and seen as genuine partners, not pawns. They have something to contribute - they are not a nuisance!” (Cllr-01).*

Hence, the process of participation may create an inclusive (powerful) environment for some while effectively excluding (dis-empowering) others. Such a situation may create a lack of representative views on the part of a society in which individuals have little or no voice at all on issues directly affecting them. Someone is socially excluded “...if he or she does not participate in the normal activities of citizens in that society” (Sirovátka and Mareš, 2006, page; Burchardt et al. 1999). Participation is a social event that needs the interaction of the public. In the context of area-based regeneration initiatives, the collective voice of individuals is counted as public participation. However, care should be taken when defining the public as a collective voice to make participation more meaningful. For example, an elected councillor raised a fundamental question about who the public are in participation:

*“Public participation is the most difficult issue to talk about. Do really the public participate in issues that affect them? I have my own doubts. In reality, the public is those few groups of people who find themselves in every meeting. For others, attending meetings demands time, commitment and resources. People need financial rewards for their time, for childcare and of course, for their expertise. Otherwise, less and less people attend meetings and after a while only those regularly show up call themselves ‘the public’ and we tend to believe them” (Cllr-09).*

The interviewee raised the important point that a few people who have the time and resources for getting involved in regeneration initiatives are taking a centre stage by regularly attending meetings and considering themselves as representatives, even though they are not elected or selected by the public. The central argument here is that if participation is about regular attendance then there is a large proportion of a society that cannot attend meetings due to a variety of reasons. It is apparent that those people with enough time and resources have better opportunities to make choices about how and

when to participate and be part of the decision making process. Thus, one can conclude that power in the participation process is closely bound up with material and other resources. The availability of resources will determine who the 'public' are in public participation. Therefore, participation could become a social issue of inclusion or exclusion in the decision making process. To tackle the problem of exclusion then the need for empowerment of individuals and groups will be necessary. Newman et al (2004:204) agrees that

*“ ... Complex social issues – such as social exclusion, inequalities in health, community regeneration –elude traditional approaches to governing through hierarchical instruments of control, while growing social differentiation has made the task of governing more difficult”.*

In order to empower local people, resources should be available to help the delivery of professional and independent support for participation; to help identify problems, solutions and priorities; to assist local people in order to enable them to solve problems on their own; and to challenge power structures which hinder people's participation. Particular attention should be given to empowering people who are struggling as a result of poverty, inequality and exclusion, whose voices very often are not heard.

The journey towards securing sustainable outcomes from area-based regeneration requires broad based support for local people who are the main actors, not least because of the way that much power is performative in the regeneration 'theatre'. Mobilising and nurturing local knowledge and capacities are good first steps towards empowering people. To alleviate the problem of exclusion the public also need to be empowered through education. My research respondents see empowerment as an individual-oriented strategy. However, empowerment is also interpreted a process through which disadvantaged groups work to change situations and to fulfil their needs and rights. Empower-

ment is also about nurturing capacities. Empowerment is not the shift of power by the powerful to the powerless as it is not about imposition.

Elliot and Kaufman (2003:265) wrote

*“In each situation, the decision-making process involves several interconnected communities, both spatial- and interest-based. Effective solutions may depend on the capacity of all involved to engage in civic discourse. Solutions require the efforts of several public agencies, residents, activists, businesses, and others. Civic capacity—consisting of these institutions, organizations, and individuals; the knowledge and skills embedded in them; and their ability to collectively resolve joint problems...”*

The role of the local power holders and the state needs to be clearly defined and understood by all. For example, Newman et al. (2004:204) summarise the importance of the role of the state as:

*“The role of the state shifts from that of ‘governing’ through direct forms of control (hierarchical governance), to that of ‘governance’, in which the state must collaborate with a wide range of actors in networks that cut across the public, private and voluntary sectors, and operate across different levels of decision making”.*

A shared power creates responsibilities for all. A faith group representative wrote:

*“The strength of civil society in which (sic) community and faith groups are part of, is that it works based on the bottom up approach. The bases are the grass-roots. Power and responsibility are evenly distributed. Hence, meaningful and genuine engagement is possible.” (Faith-9).*

This respondent seems to be suggesting that it is a responsibility of citizens to be actively engaged. This responsibility emerges from a full understanding of the issues, the possibilities and some of the limitations associated with the regeneration process. Empowerment through education helps people to be more confident and to understand issues, use opportunities and manage limitations. However, the empowerment of some may result the dis-empowerment of others both at individual and group levels. Moreover, empowerment in the absence of social, political and economic support cannot be

sustainable. A resident pointed out an example in which the local residents became empowered by becoming landlords, allowing them to represent less powerful tenants.

*“It is important that we have to invest and empower in the community now to have a positive effect in the future. In our case, this is a proven fact. I remember that in late 1970’s we were working hard to invest something in Bryant Street residents with their full participation. Today, these same residents have at least, some properties to rent out for people suffering from chronic homelessness” (Res-09).*

Although the citation is not about empowering people to participate in regeneration, similar models of empowerment from other sources (non-property based) help communities to participate in local initiatives which will have long term positive effect. Those who do not get the chance to engage and voice their views will not only be excluded but labelled as ‘hard-to-reach’ so that their involvement will effectively be curtailed.

Gustafsson and Driver (2005:534) observe that :

*“Often people are considered "hard to reach" simply because they resist involvement (Cook 2002). By attaching such a label to people it is then assumed they belong to a homogeneous group, so that once a few so designated have been consulted no further involvement is required.”*

There are certain groups of people who do not actively participate or who are reluctant to take part in the process of public engagement. Other research has revealed that young people for instance, are less active in public participation while certain sections of society are always well represented (O’Toole, Marsh & Jones, 2003). This underrepresentation is mainly as a consequence of a lack of proper structures and mechanisms that encourage young people to participate. A councillor endorsed this view and suggested structures that might help to empower young people:

*“The young people are always not represented very well. The adults are the ones who are setting the agenda for young people. We need to use School Councils and the Youth Parliament as the possible places to hear the views of young*

*people. Unfortunately, many members of the Youth Parliament are hand picked ones” (Cllr-09).*

Generally, local opinion from respondents suggested that redistribution of resources to empower under-represented groups to participate can be done through expert support, education and knowledge transfer, investing in local social networks and innovative decision making structures and organisations.

### **Views on ‘what works’ and on making solutions that are sensitive to local context**

As discussed in chapter 3, one of the strategies of successive UK governments to assess whether area-based initiatives would work was to test them in a few places before launching programmes in full. This means that most of the government area based initiatives were meant to be evidence-based through an initial trial of trailblazers before the major project came into effect. This approach was applied to almost all the initiatives undertaken after the New Labour government came into power. Projects like *Sure Start* (Belsky et al, 2007), *Health Action Zones* (Carr, et al, 2006) and *New Deal for Communities* (Dinham,2005) have been the result of evidence-based initiatives and this is why local knowledge specific to each setting is important.

Urban regeneration policies since 1997 have promoted public and community participation as their vital strategy. This is as a result of changes made through evidence-based approaches. This was pointed out in the *Strong Local Leadership – Quality Public Services* (DTLR, 2001:11), the local government White Paper that stated:

*“Communities and places differ and change, and so do the challenges they face. Local areas are becoming more diverse. Our towns, cities and rural areas contain many communities, often sharing space and resources, with many similarities but also significant differences. Communities everywhere face rapid changes to their economy, environment and social mix. The leaders of those communities have to adapt continually to such changes”.*

Community involvement has become part of the rhetoric of government strategies and has been supported by different funding regimes:

*“Effective community engagement leads to better decisions and better implementation. Community involvement is a key component of best value, an increasingly important element in the improvements we are making to health services and is an important goal for LSPs in taking forward community strategies and other initiatives. To help build social capital and the capacity of communities to engage in local decisions we have established schemes such as the Community Empowerment Fund, Community Chests and the Community Champions Fund” (DTLR, 2001:20)*

The participation of local people in the decision making process has a great impact on sustainable local development as argued by leaders of some local initiatives. A good example in Newham is that of the local “What if...” project as stated by a voluntary sector organisation interviewee.

*“Services users are involved in identifying the problem, developing the solution and taking part in the pilot project ..”(In-11).*

He went on to say :

*“ ... I can give you a couple of examples. Hundred different languages are spoken locally. It is a very very diverse community. One of our first lines of contact with local people is through their GP surgeries or hospital or job centres. Very often, they require to fill forms and if English is not your first language it is very complicated and difficult to take up services . ...So we conducted “what if ..” conversations with local users and staff. We came up with the idea of recruiting and training local people who speak different community languages and put them in the job centres and social security offices for providing assistance in filling forms and interpreting services. Then in a matter of a month we reduce the error from 70% to 1% and the waiting time from eight weeks to three or five days” (In-11).*

The above citation illustrated that the success of involving local people in decision making as well as the possibility of involving them in the delivery and sustainability of services.

Nevertheless, an elected councillor asserted that local government authorities are working towards implementing regeneration programmes as directed by the central government in which public participation has almost nothing to do with ‘*changing or*

*modifying it* '. The interviewee pointed out that most of the regeneration projects are either central government initiatives or partnership initiatives led by the local authority. In most cases, such projects have '*strategic values*' for the whole community, not for one sector of a community, or for communities in one specific area of the Borough. The councillor further argued that :

*"... the Council needs to balance its 'vision for the future'. This means that decisions have to be made on some projects without the participation of the wider public. Projects, in most cases, are localised and their funding are attached with a strict time frame. Hence, the Council takes some unpopular decisions. ... You cannot consult residents in each and every thing; you cannot satisfy everybody either" (Cllr-06).*

A voluntary sector organisation representative also agreed with the above assertion, though from a different perspective, and argued that in Newham regeneration programmes are '*intensely political*'. She discussed how the peculiarity of Newham in terms of its demography and poverty creates a complex relationship of dependency whereby the local authority has become reliant on central government funding. She said:

*"... Central government funding is a reward, nowhere more so than here (in Newham). At grassroots level, the local authority actually perpetuates dependency on welfare by the way it attracts central funding. A cynic might say that without deprivation, London Borough of Newham has no existence'" (Vol-04).*

Here, what the respondent controversially argues is interesting in relation to the criteria of selection of a given place for regeneration.

On the other hand, however, another respondent disputed the emphasis given to the regeneration programmes. He argued that 70% of the revenue used to fund services in Newham since the early 1990's comes from statutory sources and yet only 2% is allocated towards two or three regeneration programmes. Thus he concluded '*it is going to be the mainstream budgets like health, housing and welfare benefit budget that really*



have made impact in people's daily lives' (In-11). Another interviewee also questioned the impacts of regeneration initiatives on residents by saying that:

*"... there is still the missing bit of all these things. We hear time and again that a lot of the financial investment have been given to Newham by the central government over years, probably running to billions of pounds, but in terms of the impact and change, I am not entirely convinced and what we see from the evidence is rather getting worse" (In-03).*

Yet, another interviewee disputed the very mechanism of regeneration, which she regarded as only erecting buildings and local infrastructure without a real positive influence and change in the life of people of Newham. The interviewee who has lived in Newham for ten years argued that:

*"... just only building infrastructures is not a real regeneration. It is not a rounded initiative. I am not sure whether new buildings brought any changes in the lives of the residents" (In-06).*

Thus, for some respondents the ability to participate in regeneration was not the point. Instead they raised more fundamental questions about the value and purpose of regeneration, doubting its impact on the well-being of the Borough's populations. This may deter people from getting involved.

### **Targeting groups or individuals**

Besides the scepticism from some respondents about the impact of local regeneration initiatives on individual residents, some were also critical about how their views are taken into account. However, this raises further questions about whether public participation is about the participation of individuals or participation of individuals as a part of a group. What is the reason for instigating participation? Is what the residents want or what the authorities need in order to demonstrate commitment to a more inclusive approach? Blanc and Beaumont (2005:413) remark that:

*“In practice, an important question concerns who actually desires participation – the authorities or the residents themselves? A further question concerns who should participate – people on an individual basis or groups through organisational involvement? Targeting individuals or groups leads to two distinct strategies, both of them with advantages and drawbacks. When every individual is invited, only a minority is present, usually the better educated, more articulate and confident. The mobilised and committed minority are not representative of the entire local population and they may defend their own interests, requiring for example exclusion of so-called ‘bad’ tenants allegedly creating problems in the neighbourhood.”*

An interviewee pointed out some how the power imbalance can limit participation:

*“There could be so many reasons for the residents to lose interest in the whole exercise of consultation. Sometimes the officials deliberately limit what should and should not be taken from the view of the public” (In-02).*

Others felt marginalised by a lack of information about current projects:

*“Newham is a multi-cultural borough. However, enough information is not given about some initiatives. I personally do not know the details of what NDC is doing and what specific project it is running. Information may be given through leaflets. I do not read them, as there are too many of them pushed through my door. I just throw them to the dustbin. It is better to announce about the activities through groups like elderly, drama and dance group, street by street and door to door. The initiatives should be something that are current and appeal to us like crime prevention or job creation” (Res-14).*

The practical engagement of people in identifying and prioritising the problems is an important aspect of empowerment (Friedmann,1992) and evidence-based policy. According to Friedmann (1992) empowerment is a two step process from mobilising the poor to be a ‘social force’ to transforming them into a ‘political power’. This means that local participation in defining problems and solutions in the context of local conditions contributes to the evidence base on ‘what works’. Projects of this nature are likely to be sustainable even after the programmes are phased out. The national and local policies that are informed through the engagement of local people are advantageous. Participation and networks should monitor all the problems of regeneration throughout the programme lifetime and beyond. Local people need to be empowered to be involved in of

the entire process including the project planning, development and review stages. A board member of the NDC gave an example:

*“We have user groups, which are working on the development of the Brooks Road scheme[in Newham NDC] to put in place a management and neighbourhood agreement and advise us on our next approach at [an] early stage. What we will then do is, devise our implementation approach through [a] consultation process as next stage. But it is not usually how we do things because it was the first time we came to Newham. ... The advantage of the NDC is that they have done this already, they already established relationship and we are only building on that” (In-03).*

As stated above, communication needs to be more robust, appropriate and tailored to the information channels that local residents actually use. The problem of poor communication has a more sinister side, according to one interviewee. This interviewee suspected that most of the consultancy agencies hired by Newham to facilitate consultation do not know the area and the people and said:

*“... they do not really care about the area, they are paid a lot of money (they are appointed to the authorities, that is why they are chosen) and eventually you never see them again. And probably you never hear about the result as well. There is no communication what so ever. In such kinds of situation, people are legitimate to complain. People ask what I am going to get out of this. Very often they never get the answer. So the problem goes a full circle of disengagement” (In-11).*

Perhaps, upon reflection, the above quote also explains why my door-to-door survey produced a low response – people are cynical about those seeking consultation.

The lack of resources and funding to run public participation is one of the concerns respondents raised. This is a particularly important problem for small organisations and informal groups in the community whose funding is dependent on other major charities or government organisations. Some funding schemes have strict requirements on how and when the public should be consulted on specific projects or services. They have ‘a preconceived idea in their mind already’ as an interviewee from a community group put it. She further argued that:

*“... we have no focus groups, we have no money, we have no expertise to run focus groups. If we have the funding, fine; we can purchase the expertise. I think, in reality we cannot talk about participation, leave alone about different types and levels of participation” (In-06).*

An interviewee raised issues over the nature of consultation and the lack of feedback in relation to measures that had been taken following previous consultation. The interviewee thought that :

*“It is a kind of mis-apprehension, mis-understanding going around. People say they are over consulted. But it might be because they didn't see any result from the previous consultation. So it is perhaps they are frustrated as they are asked the same questions again and again and nothing has really happened. Even if something has happened it is not communicated back to them” (In-11).*

Another respondent believed that improving the feedback system means identifying weaknesses and strengths that enable project managers to take the necessary actions. It would also help to provide a mechanism by which it would become feasible to change projects in light of users views. The respondent argued that *‘people like to see what is improving. They like to get feedback on what their participation produced’*. She further pointed out that,

*“... All are guilty of this. They do not say, look, we [did] listen to you [about] this; but we cannot do all the services required. ... You do not always know what is negotiable and what can be changed. It is nice to be open. They have to say, we can do this bit and this is the bit we have to negotiate” (In-04).*

An elected councillor argued that although there is no system for feedback, the main problem is due to the fact that the power holders are more concerned with fulfilling their statutory responsibilities than being interested in having the real engagement of local people.

*“The main problem is not about setting up the system . The fundamental problem is whether to respect residents as equal partners or not. Their inputs are always undermined except to serve the Town Hall consultation statistics. For the Council officers the very purpose of consultation is mainly a ‘must to do’ exercise [rather] than listening to people. It is just a persuasive attempt to [make] the residents sign up to what the Council like to do” (Cllr-04).*

An NDC board member interviewee argued that feedback is more about accountability, devolving and *'individualising the power structure'* and creating a conducive environment for empowerment.

*"When people knew about actions taken as a result of their participation they feel that their views are taken seriously. They feel empowered to take decisions. They feel good about accountability. They feel good about how their knowledge is contributing to the wider picture of addressing local issues"* (Brd-9).

However, in the absence of feedback people feel dis-empowered, neglected and ignored. A respondent pointed out that the problem is particularly significant in a big public organisation where the feedback system is almost non-existent. The respondent argued that, in small community and voluntary organisations, as the structure and flows of information are not so complicated, feedback is possible by formal and informal means. The organisational structure of voluntary and community groups makes it simple to communicate with people. The paradox, however, is that the role of a smaller organisation in a big regeneration initiative is limited due to the lack of expertise and resources.

Thirty six respondents including NDC Board members were given a list of fixed options extracted from the responses of the key informants' survey and were asked to identify factors that they thought were hindering public and community participation. A total of 33 (92%) of respondents said that lack of trust in decision makers is the main hindrance to meaningful participation. More than 80% of respondents also identified disenchantment with the political set-up – 'too much talk with no action'; the power imbalance between residents and decision makers; too much bureaucracy and the belief that it makes no difference whatever you say. These were all important causes of dissatisfaction. However, from the fixed options, 'watching too much television' and 'boring meetings' were not considered as important factors in hindering participation! The issue of lack of trust was not only aimed at power holders but also people who claim to be

representatives and who have more resources and access to attend meetings and voice their views on a regular basis (Rowe and Frewer, 2005; Newton, 2001)

Time was also found to be a significant issue. Some respondents believed that most of the meetings were held at inconvenient times for many people, especially for those who work during the day. They suggested evening meetings would be more appropriate for those working during the day time. Those who argued against, pointed out that evening meetings take away 'quality time' at home for working families. An alternative solution was suggested by a councillor who is in favour of giving people 'time-off' (which means paid leave from work when people are invited for public meetings) rather than making the meetings in the evening. However, this option does not seem feasible as employed local residents have different employers with different types of employment policies and procedures which may not accommodate such free paid time for public meetings. Hence, it would be difficult to find a convenient time that suits all. As suggested above, giving time off for participation in public affairs has wide implications for current employment law, both at the British and European level. Reviewing such a law will need more research in terms of its implications. However, using the most advanced telecommunication technologies which are much more flexible might be the solution to reach as many people as possible and minimise the problem of inconvenient timing.

Some argued that most of the consultation meetings were restricted by very short and tight time frames. There was not enough time to understand the real, core issues. When people have gathered information that helps them understand the issues and are ready to make an informed view on them, on many occasions it is too late, as the consultation time has come to an end. Again making a meaningful contribution and reaching well-informed decisions is far from a reality in a rigid and short timeframe for consulta-

tion and where there is a lot to understand about the issues under discussion. This is particularly true for residents, small voluntary and community groups who most of the time are asked to be part of the partnership group or the participatory process within a tight, inflexible time-frame. This also raises the issue of a resource divide between the haves and have-nots. Those equipped with the necessary human, material and information resources may be able to use the given time effectively. However, those with less capacity and capability will miss the opportunity for meaningful participation.

A voluntary organisation worker stated that although she ran an organisation to serve tenant associations they sometimes are in disadvantageous situations when it comes to their members' participation:

*“We run a small organisation with limited human and financial resources. At the same time we have the potential to reach many council tenants in the borough. However, as our resources are limited we are restricted in providing information, rather than empowering tenants to participate in the decision making process. Regrettably, the Council seems comfortable with the notion of giving information about ongoing regeneration initiatives. Tenant participation is too costly to them” (In-05).*

Therefore it is necessary to revisit the length of time organisations, groups and individuals are asked to be involved in regeneration initiatives. On the other hand it is difficult to know exactly what 'enough time' means and different groups of respondents vary in the amount of time and extra resources that they need.

Apathy is another important problem where citizens become disengaged due to many reasons. Apathy affects the depth and level of participation. Some respondents thought that in its simplest form, apathy generally resulted from people who are '*too consumed by their private lives*' to spare the time, energy, and commitment that public engagement requires (Brd-9). Others thought that apathy is more about an '*indifference to the process, or lack of faith in it*' (Vol-40). There are many other reasons for feeling apathetic. According to a councillor respondent, apathy stemmed from '*the belief that*

*things are not going to get done'* (Cllr-03). Such a belief is one of the main barriers to meaningful public participation. Another resident respondent believed that *'Newham only plays lip service to participation of residents'* (Res-09). The respondents also identified the reasons for this as due to the fact that the authorities are *'too worried about losing control'*. Further causes of apathy according to a councillor stem from the mismatch of need and priorities:

*"Most of the issues for regeneration are not about the real need of the people. For example, in this electoral ward the main issue is about quality [of] housing. However, the Town Hall set priorities that are different than the needs of the people"* (Cllr-04).

A councillor respondent argued that the blame not only rests with the authorities but also with the local people:

*"Some groups in the community do not wish to take part or are not interested as they do not have a view that they can affect anything or would wish to do so, or they may have the experience from the past that nothing changes in a time scale that matters to them"* (Cllr-13).

One might argue that it is not reasonable to assert that people 'do not have a view'. It is natural that people have a view on issues that concern them. The causes of apparent lack of interest are a matter for debate. For example, a respondent agreed with the above argument but for a different reason. The respondent appreciated that people have busy lives and not much time to spare. She also said that due to limited options left to try, Community Forums attract the *'same people all the time, (Cllr-11)*. Yet another respondent took a different view that residents are reluctant to get involved in any issue *'until it has actually happened'*. He went on to say *'It is frequently businesses that do not live in the borough that show more interest (make more noise) or those wishing to make political capital'* (Cllr-07).

The above quotations raise an important issue which needs attention: that participants often do not really represent local residents' views. Firstly, business owners



who are not residents may have different motives than residents when they participate in the decision making process. Secondly, business owners often have stronger networks than local residents when it comes to putting forward their views in a more organised manner. Local residents will then be marginalised when strong networks of businesses influence decisions to their advantage. However, a local Councillor suggested a possible solution by saying:

*“To minimise the number of apathetic residents, it is necessary that the Town Hall needs to change hearts and minds [about] how [they are] treating the views of local people. They have to think about the people not take them as objects. I believe regeneration is needed to enhance people’s economic and social wellbeing. But imposing the will of the Town Hall on the residents is not appropriate. It could destroy communities. The Town Hall should work with and for the people. But should not work to the people. Imposition breeds apathy” (Cllr-04).*

Despite the fact different groups have different views on why local people are “apathetic” to local issues, apathy will probably remain a problem for public participation until a higher level of citizen participation leads to ultimate ownership. It is also important to tackle the main obstacles to participation to minimise apathy. Among the additional factors hindering participation, the lack of confidence of individual participants is identified by some respondents. The lack of confidence is as a result of individual personality traits as well as a combination of other contextual factors. A resident criticised the current use of public participation as a bad practice as it resulted in an undermining of confidence:

*“My experience as a local resident and involved in many events shows that public involvement is a badly handled affair in Newham. Firstly, most of the time people are just asked to approve or disapprove rather than to jointly initiate and implement ideas and issues. Public participation requires a community who have full confidence in the whole process. But undermining the inputs of individuals means undermining their confidence to participate” (Res-11).*

Lack of confidence as a result of individual personality can be overcome through coaching and training. However, if the participation process itself is the cause of the lack of confidence then it will be very difficult to reverse as this requires a system change.

Some respondents identified that beside lack of confidence, people prefer to take the safe route of non-involvement as a result of lack of knowledge about how to get involved. Therefore, decisions are made by a few, like-minded people. Then there may be a cause for concern about the legitimacy of the decision-making process by such 'usual suspects'. When only the 'usual suspects' meet and decide matters of wider public significance, then it will have a long term negative effect on the sense of ownership by the public. However, a councillor had a different view about the 'usual suspects' and argued that Newham needed more of them:

*"...what we call the 'usual suspects' are people who are dedicating their time to community causes. They are not paid for their services in one way or another. They are passionate about community issues; therefore, we have to admit that these are the people who are responding to the call of local issues. We need to have as many of them as possible" (Cllr-06).*

As another interviewee put it:

*"There are some people who are very noisy compared with others, partly for their individual interest. ... This could be an issue but you can't reach everyone. Therefore, the noisy ones take their chance" (In-04).*

As Gustafsson and Driver (2005:534) note:

*"The extent to which public participation takes place thus depends on a number of assumptions of who constitutes the public and how representative the people involved really are."*

Some Newham Council elected members do not agree with the above argument. On the contrary, they say that (be it in regeneration initiatives or otherwise) the Council priorities have been set by 'feedback' from residents. They explain that the Council has a well-developed system to enable people to set their priorities through 'community fo-

runs and suggestion cards' sent to all households. In their view this consultation is always 'part of the system' and always produces readily available knowledge. In addition, the results of the national *household panel surveys* are taken into consideration for making crucial decisions. One respondent said he could '*sees no logic asking residents for every minor issue*' (Cllr-08). Another Councillor also agreed with this and asserted that:

*"Participation is part of the Council's commitment for inclusiveness across the board. It is closely monitored and scrutinised. Generally the council is open and transparent. I would say 98% what we do is open for public scrutiny and consultation. Independent bodies like the MORI sometimes run consultation on behalf of the Council"* (Cllr-10).

As stated above, the early engagement of local people could help them to stay involved throughout the lifetime of a regeneration project. Public participation embraces a range of systematic and non-systematic activities in which the public intend to influence the decision making processes. Participation is not restricted to certain issues and areas only. It varies from voting in an election to directly participating in decisions at a local level. In so doing, the level of decision making power of local people varies.

The level of participation varies in a number of ways, some of which are directly controlled by participants while many others are determined by some other people who set the agenda. Therefore, the appropriate system that is available to support participation is crucial as to whether or not it empowers people. According to Gustafsson and Driver (2005:529)

*"As in the Athenian polis, public participation reflected the rights and responsibilities of the citizen and would deepen the sense of citizenship through active participation in the governance of the public sphere. And what was good for politics ... would also be good for public and social administration. More "people power" would widen choices, make public policy more accountable to users, and deliver better performance and standards of service."*

Generally participation is not only a process to make decisions inclusive but a tool for empowerment. Through participation, marginalised and excluded groups educate them-

selves and gain more confidence. Through participation local people learn about the issues that affect them (Pateman, 1970). Well informed citizens are likely to be part of the processes of solving problems as a consequence of their active participation. The initiation of *Community Forums* in Newham is a welcome development in relation to this theme.

### **6.3. The process of participation (direct and indirect/representatives)**

Here, I discuss ideas about four models of representation based on: direct and indirect representation, then models that mix the two, and finally the idea that effective participation is so unrealistic that there are ‘no grounds’ for it, although the idea of mixed models offer the best prospects. Barnes (2005:248) pointed out

*“The practice of public participation has been informed by theorists of ‘deliberative democracy’, who along with practitioners have argued that for a diverse citizenry it holds greater promise than representative democracy for inclusive, critical, informed and responsive engagement”.*

Hence, there are different understandings of participation, and contradictions in understandings of the correct participatory process as a result of clashes of purpose and aspiration between different groups or individuals. As discussed in chapter 5, significant challenges to participation arise from differences of views about how participation should be conducted i.e. directly or through representation.

#### **Direct participation**

Questionnaire respondents and interviewees were asked which approach they thought was the best method of participation. Those who supported direct participation argued in a variety of ways. Some argued that direct participation is part of active citizenship where participants are working towards a common good. A faith group respon-

dent pointed out that there is a need for more '*active citizenship*' where people are able to organise their own response to community needs. He pointed out the work of *London Citizen* as a good example, where faith institutions work with schools and trades union branches to campaign and work for the common good. Others also asserted that direct participation is part of the empowering process through small group meetings with language and other similar support. As a voluntary organisation representative put it, meeting people on a one-to-one basis and encouraging them to participate would '*raise people's confidence to take part in public consultation processes*' (Vol-31). Some respondents went even further to say that in most cases those calling themselves 'representatives' were just representing their own views as they do not have the capacity or resources to gather the views of others. Therefore, they argued that direct participation is the best way. This was considered to be because community representatives often speak for themselves rather than the people they are meant to represent and certain groups are always either '*under represented or not represented at all*' (Cllr-07).

Some also argued that a representative may not say things '*there and then at the same level that direct participants do*' (Brd-8). In some cases, representatives hold views 'by virtue' of their daily contact with power holders or decision makers, and '*quickly become out of touch with the people they are supposed to represent*' (Faith-1). It is also important to note that there are some very vocal people who always put themselves forward to represent others. These people, in many cases are the strong supporters or opponents of certain causes or views. Therefore, their representation will be more politicised through taking certain stands or positions. A member of the NDC board said :

*"I think there is a danger that representatives politicise decisions, over-complicate it and add to the unnecessary bureaucracy. Direct participation is more effective so long as the decision-makers do not abuse the trust and the power that they have access to"* (Brd-5).

Some representatives are hand-picked by certain groups rather than democratically chosen by the wider community or representing majority views. As a board member respondent put it:

*“Representation is not a reality as far as the community representatives are concerned. First of all, most of the community representatives are white and males. The diversity of these representatives [is] limited. Even those attending and claiming to air community issues are the same people; you see them in all public events” (Brd-09).*

However, the respondents appreciated that such people have strong reasons to be involved in all issues of community concern. However, the respondent doubted that they have personal knowledge about all issues of a community nature. A councillor concluded by saying:

*‘... it is true that we are asking the same people in education, crime, health or noise pollution. We think they know about every aspect of community issues. Here comes the problem. They cannot be experts in everything. Can they?’ (Cllr-08).*

### **Indirect Participation**

Some argue that representative decision making (i.e. indirect participation) is a better alternative to a low level of direct participation by individuals. Representation is where citizens within a given area or group elect or select representatives to make decisions on their behalf. Hence, people hand over the responsibility of decision making to someone else who wishes to be in that position. In this way, individual citizens remove themselves from the process of direct decision making and they play a less active part in the mechanism of decision making. In such situations, it is possible that the representatives would act as their conscience guides them rather than fulfilling the wishes of all.

Respondents supporting indirect participation/representation were also strongly critical of direct participation and argued that representative participation of the public and communities is more likely to feed into a meaningful result and outcome in local

regeneration initiatives. The reasons given for this were varied. Those supporting representation point out that representatives are more committed people with strong views for certain causes and that they take their responsibilities seriously. A board member stated that:

*“Too many people only make for a talk-shop. Representatives should be elected by the community; they will be able to talk the talk and walk the walk. They can put their views across; especially representatives of those people who are not confident enough to voice their opinion” (Brd-6).*

Others also had the view that in certain local issues it is practically impossible to get everybody’s opinion at all times. Therefore, representation is inevitably a more practical way of dealing with issues. As summarised by an interviewee:

*“Any meeting you call, it is not possible and practical to expect that everyone will attend. That is one of the reasons we have to have representatives of residents” (In-10).*

Representation will give precise and clear views relative to the more complicated views of many people which, at times, have no common ground. This view is supported by an assertion from a community forum respondent:

*“I personally, feel that community representation is more effective and better, as opposed to direct participation that can lead to too many and diverse views/opinions that never have a common ground for agreement. Direct participation can also become too ‘unwieldy’ and does not always help the local authority in the way it should” (PW-03).*

There are certain groups who are unable to participate due to a variety of reasons or, even if they do participate, they may not articulate their views; hence, representation will help to include the views of such groups and should ensure equality. A respondent from a faith group remarked:

*“I personally favour a representative democratic structure; as it impractical to carry out direct participation equitably. Although the new information technologies may have helped towards more direct participation, however, it is not possible to ensure that direct participation is always practical. It is, therefore, better to discuss how representation works effectively and equitably to include those at the margin of the society” (Faith-9).*

### **A mix of direct and indirect participation**

While there were respondents who took one of the two distinct positions there were also other people who argued for a middle ground i.e. a mixture of direct and representative participation. Those who favoured a mixture of both, pointed out their reasons as follows. Some thought that the type of representation could well depend on the type of questions being debated. A councillor responded to the question of a mixed approach by saying:

*“It depends upon the type of question. The more local, the greater can; and should be local involvement. The more strategic [decision making] (budget and allocation of resources) needs to be done by representatives [based on] the use of information gathering techniques e.g. questionnaires and the household panel” (Cllr-05).*

Here we see a clear distinction between local issues for direct participation and issues of strategic nature to representatives. However, the question is how far can local decisions be taken without some influence over local resources? Some respondents felt that the choice of the most effective type of participation will be dependent on what outcome is anticipated from the very beginning. As an interviewee from a voluntary group put it:

*“It is depending on what you want to get at the end. When involving a lot of people, you will get a lot of life stories. They can be useful, but it is very time consuming. If you just pick up representatives for core themes, then the result may not reflect the objective reality. So you do not get answers to the overall problem [you have] to deal with . So it depends on the actual problem and the issue we are looking at or what you want to gain out of it” (In-04).*

Others also thought that much depends on the purpose of participation and the capabilities of those who need to be represented.

*“It depends on circumstances and it depends on what you want people to participate about, why you want people to participate and play a role. I tend to agree, however, with the direct user participation rather than just representatives or advocates. But again, it depends on the individual or the group who want to participate. For example, if people are severely disabled they obviously need advocates i.e. people who are able to represent them” (In-11).*



Some respondents argued that as there is a diverse population and ethnic issues very often come to surface while discussing participation, both direct and representation approaches are appropriate to accommodate the issues of a broad range of people equitably. As a board member respondent summarised:

*“Representatives tend to be committed and attend all meetings but do not necessarily carry community views all the time. Certain cultures are not familiar with the process of participation. In this case a mixture of both methods will not only be appropriate, but absolutely necessary” (Brd-3).*

### **No grounds for public participation**

In contrast to the above three different views, this research also identified respondents who are sceptical about public and community participation in the decision making process altogether. For example a councillor argued that :

*“Why assume that the residents can or should be involved in the decision-making process? Residents aren't involved in the delivery of social services over and above where it affects them. Residents aren't involved in the delivery of street lighting. Or education (with the possible exception of school governing bodies and actually I think there's a strong case for saying that these are generally ineffective). The starting point should be "what contribution can and should residents make?". And that will vary from scheme to scheme, from project to project” (Cllr-15)*

Another comments:

*“Community representation is found to be difficult from certain groups. The Somali community are relatively under represented. It is difficult to set priorities for groups who are under represented unless there is a mechanism to get [information on] what their special needs and priorities are. Therefore, the Council sometimes takes a risk in implementing projects that it thinks are the best for all parts of the community” (Cllr-14).*

A respondent also pointed out that because there are nearly 110 languages spoken in Newham

*“...we are celebrating the diversity of our community. However, there are some negative aspects for participation. Some people are highlighting the problem and remain part of the problem instead of being part of the solution. This is not*

*good for healthy participation. Everybody should take some level of responsibility” (Cllr-08).*

Here, the argument against efforts at participation is based on some of the practical problems. However, some of the quotations could be interpreted as part of the excuse given by the power holders to justify why they do not involve local people in the decision making process. These issues can not be ignored. They need to be addressed and dealt with, as excluding local people from participation in local initiatives will have an effect on their sustainability and ownership according to other informants in this study, and according to much of the literature reviewed earlier in chapter 2.

#### **6.4. Social capital and participation as community empowerment**

In this section, I consider the views of my informants on social capital and its relation to participation, leading on to a discussion of the nature of social networks in Newham and how effectively they can be used to promote participation. In addition to redistribution of resources summarised in section 6.2 and introduction of innovative models such as the mixed model of representation described in section 6.3, it is also necessary to pay attention to the relationship between social capital and participation. The reasons for this are explored below.

From the perspective of theories about social networks, empowerment is not an outcome of a single event. Empowerment as Hur (2006) put it is a “social process that occurs in relations with others. It is a continuous process through which people are enabled to understand, learn and use their capacity to gain better control over their own lives”. In the process, people will become aware of choices, develop opportunities and expand their web of networks with others in similar situations (Becker, Kovach, & Gronseth, 2004). The initial contacts may be developed in a variety of ways including

through family friendship, work relationships, membership of civic organisations or through leisure activities. The stronger the network they have, the more they further expand their web and power-base and the more they strengthen it through participation. Their participation covers issues that they are passionately concerned about or initiatives that are likely to benefit them. The network that involves people known to each other also helps them to share common aspirations and interests. When people are involved they develop a feeling of identification with their community, a sense of shared perspectives and interdependence. Hence, involvement in a strong network empowers individuals to take action in a collective manner and achieve common goals. Actually as Gilchrist (2004:116) put it “Community participation and collective empowerment emerge from a complex infrastructure of informal networks and self organising groups. It is this layer of interaction which is neglected by, and yet essential to, the recent successes in community-led regeneration programmes (Stewart, 1998)”. In the context of local regeneration initiatives, social networks that generate a stock of social capital do not only come from the efforts of individuals, but also from the help and support of local organisations or formal and informal social institutions with resources at their disposal to develop connections.

As discussed in chapter two, social capital is the outcome of members developing many ties among the people in their group and beyond. At the neighbourhood level, to strengthen social networks, it is necessary to mobilise residents’ connections within their vicinity and, if need be, with other, more distant networks. A strong network may help to gain access to a variety of resources. The greater the stock of social networks in the neighbourhood, the easier it is for residents to draw on these interconnections and use them. Social networks are the basis of friendship and trust and *vice versa*. A well developed system of friendship and trust helps individuals to use personal contacts to

achieve objectives and play a role in a society. In area-based regeneration settings, the individual's ability to use social networks for the purpose of active participation depends on the strength of the network. Dense networks of strong ties are necessary for developing and promoting shared values, trust, and mutual understanding that make the residents' co-operation and co-ordination possible. Close and frequent interactions allow residents to know and trust each other, share information, and stand for a common purpose that is collectively benefiting them. They collectively act due to the fact that they share commonly available resources.

In the context of regeneration, social capital could be accumulated and used in many different ways for different purposes. Social capital is built up when trust and relationships between and among individuals, groups, communities and organisations are getting stronger and in the mean time used for mutual or individual benefit. The trust leads to reciprocity and good relationships; good relationships help to work in partnership and expand networks. Organisations could be good sources of vertical links between residents and authorities while residents with the help of organisations could form horizontal links between other communities and organisations. When all these are connected to each other, then there will be a conducive environment for individuals to participate in public affairs with the help of these webs of networks.

Many recent regeneration strategies can be argued to be a part of the *Third Way* ideological approach. The *Third Way* approach was discussed in chapter five and is considered to be consistent with the principles of social capital where responsibilities are shared between citizens and the state (Giddens, 1998) . Residents in regeneration neighbourhoods are helped to help themselves. This could be achieved through a strong social network that could be translated into trust and reciprocity which are the bases of

active engagement in the decision making process. By helping residents to enhance their skills, networks and confidence the government aim to avoid exclusion and inequalities.

Inclusion is the first step of empowering residents. Inclusion enables individuals to take informed decisions and undertake meaningful participation. Participation in public affairs helps individuals out of isolation to contribute towards the common good. In the process, individuals will be active participants within the society which helps to contribute to the social capital that could be shared or used by all. Social *capital* is argued to be a form of capital because it can be accumulated, produce benefits, can be used and kept for future use. Social capital does not belong just to individuals; it is rather a capital that belongs to all the community members that produced it. When used by individuals, families, groups or communities it grows because of the trust and reciprocity, cooperation and relationships are used and benefited those use them (Claibourn and Martin, 2007).

To establish the level of social capital in the London Borough of Newham, respondents were asked a number of relevant questions including whether they considered Newham as a place they enjoy working or living or as a place where neighbours looked after each other. To keep the validity of the research outcome, the questions were extracted from similar questions used by the Newham Household Panel Survey (see appendix 2).

Of the 20 respondents who were working in Newham at the time of the research all responded by saying it was an enjoyable place to work. From those who were residents in Newham, a total of 24 (78%) agreed that they enjoyed living in Newham. Again from those who lived in Newham a total of 21 (72%) also believed that neighbours in Newham looked after each other. As the answers are based on individual

perception, one can argue that to some extent people choose where to work and live, and therefore that they can be expected to answer positively.

However, less than a quarter of residents said that they are not enjoying living in Newham. Therefore, at the individual level a high proportion of respondents were apparently happy living and working in Newham and believed neighbours looked after each other.

When it comes to the question of their support network respondents have a more divided view. For instance, when asked to agree or disagree with the statement - '*most of the time, people or most people try to be helpful*'; - then the respondents split in half. When asked whether '*most people would take advantage if they got the chance*', over a third of the respondent agreed with the statement. When asked if '*most of the time most people can be trusted*', only a third of the respondents answered yes. Trust is one of the important indicators of a good social network and theoretically could be important for individuals' participation in the issues around them (see table 10). Perhaps a lower level of trust will produce a lower level of social networking and less active participation.

**Table 10. Support and network with your neighbours**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Depends</b>	<b>Non responses</b>
	All N(%)	All N(%)	All N(%)	
Most of time, people or most people... try to be helpful	18 (49%)	8 (22%)	11 (30%)	0
Most of time, people or most people... would take advantage if got the chance	13 (36%)	11 (31%)	12 (33%)	1
Most of time, people or most people... can be trusted	12 (33%)	12 (33%)	12 (33%)	1

We experience trust in numerous ways; through our families, friends, organisations and institutions. Trust within the context of family qualitatively differs from the trust we experience within institutions. For example, organisational trust is more than simply the personal trust that exists between individuals based on reputation and experience. Trust is closely related to social capital. Coleman (1988) points out that a system of mutual trust is an important form of social capital on which ‘future obligations and expectations’ may be based. In mutual trust, both parties know that the actions of one party can affect the other. Trust can strengthen norms of reciprocity, minimise suspicion and associated uncertainties, resentments, and frustrations. Trust-based connections that characterise social capital lead to the development of increased trust as people work with one another over time, so trust is also a product or benefit of social capital (Putnam, 2000). On the other hand, in the absence of trust people become suspicious of others. People blame others for the collective societal ills. As society becomes more violent so people have lost trust in one another. A resident respondent indicated that:

*“Many people would like to be able to go out in the evenings as we used to. But due to the amount of crime in the area, people are afraid to do so now. We trust nobody. We do not feel safe anymore” (Res-7).*

Another resident respondent said that the individual’s narrow personal interest make community networks only work for their own advantage which affects mutual trust.

*“Community and family events in a small area are good for networking particularly with young people. However, the red-tape poses difficulties to run such events. Some of the so called representatives are just working for their own good rather than the interest of the people. They are after personal advantage or to establish good connections with officials” (Res-16).*

Narrow personal interest as mentioned by respondents will be a great threat to mutual reciprocity which is a basis of good social capital. Respondents were asked about the frequency of their contacts with relatives, friends and neighbours over the last two weeks at the time of the research. The results show that residents were more likely to

talk to their relatives or friends on the telephone than meet them in person. Faith group leaders were more likely to visit their faith members or speak to their neighbours and their friends. This shows that there is difference between individual networking systems and networking within social groups. Faith groups are fairly organised institutions which enables them to use their resources to reach their members in person. However, for ordinary residents it will be practically impossible to meet their friends and relatives very frequently. The argument that face-to-face contacts are superior to other forms of contacts will be discussed at a later stage.

Formal and informal membership of individuals to organisations and social activities is a good indicator to examine the level of social networks in a society (Johnston and Percy-Smith, 2002). Membership also helps to shape the identity of an individual, his or her behaviour and their action within a society. Through membership, people share information, support each other and perform collectively towards common goals that benefits them all. Therefore such social relationships create a community. These social relationships derived from a common goal leads to a strong attachment among the members. Membership implies a responsibility toward other members, providing and receiving support from one another that further leads to a general trust extending throughout the community. Furthermore, social relationships foster a sense of belonging and social identity that constitute fundamental characteristics of a community (Talen, 1999).

In terms of membership, the research found that it is more unlikely that ordinary residents belong to a particular group. However, NDC Board members and elected Councillors were more likely to be members of a tenant association, a political party or a trade union group. There is similar trend of membership among certain groups that requires a level of leadership and power. For example, the response from board mem-



bers and councillors shows that they are more likely to be school governors than the other informants. There is also variation in terms of a relatively low level of membership by the young people and women. According to the Newham Household Panel Survey, Wave 4 report ([www.newham.info](http://www.newham.info)), nearly two third of respondents reported that they were not a member of any organisation. The same household survey also revealed that organisational membership has increased among younger age groups (16-29) and among those aged 60 and over. An initial rise followed by a decrease in membership was noted among the 30 to 44 and 45 to 59 age groups from the Wave 1 (2003) to Wave 4 (2006) surveys.

In terms of respondents' involvement in local activities, residents and board members were more likely to take part in charity activities than councillors. From their self completion questionnaire, councillors tend to be school governors more than anybody else. This reveals that public participation is also dependent on the individual position in a society. For example, elected councillors are people committed to a structured form of political activity and hence hold some level of social position. The very nature of their position helped them to take charge of decision making within their local areas. By so doing, they have accumulated social capital that could be shared and developed. The involvement and membership of local residents in charitable activities is frequently founded upon more moral than political values. However, residents have also accumulated social capital through more informal structures and a different set of values than, for example, elected councillors. Furthermore, the social capital accumulated by the faith groups seems more a hybrid of the above two. Faith group leaders have both structured and informal types of social capital. They have structured social capital through their religious institutions and informal social capital through the trust and reciprocity among themselves. Nevertheless, due to apathy, less interest in local issues and the de-

clining trends of membership in some religious beliefs and social institutions, social capital could be affected and also therefore the process of public participation (Putnam, 2000).

Respondents argued that community spirit is becoming depleted and communities are fragmented as a result of the type of place in which they live, particularly in high storey buildings where people come and go without living for long. The argument is based on the fact that there is no conducive environment that enables people to come together and talk to each other, hence, as a faith group respondent put it *“there is no need for a community, because we do not have one. You can see that there is no community spirit. People do not know each other.”* The respondent gave examples of people living in tower blocks. *“There is no stimulus that encourages people to know each other. Unless people know each other they can not build a community.”* The respondent goes on to say :

*‘As a priest, I am involved in funeral services. I saw people coming from far away to attend funeral services of their families or relatives (as far as Essex and the West Country) [rather] than local neighbours. Your own neighbours do not know what is happening next door. If you add up all these together and take it as part of the wider picture of local involvement then it is disappointing. It is really worrying’ (Faith-5).*

The points raised here are varied. On one hand, the built environment i.e. high rise buildings are not conducive to creating conditions for people to talk to and trust each other and develop social capital. On the other hand, people are frequently moving, which has an effect on the development of established community with well accumulated social capital. The other side of the argument, however, is that when people are moving to other places, their former space is filled by others. The moving-out process is a slow and gradual one. The incoming people slowly become part of the community they join. Therefore, it is unlikely they disturb the existing social network. They rather

strengthen it by using it at the first instance and contribute to it with new types of experience.

Just as multiple communities can exist within places like in Newham, so can multiple networks. Newham communities are divided by many attributes including ethnicity, class, political view, religious beliefs, social status etc. within their geographical boundaries. These divisions are often linked to distinctive social networks and resources associated with each of them. In other words, not all groups, classes, or individuals have equal access to the resources provided by each other's social networks. Thus, divisions are reinforced or exacerbated by the sharing of resources among those within particular networks and the withholding of them from those who are out of the network. A member of the NDC board pointed out that:

*“ ... it is difficult to talk in full confidence as to what extent our community is diversified. For example, no one knows how many East Europeans settled in Newham. How can we talk about community participation if we do not know exactly who the Newham communities are? To be honest we are not engaging the new communities. It is only with the established communities we have access to. I am talking communities of Asian and African-Caribbean. We only know about the new communities through crime statistics or the number of school children; not through their participation” (Brd-9).*

These are not the only reasons for the fragmentation of communities. As discussed in chapter 2, ideally, individuals are socially connected in 'bonding' networks, through which they are potentially able to access social and personal support, and 'bridging' networks that circulate potential social capital in the form of new information and diverse social contacts. When people move to the area, new networks bring them into contact with new ideas and experiences that were not familiar to them before. This has both advantages and disadvantages. The advantages are that people learn new things from others which will be taken to strengthen their networks. The disadvantage could be that

it creates an unhealthy competitive environment among different networks and ultimately leads to fragmentation.

There are also other causes of fragmentation. For example, a respondent in this research identified that poverty, lack of self respect and lack of respect for others are playing an important role in causing fragmentation of communities and lowering the potential for public participation. A faith group respondent mentioned that he had extensive experience working with the poor and working-class people in multi-cultural settings of East London. He considered his experience as a unique opportunity which one can hardly find in other places. He then points out that:

*‘I have witnessed a lot of changes during all these years working in East London. For example, in the good old days, the rate of crime and fear of crime used to be very low. In some neighbourhoods it was common to see doors wide open - not locked all the time’ (Faith-5).*

He went on to say :

*‘The situation has changed now. Older people are very apprehensive about fear of crime, being mugged or robbed. Some argue that this as the complex nature of poverty. It could be true to a limited extent. I would rather argue that it is the product of lack of self-respect and respect to others. It is a sign of community disintegration. Unless you care for each other it is unlikely that you are tending to be involve in local issues that concern the whole community’ (Faith-5).*

Access to good information and support mechanisms through new technologies seems to be starting to replace the traditional way of networking through personal or group contacts (Shah, 1998). Access to good quality information not only helps access to good services but empowers the individuals to make informed decisions through participation. The online communities and social networks developed by new internet technologies have become a new model of participation. Such social networks have become powerful not least because they offer support via a user friendly environment but also there is no bureaucratic channel or hierarchy to share and spread messages. Therefore, technologically driven social networks could have both the most beneficial effects on

the individual and society, by generating trust and confidence which otherwise were not possible through a rigid face-to-face networks. Nevertheless, they have their own problems as well. On the one hand, they are the most flexible, and adaptable forms of networks that are able to evolve with the need of individuals.

On the other hand, certain individuals in a society have difficulties in accessing such technologies. Even if accessed they may under-use or misuse them. Access to a good level of high quality information could limit the need for a person-to-person network system. This individualised access to information of all sorts which traditionally was thought to be a good basis for social capital is now under threat. Another resident respondent asserted this by saying:

*‘The social network we had in the past is going to disappear. The good nature of neighbourhoods is polarised. I am not sure the NDC is serving everybody equally. They have created artificial class hierarchy. Some have a good access to the services provided by NDC information network supported by internet facilities. But most of us do not have that access to latest technologies. It is not about networks anymore; it is about who has access to the right information in the first place’ (Res-16).*

Moving back from the virtual to the ‘real’ world, the next section considers the influence population movement has on social networks and subsequently on the public participation.

### **6.5. Population mobility and networks**

The mobility of people from their residential area could result in the decline or fragmentation of social networks. It is hypothesised that mobility weakens ties to our neighbours, which in turn lowers the overall level of community cohesion (Putnam 2000). Conway and Hachen (2005:27) wrote

*“We also know from previous studies that the number of social ties an individual has is related to how long they have resided in a particular locale (Rankin & Quane, 2000). Because the development of social ties is a time-intensive activity, those who have been residents for a longer period of time should have more ties,*

*and conversely, newer residents would be expected to have fewer social ties. In turn, people who are long-term residents are more likely to participate in a neighbourhood organization because they have more of an investment in and attachment to their neighbourhood, increasing the likelihood that they will be aware of opportunities for community participation”.*

On the other hand, however, they went on argue that

*“... in neighbourhoods with high population turnover and weak levels of attachment, it is more difficult for tenants to become acquainted with others and to develop friendship networks through which information about community participation can flow (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997).”*

Some respondents thought that when people were convinced that they did not belong to the area of their residence, they had no intention to participate in local issues. The rapid inflows and outflows of residents in a neighbourhood lead to neighbourhood instability. Strong social capital may promote neighbourhood cohesion by encouraging residents to stay longer. Local social networks not only provide material support, but develop emotional support for people in their geographical area. Once moved to another place or neighbourhood, the social capital that has been accumulated for long period of time may simply be lost. Thus, local social networks are likely to be negatively affected by population mobility.

People who have lived in a certain area for a long period of time with strong social ties, may generate positive connections, for example in tackling crime, maintaining the physical environment, etc. Social networks create common values among individuals and their relationships. Such relationships are an asset because each one contributes to the creation of trust and reciprocity. Trust and reciprocity are some of the key elements that reduce the out-flows of people from an area. People who do not have any commitment to stay in a given area will invest less to the local social networks. This is because the network that a person has contributed to in one location will become less useful after moving to another place.

According to Putnam (1993), bridging social capital is fundamental for political life because it is needed to build coalitions and to form groups that pursue diverse interests. This type of social capital is the one that contributes to the development of citizens' sense of responsibility. Residential mobility disturbs both bonding and bridging social capital. There are a number of respondents in this research study who argued that continuous population mobility influences the type and level of social networks in Newham. Mobile people lack connection with the area and do not interact with people locally. This lack of connection and interaction will undermine social capital. A faith group respondent asserted this point by saying that :

*“The proximity of Newham to the City and the availability of relatively cheap housing in some corners of the borough means that the area has become attractive to a highly mobile population, many of whom are young people, These young and mobile residents do not contribute to the social capital of their neighbourhood” (Faith-7).*

A resident respondent also mentioned the impacts of the mobile nature of new migrants on the social network and argued that:

*“The case of Newham is peculiar. The East Europeans are settling in the borough in the last few years. Most of these people are young males. They are very mobile. They may not have interest in local issues as they do not have the intention to live in Newham for long. They normally choose Newham, because it is nearer to central London and the housing rent is relatively cheaper. I think, this will have a negative effect on social wellbeing of the whole community” (Res-09).*

Another resident, however, discussed the push and pull factors that enable the development of sustainable social networks.

*“Above all the NDC should create jobs and an environment where we are able to raise our children without worrying for the future. Such approach will help us to stay in one place rather than worrying about moving from one accommodation and work to the other; the more you know and become close to your next door neighbours, the more you create a strong community with a good network of support and ownership” (Res-16).*

Yet another resident argued that families with children foster community network which benefits everyone.

*“My belief is that parents have a duty to care and nurture their children as potential, positive and secure members of our community: it should be innate. It requires networking among all parents. This area is overcrowded with individuals and families with this concept of seeking joy and happiness by accumulating material wealth without commitment to each other; without a community pride. A minority, educated or aspiring residents like myself, are anxiously aware of moving out to a more affluent area to which we may not feel despondent. Others may use initiatives like NDC and regeneration services to better their personal career at the expense of others” (Res-2).*

The above quotes have described the complexity of networks in areas like Newham. On the one hand, there is an inherent need for social networks that benefit individuals and the wider community. The required social network would help their children to be raised in a safe and happy neighbourhood environment. However, on the other hand, there are other embedded issues that prevent social networks from developing. This might be because of the different mix of people with different ideas about what might constitute a community. The lack of social ties forces some to move to other places where they can fit with the new social environment. Regeneration projects need to carefully manage such issues in the community.

Although respondents report their concerns however, according to the Census of 2001 there is no strong evidence that indicates a high mobility in Newham population (see Table 11 and 12). Therefore, population outward mobility is not a strong influencing factor for social networks in the case of Newham. As shown in the Tables there is a higher level of population movement in the previous year from inner city London than outer London boroughs. There is a higher rate of population movement from affluent boroughs than from deprived boroughs. For example, there were about 7.64% of Kensington and Chelsea residents lived outside the UK or moved outside their usual address a year before the census as compared to Newham where the proportion is 1.83 % of its



residents. Newham is the third after Lewisham and Hackney where there is minimum outward population movement i.e. moving people out of the boroughs recorded. Therefore, although this doesn't refute the concerns of respondents and some of the previous literature findings, in a relative terms outward population mobility is not a big concern for the Newham population.

**Table 11. The Scale of Migration in Greater London based on the 2001 Census**

Borough	Lived at the same address	Lived elsewhere outside the 'associated area' but within the UK	Lived elsewhere outside the UK	Moved outside the 'associated area' but within UK	Total people moved out of the area	% of people moved out of the area
City of London	5533	41	308	22	371	6.71
Camden	157151	441	7500	313	8254	5.25
Hackney	173996	261	2348	198	2807	1.61
Hammersmith and Fulham	132055	446	5573	281	6300	4.77
Haringey	180171	290	3525	xx	Xx	xx
Islington	145995	365	3682	246	4293	2.94
Kensington and Chelsea	128164	310	9232	250	9792	7.64
Lambeth	219187	532	4296	378	5206	2.38
Lewisham	214504	187	2838	225	3250	1.52
<b>Newham</b>	<b>211219</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>3507</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>3869</b>	<b>1.83</b>
Southwark	205693	425	4934	338	5697	2.77
Tower Hamlets	163707	386	3787	262	4435	2.71
Wandsworth	205697	687	6291	500	7478	3.64
Westminster	139856	537	10217	409	11163	7.98
Barking and Dagenham	147703	46	803	53	902	0.61
Barnet	271662	351	5554	366	6271	2.31
Bexley	199931	67	639	103	809	0.40
Greenwich	225108	255	5639	276	6170	2.74
Bromley	266083	153	1711	241	2105	0.79
Croydon	292100	252	3077	292	3621	1.24
Ealing	258735	393	5921	354	6668	2.58
Enfield	241953	133	1978	192	2303	0.95
Greenwich	186395	163	2198	174	2535	1.36
Harrow	183732	173	2725	169	3067	1.67
Havering	206904	77	699	100	876	0.42
Hillingdon	213433	225	2345	318	2888	1.35
Hounslow	183285	268	3808	237	4313	2.35
Kingston upon Thames	123930	162	2762	185	3109	2.51
Merton	161399	244	3639	289	4172	2.58
Redbridge	213190	126	1913	188	2227	1.04
Richmond Upon Thames	146074	365	4079	259	4703	3.22
Sutton	159475	92	1113	153	1358	0.85
Waltham Forest	189739	216	2304	217	2737	1.44

**Table 12. The Scale of Migration in Newham Wards based on the 2001 Census**

Wards	Lived at the same address	Lived elsewhere outside the 'associated area' but within the UK	Lived elsewhere outside the UK	Moved outside the 'associated area' but within UK	Total people moved out of the area	% of people moved out of the area
Beckton	10965	16	224	19	259	2.36
Boleyn	10902	9	152	13	174	1.60
Canning Town North	10545	9	123	12	144	1.37
Canning Town South	9905	3	117	16	136	1.37
Custom House	10480	9	125	5	139	1.33
East Ham Central	10548	3	225	7	235	2.23
East Ham North	10075	0	182	7	189	1.88
East Ham South	10992	3	91	9	103	0.94
Forest Gate North	11023	16	143	14	173	1.57
Forest Gate South	11579	16	279	9	304	2.63
Green Street East	11524	9	219	0	228	1.98
Green Street West	11450	0	131	4	135	1.18
Little Ilford	11487	0	141	6	147	1.28
Manor Park	10454	4	185	3	192	1.84
Plaistow North	11523	15	269	10	294	2.55
Plaistow South	10303	21	178	12	211	2.05
Royal Docks	4972	12	143	15	170	3.42
Stratford and New Town	10329	15	191	26	232	2.25
Wall End	11138	3	189	0	192	1.72
West Ham	11025	9	200	3	212	1.92

## **6.6. Conclusion**

This chapter has underlined the importance of empowering local people to enable them to use their full capacity and capabilities in participating in urban regeneration initiatives. This is only possible when there is clarity about the meaning, extent and implications of participation and the benefits of empowerment. Therefore, participation and empowerment were discussed from a variety of perspectives. The chapter considered different ways of ensuring participation in local issues which include direct and representative participation.

Moreover, the chapter also considered the role of social connections and networks as a resource that people use to help them to advance their interests by cooperating with others and as a means of 'empowering' disfranchised groups more effectively. Creating and exchanging skills, knowledge and attitudes that potentially enable people to tap into other benefits is helped by social networks. Social capital is an accu-

culated stock of resources based on the relationships among people and could be embedded in their participation in society. Being a member of a network and following the norms that guide actions, can be strengthened by knowledge and trust within the network. This facilitates reciprocity and co-operation that could result in networks and norms being used for mutual or collective benefit. More particularly it could foster more widespread and meaningful participation in local regeneration initiatives. The Newham residents are positive when it comes to their view of working and living in Newham. However the chapter identified that these views vary between different groups in the community. Some are more sceptical than others as to the impacts of social networks in positively influencing local regeneration through the participatory decision making processes.

Although it appears to have little impact in the case of Newham, the chapter also raised the issue of whether residential outward mobility could be a potential deterrent to a strong social networks and hence participation. The reason for this is that in the absence of strong social networks people do not commit themselves to actively participate. Therefore, to alleviate some of the issues problems concerning effective participation in urban regeneration raised in the previous chapters, there needs to be a revisiting the of local and national policy issues. The next chapter discusses some of the model policies that need to be developed to enhance participation and social networks where area-based regeneration initiatives are undertaken.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **MODEL POLICIES OF PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT**

#### **7.1. Introduction**

Drawing upon some of the key research findings, this chapter discusses ‘ideal models’ of public participation and social networks with a view to informing future policies of area-based regeneration. The chapter explores the role of voluntary and community groups in area-based regeneration especially as campaigners, advocates, partners and resource facilitators. It argues that the future of area-based urban regeneration is not only dependent on the role of voluntary organisations as advocates, but as partners in local and central government initiatives. As a matter of policy, the role of voluntary and community groups needs to be redefined to accommodate the formal and informal representative participation they play in the decision making process. Drawing upon the research findings, there is also consideration of models that make voluntary and community groups participation more meaningful and effective.

Furthermore, growing interest in the role participation and social networks in the urban regeneration process over the past four decades means that it is a good moment to reassess which policies would work best in tackling the problems of low levels of participation and poorly developed social networks. A further section of this chapter also attempts to demonstrate the ‘added value’ effective participation will bring by creating a more cohesive society. Finally the chapter concludes by discussing the untapped resources of new technologies in enhancing participation and strengthening social networks. As a matter of policy and good practice it is suggested that it is necessary to

conduct regular impact assessments to examine whether a particular participation initiative in area-based regeneration initiatives is working or not. Such impact assessment will help to evaluate the outcomes that are produced as a result of active participation or assess the implications of non-participation. It is easier to assess outcomes that result from active participation than the longitudinal effect of non-participation.

## **7.2. The role of voluntary and community organisations in the London borough of Newham**

As indicated in the previous chapter, some of the evidence presented in this chapter has suggested that mediating institutions (voluntary and community organisations, faith groups, clubs and associations) in the London Borough of Newham could potentially play an important role in mobilising their respective members and service users to participate in issues of local and mutual concern. Voluntary and community groups are well placed to access the public, both formally and informally. The public can also easily access the resources of the voluntary and community groups. The respondents in this research felt initiatives that had not meaningfully involved the 'Third Sector' (as voluntary and community groups are sometimes referred to), had failed in the past and there is an indication that they would fail again in the future.

Taylor and et. al. (2004:68) point out the importance of the voluntary and community sector within policy discourses:

*“The growing significance of the VCS as the “third” sector has been acknowledged in countless government documents and institutionalised in the agreement of a “compact” of principles and codes of practice to govern relationships between the public sector and the VCS.”*

Local authorities like Newham, often have problematic relationships with voluntary organisations mainly due to the unique role that local organisations play. Voluntary organisations are not only service providers but also campaigners and advocates on behalf

of their service users and the wider public. Sometimes their campaigning and advocacy role has resulted in a direct clash with the local authorities. The principal users of local voluntary organisations are people living in the vicinity of where these organisations provide their services. Therefore, local voluntary organisations could help promote the participation of local people in issues that affect them including regeneration initiatives in the area. There are different ways in which voluntary organisations generate a conducive environment for their service users to actively participate in local initiatives. Particularly in areas like Newham where poverty and social exclusion is found to be prevalent, the role of mediating institutions is important, because such institutions could practically address the problems with much more flexibility than more structured government agencies. Their members are voluntarily organised with relatively high levels of commitment and are often well embedded in social networks, consequently their work could be effective and influential in providing structures that support participation in regeneration schemes. 'Mediating institutions', such as voluntary organisations, are nearer to the people they serve. A councillor respondent agreed with the above assertion by saying:

*"I do not rule out the role of the voluntary organisations to voice in the place of the voiceless either by their own participation or facilitating participation of the public. Voluntary organisation can be real power brokers and influence to change things" (Cllr-09).*

There seems to be a widely held view that local voluntary and community organisations could play a role in strengthening public and community participation (Kendall and Knapp in Smith et al (1995:66-75) . This could be achieved partly by providing good quality information and a small amount of funding to groups to aid participative activity. For example, the Community Involvement Unit of Aston Charities, an organisation active in Newham, is helping small groups to enhance their capacity to participate in

local issues. Furthermore, working in partnership with small local groups, providing training, advice and language support are also considered as important roles voluntary organisations could play. This view is also supported by other researchers. Osborne et al., (2006:238 ) asserted that:

*“... they [voluntary organisations] offered the opportunity for local community groups and their members to experience successfully acquiring and managing resources for community regeneration. Finally, they developed the confidence of community members in their ability to act successfully in the complex forum of regeneration partnerships.”*

Lindsay, (2001:115) also argued that the voluntary sector has played an increasing role in brokering policies and establishing issues and went on to say

*“For many major policy areas – international aid, the environment, poverty, discrimination – it is far more likely that it will be the campaigning organisations, not the political parties, which will have brought together people with shared interests, developed public opinion, and promoted reform programmes with public authorities.”*

Due to the fact that mediating institutions work at a neighbourhood level, they can develop trust and encourage participation of their service users and members. In addition, such organisations work with local people on a day to day basis, and they understand what services are available and what the needs are. They enjoy a higher level of trust among their service users or members. They can easily identify issues directly from the experience of their individual users and from their institutional openness. Turner (2001:201) went further to discuss the wider role of voluntary organisations and wrote:

*“Voluntary associations have four democratic enhancing functions: they provide information to policy makers; they redress political inequalities that exist when politics is materially based; they can act as schools of democracy; they provide alternative governance to markets and public hierarchies that permits society to realize the important benefits of co-operation among citizens.”*

However, despite the potential of the role of the voluntary and community sector in enhancing public participation, and offering a local compact which is designed to ease the

power imbalance between authorities and the public, respondents argued that with limited material and financial resources, it would be difficult to achieve the intended purpose unless funding policies are changed. Here is how one of the interviewees who worked in a voluntary organisation viewed the situation in Newham:

*“Well, in theory, the role of the voluntary sector in enhancing public participation has long been known. To be honest, there is no way that we can actually compete with a vested financial interest of the private sector in any social or economic regeneration. If you compare the way Newham is managing public participation with other boroughs, for example in West London, it is absolutely different. Funding in Newham is a way of controlling. Therefore, voluntary organisations as mediating tools between residents and the Council is non-existent, if not impossible” (In-06).*

The interviewee commented on how Newham Council is being seen to manipulate voluntary organisations, rather than to give them real power. It is here that there needs to be a locally agreed partnership and participatory policy that clearly differentiates the role of the private sector (which is market driven) and the voluntary sector (which is not-for-profit driven) in area-based regeneration initiatives. Such locally agreed policies will help to accommodate each group’s perspectives on a more equal footing. Another respondent also agreed on the importance of this approach but suggested that there were resource problems. He argued that many organisations are working very hard merely to ensure their own survival, rather than supporting the active participation of the public in regeneration and other initiatives.

*“I think, a lot depends on the financial and resource status of organisations. Almost all of the voluntary organisations are meant to be involving people or helping people to get involved in local issues; but the majority are working just to survive” (Vol-33).*

In reality, for many organisations securing sustainable funding is a struggle and hence the role that organisations play may be limited or hampered. For example, the provision of training to enhance the capacity of individuals and groups is a highly resource-intensive exercise. The capacity of small and medium size organisations to provide this



important area of support is limited even though such training is key to ensuring higher levels of participation. In areas like Newham where more than a hundred different languages are spoken, facilitating support for a wide range of people may be extremely difficult and challenging. The organisational resource capacities for interpreters and translators is limited. Yet such resources are needed if voluntary organisations are to play a role in facilitating participation in urban regeneration.

Simmons and Birchall (2005:264) have attempted to establish the reasons why certain individuals participate while others do not. They concluded that resource availability or scarcity are important factors in determining who becomes active and in what ways. By this argument it is voluntary organisations with abundant resources who are in the best position to help individual residents in facilitating and supporting participation.

It is evident that organisations in voluntary, community and faith groups are often better placed than statutory agencies to provide some community based services and support to hard-to-reach groups, aiding their participation in society. Many voluntary and community organisations specialise in supporting certain marginalised groups in a society. Therefore, by strengthening their resource capacity through funding such groups, it is possible to enhance the public and community participation in local regeneration activities. The local and national policies should address the questions of how grassroots organisations can be funded to help local people to engage in active citizenship. However, financial and material support to voluntary and community organisations from central and local government rarely comes without strings attached. Voluntary and community groups may have to compromise their fundamental values in order to receive support (Knapp in Billis and Harris, 1996).

However, this research suggests that policies that encourage public investment in local voluntary and community groups towards supporting residents in participatory activity are worth exploring as they may benefit area-based regeneration initiatives.

In contrast to the above assertions there are some critics who argued that voluntary organisations are partisan, tend (in reality) to reflect the view of small segments of the population and still fail to reach the most inactive and apolitical part of the community (DiMaggio and Anheier, 1990:147-150). Such criticisms were true in the past (Lewis, 1996: 166) and still exist.

### **7.2.1. Voluntary organisation as campaigners and advocates**

One of the roles of voluntary organisations is to act on issues that they think affect the wider public. They lobby on behalf of their service users or local people in their areas to bring important local issues to the attention of power holders or decision-makers. Sometimes, they do this as advocates and other times they act in their own right for the cause they espouse and as part of their duty as representative organisations. Marshall (in Billis and Harris, 1996:58) wrote

*“The internal heterogeneity of the ‘voluntary sector’ can be encompassed by seeing it as an amalgam of several sub-sectors, each with a different impetus and character. Some of these are concerned with the creation of community, some with helping the disadvantaged, others with mutual self-help or grassroots innovation”.*

Marshall went on to say that the common feature of voluntary organisation is “the fact that they give individuals a role and a place in social life and, potentially, social change”. He also argued that “If the private sector constitutes the marketplace for material negotiation, the voluntary sector provides the market place for negotiating social values and social relationships”. They have also relatively strong potential human expertise to promote their demands through research and supported evidence. Sometimes

these organisations are involved in wider national issues which might have significant local effects. The work of *Community Links* in Newham is a good example because of its local activities that have a national impact. Some of the action research *Community Links* undertook discussed in chapter five is a notable example.

Voluntary and community organisations can facilitate a good level of communication and can help the public to be part of a decision making process. Local people will gain experience, knowledge and skills through participating and working together with the help that voluntary and community organisations provide. Such organisations are in a strong position to advocate on behalf of socially and economically marginalised groups. Many advocacy organisations feel that it is appropriate to take advantage of the opportunities to represent marginalised groups and tell the stories of their experience, their values and the views they hold.

Ultimately, the whole process of advocacy needs to be expanded so that it is not only about representation but also about awareness building, that leads to decision-making – all the way from initial planning through to project implementation and review. Moreover, the way that advocates identify themselves with people they advocate for has an enormous impact on determining the relationships and their legitimacy. For example, members of the *Friends of Queen's Market* campaign group are residents of Newham and users of the market place, either as consumers or business people.

However, representation or advocacy is a highly charged issue and very often wrongly understood. Sometimes advocates claim to represent a particular group of people in a community, while in reality they have little or no access to the decision making processes. The local policy should clearly state advocacy is part of an empowerment process.

Beside the role of advocacy there are also pressure groups who are collections of individuals or organisations who pursue organised campaigns to in order to have their views influence the power holders in making their decisions. Unlike advocacy organisations, pressure groups have different means of influencing the process of decision making. Some do this by approaching residents door-to-door, for example, by collecting their signatures in protest or support of certain initiatives which are then eventually submitted to authorities in order to influence their actions and/or decisions. More organised pressure groups of residents or advocacy organisations would also orchestrate demonstrations, petitions and other methods of protest or support for certain issues. Such efforts will be more effective when they attract the involvement of local political and community leaders. The local public media will play a crucial role in these kinds of activities, either to bring the issue to the attention of people or by pressurising the power holders to act. Tenants Associations in Newham and *Friends of Queen's Market* campaign groups are good examples of such pressure groups. For example, the sustained campaign of *Friends of Queen's Market* has attracted vast local and national attention and forced Newham Council to reconsider its initial plans for regenerating the area. This campaign group also played an important role in the local election in which the Labour Party lost the wards where the market existed to the Respect Party. This shows how organised protest and can be achieved through collective action.. Pearce (2004:502) discussed the relationship between collective action and formal democratic process:

*“... while democratic deficits must be challenged by collective action, collective action needs democracy if it is to do more than shout from the periphery every so often. And social activists need to be democratic whatever the flaws of existing democratic arrangements at the political level. Collective action could be one end of a spectrum of participatory engagement, where the other end is more formal and institutionalised.”*

The *Friends of Queen's Market* expressed their opposition by using both the formal democratic means i.e. through the ballot box and by organising actions including protest demonstration at the Town Hall where they got a extensive media coverage.

Beside the organised efforts of advocacy by voluntary and community organisations, there are also selected powerful individuals who feel strongly about the social ills in their area and like to positively influence the situation by using their power base. Their power base could be their fame, position, business or social status. Such social entrepreneurs may organise with like-minded people or organisations and work for the wider public. The public will be gathered around their call to participate or deal with some social ills or issues at the local level. However, it is likely that a joint partnership effort between individuals and organisations would bring more meaningful and sustainable results.

Similar issues have been identified by Perrons and Skyers (2003:272) in their case study "*Shoreditch Our Way*" *A New Deal Partnership Case Study: An Evaluation of Participation in Practice*. Based on their research in Shoreditch, in the London Borough Hackney they conclude:

*"Thus, community participation allows some voices to be heard but unless they have some influence over resource allocation they are unlikely to be able to challenge economic injustices. In spite of this crucial limitation, however, community awareness and empowerment have given some people a sense of influence over aspects of their surroundings. The tenants' representatives involved in the SHOW partnership have gained considerably by enhancing their personal skills and contacts, developing marketable skills and by being able to articulate their rights as tenants, and there is an increasing sense of optimism about what has been delivered so far. (Perrons and Skyers, 2003:281)*

The next section looks at the role of voluntary organisations as partners in organising participation and empowering their members in local decision making process as identified by my research informants.

### **7.2.2. Voluntary organisation as partners**

One of the most important methods of participation at community and organisational level is working in partnership rather than in competition. This has been a key theme in New Labour social and urban policy. Partnerships as part of local governance arrangements in the context of area-based regeneration are founded upon a relationship between different interested groups and organisations to support and deliver the objectives of the initiative within the given area. As Purdue (2005:123) points out:

*“Partnership working between the statutory sector, business and local communities has become the organizational form of choice for British policy-makers to deliver urban regeneration.”*

In recent years it has become increasingly clear that the role of the voluntary sector in local issues is recognised by policy makers. Local voluntary organisations are encouraged to play their role as equal partners in their areas. They express their views through a number of local structures and arrangements, such as the *Local Strategic Partnership*, *The Local Area Agreement* and *The Local Compact*, to mention but a few. More importantly, some local authorities (including Newham) and local voluntary organisations have followed a central government initiative and are signing a binding contract that clearly defines their responsibilities and roles. Smith et al. (2004:511) pointed out that:

*“In recognition of the complex relationships and imbalances of power between the voluntary sector and the public sector, the Labour government in its first term launched a national compact between representatives of the voluntary sector and the state in November 1998 (Home Office, 1998). Many localities have followed this lead, developing local compacts that set out explicit guidelines on relations between the two sectors and attempt to balance the demands of competition and collaboration.”*

However, the difficulty is how to ensure equal voices for all those participating in the partnership processes. Although partnership is considered as an important way to promote joined-up working, the expectations of different partners varies. For example, a

local councillor respondent suggested that a change in the attitudes of council leaders is crucial:

*“so that local people are seen as genuine partners not pawns. They have something to contribute - they are not a nuisance!” (Cllr-01).*

Moreover, partnerships are not only between organisations but also between people through a process of continuous dialogue. This involves individuals being very open and clear about what the issues are, identifying potential areas of conflict, agreement or disagreement and where problems emerge, trying to work through them. As a respondent from a voluntary organisation put it:

*“...But if that is not possible, it is fine as long as we talked about it and agreed. Maybe then a specialist organisation or advocate can come in and represent the individuals or communities depending on the importance of the issue” (Vol-21).*

The question about partnership working between residents and other local actors in local regeneration initiatives elicited a variety of views. On the one hand, several residents thought that partnership working is just a matter of lip service. These people (usually the residents) thought that local authorities see themselves as ‘gate-keepers’ for any regeneration initiative in their local area. Therefore, they have a paternalistic view towards other partners. By using their financial and political power, authorities dictate whose interests particular initiatives are in and very often do this to gain some political advantage. However, on the other hand, the research respondents from faith and community forums were more optimistic that their partnership could work if there was a real commitment from all sides, including the authorities.

On the ground, there are encouraging initiatives of partnership working particularly among local groups. Business communities are now joining the local community and voluntary groups in participating in many of the regeneration activities notably in the work of the West Ham and Plaistow New Deal for Communities. There are also

good indications that smaller groups are merging together to form a bigger entity for the sake of partnership working and in order to strengthen themselves so that they have significant power. For example, within the NDC area there are several small local businesses that are jointly represented on the NDC board. The representatives are elected and they represent business interests from their own consortium. These trends toward partnership working have been increasing since the demise of *Urban Development Corporations* and the emergence of initiatives like *City Challenge*.

Local regeneration agencies are increasingly required by central government to engage with the general public and local communities, in order to obtain feedback on their projects and develop partnerships with local and voluntary organisations. Such encouraging developments need to be part of a policy that requires consistency and long term objectives in local regeneration initiatives in contrast to problems of 'short-termism' in regeneration planning. Partnership is not always as smooth an activity as intended. Davies (2004:580) argued that:

*“NDC, a 10-year area based regeneration programme established in 1999, is a case in point. ... the Government intended NDC to be community led (DETR, 1999). While residents are far more engaged with NDC than previous regeneration programmes, often forming a majority on partnership boards, the rules for financial management and project appraisal have necessitated the development of complex and sometimes alienating partnership structures.”*

He went on to say that there have been widely publicised tensions and divisions between residents and regeneration professionals caused by divergent understandings about the purpose of the programme and the role of each party within it.

*“The evidence suggests that partnerships are characterized in many cases not by productive networks built on strong-weak ties, but by conflict, bureaucracy, inertia and hierarchy. ... Resident activists frequently perceive that statutory agencies are hijacking the programme, while regeneration professionals feel that residents find strategic thinking difficult. Disagreements of this kind have prevented some partnerships from functioning effectively, thus far.”*



The local partnership policy needs to clearly state the ways to minimise conflicts and misunderstandings and the mechanism to resolve conflicts if they occur. Conflicts could be defused partly through the full inclusion of people with a variety of views sharing a commitment to try to accommodate difference through dialogue and consensus. Perrons and Skyers (2003:272) pointed out that, although this is a challenge, local authorities can play an effective role:

*“According to official interpretation, partnerships were designed to give a voice to local business and the community, to streamline the range of agencies or Quangos and to make the deliveries of policies more effective (Audit Commission, 1999.) However, the evidence that suggests that the degree of involvement required is desired, or that it is conducive to greater social inclusion except in a formal discursive sense, is sparse, although participation has been shown to increase when local authorities make efforts to build participatory structure and especially when they are perceived to have material outcomes (Docherty et al., 2001). ”*

From the health services perspectives, Longley (2001) argued that conflicts are multi-dimensional involving all actors in the services at the ‘providing’ and ‘receiving’ ends. He (2001:262) a weakness in the approach and policy discourse:

*“For many, ‘partnership’ seems to be predicated on the belief that there are no necessary conflicts of interest in policy-making – that the public would support current policies if only they know more about them, and could understand why they were necessary.”*

Generally, to narrow the gap of understanding and the means of dealing with local issues between the power holders and local people (or their organisational representatives) there needs to be a more active and robust partnership policy. It is essential that there should be more open partnership arrangements where both input and outcome is quantifiable and can be measured. So the policy should clearly stipulate what should be done and how quantifiable objectives should be measured at local level. Some of the

quantifiable outcomes including the increasing of participants as part of ensuring effective participation will be discussed in section 7.3.

### **7.2.3. Voluntary organisations as resource facilitators**

Lowndes et al. (2006:540) argue that “The most important factor in determining the level of local participation is, undoubtedly, the resources that citizens have access to – money, education and civic skills”. The further argued (2006:545) “Having the skills to participate is a crucial element in explaining whether people do participate but, as the main proponents of the resources model recognize, it also matters whether people are mobilized”.

The quality of the outcome from participation is dependent on the quality of initial preparations and the availability of support and facilities. Some participatory activities need hands-on expert support to make the outcome more effective and efficient. Millward (2005:739) pointed out that:

*“The distinction between amateur and professional is a useful device for looking at participation. The amateur is perceived as a lay person doing unpaid work, perhaps as recreation, in their leisure time. By contrast, the professional is an expert, doing the work as their main activity. Professionals are typically self-regulating through professional organizations, sharing an ethical code, and body of knowledge (usually specified by the professional organization).”*

A community forum respondent highlighted the importance of external facilitation which is an area that requires further policy development. He said:

*“I think there is a role for both the local person and a role for having somebody with skills and expertise as well. It is about striking the right balance. Often the locals do not have the right time, either they are working, they may be busy with families, or they may not have huge amount of time to get involved. ... However, there is definitely a role for local people to get involved in the whole process. But there is also people with skills, I mean professionals to be involved” (PW-03).*

Organisations who said that they participated in the work of Newham regeneration initiatives were further asked in which past and present regeneration programmes their organisation participated. There were a few like *Community Links* and *Aston Charities* who had participated directly in major regeneration programmes. Others participated in certain projects like back-to-work training and working in collaboration with *Sure Start* projects and specific community health service areas. There were a few organisations that took part in project implementation for regeneration programmes like SRB, Neighbourhood Renewal and the bid to host the Olympic Games. These organisations were the ones that had a good level of human and financial resources in the first place.

Regarding the level of organisational participation in local regeneration activities, among the research respondents, only 8 (16%) out of 50 organisations had been involved in the *regeneration partnership board* a higher decision making body at local level. The organisations who said that they were involved, or were members of different partnership boards, are the organisations that are relatively well established, well resourced and well organised. All of them have existed in the area for more than 25 years with an annual budget of more than £1 million and have 50 or more staff and a permanent office base.

For the majority of smaller organisations participation in regeneration activities did not extend beyond providing information or receiving information provided to them, or taking part in the process of identifying specific projects, or low level reviewing of the progress of projects. Such a low level of participation hardly counts as meaningful participation as there is little or no way of influencing the direction of decisions. For instance, there was only one organisation each respectively to provide interpreters for public meetings and covering expenses towards child and carers allowance to those attending meetings. This shows the low level of participation in Newham. Good resources

and basic facilities are important to enhance more public participation as was discussed in chapter 6. This is because facilitating and running participation is an exercise that has real costs. A representative from a community forum suggests that:

*“Empowering underrepresented groups through specific training and information needed special emphasis. Ensuring that training develops a broad capacity [for] building programmes. Developing training programmes that are flexible and responsive to groups’ needs and situations and where necessary that should include advocates or representatives” (FG-01) .*

This indicates that partnership working with small and medium size voluntary organisations should be an important element of policy when local regeneration initiatives are implemented. The policy should address the resource issues that might need attention to help local people to be part of the decision making process – for example, their training needs.

### **7.3. Examples of strategies for effective participation**

This section considers factors that support public participation, how it is measured and how local policies could be embedded in effective participation practices. It is based upon some of the key findings and experiences identified by in this case study of Newham and supported by critical insights from other academic literature. One of the first places to start in securing public engagement in local regeneration activities is giving the right information about initiatives and ongoing activities. An important tool in any kind of decision making process, seeking information is a starting point for showing interest in a particular issue. Mokros and Aakhus (2002:299) argue that:

*“Information-seeking behaviour is regarded as a basic human activity by researchers across many disciplinary boundaries (Rice, McCreadie, and Chang, 2001). It is typically thought of as an adaptive process that contributes to learning, problem solving, decision making, and the like.”*

A councillor respondent took the above idea further by suggesting a 'welcome pack' with adequate information about expectations, choices and what services are on offer to newcomers to the borough would be useful. The information could be disseminated through some of the existing structures. For instance, there are ten different Community Forums in Newham. At these Forums, residents can discuss current issues about their respective areas. Depending on the issues, invited guests briefed residents about new and planned initiatives. The Forums are one place where information about initiatives is disseminated.

As already discussed in the previous chapter, to get the best out of information there needs to be effective communication mechanisms among individuals or groups with diverse backgrounds and interests. The lack of effective communication obviously affects the quality of information transfer. This is because different people see problems differently depending on their experience or view of situations and their interpretation of the facts around them. People also experience the same event or situation differently, hold different values and will advocate different approaches to solve problems. There is no one right method or one single set of techniques that guarantees the same understanding of events or situations by all people all the time. Therefore, the flexibility of effective means of communication at all levels is of vital importance. The ultimate goal of providing the necessary information is a demonstration of a willingness to be open, listen and explore options. Citizens can sense very quickly whether their participation is really welcomed.

It is also important to structure and facilitate the provision and receipt of information in a way that truly permits local people to be able to contribute to their level best. Local people are not only recipients of new information, but often have expert knowledge of local issues due to the fact that they have direct experience of them. Such

people are important assets, whose advice and experience can be drawn upon to deal with local problems. One of the possible good practices that needs attention that was suggested by an elected councillor is the training of community leaders in conducting neighbourhood meetings smoothly and effectively. He went on to say:

*“One good way of making public participation effective is to give training to those chairing the meetings. A good chairperson makes the meeting fair, free and yet effective. In addition, I believe such a public participation exercise should be done at community centres where people feel comfortable to express their local knowledge ” (Cllr-09).*

The training of community leaders should also be taken as part of the empowering process. TELCO in Newham has a regular training programme in leadership for community representatives. In addition to training, for certain groups of the community there should be tailored support that enables them to be involved. For example, tailored support might be required to ensure that young people make the best out of their involvement. A community forum respondent suggested that:

*“Regarding young people, the meetings should be to the point and short, or put the items which concern them top of the agenda so that they can go or stay if they wish after those items are discussed. We need more people with disabilities to put their views forward. Getting them to meetings is the problem” (GS-08).*

As indicated above, to maximise the interest of people in local initiatives, there needs to be flexibility to accommodate the needs of individuals and groups. However, the respondent below makes the point that not all organisations speak for specific social or demographic groups and it may be difficult to know who their constituency of interest really is. An interviewee who works for a training organisation argued that the traditional approach to participation sometimes contradicts with the culture of the individual organisation:

*“It (public participation) has got to be a buzzword of political prominence since the election of 1997. It is a very worthy kind of statement which can actually be used to eliminate criticism. It is precisely what happened to us. We are not eth-*

*nic, culture, gender, age or education specific organisations. We cannot be funded that way. Our service is individual and specific. User participation in our case comes primarily through the participation of the Management Committee. It is unrealistic to expect our users to participate in the way which is laid down by the establishment. What works somewhere else does not work here in our case.” (In-06)*

The effectiveness of public engagement is directly related to the attractiveness of the methods used. For example, in Newham events with different types of activities have attracted many people from all age groups. The live music event by the name of *Under the Stars* at East Ham Central Park during the summer of 2003 attracted about 40,000 people; at this event elected councillors were available for consultation with their electorate. The *Under the Stars* event was organised to attract young and old, women and men and people from all ethnic groups, offering some sort of activity for all. Other similar events with the same purpose were organised by the Council on different occasions including *The Mayor’s Town Show* and *Local Neighbourhood Street Shows*. Similar types of events have been carried out through different schools in the borough. Parents might be reluctant to attend a formal parents’ evening, but most have attended attractive events such as a school play or another similar event. The events mentioned here might not be directly relevant to regeneration initiatives. However, the same principle of attractive participatory events could be used in regeneration programmes to enhance participation and strengthen networks of local people. Nevertheless, some respondents had a more cautious opinion about ‘one-off events’ because they may convey the wrong message in terms of the quality, quantity and diversity of views. Those who argue against such events said that participation is about taking a long term view, not necessarily about a one-off occasion.

Beside pursuing attractive methods, having different innovative means of participation is also possible in order to attract people who are interested in one particular issue but not necessarily in the whole regeneration agenda. For example, the West Ham

and Plaistow New Deal for Communities (NDC) has created “*theme groups*” orientated around issues like crime, anti-social behaviour, education and employment. The theme groups aimed to encourage interested residents to engage in participatory activities which do not necessarily require their long term commitment. The NDC has also used innovative ways to gather views; at ‘fun days’ where all family members were involved in different activities, some of which engage them in expressing views in a variety of formats including openly talking in front of a video about what they want and do not want in their neighbourhoods.

However, one can argue that participation should come from individuals who care for the wider societal issues, and that this requires a longer term commitment than is possible through a public celebration or through a specific one-off event. Public participation activities also need to be accompanied by more rigorous approaches to monitoring, reviewing and follow-up.

The concept and goal of self-help in the context of participation is about empowerment (Craig and Mayo 1995:50). It is about finding creative ways of participation without expecting help from others. This might run counter to earlier comments about the need for ‘professionals’ to work with volunteers or for ‘training’ in a conventional sense. The challenge of finding ways of engaging oneself increase the skills of individuals, groups and communities to make better decisions for themselves. Such challenges could emerge from small group participation approaches where local people gain direct experience of talking directly to decision-makers. These could be consultative meetings between local authority representatives and small numbers of local organisations rather than large ‘Town Hall’ meetings. As discussed in chapter 2 the advantages of such participation is that it is focused on specific and tangible problems; it develops solutions to



problems; it brings the power holders and the public together and, most importantly, it helps to empower members of the public.

This leads us to the notion of reaching out. Some respondents thought that meaningful public participation could be achieved through reaching out to people where they are. By outreach work with people it is possible to use resources more effectively. Some respondents postulated that the most effective way of winning the interest of local people is by going out where they experience their everyday lives, including to their worship places like mosques, churches and other community centres. Hard-to-reach groups should be carefully treated, through openness and extra efforts – as an elected councillor put it by *'Hacking at glass ceilings and walls – getting hold of groups that cannot come into society'* (Clr10). Reaching out has enabled more public participation and has increased the benefits of a bottom up approach. Perhaps, the work of *Community Involvement Unit of Aston-Mansfield* is a good example, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Through using a 'bottom up' participation approach, ordinary citizens apply their knowledge, intelligence and interest to the formulation of local solutions. Complex technical problems may be most effectively and cheaply solved at the grassroots level. Millward (2005) succinctly expresses how so-called 'amateur' individuals could well become professional experts through participating and learning through experience. Millward pointed out that the perception of policy makers is that amateurs are participating because they are representing certain demographic or geographic characteristics, or knew about the services they receive and/or they have spare time to be involved, rather than because they have their own ideas, expertise, knowledge or values. Millward, (2005:740) went on to say:

*"In practice, however, participation opportunities offered over the last decade have created a growing, but still small, group of experts – 'professionals' in all but status. These experts may be criticized by other participants or policy-makers, but are relied upon and encouraged in practice. As will be shown, they*

*are also people who are interested in the field and who have taken a professional approach to building their skills and expertise.”*

Moreover, effective solutions to certain kinds of public issues may require the variety of experience and knowledge offered by diverse, relatively open-minded, citizens with personal knowledge of the place where the problem exists. Otherwise, distant experts and “parachuted” consultants, who have been contracted to conduct participatory exercises among the people they do not have prior knowledge about, will not be productive.

Nash, (2001:54) argued

*“... On the issues of public involvement, regeneration measures have been criticised as too ‘top-down’ even when they require the establishment of community partnerships.... Only by helping the communities which support, bind and motivate individuals in their public or civic role can the process of civic renewal begin in earnest.”*

The area-based approach to urban renewal is a model that is nearer to people. Projects that start and function at grassroots level will have much greater chance of being sustainable. Therefore policies that promote supporting the grassroots will be advantageous. The ‘grassroots’ are not only local residents that benefit from the regeneration programme but also local agencies, voluntary and community groups and businesses. The support given to grassroots will help the decision-making processes and it can be counted as capacity building. Capacity building is about developing the effectiveness and efficiency of community groups to the best use of their resources and potential so that local initiatives are nurtured. Osborne et al. (2006: 235-242) argued that capacity building involved nurturing and supporting individuals who could develop and support the capacity of local communities to be involved in regeneration partnerships. They went on to say:

*“... The final element of support from infrastructure bodies that local communities found particularly useful was the building of skills by direct involvement in a project.”*

### **7.3.1. Users Participation in Organisations**

In my research respondents from local organisations were asked about what participatory methods for their service users they think are effective ways of instigating and improving participation. They suggested that one-to-one meetings and regular information newsletters were top of the list in helping their service users to participate in issues related to services within their organisation or beyond. Due to the nature of their work, most voluntary organisations have easy access to one-to-one contact with their service users. Furthermore, user satisfaction surveys with language support were also identified as effective methods of participation to identify needs and set priorities. A number of respondents think that door-to-door contact is one of the most effective ways of involving people. Taking the message to the doorsteps is considered effective due to the fact that people do not always want to come out and get involved. A board member of the West Ham and Plaistow New Deal for communities wrote:

*“There should be more door knocking. We get so much junk mail. A lot of important leaflets are discarded without being read properly. Door knock, handing the leaflet to people and explain why the community views are important” (Brd-6).*

One-to-one or a door-to-door contact with local people requires a good practice guidelines and policies to ensure the intended purpose is achieved with high standards. Again voluntary and community groups with good human and material facilities could be part of such exercises.

The effective use of electronic media could also be a good medium for local news bulletins and exchanging views as part of the decision making process. An elected councillor acknowledges that:

*“The Council as well as the NDC web sites are well known by residents. The electronic participation shows steady progress. Many residents are now communicating with the council services through the internet. There are many [sources of] information about services on the Council web sites. Nevertheless,*

*the only problem with it is that it is mainly to inform rather than to interact” (Cllr-10).*

Many internet sites have been created to enhance a proactive e-democracy (Gronlund, 2003:94). However, the socio-demographic and wealth divides in access to the electronic media could easily create an electronic divide in society if we heavily depend on it. As the technology is growing at a fast rate, the knowledge and accessibility divide will create a rift among certain members of society. Not only individuals but also groups may over- or under-use it (e.g. younger versus older people). A respondent was critical of the idea of e-government as it is not sufficiently well established to be accessed by the majority of Newham residents. The respondent identified two key problems of e-government. On the one hand, there is ‘a generational gap’ in which the older generation is not much accustomed with using new technologies; these problems can be compounded where English language or literacy is an issue. This could limit the value of English language text based electronic media. It is the younger generation who are using the new technologies extensively. On the other hand, at the same time many young people are not enthusiastic about getting involved in community matters. Moreover, the usage of electronic media could be too restrictive given that to make intelligent and interactive discussion may require a variety of approaches. Therefore, it is worth noting that electronic engagement is not free from criticism both in terms of its take up and its effectiveness.

Be it through new technologies or by other means, participation is a continual and educational exercise by which one can learn through more engagement. The knowledge also increases and accumulates over time. More knowledge and experience will help stimulate more participation. Therefore the quality of involvement could well be improved and sustained through ongoing participation. An interviewee from a voluntary sector organisation agreed with this suggestion:

*“I think, what we have to say here is that people who experience the problem are those who also understand it best. If you are there and experience it, you really understand other people’s situation and you work in a positive way. It is very rewarding for the confidence of that particular individual and also the person and staff working with them. I think it is rewarding” (In-11).*

It is evident that there will be much we can learn from past experiences in developing and applying effective methods of public participation. The more one learns and celebrates the positive outcomes of these past experiences, the more likely it is that participation will move to the higher level (Pateman, 1970). Therefore, effective regeneration practice should be embedded in a sound knowledge of the issues identified by local people and, through participation, local people could build a shared local knowledge about the issues they are dealing with.

#### **7.4. Effective public participation**

One of the good indicators of effective participation and strong social networks is the existence of a cohesive society and strong civil institutions (Baum and Ziersch, 2003:320-323). A cohesive society that develops a high level of conflict resolution will not be deterred from participating as conflicts would be resolved or managed through dialogue. Otherwise, a community that does not have the mechanism to resolve conflicts will become further polarised and fragmented. Effective participation therefore will depend on how communities resolve their differences (Leeuwis, 2000). A society which is working for mutual interests will probably be well engaged in participation and make it effective (McGhee, 2003: 376–404). A well engaged society is a well-connected society and *vice versa* (Mencken et.al. 2006:110). Participation will create an environment to understand each other’s views, aspirations, cultures and so on. When individuals are in a position to understand each other well, they will be able to resolve their differences amicably and help each other for their common good. A respondent to this research

thought that a more integrated and settled society will encourage greater involvement in the decision making process. An interviewee from a voluntary group stated that participation may be easier for future generations born and raised in Newham.

*“I think it is much easier with second and third generation of immigrant families. By that time they must have gone through the education system, speaking English, having friends from different communities and being well integrated. Therefore, some of the issues and differences the parents might have will not be an issue any more. So they have common issues with other communities which obviously minimises conflicting interest with other groups” (In-11).*

In contrast to the above, there is also a recognition that Newham continues to receive immigrants who have not had time to achieve ‘*integration*’ and may not be motivated to do so particularly when the idea of integration has re-entered the political rhetoric, especially following 9/11 – i.e. in place of a rhetoric which emphasised diversity and multiculturalism. . Hence, some respondents (including residents) also indicated that the latest immigrants (often young and male), are using their neighbourhood as a place of transition to their next and better life. Therefore, they do not have particular interest in the area and as a result may have no engagement.

*“The case of Newham is peculiar. The East Europeans are settling to the borough in the last few years. Most of these people are young males. They are very mobile. They may not have interest in local issues as they do not have the intention to live in Newham for long. They normally choose Newham, because it is nearer to central London and the housing price is relatively cheaper. I think, this will have a negative effect on social wellbeing of the whole community unless something that interest[s] them is done, so that they are part of the community” (Res-11).*

However, others would argue that it is an undesirable goal since it potentially involves minority cultures giving in to the ways of life of majority ones; some would prefer the preservation and respect of differences – a multicultural perspective.

As mentioned in the previous section, the quality of participation is enhanced by the experience of engagement in a continuous manner; this is a good indicator of effectiveness. When engagement produces a positive result people wish to be involved more

and change their area for the better (Martin and Boaz, 2000:47-54). The ownership and control of local projects could also be a good indicator of meaningful participation of local people from the outset. If residents are in full ownership of projects and programmes they will care about their future. Moreover, the sustainability of a particular initiative for the long-term benefit of the local people could well be a good indicator of a relatively high level of participation (Perrons, D. and Skyers, S. 2003). A strong feeling of citizenship could be the cause for participation. According to Marshal (1950:28-29):

*“Citizenship is a status bestowed on all those who are full members of a community. All those who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed. There is no universal principle that determines what those rights and duties shall be, but societies in which citizenship is a developing institution create an image of ideal citizenship against which achievement can be measured and towards which aspiration can be measured”.*

The inclusion of minority and under-represented groups is crucial in participation policy development. Inclusion could mean supporting particular groups. This requires mechanisms for group representation. However, where differences in capacities, culture and values exist among groups, and as a result of these differences if some of these groups are more privileged or advantaged than others, then a strict principle of equal treatment should be in place at a policy level. The inclusion and participation of groups in the structure of decision making therefore requires the articulation of rights in order to undermine disadvantage and marginalisation.

There are many types of statutory requirements for public consultation that organisations need to comply with to provide new or improve existing services or projects for the benefit of the local population. For example, proposed changes in local health services need to be consulted over with local people, facilitated by the NHS Trusts, local authorities or other similar organisations. According to *NHS Direct* such a statutory

compliance was introduced into the NHS in 1989 as a quasi-market principle, which sought to empower patients and the public more directly as ‘customers’ or ‘consumers’ of NHS services. A range of statutory, strategic and policy drivers have built on these reforms. Although the *Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill 2006*, abolishes Patients’ Forums, the *Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health*, introduced *Local Involvement Networks (LINks)*, with a purpose to:

*“placing a duty on local authorities to develop and create LINks to ensure local people are involved in commissioning, provision and scrutiny of local care services. The Bill also introduces duties to consult on the provision of service, the development and consideration of changes to service provision and decisions affecting the operational running of services” (House of Commons, 2006).*

A variety of government legislation and white papers in most sectors of public services have demanded that consultation take place before implementation of regeneration schemes. In principle, urban regeneration initiatives inquire about the views of the local people through different types of consultation exercises. According to Brindley et al. (1996:17) public involvement in planning has “emerged during the late 1960s.” It was the 1968 *Town and Country Planning Act* that introduced a statutory requirement for public participation in planning. The Skeffington report, 1969 also recommended “techniques for publicizing plans and consulting the public” which were subsequently “adopted by many local authorities.” The question, however, is how to enhance public participation from its usual tokenistic level as to a level of meaningfully influence decisions as discussed in chapter 2. Although demanding the participation of local people in planning and reviewing projects and programmes are good practices, in most cases, government legislation and guidelines are not clear about the level of influence expected from participation and how the results of such exercise should be recorded. Rowe and Frewer (2004:516) wrote

*“Evaluation of participation exercises is important for all parties involved. These include the sponsors of the exercise, the organizers that run it, the par-*



*ticipants that take part, and the uninvolved-yet-potentially affected public. In this sense, the evaluation of public-participation exercises is no different from the evaluation of any social program.*

They also pointed out the importance of evaluation as

*Evaluation is important for financial reasons (e.g., to ensure the proper use of public or institutional money), practical reasons (e.g., to learn from past mistakes to allow exercises to be run better in future), ethical/moral reasons (e.g., to establish fair representation and ensure that those involved are not deceived as to the impact of their contribution), and research/theoretical reasons (e.g., to increase our understanding of human behaviour). As such, few would deny that evaluation should be done wherever and whenever possible.”*

The other area that could be considered as a good indicator of effective participation in area-based regeneration initiatives is the arrangement of leadership and governance structures. The leadership of regeneration projects would be more productive if they involved residents at different levels and responsibilities. A policy that promotes user-led initiatives will help in fostering the ownership of projects by local people. Simmons and Birchall (2005:261) pointed out that:

*“In recent years, policy-makers and consumer groups have therefore called for the more intensive participation of service users in the governance and delivery of a range of public services (e.g. Cabinet Office 1999; DETR 1998, 1999; DoH 1998, 2001; DTI 2001; NCC 2001, 2004).”*

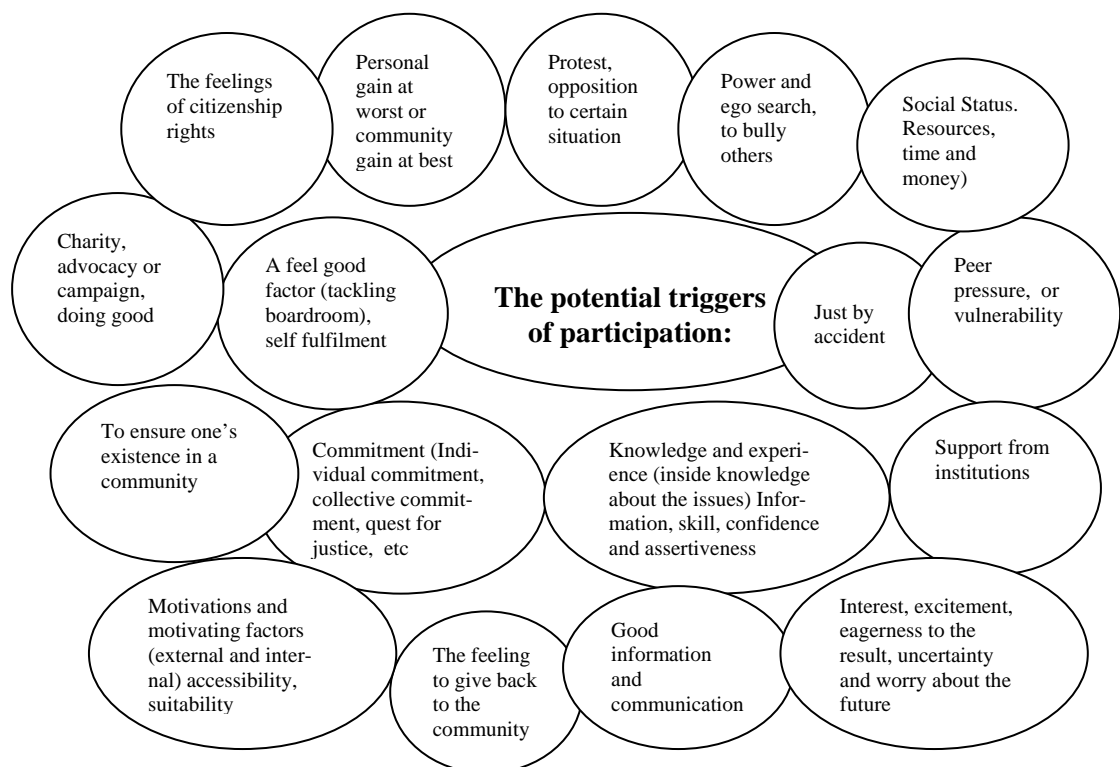
In previous British urban regeneration initiatives decisions were made by partnership board members and agencies that were not directly elected by the local people or residents. In most cases the people sitting at a board level were appointed by the government because of their knowledge and expertise. These un-elected representatives were the focus of concern among local residents who are unable to gain direct involvement in the decision making processes. Hence, regeneration policies should review to include people directly elected by local people to be board members at all levels.

Furthermore, the policy of public participation need the continued development of evidence-based experiences which one can learn from. The purpose of evidence-

based policies in regeneration projects is that they can be adjusted and re-adjusted based on the experience on the ground. This flexibility will help the projects to address the right issues and deal with them accordingly. The flexibility of policies at national and local level will help also to accumulate the right experience for making things better. To claim participation and networking as a right of citizenship should be demonstrated by strong evidence supported by research. The following figure illustrates what triggers participation as perceived by my research participants.

The frequent trigger factors mentioned by respondents ranges from exclusively individual factors to reasons embraced by many people. Some of the trigger factors are based on certain moral or political values (e.g. a feel good factor or citizenship rights) while other are more to do with external support or pressure (e.g. support from institutions or peer pressure).

**Figure 4: Extracts from respondents perceptions as to what triggers participation**



### **7.5. Conclusion:**

Despite the rhetoric of public participation in the planning and implementing of local regeneration initiatives, there is limited evidence that such a process universally exists and is actively pursued. The various area-based urban regeneration initiatives have been instrumental in structuring the role of the public and the local authority in partnership working. These policies have been invented and reinvented during the different periods when both Conservative and Labour governments have been in power. This shows that public participation and partnership working are enduring policy matters in urban renewal spheres. Recent regeneration initiatives like NDC have given local authorities and other actors a new role and encouraged them to undertake “joined-up thinking and working”. These initiatives are intended to enable partners including local residents to act collectively to determine their collaborative action with the necessary support they require. Furthermore, it is argued that partnership working will help to combine a range of resources and develop appropriate accountability mechanisms, so that the activities of the collaboration are transparent and open to scrutiny by all relevant stakeholders.

Moreover, involving the public as services users or community members is a core element of many government initiatives in health, education, and welfare provision. This involvement takes the form of a collaboration for making the services efficient and effective. The same philosophy needs to apply when it comes to public participation in local regeneration initiatives. This is not only in order to support the involvement of communities and citizens in opportunities opened up by such local initiatives, but also to ensure that they are the beneficiaries. Government urban policy has evolved from the concerns about physical regeneration in the 1990s toward a more holistic people-centred approach that covers other aspects of local issues including social

and cultural regeneration, although it is in its early stages. This is one of the most important changes that brings people to the centre of the regeneration process so that the public can gain a level of ownership in initiatives that are meant to benefit them. A policy that promotes the capacity of local people and community groups in a variety of ways will help to strengthen social networks and social cohesion which in turn are the basis of promoting public participation so that local people will have the necessary skills and confidence to take over development projects initiated by regeneration programmes. Simply providing information to local people does not support individuals to have the ability, as well as the exercise the influence that they should be exercising in the decision-making process. Local policies should clearly outline the role of residents in local regeneration initiatives and indicate how local human and material resources should be used to enhance the role people play. Active public participation can contribute to the empowerment of resident groups and hence becomes an important tool in integrating local and professional knowledge and expertise. Where local authorities are leading regeneration initiatives it will be imperative to support residents' active participation for a successful outcome. Communicating with residents throughout the whole process enables them to participate in changes that will affect their lives. It also enables authorities to become more aware of the need and priorities of local people.

In summary, the examples of effective practice in Newham described in this chapter highlight questions about the tensions between “top-down” and “bottom-up” approaches in the policy development regime. The discussion presented in this chapter suggested that beside the existing model policies of participation and social networks, there are some other areas that need more attention in future and current area-based regeneration initiatives. The role of voluntary organisations and community groups as advocates, partners and facilitators is an area that needs to be included in local and na-

tional policy making to enhance the participation of local people and strengthen social networks and local governance. To make participation effective, it is necessary to make it attractive, innovative and flexible. The chapter also suggested that although the availability of electronic media may not be equitable, however, the proper use of electronic media is vital as the profile of actors in area-based regeneration initiatives are changing and most of them are increasingly becoming dependent on new technologies. The questions of sustainability of area-based initiatives need to be at the centre of current and future urban policies. Sustainability should be understood as more than a continuity of projects after budgeted period but should extend to cover the ownership and transfer of the full control to local people.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CONCLUSION

#### **8.1. Introduction**

This thesis has attempted to highlight the role of public participation in enabling area-based regeneration work better. It has outlined theoretical frameworks for understanding and assessing the effectiveness of participation and has explored these themes through a detailed study of the London Borough of Newham – one of the most deprived localities within the UK where a number of area-based regeneration initiatives have been undertaken. Outlining the range and scope of these initiatives, the thesis discussed the recent history of national and local regeneration programmes, noting how approaches have changed according to shifting political ideologies and economic circumstances. This discussion revealed how the importance of participation to the regeneration process has varied over time. Discussion focused on identifying different models of participation; the importance of social networks; issues of empowerment and the significance of governance arrangements to the successful implementation of different area-based initiatives. The study has delineated the potential of participation for enhancing the workability of area-based regeneration initiatives. It has also incorporated a discussion of the advantages of social capital, community empowerment and good local governance in creating a society that is capable of participating in local and national issues and *vice versa*. The study has provided evidence that many of the past and present regeneration initiatives in Newham lack the real inputs of local people either directly or through their representatives.

The initial questions of the research were:

- a) What types and levels of participation in groups, communities and voluntary organisations have been and are being used for regeneration initiatives in Newham?
- b) Are there innovative strategies likely to make participation ‘work better’ in the study area? and
- c) Can we identify ideal model practices of participation (based on pre-existing social networks, empowerment methods and governance arrangements) for small area inner city regeneration?

Each question has been addressed in a variety of ways. As far as the first question is concerned, different types of formal and informal participatory public events have been carried out in Newham. Many of these activities are not exclusively focused on local socio-economic regeneration initiatives. A good deal of the public participation initiatives are structured, run and managed by the council. One good example is the Community Forums. At the time of this research there were ten community forums throughout the borough with full administrative support from the council offices. Furthermore, some attractive public participation events have been undertaken by the West Ham and Plaistow New Deal for Community programme which caters for all groups of the community in its catchments area. Nevertheless, the research found that the level of participation has tended to be at the lower strands of the Arnstein ladder of citizens’ participation. Moreover, certain segments of Newham communities are largely alienated from the participation. Alienation from participation is the product of the disconnection of individuals and communities from wider opportunities and the society of which they are supposedly a part. These are the same segments of the community that have very weak social networks. Here, I am referring to a number of groups that were identified by my

key informants such as young mobile migrant workers, people with disabilities, some groups of women and adolescents. The reasons for the disconnection of these individuals are related to the big issues of inequality, poverty, social exclusion and discrimination. Nevertheless, some of them may have social networks that are strong or extensive, but are disconnected from the informants of my study, most of whom were engaged to some degree in participation.

A detailed interrogation of the reasons for the low level of participation has also identified possible mitigating measures that might help to improve weaknesses. There are good, small scale participatory approaches in action that could empower individuals and that could be expanded to a larger scale in order to make participation more effective and inclusive. Relatively Community Forums are good examples of this and a basis upon which more meaningful participation could be built. However, there is a long way to go before community forums achieve a higher strand of the Arnstein ladder of citizens' participation. The thesis emphasises the need for empowering local people through enhancing and increasing their participation. It has used some of the findings of the field work together with reviews of theoretical literatures on participation and urban governance to identify ways of doing this. The thesis reiterated some of the methods of empowerment local people felt to be necessary such as: provision of information; access to structures and facilities; provision of training and support from professionals which participants could learn from; and the pooling of shared knowledge from experience among participants themselves. Finally the thesis has identified some model policies in participation that have not yet been put into practice and that need to be considered for inclusion in area-based regeneration initiatives at a local or national level.



## **8.2. A summary to the research main findings**

As discussed above, the main aim of this study was to investigate the impacts of public participation in urban area-based regeneration where poverty and multiple deprivation are prevalent. The project was focused on the London Borough of Newham as a locality that fulfilled these characteristics. The Newham regeneration areas (e.g. Stratford City Challenge, Forest Gate SRB 6, Green Street Partnership, West Ham and Plaistow New Deal for Communities) have been selected by the government on the basis of their need for all aspects of social, economic and environmental regeneration. Following the completion of their budgeted project life, however, the outcomes of the regeneration initiatives are not always sustainable. Perrons and Skyers (2003:271) argued that:

*“Despite more than four decades of regeneration policies, spatially concentrated areas of deprivation and ‘social exclusion’ remain.”*

Curtis (2004:276) also discussed area based initiatives from the health perspective, arguing that:

*“... the changes produced in area initiatives within a limited time may not be sufficiently large and long term to make a perceptible impact in terms of health improvement.”*

There are geographical areas where ill-health, uneven wealth distribution and social inequalities are still prevalent problems in Newham, as well as in many places in London, in spite of the fact that regeneration initiatives have been carried out in these localities in the past. One of the many possible explanations for such a lack of long-term improvement in the quality of life of the residents affected by regeneration efforts is their limited sense of ownership over the process. This is caused by a lack of participation and powerlessness of the public and communities from the outset and throughout the duration of projects that are intended to benefit them. I have argued in this research that

a long-term improvement in regeneration initiatives could be attainable through higher levels of participation defined in terms of *Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation* (Arnstein, 1969:216-224) from the outset and throughout the project lifetime and beyond. The research reported here has debated the relevant theories and empirical findings in the existing literature and developed ideal theoretical models of participation, notions of power and empowerment and social capital that could be appropriately used in area-based regeneration programmes. It has also identified the policy implications of higher or lower levels of participation, revised local governance arrangements and discussed whether improved participation would further empower participants.

The research participants were residents, members of faith groups and community representatives, elected Council members, voluntary and community groups connected with the London Borough of Newham. I used both qualitative and quantitative methods and different forms of data collection and analysis to understand the nature and levels of participation and related issues of governance arrangements and social networks in the borough. This is consistent with a growing tendency to combine the use of different methods and different research strategies within individual inquiries in order to achieve valuable findings. The quantitative inquiries mainly involved collecting and analysing secondary data about the study area, while the qualitative approach was geared to collecting and analysing views, beliefs and attitudes on participation through questionnaires, in-depth interviews, participatory and non-participatory observations. The following section provides a summary of the main findings of the research.

The research has identified that the meaning of participation varies among different people. The level of power they have, their socio-economic status, gender, age and ethnicity are among the factors that appear to affect people's understanding of what participation is. As there is no common understanding of what participation is and what

it is for, this results in difficulties, particularly in relation to the evaluation of the impacts that participation has had on regeneration initiatives. It has been argued that a strategy which involves people early on and throughout the decision-making process is a good practice as it generates confidence, fosters better understanding and builds relationships among communities and other regeneration actors. This is also consistent with the results of other similar research findings elsewhere. For example, Lowndes et al's (2006:556) comparative review of political participation in the cities of Hull and Middlesbrough and concluded that "In introducing new political structures for the town, the reforming politicians in Middlesbrough have not only enhanced opportunities for community engagement but also radically altered the incentive structures for both politicians and citizens to support this new style of politics. From their conception in the 1980s, the community councils were resourced by senior officers who attended every meeting and followed up on residents' concerns. The very existence of these new structures, and the voice they gave to residents, provided new incentives for citizens to become engaged, especially as these structures gave them direct access to senior officers and politicians". As discussed in chapter six, national and local policies are not explicit enough about the role of public and community participation and why and when it is necessary in local area-based regeneration initiatives. However there is a general consensus as Potapchuk (1996:54) puts it that public participation is:

*"the central element in unleashing the power of people to control their own destiny and nurturing the citizen-to-citizen connection that helps build political consensus and will, strengthens neighbourhoods ..."*

For an effective decision-making process, both the decision makers and the public need to fully understand the situations, problems, issues and opportunities. They require mutually agreed priorities and alternatives in case of unforeseen problems. For example according to Walter et. al. (2000:352)

*“Public policy problems can often be viewed in potentially countless ways depending on a person’s interests, background, and experience. Consequently, different participants have different views on exactly how a given problem should be defined, what criteria should be used to identify a good solution, and which alternatives hold the greatest promise for solving the problem”.*

However, the reality is that everyone is working with imperfect and unbalanced knowledge which indicates a clear power imbalance and inappropriate decision making.

The thesis has shown that there is a need for an evidence-based participatory local initiatives that empowers local people in a small-scale urban regeneration initiatives. This is consistent with the government’s trailblazer approaches that test programmes before they are widely implemented (Kearns and Turo, 2000). When local people are part of an interactive engagement process from the outset, they are empowered and understand the challenge of making decisions and tolerate different views about what could and should be done to make initiatives effective, efficient and sustainable. Participation broadens the public knowledge-base as they contribute to it (Pateman, 1970). A ‘working well’ example is the different community forums, and Tenant Associations in Newham (discussed in chapter 5) which have a level of equitable internal governance and whose members are engaged both in campaigns and actions on issues in their local neighbourhoods. Involving people in a variety of ways in the decision-making process enhances trust, creates relationships among all stakeholders and helps reciprocity to develop. A good foundation of trust, reciprocity and networks will subsequently strengthen the stock of social capital which apparently enhances the level of participation. Hence, participation and social networks complement each other. This is observed in my field research (see chapter 4) and supported by comments from the research participants (see chapter 5 and 6). However, the reality seems different as little is currently happening in Newham. I observed a few examples in Newham of where people were actively involved in solving problems or making decisions and they developed a sense

of ownership and commitment They claimed a stake in the results of those efforts and initiatives which were fundamental to sustainable socio-economic improvement in a given area. But these examples were relatively few.

My observations of Newham Civic Partnership meetings, West Ham Community Forum and The Newham Mayor's Question Time demonstrated that when issues were addressed and considered with the full participation of all actors, people became more supportive of the decision and became stronger advocates of the issues they believed in. However, sometimes the situation in Newham was the opposite and this was partly why participation was failing. The participation of a range of interested groups of people or their representatives added more perspectives, expanded options and enhanced the effectiveness of the decisions made.

### **Evaluating the Impacts of Participation**

Area-based regeneration initiatives need to adopt an impact assessment system to evaluate the outcome of participation or non-participation. Some of the current evaluation exercises are primarily focused on the outputs of regeneration initiatives, often measured against the financial inputs. The thesis considered that the inputs of public participation also need to be assessed, with some assessment of their impact on respective area-based urban initiatives. What kind of participation is likely to be possible in the locality? How should existing structures and arrangements that might promote participation be harnessed to best effect?

Firstly, the area selection criteria should include whether in that particular locality, there is a conducive local governance structure or mechanism readily available which enables local people to participate while the regeneration idea is still at an early stage. The assessment needs to address the availability and strength of social networks

and the social environment: the conditions that help local people develop their social capital. Furthermore, the assessment of the regeneration policy should attempt to establish whether the existing participation, governance arrangements and social networks are sufficient and working well or not. Like other impact assessments, it is good practice to develop a prospective, concurrent and retrospective, participation, governance arrangement and social network impact assessment. This assessment will help to establish the level of success or failure to projects and the extent to which this is due to participation or non-participation. Obviously it is not the intention of my thesis specify the detail of impact assessment. This would be a job for policy makers, who might use my thesis to inform that work.

Nonetheless, Rowe and Frewer (2004:513) questioned that:

*“Among the key questions that need to be answered regarding public participation are why it has caught the attention of policy institutions at the present time, and why public participation is perceived by institutions as potentially facilitating governance and institutional practices. In addition, and perhaps most important, is the question of how can we be sure that "participation" results in any improvement over previous ways of doing things, or indeed, of any effective or useful consequences at all.”*

This is the reason why a more robust system of evaluation is necessary.

In summary, the findings of this research indicated low levels of public and community participation in many of the current and past Newham regeneration initiatives. These low levels of participation are reflected in the low impacts area-based regeneration initiatives produced. The research also identified a range of other factors that contributed towards low levels of participation. The types and effectiveness of participatory approaches together with the design and use of a variety of participation techniques, social networks and the local governance arrangements determined the level of participation. The processes by which decisions are made, and who the decision makers are in terms of their level of power also contributed towards how effectively public participation

could impact on existing regeneration initiatives. The other factors include resource constraints which are important in relation to empowering individuals in public participation and networking processes i.e. the time and costs of different types of participation methods and the nature and extent of engagement. The issue of trust between residents and power holders is still patchy and an important issue. When regeneration planning was preceded by good preparation that started early and was designed purposefully and thoughtfully, it was more likely to raise interest among the resident participants and their networks. Generally, I believe, my research thesis has made an original contribution by identifying the main and peripheral causes for low levels of participation, power imbalances and weak social networks. Possible practical and theoretical models to mitigate the causes have also been identified along with ideal policy models. But how does this study contribute to what we already know?

### **8.3. The contribution of the findings to the current theoretical debates**

The thesis initially discussed the overarching theoretical bases for public participation, power and empowerment, social capital and local governance in the context of urban regeneration. The findings of this thesis have also cast light on the current political and policy debates about participation, empowerment, governance and social capital. Recently, ideological and philosophical support for the “third way” (Giddens, 1998, 2000) approach in regeneration policy has given new impetus for the current theoretical debates in a number of areas. It is emphasised that public participation is about the inclusion of communities and citizens within a specific geographical area, the empowerment of people and the creation of social networks which effectively promote further participation and in turn strengthen the decision making process. This is argued by Giddens to be a sort of ‘virtuous circle’ benefiting communities. The grassroots networks,

empowerment and devolved and bottom up good local governance arrangements help people to identify what they need, how to address issues and be actively involved in the process of setting priorities.

This thesis has reiterated that people will be empowered individually or as groups through continuous participation and through being part of social networks in their areas. The notion of empowerment captures both the theoretical and the practical goals of participation and decision making. Empowerment will give residents the chance to acquire opportunities that have a real value for them in enriching their participation in the decision making process. In practical terms too, having the power to influence and be part of the local governance structure in the development and delivery of local initiatives and to become part of the implementation process, means that a 'bottom-up' policy gets pursued.

The strengthening of public participation through inclusive local governance arrangements, different means of empowerment and the enhancement of social networks are areas of theoretical interest for future research, particularly in localities where material wealth and poor health are not problems i.e. a locality that contrasts with the situation in Newham. The concepts of partnership working and practice is another possible area that future research could pursue, again in the setting of 'wealthy and healthy' areas. The partnership debates in this study also raised questions about the future of the role of the voluntary and community sector in area based regeneration schemes.

Chapter 3 of this thesis has also pointed out concerns in the selection criteria of particular places for regeneration. The other area where the thesis identified a gap in theoretical interpretation is in the role played by mediating institutions or voluntary sector organisations and 'experts'. Generally the thesis found that many of the contempo-



rary and classical debates about participation and related issues are still relevant and applicable in a small scale area-based regeneration initiatives.

#### **8.4. The contribution of the findings to current policy debates**

The study highlighted some of the policy issues that need close scrutiny. It is apparent that in the recent past the policy debate has given special emphasis to how local people can be actively engaged in the decision making process of local initiatives rather than just being the recipient of services. Taylor and et. al. (2007:97) have also observed this change:

*“Over the past 10 year, finding new ways of engaging citizens with democracy and making services more responsive to the people who use them have been common themes with policy makers across Britain.”*

The selection criteria for regeneration initiatives in a particular area should address the root and triggering causes of problems rather than just being based on the poverty index and related factors. Perhaps the level of social networks (e.g. through membership to network groups), the potential of public participation in the decision making process, and whether an effective governance and empowerment structure and inclusive system are in place should be included in the future selection criteria of a particular regeneration programme. The issue of sustainability is important, so the selection criteria should also include the readiness of local people for such area-based initiatives. For example, is there a structure to enable local residents to put their views across? Are there good social networks or ties to glue together local people to enable them participate and stay together? These questions would pose a real dilemma for the policy maker. However, in the absence of the readiness of local people, the implication for regeneration and its outcomes is that there will be absence of ownership and sustainability. Regeneration will be less successful. Hence, I would argue that a local policy intervention is needed prior

to regeneration that would make people 'ready' to participate. The thesis also suggested a prospective impact assessment to clearly establish the extent of influence public participation would have on area-based regeneration initiatives.

The issues of partnership or joined-up working need to be strengthened in a meaningful manner, especially by empowering residents to be real partners, rather than just paying lip service to the partnership approach. Far too often the powerful retain their power over 'powerless' partners. To improve the concept of partnership in a more meaningful way, there needs to be local institutions with independent authority to evaluate and regulate the efficacy of partnership working arrangements. These institutions should also assess whether the local governance structure is friendly to partnership working. They should draw up a framework to ensure the partnership arrangements can be revisited for future restructuring if needed.

The tendency for regeneration to always revolve around the built environment and physical regeneration, needs to be resisted. It should also focus on wider environmental and societal issues and the cultural well-being of populations. Although the physical environment has improved in many areas of Newham, such physical regeneration activities do not always secure a change of attitudes and strengthen communities to the required sustainable levels. Therefore, the thesis suggested that future regeneration initiatives should seriously consider other issues including the social aspects of regeneration with full participation of local people. It should be noted that increasingly the recent regeneration initiatives have favoured such a holistic approach rather than just a physical redevelopment of an area. However, the participation of the public is still at the lower rungs of the Arnstein (1969) ladder of citizen's participation.

So far, the definition of public participation in regeneration settings has tended to focus on representative participation rather than the direct involvement of individual

residents in a variety of ways. The importance of including individual residents as well as community groups is crucial. The research suggested that more attention should be given to participation at an early stage in order to ensure that all sections of the community have the opportunity to participate. However, as discussed in the previous chapters, in today's situations pursuing just one particular method of engagement is not a solution. One size does not fit all. By combining different methods and making use of new technologies such as the internet, it is possible to use local knowledge and strengthen networks for the purpose of effective regeneration outcomes. The fundamental overhauling of participatory approaches in area-based regeneration initiatives will have implications for the other aspects of government policy relating to public participation, such as participation in local service delivery and consumption.

The effectiveness of new local authority governance arrangements – especially the introduction of mayors – should be scrutinised to shed light on the future effectiveness of direct and representative democracy. This also raises important theoretical, practical and policy related discussions about effective forms of political participation as discussed in chapter 6.

### **8.5.Challenges and limitations to participation**

I like to acknowledge that this research project could have been more robust if the direct participation of ordinary residents had been much greater than the number I had. However, the thesis has raised issues which can be drawn both as challenges and limitations to participation. The fundamental issue is the confusion that has emerged from understanding of the very purpose of participation. Most of the local participation arrangements in Newham (perhaps in other places as well) are based on the assumption that providing information is sufficient to be called participation. The meetings of the

Civic Partnership, the Mayor's Question Time and to some extent the area forum meetings are all about giving and receiving information about services and initiatives, or about particular places in the borough. However, the area community forums have some space to discuss and take actions at the forum's membership level. The actions have no effect except within their respective designated area of the forum. Small steering groups could be a good place to discuss issues exhaustively. However, their power to make decisions was limited. These different participation arrangements have also resulted in different levels of authority and power for certain individuals. Even if they do participate, the magnitude of influence people have will vary greatly depending on their understanding of why their participation is required, the extent of their participation and upon who else actually participates.

The research indicates that the past and present types and levels of participation in area-based regeneration initiatives in Newham are restricted to the bottom of the Arnstein ladder of citizen participation. This is mainly because most of the participatory exercises are no more than a town hall gathering for public hearings about initiatives.

The research respondents from local voluntary and community groups claimed that their service users played a key role in their organisations. . For example, service users were sitting on the management committee of most of the organisations to give leadership, working as volunteers and also participating in the regular review of project services. However, such active public participation in the affairs of local voluntary and community organisation is not matched by the same level of participation in local regeneration initiatives. One of the possible explanations is that voluntary and community organisations are set up to work closely and tackle the immediate problems of local people. Therefore, the level of participation in such organisations is expected to be relatively high. However, the low level of participation in regeneration activities is partly

because almost all of the area-based regeneration initiatives are identified and selected by government departments, based on nationally used criteria including the index of deprivation, other socio-economic indicators and the suitability of projects for further physical and built environment developments. At this crucial stage of area identification for regeneration initiatives in Newham as well as other places, the input from the public is limited. Due to the selection criteria that are exclusively determined by experts and people with authority, local residents do feel projects are imposed from outside.

The level of deprivation also dictates the type of programme initiative (e.g. be it the built environment, housing development or holistic regeneration) which are very often decided by experts and technocrats. This has to be revisited to get consensus on a more 'bottom up' approach? Even in the most recent and 'advanced' regeneration initiatives, like *New Deal for Communities*, the public view is sought only during the process of identifying or implementing individual projects within the overall programme that is already agreed by authorities. This shows that, public participation as a tool for identifying and prioritising regeneration programmes from the outset has never been a reality. This is certainly true in the case of Newham. Furthermore the 'vicious circle' of poverty in Newham has not eased despite many regeneration initiatives over the last 40 years, but regeneration is undertaken as a basis for attraction of more and more initiatives. Most of the initiatives are geared to building infrastructure rather than funding the running cost of services. Generally, the whole process of the selection of regeneration initiatives in a specific area needs a fresh and new approach, involving identification of projects and priority setting carried out by the local people with the help of local authorities and submitted to the central government for financial support. Of course initiatives like City Challenge was in part trying to encourage localities to come up with their own solutions. However, it was the case that local authorities were in the driving seat

rather than local people. However this has been working, to some extent, for the SRB projects in which local partners including residents bid for local projects. This approach should ensure the ownership of projects by local people on the one hand and setting the right priorities on the other. A good example of this would be the regeneration of Green Street in Forest Gate. It thrives as a commercial hot spot and has become one of the largest shopping centres for the Asian community in London.

Furthermore, many regeneration initiatives are opportunistic in the sense that they are carried out due to the availability of un-used and derelict areas in parts of Newham. Developing derelict areas is not a problem in itself. However, priority setting is carried out by technocrats assessing the planning suitability of the place rather than assessing the real needs of local people. This again raises the issues of ownership through participation in identifying and setting priorities. Most of the physical regeneration initiatives of the London Docklands Development Corporation are good examples of the above statement. However, regeneration is also 'opportunistic' in the sense of responding to new central government funding initiatives regardless of whether they really suit local needs and conditions.

There is a debate that the mainstream government budget e.g. in health and education is not allocated for specifically targeting certain communities of a society in certain neighbourhoods. It is allocated to tackle the wider socio-economic problems in the long term unlike the regeneration initiatives which in most cases have a short life span. Hence, the contribution of public participation is needed to make this specific and time-limited initiatives prioritised and integrated in the mainstream services in the future.

Unless economic regeneration is complemented by the cultural and social regeneration of local communities in order to bring people together, then the sustainability of any efforts will remain in question. As indicated in the previous sections, so far many of

the area-based regeneration schemes in Newham have focused on physical redevelopment and have little to do with social or cultural regeneration. The other important point is that fund holders have their other strategic and sometimes political interests when it comes to how the regeneration money should be invested. In the past, when the regeneration areas were selected, they were chosen to fit with the types of projects in the minds of planners and property developers. One of the examples would be the large commercial development in Canary Warf , East London. This means that some of the selection of areas is dependent on the availability of open spaces or derelict lands that are suitable for development. This approach put some areas in a more advantageous position than the others. Ideally, in areas where high rates of multiple deprivation exist, the projects need to address the root causes and then the long term benefits for the people. As stated before, very often, plans are already agreed before the public are consulted about them.

Beneficiaries, or people at the receiving end of services, also do not have enough knowledge about how the initiatives are being set up and how they are functioning. Fund holders, by virtue of the political and institutional power bestowed upon them, determine the type and levels of participation which is very often not beyond a degree of tokenism. Indeed, a power imbalance between residents (very often users of local services) and the power holders, was one of the hindrances preventing public participation in regeneration from reaching the higher stages of the Arnstein ladder. The level of participation in decision making is also crucial for the capacity to make the right decision, judgement and choices. Taking the diversity of the people of Newham into account, the communication and clear dissemination of information is central to attaining a good level of involvement.

Public participation cannot be done cheaply. It requires proper planning and execution that relies upon an earmarked budget. The dependency of voluntary organisations and community groups on government funding to facilitate participation is not only a practical problem but it is also a moral dilemma. The funding agency sometimes dictates the type and level of participation by restricting the capacity and nature of the activity for which they have donated support.

On one hand, there are citizens who feel powerless to influence the work of local initiatives. They assume that officials will not listen to them, no matter what methods of public participation are used. Respondents felt that such participatory exercises are just for 'the sake of statistics and publishing a fancy annual report' than to bring real change. On the other hand, some Town Hall officials believed that the majority of citizens are distrustful and apathetic about the functions of local government. Therefore, they questioned the very motives of public and community representatives.

Local community groups sometimes have complex internal relationships. Such complex relationships stem from conflicts of interests and different kinds and levels of needs among different groups. Such complex characteristics of communities should be taken into account in discussion about their participation in local initiatives. Sometimes the intended or actual outcomes of public participation bring members of the public into conflict with each other and they take polarised positions to get their points across. This creates difficulty in reaching decision that pleases and safeguards the interest of the wider public. Such polarisation may also result in decisions and choices that only please a few. Hence, participation is not free from criticism. Some people are not interested in getting involved to avoid conflicts and divisions. Participation organised by statutory agencies (mainly formal consultation methods) do not provide an adequate forum for representing public interests and very often exclude the general public in favour of po-



larised interest groups. Therefore, the critics consider this kind of participation unnecessary waste of time and public resources. Other critics also consider formal participation exercises do not allow for adequate information exchange between the public and professionals, hence public participation is just a tokenistic activity.

Communities and the wider public have different interests; some long-term others requiring a 'quick fix'. The emergence of these kinds of different interests could be due to the lack of appropriate information and the level of understanding as to the significance of the contribution that people could make. When there are conflicts of interest among different communities it is not only time consuming to accommodate the views of all of them, but practically impossible. In such circumstances, again the experts may intervene to set criteria to be considered in the decision making process or in the project identification. Hence, the most important part of the process, where the public is expected to decide on regeneration strategy, will be missed due to the difficulty of reaching a common agreement among different groups. Therefore, the role of the public will be simply to 'rubber stamp' decisions already taken or taking directions that are influenced by experts and power holders. However, sometime individuals have to stand up and say what needs to be done.

## **8.6.Reflection**

The relationship between local government (the main sponsors of local regeneration initiatives) and local people over the last three to four decades has shifted from one of doing things **to** the local community, to doing things **for** the community, and then to doing things **with** the community. This shift of policy needs to be strengthened and supported by locally available systems to ensure that local people are also the owners of projects and programmes. The new approach to area-based regeneration policy needs to

ensure a mutual contract between authorities and local people. This will help in improving the opportunities for more people's participation. If local people are to play a pivotal role in influencing the choices which authorities make, they need good information on matters such as key facts, trends, options and short and long term benefits. The outcomes need to be clearly communicated to people; this is equally as important as asking them to participate. This research has made it clear that people do want to have a say and influence the direction of regeneration projects and want to have assurance that they are active contributors whereby their views are taken seriously.

People participate for different reasons. Some participate through their own initiatives and others because they are asked. But whatever the reasons, it is clear that the longer they participate, the more likely they are to participate more and more. It is equally important that not everybody wants to participate collectively, as in Town Hall meetings or large public gatherings; many prefer the personal face-to-face contact which gives them more confidence. Therefore, different forms of participation need to be recognised. This could also extend to non-participation where people may want their area regeneration but they are not interested in participating – they prefer to trust others.

As far as the sustainability debate of the area-based regeneration is concerned the participation of local people is central. In the policy arena, both at local and national level, there must be clarity about what participation by local people is for, so that the impact of the participation can be demonstrated, quantified and fed back to the people.

The British urban regeneration policy and strategy has evolved through time and has been based on a wide range of different approaches. For example the policies of Urban Development Corporations in 1980s and early 1990s were market driven and seemed to care little about reducing inequalities. However, the ultimate goal of Labour government initiatives was to reduce inequalities and narrow the poverty gap between

areas and people. The direction of the future urban policy will not only be dictated by local problems and issues. Now, any area-based regeneration initiatives needs to be seen within the prism of the wider European context on the one hand, and the economic, political and cultural globalisation of Britain on the other. The New Labour government “third way” approach has laid emphasis on the future of urban policy whereby local people have influence over how programmes and projects will benefit them, but where schemes are still centrally orchestrated and funded. This follows the principle of sharing responsibilities at the local level and devolving the power of the state downwards in contrast to greater centralisation of power implied by policy making at national and European levels. This new approach could be a way of overcoming polarised debates between representative *vs.* direct participatory democracy on the one hand, or statism *vs.* localism on the other. The approach would help future initiatives to be identified, prioritised and implemented with the consent and participation of local people. This approach helps to guarantee ownership and the continuity of initiatives by smoothly transferring responsibilities to local agencies controlled by local people. The advantage of such transfers is that the outcome of regeneration programmes will lead to the improvement of localities and their populations in a more sustainable manner.

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[http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm\\_urbanpolicy/documents/pdf/](http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_urbanpolicy/documents/pdf/) (The Office of Prime Minister, 2003 - accessed on 22 February, 2005)

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## Appendix 1. Preliminary Questionnaire to Key Informants

Date: January 2004

1. What do you think are the most important **problems already addressed and still to be dealt with by** the past and the present regeneration programmes in Newham?
2. How far do you think that Newham residents are **informed and involved** on the decision-making processes of issues affecting them in the past and present regeneration programmes?
3. How far do you think the **views of residents have been taken into consideration** while regeneration programmes are planned, implemented and their progress are reviewed?
4. What do you think are the **factors hindering** residents from **active participation**?
5. Which **groups in** the community do you think are **underrepresented** in participation exercises about the Newham regeneration programmes? What do you think are the reasons and possible solutions?
6. What do you think are the best ways to enhance the involvement of **hard-to-reach groups** in Newham regeneration?
7. In the Newham situation, how do you think is possible to make the **participation of diverse communities** effective and efficient?
8. Which do you think are effective means of public participation? Participation through **representatives** or the **direct participation** by as many individuals as possible? Please explain your view?
9. What are your views in terms of the scope and effectiveness of **partnership working** in Newham between residents, business communities, the Council, voluntary and community organisations towards regeneration work?
10. Any other comment on issues of public and community participation in regeneration you would like to add?

## Appendix 2. Interview Questionnaire – 1- 2005 (sample)

### I. About Participation - General

1. How **informed** are you as representative of a faith group in the decision-making about issues affecting people in Newham's regeneration programme area?

Well informed   
 Fairly informed   
 Not fairly informed   
 Not informed at all

2. How **involved** are you as representative of a faith group in the decision-making about issues affecting people in Newham's regeneration programme area?

Well involved   
 Fairly involved   
 Not fairly involved   
 Not involved at all

3. Now, I would like to ask you about the members of the your faith group. Would you say the **views of faith groups have been taken into consideration** when planning local regeneration initiatives?

Strongly Agree   
 Agree   
 Disagree   
 Strongly Disagree

4. How important the following factors are in **hindering** your faith group members from **active participation**?

	Very Important	Important	Not Very Important	Not Important at all
a) Too much talk with no action or promise that never fulfilled	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) The lack of access to participation itself (e.g. lack of interpreters, crèche for people with children, translators, sign language facilities, transport and budget)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Day time local consultation events in which working people can't attend	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- |  |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| d) Lack of trust to decision makers                          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Disenchantment on the political set-up                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f) The belief that it makes no difference what you say       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g) Boring meetings   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h) The struggle to earn and look after family                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i) Television and other home entertainment                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| j) Residents expectation more than just ticking boxes        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| k) Too much bureaucracy                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| l) The power imbalance between residents and decision makers | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

5. How well represented are the following **groups in** participation exercises about the Newham regeneration programmes?

	Well represented	Fairly Represented	Not Fairly Represented	Not Represented at all
a) People with disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Women	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Moslem Women	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Ethnic minorities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Refugees and asylum seekers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Young people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Non-English Speakers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Men	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i) Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. How can the participation of local residents be improved? Please explain.

7. Which do you think is the more effective means of public participation? Participation through **representatives** (e.g. faith leaders, Elected Councillors, MPs) or the **direct participation** by as many individual residents as possible?

Representative   
 Direct participation  Please explain your view.

8. How would you rate the effectiveness of **participation techniques or methods** among residents of West Ham and Plaistow NDC area?

	Very effective	Fairly effective	Fairly ineffective	Very ineffective
a) Area Community Forums (e.g. West Ham Community Forum)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Public meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Mayoral question time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Neighbourhood meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Youth Parliament	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**II. About Local Community Network**

9. How long have you worked in this local area? \_\_\_\_\_ **Years** \_\_\_\_\_ **Months**

10. Would you say this area is a place...

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a) you enjoy <b>living</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) you enjoy <b>working</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) where people <b>look after</b> each other .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. Most of time, people or most people..

	Yes	No	Depends
a) try to be <b>helpful</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) would <b>take advantage</b> if got the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

c) can be **trusted**

12. Which, if any, have you done in the **past fortnight**?

- a) Went to visit my faith group members
- b) Had faith group members visit me
- c) Spoke to faith group members on the phone
- d) Went to visit friends
- e) Had friends visit me
- f) Went out with friends
- g) Spoke to friends on the phone
- h) Spoke to neighbours
- i) None of these

13. Are you currently a **member of local** groups, club(s), association(s) or **any other faith related organisations**?

Yes  No  If no, why not? (please explain)

13a. If yes, how **often** do you meet?

- a) daily
- b) weekly
- c) fortnightly
- d) monthly
- e) quarterly
- f) yearly
- g) other  please specify

13b. How do **you contribute** to the group?

13c. How do **you benefit** from the group?

13d. If you are not a member now, do like to be a **member in the future**?

Yes  If yes, which particular group?

No  If not, why not?

14. Is there any **other comment** on issues of public and community participation in Newham regeneration you would like to add?

**III. About yourself**

15. Are you **Male**  **Female**  (please tick one box)

16. How do you describe your **ethnic group**? \_\_\_\_\_

17. In which **age group** do you belong?

Under 25  25 – 65  above 65

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

**Appendix 3. Interview Questionnaire –2- 2005 (sample)**

**I. About Participation - General**

1. Would you say the **views of residents have been taken into consideration** when planning local regeneration initiatives?

- Strongly Agree   
 Agree   
 Disagree   
 Strongly Disagree

2. How important could the following factors be in **hindering** residents from **active participation**?

	<u>Very</u> <u>Important</u>	<u>Important</u>	<u>Not Very</u> <u>Important</u>	<u>Not</u> <u>Important at all</u>
a) Too much talk with no action or promise that never fulfilled	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) The lack of access to participation itself (e.g. lack of interpreters, crèche for people with children, translators, sign language facilities, transport and budget)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Day time local consultation events in which working people can't attend	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Lack of trust to decision makers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Disenchantment with the local political set-up.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) The belief that it makes no difference what you say	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Boring meetings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) The struggle to earn and look after family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i) Television and other home entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j) Expectation more than just ticking boxes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



- k) Too much bureaucracy
- l) The power imbalance between residents and decision makers

3. How well represented are the following **groups in** participation exercises about the Newham regeneration programmes?

	<u>Well represented</u>	<u>Fairly Represented</u>	<u>Not Fairly Represented</u>	<u>Not Represented at all</u>
a) People with Disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Women	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Moslem Women	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Ethnic minorities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Refugees and asylum seekers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Young people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Non-English Speakers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Men	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i) Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. How can the participation of local residents be improved? Please explain.

5. Which do you think is the more effective means of public participation? Participation through **representatives** or the **direct participation** by as many individual residents as possible?

Representative   
 Direct participation  Please explain your view.

6. How would you think is possible to make the **participation of diverse communities** effective and efficient?

	<u>Strongly agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly disagree</u>
a) By listening to different groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) By setting priorities together	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- c) By well resourcing (funding) participation activities
- d) By outreach people or reach them where they are
- e) Other (please specify)

7. How would you **rate the performance** of the West Ham and Plaistow New Deal for Communities Programme in terms of involving residents?

- Very good
- Good
- Bad
- Worse

8. How would you rate the effectiveness of **participation techniques or methods** among residents of West Ham and Plaistow NDC area?

	Very effective	Fairly effective	Fairly ineffective	Very ineffective
a) Area Community Forums (e.g. West Ham Community Forum)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Public meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Mayoral question time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Neighbourhood meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Youth Parliament	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## II. About Local Community Network

9. How long have you lived in this local area? \_\_\_\_\_ **Years** \_\_\_\_\_ **Months**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

10. Would you say this area is a place ...

- |   |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) you enjoy living in                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) you enjoy working                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) where neighbours look after each other | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

11. Most of time, people or most people...

	Yes	No	Depends
a) try to be helpful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) would take advantage if got the chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) can be trusted	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. Are you currently a **member** in any of these organisations?

a) Political parties	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Trade unions	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Environmental group	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Parents'/School Association	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Education, arts, music group/evening class	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Tenants'/ Residents' group or Neighbourhood watch	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Religious group	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Group for elderly people (e.g. lunch clubs)	<input type="checkbox"/>
i) Youth group (e.g. scouts, guides, youth clubs etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>
j) Sports Club	<input type="checkbox"/>
k) Social club/working men's club	<input type="checkbox"/>
l) Women's Institute/Townswomen's Guild	<input type="checkbox"/>
m) Women's Group	<input type="checkbox"/>
n) Other group or organisation (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
o) None of these	<input type="checkbox"/>

13. Do you join in the **activities** of any of these organisations (even if you are not a member)?  
(Please tick all that apply)

a) Trade unions	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Environmental groups	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Parent-teacher association or school association	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Tenants' or residents' group or neighbourhood watch	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Education, arts, music or singing group (including evening classes)	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Religious group	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Charity, voluntary or community group	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Group for elderly or older people (e.g. lunch club)	<input type="checkbox"/>
i) Youth group (e.g. scouts, guides, youth club)	<input type="checkbox"/>
j) Women's group	<input type="checkbox"/>
k) Social club (including working men's club, Rotary club)	<input type="checkbox"/>
l) Sports club, gym, exercise or dance group	<input type="checkbox"/>
m) Other group or organisation (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

**OR** No I don't regularly join in any of the activities of these organisations

14. Is there any **other comment** on issues of public and community participation in Newham regeneration you would like to add?

**III. About yourself**

15. Are you **Male**  **Female**

16. How do you describe your **ethnic group**? \_\_\_\_\_

17. In which **age group** do you belong?

under 25

25 – 45

46 – 65

above 65

Thank you for your co-operation.

#### Appendix 4. Covering Letter

**Postal Address**

Mobile: xxxxxxxx

Fax. xxxxxxxx

e-mail:

Date:

Dear

Re. Questionnaire Survey (Sample)

I am currently doing a research degree (MPhil) in Human Geography at Queen Mary College, University of London. My research aims to explore public and community involvement in area-based regeneration initiatives. I am considering the West Ham and Plaistow New Deal for Communities in the London Borough of Newham as my case study area.

I believe that you have knowledge of the regeneration initiatives in Newham as a resident faith group leader. I would really appreciate it if you could help me with my research and let me know a convenient date and time to interview you on some of the attached questions. If a meeting is not possible, I would appreciate if you could help me by completing the attached questionnaire. The interview and answers to the questionnaire are voluntary of course and will not be used for anything other than the research purpose. Any quote I may take will be treated as anonymous. If you are unsure of any of the questions please let me know.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for further information you may require on the above contact address/telephone.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Mentesnot Mengesha

**Appendix 5. Standard Observation Checklist (I) – Civic partnership**

Date	14/03/2005			
Venue	Stratford Town Hall			
Time of meeting	Start	Finish		
	6.30	8.55		
Number of Attendants	Members		Officers	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
	6	8	8	2
Pre-meeting activities	Refreshments, networking			
Chaired by	David Stout			
Discussion entry	Introduction to the agenda, introduction to the speakers			
Discussion exit	Setting the date for the next meeting and topic			
Individual dynamics	The usual suspects dominate the meeting, many passive listeners			
Group Dynamics	The small groups are more interactive, but still dominated			
Guest Speakers Topic	Tacking Youth Offending and Improving Youth Provision			
The quality of information given	Moderate quality of information			
Time allocation	Not sufficient			
Discussion on issues raised	Fairly active			
Decision on issues raised	Communication and publicity could be improved.			
On meeting activities	Moderate			
Level of participation	Moderate			
Follow-up mechanism	Exists			
Settings	Well organised			
Goals	achieved			
My general impression	Moderate			
Comment on weaknesses				
Possible remedies to weaknesses				
Comment on strength				
Lesson to learn from strengths				
General Comment				

## **Appendix 6. Key for respondent's code**

- Brd = West Ham and Plaistow New Deal for Communities Board Member
- Cllr = Elected Councillor to the London Borough of Newham
- Faith = A representative of faith groups
- FG = Member of the Forest Gate Community Forum
- GS = Member of the Green Street Community Forum
- In = Interviewee
- PW = Member of the Plaistow Community Forum
- Res = Resident (Newham Resident)
- Vol = Representative of Voluntary or Community Organisation

## Appendix 7. Correlation analysis summary for wards in Greater London

	SMR M	SMR F	SMR All	White	Mixed	Asian	Black	Chinese	Shared	Unshared	Class E	Class AB	NoCar	4orMore cars	Eco active	Eco Inact
SMR M	1															
SMR F	0.957	1.000														
SMR All	0.989	0.990	<b>1.000</b>													
White	-0.491	-0.599	<b>-0.552</b>	1.000												
Mixed	0.441	0.464	<b>0.458</b>	-0.516	1.000											
Asian	0.186	0.295	<b>0.243</b>	-0.790	0.022	1.000										
Black	0.590	0.635	<b>0.620</b>	-0.641	0.729	0.053	1.000									
Chinese	0.063	0.074	<b>0.069</b>	-0.299	0.439	0.104	0.175	1.000								
Shared	0.099	0.089	<b>0.095</b>	-0.128	0.411	-0.075	0.214	0.428	1.000							
Unshared	-0.099	-0.089	<b>-0.095</b>	0.128	-0.411	0.075	-0.214	-0.428	-1.000	1.000						
ClassE	0.816	0.781	<b>0.807</b>	-0.341	0.265	0.078	0.484	0.055	0.058	-0.058	1.000					
ClassAB	-0.672	-0.679	<b>-0.683</b>	0.391	-0.055	-0.261	-0.405	0.256	0.284	-0.284	-0.704	1.000				
NoCar	0.688	0.662	<b>0.682</b>	-0.415	0.657	0.009	0.602	0.431	0.546	-0.546	0.652	-0.167	1.000			
4orMore	-0.589	-0.590	<b>-0.596</b>	0.393	-0.603	-0.049	-0.534	-0.303	-0.403	0.403	-0.464	0.152	-0.811	1.000		
EcoAct	-0.652	-0.656	<b>-0.661</b>	0.531	-0.187	-0.398	-0.375	-0.201	-0.047	0.047	-0.815	0.593	-0.480	0.256	1	
Ecolnact	0.652	0.656	<b>0.661</b>	-0.531	0.187	0.398	0.375	0.201	0.047	-0.047	0.815	-0.593	0.480	-0.256	-1	1

## Appendix 8. Correlation analysis summary for wards in Newham

	SMRM	SMRF	SMRAll	White	Mixed	Asian	Black	Chinese	shared	unshared	Class E	Class AB	NoCar	4orMore	Eco Act	Eco Inact
SMRM	1															
SMRF	0.369	1.000														
SMRAll	0.899	0.738	1.000													
White	0.417	-0.350	0.139	1.000												
Mixed	0.329	-0.268	0.121	0.595	1.000											
Asian	-0.498	0.281	-0.231	-0.973	-0.721	1.000										
Black	0.637	-0.032	0.450	0.700	0.814	-0.839	1.000									
Chinese	0.106	-0.162	0.002	0.533	0.421	-0.571	0.378	1.000								
Shared	0.296	-0.076	0.184	-0.149	0.229	0.076	0.149	-0.290	1.000							
Unshared	-0.296	0.076	-0.184	0.149	-0.229	-0.076	-0.149	0.290	-1.000	1.000						
ClassE	0.707	0.557	0.770	0.162	0.047	-0.234	0.403	0.039	0.029	-0.029	1.000					
ClassAB	-0.055	-0.573	-0.299	0.310	0.490	-0.321	0.270	0.062	0.344	-0.344	-0.611	1.000				
NoCar	0.724	0.266	0.649	0.252	0.364	-0.388	0.661	0.119	0.424	-0.424	0.764	-0.130	1.000			
4orMore	-0.237	0.077	-0.133	-0.359	-0.111	0.349	-0.311	0.002	0.092	-0.092	-0.303	-0.084	-0.398	1.000		
EcoAct	-0.060	-0.653	-0.345	0.734	0.659	-0.727	0.495	0.547	-0.060	0.060	-0.425	0.718	-0.060	-0.250	1.000	
Ecolnact	0.060	0.653	0.345	-0.734	-0.659	0.727	-0.495	-0.547	0.060	-0.060	0.425	-0.718	0.060	0.250	-1.000	1.000



**Appendix 9. SMR ranks of Newham wards as compared to overall London.**

	<b>Rank from all of London of 624 wards</b>	<b>Newham Wards</b>	<b>SMR All</b>
1	3	Canning Town North	148
2	8	Canning Town South	144
3	23	Plaistow North	139
4	26	Green Street West	138
5	30	Stratford and New Town	137
6	35	Manor Park	136
7	42	West Ham	134
8	43	Green Street East	134
9	49	Royal Docks	134
10	51	Little Ilford	133
11	54	Forest Gate South	133
12	56	Beckton	132
13	68	Boleyn	130
14	74	Custom House	129
15	82	Plaistow South	128
16	86	Forest Gate North	127
17	87	East Ham North	127
18	89	East Ham Central	127
19	106	Wall End	125
20	112	East Ham South	124

### **Appendix 10. SMR, ethnicity and material deprivation indicators in Newham**

	SMR	SMR	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
	All	Rank	White	Mix	Asian	Black	Chinese	Eco inact	Live in a shared dwelling	No car or van	Social & eco- nomic status Class E
Beckton	132	9	49	4	21	21	5	37	0.48	42	18
Boleyn	130	10	40	3	36	18	3	42	0.49	48	21
Canning Town North	<b>148</b>	<b>1</b>	55	4	9	28	4	44	0.70	55	25
Canning Town South	144	2	<b>61</b>	3	6	27	3	44	0.46	55	<b>26</b>
Custom House	129	11	58	4	7	26	5	38	0.35	44	18
East Ham Central	127	12a	32	3	50	13	3	43	1.05	48	20
East Ham North	127	12b	16	2	<b>69</b>	12	1	<b>47</b>	0.46	44	19
East Ham South	124	14	57	4	17	20	2	38	0.21	45	20
Forest Gate North	127	12c	43	<b>5</b>	21	28	2	38	0.86	48	19
Forest Gate South	133	8a	36	4	35	22	3	41	<b>2.02</b>	52	19
Green Street East	134	7a	16	2	65	15	2	46	0.55	45	19
Green Street West	138	4	16	2	66	14	2	<b>47</b>	0.56	44	21
Little Ilford	133	8b	29	3	41	25	2	45	0.69	50	22
Manor Park	136	6	28	3	48	19	2	44	0.79	49	20
Plaistow North	139	3	36	4	30	25	4	42	0.72	53	22
Plaistow South	128	12	51	4	18	22	6	37	0.08	47	19
Royal Docks	134	7b	<b>61</b>	4	7	26	2	34	0.81	46	17
Stratford and New Town	137	5	45	4	18	<b>30</b>	3	38	1.14	<b>59</b>	22
Wall End	125	13	29	3	51	14	3	41	0.34	42	18
West Ham	134	7c	45	4	18	28	5	39	0.37	54	22