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**COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION  
IN  
DECENTRALISING  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

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**November 1995**

## SUMMARY

This thesis examines recent experiments with participatory democracy in the context of decentralised local government. It charts the evolution in attitudes to the role of the generality of citizens in their own government, from commentators who were convinced that stability depended upon their apathy, to the current belief that mass involvement will save local democracy from deteriorating further into crisis.

From the literature it is apparent that various authorities have pursued decentralisation initiatives for very different, sometimes conflicting reasons, not all concerned with democratisation. These have frequently been only vaguely articulated and then half-heartedly implemented. Where democratisation has actually been attempted and has included a participatory element, it is the particular contention here that there has been a mismatch between the structures adopted and the objectives to be achieved such that the community participants involved are prevented from playing the role envisaged for them. Furthermore it is argued that a belief that the emergent participants are non political overlooks their true party affiliations; consequently there has been a failure to introduce sufficient safeguards to ensure true accountability to the constituents for whom they are intended to speak.

The case studies on which the research is based are drawn from Scotland where there is an existing grassroots network of community councils which might have formed the building block for any new structures of involvement. Two quite contrasting models are examined, one primarily intended to improve the council's responsiveness to local needs and aspirations in regard to provision of public services, one intended to offset disadvantage through empowerment. These are evaluated in the light of the above hypotheses and alternative models are evolved better suited to achieving the council's apparent aims. Finally lessons are drawn in relation to their effectiveness or otherwise as examples of new forms of participatory democracy which would have a potential to lower the barriers to involvement by those who currently choose, or are forced, to remain excluded from our present representative forms of democracy.

## OUTLINE

The first three chapters look at the background to the subject, covering democratic theory and practical experiences chiefly in Britain; Chapter 4 is devoted to the current research study whilst Chapters 5 to 10 cover the results of these investigations; finally Chapters 11 and 12 evaluate the outcome, firstly from a local authority perspective in achieving their aims, secondly as models of participatory democracy.

**Chapter 1** takes as a starting point the current assessment that representative democracy is in crisis, examining what the nature of this crisis is believed to be. The history of theories about participation by citizens is traced from Direct Democracy in Athens, through the fear of causing instability were there to be mass involvement, to the current vogue for Participatory Democracy.

**Chapter 2** deals more specifically with issues of decentralisation as practised in the context of British local government. Again the starting point is a diagnosis of the ills which are to be addressed by such initiatives. There follows a discussion of Exit and Voice as differing means to attack the presumed defects. The theory of Voice as a solution is contrasted with lessons from this strategy when applied in practice, highlighting some of the political difficulties inherent in introducing and implementing decentralisation, and examining the various reasons for adding a participatory element.

**Chapter 3** focuses on decentralisation in the context of Scottish local government, tracing its roots in the Wheatley Commission's deliberations which preceded re-organisation in 1973, and thereafter how it was introduced over the subsequent period. At different times the motivation driving councils to adopt such policies varied, some having roots primarily in ideology, some in reactions to external measures imposed or threatened by Conservative central government since 1979. Whilst up to now decentralisation has been adopted voluntarily by councils, under the legislation to introduce Unitary Authorities in Scotland in 1995, it has become mandatory for reasons which are explained. A final section in this chapter brings together the themes and lessons from the literature.

**Chapter 4** outlines the current study, based on Glasgow District and Strathclyde Regional Councils, beginning with the research questions to be addressed. The selection of the case studies is described, together with the way the investigations were to be conducted. Although a number of techniques are to be used, the main



tool is semi structured interviews, the reasons for this being discussed. Thereafter there is an account of how the interviews were conducted and of problems encountered.

**Chapter 5** deals in greater detail with the actual attempts at democratisation by the chosen councils, describing the emergence of Area Management Committees (AMC) in Glasgow District and Area Liaison Committees (ALC) in Strathclyde. The history of AMCs is traced from the early days of their introduction, for reasons which are examined, up to the form they take today. There is a parallel examination of the ALCs as they progressed from the personal initiative of a local councillor to emerge as a plank in the council's deprivation strategy.

**Chapter 6** paints a picture of the three case study areas in Glasgow in which the research was conducted, depicting its physical features, relevant demographic characteristics, and social and political history. This sets the backdrop to current relationships between agencies and local organisations, between politicians and activists. An account is also given of any local structures offering opportunities for participation at the interface with local government. Hypotheses are outlined as to how these structures might impact in differing ways on the ground and how local activists might react to them.

**Chapter 7** looks at the way in which a traditional local authority committee normally operates and the reasons why it may not be well suited to community participation. The case study meetings are compared to this norm to estimate whether they are any more appropriate. Replies to interview questions reveal how the three categories of stakeholders - councillors, officers and community - report that the meetings operate from their differing perspectives.

**Chapter 8** continues this examination of the meetings by reviewing two aspects of the respective papers, namely how and when they are distributed, and how and by whom items for inclusion are collected. The former, it is argued, inhibits how participants are able to play a meaningful part, and contributes to their becoming cut off from those for whom they are supposed to speak. The latter dictates which issues are addressed, whether the local authorities' or the communities' priorities are paramount. Interview responses here serve to illustrate that all parties see officers as controlling procedures.

**Chapter 9** considers the nature of constraints on the effectiveness of the participatory structures, some of which are imposed from outside, some of which derive from internal factors. Amongst the latter, the level of resources in terms of

staff time, funding, training and community development support for activists are each treated in turn. It is shown that availability does not always equate with uptake. In terms of funding, many of the community organisations are heavily dependent on council grants which can have the effect of muffling dissent.

**Chapter 10** reaches the nub of the research indicating how aspects of the way the committees operate stack up together to circumscribe the role played by participants. As already stated, it is a particular contention of this study that there has been a failure to recognise the fundamental distinction between an elected member, validated at the ballot box, and a participant who should be mandated in an ongoing manner by their constituents. The result is that the structures have not been adapted to accommodate the differences, contributing to the creation of 'gatekeepers' who are forced to behave as 'bad democrats'. In addition, it transpires that there is indeed a very high proportion of party activists which muddies individual loyalties and lines of accountability. Nor has the democratic objective of making councillors or officers more accountable been achieved, as is illustrated by the interview responses on this topic.

**Chapter 11** takes up the theme that certain prerequisites have to be met for these initiatives to operate in a meaningful way. Specifically there have to be changes in organisational culture and attitudes favouring participation. Community comments demonstrate that not only have these not been met, but in some instances definite action has been taken to deter certain participants altogether thus eliminating unwanted voices. The crucial features of the models which require remedial action are highlighted, and alternative models which would better match the councils' objectives are suggested. Arguments are put forward for creating a clearer separation between the representative and participatory parts of the resultant system. A brief final section considers the practical problems facing the new Unitary City Council in reconciling the two models which the precursor councils have adopted for very differing purposes.

**Chapter 12** finally returns to the opening theme of forms of democracy, setting out democratic objectives which might be achieved through participation. These shade from (re)creating trust in the representative system up to enhancing self reliance. Suggestions are put forward outlining how such aims might be achieved by inhibiting the over active, encouraging the inactive or compelling the reluctant. These solutions ultimately depend on value judgements about the respective obligations and duties of the state and its citizens.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks go first to the editorial board of Urban Studies without whose imaginative gesture in funding a scholarship the research would never have been undertaken. Next to my two supervisors - Andy McArthur (Social & Economic Research) and Ronan Paddison (Geography) - who, individually and together, put me on the right path and with much encouragement ensured I stayed there. To Janie Ferguson, my library specialist, who read my thoughts as to which books she should purchase. To Annette Hastings who swapped books, jokes and experiences. To other colleagues and friends who listened patiently or impatiently to discussions on democracy. To my family who cast a long shadow which I now cast in my turn. But most of all to those interviewees who gave so willingly of their time and whose comments enliven this study.

I'm a skyscraper wean; I live on the nineteeth flair,  
But I'm no' gaun oot tae play ony mair,  
'Cause since we moved tae Castlemilk, I'm wasting away  
'Cause I'm getting wan meal less every day:

*Oh ye cannae fling pieces oot a twenty storey flat,  
Seven hundred hungry weans 'll testify to that.  
If it's butter, cheese or jeely, if the breid is plain or pan,  
The odds against it reaching earth are ninety-nine tae wan.*

We've wrote away to Oxfam to try an' get some aid,  
An' a' the weans in Castlemilk have formed a "piece brigade."  
We're gonnae march on George's Square demanding civil rights  
Like nae mair hooses ower piece-flinging height.

Adam McNaughtan, 1967  
Noise and Smoky Breath

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# CHAPTER 1

## DEMOCRACY AND PARTICIPATION

A widespread perception on both sides of the Atlantic is that democracy as practised in the West is in crisis. Furthermore in a growing number of quarters and for a variety of reasons, it has been concluded that the solution is to (re)turn to a greater degree of participation by ordinary people in decisions affecting their own lives. What features is it then in the nature of representative forms of democracy which has triggered this concern with the way it operates today and what are the alleged ills which are to be addressed by adopting these alternative measures?

This chapter begins with an exploration of differing theories of the role which should be played by the mass of citizens in a healthy democracy, contrasting earlier views on the threat to stability, and the fear of conflict which would follow from involvement, with the emergent belief in greater degrees of participation. Two linked themes emerge which have a bearing on measures of democratisation adopted by the two councils which form the subject of the current research. The first is concerned with *responsiveness*. Here the emphasis is on such issues as greater willingness to listen to and learn from the public, and an enhanced desire to find means to deal with the diversity of their needs and aspirations. The second is concerned with *offsetting disadvantage*. The emphasis this time is on inequalities in access to decision-takers and either overcoming dependency or achieving social justice through empowerment by transferring elements of control from the governors to the governed.

This sets the theoretical backdrop to the subsequent two chapters which describe in greater detail the moves towards decentralisation, and with it democratisation and community participation, in the settings of first British and then Scottish local government. The latter forms the setting for the case studies on which the research is based.



## TERMINOLOGY

One immediate problem which arises in the present context is that the terms participation, empowerment and democracy come packed with variations in their meanings. A moment will therefore be taken here to clarify how they are to be understood in the current research. The first two are taken by some authors, as we will see below, to be synonymous; that is 'real' or 'true' participation must involve some transfer of power to the participant. But here it will be taken as neutral in this respect, simply describing an act of involvement of some kind.

The expression '*direct democracy*' is used to denote a system of decision-taking in which each individual can speak and vote for themselves. This lies at the other end of a spectrum from '*representative democracy*' which is that form of government in which electors exercise their rights through representatives chosen by and accountable to them. '*Participatory democracy*' hovers somewhere between these two, on occasions denoting an element of direct democracy involving an extra category of 'community' participants added onto a representative system, sometimes an informal, small-scale, localised body entirely consisting of lay people. 'Community' itself in this context is used to mean a neighbourhood catchment area from which participants are drawn.

## THE NATURE OF THE PERCEIVED CRISIS

The notion of direct democracy, however, does not just simply encompass a system for taking decisions, it also contains elements relating to the educational and psychological effects of involvement in decision-taking. In this light the drawback of a representative system is that the mass of electors are simply expected at intervals to choose between competing candidates. Thereafter there is no requirement for them to play any part until the next ballot. Liberalism is blamed for creating a 'thin democracy' (Barber 1984). This it is now felt has led to an unhealthy level of apathy. Whilst the earlier pressures for change involved the gradual enfranchisement first of tax-payers as opposed to property-owners, then second of women and ethnic minorities (in America the blacks), the third crisis is seen as being that many, especially amongst the poor, still remain excluded (Kweit & Kweit 1981). As a result, democracy is in danger of becoming limited to the affluent because of the exclusion of poor communities from the decision-making process (Geddes 1995). Activists report '*The question on the doorstep is not should I vote Labour. It is should I vote?*' (CSJ 1994, p86). Whilst failure to register

and cast a vote may be the most easily quantified aspect, the malaise is seen as running deeper than this :

*'There is widespread agreement that democracy in America needs renewal. Too few people participate in the governmental process. Too many people are content to rely on their elected officials to solve society's problems, even though they are dissatisfied with the results of those officials actions.'*  
(Berry, Portney & Thomson 1993, p1)

The uninvolved, on the one hand, so this argument goes, have lost their sense of responsibility and become far too dependent.

On the other hand, there has been an increasing reliance on forms of direct action as people take to the streets as the only way they see to get their views across. Their activities have become more and more professional so that in a recent road protest in London, the costs of policing the construction of one mile of motorway came to £6M, Our governments literally cannot afford to disregard their disaffected citizens. These tactics are also spreading in Britain to the middle classes who previously would have relied on using formal channels of influence (Guardian 1995). At the extreme some inner cities have been the site of riots vividly demonstrating the dangers to the state of alienation.

## MASS INVOLVEMENT AND STABILITY

Participation is so widely favoured today as the solution to this situation that we are in danger of forgetting that in earlier times, by contrast, stability was seen to be achieved through government by an elite. Political theorists have differed in their views of the degree of participation by citizens desirable to maintain a stable democracy. As Almond and Verba (1963) sought to demonstrate in their Civic Culture study a tension exists between the power of leaders to act, on the one hand, and citizens to be involved in the political process, on the other. They contended that for stable conditions to prevail the political culture must be one which correctly balances activity & passivity, obligation & performance, consensus & cleavage. It had been the collapse of the Weimar Republic, with its high level of mass participation, which had led an earlier generation of political theorists in the 30s and 40s to identify participation as a destabilising influence. Thus Schumpeter (1942), an influential writer from this school of thought, advocated a role for citizens strictly limited to voting for their choice amongst an elite of suitable leaders, even going so far as to contend that they should be debarred from exerting any pressure on their representatives once elected. For a later generation, this theory was given credence by the findings of early social surveys

in America which highlighted low levels of political awareness or activity, even non-voting, especially amongst the lower socio-economic classes. Since the United States enjoyed a high degree of stability, revisionist theorists concluded that the existing levels of inactivity must be making a healthy contribution in leaving governors freedom of manoeuvre. Thus Dahl (1956) saw a need for a high degree of consensus amongst leaders which could be threatened by greater activity amongst those from lower socio-economic groups who, having more authoritarian attitudes, would not conform to the same norms. Apathy Berelson (1954) maintained had a positive function for the system as a whole by cushioning it from the shock of disagreement. The most extreme proponent of this line of argument for elite leadership was Sartori (1962,) who denied that apathy was due in any way to illiteracy, poverty or insufficient interest, or due to lack of practice in democracy declaring (p87) '*we have learned that one does not learn to vote by voting*'. Taking a different approach, Eckstein (1966) put forward the view that government would tend to be stable if its authority pattern was congruent with other authority patterns in the society of which it was a part. Since certain authority structures such as family, schools and economic organisations could not, of their nature, be democratic, it followed that government likewise should not be purely democratic, but incorporate a '*healthy element of authoritarianism*' (p262).

The common feature of all these theories is that they extended the descriptive survey findings on non-participation to become prescriptive norms. These comfortable conceptions were shattered by the subsequent violence and rioting which broke out in the sixties throughout many urban centres in the United States and to a more limited extent also in England, demonstrating only too dramatically the dangers to political stability of an alienated citizenry adopting tactics of militant social action. It was at this time that active citizenship, through the writings of radicals such as Alinsky (1969) came to stand for a demand for '*power to the people*' especially for the urban poor and the black population who, whilst enjoying legal eligibility for a vote, were effectively disenfranchised by the imposition of economic and educational qualifications.

Out of this disaffection came the American welfare initiatives and British Urban Aid, the inclusion of involvement of the 'poor' in these spending programmes apparently being driven more by desperation in the face of unrest than any sense of adhering to democratic principles. Indeed Moynihan (1969) recounts that the famous phrase '*maximum feasible participation*' was the result of a piece of defective drafting of the legislation, the intention having merely been to ensure that the poor blacks in the South benefited from the expenditure, not to guarantee they

were given any say in its allocation. Participation then became advocated top-down as a nostrum for the disadvantaged by those seeking to bring them into the fold or by committed socialists, rather than being demanded from below. Indeed if there was demand, this came preferentially from the middle-class not from the lowest socio-economic groups (Boaden *et al* 1982).

## COOPTION OF DISSENT

Those of a radical disposition who looked to such programmes to provide any significant power-sharing became disillusioned with critics decrying them as at best tokenistic efforts aimed at buying off dissent (Arnstein 1969). This suspicion of government sponsored structures as being a tool intended to contain conflict is a recurrent theme throughout the literature. An example in this vein is Cockburn (1977) who, in her account of neighbourhood councils in Lambeth, contended that they acted as a form of deliberate state control aimed at co-optation of dissent. This attitude is prevalent in the field of community development where the fear is frequently expressed that forms of sponsored participation will deflect energies which would otherwise, more correctly in the workers' view, be concentrated on direct action against more significant targets (Bryant 1982; Barr 1991).

Amongst the potential participants themselves the literature points not only to differential rates of engagement between social classes, but also to variations in their preferred modes and styles. Susskind (1983) categorised the resultant patterns of interaction between participants and authorities as 'paternalism, conflict and co-production' (perhaps now more normally termed partnership). From his knowledge of collective action in Covent Garden, Hain (1980) inferred that consensus models were preferred by middle-class owner-occupiers who could deal as equals with council officials, whereas direct action and more aggressive campaigning techniques were the chosen option of working class tenants. When the group fighting development plans for the area became dominated by the former, the latter ceased to cooperate since they no longer regarded it as serving their interests.

From the reverse perspective of the attractive powers of certain structures, Yates (1973) hypothesised that activist community leaders were drawn to models which called for immediate practical problem-solving, usually outwith formalised situations involving negotiation. Where a transition from a conflictual style to a consensus one is demanded, the required adaptation may cause stress to individuals and within their organisations. Speaking, for instance, of a group which began its life in protest but was forced to become developmental after

successfully attracting funds, its chairman recounted the severe difficulties this imposed on members, some of whom defected as a direct consequence (Robertson 1991). These attitudes to conflict, fears of co-optation and antecedent history of action were deemed by Susskind (op. cit) to be crucial factors in predicting the outcome of participation exercises.

Whilst these authors were preoccupied with conflict between citizen and government, others have been concerned over the consequences of conflicts of interest between differing stake-holders within governmental structures. Dislike of contentious disputation can be one reason why volunteers, who are otherwise prepared to play an active role in society, seek out the quieter waters of the third sector in preference to entering the political arena (Hampton 1987). Kweit and Kweit (1981) believed this might be a particularly significant issue in a consensus-orientated political culture such as the United States, testing out three possible hypotheses, namely:

- the greater the conflict, the less policy impact
- the greater the conflict, the less power redistribution
- the greater the conflict, the less trusting and efficacious the citizens.

In the event, though they claimed their findings to have successfully substantiated these prognostications, the evidence was in truth somewhat ambiguous due to differing perceptions between officers and community of the degree of strife and its effects. Officers may have concerns about the justification for amending their programmes in reaction to pressure. In pursuing their self-interests, citizens may precipitate a free-for-all struggle in which the most persistent, not necessarily the most deserving, become the winners. It is this potential for bias towards those who 'shout the loudest' which perturbs officials dedicated to executing what they regard as rational schedules based on expert evaluations of priorities (Baker 1978).

The resolution of conflicts between varying interests is a fundamental task for politics, but for those with a desire for social justice there is an added requirement that all such interests, and not just those of a powerful, organised lobby or the educated and vociferous few should be expressed. Government is expected to be responsive, but to whom is it listening and to whom should it listen?

## PARTICIPATION AND RESPONSIVENESS

Evidence abounds that the answer to this question is that certain sectors of society, more skilled in deploying their economic muscle, better organised or highly versed in utilising the opportunities available to them will make themselves more powerfully felt than others. It has been demonstrated in study after study that to be in any, even minimal, sense politically active is to be numbered amongst the 'supergladiators' (Parry, Moyser & Day 1992). What is more that those few come predominantly from high socio-economic strata acting alone or in groups. Educational levels too have been found to be a powerful predictor of the likelihood of taking action (Oliver 1984). Typically Verba and Nie (1972) found in their research into American political behaviour that only 20% of voters ever contacted their elected representative. Likewise it is the middle classes in Britain who will avail themselves of any opportunities to reply to consultations, to letter, to campaign (Boaden *et al* 1982). Similar Scottish figures (HMSO 1981) put the number who are active as 3.6%, with their numbers drawn predominantly from amongst men, the elderly, socio-economic groups 1 and 2 (which comprise employers, professionals, farmers and senior managerial occupations), those who had completed secondary level education and those who feel they 'belong' to an area.

Evidence is also available that those in government whether elected representatives or appointed officers, themselves atypical of the population at large, are more likely to concur with views emanating from segments of society closest in background to their own. Concurrence rates between community leaders and citizens, Verba and Nie (*op. cit*) discovered in their study, were greatest where activity rates were highest, thus constituting a potential source of bias since the activists were to be found amongst higher socio-economic groupings. Party activists and elected councillors are found to prioritise different issues than electors (Budge *et al* 1972). Supposedly neutral officers may also be less even-handed than they believe themselves to be, reacting more favourably to arguments couched in language similar to their own (Hain 1980; Newton 1976), and showing a preference for certain interests over others :

*'... benevolent norms ... which ought to help everyone, end up helping some more than others ...[Many] neutral decision rules are not neutral. They have a class bias.'* (Levy *et al* 1974, p232)

Just how effective a lobby backed by economic muscle can be is confirmed by the recent example of the British government deciding not to enforce it's own very

recently enacted environmental legislation concerning contaminated sites when forcibly acquainted with its damaging economic effects on a building trade facing recession (Guardian 1993). Even at the grassroots there is recognition that the loudest voice may prevail as the following quotation demonstrates:

*"Well, I really believed that you elected people and they would take care of things. I believed that agencies were there to do what they were hired to do, which was to protect people. And my experience has been that they don't. And what I find is that unless people yell a lot, they get ignored."*  
(Watson & Barber 1988, p49)

Were action automatically to be taken upon this clamour, it would be to the detriment of the perhaps more deserving, but less articulate. Knowing this, and wishing to avoid this outcome, underlies much of the uneasiness relating to spontaneous participation and issues of 'representativeness'.

Two alternative solutions have been propounded in answer to dilemmas of this nature, the first arguing for authority to pursue the public good divorced from any obligation to listen to or act upon external pressures between elections (the solution found by Newton (op. cit) to be favoured by Conservative councillors in Birmingham); the second proposing the opening up of appropriate channels of communication to those currently unable or unwilling to use existing means. Prominent amongst the first school of thought is Schumpeter, as already cited, who would disallow any role for the citizen in exerting pressure other than the threat of withdrawing subsequent electoral support. Likewise Lowi (1979) avers that a government that makes decisions solely on the basis of citizen demands is illegitimate, the more so since the public may not be fully aware what is in their own best interests. A similar line is pursued in respect of the bureaucracy which, in the truly Weberian version, should always be allowed complete discretion to follow rationally adopted, impersonally executed, uniform procedures. There are both elected politicians and appointed officers who attempt to follow this theoretical line in practice by adopting a detached position as protection. Such individuals, it is safe to assume, will be deeply antagonistic to the countervailing moves to open yet further channels for interests to be expressed.

Pressures to do so are, however, coming from many directions, not all by any means as a result of concerns with social justice for the deprived; the case is also being made for tax payers, businesses, consumers and employees to be acceded rights to be heard. Claimants may thus represent very different interests and lie at every point along the political spectrum; Tories advocating options such as Partnerships or co-option of business rate payers into local government and

community partnerships, whilst Socialist and Liberal councils explore community involvement in decentralised forums. With Central government in Britain committed to expanding choice by amending subsidy regimes or engineering a shift to service provision outwith the public sector, local governments have reacted by enhancing their capacity to respond sensitively to local needs in the hopes of retaining loyalty to their threatened services (see next chapter). Recent years have seen a burgeoning number of initiatives in the field of information and advice services, council newsletters, consultative exercises, opinion polls or consumer surveys, neighbourhood offices and forums, joint or devolved management of certain services or projects.

The aim here is to counteract those aspects of the representative system which are seen to contribute to the reported feelings of alienation. First and foremost responsiveness of the elected representatives must be enhanced; participation will only be a secondary element to improve feedback. But this does not deal with the dual criticisms that some citizens choose, or are forced, to remain outside spheres of influence and that, as a consequence, they have grown dependent. Direct democracy, it is claimed, *'nourishes the democratic spirit of individuals, it builds community which nurtures shared values, such as compassion, tolerance and equality.'* (Berry, Portney & Thomson op. cit, p4). It inculcates a sense of pride in citizenship; to be uninvolved is to cease to bear responsibility. In the words of John Stuart Mill: *'Let a person have nothing to do for his country, and he will not care for it.'*

It is to tackle these additional criticisms that other theorists advocate opening up decision-taking in ways that allow some transfer of 'power' preferentially to those who are currently excluded. But is this truly necessary? Might an authority be responsive to the needs of the disadvantaged, might participation achieve its alleged redemptive capacities, without actually transferring power? What anyway is the nature of power within the political sphere, where does it lie and which elements would have to be transferred to achieve the desired objectives? How are we to decide what level of control should be devolved and to whom?

## **PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT**

To take the useful analogy derived in relation to whether tenant participation empowers tenants (Cairncross, Clapham & Goodlad 1994), what is under consideration should be viewed as a 'game' played by different stake-holders. Their respective degrees of influence at any given moment will depend on how



the game is being played, who at a particular point has leverage. The outcome is highly contingent, in part on the rules, in part on the relationships between the players. Some of the rules of the game may be determined externally - in our case usually by central government legislation. Some may be set for the particular game by the party in charge. Some may be negotiated between the players as they gain temporary leverage. In this analogy an indicator of the power relationship is who is making the rules.

The capacity to control and select who will be permitted to wield influence within the decision-making sphere or exert pressure upon it is in itself one attribute of power. In the sphere of political policy-making other elements include such facets as tax levying, resource allocation, and enacting legislation. Within a given decision-taking arena significant indicators will be control over the setting of the agenda, over presentation of options and the stage at which debate on these alternatives will occur, over who has a seat at the table, and over whether they are granted a vote. Therefore to ask if participants are empowered is to ask how many of the rules of the game are under their control.

Table 1.1 Control over Elements of Power

WHO DECIDES?	CONTROLS
What game to play	Aims and Objectives
What is at stake	Remit
How rules are set	Regulations
How players are selected	Method of (s)election
Who may play	Membership
How many players	Capacity to outnumber
Who has a vote	Capacity to outvote
Role of players	What members can do
What will be discussed	Agenda setting
Who is in the chair	Running of meetings
Degrees of support	Resources for participation
Access to training	Edge of advantage
Who will be trained	Skills level to be deployed

Source: Author's original

This also illustrates the point that 'power' is not a monolithic whole, but is composed of an aggregation of elements which may be concentrated in one

location or spread between parties, the latter being the norm in a pluralistic society. Power then is constituted by a collection of legal and moral rights backed by authority and capacity to exert them. When one person confers their rights to a second person, if the interests of the first are to be safeguarded, the second has to be inhibited through such checks as mandating, accountability, election or the law. To possess ultimate power is to be free from such constraints.

These elements may be assigned under legislation or transferable under discretion. In some countries, for example, electors have constitutional rights, as did the citizens of Athens, to demand that an issue be an item for debate. Two alternative forms of this device exist under some state constitutions in America, the first being the popular veto - which seeks to repair the legislature's sins of commission - the second being the initiative - which seeks to redress sins of omission (Bogdanov 1991). The latter, that is deliberate failure to address issues, was the element of power demonstrated by Bachrach and Barratz (1963). The stage at which debate is allowed - early pre-planning, decision-taking or implementation - is also a crucial variable open to manipulation in favour of one party or another (Kweit & Kweit 1981). Rights, however, do not automatically confer power unless they are accompanied by capacity to exercise them, which in turn can be dependent on resources such as adequate funding, appropriate training or access to expertise.

As we have already seen, the locus of power is seldom concentrated in one place, and consequently the battle for a greater degree of power-sharing may be waged not only between citizens and government, not only between levels - whether national, regional or local; federal state or metropolis - but internally between politicians and civil servants, senators and bureaucrats, councillors and officers. Whilst the myth that policy is enacted by the elected and executed by the appointed may still hold sway, the reality is a much more complex and ever shifting intermingling of these functions. Many of the pleas for enhanced powers emanating from the community outside the decision-making arena, could be and are echoed by the councillors within it (Young 1977; Martlew 1988).

## **MUST PARTICIPATION INVOLVE POWER SHARING?**

It is the question of power sharing which forms the nub of many of the arguments surrounding participation, some of which stem from substantial ideological differences of view, some of which are semantic in nature. The two become

intermixed in the way writers deploy the expression itself. Richardson (1983) argues that the term participation should be used in a neutral fashion merely to convey the taking up of opportunities to be involved in action. Pateman (1970) by contrast requires that it signify a quite considerable transfer of power, insisting on such expressions as ‘partial’ or ‘pseudo’ participation to cover situations where this is not the case. This line is also followed by McGregor *et al* who state:

*‘A public or private sector agency may try to inform people about its work and intentions and to change their attitudes towards the agency. That is the beginning of ‘public relations’ - but only the beginning. It should perhaps be called ‘information-giving’. ‘Participation’ begins when the agency listens to what the people say, changes its behaviour from time to time, and explains on other occasions why it cannot do so. Again, this is only a beginning, better described as ‘consultation’. ‘Real participation’ - sometimes called ‘empowerment’ - begins when the people who use an agency’s services gain some control over them perhaps through ownership (as in a fully owned housing co-operative) or through an effective veto (as in an Estate Management Board on which tenants have a majority of the seats).’ (1992b, p5)*

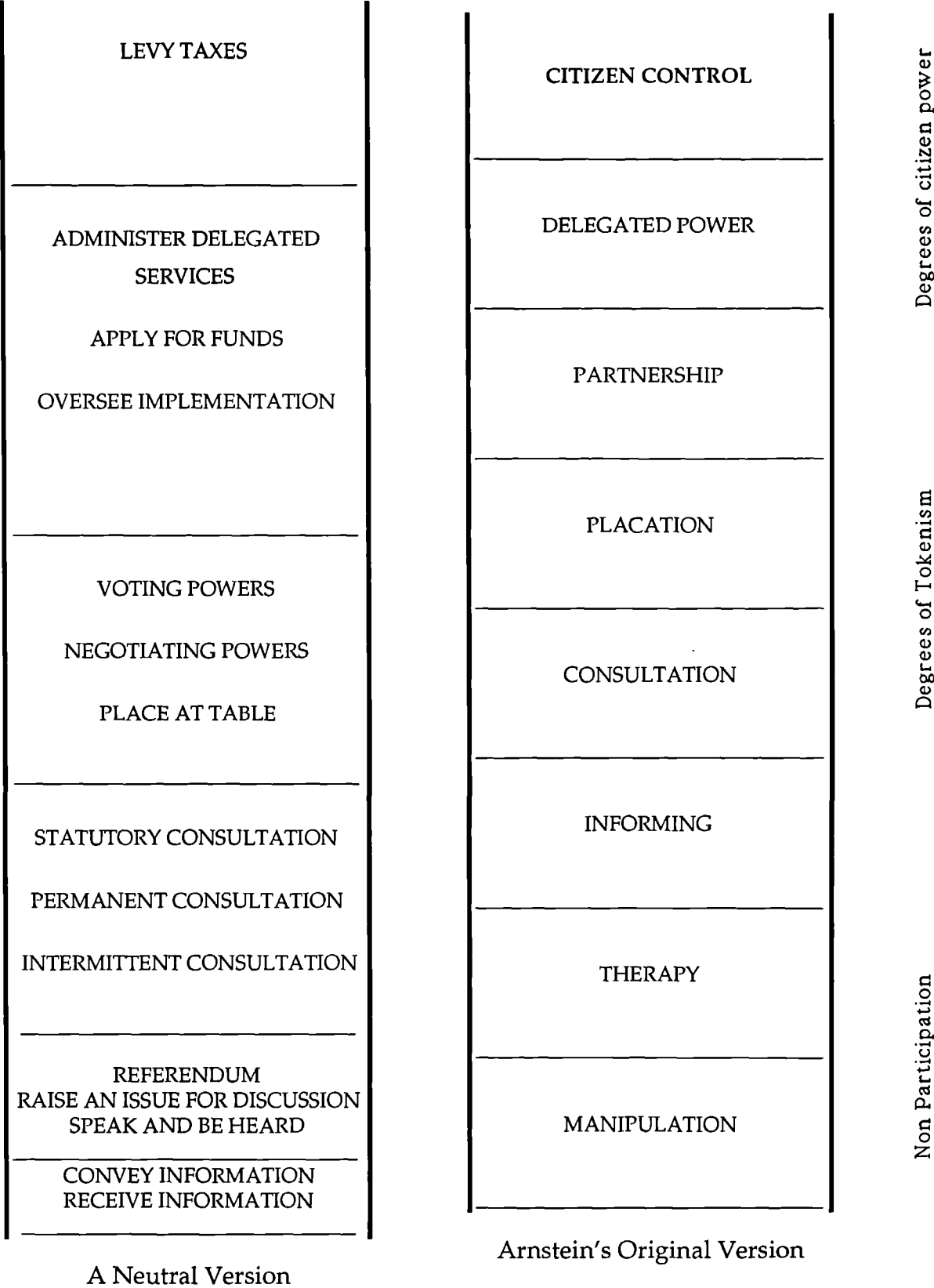
concluding

*‘If power is not transferred or shared to some degree, it is not ‘participation’.’ (p5)*

To substitute empowerment for the term real participation goes some way to resolving the ambiguity, but even here some further distinction is required between its differing facets, namely conferring authority and enhancing capacity. If the goal of the agency is merely to change public attitudes, and as this quote indicates this may be achieved by the simple expedient of giving information, then the clear conclusion has to be that the agency can succeed in its objectives without any substantial transfer of power being required. Much of the emotiveness of commentary stems from an ideology embracing ‘power to the people’ which colours attitudes to such ‘lesser’ elements as information-giving or consultation, leading to efforts being dismissed as placation or tokenism.

Thus the widely used ladder of citizen participation which was developed by Arnstein (1969) - on the right in Figure 1.1 - is couched in a manner which implies the ideal is full transfer of control. It might equally be redrawn in a much less loaded manner, starting from an adaptation by Burns (1992) depicting unevenly spaced steps which he argued more closely resembled the true difficulty of achieving upwards progression - the new version is on the left overleaf:

Figure 1.1 Ladders of Participation



Movement up this ladder confers a growing number of the rights forming the elements of authority. As steps are taken up this ladder there will be both increasing constraints on the transfer of rights and inhibitions on their receipt; some are more easily given, some more readily received. For these to be exercised, however, there must be matching resource allocation combined with an increased capacity to perform at higher levels. A form of tokenism is otherwise to confer rights in this way, but without the concomitant means to make use of them. But control of the resources needed to rise up the ladder can be a means whereby the holder of the purse strings maintains the ascendancy.

Nor, assuming a policy has been established that this should be done, is power a simple object to transfer. Because its nature is diverse and its locus widespread, because its holders may vary in their ideological reaction to such a proposal, initiators of power-sharing have a hard task in forcing implementers to comply. As Boaden *et al* (1982) remark in relation to British local government '*... official and elected members may feel, correctly or incorrectly, that their role in the policy making process has been threatened.*' The contention of Kweit and Kweit (op. cit), based on experience of the American political scene was that the more the power lay with the hostile bureaucracy, the harder it was for the citizen to wrest it from them:

*'Bureaucrats frequently believe that expertise should be the basis of decisions and because citizens lack it the bureaucrats feel that their influence on decisions should be minimized.'* (p96)

Where change has to be mediated through the unconverted its progress will be at best slow, at worst non-existent.

An instance, this time from industry, is that of the recent fashion for Quality Circles (QC) intended to allow employees a limited form of workplace democracy. These, after an initial flowering, tended to wither away largely because there was an absence of any incentive for commitment by middle management. An investigation concluded that QCs were extremely vulnerable to collapse and could rarely succeed unless established within a totally altered organisational culture (Hill 1991). The same conclusions concerning the need for a drastic cultural shift have been found to hold for the personnel in local government (Boaden *et al* (op. cit); Young (op. cit) where it has proved equally difficult to change opinions amongst officers and councillors.

## OBJECTIVES TO BE ACHIEVED BY POWER SHARING

Assuming power-sharing is not an end in itself, the purposes to be achieved will dictate the degrees of authority, if any, which have to be transferred in order to achieve a given goal. It may be hypothesised that power holders will wish to minimise the quantity lost to them as a consequence. These objectives have been characterised variously as instrumental and developmental (Richardson 1983), policy impact, power redistribution and improvement to citizen attitudes ' (Kweit & Kweit op. cit) or consumerism, decentralization and the extension of local democracy (Hambleton 1988). The three aspects comprise, firstly improved policy making and service provision through greater flexibility and responsiveness to variations in priorities. Secondly, there is a desire for changes in the perceptions and behaviour of bureaucrats and elected members in becoming better acquainted with and sensitive to the needs of the recipients of their policies, and of citizens in becoming more trusting, accepting, tolerant or more willing to take some responsibility for curbing their own or others' anti-social actions. Thirdly, there is a hope of engendering greater interest in traditional representative politics through opportunities to practise in direct participatory models.

It is arguable that very little power may need to be shifted to citizens in order to achieve an impact on policy where the desired objective is responsiveness. This is because improved information flows can be produced through such techniques as consumer surveys, councillor surgeries, neighbourhood offices, resulting in officers changing their prioritization of issues and resource allocations. Likewise it might be supposed that changes in attitudes can be engendered without advancing far up the ladder if power holders are prepared to listen more often and more sympathetically, and if citizens are content to be placated or coopted. Since there appears to be no empirical evidence for the contention that there is a causal link between lack of practice in direct democracy and disinterest in representative democracy, the role of power sharing in its revival appears imponderable.

If the end objective is a developmental one of changing citizen attitudes (for the benefit of the state) or altering the balance of power (for the benefit of the disadvantaged), the question then becomes which of the elements of control must be passed over. Is it essential to aim for the uppermost rung of citizen control? Stylistically much that is written is hortatory and evangelistic in tone since the question of how much power ought to be transferred is a matter of ideology. The literature reveals a tendency amongst authors to assume, without justifying their

viewpoint, that full devolution of control has to be the desired objective, a typical lament (Yates 1973) being *'first the ideal of community control has nowhere been achieved or approached'*. Researchers entering upon their studies with such a preconception often fail to record lesser gains which have been satisfactory to the actors themselves (Hain 1980). Nor is there always clarity about what it is, or over what timescale, these enthusiasts would wish the community to exert control. The majority of the debates have occurred in the field of regeneration where what is under consideration is a restructuring plan or short-term, albeit massive, injections of expenditure into targetted deprived or decayed neighbourhoods. On a lesser scale it may be a one-off block transformation or traffic management measures; over the longer term comes permanent community administration of individual facilities such as parks, schools, health centres or leisure halls or self-management of social housing estates. Fewer advocates are found for permanent forms of political decision-making, with Hallman (1974) in the US representing a minority voice in favour of long-term delegation through the establishment of neighbourhood councils to which a range of minor day-to-day services could be devolved.

Nor are the mass of citizens themselves always clamouring for as much power as some radicalized community agitators would wish (Hain 1980; Bryant & Bryant 1982; Barr 1991), being quite content with levels dismissed as tokenistic. Power of necessity brings with it responsibility, rights are accompanied by obligations. Energy or anger may be sufficient to stimulate a brief campaign, but sustaining continuing input over a long period may prove elusive, the more so since the costs are borne in the present whilst the rewards, if they arrive at all, come in the future.

*'... participants' aims have often proved to be short-term. Once they are achieved interest wanes. Responsibilities are allowed to fall back onto the shoulders of someone who is seen as willing to do the job or is paid to do it.'*  
Boaden *et al* op. cit, p107)

The dividing line between liberating energies and imposing undue burdens can prove a narrow one; partnership, rapidly developed, under-resourced and ill-matched to existing skills may do little to enhance community capacity (McGregor *et al* 1992a & b), worse still may cause burn-out (Wilson 1992).

## THE ROLE OF CITIZENS

This raises the question of the rights and powers of the state to require its citizens to bear responsibilities, with Socialists and Communitarians asserting the importance of community and co-operation in collective action, whilst Tories adhere to minimal state intervention combined with individual acts of citizenship. Thus Hayek (1943), a political theorist much quoted by the New Right, argues for the right to freedom from coercion, a view echoed from an entirely opposite perspective by Barr:

*'The argument that there should be opportunities for citizens to work voluntarily in public services, as an expression of fraternity and the rights and obligations of citizenship may have validity in a situation where such action is based on free choice, but it does not hold when the burden of caring is deliberately thrust back on self-help. The latter is the logic of recent government thinking.'* (op. cit, p153)

Most authors stop short of advocating that participation should be compulsory, although there has been recent interest in forms of citizens' juries involving payment for attendance (Stewart, Kendall and Coote 1994).

### Accessibility

The first factors determining the part which can or should be played by the mass of the population are the practical ones of accessibility and size of units of government. Whilst we may still find adherents of the Rousseauian ideal of self-government, his desire that this should be achieved through bargaining within a free association of economic equals is no longer tenable in modern industrialised society. At international, national and regional levels, apart from occasional referenda, sheer distance and numbers dictate representative forms for institutions. The mass of the citizenry are only able to make a greater contribution if opportunities are created at local, indeed parochial, level. For this reason Cole (1917) and Pateman (1970) urged democratisation of the places of work where the majority (of men) spent their everyday life. It is for this reason that John Stuart Mill, whilst recognising this necessity for a national representative system, maintained that it must be underpinned by more participatory models closer to home where novice voters could learn the requisite skills to make an informed choice of elite leadership.

These sentiments led Mrs Thatcher, in her 1988 speech to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, to laud Neighbourhood Watch, Parent Governors,



charitable work and self-management of social housing. Her government enacted legislation allowing co-option onto local councils with places to be created for representation of business - safeguarding the interests of the rate-payer - or tenants associations - doing the same for recipients of housing services. New opportunities have been created for consumers in the spheres of education, health and housing with the establishment of such structures as School Boards, Trusts, Housing Associations and Cooperatives. The profile of the ideal active citizen for the nineties which emerges is that of a well-informed voter at the national level, a conscientious employee in the workplace and a vigilant taxpayer, informed consumer and involved participant within their community. It is accessibility which means that the interest in strengthening democracy focuses on local government, especially on decentralisation, so that opportunities for participation are created close to home.

## Capacity

The second factor is the capacity of the citizenry to perform these tasks. Opinions on this point are diametrically split between those who maintain that the masses are irradicably ignorant and should consequently be debarred, and those who believe in their innate abilities given suitable training and support. The first view was that of the Greek critics from Socrates and Plato onwards, and is one which has persisted in certain quarters. Adherents of Schumpeter would, for instance, maintain that the outstanding characteristics of most citizens, especially those amongst the lower socio-economic strata, are a lack of interest combined with authoritarian attitudes making them entirely unsuited to play any part. By contrast, an early example of the second school is Jefferson with his declaration:

*'I know of no safe depository of the ultimate power of the society but the people themselves, and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion.'* (In Watson & Barber op. cit, p 53)

The non-involved themselves may perceive lack of relevant talents as an inhibiting constraint on volunteering. This was demonstrated by Oliver in her study in Detroit of active and token contributors to local collective action in neighbourhood organisations from which she concluded that *'the salient resource limiting active participation is the skills involved rather than money or time.'* (1984,p608) A similar conclusion was drawn in a survey conducted in Scotland (HMSO 1969) where 41% of respondents quoted absence of skills, qualifications and experience as a reason for unwillingness to enter the political sphere (though on this occasion

in close second place to the 42% citing time and money). The result, as we have seen earlier, is that those who come forward unprompted will be the better educated. Alternative strategies to overcome this involve either compulsion, on the one hand, or specially designated compensatory structures on the other.

Whether lack of skills, whilst often volunteered as the reason, is genuinely the cause of non-involvement or simply an excuse is also open to question since there may be many motives, some linked to apathy or laziness, some to disbelief in state organised activism. Apathy has been shown (O'Brien 1974) to be rational behaviour provided the desired aim can be achieved without personal effort, the free-rider effect or so-called '*public goods dilemma*'. Immediate self-interest may be sufficient as a short-term incentive to campaign or join in the allocation of project funds, it is questionable how many can be expected to sustain a long-term input.

The costs of involvement can be greater for some than others. Participation may require time away from economic activity which is not remunerated, nor recognised as a valid public duty - unlike jury service for example - potentially even a threat to career advancement. Community Councils in Glasgow have argued that their members' activities when coopted on to local authority committees should be given the status accorded to trade unions in allowing a fixed amount of time out of their workplace. Without some such recognition volunteering may be biased to those who have sufficient leisure - the elderly, housewives, independent businessmen, or, as a recent study highlighted (McGregor *et al* 1992), the unemployed.

As more public services become opened up or devolved to local management, it is the consumers of these very services, themselves increasingly the 'deprived', who are called upon to become involved. Yet as one community leader commented (Yates 1973) for these people "*the way I see it just surviving is a fulltime job.*" . Consequently Kweit & Kweit (op. cit, p39) point to '*the heaviest burden falling on those who need government services most*' whilst, on the other hand, Oosthuizen highlights the irony that '*participation is often being argued for the poor at a time when locally orientated participation is decreasing among the non-poor*' (1984, p216). If participation is in truth burdensome, what are its satisfactions and is there any evidence that, as advocates claim and policy-makers devoutly hope, it can lead to personal fulfilment, increased integration and rekindling of community spirit? It is to this question that we now turn.

## FULFILMENT

To take first the question of individual empowerment, research has indicated (Yin 1973) that participants do enjoy greater feelings of efficacy, but the causal direction remains unclear since it may be just those who have higher levels of self-confidence who were attracted to come forward in the first place. Far from contributing to greater self-confidence, Zurcher (1970) pointed to negative effects of involvement, where this did not achieve the participants' goals, in making citizens even more aware of their powerlessness in impacting on policy outcomes. Pateman (1970) in looking at the effects of participation in industrial settings, found firstly that it was only managers who availed themselves in any numbers where higher level decision-making in their organisation was on offer, secondly that workers drew benefit from what she regarded as mere tokenism of increased information-giving. From this she (reluctantly and somewhat confusingly) concluded that perceptions of efficacy could be engendered by low levels of what she deemed pseudo-participation (involving no transfer of power).

Lay people have also pointed to the speed of decision-taking on complicated issues and unavailability of access to expertise as undermining their capacity to perform effectively (Robertson 1991). Reference is also made in the literature (Hoggett & Hambleton 1987; McGregor *et al* 1992) to the difficulties which novices encounter in formally structured meetings with complex standing orders, lengthy agendas, jargon-filled reports at which they are outnumbered by professionals. Again this is a complaint also levied by councillors with 31% in a recent Scottish survey (Martlew 1988) criticising their own authority, citing reports as poor, difficult to understand and too full of jargon and technical detail. As one interviewee put it (p122): *"I wish sometimes that things would be put in my kind of English."* Whether or not participants will emerge with enhanced feelings of control over their personal or communal lives thus emerges as contingent on circumstances, some dependent on their personal characteristics, some governed by the nature and mechanics of the structures within which they are involved.

Problems also arise over the question of to whom these added responsibilities should be passed and who should control this decision. In the welfare programmes in the United States in some cases it was the local Mayor who assumed the prerogative of making appointments. In others there was election by the 'poor', with the resultant candidates being virtually plucked off the street. Expediency usually dictates that use will be made of existing community organisations, which may negate the aim of drawing in the uninvolved

(McGregor *et al op. cit*). On occasions the outcome is the very opposite of democratic:

*'Paradoxically citizen participation - touted as a great modern day democracy - frequently imposes authoritarian structures of charismatic leaders and militant elites in many U.S. cities.'* (Draisen 1983, p253)

This illustrates the incipient danger that, through measures of participation, the old elites of representative democracy will simply be replaced by new community elites. Unless care is taken in how the new structures operate, the latter may replicate all the faults of unresponsiveness without the offsetting safeguards of accountability. Unless special efforts are made, possibly even to the extent of compulsion, they are unlikely to bring in the alienated and excluded where these are the target.

## THEMES FROM THE LITERATURE

The literature firstly demonstrates that citizen participation is a concept which arouses strong passions amongst both protagonists and opponents. Whilst some of the latter might nowadays hesitate to declare publicly their adherence to the more extremely elitist arguments of political theorists of the past, it seems a fair assumption from the empirical studies quoted that such opinions still prevail in certain quarters. Even amongst supporters there can be diverse motivations with some favouring egalitarianism and social justice, others seeking lessening in dependence on the state; some advocating collective action and altruism, others individualism and the shouldering of personal responsibility.

Citizens too may regard any opportunities with a mixture of emotions from apathy to enthusiasm, disinterest to outright hostility. Since any given structure will bring together a collection of stake-holders - elected members, appointed officers from various professions and community representatives - any of whom may come to the situation with a mixture of preconceptions, motivations and personal attributes of the kind outlined above, the outcome it can fairly be presumed will be highly unpredictable. It is hypothesised that this will be the more so the greater the ambiguity in the minds of the initiators at the inception, and the more freedom the implementers and activists have to control circumstances thereafter.

The second conclusion from the literature has to be that there may be specific difficulties in establishing participatory structures in situations where the catchment population is dominated by lower socio-economic groups. Here there will be concentrations of individuals who are slower to volunteer, especially demonstrating higher levels of inactivity in the political sphere, who may have low levels of self-confidence and who perceive themselves as lacking in pertinent skills. The barriers to participation have to be lowered; there is an increased requirement for special measures of adaptation such as more informal procedures, access to relevant training (for all stake-holders) and maybe by amending the agenda to reflect immediate parochial concerns. In addition, there is a higher probability that they will at the outset be more cynical about motivations, the more so if they are public sector tenants who have a history of disappointment with the service provided and a lower economic stake in their neighbourhood. The tactics which community activists accustomed to militant campaigning bring to the negotiating table, plus their lack of knowledge of local authority procedures, may cause them to adopt a style of operation which is more openly confrontational. In addition, there is a likelihood that there will be lower degrees of concurrence between their opinions and categorisation of problems and those of the professional officers. Consequently amongst the latter there may be a greater reluctance in accepting the views propounded and priorities for resource allocation suggested. From this it is hypothesised that, where structures are established as part of a deprivation strategy, the outcome will be especially susceptible unless there is a powerful drive towards change in the surrounding organisational culture into which the new bodies are implanted.

There are two themes which emerge from the literature concerning the defects of representative forms of democracy. The first relates to the judgement that these have failed to provide adequate channels of communication for the public, that too much faith has been placed in the expertise of professionals so that :

*'Too often people were treated as passive recipients of services and benefits deemed appropriate by government. Today people who are active and well-informed consumers of private goods and services want to make more decisions for themselves in the public sphere.'*

(Commission for Social Justice 1994, p85)

What is at issue is:

*'...the provision of a rightful share in the process of 'government'. This requires that people be recognised as having the right and opportunity to act in public life.'* (Held 1987, p291)

Government is therefore to be opened up to a greater extent to influence and citizens are assumed to be ready and willing to come forward.

Participation in this context is about citizens' rights for channels through which to be heard and the governors' obligation to listen.

The other theme, however, revolves about issues of inequality of uptake of opportunities that exist in the representative system which is deemed to be dominated by elites deaf to the particular needs and aspirations of the voluntarily or deliberately excluded. The latter are to be preferentially drawn into participation by adapting structures to make them more readily accessible since :

*'The crucial value of good governance is that the system is open, has low barriers to the expression of dissent and limits the disadvantages of the poorly organised and resourced.'* (Stoker 1994, p11)

recognising that the bulwark of democracy against tyranny is:

*'Not surely the existence of wise and privileged rulers, but the existence of a self-confident, opinion-forming, idea-generating people.'*  
(Robinson 1969, p31)

The objective this time is to create a sense of shared ownership of policies.

Participation in this context is about the governors' obligations to provide appropriate opportunities and citizens' willingness to bear responsibility

In Britain it is in the field of local government that these theories have been put to the test. In part this is because it is here, particularly amongst those councils that have pursued policies of decentralisation, that accessibility permitting face-to-face dialogue with the public can most easily be established. In part it is because under Conservative rule since 1979 the combined effects of increasing centralisation and decreasing capacity to provide public services have caused a deepening concern in opposition local government circles to widen their appeal to their electorates. The next chapters therefore consider how the two themes of greater responsiveness and offsetting disadvantage through empowerment have been pursued in practice.

## CHAPTER 2

### DECENTRALISATION

Where local government has turned to decentralisation the reasons they have chosen to do so echo the criticisms of representative democracy explored in Chapter 1. Some were concerned with issues of responsiveness, some with offsetting disadvantage. As service providers, the former councils had come to view themselves as unresponsive to the needs of their consumers and unappealing to many of the electorate as a consequence. Their attitudes had been those of paternalism, their methods at best bureaucratic in its pejorative sense, at worst autocratic. The thrust in the latter councils concentrated on addressing the particular needs and desires of the disadvantaged, many of whom had come to be congregated together in certain run down inner city areas or public sector housing estates.

This chapter examines the history of the recent pressures for change in local government in Britain which influenced decentralisation, starting with the specific shortcomings it was intended to counteract. There follows a survey of practical examples, highlighting the problems thrown up during their actual introduction especially in cases where there was an intention to include some degree of democratisation. The main lessons to be learnt indicate that lack of clarity in the aims to be served results in structures ill-suited to the purposes for which they are intended, and that lack of firm (political) commitment led to failures of implementation. Furthermore insufficient thought has been given to how community participation should be incorporated in that a distinction should be drawn between models which are intended to achieve responsiveness and ones which are intended to achieve empowerment. Specifically, greater thought should have been given to who exerts control over the procedures. Finally, it is argued there has been a failure to appreciate the political aspects of decentralisation where local government is dominated by party politics.

The literature on which this chapter is based predominantly concentrates on the British experience of decentralisation. This is not to ignore the wealth of evidence from elsewhere but in so short a space it is impossible to do justice to it here. Furthermore the conclusions from other countries are either remarkably similar or the circumstances are so extremely dissimilar that the lessons seem inapplicable (Hambleton & Taylor 1993). For instance, in some US cities local government elections are organised at-large, so that there is no ward system to which to devolve. American research frequently concentrates on levels of conflict because this featured in the well known critique by Moynihan (1969) of the War on Poverty by which concluded that the poor should not be involved (Berry, Portney & Thomson 1993). In addition, the voluntary sector in the US can be quite different where the generous levels of funding for community activity permit the employment of staff (Castells 1983; Haeberle 1989; Hallman 1974; Kweit & Kweit 1981; Marshall 1971; Yates 1973). Meanwhile the programmes elsewhere in Europe are often one off planning exercises or regeneration initiatives more akin to UK programmes of Urban Aid or the new Partnerships (Alterman & Cars 1991; Carmon 1990).

## DIAGNOSIS OF ILLS TO BE ADDRESSED

What then were the defects in local government which decentralisation sought to counteract? These will be charted as they came to the fore, progressing from tackling deprivation, through the criticisms of bureaucratic services to the present Tory views on dependency. The era preceding the current swing to decentralisation was characterised by a belief that large organisations offered savings through efficiencies of scale, that bureaucracies staffed by trained professionals would deliver fair and uniform services (Stewart 1989). The emphasis in business circles was on large units to be co-ordinated by means of the techniques of corporate management. In Scotland reorganisation of local government in the 1970s introduced the Regions, with the giant Strathclyde representing the most populated local authority anywhere in Europe.

Side by side with these developments there had been a groundswell amongst new grassroots organisations concerned with such issues as the environment and peace, involving women's and black's groups towards non-hierarchical, participative modes of operation (Stoker 1987a). Meanwhile consumers had become more assertive in demanding variety so that there were pressures on local



government to tailor their services to particular circumstances and to the needs or aspirations of a diverse society (Gyford 1986). The old style of paternalistic delivery which caused the tenants of Lambeth to declare that the Director of Building “*could hardly be told apart from his bulldozers*” (Cockburn 1977, p133) became less and less acceptable. No longer could a Tory councillor declare with impunity that “*it’s fashionable this responsiveness but I would rather be divorced from the howls of the community because I know how I have to act*” (Cockburn *ibid*, p132). In addition, the professional commitment to uniformity of service provision could actually operate to disadvantage those who had greater needs (Stewart 1974).

## DEPRIVATION

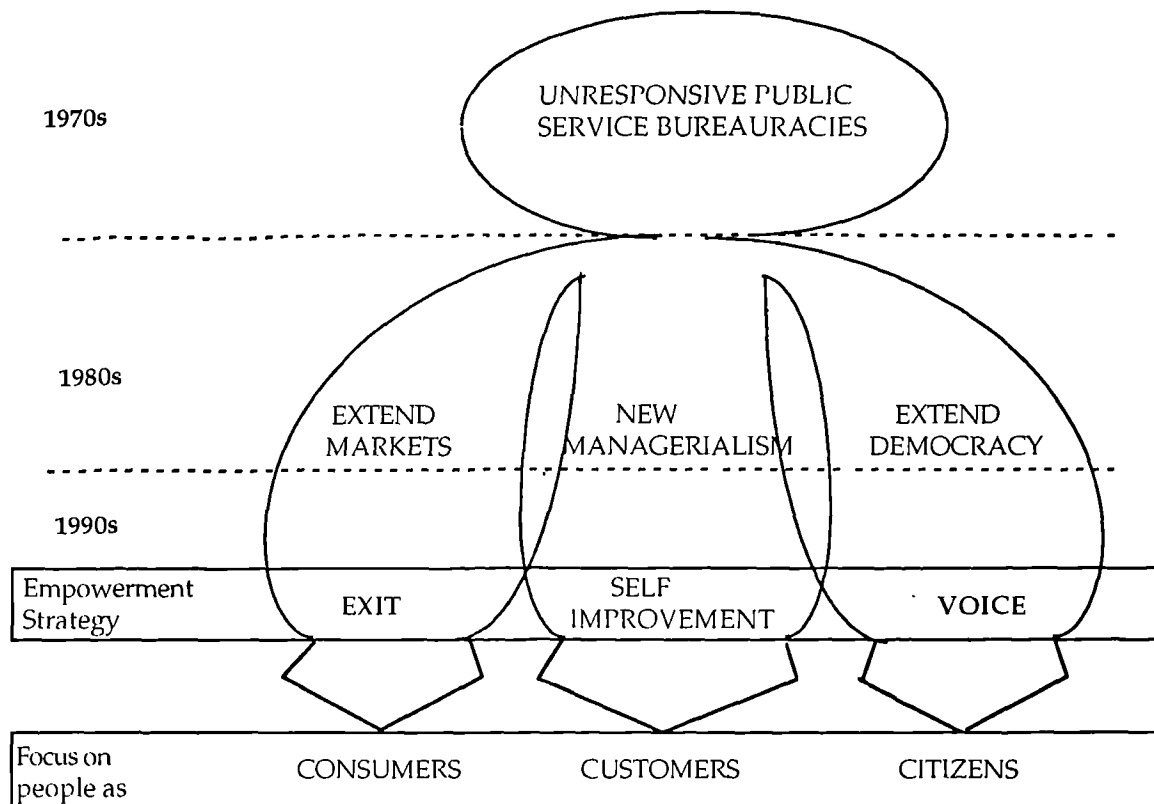
Thus Area Management as it was first conceived in Britain was promoted by central government seeking to redress deprivation in specific urban settings. The aim in the words of the Department of the Environment (DOE 1977) was ‘a means of adapting local government organisation to the particular needs of area.’ Special area-based initiatives were supported in 8 cities, namely Dudley, Haringey, Islington, Kirklees, Liverpool, Middlesbrough, Newcastle, Stockport bringing together the councillors whose wards were covered and officers who served the area (Harrop *et al* 1978). The means of engaging with the public varied, with the most systematic being the Community Councils established in Stockport. However, local residents by and large lacked the requisite skills or bargaining power to achieve anything approaching partnership (Webster 1982), indeed the emphasis was on responsiveness and sensitivity, rather than community renewal (Jackson 1984). When attempting to engage with the public, little effort was made to move away from formal, traditional committee styles of operation:

*‘The formality of the relationship, however, may actually deter those with little experience, or wish, to operate through a formal committee system with the need for detailed minutes, resolutions, quorums etc. To some extent this is duplicating the structure of the local authority in the community and this is most likely to be acceptable to those who already appreciate that structure and how it functions. For many deprived areas and deprived groups other, more spontaneous and indigenous forms of organisation would be appropriate.’* (Mason *et al* 1977, p81)

Overall these experiments were not judged to have been successful as a means for tackling deprivation (indeed some local authorities had not even attempted to make this their objective), nor did they achieve the desired co-ordination in the field. The necessary degree of commitment seen as vital to success was found to be lacking amongst both councillors and officers (Mason *op.cit*); there had been a

failure to adapt either the structures themselves or their links into the overall decision-taking and policy-making of the respective authorities. There was considerable resistance to the creation of Mini Townhalls and this lack of true devolution led to the onset of disillusion (Jackson op. cit).

Figure 2.1 Public Service Reform Strategies



Source: Burns *et al* 1994

## UNRESPONSIVE SERVICE PROVISION

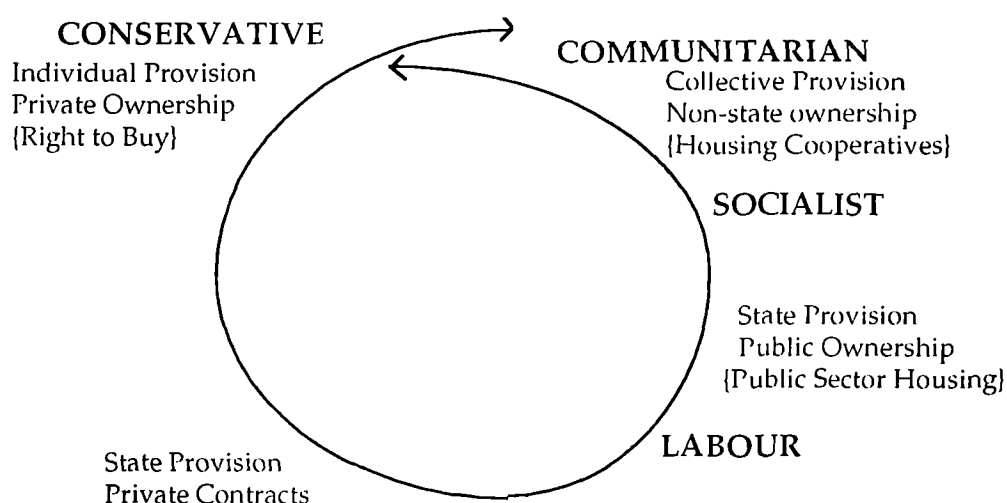
The starting point for change in the 1970s was almost universal agreement that local authorities could be categorised as 'unresponsive public service bureaucracies'. For instance, an opinion poll carried out in Birmingham in the 1970s demonstrated that terms used by respondents to describe their council included '*red tape, uncaring faceless bureaucracy, excessive time, too much paperwork, confusion*' (Haine & Keen 1994, p13). This then was the primary ill to be tackled. Politicians from different parties, however, pursued very different approaches in response, as illustrated in the diagram shown in Figure 2.1. The Tories favoured market solutions typified by Exit whereby people quit public services entirely; pragmatic

councillors and officers in Labour controlled councils looked to so-called consumerist, managerial solutions; those further to the left sought political solutions to amplify Voice whereby people are given greater say.

## DEPENDENCY

Nonetheless the resultant action in terms of policy could appear identical. The diagram developed in Figure 2.2 depicts how this might be so in the case of public sector housing. Here the parties overlap in their acceptance of selling off stock, the Exit option of Figure 2.1. But their beliefs in the advantages of this solution and the prospective beneficiaries are entirely disparate. Thus the Conservatives, the idealistic Communitarians and the Pragmatic Socialists all favour cooperatives, but only the Communitarians always advocate this on principle. The Conservatives have come to this view because it represents a form of self-help intended to offset the supposed ills of dependency on the state. Labour councillors, faced with cuts in their own housing budget, see it as one way in the to give tenants access to funds, whilst maintaining the stock in the public sector even if not in public ownership.

Figure 2.2 Overlap in Policies on Exit



Source: Author's original

But the favoured option of Labour and Liberal/Democrat Councils in the face of such pressures from national government or for reasons of ideology has been not Exit but the collectivist strategy of Voice which forms the subject of the following illustrations from the literature.

## THE THEORY OF VOICE AS A SOLUTION

The objective of the Voice option is to strengthen the democratic elements in the structures but a number of means were pursued to achieve this end. The main approaches are mapped in the following listing:

Figure 2.3 Ways of Strengthening 'Voice' in Local Government

1. *Improving representative democracy*  
e.g. voter registration drives, open government, citizens' rights at meetings, better support to councillors
2. *Extending representative democracy*  
e.g. area committees of councillors based on wards or groups of wards, strengthen parish councils
3. *Infusing representative with participatory democracy*  
e.g. co-option onto committees, neighbourhood committees of councillors/representatives from community/disadvantaged groups
4. *Extending participatory democracy*  
e.g. funding of non-statutory groups, community development, user-group participation, valuing grass-roots movements.

Source: Burns *et al* 1994

It is variants 2 and 3 which are of interest in the context of the current research since they introduce elements of decentralisation and participation in the decision-taking structures.

As the 1970s progressed the policy climate industry shifted to managerial devolution, with decisions and budgets being passed down the hierarchy; larger firms were beginning to experiment with granting local autonomy to their branches as the ideas of Peters & Waterman (1982) became widely adopted. These approaches spilled over into local government circles (Hoggett 1991). Thus whilst earlier Area Management had been imposed externally by central government, decentralisation - although in most respects similar on the ground (Stoker & Young 1993) - was adopted voluntarily by local government.

In the first instance it was seen as the solution to a series of management problems. Thus in local authorities these concepts first took seed in housing departments which bore the brunt of much criticism for their paternalistic style of operation. The first authority to initiate reform was Walsall in the early 1980s where the municipal housing service was relocated into 31 neighbourhood offices. The council at the time was pursuing the twin aims of improving the service provided and rebuilding a sense of community through involvement. The public were to undergo political education since '*people need a little less faith in experts and a bit more in themselves*' (Seabrook, 1984, p142). As it happened - because the previous Labour council lost out to a Tory/Liberal coalition which halted progress - this stage was never reached, a not uncommon outcome as we will see below. The neighbourhood offices, however, had become so popular that their proposed closure was rapidly rescinded. A growing number of councils meanwhile had followed Walsall in adopting decentralised offices as a management tool, many of these being single-service housing offices, whilst some aimed at a one-stop shop combining housing and social work\* on the spot with access to other skills and departments as required.

## DEMOCRATISATION

The second wave of enthusiasm for decentralisation centred on its potential as a political mechanism for councillors to re-inject a greater degree of democracy. This vogue arose predominantly amongst a new generation of professionally educated, middle-class Labour councillors with a background in the community politics of the 1960s moving into the gentrifying London boroughs. They became known under the title of the Urban Left (Stoker 1987a). Their aim was to open up the processes of decision-taking and shake up the bureaucracy (Lansley *et al* 1989); first and foremost to reassert the political dimension by strengthening the position of councillors viz a viz old guard officers in whom they had very little confidence. Conflict and domination was to be replaced by co-operation and democratic control (Beuret & Stoker 1986). Only secondly - if at all - were the processes to be widened by involving the public.

Decentralisation was seen as aiding these objectives in allowing elected members, especially backbenchers, much greater say over resource allocation in their own wards. The manifestation of these concepts on the ground was the establishment of some form of area or neighbourhood committee which might consist of

\*In English metropolitan authorities these are both provided by the one council unlike Scotland where housing is the responsibility of Districts and social work of Regions.

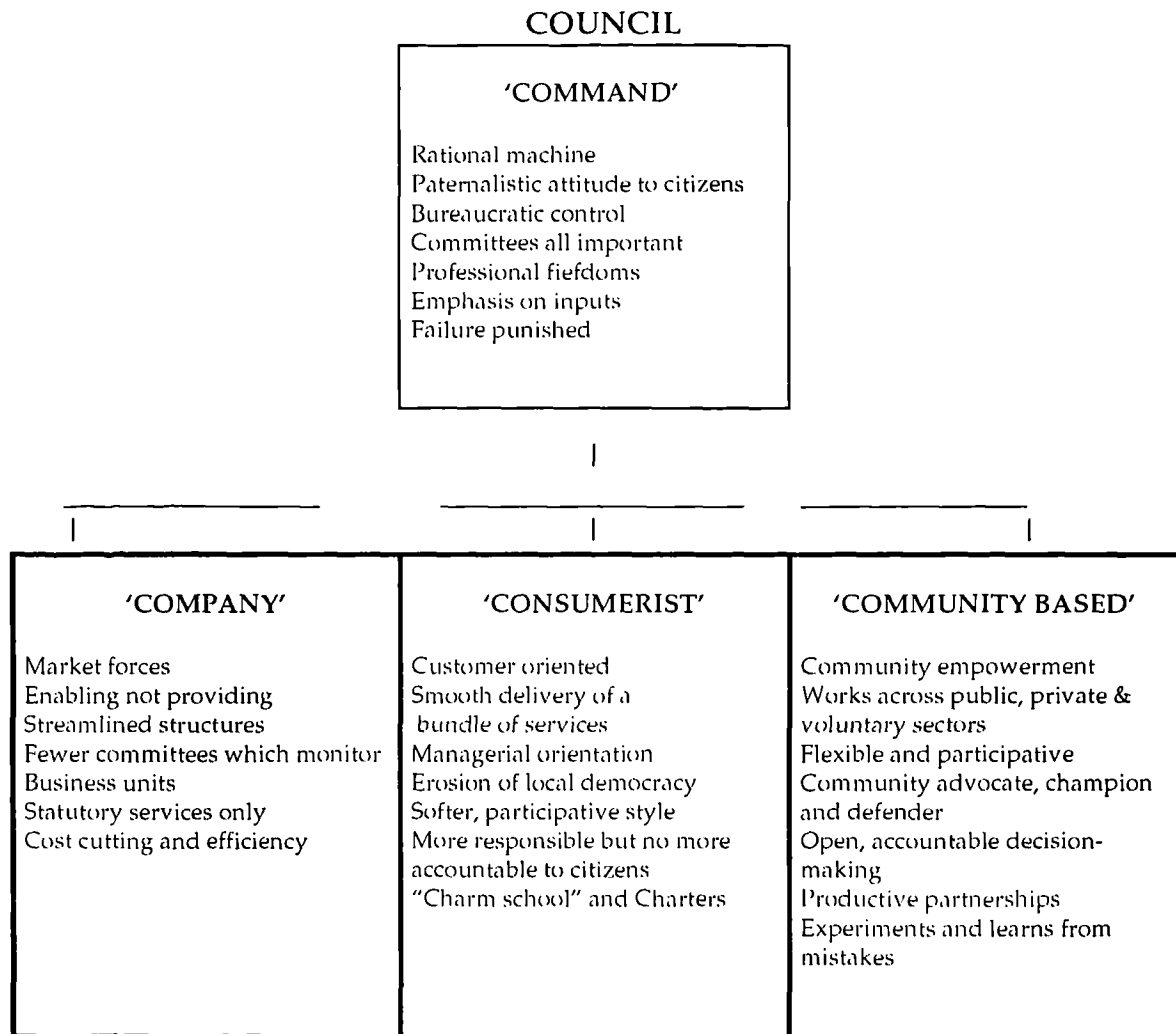
councillors and officers only, or of these plus a small number of co-opted representatives of local groups such as tenants associations, or which might run in parallel with separate neighbourhood advisory forums. The latter was the model adopted in the early days by Lambeth (Cockburn op.cit) and in Islington, the longest running and best documented example of such a scheme (Smith 1981, Khan 1989, Burns *et al* op.cit).

Whilst a handful of authorities were thus adopting decentralisation for purely ideological reasons, others (such as Edinburgh) were doing so as a defensive reaction to the national policies of central government. From 1979 onwards the Conservatives introduced a growing number of measures aimed at applying private sector, market driven mechanisms to councils. Consumers were to be encouraged to exit, preferably individually, from public sector provision by acquiring their own council houses through the Right to Buy, if not collectively by Opting Out schools. Council services operated by Direct Labour Organisations were to be opened up to competition through Compulsory Competitive Tendering. Local councils reacted to these pressures by introducing measures to make their services more popular in the face of this onslaught. Community-based programmes were springing up in many fields as much from desperation as from ideology (Donnison 1989).

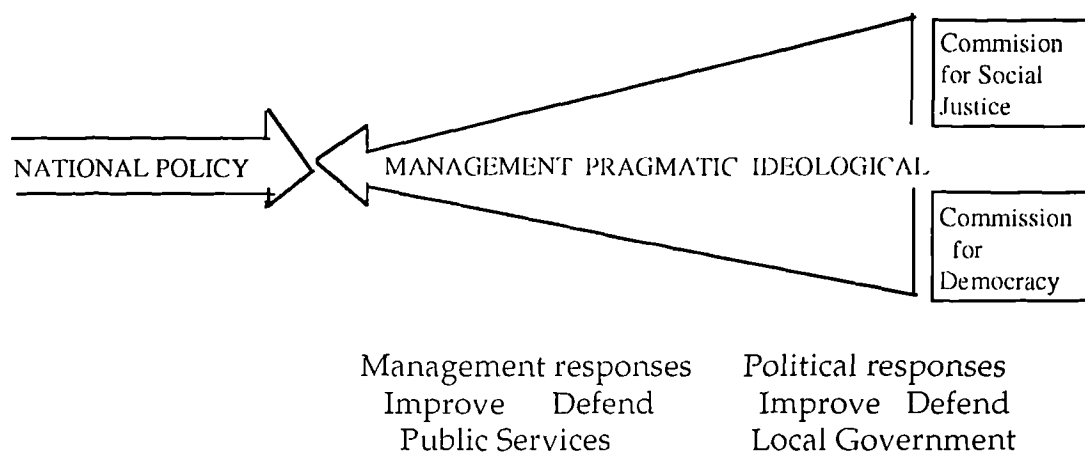
Decentralisation to improve the quality of public services, and participation of consumers to improve their responsiveness, was now intended as a means of protecting the fundamental right of local government to continue as a direct provider though councils might not always express this intention overtly. Few would be as outspoken as the Chairman of Housing in Norwich who saw area committees (Burns 1989) as '*...a key element in her party's strategy of building support for council housing in the face of government proposals for the right to choose a landlord..*'

It is difficult to assess the overall numbers of councils involved by this stage as the picture is fluid with councils swapping hands, changing leaders and a lack of central records, but one estimate puts the figure as growing from 9% to 20% from 1980 to 1988, with the figure reaching 75% in metropolitan areas controlled by Labour (Stoker & Young 1993).

Figure 2.4 Types of Council



Source: Adapted from New Approaches to Governance and Service Delivery  
 South Somerset District Council



Source: Author's original

## DEFENCE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Finally the perception grew that there was a threat to the very existence of local authorities as they had operated to date with the Conservatives moving step by step towards their vision of the '*Enabling*' council whose handful of councillors would meet periodically to place service contracts with the private sector, leaving day-to-day administration in the hands of a Chief Executive as supremo. The Left reacted by re-examining and re-formulating their own alternative picture of socialist councils laying stress on their primary role as local government, not simply the provision of a series of services (Commission for Social Justice 1994, Commission for Democracy 1994). Decentralisation and participation within it are now seen as essential in the battle to save local government itself.

These various trends and the type of council that would epitomise each are depicted in the diagram in Figure 2.4 on the previous page adapted from one first propounded by the Liberal-Democrat South Somerset Council (Usher & Darbourne 1993), with the addition of arrows illustrating the pressures from the centre and incremental changes in reaction by the Left.

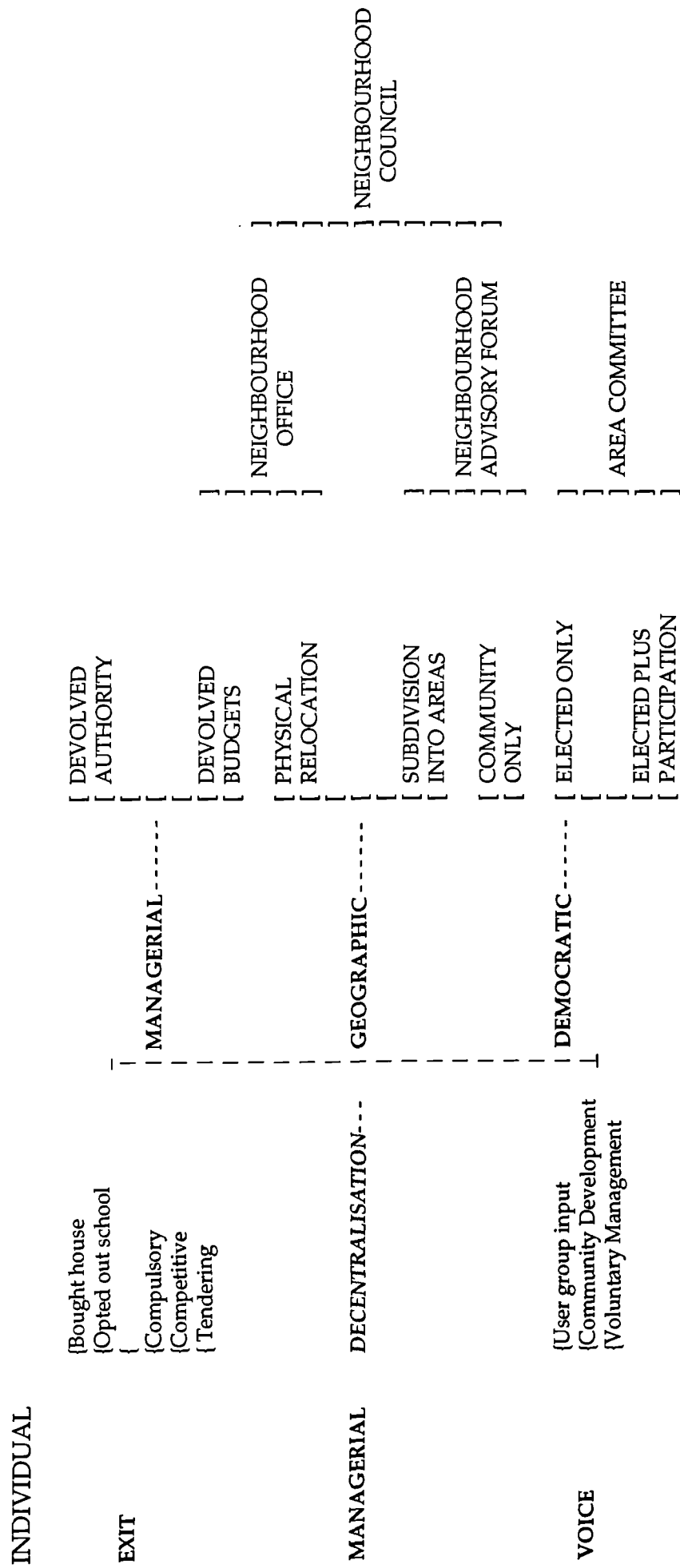
## FORMS OF DECENTRALISATION

Before moving on to consider some practical examples, a moment must be taken to disentangle the forms that decentralisation can take since this too appears in a variety of guises. These can for convenience be categorised under the three headings (Leach, Stewart & Walsh 1994):

\* management      \* geographical      \* political

In the first, authority to take decisions is devolved down the hierarchy to local managers, possibly but not necessarily in conjunction with devolved budgets. In the second there is either actual physical relocation normally into offices serving a 'neighbourhood' (regarded as being a population anything from about 5,000 [Islington, Lambeth] to 20,000 [Basildon, Norwich] or sub-division into areas. These are serviced by a team of officers from within the various departments led by an Area Coordinator but not necessarily based in the locality covered. Finally there is political decentralisation when some kind of committee is set up to discuss local problems and their solution. This may comprise councillors only, as in the Liberal-Democrat model in Tower Hamlets or South Somerset, with a view to reasserting their democratic role as representatives. There may be separate, usually advisory, neighbourhood forums to allow local people to bring forward their own problems.





Source: Author's original

Figure 2.5 Forms of Decentralisation

When decentralisation forms part of a deprivation strategy, efforts and resources will be concentrated on selected areas only (in Scotland the Areas of Priority Treatment designated by the Scottish Office as eligible to receive Urban Aid). Forums may then only be established in these specific neighbourhoods as in the case of the Area Liaison Committees in Strathclyde which form one subject of the current research. In places in London it was the initial intention that such a forum might progress become a Neighbourhood Council overseeing the operations of the Neighbourhood Office but, as we will see below, often the initiative peters out before this can be fully implemented. Alternatively, in cases where there is no physical relocation, there may nonetheless be a system of area committees bringing together elected members and co-opted members of the public, such as those operating under Glasgow City Council which form the other subject of this research.

Taken in conjunction the spectrum of exit-voice options and the diverse forms of decentralisation, the chart in Figure 2.5 maps the resultant models of decentralisation. The starting point on the left matches the possible options of Exit, Self Improvement and Voice depicted earlier in Figure 2.1 which form the three strategies advocated.

## LESSONS FROM THE VOICE STRATEGY IN PRACTICE

The first overall conclusion from the literature is that councils which embarked on decentralisation often started out with very unclear ideas of what they wanted to achieve. There was considerable *'ambiguity, conflict and uncertainty over objectives'* (Stoker 1987b, p167) in pursuing the *'beguiling themes of participation, responsiveness and decentralisation'* (Hoggett & Hambleton 1987, p133) through *'ill thought out directives'* (Jackson 1984, p154) arising from a *'confusion of different hopes, expectations and anxieties'* (Hambleton 1992, p10). Often *'the conflicts and incompatibilities which are contained within the philosophy have not been resolved prior to the implementation of the ideas, and are often reflected in the form of the schemes themselves'* (Webster 1982, p197). How then might these objectives have been categorised had the councils paused to clarify their thinking?

Figure 2.6 Possible Objectives of Decentralisation

1. Improving services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Service delivery</li> <li>* Changing the relationship between public servants and the public: public at the top</li> <li>* Service planning and policy</li> </ul>
2. Strengthening local accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Various degrees: authority or influence? To whom? (Local councillors? Community groups? Local people? A combination?)</li> <li>* Community Development</li> </ul>
3. Achieving Distributional aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Different resources for different areas or</li> <li>* Equal opportunities policy</li> </ul>
4. Political awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Win political support for public services</li> <li>* Win political support for a political party</li> </ul>
5. Developing staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Job satisfaction</li> <li>* Multi-disciplinary teams</li> <li>* Friendly environment</li> <li>* Neighbourhood loyalty</li> </ul>
6. Controlling costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The decentralization of austerity</li> </ul>

Source: Hambleton 1992

This list has been compiled from an analysis of existing examples of decentralisation, mainly in England. Some of these varying objectives as Hambleton (1992) points out may well be incompatible with one another.

Not only is there this degree of confusion at the neighbourhood level, but this is frequently combined with lack of clarity both about the relationship to the centre and about the (residual) role that the centre is to retain. Indeed in the majority of cases the new structures are simply 'bolted on' without any amendment to the remainder of the central policy-making system (Daniel & Wheeler 1989; Gaster 1991; Khan 1989; Stoker & Lowndes 1991). The primary lesson that emerges is that decentralisation has to be strongly driven and constantly monitored from the centre (Deakin 1984) with a well-thought out strategy (Lowndes 1992).

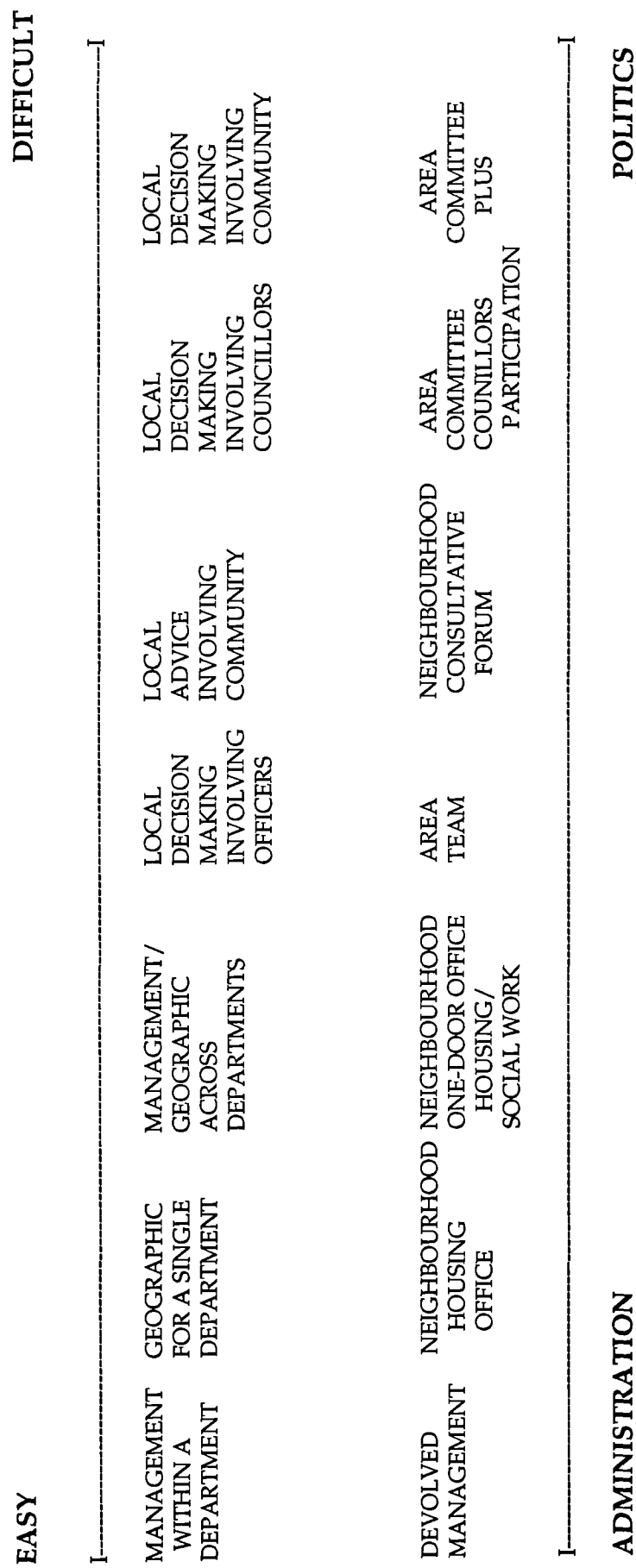
## LACK OF ONGOING COMMITMENT

The second overall conclusion from the literature is that councils seldom reached the destination they had originally mapped out for themselves. Either they encounter resistance, or run out of steam over the period of initial introduction, or experience a change of direction, leadership or party political complexion. The element least likely to be implemented was that involving democratisation which proved much more problematic than managerial devolution or geographical relocation (Hambleton 1992). An example in the first category, for instance, was Hackney where the union NALGO came out against the proposed 'Red Print' for housing offices at an early consultatory stage (Jackson 1984). This was typical of officers who, at best, viewed neighbourhood councils as '*the councillors' affair*' (Cockburn 1977, p149), were '*deeply suspicious*' (Hoggett & Hambleton op.cit, p98), or '*antipathetic or too long in the tooth for upheaval*' (Lansley et al 1989, p77).

Their worries depended on the projected model, with anxieties centering on the deskilling of professionals forced into generic patterns of work in multi-service offices, or on the challenge to their professional expertise when forced to become more accountable to councillors or the public in committee. The following description of the officers' reaction to challenges from the neighbourhood councils in Lambeth serves as just one example of the latter:

*'The neighbourhood councils pointed over and over again to the two main weaknesses in the council's management system: planning and housing. To those councillors able to take a high-level view of community development it was possible to see that this was exactly the function that, if it were to serve the local state well, it would perform. It should show up the weak spots in the management system in such a way that the overall system might correct them - even offering some of the means. But, being human (notwithstanding the suspicions of some NCs), the directors of these two particular departments and some others that were shown up by the debates on the sub-committee were not prone to take this olympian and detached view of the food of the whole system. They felt personally threatened.'*  
(Cockburn op.cit, p148)

They reacted by engineering the disbandment of the special sub-committee concerned with the neighbourhood councils so that their effectiveness was diminished (Khan op.cit).



Based on conclusions from Leach et al  
*'The Changing Organisation and Management of Local Government'*

Figure 2.7 Ease of Implementation of Decentralisation

## EASE OF IMPLEMENTATION

Some forms of decentralisation proved much simpler to execute than others with much greater progress being made with service delivery aspects whilst the necessary transfer of power implied by '*the issue of delegating political control and bringing in previously excluded groups has proved more problematic*' (Stoker 1987b, p163). The chart on the previous page in Figure 2.7 based on the findings of Leach *et al* (1994) depicts a spectrum from easy to difficult with the most frequently encountered model being that of managerial devolution within a single department, whereas the least frequent is that of local decision-making involving the community alongside the councillors. This is matched by a spectrum from adjustments confined to the administrative structures at one end to complex adjustments to the political system at the other. The reasons for the discrepancies are examined in more detail in the sections that follow which examine firstly some of the political hindrances to implementation that cause councils to water down their schemes as time passes. After this comes a section which deals in depth with the particular problems of schemes that include participation by the community.

## THE NEED FOR A CHANGE IN ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Latterly the language of industry has moved on from that of corporate management to that of 'empowerment' through involvement of staff in Quality Circles and Total Quality Management (Marchington 1980). The aim now was to release knowledge and enhance motivation amongst the workforce, but this did not prove at all easy to achieve. There is much discussion in the literature of the need to alter the whole 'culture' of the organisation towards a participatory one if workers are truly to become empowered through these techniques. Senior managers it is emphasised (Rothstein 1995) must be signed on to the ideas, even if they are not directly involved themselves, or the new practices will not permeate. To achieve such changes is even harder in local government where the political dimension means there are two groups of people whose minds must be won. Councillors as well as officers must be convinced of the benefits. And the harder yet to 'empower the community' whose members remain external to the organisation. Yet this is one avowed intention of some of the democratisation policies which include participation. It follows that the community-based models which seek empowerment will prove much harder to devise, establish and maintain than the merely consumerist seeking improved service provision.

But it is clear that councils have often failed to achieve the required shift in culture even when their decentralisation schemes do not involve any element of democratisation. Thus Stoker & Young (op.cit, p117) call for '*embedding*', Hambleton *et al* caution that there must be '*complete restructuring*' (1994 p10) whilst Lowndes speaks of this aspect as '*vital but ignored*'.(op.cit, p58) Where some form of participation is introduced in addition, the requisite shift in the culture will be that much greater, yet it appears that even less thought is given to the implications in this context. Consequently the '*gap between designing a structure and developing a culture of active involvement remains*' (Butcher 1993, p144) whilst concerted efforts are needed because '*citizen participation cannot be added on at the edge*' (Burns *et al* op.cit, p174).

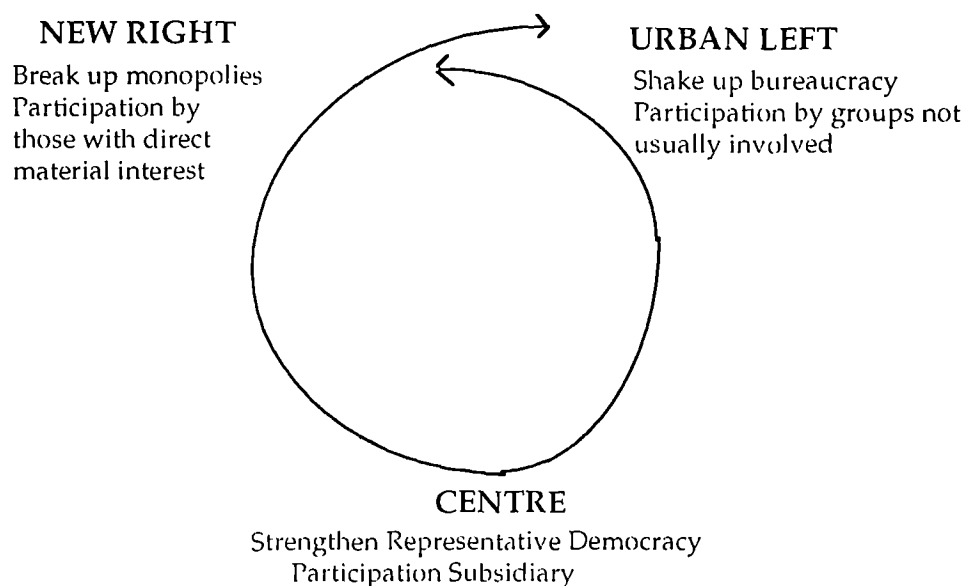
## POLITICAL DIMENSIONS

There are also political aspects to the implementation of decentralisation policies, and it is to these that consideration will now turn. Some of these arise from the differences in perspective between the ideologies which can lead to switches in direction when councils change party control, others are due to hesitancy even within a single party or within a single council.

We have already seen that there were elements in the Exit solution which appealed to all parties and the same is true of decentralisation which is '*capable of attracting support from a variety of different perspectives, including New Left, Centre and New Right*' (Stoker 1987a, p8-10). It was pursued most often by the Urban Left for whom it was seen as a way to '*challenge the paternalism of old style Labour politics*', '*see things in the round*' and '*get away from the narrow focus on electoral politics*'. Participation was to bring in those previously excluded such as single issue and community-based organisations involving environmentalists, ethnic minorities, women and tenants. For the Social Democrats and Liberals the emphasis was on strengthening representative democracy, with participatory democracy very much '*subordinate to the objective of restoring political control to elected councillors*'. Finally for the New Right, although Exit was the preferred solution, decentralisation within the remaining public sector was regarded as a way of '*breaking up monopoly bureaucracies into autonomous units which would compete with one another*'. Participation in this model is to be by those with a '*direct material interest in the provision of services*' (Stoker *ibid*).

These latter views though were promulgated more at a national than a local level. It is only very recently that some of the Tory shires in England have picked up the idea in their evidence to the Local Government Commission as a means of arguing for their preservation as Unitary Authorities despite their size (Hambleton *et al* 1994). Advice from the Working Party on Internal Management of Local Authorities in England (DOE 1993) which advocates the decentralisation of decision-making to the lowest possible level is now being endorsed by Central Government. The production of schemes for decentralisation will be mandatory for the new Scottish Unitary Authorities under the Local Government Scotland Act 1995. Decentralisation/Participation too can be depicted on an overlapping policy circle as shown in Figure 2.8 below.

Figure 2.8 Policy Overlap on Decentralisation/Participation



Source: Author's original

## POLICIES IN PRACTICE

By and large Conservative councils have not been the ones up till now adopting such decentralisation policies in practice, so that where there has been a swing from Labour or Liberal-Democrat or the council becomes hung, as is increasingly the case, implementation is halted or reversed. For example, in Scotland, Stirling District Council changed hands from Labour to hung Labour/Tory with 10 seats each, whereupon the incoming Tory administration halted the Going Local programme, disbanded the Community Development section and shut local offices {personal letter}. There can also be problems within the council's boundaries if sub-dividing the council's total membership into sub-units results in



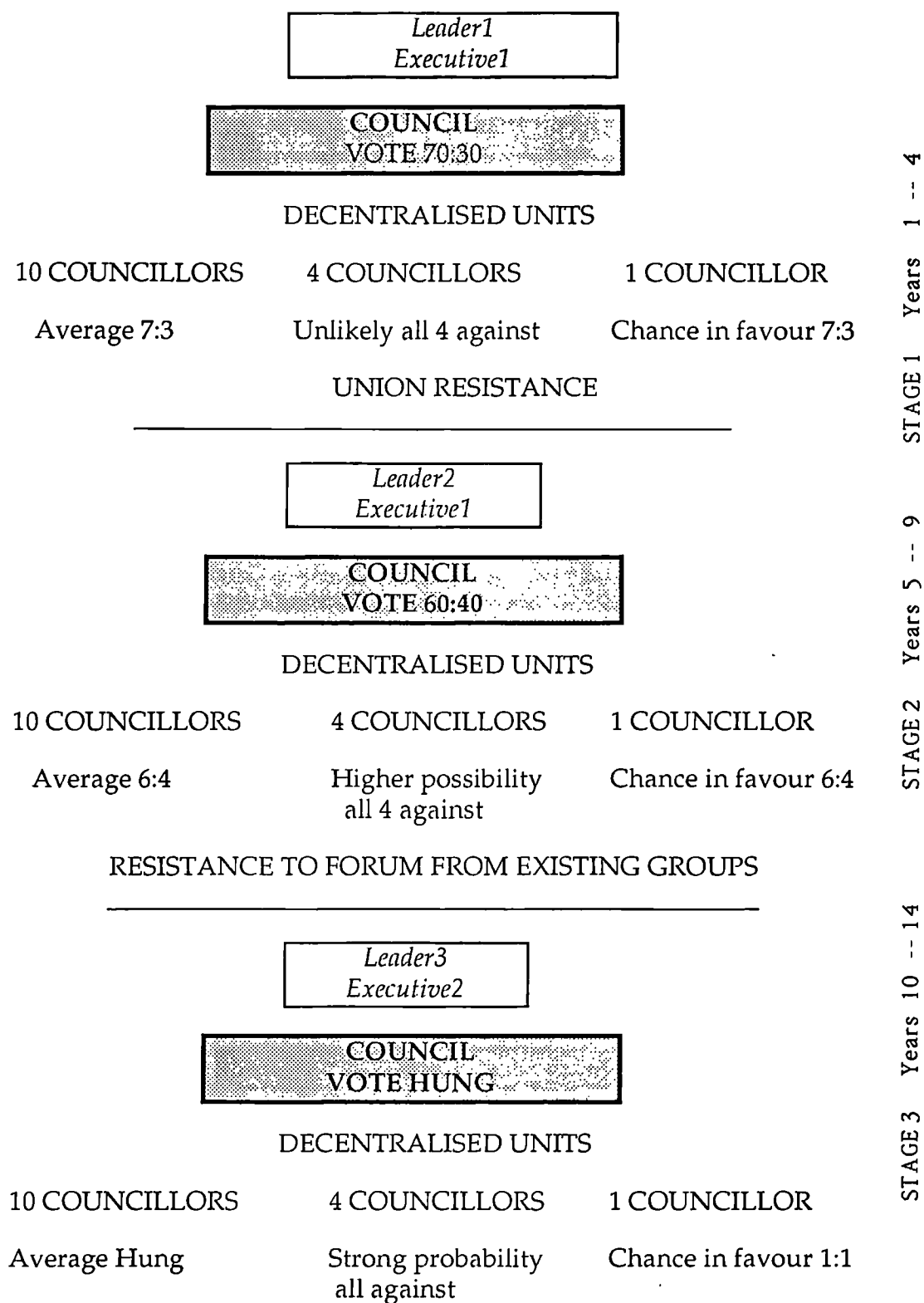
committees on which the opposition are in the majority. This was the case in Birmingham at one time where progress was severely hampered because opposition councillors held a majority of seats on 5 out of 12 Area Committees (Duncan & Hemfrey 1987). It happened also in Tower Hamlets where at times the Liberal-Democrats were outnumbered by Labour on 2 or 3 of the Neighbourhood Committees. The result here was that the Liberals in these areas returned to the centre as their base of operation where they had the effect of undermining the devolutionary thrust (Lowndes & Stoker op.cit).

Even within Labour circles there has been considerable hesitancy over their policies on this issue (Beuret & Stoker 1986; Butcher *et al* 1993), especially over dispersing power with a result that there *'has been a certain paralysis when it comes to the process of opening out politics'* (Stoker 1991, p209). Often the decentralisation has been introduced by one of the relatively new Urban Left councillors with drive, who pushes the decisions through the relevant Labour Group on the council. There it may have been 'sold' on the basis of its potential to enhance councillors' standing in their wards (Butcher *et al* op.cit). But due to the timescale which is involved in implementing major change, this charismatic leader moves on within the council to one of the more powerful central committees (Jackson op.cit), or the Community Development Committee established to oversee the initial stages is disbanded as 'no longer required' (Cockburn op.cit). One finding has been that councillors lose interest once neighbourhood offices have been opened (Gaster & Hoggett 1992).

Over time, as ardour cools, the policies become watered down (Daniel & Wheeler 1989). Where participation is introduced, councillors have experienced an added tension in weighing up the demands of their electors, their ward political party, the community activists, on the one hand, and the collective manifesto promises or city-wide requirements, on the other. New measures have to be developed to reconcile the warring needs or desires of different interest groups (Lowndes 1992); or to put the lid back on when they discover that *'giving people a voice means that 'people' will say things local politicians do not wish to hear'* (Fenwick 1989, p48). As Stoker sums up:

*'...the turning of commitment to decentralisation, in whatever form, into an operational and effective practice is a demanding task. We need not only greater clarity in terms of our thinking about decentralisation, but also to learn how to manage change and a realistic appreciation of what benefits and disbenefits reforms deliver.'* (1987a, p11)

Figure 2.9 Effect on Decentralised Units of Changes in Elected Members



Source: Author's original

Over the longer term, if the policy remains in place as it has done now in Islington or Glasgow over a period spanning numerous intervening elections with changes of councillors and leadership, there may be fewer and fewer elected members who actually voted for the policy in the first place. For instance, in Islington the policies were never as acceptable to the working class members as the middle class who then moved on (Baine 1975). Geographic spread can mean that there are decentralised units entirely containing 'non-believers', the smaller the unit the greater the probability that this will be so. The chart in Figure 2.9 on the previous page depicts a hypothetical example of the outcome of these factors in combination over time.

A further difficulty arises when the adoption of a deprivation strategy channels resources to specific wards or APTs as in Strathclyde Region. Here only certain councillors whose wards are involved will reap the benefit. This necessarily causes tensions over resource allocation with councillors whose wards are not the ones which stand to gain (Mason *et al* 1977). Once again at the decentralised level there may be groupings of councillors none of whom are winners, or some of whom are and some of whom are not, or all of whom are losers. Figure 2.10 overleaf depicts schematically a possible scenario loosely based on the new Local Committees in Strathclyde but using simplified arithmetic to illustrate the point.

This too has a potential effect of watering down centrally agreed policies as they are filtered at the local level. Community Development aimed at strengthening disadvantaged groups to engage with local politicians can prove particularly vulnerable in this respect. In Strathclyde it has been found that the role of the Whips needs to be reconsidered because they have power to bring a councillor to book for not carrying out agreed party policy, but no similar power in respect of agreed council policies (SRC 1994). A not unnatural consequence has been a reluctance to devolve real decision-taking power and relevant budgets away from the centre. Only the Liberal-Democrats now in South Somerset District, and earlier in Tower Hamlets (Lowndes & Stoker op.cit), have adopted an approach which entails drastic slimming down of the centre.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT POLICY AT REGION

CENTRE  
100 COUNCILLORS

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT POLICY FOR DEPRIVED  
20 COUNCILLORS WARDS WILL BENEFIT  
PUSHED THROUGH ON VOTE 60:40

EASTWOOD	RENFREW	AYRSHIRE	GLASGOW	LANARK	DUMBARTON
			30 COUNCILLORS		

UP = 15 CLLRs  
BENEFIT

GLASGOW LOCAL 4 COUNCILLORS	GLASGOW LOCAL 4 COUNCILLORS	GLASGOW LOCAL 3 COUNCILLORS	GLASGOW LOCAL 2 COUNCILLORS	GLASGOW LOCAL 4 COUNCILLORS
UP 2 BENEFIT 2 NO BENEFIT	UP 4 BENEFIT	UP 1 BENEFITS 2 NO BENEFIT	NO APT 2 NO BENEFIT	UP 4 BENEFIT 1 = DEDICATED BUDGET VIA ALC
2 SUPPORT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT POLICY	4 SUPPORT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT POLICY	SPLIT SUPPORT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT POLICY	NONE SUPPORT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT POLICY	MIXED SUPPORT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Source: Author's original

Figure 2.10 Support for Central Policy in the Decentralised Units

## PARTICIPATION IN DECENTRALISED STRUCTURES

The issue to be examined next is that of community participation within the decentralised structures. One problem with the literature is that very little goes into detail about how participation is structured; nor are there many examples to choose from. There is, for instance, a rich seam dealing with Islington, whereas other areas have largely been ignored. The writers are, in addition, often supporters of the working class with few good words to say for any middle class activist, even when the latter are using their skills and influence on behalf of others. Added to this, those accounts which do cover this aspect tend to be very biased in that the authors assume that community control is the ideal to be aspired to, denigrating any efforts that are aimed 'only' at information provision, listening or consultation. They conveniently overlook the possibility that this is not the level that participants themselves desire or that they may only be tempted in this direction through force of economic pressures. One particular gap in the literature, which the current research seeks to address, is that little or no mention is ever made of the significance of participation within a sphere dominated by party politics.

## AMBIGUITY OF PURPOSE

Frequent mention has been made that the objectives of councils' decentralisation schemes were usually neither clearly defined nor clearly articulated. It therefore should come as no surprise to find that the participation aspects suffer parallel confusion. Not only are they added on as an afterthought (Burns *et al* , op.cit), but they are not matched to the aim to be achieved; indeed there is a dearth of discussion on the necessity for this except in terms of whether community participants are 'representative'.

But it will be argued here that very different structures are needed to achieve the varying objectives, that one designed by a consumerist council as outlined above with the aim of improving consumer feedback on services could and should look very different from one designed by a community-based council with the aim of empowering the disadvantaged. Neither is here credited with being 'better' than the other in absolute terms, it is simply in a stronger position to be able to deliver the desired end. In addition, it is hypothesised that there would be much greater certainty about the outcome in a Consumerist model since it is more straightforward to understand how this can be constructed.

By contrast, for the reasons outlined in Chapter 1 in relation to the nature of power, there can neither be any certainty concerning the outcome of any model aiming at empowerment, nor any simple correlation between this and the type of structure on offer. That this is so is confirmed by the examples from practice. For instance, in Islington some of the Neighbourhoods are reported to have grown to wield considerable influence despite their advisory nature, but others have lagged behind (Burns *et al*, op.cit). The reasons for this are complex but derive in part from the personalities involved. On the one hand, despite being outnumbered by community representatives, officers may dominate causing Hoggett & Hambleton to state that when evaluating the potential of a committee '*numerical composition is a poor indicator*' (1987, p70). On the other hand, key activists may come to dominate through force of personality so that they silence their own colleagues.

### IDEAL SIZE OF UNIT

In the literature there are often comments to the effect that the chosen areas are 'too large' without differentiating between consumerist or community-based models. Whilst it may be correct that the neighbourhood unit is more appropriate when creating a user-friendly atmosphere where all participants will have the capacity to speak from first-hand local knowledge, it can be very limiting:

*'The smaller the unit the greater the opportunity for citizens to participate in the decisions of their government, yet the less of the environment they can control. Thus for most citizens, participation in very large units becomes minimal and in very small units it becomes trivial.'*

Dahl (1967, p960)

In the consumerist model what is required is varied feedback on overall performance of a specific service in different places and the relationship of this to resource allocation. This could indeed conceivably be achieved by use of surveys or asking local groups to report, which would allow those most apposite to be selected. What is significant is that systematic opportunities be created to discuss a given service with adequate time allowed for data collection so that immediate first-hand knowledge is not required. There has been a presumption in the empowerment model that this must operate at the neighbourhood level. However, reducing the size of the area of necessity restricts the magnitude of any decisions in which participants may be involved. There could be a counter argument for believing that they could achieve a greater impact in offsetting disadvantage by exerting influence over the redistribution of resources through city-wide policies than having the final say at their parochial level.

## ADAPTATION OF PROCEDURES

There is some discussion in the literature on the type of meeting required when establishing face to face dialogue. Mainly this is to the effect that there has been a failure to adapt traditional committee methods (Hambleton & Hoggett 1987) developed for council decision-taking. The emphasis is on making meetings 'user friendly' by holding them in community venues, reducing paperwork and the jargon within it, providing cups of tea ... The only mention of the participants being allowed more control tends to be limited to them setting the agenda on what is discussed (Charters 1994). Beyond this there is virtually no discussion as to who should control procedures.

The critical issue here is how should meetings be shaped if they are to allow the community participants to play the desired role. What differences might be expected between models concerned with service provision and those models concerned with empowerment? In the former, where the emphasis is on listening more, it may be of little consequence that the 'rules of the game' are entirely controlled by the council. What is needed is unimpeded upward flows of information so that recommendations put forward by officers are made on the basis of real familiarity with the area in question. For example in Islington, when the Forums there were given the power to decide planning applications provided they accepted the Planning Officer's recommendations, the value of participants able to comment from a standpoint of strong local knowledge was appreciated :

*'Firstly there is direct involvement of people in the locality. The traditional approach to consultation usually only reaches those who are very near, if not on the doorstep of the development. This approach reaches others. Secondly, involving the neighbourhood improves the quality of decision making. We get more sensitive decisions because of the fact there is local, public processing of the application.'*

(Burns, Hambleton & Hoggett, *ibid*, p186)

But for this local knowledge to be deployed it is likely that the structures will have to be slowed down to allow time for feedback to be gathered.

When it comes to empowerment we might expect to find some discussion of the barriers to greater involvement and how best might they be lowered. In particular, which key elements of control as listed in Chapter 1 is it desirable to transfer? One which is mentioned is for a community participant to be in the chair, whilst the status of elected members and officers should be one of facilitating without dominating. This is the pattern described by Burns *et al*

(op.cit) in Islington where councillors are non-voting and sit with the members of the public. Otherwise there is a dearth of evidence on these questions.

## SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

One key to 'successful' participation is seen as being access to resources, support and training (Smith 1981; Lowndes 1992; Goodlad 1993). Another is learning time since '*capacity building requires patience*' (Hambleton & Taylor 1993, p244) whilst the attempt to '*alchemise a client relationship into a political one is beset with problems*' (Butcher *et al* , op.cit, p143). The nature of this input, however, is surely heavily dependent on the model. In the case of consumer feedback one might, for instance, envisage seconding an expert to community groups to help them devise and conduct some form of survey and then to compile a report for committee. By contrast, if the normally inactive are to be enticed into involvement, community development will play an essential part (Gaster 1993; Shepherd 1994).

An aspect which is less discussed is the significance of the source of these resources. The truth of the matter is that many groups are funded through local government so that entering into a closer relationship with the council may be problematic. The dilemma from a community perspective can be that if they criticise the council they endanger their grant, if they do not they risk co-optation of dissent. The danger from a local authority point of view is that valid criticism is withheld or the community collude with one another and/or with politicians to safeguard each others continuation in post.

## REPRESENTATION

This brings us finally to the problem of who is to be involved and how they are to be (s)elected since :

*'... the composition of committees is likely to be a contested issue. Decentralising authorities need to ensure that neighbourhood committees are credible in that they offer some form of representation to all parts of the community and attempt to reflect the feelings of non-vocal members of the public as well as those of community activists.'* (Lowndes 1992, p59)

The solution usually favoured is to offer places to pre-existing groups, such as tenants associations in the case of neighbourhood forums concentrating on the provision of public sector housing. There may sometimes, as in Islington, be places reserved for specific sectors such as youth, women or ethnic groups who are otherwise underrepresented (Burns, Hambleton & Hoggett, op.cit). No British authority has gone so far as some of the US models where 'poverty' elections were



held in which an income threshold was applied, the outcome of which was the election of participants 'off the street' who proved to be very much more aggressive than was acceptable to officialdom (Marshall 1971). Indeed, means have often been adopted to exclude those deemed 'unhelpful' (Cockburn 1977; Dunleavy 1980; Hain 1980; Newton 1976). The result has been that most schemes involve a '*coterie of activists*' (Khan 1989, p28) who are then accused of being 'unrepresentative' whenever they venture to express an opinion which counters the official line. It is argued here that this is to apply the standards of conventional democracy; the question should not be are they representative since no such person or group exists. For suppose we achieve the 'correct' demographic ratio of men to women, whites to black, young to old, might they not all be car drivers discussing the fate of public transport, dog haters considering the hazard of fouling, non-readers adjudicating on the library? Suppose instead we select a geographical spread of 'Street Wardens' may they not educate their children in private schools, shop in the city centre or come home only to sleep?

Firstly there is a presumption that what is to be sought is a fixed set of representatives who will be the same people on every occasion, thus their personal characteristics are deemed of immense significance. If rather what was sought was the quality which they bring to problem-solving that would not otherwise be present, a very different approach could be envisaged. What might then be on offer would not be a permanent seat at the table, but opportunities to address the meeting on the topic under debate. Those sent along might be individuals from different groups such as tenants associations or community councils with distinct geographical territories which could designate their 'expert' on the subject, or nominated spokesmen briefed to deliver a joint report. This pattern would appear particularly appropriate to the consumerist model and it has the added advantage of limiting the danger of co-optation.

If there are to be fixed places, then the pertinent questions should be:

- do the individuals have a good network of contacts?
- do the structures allow sufficient time for them to be mandated?

That the answer to the latter is likely to be 'no' if participants are added to a decision-taking system is readily apparent from the complaints of councillors themselves to this effect (Martlew undated; Young 1981). In confirmation we have the instance where '*proposals that agenda papers should be circulated two to three weeks in advance to give representatives time to consult on issues were refused on administrative grounds*' (Smith op.cit, p56).

## POLITICAL AFFILIATION OF PARTICIPANTS

One significant gap in the literature is the failure to appreciate the significance of the party political nature of local government. Although there is much deliberation on this vexed question of representation, there is none on the political make-up of participants. What is more Hambleton & Hoggett even maintain:

*'The distinction between representative and direct democracy is an important one. Whereas our system of representative democracy hinges upon the activities of the major political parties at national and local level, direct democracy refers to non-party forms of self organisation. Direct democracy therefore hinges upon the activity of organisations such as tenants' associations, community action groups, voluntary organisations, sports and leisure clubs and societies, self-help organisations and so on.'* (1987, p54)

Whilst they acknowledge that when direct democracy comes up against representative democracy the relationship is '*fraught with tension*' and that when clashes occur between the two '*the party system has nearly always emerged victorious*' Firstly, this is not direct democracy since then everyone would speak for themselves and indeed there would be no role for party politics in putting forward candidates standing on alternative manifestos. Secondly, it seems naive to believe that people in these groups are of necessity non-partisan. They do not seem to conceive that one way this can come about is that the representatives of the organisations are themselves within the relevant party.

Yet it is well known that those who are active in groups are more likely also to be involved in party politics (Parry, Moyser & Day 1992), so that it is perverse that this is overlooked in the democratisation debate. Of all the vested interests that community representatives may exhibit this is the one which is never explored. One explanation is that it is so obvious that it does not need to be stated, yet this seems a weak excuse. If we worry about the party complexion of Quangos, School Boards and Hospital Trusts, should we not pay equal attention to the composition of neighbourhood forums? Indeed, might it be that there is something in the nature of these particular structures which makes them more attractive to or less off-putting to party activists? In the current research it is hypothesised that one factor is that activists enjoy success because of greater knowledge of the workings of local government, in general, and of greater insight into how to apply pressure, in particular. Also that this is more likely when an activist is familiar with the mode of operation of the dominant political party, which in turn is more likely if they themselves are a member. By contrast, that it

is less likely if they are completely apolitical, and that being a member of an opposition party will be positively counter-productive.

There seems a distinct possibility that activists who are also in the majority party, that is the Labour Party in Glasgow in the context of the current case studies, will be in a position to exert greater leverage than those outside, especially at moments when elected members feel vulnerable. In part this derives simply from the superior knowledge about how to achieve what they seek; in part it derives from the reaction of elected members which will, in addition, influence the behaviour of officers familiar with who and what will be accepted or rejected. It is hypothesised that the community will become politicised as a consequence, either of their own volition or, if the stakes are higher, by manipulation or infiltration.

The consequences are significant. At the very least if all we have added to any committee is political associates of those already present, it has to be asked whether any new element has been introduced. If what has been added are political opponents, should we not expect this factor to come into play? For it is hard to imagine that councillors will find their views acceptable, however valid. If elected members feel challenged, may they not be tempted at best to control the agenda, at worst to ensure committees remain advisory; at best to overturn recommendations elsewhere, at worst to disband; at best to encourage those of a like mind, at worst to manipulate the (s)election processes?

In conclusion, it is the contention not only that too little thought has been given to the quality of the participation when decentralising, but that this has to be matched to the desired objective which itself must be clearly articulated. Furthermore that whilst it may be relatively straightforward to envisage a model to improve consumer feedback, the task is altogether more complex when the aim is to make a contribution by addressing disadvantage. That part of this complexity is due to the unpredictability of the outcome. Finally that the part played by party politics is ignored at our peril. Yet it will be argued in the current research that participation has been structured in ways that maximise its potential to cause conflict with the representative system, whereas had it been alternatively approached it could have made a valuable, non-confrontational contribution to local government decision-taking.

## CHAPTER 3

### DECENTRALISATION IN SCOTLAND

As we have seen in the preceding chapter, decentralisation initiatives can be driven by very different motivations with varying end objectives, which may never have been clearly articulated by policy initiators originally or received by subsequent implementers. The now familiar themes of responsiveness and offsetting disadvantage are again to the fore, but there are a number of reasons to expect that initiatives might have first emerged and then evolved in a particular fashion in Scotland. Some could be due to geographical, political or legal considerations; some to the policy climate at the stage of introduction (where Scotland lagged behind England); some to the different ways the functions are shared between councils in the two tier structure here; some simply to dominant personalities at any given moment. Scotland was also unique in adopting the concept of statutorily recognised community councils which might have constituted a natural building block in any moves towards democratisation involving elements of community participation.

This next chapter explores the strands as they appeared over time in the Scottish context. The starting point is taken as the reorganisation of local government in 1973, showing the thinking behind the changes. From this it emerges that decentralisation was actually advocated from the beginning but, for reasons which will become apparent, was not adopted at that time. There follows a detailed description of the specific examples of decentralisation in Scottish councils at both District and Regional levels in chronological order as they were introduced. This tracks the effects of the relevant policy climate on the way they were envisaged, beginning with the interest in the internal mechanisms in the new councils influenced by enthusiasm for corporate management. Then come concerns with deprivation, safeguarding public services and latterly safeguarding large Regions in the lead up to the latest reorganisation to create unitary authorities. A concluding section rehearses the themes which emerge from the literature on which the current research is to be based.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN SCOTLAND

Over the period that the Royal Commission under the chairmanship of Lord Wheatley undertook their deliberations in Scotland the recommendations of the earlier Maud Report (1967), with its ideas imported from business concepts of corporate planning, had been adopted in England. There the majority of local authorities had responded by introducing some form of organisational change, whereas the impact in Scotland had been minimal (Rhodes & Midwinter 1980). However, the diagnoses of the ills of local government, and perceived reasons for its reorganisation, were much the same as they were in England, namely:

- fractured planning due to small units
- lack of coherence in policy making
- entrenched departmentalism inhibiting co-ordination
- profusions of committees dealing with detail
- poor turn-outs at elections indicating a disaffected electorate
- low calibre candidates as councillors

The two separate Royal Commissions established to recommend reforms ran in parallel with one another over the period 1966-1969, as did the later committees examining in greater detail the suggestions for internal management and organisation. But whilst the common problems to be addressed may have borne a similarity, the geography of Scotland posed very particular problems in selecting unit sizes, with the highlands in the north encompassing 57% of the landmass with a thinly dispersed population, whilst the Clyde valley in the south contained 3 million of the then approximately 5 million total population heavily concentrated in urban settlements. It is not the intention here to dwell on the many recommendations of the Wheatley Report (1969) but simply to highlight those aspects which are of relevance to the research theme of internal decentralisation within authorities. Whilst this was not at the forefront of considerations, it entered tangentially as a consequence of the decision to opt for large regions as the preferred unit of government. The four prime objectives as set out in the report are stated to be:

- POWER** - to enable local government to play a more important part in running of the country;
- EFFECTIVENESS** - to ensure that functions are exercised effectively, in the interests of the people served;
- LOCAL DEMOCRACY** - to ensure that effective power of decision in local matters rests on an elected council directly accountable to the electorate;
- LOCAL INVOLVEMENT** - to bring the people into local government as much as possible and to make decisions intelligible.

The solution recommended for Scotland in attempting to meet these objectives to the best advantage was the now familiar two tier system, in the original Wheatley version with dominant, large-scale regional councils given overall responsibility for the major services (at that stage including housing). After some adaptation, what emerged from the subsequent White Paper and finally the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 was a pattern of 9 regions and 3 Island authorities with the following areas and populations.

Table 3.1 Scotland - Regions and Island Areas and Populations

REGION/ISLANDS	POPULATION	AREA
Borders	99,938	1803.5 sq miles
Central	271,177	1015.6 "
Dumfries & Galloway	142,547	2460.0 "
Fife	340,170	504.0 "
Grampian	469,168	3360.6 "
Highland	190,507	9710.0 "
Lothian	750,729	700.0 "
Strathclyde	2,431,101	5300.0 "
Tayside	401,661	3177.5 "
Orkney	18,134	340.0 "
Shetland	22,111	550.5 "
Western Isles	29,791	1120.0 "

Source: Population - Stodart Report Area - Scottish Information Office

The final split in the functions became:

Table 3.2 Scotland - Distribution of Major Government Functions

Regions/Island Authorities	Districts/Island Authorities	Concurrent Functions Regions/Districts
Education Police	Housing	Derelict land
Social work Fire	Local planning	Industrial development
Strategic planning	Libraries	Amenities and tourism
Water/sewage Roads	Environmental Health	
Consumer protection	Refuse collection	

Overtly the ultimate split in the functions placing housing with the Districts was to provide more balanced councils in the sense resources (since 2/3 of capital expenditure was on housing) so as to equalise their respective power (Monies & Coutts 1989). However, the underlying political motivation was to prevent the new Regions from using their considerable size to redistribute resources from

owner-occupier (Conservative) suburbs to subsidise council tenants in (Labour) cities (Midwinter, Keating & Mitchell 1991), a capacity which they did indeed employ in Strathclyde in those fields available to them. In relation to decentralisation, this division of functions is one of the reasons it has proceeded along different lines than some of the recent neighbourhood initiatives under English authorities. Whenever the latter have combined the two services in a single 'one-door' office, this has occurred under councils with responsibility for both functions [SAUS seminar 1993]. Elsewhere it has proven difficult to achieve the necessary degree of co-operation between councils.

To return to the Wheatley Commission, despite coming down on the side of large-scale units aimed at achieving effectiveness, in reaching their final conclusions they had been very mindful of the need to be conscious of the loss of localised decision-making and destruction of community identity which could result from the replacement of the many small burghs, with their numerous elected members, by these enlarged bodies. Some of these concerns were covered in the body of the report, the bulk of which found its way into the legislation, some were contained in an extensive chapter dealing with internal organisation of the future councils which was strictly beyond the remit of the Commission. The extracts below from the Wheatley Report (1969) give the flavour of the sentiments being expressed:

- \*776 *But, with all this, local government must on no account become hard and impersonal. Its object must be ... to provide public services with the greatest possible satisfaction to those receiving them.*
- \* 777 *Both of these factors - efficiency on the one hand and the provision of satisfactory services on the other - spell out the same message: decentralisation. Subordinate decisions must be delegated, so that they can be sensitively adjusted locally. This should free the central administration of detail leaving it in a better position to take the broad central decisions.*
- \*778 *Decentralisation may take two forms. One is the delegation of administrative responsibility to officials. The other is enlisting the advice of local people on the local application of policy.*

Of especial significance in the present context were the recommendations:

- \*779 *...we are concerned to stress that regional authorities ought to practise decentralisation actively in all available forms. One specific form which we commend is a system of local committees, constituted by the regional authority from non-elected persons as well as councillors, which could play a vital part not only in dealing on the spot with local aspects of certain regional functions, but also in promoting a healthy sense of local involvement.*

- \*802 *... it would be appropriate for regional authorities to invite district councillors, on a personal basis, to take part in the local administration of regional services, e.g. through the kind of local committees mentioned*
- \*803 *...in working out local areas for administering their services - including areas for local committees - regional authorities should make use of district authority boundaries as far as possible, so as to make consultation and co-operation easier.*
- \*940 *...an authority ... should be able to co-opt freely to committees with the proviso that in any committee exercising executive functions at least two-thirds of the membership should consist of persons elected to the council.*

How the Regions reacted to these recommendations will be seen later, meanwhile we go on to see how Wheatley intended community identity to be preserved.

## COMMUNITY COUNCILS

The Commission put great stress on the need for the new units to correspond to 'genuine' communities in order to 'attract local loyalty' and preserve community identity and spirit which might be lost as a result of the demise of the many small burgh councils. What they had in mind is conveyed by the following passages (Wheatley op. cit):

- \*577 *A local government unit is a complex thing. It is a unit for the administration of functions and the provision of services. ... But it is also a geographical unit: it represents the people of a particular area. The area ought to be so chosen that within it there is as much as possible in common - a convergence of interest, affinities and sentiments. This is what we have in mind when we use the term 'community'.*
- \*578 *The importance of the concept of community to local government hardly needs emphasising. A structure of local government which fails to embody the concept of community will almost certainly fail to be relevant to real life. Not only will the authorities tend to prove clumsy for administrative purposes, but they are unlikely to succeed in mobilising local interest and that sense of 'belonging' which lies at the heart of effective local democracy.*
- \*579 *It is easy enough to grasp the idea of what is meant by community. It is another matter of define the term accurately. In ordinary usage, a community can mean a very small closely-knit grouping of people - even a single township - or on the other hand a very scattered group linked not by physical proximity but by some common belief or allegiance. Our use of the term is a narrow and almost technical one. What we mean by a community is a grouping of the population on a geographical basis - large or small - which has social and economic coherence.*



Survey evidence had indicated four levels of community in Scotland which would comprise diminishing numbers of units, namely:

- \*613    *The 'parish'                    (very approximately 800 units)*
- The 'locality'                (100 to 250 units)*
- The 'shire'                    (approximately 37 units)*
- The 'region'                  (5 to 9 units)*

It was this thinking that led the Commission to adopt the proposal from the Border Burgh's Convention (Written Evidence, Vol 21) for the creation of 'community committees'. These were to be established, only if the community so desired, at a sub-district level corresponding to the identified localities or parishes. Whilst definitely not forming a tier of government, they should be afforded statutory recognition as:

- \*848    *... a broadly-based unit, with an official standing, to which the local community as a whole can give allegiance and through which it can speak and act.*

They should have no set functions, their purpose being to 'complement local government, not compete with it ' but might be given devolved responsibility for operating certain services (specifically community centres). Secretarial support was to be provided by the relevant district but, not being part of the structure, there could not be an automatic right to levy tax or requisition (as Parish councils can in England). Nonetheless it was not seen that there should be any reason '*why a community council should be handicapped by the lack of a fixed source of income*' , whilst it was envisaged that community councils would be '*closely involved with both district and regional authorities*'.

- \*869    *At the same time, it is most undesirable that a community council should come to regard itself merely as part of the administrative machinery of the district, or of the region. It has an important duty to represent the point of view of its own area and to speak without fear or favour on any matter that concerns it....*

It should be entitled to do anything to improve amenity, to act as an agent in the day-to-day running of certain local services or facilities, might become the custodian of tradition, and finally could pursue any activity which local people wished it to. But

- \*860    *First and foremost, the role of the community council would be a representative one. It would be able to give expression to the views of the community on matters affecting it, whether or not these views had been asked for. Naturally it should also be the recognised body for public authorities of all kinds, including district and regional authorities, to consult on matters affecting that neighbourhood.*

The procedure for the formation of community councils laid upon the new districts an obligation, once formed, to draw up schemes designating a map and prescribing rules of a minimal character.

These proposals were translated almost intact into the subsequent 1973 Act where the general purpose of a community council is stated as being:

*'to ascertain, co-ordinate and express to the local authorities for its area, and to the public authorities, the views of community which it represents, in relation to matters for which these authorities are responsible, and to take such action in the interests of that community, as appears to be expedient and practicable.'*

There was, however, one subtle, but as it transpired, significant alteration. The Schemes for the Establishment of Community Councils merely had to include:

*'Provisions concerning the procedures to be adopted by which the community councils on the one hand and the local and public authorities with responsibilities in the areas of community councils will keep each other informed on matters of mutual interest.'*

Thus CCs were no longer to be consulted, but now merely *kept informed*, a distinction which some authorities were not hesitant to exploit (Duncan 1994).

## INTERNAL MANAGEMENT OF PROPOSED AUTHORITIES

The terms of reference for the Commission did not require it to devise a system of internal organisation for local government, but nonetheless a whole chapter of the report is devoted to 'elucidating the principles of good organisation' specifically laying 'the right kind of responsibility in the right place.' The diagnosis of the ills of the existing style of organisation (echoing and referring to Maud (1969)) was that what was missing in local government was *unified management* (emphasis in original). Some organ was needed to provide drive and co-ordination. The general ideas for improvements again reiterated the suggestions for chief executives, policy & resources committees and teams of chief officers but added to these were some very detailed prescriptions in relation to devolution and decentralisation. By the former was intended that :

*\*968 ... issues should be dealt with at the lowest, or most local, level consistent with the nature of the problem involved.*

This was to be achieved by delegation of responsibility, with elected members entrusting more to officers, and officers in turn passing more down the line. The idea of local committees is again reiterated:

- \*975 *By comparison with the biggest authorities at the present day, the regional authorities we propose are very large in extent and in population. We consider that in most regions there is a strong case for local area committees to be formed to assist the regional authority in carrying out its functions, by advising how policy should be applied locally and by taking on certain executive duties.*

as is administrative decentralisation:

- \*979 *Devolution to local committees is not a substitute for administrative decentralisation to officials. The two ought to be practised side by side. We think that, within a proper management framework, the more that responsibility can be passed down the line the better. There is much to be gained thereby. Pressure on the centre can be further relieved. Local officers can be given a more stimulating and responsible job to do, without undue reference to headquarters. Policy can be applied more flexibly. The convenience of the public is served, because individuals do not have to travel any further than necessary to see an officer who can deal with their case on his own initiative.*

Significantly they heard 'conflicting evidence from educational experts about the feasibility of any substantial delegation to outposted educational staff' (Minutes of Evidence Vol 11). As we shall see later it was indeed the education service which hindered moves towards local committees in Strathclyde.

## **PATERSON COMMITTEE**

To carry forward early planning, the four Scottish local authority associations came together, with the approval of the Secretary of State, to study the organisational problems and to provide guidance on organisation and management for consideration by the new authorities. The committee was predominantly made up of supporters of corporate management techniques (including a future Chief Executive of Glasgow District) so that it was hardly surprising that the resultant report (Paterson 1973) closely followed the Wheatley suggestions on this topic. As one member is quoted as saying "We knew we were on the corporate bandwagon from the start". (Midwinter 1982, p13). However, the committee did not entirely accept Wheatley's thinking in relation to Area Committees.

### **Area Committees as envisaged in the Paterson Report**

When it came to area committees these were only seen as being required in the (undefined) larger regions. They were to be composed solely of regional councillors (without the district councillors or the public), and their role was to be to 'deal with issues which are sensitive and important locally but which do not affect

overall regional policy', extreme care being taken, however, to 'avoid fragmentation of policy and inconsistency of application.' In addition (Paterson 1973):

*\*6.16 ...In view of the close links between education, social work and housing at the community level and the fact that all of these services may come together to deal with one family, we recommend that the sub-regional boundaries of education and social work would coincide with one or more district boundaries and that the sub-regional offices of education and social work and the district housing office be at or near the same location. At this point we emphasise the importance which we attach to the development in the new authorities of the 'one door' approach to facilitate contact between the public and the authority. We recommend the setting up of general offices at convenient local points to allow members of the public wishing information or assistance from any of the local authority services to have their requests dealt with speedily and effectively. This will entail the manning of these offices with staff possessing wide general knowledge and experience. We think that the provision of this facility should be given high priority irrespective of whether the sub-regional and district offices can be located together in the short term.*

Paterson here moves away from the participatory model of local committee envisaged by Wheatley and limits its scope. His one-door model, on the other hand, is close to that which has been adopted in the 1980s wave of local neighbourhood offices. The reforms, as advocated, thus contain the germs of decentralisation as it took shape in the 1970s. In community councils it also provides what Wheatley saw as the bodies to be consulted, but which might, in addition, have been the natural building blocks for the desired participation by local people.

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE AUTHORITIES

Both Wheatley and the Paterson Reports had been taxed about the question of co-ordination between the two tiers, advocating close working relationships if the system were to function. They saw this being achieved through informal links such as liaison committees, close contacts between district and regional officers, joint programme area teams and, in particular (Wheatley op. cit):

*\*802 ...an invitation to district councillors, on a personal basis, to take part in the local administration of regional services through the local committees.*

Co-terminous boundaries at sub-regional level were urged to ease the process. These exhortations proved in the event to fall on deaf ears. There were a number of reasons why this should be so. Old conventions proved difficult to change and the division of functions militated against this kind of corporate working (Monies & Coutts 1989). Not surprisingly both councillors and officers who had been

serving on outgoing councils were upset to lose their previous all-purpose status. Indeed campaigns for its reinstatement were launched almost from the inception of the new councils (Alexander 1982). None of the cities fully accepted 'demotion' to second tier district status, with resentment at the change continuing to bedevil relationships between the tiers (Midwinter, Keating & Mitchell 1991). In a survey conducted by Alexander (op. cit) he reported that in none of the 3 regions visited (Grampian, Tayside and Strathclyde) was the relationship satisfactory. In one case (unspecified) there was an '*almost unbridgable gulf*' (p133) indicating, he concludes, how relationships are '*deeply affected by institutional history and the resentment that arises from loss of status and injured pride*'. Few commentators, therefore, support the assertion by Young (1977) that the conflict had its positive side in bringing into the open differences which would otherwise have been papered over. Though Midwinter (op. cit) did indicate a lessening of hostility amongst those who had not previously served, the overwhelming impression is of

*'a system that functions because the goodwill and informal networks of members and officers acts as lubricant for a structure in which friction is inherent'* (Alexander op. cit, p134)

So much for the pious hopes of Wheatley and Paterson.

### **Relationship between Strathclyde Region and Glasgow District**

Of particular interest to the case studies which form the subject of the present research is the relationship between Strathclyde and Glasgow. On the face of it the latter should have been dominant within the region where it includes one third of the population and thus provides an equivalent proportion of the elected members. In the event a large number of former Glasgow councillors opted to remain at the district level, despite what they saw as its downgraded status, with a result that the influence of Glasgow councillors within the region was not as great as it might have been. In the period immediately after reorganisation, Glasgow's Lord Provost commissioned a consultant's report proposing the creation of a Glasgow Region as a unitary authority composed of the old city plus its surrounding suburbs. As Alexander comments (op. cit):

*'Although the report was never formally considered by the corporation its commissioning and production are evidence of the hostility of councillors and officials in Glasgow to the creation of Strathclyde. The relationship was summed up by a senior official who said, quite simply "The Region distrusts the city and the city distrusts and hates the Region."' (p133)*

Yet it is against this backdrop that both Strathclyde and Glasgow instituted their respective schemes for decentralisation, each of which, as we will see later, stipulates the involvement of councillors and officers from the other authority.

## DEPRIVATION

The benefits of the Wheatley and Paterson reforms are couched primarily in terms of enhanced policy-making and improved service provision, with ideas of preserving community identities forming a secondary consideration. But returning to the thinking underlying the Voice option, as we saw in the preceding chapter a second theme is that of offsetting disadvantage, of making a contribution to another problem facing Scotland, namely social regeneration of the depressed areas. There had been growing concern over deprivation, particularly urban deprivation, and the associated social disintegration as evidenced by vandalism, anti-social tenants, low educational attainment. Programmes to address these problems were already in their infancy in the late 1960s; experiments with Community Development Programmes had begun; the Wilson Government had introduced the Urban Programme. The legislation introducing this measure - The Local Government Grants (Social Needs) Act 1969 - provided the Secretary of State with powers at his discretion to make grants to local authorities who 'have to incur expenditure by reason of the existence of any urban area of special social need' (SOCRU 1984).

In Scotland the Urban Programme (UP) was administered from the time of its inception up to 1975 by the Social Work Services Group, and this was reflected in the initial focus on grants towards community centres, nursery education and other forms of pre-school provision. Glasgow Corporation, for instance, had been quick to seize on these new opportunities and had a number of schemes in place by the time of reorganisation. In 1975 responsibility was switched to the newly formed Urban Renewal Unit of the Scottish Development Department, largely with the intention of encouraging local authorities to adopt an area-based approach to the problems of urban deprivation, with an emphasis on the importance of voluntary effort by giving priority to projects undertaken by voluntary bodies.

As the restrictions on local government expenditure increased over subsequent years with mainstream budgets suffering ever deeper cuts, UP came to play an ever more significant part in the councils' finances. Expenditure on associated

projects meanwhile grew substantially from a starting point in 1975/76 at £1.5M capital and £2.6M revenue. By 1991 the total for Scotland had risen to £69M overall, a figure which continues to escalate. As we will see later from the case studies, the Urban Programme plays a large part in the reasons the community come to be involved with the local council.

After reorganisation, the divide in functions between the new councils meant that the regions inherited education and social work, with their greater emphasis on community development, whilst the predominant concern of the districts was with housing. This naturally tended to reinforce the perspectives from which the respective councils approach the question of decentralisation.

## DECENTRALISATION AS IT EVOLVED IN SCOTLAND

In the lead up to the creation of the new councils in Scotland there were thus two themes in evidence which had a bearing on decentralisation. That deriving from the forces for reorganisation was chiefly concerned with the managerial problems of co-operation between the levels and co-ordination within the council, decentralisation to areas being to offset the effects of creating the large regions. That deriving from anxieties about deprivation was concerned with social problems of offsetting disadvantage by becoming responsive to special needs. These came together in varying combinations in the schemes which emerged in the first phase of decentralisation initiatives amongst the Scottish councils.

To these over time were added the pressures for change discussed in the previous chapter deriving from the Conservative central government's commitment to the application of market forces. As a reaction to this, a second wave of Scottish councils saw decentralisation as a means to safeguarding their services. Finally as local government reform loomed once again, with policies completing a full circle to introduce Unitary Authorities, the large regions faced with the prospect of extinction turned to decentralisation as a means to their salvation. These trends and the councils which first adopted proposals at a given stage are sketched below. Amongst the first come Glasgow District and Strathclyde Region, a reason for their choice as case studies in this research (a more detailed description of these particular initiatives can be found in a later chapter).

## CORPORATE MANAGEMENT

Ironically, given the concerns of Wheatley and Paterson, it was not the giant Strathclyde Region which took up their recommendations for Area Committees, but Glasgow District. This should not come as a total surprise since one of their senior officers, as mentioned above, had been seconded to the Paterson Committee because of his enthusiasm for the principles of corporate management. On the death of the first Chief Executive, he was promoted to this post, whereupon he was afforded the opportunity to bring his ideas to fruition (McFadden 1982). It happened that this coincided with the return to power of Labour who had suffered a brief period in exile. This brought to the fore a new leader backed by a new grouping of councillors. Area Management at this time formed one arm of a series of reforms concerned to achieve co-ordination of policies and services by breaking down departmentalism. The Team of field officers serving a part of the city was to be its main focus, with a Committee to oversee its operation. In order to achieve cooperation with the Region, both elements were to include their counterparts from Strathclyde. Amongst councillors the momentum for change came largely from dissatisfaction with the housing department whose paternalistic (not to say corrupt)\* practices were seen as unacceptable to the electorate. The starting point here thus coincides with that of counteracting 'bureaucratic public services' as shown in the diagram in Figure 2.1. Nonetheless a minor element of Voice was added even at this early stage in that outline provision was made for community representation on the Area Management Committees (AMCs).

## OFFSETTING DISADVANTAGE

In Strathclyde, by contrast, there was no one model of decentralisation adopted as universal policy, but rather a gradual coming together of various strands. Initially, although there was a degree of administrative delegation, there was a positive rejection of any form of area committee at ex-county level, largely engendered by a fear that Glasgow would not become integrated into a region seeking to imprint its rather shaky identity. Councillors under the first Convenor were, however, experimenting with innovative new structures (Young 1981). Amongst these was the Area Development Team established in certain of the identified areas of priority treatment (APTs) eligible for Urban Programme funding. Here again the main focus was on the team of local officers, but the chosen unit was on a small scale and the objective was to offset disadvantage by

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\* Labour's period in the wilderness had been provoked by a housing scandal.



coming together to tackle problems. Meanwhile one individual elected member inaugurated a very informal get together of local activists in his ward to provide them with an opportunity to air their views. Over time these two threads came together in a more formalised way within the framework of a Social Strategy for the 80s (SRC 1984) with the creation of the Area Liaison Committees (ALCs) which form the subject of this research. The starting point here too was that bureaucratic public services delivered in a uniform manner were insensitive about and unresponsive to the special needs of neighbourhoods suffering high levels of deprivation. Voice, however, was very prominent as a measure of redress, the community being seen as the experts on their own problems and architects of their solution.

## **SAFEGUARDING PUBLIC SERVICES**

The next cluster of councils to decentralise did so in the mid 1980s amidst a much altered policy climate. Firstly this was the era of the new urban left (Stoker 1989) impatient with the old, traditionalist labour style; the period of enthusiasm for decentralisation stemming this time from political concerns of the elected members (Gyford 1991). Secondly Labour councils felt themselves to be under threat from pending central government legislation which, under the Housing Bill, would seek to transfer stock away from the public sector and, under the Local Government Bill would subject public services to compulsory competitive tender (CCT). An underlying motive for councils was therefore to ensure that their services were sufficiently popular to maintain the loyalty of their recipients.

### **Stirling**

The decentralisation initiative in Stirling belongs in this category. This was a Labour council coming to power for the first time in 1980 after successive years of Tory rule on a manifesto declaring: 'The Housing Bill threatens the very future of public sector housing services. The government is attempting to introduce private landlords and replace an accountable local authority.' and promising to fight to protect public services. This was to be achieved through creating 'A Partnership with the People' (1988) by 'involving and consulting local people, giving them a say in decisions that affected them.' There were two planks to this platform, the first being a community development programme under which they encouraged self-help projects with support from Stirling Resource Centre (1991). The second was a housing strategy comprising the establishment of new tenants associations, the creation of local housing liaison committees, the involvement of the Tenant's

Federation on the housing committee, and 'Going Local' (1990) by moving the housing service to neighbourhood offices. The next stage was to be the introduction of a network of forums working with the community to create 'representative bodies which can play a full part' linking into Area Committees to 'ensure proper corporate working at community level between departments with better co-ordination of service provision.' In the event, in the time it took to move towards the implementation of these later steps Labour lost its overall majority in 1988, when seats were equally divided between Labour and Tory, and then lost control entirely in 1992. This switch, in accord with the findings in the preceding chapter, led to the abandonment of the decentralisation strategy.

## **Renfrew**

Renfrew, by contrast, was a traditional Labour stronghold. The district is dominated by the four towns of Paisley, Renfrew, Barrhead and Johnstone typical of the West of Scotland in suffering pockets of poor housing, unemployment and poverty. Having been the site of one of the government's CDPs in Ferguslie Park, there had been early experience of a community development approach in tackling social problems which persisted, Renfrew being unusual amongst district councils in having a Community Development Committee. As elsewhere at this period, however, the move to decentralise services was housing led; the tone, whilst less strident than Stirling, shares the same concerns with public services under threat. Physical relocation to neighbourhood offices was followed in 1987 by the creation of 9 Area Committees coterminous with the housing service. These consisted of a core group of the district councillors for the area concerned, any community councils or tenants associations as of right, plus other voluntary organisations deemed to be 'representative and accountable'. These committees were advisory to the Community Development Committee, their remit being defined as to:

- a) discuss matters of general and specific local concern relative to District Council activities
- b) consider and discuss policy and operational arrangements in respect of specific District Council functions
- c) consider remits from the District Council in relation to which the Council specifically wishes to arrange for local consultation and seek views of the community
- d) consider and make suggestions as to needs of the local community area.

In 1992 the Corporate Plan pledged a Partnership with the people and communities, an element of which was to 'provide substantial local budgets to the local area committees as part of a broad initiative to get closer to and empower the local community' and 'to develop new opportunities for direct community involvement and control of a wide range of projects and initiatives'. Consolidation of areas produced six Area Committees each with a substantial budget of up to £100,000 under their direct control. This change to a decision-making status brought these committees within the ambit of the restrictive legislation, and at the same time elected members became concerned to ensure that their ward had an equal chance of benefiting. The result was the proposal to alter the community places available to guarantee an equal number within each council ward. Since there was an unequal distribution of community councils and tenants associations, this led to a position where some groups could only be offered one seat, whereas another might be afforded five. Potentially the committee size could swell from its previous limit of 20 members up to a new level of 72. Information is not to hand as to whether this cumbersome structure proved viable in practice.

## **Edinburgh**

The council in Edinburgh was another which changed hands from Tory to Labour for the first time in 1984 whereupon the new council, anxious to stamp their authority, embarked on an ambitious programme under the flag of protecting threatened public services. Indeed, this council is unusually frank in declaring that providing 'efficient and popular services' was an 'essential mechanism in ensuring the Council continues to run its own services and manage its own housing stock in the face of the proposed competitive tendering and Scottish Homes legislation'

The initial city-wide plan involved the relocation of the housing service to 30 local offices each overseen by a specially created Neighbourhood Forum. This it may be recalled was the city which, under Tory rule, had all but refused to introduce community councils. The result had been that these were demanded in middle-class areas - indeed by the very Amenity Societies which were deemed to render them unnecessary - but, in the absence of any outreach development work, had never come into existence in the city's various peripheral estates. In proposing these Neighbourhood Forums the Council was worried that there was a potential for a clash between the two, with the need for the community councils being diminished, so that there was need for them to be afforded an important role to play in the new Forum.

As it happened this particular situation never arose because the council was forced to curtail the city-wide programme and instead substitute an incremental one starting as a matter of priority in the APTs. This revision in their strategy was attributed to 'the pressures placed on the Council's budget by totally unwarranted and vindictive action by the Secretary of State for Scotland'. By 1988 the plan therefore had become the modest one of providing 13 accessible local offices. Before a local office could open, the local forums would be established, and once all the local offices were operating 6 Area Committees would be constituted. A start was to be made by concentrating on setting up selected Local Forums in Wester Hailes, Craigmillar & Niddrie, Muirhouse, Pilton, Granton & Telford and recognising an existing body in Leith under this umbrella. Even this reduced programme came adrift with a result that by 1993 only a small proportion of the forums were in operation and the intended Area Committees have yet to come to fruition. This tailing off in commitment conforms to the pattern described in the previous chapter as characteristic of councils which choose an incremental approach to implementation, reflecting the difficulty of sustaining sufficient forward momentum to overcome the forces of inertia and resistance.

## **SAFEGUARDING LARGE REGIONS**

The present wave of decentralisation initiatives is to be found amongst Scottish regions coinciding, it has to be concluded not entirely fortuitously, with the review of local government which threatened their demise. In this they appear belatedly to be attempting to counteract the often repeated perception that they are 'remote'. As described below, some of these councils only went so far as to promise decentralised advisory committees in responses submitted to the consultation on the future of local government in Scotland (SO 1991), two Regions took actual steps to implement them before the legislation was enacted. In the latter category comes Central and Strathclyde, whilst in the former category comes Tayside and Highland Regions, whose proposals fed too into the emergent legislation for the new Unitary Authorities.

### **Central Region**

The first of the two councils that have actually taken practical steps is Central which as part of their Social Strategy (CRC 1991) began a process of introducing a series of reforms to make access convenient, bring decisions close to consumers and give the latter a role in determining the shape and content of services. Greater administrative powers were to be devolved whilst a local committee

would be established 'to secure accountability of local service managers' (CRC 1993a). Each would consist of the local elected members from the region and invitations would be extended to their counterparts from the respective district (who in practice refused to co-operate). Reliance on CCs was seen as problematic since 'unfortunately the activity levels of CCs vary across the Region. In some areas they are healthy, in some it is difficult to ensure continuity.' 'The first two of a planned series of thirteen such committees were set up in 1994 Hillfoots and in Denny, to be followed by Stirling and Grangemouth. The new community forums should be 'able to raise and obtain a response on all aspects of service delivery and be regarded as consultees on a wide variety of council services, including planning applications' (CRC 1993b). A review after the first year emphasised that these initiatives were 'not bolted on' but formed part of an overall scheme which included slimming the centre, delegated management, community development and a designated unit at the centre to oversee progress (Stoker 1995).

### **Strathclyde Region**

The second of the councils to take practical steps is Strathclyde where a region-wide coverage of Local Committees was introduced in the autumn of 1993. Whilst these were mooted in the Manifesto for the 1986 elections and also recommended in the SAUS review, the part of their remit described as being to publicise the activities of the Regional Council in the local media (SRC 1993) perhaps offers a hint as to the reason for the sudden push to implement this radical policy innovation at this particular point of time.

In their report, the Working Party set up to consider this matter spell out that they saw their remit extending to also considering reshaping of the central committee structure which was deemed to be overloaded with trivial business that could and should be downloaded either to these Local Committees or to officers. Central committees should thus be slimmed in size and number and freed to deal with setting the policy framework within which the Local Committees could oversee devolved administration. By this means local officers would be made properly accountable to their political masters. The Local Committee was also to become the focus for community involvement and liaison with the Council.

Having accepted this idea in principle, the region had some difficulty in finalising areas, partly for purely practical reasons of establishing boundaries which matched to such elements as wards and service areas, partly because of the existence of the joint Initiatives and the Area Management system in Glasgow. Behind the scenes there were also political pressures which caused them to flirt

for a while with joint formations in Easterhouse/East End (to neutralise Militant) and East Kilbride/Eastwood (to weaken Tory domination). The final pattern which emerged was for 27 Local Committee which outside Glasgow broadly coincide with Districts, whilst Glasgow itself is divided into 9 sections preserving the three pre-existing Initiatives (Drumchapel, Greater Easterhouse, East End) and otherwise in groupings of 3 to 5 wards in parallel with Area Management.

Each committee has to consider on a pre-set date certain core agenda items set centrally, has certain delegated powers to make grants, in addition to which it can address any issues it wishes to. Membership is restricted to regional councillors only, a specific point being made in the descriptive literature that there can be no co-option of community representatives, allegedly due to the restrictions of the legislation. Nonetheless the Initiatives continue to permit voting representation as before, whilst also doubling up as Local Committees, a situation which leads to extremely complex procedures of selective voting on financial matters. Part of the remit is to provide support to the ALCs and elsewhere to devise mechanisms for involvement, and this is a specific part of the workload of the Local Officer.

Clearly in Glasgow at any rate internal divisions over the distribution of power between these Local Committees and the centre have by no means been resolved because they had only completed a cycle of two meetings when a get-together of committee chairmen began to call for greater delegated responsibilities to be remitted downwards (Strathclyde 1994). In creating these Local Committees and in recommending delegation to officers it is perhaps ironic twenty five years on that Strathclyde has eventually come round to implementing Wheatley's proposals for the region, and for exactly the reasons which he advocated in achieving responsive services and freeing councillors time to concentrate on effective policy making.

### **Tayside Region**

In their response to the Scottish Office consultation exercise, Tayside Regional Council argued that no case had been made for change, but if there were to be Unitary Authorities these should be based on regional units. Should Tayside be retained they promise that steps would be taken to set up Local Committees, claiming (TRC 1993) 'local committees based on recognised communities in Tayside allows the traditional civic identities of the former burghs lost in the 1975 reorganisation- to be regained.' and 'A decentralised system such as this can best reflect local needs and aspirations and deals with criticisms of remoteness and lack of responsiveness'. In relation to CCs, the council appeared ambivalent

stating at one point that whilst they saw 'no role for CCs in direct delivery of services in a model of local government which incorporated local committees. However, that does not detract from the useful consultative role that CCs can play at the most local level'. But then appearing to by-pass them in the new scheme in which Local Committees of 10-15 members of the public are to be elected. Nor was it clear what the link was to be between these and the single tier authority nor what powers, if any, might be devolved although there was anxiety that the Local Committees should not duplicate the disappearing districts.

## Highland Region

In their response to the same consultation, Highland Region argued strongly for their retention as a Unitary Authority. If retained, they would incorporate in their plan a series of area committees (HRC 1993). It was intended that these would build on existing networks established to offset the very real geographic distances between the scattered centres of population. Already there are four operational Area Social Work Committees of local members overseeing a series of seventeen locally based Resource Centres. Eight Divisional Planning Committees have operated jointly with the Districts since 1975 with delegated powers to deal with most planning matters. In the new system 'the role of these more local decision making bodies can be widened to allow groups of members to determine a variety of additional matters relating to localised aspects of the physical infrastructure and to service delivery for example in Roads, Water & Sewerage, Countryside, Libraries and Leisure Services.' Regional councillors, it is claimed, have forged ties with the 130 CCs and the 'comparative strength of the network of Community Councils in the Highlands and the close association with Community Councils has obviated the need felt in other parts of Scotland to develop local or neighbourhood committees.'

It is perhaps to Highland that we owe the resultant legislation on the subject of decentralisation since their response also reads:

*'Whatever structure is finally chosen, it is clear that most authorities will require to make arrangements to ensure decentralisation of decision-making and to maximise links with communities. It may well be desirable therefore that the Secretary of State has power to require submission by local authorities of schemes making provision to that effect, or at least to issue some general guidance to authorities in that field.'* (HRC 1993)

## DECENTRALISATION IN THE UNITARY AUTHORITIES

It would appear that heed was paid to this exhortation since the Secretary of State has been afforded just such powers. Indeed, the Local Government Scotland Act of 1994 goes further than this in laying down that each authority must by 1997 submit a scheme for decentralisation, although it leaves to the councils what form this might take. The relevant clause merely states that any draft scheme may include provision as to:

- (a) arrangements for the holding of meetings of the council (or any committee or sub-committee of the council) at particular places within the area of the council;
- (b) the establishment of committees for particular area and the delegations to those committees ... of specified functions of the council;
- (c) the location of offices of the council within the council's area, the staffing of such offices and the delegation to members of staff ... of specified functions;
- (d) the provision of facilities at particular places within the area of the council where advice may be obtained on services provided by the council.

The only role mentioned for CCs is that any proposals are to be publicised and 'every council shall ... consult with the community councils within their area about the draft scheme' Other steps to strengthen their rights to consultation on planning and licensing issues are promised but not contained in the Act itself.

The Unitary Authorities are thus free, as the subsequent Guidance on Decentralisation spells out, to opt for political, managerial or physical decentralisation, but councils should 'be clear what they mean by decentralisation and what they want to achieve by it.' (SOED 1995). The key objectives are seen as:

- to bring services closer to the public;
- to enable the public to influence and shape the design of those services and the way in which the council serves its community; and
- to provide more effective and responsive local government.

To be successful decentralisation must have the commitment of the public as stake-holders, must not be a 'bolt on' to the organisation and will require commitment at both Officer and Member level. 'Fundamentally it will not simply happen: it needs to be supported and it needs to be resourced. (SOED op. cit). The Unitary Authorities may not take too kindly to being told the latter since no extra funds are to be available to implement any plans. Indeed according to the Minister when heckled by Labour on this point in the Standing Committee debate



on these clauses in the Bill, savings are anticipated. Nonetheless it is clear from the Guidance that what is expected is thoroughgoing decentralisation, a 'holistic' approach because 'simply to establish outlying offices without reflecting on issues of political and management culture is to build decentralisation on exceedingly weak foundations.' Decentralisation has moved centre stage.

## THEMES AND LESSONS EMERGING FROM THE LITERATURE

This overview of decentralisation initiatives in this and the preceding chapter concentrated firstly on the motivation, because in assessing 'success' there needs to be some sense of matching outcomes to objectives. Secondly it looks at the structures which have been put in place as the starting point for considering whether these are capable of delivering on these aims either in theory as envisaged or in practice as manifested on the ground.

It is clear from the literature that the councils were approaching decentralisation with a very wide variety of often poorly defined, possibly conflicting, objectives in mind. Nonetheless there appear to be three persistent strands to the thinking which reappear repeatedly, namely service provision, personal or community development and political control.

### THEMES

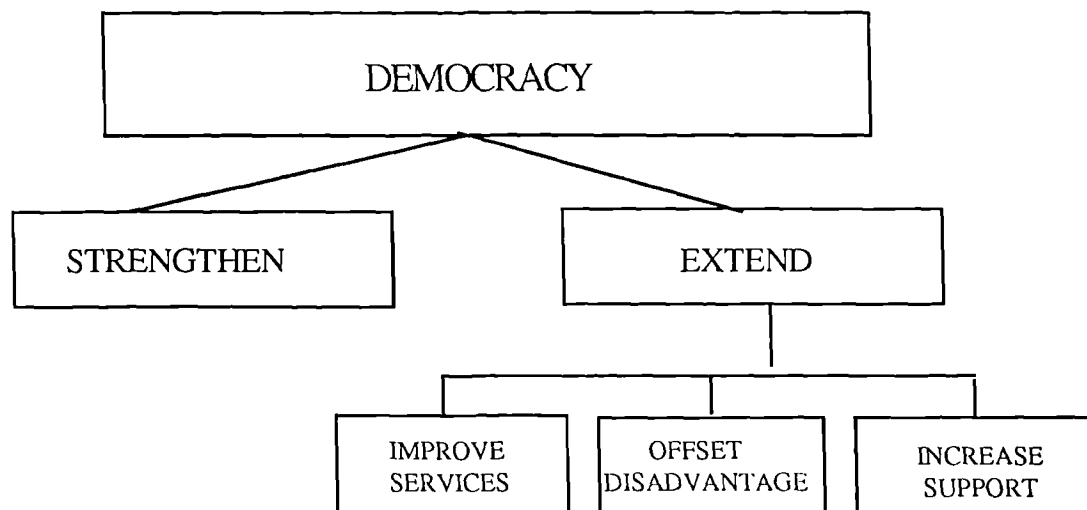
The first theme common to many of these initiatives is that of **improved service provision**, though the drive may have changed over time from a view that this was a consumer's right per se, through a stage of achieving loyalty through popularity, to the most recent efforts to cling on to the role of direct service providers in the face of central government moves towards the Enabling Authority. The talk in this context is of improvements in efficiency, of increased co-ordination between departments, of responsiveness, of priorities better matched to local demand ...

The second broad theme centres around **developmental** aspects in the contribution that these structures can make to providing opportunities for the people involved - whether officers, councillors or representatives - to develop either in a personal sense or collectively. Here the vocabulary is that of devolved responsibility, of empowerment, of influence on decision-making through participation, of tackling deprivation ...

Finally there is a strand, perhaps less overtly expressed, revolving around issues of **democratic control** whether through the representative system by strengthening the role of elected members, or through extending participation to include the lay element. These issues find expression in terms of councillors wielding more influence over decisions affecting their wards, of making officers more accountable to councillors or to community, of the deployment of local knowledge in tackling problems ...

We can begin therefore to distinguish more clearly between the differing objectives as depicted in the diagram:

Figure 3.1 Motivations for Decentralisation



Source: Author's original

## LESSONS

For convenience, the conclusions from the theory and previous experience analysed in these three chapters are grouped together under three headings. These cover first prerequisites for the models to operate effectively within the overall structure of the relevant authority; secondly the mode of operation and who controls procedures; finally the effects of party politics.

## **Prerequisites**

Various criticisms are levelled at the experiments in decentralisation described in the literature and there are many warnings to those contemplating such initiatives. In this category come the strictures to the effect that the new structures must not simply be 'bolted on' to the old, but must be fully integrated into the overall decision-taking system. That the role of the centre has to be slimmed down and/or adapted accordingly. The new structures must be afforded a clear status, whether this be advisory or with powers, and staff assigned must be of an equivalent status in a position to deliver results. In particular, democratisation must go hand in hand with devolved management. Overall that there has to be a high level of sustained commitment from officers and councillors to ensure that interest does not peter out during implementation and to bring about the necessary shift in the organisational culture. That overarching all the desired objectives must be very clearly thought through and must be very clearly articulated. These prerequisites have to be met whatever the form of decentralisation, whether involving geographical relocation, managerial devolution or democratisation.

## **Adaptation to Community Participation**

Where, in addition, there is to be community participation this too must be fully integrated not bolted on as an afterthought. If lay people are to be added in, then it must be clear why this is being done, what role they are expected to play and who is to be sought. Here it is argued that the relevant question to ask is not whether they are in some sense 'representative', but whether they truly reflect their constituents' views and whether the structures in which they participate enhance or inhibit their capacity to do so.

If there is to be face-to-face dialogue, then the way meetings are run needs to be adapted not just to make proceedings more 'user-friendly', but to allow participants to play an effective part. In particular, a clearer distinction should be drawn between models intended for feedback on service provision and models intended for empowerment. In the latter, consideration needs to be given to the elements of control over proceedings - such as agenda setting, selection of participants, chairing of meetings - the council wishes to see transferred. Once again overarching all, objectives must be clearly thought out and the form of participation matched accordingly.

## **Effects of Party Politics**

Party politics come into play in decentralisation in a number of ways and at differing levels. First and foremost the different parties may all support the concept, but to differing degrees and for very different reasons, as a consequence of which changes in party control produce swings in policy. Within one council sub-units may be of differing political complexion or, less obviously, may be dominated by councillors from opposed factions or simply unenthusiastic for their own centrally adopted policies, both of which eventualities demand strong central drive and enforcement. Finally there appears to be a tacit assumption in the literature that community participants are free of political allegiances which might colour their own attitudes and interests and colour the relationship between them and the elected councillors.

# CHAPTER 4

## THE RESEARCH STUDY

The broad aim of the current research is to examine and contrast two models of democratisation involving community participation in area committees, one where the aim is improved service provision, the other where there is a stated commitment to empowerment. The intention in so doing is to delve below the surface, examining how the structures operate on the ground to facilitate or inhibit the part played by participants. The contention here is that there has been a failure to draw a distinction between representative democracy, in which elected councillors are validated by the ballot box, and participatory democracy, in which community participants should be recognised as being mandated delegates.

Secondly the study explores whether these structures succeed in lowering the barriers to involvement. Whether either model achieves a greater degree of responsiveness, and whether the empowerment model allows the voices of those who are normally excluded to be heard. Here it is hypothesised that the nature of this form of dialogue at the interface between community and the authority is likely to be more open to those already enjoying a high sense of their own efficacy, that is those who are already activists, and may furthermore be more attractive to those already active in party politics.

This chapter begins by elaborating the research questions to be addressed, indicating the contribution this study is expected to make in extending the field of current knowledge. An explanation is then given of the methods developed to answer these questions; the means by which criteria were derived to select case study models of decentralisation between and within different Scottish councils or cities; and the various measures to be deployed in the evaluation. Although a number of techniques were used to gain insights, the main fieldwork was based on a series of semi-structured interviews across the three categories of stakeholders - councillors, officers and activists. A brief account is given of the theoretical reasons why this was considered the appropriate tool for the current purposes. The thinking that went into the actual execution of the research is then described, showing the order in which successive stages were performed. Any problems envisaged in advance and encountered in practice are the subject of the final points to be covered.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED**

Following the sub-division in the previous chapter, the research study is designed to evaluate three aspects of the chosen models of democratisation, namely whether they operate within a context which satisfies the pre-requisites, whether they have been adapted to the involvement of participants, and what part is played by (party) political factors?

### **HAVE THE PRE REQUISITES BEEN MET?**

Amongst the lessons to emerge from the literature in this respect are that any new structures should not be 'bolted on' as an after-thought, that they should have been conferred an appropriate status within the overall decision-taking mechanisms of the council, and that there must be genuine commitment and changes in organisational culture.

#### **Have the new structures been bolted on?**

Here the study was designed to identify whether there were signs of integration of the case study committees into the rest of the council decision-taking or policy-making. The questions to be asked were whether the new committees had a separate, clearly defined remit with strong linkages into the centre? Whether the centre itself had been in any way altered at the time of the introduction of the decentralised units? what linkages existed between the various parts as evidenced by flows of information upwards and downwards, and/or by structured consultation?

#### **Do the decentralised units enjoy an appropriate status?**

By 'appropriate' is meant that the status afforded matches the respective remit. If the committee is advisory, is it in fact asked for its advice and does such advice carry weight with the decision takers? If the committee is empowered to take decisions, over what matters does it have jurisdiction? Is it entirely clear to all parties whether the status is advisory or decision-taking, and is its position codified in writing? Other indicators of relative status include the level of staff within the departmental hierarchy and their commitment to continuity of attendance

### **Has there been ongoing commitment and changes in organisational culture?**

Whilst concrete evidence can be sought in answer to the questions above, this last category involves the perceptions of the various stake-holders. It was anticipated that the requisite change in attitude amongst councillors must be an acceptance that their representative role was altered by the presence of participants. It was further assumed that councillors would feel themselves more threatened in the empowerment model than the one involving consumer feedback. The requisite changes amongst officers would be a belief in devolution down the hierarchy, on the one hand, and in co-operation across departmental or council boundaries, on the other hand. Commitment to decentralisation and democratisation has to exist both amongst councillors and amongst officers, especially at a senior level for this to percolate downwards, but either side might be the one that was driving the policy. Finally the community participants, it was assumed, had to be convinced that such commitment existed for them to feel it worthwhile to become involved.

### **HAVE THE STRUCTURES BEEN ADAPTED TO PARTICIPATION?**

Here the study set out to explore what the councils hoped to achieve through the inclusion of community participation, in what ways the structures had been matched to these objectives, whether there was recognition that the participants had a different role to play from elected members, and finally who controlled procedures. The aim of the present study is to avoid any presumption that the objective of participation ought to be community control so that anything less is inferior. Rather the question being asked is what the councils wished to achieve by it and whether they have been successful in setting up structures which are capable of delivering.

#### **What was participation expected to achieve?**

The literature warns that this may not have been spelled out, the prime task therefore being to tease out the possibilities from the evidence available.

Thompson (1970) lists as the reasons for involving local people:

- They know where the shoe pinches
- They can impart local knowledge
- They will support and obey what they consider legitimate
- They benefit from self-realization
- They will stand against tyranny.

The first step is to distinguish which amongst these feasible objectives were those present in the present case at the outset. In the present instance this may be all the harder since the initiatives in question have been in operation for over fifteen years, many of the original initiators having departed the scene. The hope was to find examples that would allow a comparison between a model primarily intended for consumer feedback on services and one which aimed at a social policy of offsetting disadvantage.

### **Have the structures been matched to their objectives?**

The presumption underlying this question is that participatory models will be substantially different from representative ones. For:

*'There is a danger that institutions become carbon copies of the kind of formal institutions which we are presumably trying to get away from in any new set up.. ...They produced a sort of parody of officer-member relationships - minutes, agendas, formality at meetings - all the kind of excluding things we are trying to get away from..'* (Deakin 1986, p. 35)

This is to assume that units must be of a neighbourhood size, meetings must be 'user friendly' and so forth. In this instance, the study sets out to determine whether this has to be true whatever the end objective, it being hypothesised that a model aimed at consumer feedback might not have to conform to these rules. In addition, that it could, indeed should, look very different from one designed for empowerment where such considerations might have to be paramount. As Dahl (1967) points out there may then may be a price to pay in that the kinds of decisions will be of a very parochial nature.

### **Is there recognition that the role of participants differs?**

Underlying the conclusion that the structures have been ill adapted is a belief that the part to be played by community participants has to be distinguished from that played by elected members if there is to be some benefit from their inclusion -that the qualities they bring are of an alternative nature. Specifically, it is argued here that their mode of accountability to their constituents is of a substantially different nature, being more akin to that of a mandated delegate. The question being asked here is consequently whether the councils recognise the distinction; if so, whether they have incorporated suitable safeguards to ensure that the participants are truly mandated.



### **Who is controlling procedures?**

This question is seen as relevant to diagnosing whether there is a possibility of any shift in power towards the community. Again it is presumed that this will be significant where the aim is to 'empower' the participants, or the wider community beyond, but may not matter in the case of consumer feedback. At the same time the likelihood would seem that passing over control would pose a greater threat to the current power holders, so that resistance would be greater. The aim therefore was not only to look at positive moves to transfer elements of control, but also to seek evidence of any hostile reactions against such moves.

### **WHAT PART IS PLAYED BY POLITICAL FACTORS?**

The political factors chronicled in the literature relate to differences in party motivations for supporting democratisation and the affect that this can have in producing switches in policies when councils change hands and/or the problems of sub-units of differing complexion from the centre. On the other hand, when discussing problems of representativeness, the literature appears blind to the possibility that community activists may have party affiliations.

### **Are there significant differences between councillors?**

Since the eventual study is based on Glasgow, where the Labour party is dominant to the extent that the city is virtually a one-party state, there is no opportunity to examine the fragility of sub-units of differing political complexions. On the other hand, it could be that there is a lack of unity amongst councillors of the same affiliation. What is being probed here is the extent to which elected members are signed on to centrally decided policies of decentralisation, in general, and democratisation, in particular. Furthermore whether the sub-units formed are vulnerable to being undermined by the attitudes of key councillors or groups of councillors. An additional line of investigation concerns the reported rifts between Strathclyde and Glasgow (Alexander 1982), and how this affects structures which demand co-operation between the two.

## Do the activists have party allegiances?

A significant way in which the present study moves beyond previous ones is that it is hypothesised that any activists involved with local government are likely also to have vested interests amongst which may be support for a political party. A straightforward question to this effect was to be included in the research, but so too were others aimed at assessing who participants saw themselves as speaking for, how their 'constituency' was defined. A particular point of interest was the extent to which they acknowledged that this was the grouping whose interests they had been chosen to serve.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED

In summary, the following are then the research questions which the study was to be designed to answer:

- \* Are the decentralised structures fully integrated into the overall council system and what changes have been made to accommodate them?
- \* Are the council's objectives clearly stated and do the models suit these aims?
- \* What is the status of the decentralised committees in terms of devolved authority?
- \* Is there high commitment amongst senior councillors and directors and a strong central drive to implement the strategies?
- \* Have sufficient resources been allocated to the task?
- \* What is the aim to be achieved by involving lay people in the processes and have the structures been adapted to their presence?
- \* Do the ways the committees operate allow the community participants to play the role envisaged for them?
- \* How has empowerment been defined if this is an objective?
- \* To what extent do the community have any control over their involvement?
- \* What part does party politics play in relationships?

Broadly these questions can be banded together in five groupings:

1. Those relating to the commitment to decentralisation;
2. Those relating to committee mechanisms;
3. Those relating to resources;
4. Those relating to control over procedures;
5. Those relating to relationships between stake-holders.

The next sections examine how the research study was constructed to answer these questions and the methodology deployed.

The topic under examination is the operation of a series of hybrid committees which incorporate lay people into the decision taking mechanisms of local authorities. The objective is to assess the effectiveness of these structures and the role that participation plays within them. In so doing, two aspects were under consideration, the first being whether there has been an improvement in information flows producing an impact on policy making, the second to what extent there has been any degree of empowerment, either in its sense of conferring authority or in its sense of enhancing community capacity.

These committees have in common that they were set up voluntarily by the respective local authority to serve the latter's purposes; that they are made up of councillors, officers and community representatives; that they co-exist alongside the traditional service committees. Thus there is a generic similarity between them that should allow certain generalisations to be made. On the other hand, the models differ not only from one authority to another, but also within a single authority, some of these potential variations being due to concrete factors, some to differing aims and some to the attitudes of the various stake-holders. The extent to which it is the objective or the human parameters which dominate the outcome is one of the questions to be addressed.

The research, then, takes the form of a comparison of multiple case studies, adopting the triangulation approach (Denzin 1970a) of investigating these by a number of different methods to provide insights from varying perspectives. The main tool used was semi-structured interviews covering upwards of one hundred and twenty respondents (some of whom doubled up in the roles that they played). This interview format was selected as the one best suited to yield information in relation to perceptions, opinions, attitudes and feelings. However, material gained in this way was complemented and supplemented wherever

possible by data collected by non-intrusive methods such as examination of documents - committee minutes, monitoring and supervision reports, local authority reviews and so forth. In addition, it was seen as vital to observe the committees in operation since much can be learnt in this way that would not be apparent by any other means. Finally some personal information on the activists was obtained by completing a mini-questionnaire.

The following sections describe the stages of planning the research including the selection of case studies, the information to be obtained through the application of the different methods, and the cross-checks these allow between the differing sources. This is followed by an assessment of the difficulties encountered and potential bias which may occur in the results.

## PLANNING THE RESEARCH

Personal considerations came into play in planning the research due to long association with Glasgow stretching back over nearly twenty five years in the voluntary sector, fifteen spent as information worker in the Community Councils Resource Centre. The latter covered a time from just after the first CC elections up to 1992, comprising a period both before and after the introduction of the Area Management system. The work included servicing the District Council committee overseeing CCs, and frequent attendance at AMCs in the geographic area of personal responsibility. To a lesser extent contact was maintained with ALCs in Glasgow and their parent Divisional Community Development Committee. As a consequence it was likely that many of the potential interviewees would already be acquaintances.

This fact coloured contemplation of case study cities in the first instance. Preliminary data were sought on a number of potential case studies which were known to exist in Scottish cities, within which there were varying examples of the same kind of structure operating in different settings or different kinds of structures operating within the same setting. There were seen to be advantages in confining the study to Glasgow since a wealth of accumulated background knowledge could be called upon. Such information is invaluable in the interview situation since many features of council operation are familiar and names or events need no explanation. One effective way to build rapport is to be acknowledged to be asking the right questions. On the other hand there is a considerable potential for bias, firstly because prior assumptions could be mistaken, secondly because respondents might misconstrue attitudes. There was an especial danger that interviewees familiar with this personal background

would automatically presume a degree of support for community participation which might interfere with neutrality. Yet to exclude Glasgow entirely would have been to forego the opportunity to investigate the longest established decentralisation models in Scotland. For these reasons in the early planning stages consideration was given to a study which would have included another city for comparison, with preliminary investigations being conducted on Renfrew, Stirling and Edinburgh District Councils. In the event the material gathered in Glasgow proved so rich as to preclude studies to an equal depth elsewhere.

The other problem which had to be addressed during the planning stages was that of developing indicators by means of which an evaluation could be made when examining the various sources of data. By what means can the status of the respective committee with the local authority decision taking structure be assessed? What are the measures of information flows upwards and downwards within the policy making mechanisms of the local authority? How might it be feasible to evaluate the extent to which there had been any transfer of power from the local authority to the community? Such indicators were required in the first instance to assist in the preliminary stages of case study selection, thereafter to allow an analysis of the eventual data themselves.

These planning stages of the research occupied in all the first year of the study period, some of this time having been spent on preliminary investigations of cities and councils which were not incorporated into the final choice which will now be described.

## SELECTION OF CASE STUDIES

Scotland was chosen as the locus for the research because the existence of community councils, which might have been chosen as the basic building block for community consultation and involvement, is unique to local government in this country. The choice was narrowed to the Area Management and Area Liaison structures which existed in Glasgow and Strathclyde respectively since in both cases these by now have a developmental history stretching back over a period of years to the inception of these councils at the time of local government re-organisation. Their written remits and various reviews of their operation indicated that the two represented contrasting models, with AMCs broadly devoted to aims of improved co-ordination and service provision, whereas ALCs formed part of a social strategy to offset disadvantage.

## GLASGOW DISTRICT CASE STUDIES

In setting up AMCs Glasgow District Council adopted total cover for the city with eight initial areas fitting approximately to the decentralised housing districts. Subsequently two sectors - Drumchapel and Easterhouse - were separated off as formal Joint Initiatives with the Regional Council, whilst the East End enjoyed a similar status at the termination of the GEAR experiment. There were thus ten area structures throughout Glasgow forming the potential pool of case studies in this category.

Although from the inception it was always the intention that there should be community representation on these committees, this was added after they were already up and running. Deliberately no specific blueprint was imposed. It was left to each committee to decide at that time what form this should take. Each AMC has been free to adapt their system thereafter at successive four-yearly District Council elections, . Alternative formulations have been adopted, of which there are three principal variations:

- one with a guaranteed place at the table for every single community council in operation
- one with restricted places but community wide (s)election procedures
- one with restricted places linking to feeder structures which select the community participants

The first step in narrowing the choice of case studies was to opt for one example of each of these variations in order to explore the ways the different mechanisms might operate in practice.

In addition, in order to reduce the danger of preconceptions, it was decided that the final three should not be ones in the western sector of the city which had previously been the author's personal responsibility as support worker. There then remained 2 Initiatives and 3 AMCs from which to choose. Of these 1 Initiative was in transition, and 1 AMC had had a particularly turbulent history (partly from community pressures, partly due to the presence of Militant Labour councillors) which was deemed to make it atypical and problematic to research. The ultimate choice therefore fell on the South and South East AMCs and the joint East End Initiative.

## STRATHCLYDE REGION CASE STUDIES

By contrast with Glasgow's citywide coverage, Strathclyde Region's ALCs formed part of their deprivation strategy focusing special attention on specific Areas of Priority Treatment (APT). The latter are designated on the basis of government criteria, using social and economic factors, to be the target for enhanced funding through the Urban Programme. Within Glasgow there were at the time twenty six such areas (confirmed on the basis of the 1981 census data) varying considerably in size from a few streets, which might be termed sub-neighbourhoods, to small 'towns' constituting multi-neighbourhood units.

The preliminary stages of investigation involved an exploratory discussion with the central supervisory officer and examination of the minutes of all ALCs within the target AMCs, of which there were twelve in total. This highlighted extreme variability in the functioning of these committees due primarily to human factors. To this extent it proved problematic to develop objective criteria on which to base the selection procedure. To select by high repute or perceived degree of activity could simply become a self-fulfilling predictor of 'success'.

Those factors eventually chosen as constants were that the areas should be recognisable bounded localities - which argued against the sub-neighbourhoods - with especially high levels of deprivation since one of the lines of investigation was to be the extent to which participation could make an effective contribution to social regeneration. The indicator for this was that the area had been afforded Initiative status by the Regional Council, denoting that even amongst APTs it was regarded as requiring special action due to the concentration and severity of its problems. As one of the frequent complaints from officers in the reviews of ALCs relates to the effect of resource constraints, case studies were singled out which would allow a comparison to be made between a committee with little in the way of dedicated funding serviced by an officer as an extra duty and one enjoying a comparatively high level as evidenced by a full-time support worker and signs of follow up action in the relevant minutes.

In drawing up the community council map for Glasgow, this had been achieved by allowing local people to define their own community boundaries, so that the resultant delineations broadly reflect their loyalties. These boundaries have subsequently come to be used by other outside agencies such as the Boundary Commission as the best available reflection of neighbourhood consensus. In seeking recognisable communities, as mentioned above, CC areas were

consequently taken as a significant parameter. In addition, since the contribution of CCs to the decentralisation strategy is also one of the research themes areas were ideally sought where at least some, if not all, of the respective CCs continued to be in operation (which is no longer the case everywhere).

The number of areas which can be studied is dependent on the resources of the researcher, the time factor being the most significant in limiting the maximum number of interviewees who can be accommodated. Pitching the desirable number at forty per case study area spread over the two models -Glasgow AMC and Strathclyde ALC - dictated a potentially feasible number of broad study areas in Glasgow as three matching the forms of representation on AMCs. But even restricting the research to these three geographical areas within Glasgow, the potential catchment of direct actors on the relevant committees would have totalled over five hundred individuals.

Once again a mechanism for reducing this pool to manageable proportions had to be found. That settled upon was to investigate the impact of the AMCs/ALCs on three chosen APTs. In the case of the ALCs, this allows a full schedule of interviews with all the direct actors - councillors, officers and community participants - and also some of the officer bearers of organisations from which the participants are drawn, plus some community activists not actually serving on the committee as potential critics. In the case of the AMCs, however, it restricts actual interviewing to the APT representatives. This it was felt could be acceptable since the salient distinguishing characteristics of these particular structures appeared to be objective, rather than human factors. It did, however, regretfully mean the exclusion of participants from higher socio-economic classes with more advanced educational qualifications. No comparisons based on these parameters would therefore be possible.

## **FINAL SELECTION FOR GLASGOW CITY**

Taking the above criteria in combination, the case studies finally narrowed down together with their respective common or distinguishing features are set out in Table 4.1 on the following page:



Table 4.1 Case Studies in Glasgow

<p><b>ALL CASE STUDIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Substantial populations over 12,000</li> <li>- Recognisable communities with a history</li> <li>- Special Initiative Areas with high deprivation</li> <li>- More than one community council area</li> </ul>
<p><b>SOUTH AMC FOCUSING ON GORBALS ALC</b></p> <p>Population of APT 12,110*</p> <p>2 CCs Laurieston and Hutchesontown</p> <p>Both alive and send representatives to AMC/ALC</p> <p>Special features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unstructured ALC</li> <li>Ad hoc membership</li> <li>Low resources</li> </ul>
<p><b>SOUTH EAST AMC FOCUSING ON CASTLEMILK ALC</b></p> <p>Population of APT 28,757</p> <p>4 CCs Phoenix Horseshoe Castlemilk East Castlemilk Cathkin</p> <p>2 dead/2 struggling but ex members still active</p> <p>Special features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structured ALC</li> <li>Elected representation</li> <li>Dedicated support officer</li> <li>High resources</li> </ul>
<p><b>EAST END INITIATIVE FOCUSING ON BELVIDERE ALC</b></p> <p>Population of Inner GEAR 13,745</p> <p>5 CCs Calton/Bridgeton Dalmarnock Dennistoun N &amp; S Camlachie</p> <p>All alive and providing representatives</p> <p>Special features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structured ALC</li> <li>Joint District/Region</li> <li>Ad hoc membership</li> <li>East End Officers</li> <li>High resources</li> </ul>

\* Any discrepancies with Chapter 7 are due to the figures there being derived from the 1991 census whereas those available at the time of case study selection dated from 1981..

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

In considering the various possible sources of data, thought had to be given to which of the research questions could be answered by applying each of the chosen methods. What can be learnt through examination of documents, through exploratory interviews with supervising officers, through direct observation at meetings? In what way will this complement or supplement the main tool of conducting semi-structured interviews? In addition, to what extent can these methods be used to cross check on the validity of data obtained in another way? Finally in what order should the differing methods be conducted to achieve the maximum benefit? Each of the sources will next be considered in turn from the above point of view.

### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

The committees under investigation have existed over a number of years, some having been established shortly after the reorganisation of local government in Scotland to form Regional and District Councils. The older examples date from the era of enthusiasm for techniques of corporate management being applied from the business sector to the new local authorities or, as in the case of Strathclyde Regional Council, form part of a deliberate approach to tackle deprivation. Consequently they constitute part of a strategy with a developmental history which can be tracked through papers in the public arena from their policy origins, through a number of internal reviews to the present day. Use can be made of the Access to Information Act to inspect background papers which went into the compilation of the majority of official committee items written since its enactment. Party manifestos issued before the four-yearly council elections provide some insight into a continued commitment - in public at least - to the concept of decentralisation, in general, and participation, in particular, and their relative ranking amongst priorities. All these sources combine to provide the policy backdrop against which to judge the initial objectives of the authorities, their own views - both global and individual - on the effectiveness in practice of their strategies, and their stated current position. They are clearly the essential first step towards any understanding of the purposes to be served by the introduction of decentralisation initiatives, the broad variations between the systems encountered in practice from which tentative criteria can be derived for distinguishing between the models operating in various cities. They also provide material on which to base any eventual interviews with policy initiators, some of whom continue to hold posts or elected positions within the same authorities.

Information obtained in this way forms the backbone of the chapter on Decentralisation in Strathclyde and Glasgow.

## **EXPLORATORY INTERVIEWS**

Within the central organisation of each Council - that is in the Chief Executive's Department or its equivalent - there is a designated officer overseeing the operation of the decentralised committees over a geographical area. Such officers thus possess a wide overview not only of the effectiveness of the system as a whole in council terms, but also of the strengths and weaknesses of individual examples as judged by criteria which that officer has established for this evaluation. By conducting informal exploratory interviews with these officials much useful factual information can be gleaned, whilst providing an opportunity for sounding out preliminary hypotheses about the significant factors contributing to variability. The outline schedule for the conduct of these interviews is attached as Appendix I. Information obtained in this way primarily provided the criteria for sifting out case studies.

## **FAMILIARISATION WITH CHOSEN AREAS**

Once the three case study areas had been pinpointed, steps were taken to become familiar with each target neighbourhood. This involved in the first instance walking around to gain a personal impression of its current outward appearance. As much as possible of its social history was gleaned by reading accounts written by local history groups, and some of its economic history from academic accounts of various attempts to regenerate Glasgow. Factual information was compiled from census data and ward profiles provided by the physical planning departments of the respective councils. A history of prior activism was in part pieced together from written accounts by community workers, in part from verbal reminiscences of current activists about the original stimulus for involvement. This information forms the backbone of the chapter on the Case Study Areas.

## **OBSERVATION**

The decision to limit the study to Glasgow had the advantage that meetings of the target committees could be attended in person over the whole research period on a fairly regular basis. This was seen as valuable in gaining insights into how the committees operated in practice, providing evidence which might not have been apparent from the minutes such as relationships, behaviour or control of procedures. For instance, community members may numerically outnumber

councillors, but does this mean they are able to dominate meetings? Agendas show how many items are to be dealt with, but how much time is being allocated to debate each? Furthermore some of the usefulness of the meetings to participants may lie not in the formal proceedings but in the informal contacts during breaks. In particular, a note was kept on a specially designed form of the seating arrangements and how often and how effectively participants intervened (see Appendix 2). Information gained in this way contributed in the main to the chapter on Taking Part.

## **TRACKING ISSUES**

In each of the three areas an attempt was made at an early stage to pinpoint issues of local concern so that these could be tracked over the research period to see how successful the community were in having their concerns adopted and how responsive the council was to these initiatives. The technique was inevitably somewhat hit and miss since there was no guarantee of identifying fruitful topics. In the event issues did come to light in two of the areas which form the basis of illustrative Vignettes interspersed in the text. Even the absence of any topic in the third area was educational because it proved an indicator that the community were more taken up with an internecine battle for control of access to the system, than progressing any concrete campaign.

## **PROFILES OF COMMUNITY ACTIVISTS**

A questionnaire sheet was drawn up with the objective of collecting some personal data regarding the participants and other community activists interviewed. This was filled in after the interviews from answers which were collected during the course of conversation. The points covered are shown in Appendix 3. In particular these included what were seen as pertinent information relating to how new they were to involvement, their degree of activism and the time devoted to this, and their motivation in becoming involved. In the event some of the questions were dropped having proved either irrelevant (housing tenure) or of questionable value (last stage of education). As already highlighted, a separate question was included on their support for and active membership of a political party. This information was largely relevant to the chapter on Accountability and Representation.

## **ANALYSIS OF MINUTES**

The main plank of the documentary search was the current material in the form of minutes of the individual decentralised committees or of the 'parent' committee to which they report higher up the council structure.

### **Access to minutes**

Even the whereabouts and format of the former is a significant pointer to the status enjoyed by the respective model, together with its position within the overall system, and its formal or informal nature. At one end of the spectrum minutes of Area Management Committees in Glasgow appear in print alongside the official monthly Council records available in every local public library. At the other end Strathclyde Area Liaison Committees are simply lodged in loose typed form with the central officer responsible if the Lead Officer has been diligent in supplying them, whereas those of Edinburgh Neighbourhood forums have to be requisitioned from the local officer.

### **Linkages into rest of council decision taking**

By this means some conclusions can also be drawn as to the linkages upwards into the respective decision taking systems. Further information on this point can be obtained by scrutinising the records of other official committees for evidence of items being received from below with a request for action, or remitted downwards for information or comment, the frequency with which this occurs, and the kinds of issues involved - whether parochial or strategic, whether trivial or substantial (For checklist - see Appendix 4). Lack of such upwards communication channels would point to a very fundamental weakness if the desire on the part of the authority is to become more aware of, and sensitive to, the views of their service users. An absence of downwards channels, on the other hand, would indicate that lower levels are not being granted any meaningful position as a body from which advice is sought.

### **Minutes of case study committees**

The purpose behind examining the minutes of the individual committees was firstly to in order to facilitate case study selection by evaluating to what extent and in which ways they can be differentiated, and secondly to gain an initial feel for how they actually operate on the ground. As before, some first impressions can be gained simply from the format and appearance of the papers themselves, whether ample or skimpy, whether drafted in officialese or an 'easy read'.

Moving on, on every occasion two sets of information were to be compiled, the first relating to attendance records, the second to content. The usefulness of the former is in gaining an accurate picture of the size of committee, the people present on each occasion, the organisations, councils or departments which they represent, the stability of the membership and faithfulness of attendance. An assessment can also be made of the relative sizes of the three categories of stakeholders, namely any councillors, officials and community. There may, in addition, be some hints of conflict in rapid turnover or refusals by the local authority to grant a place. Multiple membership from the same community organisation is a pointer to a low degree of power sharing since the significance of their additional weight is not regarded as threatening.

### **Content analysis**

Progressing then to the content analysis, this firstly indicates the type of subject matter and secondly its likely provenance. The initial broad conclusion to be drawn is whether the topics being dealt with are parochial or wide ranging, general to all similar committees or individualistic, concrete or strategic. Then, classing the possible functions of the committee as those of raising community issues, giving or receiving information, consultation, prioritisation or delegated decision taking, the minuted items can be classified accordingly (for checklist - see Appendix 5) and a chart derived of how committee time is allocated between these activities. This information is incorporated in the chapters on Taking Part and Agenda Setting.

## **CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS**

The term interview is applied in social research to a very wide range of differing situations from the most informal of chats to the systematised set of questions in a pre-coded schedule. The intention in this study was that discussions would be conducted with various actors through using a semi-structured format, that is one where a set series of topics are always to be covered but these will not be raised in any pre-determined order or necessarily following exactly the same fixed wording on each occasion.

Speaking of meeting 'elite' interviewees (by which he denotes experts on an issue whether lay people or professionals), Dexter states:

*'It is my experience ... that elite interviewees dislike a steady flow of questions. They prefer a discussion or still more, perhaps something which sounds like a discussion but is really a quasi monologue stimulated by understanding comments. Often at any rate I try to handle the relationship as discussion - two reflective men trying to find out how things happen, but the less informed and experienced one (the interviewer) deferring to the wiser one and learning from him.'* (1970, p 56)

The aim then is to come as close as feasible to a normal conversation going with the flow as it naturally develops. Unlike the social survey where standardisation across hired survey administrators is the desired aim, the advantage for the single individual conducting their own research is that there is not the same difficulty with replication. A certain degree of analysis can occur simultaneously with questioning, so that interesting new avenues of thought can be explored should they happen to open up. The search is for maximum learning whilst avoiding imprinting the outcome with the researcher's own preconceptions. On the other hand, there should be a broad common framework to ensure that set issues are all pursued in every instance.

Some of these issues relate to the research hypothesis that effective participation is inhibited by structural deficiencies, that is by objective factors which, as such, can more readily be verified from interviewees. Included here are such problems as timing of meetings, lack of resources, non-existent linkages or poor adaptation of procedures. However, when it comes to such matters as conflict suppression and co-optation, empowerment or effectiveness in altering policies, there is a shift to eliciting responses which must, of necessity, be subjective. Kweit & Kweit (1981) found, for instance, that participants and bureaucrats partaking in the same meetings reached substantially different estimates of the degrees of conflict occurring and its effects on outcomes in achieving their respective purposes. It is here that it is especially valuable to check veracity against findings from other methods. Does a community participant claim to be confident, yet fails to speak when observed in meetings? Has an officer indicated a willingness to learn from lay members whilst there is no evidence of community initiated issues on the agenda? Is the councillor as keen as stated on participatory forms of democracy if minutes demonstrate very sporadic attendance or criticisms for lack of attention?

Furthermore it is anticipated that there are bound to be certain matters which may be particularly sensitive. Such might concern, to take but one possible instance,

the correlation between educational attainment and self-confidence of community participants when faced with jargon-filled documents or forceful professionals. As Cannell & Kahn state:

*'One of the limitations of the interview is the involvement of the individual in the data he is reporting and the consequent likelihood of bias. Even if we assume the individual to be in possession of certain facts, he may withhold or distort them because to communicate them is threatening to his ego.'* (1953, p338)

It is in these instances that the much debated issue of rapport building comes to the fore. Whilst some of the information being sought is personal, it does not appear so deeply intrusive to warrant establishing the extremes of ongoing friendship advocated by Oakley (1981), whilst avoiding the mechanistic style that caused her to adopt this alternative approach.

In the present circumstances the approach to be adopted arises, furthermore, in three, possibly four guises, since interviewees are to be drawn from categories comprising community activists, officers and elected members, some of the latter being local ward members, some central policy initiators. The power balance between researcher and respondent, it can be assumed will vary accordingly. Having had previous experience of operating at this particular triangular interface, maintaining the officer to fellow officer relationship or that of empathetic listener to the community appeared less fraught with difficulty than confronting the councillors. In the latter case, Dexter's suggested role of deferential learner sits uneasily with that of critic. Accusations of bias occur the more readily Becker avers where the researcher is deemed to have ignored what he terms the *hierarchy of credibility*:

*'As sociologists, we provoke the charge of bias, in ourselves and others, by refusing to give credence and deference to an established status order, in which knowledge of truth and the right to be heard are not equally distributed. "Everyone knows" that responsible professionals know more about things than laymen ...'* (1970, p18)

To the extent that a prior career as support worker to community councils is known to interviewees and regarded in the above light, bias is unavoidable if it leads interviewees to angle their responses in some way as a consequence. As mentioned in respect to the selection of case studies, this situation has been avoided as far as possible by a suitable choice of locations.



## EXECUTION OF INTERVIEWS

Two lines of thought came into play in designing how the interviews would be carried out. The first was that the material gathered should be analysed not by case study area, as is perhaps the norm, but by issue across the areas. This it was felt would allow points to be illustrated by comparison of models. The interview schedule (see Appendix 6) was consequently drawn up under headings which matched to tentative draft chapter headings:

- \* Taking Part
- \* Agenda Setting
- \* Accountability
- \* Constraints
- \* Participation/Empowerment
- \* Impact

The second was similarly that the sequence of interviews would overlap between the three areas, with all the community interviews in the first phase, the officers in the second phase and the councillors in the third phase as shown in the diagram in figure 4.1 overleaf.

An additional reason for this choice arose from a perceived danger that there might be a hostile reaction if questioning appeared to criticise current practices. Fear existed that officers might be protective of the reputation of their council or of their department. Likewise that councillors might be less than frank about any shortcomings and the most difficult to challenge as being of the highest status. The aim therefore was that any adverse comments would be grounded in what the previous category had actually reported. As it transpired officers appeared to find it therapeutic to share their concerns with an interested outsider being surprisingly forthcoming on what they saw as the defects in the system, especially the effects of CCT on honest monitoring of services. Councillors may have been less than frank about their own political relationships, but they often revealed those of others whilst other facets were supplied by alternative factions or ambitious activists within their ward. Nor did councillors appear guarded in expressing their dissent over their council's decentralisation and/or participation policies where this existed.

The way the responses were analysed is described in detail in Appendix B.

## ORDERING OF CASE STUDIES

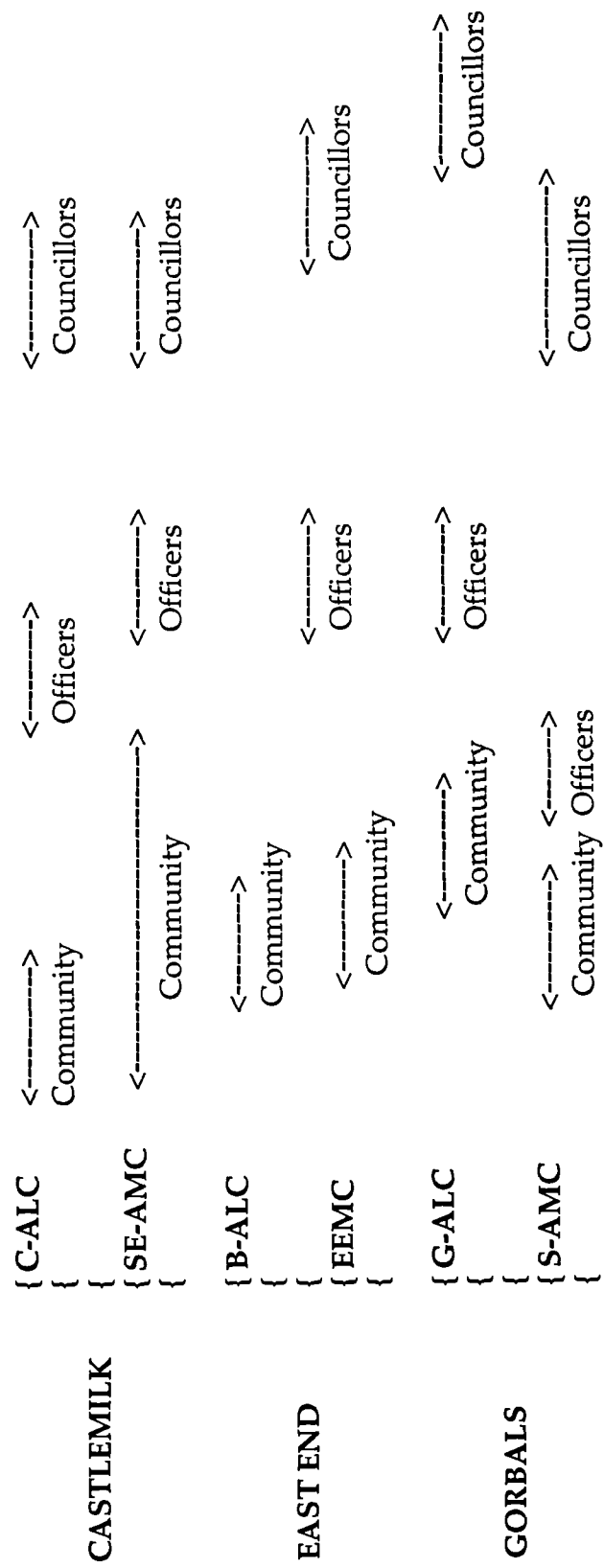


Figure 4.1 Order of Case Study Interviews

It had been anticipated that this might have been so due to the past history as a support worker to community councils in Glasgow being widely known. Insofar as this implied a strong commitment to community involvement, that this might limit adverse opinions. To ensure that whatever effect there was should be equalised as far as possible, this background was explained at the outset to anyone to whom it would not have been known. At the same time it was always made clear in the introductory stages of each interview that the aim of the research was to consider whether participation had achieved the local authority's objectives. If anything there may have been a tendency to strive too hard to offset a conceivable accusation of bias.

## PROGRAMME OF INTERVIEWS

The target set was to interview about 40 respondents in each case study area spread over the three stake-holders. In most instances it was self evident who should be selected, but on the two ALCs with no fixed membership and fluctuating attendances, the core of more faithful participants was singled out (for full list, see Appendix 7). Some interviewees were able to comment on more than one of the models or areas; two were re-interviewed having moved from being community participants to becoming councillors. Where available, office bearers of existing CCs were included whether they participated or not. This provided some activists to comment as outsiders, others of whom were identified by word of mouth. Interviews were carried out wherever the respondent chose and lasted on average 1½ to 2 hours. When the venue permitted, discussions were taped so that actual expressions could be quoted. The programme with a few exceptions was completed within the middle fieldwork year.

Once the main interview programme had been completed and the analysis written up, a final round of interviews was carried out to feed back or cross-check the results. Certain key aspects and the contents of Vignettes were verified with trusted informants. Wherever possible, any councillors or (ex)chief officers involved in the original policy development were tracked down. Lead Officers and central supervisory officers were re-interviewed to discuss the findings. Seminars were held involving local community workers from the case study areas. The alternative models proposed were tried out on the policy officers in local government and the Scottish Office responsible for advice on decentralisation in the new Unitary Authorities.

## PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

In carrying out the study in practice the most significant problem was the degree of turbulence in the conditions under which the research was conducted. It had not been anticipated that Strathclyde Region in its closing phase of existence would choose to introduce a new form of decentralisation in the form of Local Committees. This added an extra layer of committees that had belatedly to be added into the programme. These also potentially altered the linkages between ALCs and the centre, yet were not operating for long enough to assess whether they met some of the weaknesses of the earlier system. A further change in the Region occurred at the time of their last elections based on fewer wards, causing some tightly fought contests with an eye to being well placed for the pending Unitary Authority still under discussion in Parliament. Then came the first elections for this new council in Glasgow marred by intense factional infighting. In these shifting sands whilst officers remained uncertain of the future, relationships between community activists were being forged and dissolved. The politics of the situation were consequently more to the fore than is probably typical, yet much of the action was being played out behind the scenes whilst the research could only penetrate what appeared in the open or respondents were willing to reveal.

Following the line of argument propounded by Yin (1989), with multiple case study research into existing organisations there can be no means of selecting a 'representative' sample in the strict statistical sense employed elsewhere. At every stage, consequently, certain criteria have to be deduced for retaining or discarding one example rather than another. In this instance, for evaluating the causes of variability between models operating in differing cities, between models operating under the aegis of differing authorities within the same locality, or between ostensibly similar models operating in varying localities. Ultimate case studies had to be such that the provisional hypotheses could actually be tested in situations which lent themselves to drawing valid conclusions. The final task of constructing such criteria was undoubtedly simpler where crucial characteristics were judged to be objective ones, rather than attitudinal or demographic characteristics of either the catchment population or specific key individuals.

The other conundrum was more of a presentational one - how to reflect the sheer complexity of the material. The informal nature of the interviews meant that although the same broad fields of inquiry were covered on each occasion, different aspects might be dwelt on. New facts might come to light too late for

their significance to be checked with interviewees seen earlier in the cycle. The final picture which emerged had to be pieced together from a jigsaw of parts derived from varying sources - newspaper cuttings, committee documents, observation - or supplied by different contributors. Nor is it just one unity but a composite of the same scene painted from a multitude of different angles. This does not lend itself to neat evaluation of how many individuals are of a particular opinion such as a rigid interview schedule would provide. Some stories could be corroborated with other witnesses, but some of the most contentious statements about malpractices could not be verified without violating the confidentiality promised. This particularly affected some allegations of the use of grant giving to favour certain parties and the more unsavoury techniques for elimination of unwanted voices described in the chapter on Evaluation. Yet these practices, if true, cannot be ignored since they run entirely counter to the professed objectives of participation.

If there was a disappointment it is that the study did not allow meaningful conclusions to be drawn in relation to the structuring of participation on AMCs. The case studies had been selected in the hope of demonstrating that the form with a seat for each community council would cause the fewest problems of accountability. In the event, as is described in the report, any variations were masked by other features which proved more prominent. The possibility still exists that the hypothesis was correct, but it could not be satisfactorily corroborated.

Nonetheless the broad hypotheses derived from the literature regarding the bolting on of decentralisation structures and the failures of adaptation to the presence of community participants could be explored and expanded, and the significance of political activism could be outlined if not fully illustrated. The first two chapters in what follows provide details of the two models of decentralisation under scrutiny, and the case study areas in which they operate. Then come four chapters presenting the evidence on the chosen issues across the case studies. Two concluding chapters cover an evaluation of these models of democratisation with suggestions for alternatives which would better achieved the assumed objectives, ending with a critique of their contribution as new forms of participatory democracy.

## CHAPTER 5

### DEMOCRATISATION IN THE CASE STUDY COUNCILS

Moves towards democratisation in the case study councils of Glasgow District and Strathclyde Region, as was outlined in the earlier chapter on Decentralisation in Scotland, began first not long after their inception in 1975. The system in Glasgow, it was suggested, owed its origins to the Town Clerk's interest in the ideas of Corporate Management and a Leader's concern to avoid electoral downfall through the shortcomings of a paternalistic housing service. It could be categorised as belonging chiefly within that stream of New Managerialism seeking Self Improvement, with Voice added only as a secondary consideration. That in Strathclyde, by contrast, emerged gradually as part of their strategy to offset disadvantage in pinpointed deprived parts of their area with Voice very much to the forefront.

This chapter reviews the development of these initiatives from the early days of their inception, drawing on documentary evidence from various internal and external reviews which have been carried out over the intervening period and comments from the initiators. This fleshes out in greater detail the backdrop against which the current structures have emerged and the ways in which they have, or have not, fulfilled these aims. Some of the shortcomings of the structures, mainly as seen from the councils' own perspective begin to become apparent.

In the following chapters the sources of the data are indicated respectively by the symbols shown below:

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| {O} | By direct observation through visits and at meetings  |
| {I} | From discussions in the course of interviews          |
| {M} | Information extracted from minutes, papers, reports   |
| {Q} | Quotation of exact words as taped during an interview |

## **GLASGOW DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Glasgow at the time of local government reorganisation in Scotland was a city in decline. During the 1950s and up to the 1970s Central Government policies had been planned dispersal of population and industry to the surrounding New Towns of Cumbernauld, East Kilbride and Irvine. Over the period 1961-1977 the drop due to outmigration was 248,068 - leaving a population of about 780,000- whilst over the same period the net job losses totalled 54,500. Not surprisingly, those who left the city were predominantly the young and more skilled labour, so that those remaining contained unusually high proportions of the elderly and the unskilled. Much of the housing stock, with 60 % at that time in public ownership, was itself in an unsatisfactory condition and located within a poor environment. For the first time a situation prevailed where there was an absolute housing surplus but tenants were unwilling to move to certain very unpopular or stigmatised areas. One of the early Leaders of the District Council estimated that out of the city's council housing stock of 170,000 properties, some 70,000 were in areas where people were extremely reluctant to go because of the poor environment (Dynes as quoted in Bryant 1981, p134). The rapid rate of turnover in these areas of the city was contributing to a degree of instability which militated against the creation of any community spirit. Glasgow District Council thus came into being against a backdrop of severe social and economic problems just as resource constraints began to curtail their capacity to tackle them.

### **EARLY STAGES IN GLASGOW**

With housing being its main function and with it being the focus of so many of the council's difficulties, it is not surprising to find that the first moves towards participation and decentralisation were housing led. Tenants Associations (TA) were established in the council schemes in the hopes of fostering better relationships, whilst the housing offices were physically relocated to bring them nearer to their clients. Gradually each office gained a Community Development Officer to provide support and encouragement to the fledgling associations and to assist in the setting up of Tenants Halls or community flats to create a locus for social activities. These steps preceded by some years the move towards Area Management, as did the establishment of community councils.

## COMMUNITY COUNCILS IN GLASGOW

One of the first tasks laid upon the new district councils by the legislation was that of drawing up a scheme for the establishment of community councils (CC). Whilst elsewhere this was undertaken with varying degrees of reluctance, with Edinburgh for instance arguing that there was no necessity for such bodies (Paddison 1977), the concept of CCs enjoyed all-party support in Glasgow. The city was unique in setting up an Information Centre, staffed by graduates from Strathclyde University, to provide a clearing-house to facilitate the process. Nor did they adopt the facile solution of using ward boundaries, preferring to embark on a comprehensive consultation procedure to allow local people to define their own CC areas (Fyfe & Gillon 1978). No preferred population size had been stipulated, following the Wheatley prescription of flexibility in size allowing for 'localities' or 'parishes' ,which had been reiterated in the later Guidance Notes circulated by the SDD to stimulate debate. The latter simply read 'such areas to which people feel they belong and in which they have an interest.' As a result in Glasgow the proposed CCs had widely varying populations ranging from 390 at one extreme to 34,032 at the other. Those at the small end of the spectrum were usually dictated by physical features - major roads, rivers, railways - whilst those at the large end arose either from their prior historical status (Rutherglen Burgh) or to preserve intact a homogeneous housing scheme (Drumchapel). As will be seen later, this variability was one of the factors which coloured views on their suitability for integration into the Area Management system. Paddison (op. cit) also questions whether, just because the areas represent 'natural' communities, this makes them appropriate for community councils.

Inaugural elections were conducted early in 1977, resulting in almost universal coverage with the formation of 99 CCs. Due to the vagueness of the legislation, each was left to devise its own mode of operation, some conceiving this very much as a reactive one of responding to consultations, commenting on planning applications and the like, whilst others from the start embraced the additional roles of providing voluntary services or generating community spirit through arranging festivals. Each CC received a basic grant of £300 for administrative purposes and could apply for extra funding from the District for such small items as newsletters and from the Region for projects. They were not, as Wheatley had prescribed, offered support in the form of an expert Secretary seconded from the Town Clerk's Office, a fact which hampered their ability to operate effectively especially in the deprived areas (Duncan 1994).



For reasons of expediency District Councils were permitted by the Scottish Office to omit full details of the Arrangements for the Exchange of Information provided that an undertaking was included in the Scheme to the effect that these would be forthcoming thereafter. In the event only a minority of councils actually honoured their promises in this respect, with a survey undertaken in 1985 indicating that 38 Districts had yet to produce such a document (CCRC unpublished). Nor were CCs recognised in legislation as bodies to be consulted on such matters as planning applications, unlike their counterpart the Parish Councils in England. The only Act to acknowledge that they had a part to play was that covering Liquor Licensing, where they are afforded the status of a competent objector. Once again Glasgow District showed its good faith by issuing a very detailed Code of Practice for Consultation spelling out the obligations laid upon their own departments and outlining channels of communication with the Region and with other public bodies. They also were generous in retaining the Resource Centre after the preliminary stage of CC initiation to provide a developmental support service.

These circumstances did not inhibit some CCs from achieving a position of some standing, not only in the eyes of their community, but also in the opinion of officers and councillors with whom they had dealings. But development, for all the reasons outline above, was of necessity patchy. Thus the Leader of the council speaking at a conference in October 1981 had this to say:

*'Many community councils are actively functioning, but most have virtually no finance and virtually no teeth. Some of them are very successful, e.g. Corkerhill, but others are little more than talking shops and organisers of local festivals.'* (McFadden 1982, p103)

The District Council had thus voluntarily fathered TAs and willingly embraced CCs, with the two being afforded recognition in overlapping fields, a source of potential conflict which simmers to this day. This then was the position when Glasgow took its first steps towards the introduction of Area Management.

## AREA MANAGEMENT

The decision to introduce a system of area committees was sparked off by two events, the first being that Labour lost overall control of the council at the elections in 1980, the second being the death of Glasgow's first Chief Executive (Mearns 1985). The former caused the party to reconsider its policies, in particular its housing policies, whilst the latter brought to the fore a new Town Clerk (as he chose to style himself) who, as mentioned in Chapter 3, had been a member of the Paterson Committee.

The style of the District on its first formation was that of a traditional Labour council exemplified, as one of the later new wave was to comment, by its elected members being designated City Fathers (Kernaghan 1982). Its housing management style could at best be called paternalistic, at worst conflictual. Policies at the time favoured wholesale demolition at times involving police-enforced evictions of unwilling tenants (Bryant 1981). Writing about an unhappy episode of compulsory rehousing in Maryhill, Jacobs maintained that the system at that time was *'geared to minimising the rights of the individual and local groups and maximising the power of the housing management bureaucracy.'* (1976, p 86). Nor were matters better in the private sector where much of the tenemental property typical of Glasgow required renovation. Whilst the newly emergent Housing Associations may eventually have become a very successful vehicle for regeneration, in their early days the then Housing Convenor (Dyer 1982, p116) describes *'... it is safe to say there is not a mistake which is capable of being made that we did not make.'* By the 1970s Glasgow had moved to a position of having a housing surplus in absolute terms, with whole estates where properties were 'hard to let', whilst houses in highly rated areas were in high demand. Against this backdrop, accusations of corruption in housing allocations began to be heard, culminating with an investigation which reported (GDC 1979) that in 16 out of the 25 cases submitted the let had indeed been irregular. The most famous of these, because of its widespread publicity, involved a councillor who engineered priority for her own son's mistress. It was this dissatisfaction over housing policies, and the specific scandal, which led to the rejection of Labour at the 1977 elections.

They decided not to bid to run the administration, although they held the largest number of seats, the distribution being:

Labour	30	SNP	16
Progressive	25	Liberal	1

choosing rather to allow themselves the breathing space of forming the opposition. Many of the councillors who had been ousted were the more senior old-guard, leaving behind a diminished group of their juniors contemplating the reasons for their downfall.

*'The rump, those of us who were left, were forced to re-appraise our policies: increasingly we became aware (through the Local Government defeat - I am ashamed to say) of the real sense of alienation, frustration, disaffection and cynicism through so many communities in Glasgow.'*  
(McFadden 1982, p103)

The earliest policy document to emerge from this process of reappraisal was a report entitled 'New Horizons in Housing' which proposed the formation of Area Housing Groups.

Labour regained control once more at the elections in 1980, taking 58 seats to give them an overall majority of 44, the SNP being decimated. This provided the stable platform from which to launch their reforms. Their return to power coincided with the appointment of the new Town Clerk who was an enthusiast for '*fullblown corporate management*' (McFadden op. cit, p103), who set about introducing the necessary structures in the form of a Policy & Resources Committee, Programme Area Teams (PAT) and an Officers' Team to achieve central co-ordination. However, Jean McFadden, the then Leader of the Council, was mindful of her own early experiences as a ward councillor when it had proven difficult to express the desires of local residents through the service committee system {I}. To offset the centralising effect of the corporate management measures, a series of local committees was therefore created.

These were initially produced by dividing the city into 8 areas, each formed from groups of electoral wards. The central area, because of its commercial significance had different arrangements. In each of the 7 other areas, with a population of about 80,000, an Area Management Team was established under the leadership of the District Housing Manager. The chosen areas were acknowledged from the start {I} to be too big but were dictated by resource constraints. Recommendations from a report looking at decentralisation of housing management had been that there should be a network of 23 local offices. Likewise a study investigating the kind of one-door service point for Region and District advocated by Paterson concluded that there should be a pattern of 19 throughout Glasgow, with smaller catchments in places with the highest concentration of problems (Forbes 1985). The Director of Housing was obliged to cut the number to only seven (Jackson 1984), which in turn became the loose basis for the Area Management system. It was lack of funds also that led to the first team leaders being the District Housing Managers, who had this task tacked onto their existing workload. As a result in the early stages this strategy was very much housing-led, though the remit of the Area Management Committees (AMC) was the more generalised one of:

Monitoring the effectiveness of the Council's policies and services at a local level through supervision of the Area Management Teams and of service department activities'

The committees were made up of the District councillors, of whom there were about 9 to each area, the relevant Regional councillors and the MPs. Provision was made for community representation but its exact form was to be decided by AMCs as they saw fit. The legal status of the AMCs was that they were advisory and supervisory, reporting to the Policy & Resources Committee.

Whilst this initiative enjoyed the support of the Leader and sufficient senior councillors, notably her Housing Convenor, bolstered by the Town Clerk, it did not win universal approval:

*'Indeed in some quarters, it has been suggested that the City's councillors and officers overall regarded reorganisation as a temporary aberration which, once its obvious weaknesses had been demonstrated, would go away!'* (Ferguson 1982, p39)

One weakness from the start was the status of these AMCs within the overall structure. In order to ensure that the chairmen should be free from any taint of departmentalism the posts were allocated to councillors who were not heavily involved with central service committees. Since the latter continued to enjoy greater prestige, of necessity this meant that the councillors concerned were of lesser standing, usually new and junior. The same went for departments which either sent different officers to the team on each occasion or only junior staff with no delegated powers, a sure sign that *'AMCs were not being taken seriously'* (McFadden op. cit, p106). The inevitable result was that AMCs became regarded as secondary in importance, and would remain so unless steps were taken to curtail the service committees.

As far as participation was concerned, each AMC having been left to come up with their own pattern of involvement, the committees had been in operation for some time before this element was added. By 1981 little progress had been made with a few hesitant steps towards consultation with CCs, issuing 'Green Papers' for discussion by CCs or TAs, CCs invited when an Agenda item affected their area or CC/TAs urged to submit issues for resolution (to which few responded). Only one AMC had taken the initiative in inviting the CCs to nominate representatives from amongst their number. As often this occurred at the prompting of a key councillor, on this occasion Dave Wiseman who combined this role with that of community worker, therefore favouring a community development strategy. Even here though the most he could encourage his colleagues to agree to was an offer of 3 places for 15 CCs, a system which involved creating an additional forum to select and mandate the representatives. The disadvantage of this structure is the weakened lines of accountability, a defect

which we will see repeated in the case studies under investigation where this form of representation is still adopted. McFadden herself was frustrated by this outcome but, in that she was firmly decentralist herself, did not, or could not acknowledge that to be fully implemented on the ground any decentralisation has to be very forcefully driven from the centre. Thus on the one hand we find her deploring the fact that one AMC *'to my horror recently re-affirmed that Committee membership be restricted to District Councillors, Regional Councillors and Members of Parliament'* (op cit, p107) whilst still maintaining that AMCs should be free to make this decision, as indeed she does to this day [I].

## FIRST REVIEW

These deficiencies in the initial operation of the AMCs led to a rapid review being undertaken, the outcome of which was some fairly limited development (Ferguson op. cit), the main features of which included:

- the appointment of a full time officer ... for each management area (replacing the District Housing Manager in this role)
- an increase in the proportion of the council's budget which is available for disposal at area level, under the direction of the area committees.
- devolution of control of a large part of the Urban Programme to area level
- delegation to area committees of the appointment of certain area-based staff
- arrangements to enable the assessment of local need and of local perceptions of priorities to be incorporated in the central corporate planning and budgeting process
- a review of the extent and form of community involvement in the system

Thus at this stage commitment to the concept of Area Management was sufficient to divert resources towards this end for the creation of the new posts of Area Coordinators. Not only was this intended to strengthen the role of the teams, but to move away from domination by housing issues. These proposals also represent a clear shift in the definition of the role away from that of the earlier 'advisory and supervisory' committee to one which has quite significant devolved responsibilities.

In order to do this a way had to be found round some aspects of the then current legislation because the regulations strictly limited the power to control finances of a council to the elected members of that council alone. This debarred regional

councillors from voting on district council budgets or grants, and the same would be true for any community representatives granted voting powers. Ways of coping with this dilemma were found by restricting voting on relevant items, or giving delegated powers to the Area Coordinator to act under the guidance of the respective AMC.

Meanwhile both the community councils themselves and the Community Councils Resource Centre (CCRC) had taken every opportunity to put the case that they should be granted individual representation. In one instance the CC put in an appearance in the public gallery at every single meeting of their AMC until a seat at the table was conceded. The topic was one which was regularly on the Agenda at CC Annual Conferences, as were their problems of effective participation even when granted this recognition. Very gradually representation was increased until in 1983 the picture had become as shown in the following table:

Table 5.1 Early Composition of Area Management Committees

AREA COMMITTEE	ELECTED MEMBERS			COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES		TOTAL
	District Council	Regional Council	MP	Number	Voting	
North West	12	6	3	5	Yes	26
North	16	6	3	18	No	43
North East	6	4	2	3	Yes	15
East	11	5	4	None	-	20
South East	9	5	2	5	Yes	21
South	13	8	5	3	Yes	29
South West	8	5	3	4	Yes	20
Central	12	2	1	None	-	15

Source: Jackson 1984

From this it can also be seen that there was variability in the granting of the vote, the possession of which was seen as particularly significant by the CCs as a symbol of their equality of standing with the elected councillors. In this instance the CCRC argued (CCRC unpublished) that CCs might be advised to demand direct influence through individual representation rather than insist on voting

powers which necessarily could be seen as by elected members as a threat to their own representative status

By the same gradual process the remit was also strengthened so that by this date it is being described as being:

Table 5.2 Remit of Area Management Committees

1. to improve the delivery of services and make them more responsive to local needs;
2. to improve the identification and analysis of local problems, needs and opportunities;
3. to provide a local view about the relevance and effectiveness of current spending patterns and proposals for changing these (including proposals for funding of new or improved services through savings achievable by reducing or eliminating existing lower priority services)
4. to provide a local view about the relative priority of competing bids for capital expenditure
5. to administer in accordance with Council guidelines, funds allocated for the benefit of the area;
6. to monitor and provide a local viewpoint about the effectiveness and relevance of existing services and policies and where deemed necessary to bring forward for consideration by Departments, Programme Area Teams, or the Policy and Resources Committee, proposals for changing policies or practices;
7. to give local elected members more, and more direct, influence and control over the council's activities in their areas;
8. to involve local people more in the work of the Council by guaranteeing a form of representation for local groups; and
9. to devolve decisions with purely local implications from central committees of the Council.

Source: Mearns 1985

But whilst this was the description presented in public - at a university seminar at which community councils were present - the reality behind the scenes was perhaps somewhat different as became apparent shortly thereafter.

## 1984 REVIEW

Labour was returned once again at the elections in 1984 with a manifesto commitment :

- \* TO DEVELOP GLASGOW'S SYSTEM OF AREA MANAGEMENT
- \* TO RESTRUCTURE, RADICALLY, THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE SYSTEM
- \* TO RESTRUCTURE, RADICALLY, THE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

To carry these proposals forward, a Working Party of councillors was instructed to make a thorough internal review of all the committee structures. Their final report (which runs to 80 pages) is highly critical of the continued lack of cohesion, the absence of systematic policy making, the failure of officers to make themselves truly accountable to elected members, and the continued entrenched departmentalism. With respect to AMCs the overall findings were that they had limited devolved power and funds, a minimal role in controlling service delivery, little influence on central decisions, their involvement being dependent largely on the whim of Service Committees/Programme Areas. The concerns expressed by the elected members were (GDC 1984):

- the low status of Area Committees in the Council hierarchy in relation to Service Committees
- the lack of control by Area Committees over matters affecting their area
- the inadequate monitoring role of the Area Committees in relation to Service Departments
- variable officer commitment to Area Management

The call was for AMCs to be given real **influence** over policy and budget decisions, and **power** to take decisions within a financial and policy framework set by the centre, including deciding on variations in services and controlling local matters where no expenditure was involved.

All the criticisms, however, address the weaknesses from the perspective of elected members. There is no analysis at all of the value or otherwise of community representation as a contribution to achieving the Council's objectives; no discussion of whether it should be scrapped or continued; if the latter, what steps were needed to make its input effective. Yet at one point the report declares that the Council is generally unaware of customer reaction to its services, unless an issue is raised by the community, indicating that in its current form clearly representation was not meeting the Council's needs in providing feedback on its service provision. The only passing mention is the familiar one that (due to the restrictions placed by the legislation) there might need to be adjustments if the powers of AMCs were strengthened.



What effect, if any, this investigation had is not apparent since there is no indication that these matters were ever formally discussed. In the event, shortly thereafter in the annual election for the Leadership Jean McFadden lost to Pat Lally. The latter, who belongs to the 'earlier school' of Glasgow councillor, had the reputation of being a confirmed centralist. As such he was not expected to be at all interested in Area Management or community involvement. Any substantial progress therefore halted and such changes as there have been over the intervening ten years have seen a continuation in the gradualist trend.

The boundaries were amended in 1986 to create new special initiatives in Drumchapel and Easterhouse, and in 1987 when GEAR was wound up, the successor structure in the East End went under the name of Area Management Committee but in fact was more akin to the former in comprising a joint committee of the Regional and District Councils. These three are all decision-taking committees operating under different sections of the 1973 legislation which limits membership to 2/3 from the councils (1/3 District, 1/3 Region) and a matching 1/3 co-options. Even this limited capacity to bring on non-elected members was threatened in 1989. One of the concerns of the Widdicombe Committee (1986) was the use being made by some (English) authorities of this power of co-option to pack committees with their political sympathisers. The resultant Local Government & Housing Act of 1989 legislated to prohibit future co-option of voting members onto decision-taking committees. AMCs could continue to operate as before on the formalistic grounds that they are advisory and supervisory, but the Initiatives would not escape in this way, having to seek special dispensation. But while this legislation is in force in England, these particular clauses were never enacted in Scotland, although the complexity of the law on this point is sometimes used as a smokescreen - see for instance, the current dispute over the size of membership in the East End.

Over the intervening period representation on the different AMCs has continued to vary, though in the majority of cases the change has been in the direction of increasing membership. In the North however, after a period of extreme turbulence with the CCs on occasion banding together to outvote the District Councillors, the number of places was cut drastically at the next available opportunity. Whether or not voting rights are acceded also varies between committees depending on their choice in this respect. Membership numbers and voting rights today stand as follows:

Table 5.3 Membership and Voting on Area Management Committees

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATION ON AREA MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES				
Area Management Committee	Community Councils	Tenants Associations	Structure of Representation	Voting Rights
West	12	1	One per community council One per Residents' Executive	Yes
North West	13	-	One per community council	Yes
North	4*	-	One per Regional Council Ward	No
South West	14	-	One per community council	No
South	16	2	One per community council Ethnic groups	No
South East	6*		Two reps per Housing District	Yes
Central	5	-	One per community council	-
Initiative				
Drumchapel	3*		Nominated by C O C	Yes
Greater Easterhouse	5		Nominated by Neighbourhood Forums	
East End	4**		One per Area Liaison Committee	No

\* From any organisation, not necessarily CC

\*\* Currently subject to dispute whether CC only

Source: Community Councils Code of Conduct for Consultation valid as at 1994

A survey of CCs carried out in 1987 found (Duncan & Hemfrey 1988) that they placed immense value on participation in AMCs which they believed allowed them a better insight into the workings of local government and improved access to information. But whilst 75% of those with a seat at the table were satisfied with the way in which issues were dealt with at committee, less than 10% of those with limited representation were satisfied. In addition those CCs forced to act as delegates for groupings of CCs were unhappy with the procedures, expressing concern that they were invariably outnumbered by local members with their views being regarded as irrelevant. Dissatisfaction was also expressed by those CCs which did not have voting powers. Nonetheless there was found to be a very high attendance rate at AMC meetings and it has been concluded that the involvement of CCs is instrumental in preventing this decentralisation initiative from becoming marginalised as it has elsewhere in Britain (Duncan 1990).

From a local authority perspective, on the other hand, it appears from the evidence reviewed here that the council has failed to achieve its own objectives.

There would seem to be a number of reasons for this. The first, and most obvious, is the confusion of disparate aims. As the Leader herself stated:

*'We say that it was given a loose framework, but perhaps none of us really knew what we wanted from Area Management. In retrospect, our objectives were not properly defined. If pressed, we would say that we were groping towards an area perspective in the decision making process - attempting in some way to break down the apathy and cynicism among communities evidenced by so many things ranging from population decline right down to petty vandalism. We were groping towards improving the delivery of services to make them responsive to local demands. We were responding to the public desire to be involved. We were also responding to our own realisation of people's alienation and our recognition of the fact that Community Councils were not working properly; partly through the fault of Local Government and partly because of the framework they were given by Central Government. We were trying to improve local problem identification, recognising the difficulties, both of communities and of members of a large Authority. We also wanted to enhance the role of the elected member. Finally we were hoping to deal more effectively with multiple deprivation.'* (McFadden op. cit, p103)

It is one of the contentions of the current research that the council did not put in place a committee structure which was adapted to the inclusion of non-elected members in a way that permitted them to play a meaningful role.

## STRATHCLYDE REGIONAL COUNCIL

When Strathclyde came into being in 1974 its sheer size and diversity pointed to the need for decentralisation even had this not already been urged through the ideas current in Wheatley and Paterson. The giant region, with a population of 2.4 million, contained just under half the total for the whole of Scotland. It covered a landmass of 5,348 square miles dominated by the city of Glasgow and its surrounding suburbs, but also encompassing a sparsely populated rural hinterland. The council of 103 members was, and has remained, controlled by Labour who enjoyed a substantial majority. The question was not so much should Strathclyde decentralise, but what form this decentralisation should take. After some deliberation in 1975 the decision was reached to retain the traditional central service committees, rather than adopt an area approach, in order to retain uniformity of policies. Administratively, on the other hand, there was a division into 6 sub-regions, namely:

Argyll and Bute      Ayr      Dunbarton      Glasgow      Lanark      Renfrew

each with a sub-regional headquarters. In tandem, however, a number of innovative 'new structures' were introduced which experimented with different ways for councillors to operate within the system (Young 1981). At almost the same moment Tony Crosland's announcement "the party's over" heralded the first of the many moves towards stemming local government expenditure, so that the Region was born in the era of resource constraints.

## DEPRIVATION STRATEGY

As we have seen, Strathclyde inherited projects already operating through the Urban Programme, together with a patchy coverage of community workers within the social work and community education services. It was, in addition, the site of one of the government's CDPs in Ferguslie park running from 1972 to 1977. Plans were in the offing for the cancellation of Stonehouse with the innovative application of the New Town strategy to the Glasgow Eastern Area Renewal (GEAR). Thoughts of tackling deprivation and of community development were therefore very much in the air. It happened coincidentally that three of the prominent new councillors came from backgrounds which particularly favoured this kind of approach. Geoff Shaw, the first Convenor of the council, was a community minister and ex-Glasgow councillor with a history of involvement in Gorbals and Govanhill. He was a keen supporter of the concept of community councils as evidenced by a personal letter he sent to them. Ronald Young, perhaps the maverick of the three, combined his work as a councillor with that of Co-Director of the Local Government Research Unit, publishing a number of trenchant polemical works on the failings he perceived even in reformed local government. He later became the prime architect of the region's social strategy. Tony Worthington too was a lecturer at Jordanhill College in the Department of Youth and Community Work.

There was thus a strong pro-community ethos prevailing in influential places. Evidence of this is seen in the very first Regional Report (1976) which sets out the twin aims as tackling problems of multiple deprivation and creating employment opportunities, laying the foundations for the dual approaches of social and economic regeneration. In quick succession came 'Multiple Deprivation' identifying 45 Areas of Priority Treatment (APT) throughout Strathclyde requiring special attention, followed by 'Areas in Need: the Next Step' in 1978 establishing 7 special joint initiatives. At about the same time Councillor David Laing, another community minister, started the precursor of what in time became the Area Liaison Committees which are the subject of this research. His idea [I] was

to set up a very informal get-together for community activists in his east end ward of Parkhead/Shettleston to discuss the area's problems as they saw them and, where necessary, to call in the relevant officers. The aim of the latter was partly to open up direct communication with a view to problem solving, partly to ensure a sense of accountability to local people .

Running in parallel with these developments, one of the innovative structures the region invented in 1976 was the member/officer group conceived as a temporary 'think-tank' to consider a specific aspect of policy. As the title implies, it brought together councillors and officers from various disciplines to tackle very specific issues. One such was the Policy Review Group on Community Development Services which sat under the chairmanship of Tony Worthington from 1976 on, producing their report in 1978. The remit of this group was to recommend improvements in the community development services - operating within social work, community education and the police - and to:

*'examine alternative approaches to community development with a particular emphasis on the need to stimulate purposeful community participation'* (SRC 1978, p2)

The objectives were articulated as being the encouragement of a sense of belonging, the stimulation of self-help activities, the cultivation of local leadership and the devolution of power to local communities to increase their influence on decisions. Much of the emphasis was on improvement in managerial techniques - cutting out duplication, enhancing co-operation in the field and responsiveness to local people. The following quotations provide a flavour of the tenor of the contents of the report:

*'We found that the local communities we visited were usually most reasonable in their requests - the majority merely wanted courteous treatment; replies to letters; simple explanations of the issues; consistency in dealing with requests; easy access to information; easy access to accommodation for community purposes; regular bus services; and an end to prolonged delays while Council administrations and Committees processed their requests'* (SRC 1978, p30)

*'Our services at local level are particularly bad at responding to problems for which several departments have a claim to some responsibility. ... each service may play its part independently to the best of its ability but the whole adds up to a complete inadequate response from the public services'*

*'During our review we also came across a great deal of criticism of the relationship between professionals and the community. This criticism took several forms: first that as more and more services were provided by the state, more and more responsibility had been taken away from individuals*

*and the community. ...a second form of the criticism of professionals says that they use their expertise to mystify the public. Jargon and knowledge of the rules are used as techniques to convince the public that the professional knows best - it is all too difficult for the ordinary man to understand.'*

The analysis was thus very much about the need for the region and its staff to improve the way they operated. The changes needed were seen as being:

- A substantial increase in the importance accorded to community development in Strathclyde;
- Supplementing the committee system to give councillors more control of the direction of services;
- Increasing the ability of services to respond to the community's needs, not the departments' needs, by having a team of officers at the local level
- Using the enormous untapped talents of people more effectively, with community workers adopting this as their priority task.

The recommendations were the formation of a region-wide Community Development Committee overseeing separate budgets for community education and social work, the establishment of a community development officers group, and finally the introduction in selected places throughout the region of Area Development Teams. The passage relating to the latter reads (SRC 1978, p50):

*An Area Development Team for community development purposes should be set up as a matter of urgency for each area in the Region. The pattern of areas should ultimately be determined by the Community Development Committee, but we would recommend that wherever possible it should be based on Regional electoral divisions. We recognise, however, that in some cases it may be necessary to group electoral divisions. The Regional councillor (or in the case of grouped electoral divisions, one of the Regional Councillors) should chair the team, and the 'core group' should consist of Education, Social Work and (where possible) Police. One of the first tasks of each team should be to secure the active co-operation and commitment of local District Councillors, District Departments and Community Councils, and teams should be free to co-opt any representatives of these bodies whom they feel would be able to make a strong contribution to their work. As well as this, contact should be maintained with a wide range of statutory and voluntary bodies operating in the area.*

This then was the first blueprint for new participatory structures. The main features of the Worthington Report were fully accepted, with the Community Development Committee being established (under the convenorship of Worthington himself) in 1978. However, progress towards setting up the ADTs, which had been regarded as so urgent and which had been advocated on a

region-wide basis, was both slow and patchy so that by 1984 only 20 were reported as being formed.

## **SOCIAL STRATEGY FOR THE EIGHTIES**

During 1982 the region organised a series of 6 community conferences to feed into a review of their development strategies, the outcome of which was their 'Social Strategy for the Eighties' (SRC 1984). As the report summarises:

*4.8 The 'community approach' has become a fashionable phrase which conceals more than it reveals. There seems to be a consensus about the desirability of something called community development/ involvement/ participation. But behind this consensus lies confusion. At one extreme it may reflect a deliberate or unconscious attempt to ensure a more orderly acceptance of policies and services: at another it might express a genuine desire to shift the balance of political power. In between there is a lot of confusion - and no little paternalism with assumptions that it is communities, or groups within communities, who need changing or developing. It is our view that it was rather the policies and procedures of public agencies that needed changing or developing. In espousing community development we needed the active support of residents. Support here does not mean harmonious consensus. Many people in local government seem to think that clients of statutory services should have a subservient and grateful relationship to local government and that collective organisation and protest is impertinent and unseemly.*

*4.9 What they seem to want from community involvement is public approval if not applause! By 'support' we mean strong collective organisation to press from below - whether by example or argument - for the sorts of improvements we indicated in 1976 we wished to see from our nominal positions of power. Because what many of us have recognised is the illusion of being able to use such power and authority to engage on our own in significant change"*

In answering the question 'Why has there not been more progress?' the answer given is:

*5.3 Our formal political commitment has never wavered but we have had to recognise that many staff did not know we had a policy, let alone what it meant for them. Many of those who did, saw it more as a charitable gesture, in terms of dropping a few crumbs once the rest had had their fill. Apart from the fact that new resources are no longer available, one of the problems about such a perception is that when 'collective belts' are being tightened even the crumbs are eaten. Such perceptions reflect the 'blaming the victim' views deeply entrenched in society as a whole - as well as judgements about the 'peripheral' nature of the Region's strategy in relation to the 'real' work of departments.*

The conclusion drawn was that attempts of this nature to open up the processes of decision making and to channel extra resources to specific areas posed a challenge to organising principles of urban government - uniformity of service division, functional service management and formal political and departmental hierarchies of control. The reaction, to quote Hambleton (1981), was that whilst some opposition might take the form of hostile resistance, a more subtle and probably widespread response was to absorb the threat - to defuse, dilute and redirect the energies originally directed towards change.

A 'new' strategy was advocated, strengthening the principles of area discrimination, one element of which was that:

*\*8.4 Designation as an APT should entail the establishment of a local structure, chaired by the local Councillor .... to identify the most serious deficiencies and to explore with local officers, residents and members how best these problems can be addressed.*

which does not sound all that different from the earlier Worthington model but does demonstrate two emergent features. Firstly the clear linkage to APTs and secondly the dropping of community councils (which had by this point been in operation for about four years) in favour of undefined 'residents'. As Ronald Young, the driving force behind this report says elsewhere:

*'I should indicate my own unease about community councils . Ten years ago I spoke in their favour. Given the autocratic attitudes which then prevailed in local government, and the lack of neighbourhood structures, they seemed a heaven-sent opportunity to assert one of the missing components in local government - the neighbourhood component. We should have known that you cannot achieve community involvement through structures imposed by statute. Genuine community involvement is threatening and spontaneous. The various statutory bodies which exist such as Community Councils, School Councils and Health Councils are generally cosy little clubs, with all the worst features of local government and no particular relationship with the community they purport to represent .' (Young 1984, p59)*

This was a view echoed by many of the region's community workers (Barr 1991), who also viewed the area committees of their own council in much the same light as top-down initiatives likely to co-opt community activists into cosy relationships as a diversionary tactic [see Chapter 9 Constraints].

In addition to the strengthened ADTs, other new structures were introduced, the first of which were Divisional Deprivation Groups (DDG) with a broad role of monitoring the deprivation strategy and a specific remit to oversee the urban



programme. Secondly, Local Grants Committees comprised of local ward councillors were introduced in 1983, usually involving two or three wards and aimed at providing a quick mechanism for making small amounts of money available to local groups. These were widely appreciated by community and councillors alike since most operated on an informal basis allowing applicants to attend and plead their own case for funding. It also had the advantage of bringing fieldworkers and members into closer day-to-day contact; councillors, particularly backbench ones, enjoyed the increased responsibility and saw it as a good way of cultivating the ward (Martlew undated ?1986).

Overall though the picture which emerges is of isolated *ad-hoc* developments, weakly driven from the centre, evolving patchily and only where there was strong local enthusiasm from councillor, fieldworkers and community. Furthermore these initiatives were all 'bolted on' to the system which had the disadvantage firstly of twin tracking with the centrally organised, mainstream activities, and secondly of ever mounting time commitments. The latter caused one councillor interviewed by Martlew to comment wryly that "*The system is in danger of collapsing about its own ears*" (op. cit, p38). Ironically despite all these efforts the problems of co-ordination had actually been exacerbated.

## AREA LIAISON COMMITTEES

As described above Area Liaison Committees (ALC), as they came to be known, developed both gradually and individualistically in different parts of the Region. For a start the boundaries were for reasons of convenience based upon those of the APTs, which themselves varied in size from a few streets to a population of some 20,000 (which hardly conformed to a neighbourhood). Each was chaired by a regional councillor, who might be the sole elected member or one of up to four, whose degree of commitment to either decentralisation or participation, as we saw in chapter 2, might not be very great. The lead officer, who was obliged to undertake this role in addition to normal duties, was drawn from either community education or social work (who competed to avoid the task {I}). The purpose was simply to provide a forum for local members, officers and community representatives.

From this beginning grew the first written 'constitution' drawn up by the Chief Executives Department which laid down that ALCs had the following objectives:

To identify and prioritise local needs; and

- (i) explore how best these could be addressed;
- (ii) monitor progress on any local strategies devised
- (iii) devise projects or proposals for alterations to existing budgets or improved co-ordination;
- (iv) provide a direct link to and from the Divisional Community Development Committee

1983 saw the sub-division of the central Community Development Committee to form a set of 5 Divisional Community Development committees (DCDC) constituted of all the ward councillors for the respective sub-region. This was to further fragment policy with respect to ALCs since each of these new DCDCs had responsibility for overseeing ALCs within their Division, whilst overall monitoring lay at one remove with the Social Strategy Sub-committee. Seeing the strengthening of ALCs as one of its first priorities, the Glasgow DCDC in 1986 issued new guidelines elaborating the earlier ones. Whilst the overall objectives remained much the same, the specific **responsibilities** were amplified to become:

Table 5.4 Remit of Area Liaison Committees

(i)	preparation and monitoring of area profile or local strategy;
(ii)	discussing the Urban Programme proposals for the area - this will include stimulating projects, devising applications and deciding on the relative priorities between applications;
(iii)	ensuring that the relevant recommendations on the Council's strategic concerns from member/Officer Groups are implemented effectively and efficiently at a local level;
(iv)	ensuring local community groups and the wider community are kept fully informed and involved in the work of the Committee;
(v)	assisting to devise and participating in appropriate training programmes; and
(vi)	increasing the accountability of staff to the communities they service;
(vii)	maintaining effective communication with agencies outwith the Council, such, District Council departments, health service, housing associations and the SDA.

Source: Strathclyde Regional Council 1986

Membership was to include the regional councillor(s) and officers, where possible the parallel district councillors and/or officers, whilst the means for securing community representation was to be that:

*'appropriate community groups should be asked to send delegates to meetings. Each Area Liaison Committee will devise, through discussion with local groups, the most appropriate means of ensuring effective and meaningful representation of local residents.'* (SRC 1986, §8.4)

This left the issue very much in the hands of the local elected member and officers and there is anecdotal evidence that, in places at least, this discretion was used to handpick individuals. Often they came from Urban Programme projects started by these same fieldworkers, whilst 'awkward' people were screened out [1]. Although the majority of the fifty eligible community councils in Glasgow were included with some 95% playing a part, in some cases they did not even receive an invitation (Hemfrey 1988). In addition, they became just one group amongst others from the voluntary sector, with no special status accorded. This was in sharp contrast given their inclusion as the sole community organisation recognised in the original Worthington version, and the significance attached to them by Wheatley as the *natural* body to be consulted. This downgrading of their perceived status continues to be at the root of some of the friction at community level which is to be observed today in the case study areas. Insofar as the capacity to control membership was defined as one of the constituents of power then in the context of ALCs this remains firmly with the Regional Council.

## REFLECTIONS REPORT

In December 1989 the council invited the School for Advanced Urban Studies (SAUS) to conduct a review of the existing decentralisation projects including a case study examination of illustrative examples of both economic and social initiatives, joint region/district committees and one ALC. The resultant report drew the general conclusion that, although the twin aims of Strathclyde of targeting resources and promoting democratic control had remained constant over 13 years: *'whilst such consistency of purpose is admirable, unfortunately the council has not developed adequate mechanisms for implementing these policies'* (SRC 1990, p9) They pointed to failures to drive policies through to implementation, to marginalisation of the initiatives because of incomplete geographical coverage, to departments such as social work and education restructuring in isolation from one another.

In general, they advocated:

- strengthening the strategic role of the centre
- strengthening local decision-taking in all areas

The case study ALCs in the East End and Gorbals, in particular, were found to have had little impact in improving the co-ordination of services or attracting additional mainstream funds. They were a source of confusion and frustration to community representatives who saw them as lacking in any real powers. In the event, whilst the contents of the report may have had some impact behind the scenes, it never fed into policy making at the time it was issued, and only indirectly formed the basis for the recent development of region-wide local committees in 1993.

## **SOCIAL STRATEGY FOR THE 90s**

Debate had meanwhile re-opened on the council's whole regeneration programme with an ambitious consultation exercise being launched in late 1991 involving mailing a draft discussion document to 2,400 community groups throughout the region. The overall 'Corporate Objectives' were reiterated as comprising the twin priorities of:

- \* regenerating the Region's economy and increasing employment opportunities;
- \* reducing deprivation and disadvantage and their effects

The Social Strategy was reaffirmed as the vehicle for tackling the latter, but was regarded as requiring revision in the light of accumulated experience, changes in demographic characteristics and new legislation. Although there are innumerable references to community empowerment, there are signs of impatience with existing community development methods:

*'Too much emphasis has continued to be given by the Regional Council to the 'bottom-up' approach which has now been shown to be too slow and insufficiently change orientated. Greater emphasis now needs to be given to the more strategic, change orientated approach set out in Generating Change while at the same time reinforcing the Council's commitment to community involvement and empowerment'. (SRC 1992)*

In order to accommodate resource constraints, it was suggested that there should be more concentrated targeting with the creation of 3 categories of area:

- A. About 5 to 7 of the largest and worst areas to be designated 'partnerships'
- B. Smaller but high priority areas where action would be concentrated on limited key issues
- C. Areas with less severe problems where the focus would simply be on corporate working and improvements to existing services.

All would be eligible for urban aid, but areas of type A and B would be the subject of formal inter-agency agreements, whereas:

*'In category C areas, less formal mechanisms like the existing Area Liaison Committees would suffice but they too would need to adopt a more strategic approach to ensure that existing mainline services and Urban Programme funded projects were tackling the most important local issues. This has implications for the way these groups are resourced, particularly with regard to the role of lead officer and training.'*

## REVIEW OF AREA LIAISON COMMITTEES

Within the framework of this reconsideration of the overall social strategy, a parallel, but entirely separate, review was made of the operation of the ALCs. This took place against the backdrop of an in-depth overhaul of the community education service which at one time brought the fieldworkers out on strike, At the instigation of Glasgow DCDC, consultation was instigated with the individual ALCs themselves (though in the event the evidence is that replies came primarily from the lead officers, reflecting their particular concerns, rather than from the committees or community representatives themselves). By this time the number of local structures had swelled to :

Table 5.5 Number of Local Structures

AYR	5	Social Strategy Groups in groupings of APTs
DUNBARTON	6	Area Development Groups in APTs
	5	" " " in areas of need
	2	" " " in other areas
GLASGOW	23	Area Liaison Committees in majority of APTs
LANARK	19	Area Liaison Committees in all APTs
	1	" " " in non APT
RENFREW	11	Social Strategy Groups in all APTs

Source: SRC 1991

The listing itself indicates the lack of consistency in approach following the creation of the DCDCs which caused the authors of the review document in the Chief Executive's Department to comment:

*'Whilst some degree of local flexibility can and should be accommodated, there is little doubt that a standard approach would improve accountability, ensure credibility and bring clear benefits.'* (SRC 1991)

They saw the weaknesses variously as

- dependence on the attitude of the local elected member, some of whom were noted as lacking *'commitment, energy and enthusiasm'*
- lack of direction on the seniority of officers expected to attend
- patchy involvement by District council members and officers
- lack of clear authority to lead officers, with some seeing the roles as an integral part of their departmental duties, whilst others regarded it as an *'unwelcome adjunct to mainstream workloads and an unwarranted imposition.'*
- clarification needed whether this role was merely administrative or whether it was truly developmental and therefore the proper province of community education and social work
- lack of training for lead officers
- poor links with the Community Development Committees

New guidelines were outlined which, whilst closely following those already in use in Glasgow, did amplify that the primary responsibility was now *'the preparation and monitoring of local strategy ... through clear agenda with achievable projects set.'*

### **ALC Responses**

The individual ALCs echoed many of these criticisms, but also added some of their own (Strathclyde 1992) seeing a need for training for community representatives, for the status of ALCs within Strathclyde to be enhanced, for more resources, and overall for a strengthened role in policy-making. They welcomed having greater control over the Agenda, adding a proposal that the chair might be taken by the community. Only one ALC out of the 59 which replied called for greater devolved decision-taking powers. The general comment was to the effect that the proposed new guidelines were welcomed but *'concern was expressed about their effective implementation'*.

The picture as painted here, bearing in mind that these are in the main comments from lead officers as approved by the local elected member, further filtered through into a Chief Executive Officer's report to committee, is of ALCs relatively content. This contrasts sharply with the shortcomings described by the external SAUS review and those listed above from the internal review. In the event, the ALCs proved only too correct in their predictions about future implementation, as very little transpired apart from some tinkering with organisational aspects and an injection of resources to provide administrative support to the lead officers, whilst clarifying the distinction between their role and that of support workers. Even this minimal action then came to a halt, overtaken by the reorganisation leading to the creation of the decentralised Local Committees in 1993 (see Chapter 3) since part of their remit was to forge closer links with the ALCs.

The main failure of this review, indeed of all its precursors over the years, is that attention is always concentrated on organisational and operational detail whilst singularly omitting to address the question of how any requisite transfer of power is to be achieved. This point is reiterated in much that has been written from inside Strathclyde by Councillor Young who, speaking of the strong counter-vailing forces, both bureaucratic and political, which inhibited devolution and decentralisation, especially where this entails elements of participation, had this to say :

*'Politically the time has come to pull together much more against the strength of the vested interests we confront. There are very serious doubts about our capacity to learn in local government and about whether we are serious about sharing what local power we have.'* (Young 1982, p113)

Yet as has been commented :

*'Organisational reform, though often couched in the soothing language of management is usually about the distribution of power'.*  
(Keating & Midwinter 1983, p123)

Having looked at the evolution of democratisation overall in the two authorities, we turn in the next chapter to the case study areas and the way it has impacted on the ground.

## CHAPTER 6

### CASE STUDY AREAS

The aim of this chapter is to provide a picture of the case study areas, in part factual, in part descriptive, covering first those features which the three share in common and thereafter an individual section devoted to each of the three. The latter begins with some of the history and background leading to the present situation; this is followed by a brief description of the area today including its physical appearance, stage of regeneration, neighbourhood sub-divisions, demographic data and community priorities for action; next comes details of the structures as they operate specifically in each place together with information relating to the means of selection of participants within them; finally there is an account of organisational and political life, and interrelationships between the various actors.

A concluding section then considers a tentative assessment of ways in which the community might be expected to interact with the respective structures. This begins to tease out those factors which come to the fore. Which are the elements in their past history that might contribute to current attitudes? How does the current stage of regeneration govern the stakes for which the community are competing? It is predicted that diversity amongst the sub-areas will pose additional problems for any community representatives who are expected to act as a conduit for neighbourhoods over and above their home area. Also that party political ties between stake-holders cut across other interrelationships; that both of these parameters weaken the lines of accountability, a theme to which the research returns in Chapter 10. In relation to empowerment, we begin to see how the extent to which the community has contributed to the rules which govern the structures in which they are to participate shapes their perception of their capacity to control events, this being illustrated by a Vignette of their respective reactions to an event which took place during the course of the research.



The information for this chapter was compiled from a number of sources. Firstly from observation during visits when conducting interviews and contributions made in the course of these. Some social and economic history was gleaned from academic and local accounts of events. Census data were supplied by the council departments, as were details on population statistics and housing tenure. The nature of any political relationships came from individuals who, if not honest about their own, would be forthcoming about those of other parties.

## FEATURES IN COMMON BETWEEN THE AREAS

Firstly, as all three areas lie within the city of Glasgow, they come under the jurisdiction of the same District and Regional Councils with all that this entails in terms of local authority history and 'climate'; specifically the models for decentralisation share a common provenance. Each was chosen for reasons outlined in the earlier chapter on methodology, and constitutes a substantial geographical locality with populations in the range of 9,000 - 18,000. The very existence of an ALC - the reason for their selection as the subject of this research - means that they all possess in common those features which are used as the criteria when designating an APT. The specific factors chosen by Strathclyde Region for this purpose are the unemployment rate, the numbers of lone parents, the degree of overcrowding, the rate of illness amongst the non-elderly and the numbers of vacant properties. The rationale given by the Region for this is that the data are those available by enumeration district within the census (ruling out any measure of poverty) which are regarded as signalling multiple deprivation (ruling out the elderly living alone). The relevant data for the three case study ALCs is listed in Table 6.1.

In their most recent review of multiple deprivation based on the data from the 1991 census Strathclyde Region (SRC 1993) decided to introduce a new form of ranking whereby three categories of potential areas for treatment were created. The highest category consists of a very limited number of the largest and worst areas which should be given major priority for all services; the next category is to be eligible for urban programme funding, whilst the third is to be treated by whatever resources are available. The final section of the table indicates the number of Enumeration Districts (EDs) lying within the worst 1 and 5 per cent in the Region - the criterion for top category status - and within the worst 10 % - the Scottish Office criterion for eligibility for urban aid. Thus in Gorbals 25 out of 44 or 57 % are in the first band; in Castlemilk 27 out of 69 or 39%; in Belvidere 21 out

of 69 or 30%. At the slightly less severe 10% cut-off the respective percentages are Gorbals 86%, Castlemilk 58% and Belvidere 51%. It is for this reason that all three are included amongst the 11 areas in Strathclyde to be afforded the highest status.

Table 6.1 Case Study Areas

	Gorbals	Castlemilk	Belvidere*
Total Population	9,300	18,437	18,564
Factors defining Area of Priority Treatment Status			
Unemployment	41.47 %	36.08 %	32.28 %
Lone Parents	51.56 %	43.41 %	30.47 %
Overcrowded	7.54 %	8.40 %	6.98 %
Non Elderly Illness	20.91 %	14.22 %	18.91 %
Vacant Properties	9.41 %	11.48 %	4.45 %
Number of Enumeration Districts	44	69	69
Worst 1%	4	4	3
Worst 5%	21	23	18
Worst 10%	13	13	14
Worst 20%	3	20	23
Worst 30%	2	7	5

Information extracted from committee report to Social Strategy Sub-committee held 11 January 1994  
Based on 1991 Census data

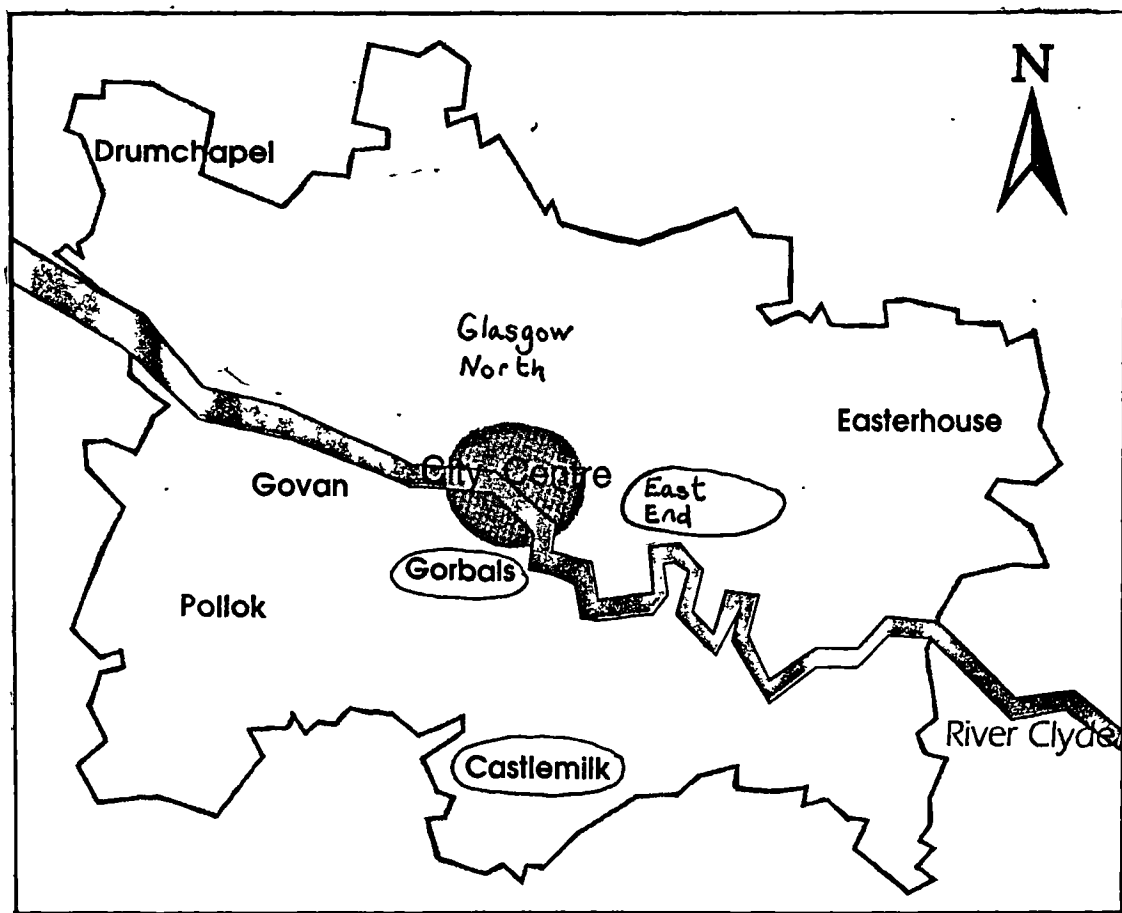
Indeed each has already been singled out as the site for a special initiative by a joint grouping known as the Glasgow Regeneration Alliance, a union of four organisations: - Glasgow City Council, Strathclyde Regional Council, Glasgow Development Agency and Scottish Homes - brought together voluntarily to tackle eight areas which suffer strongly marked disadvantages (GRA 1993). In the

\* These are composite figures for the three APTs in Belvidere (which in addition contains a section of Dennistoun which does not have this status).

designated areas there are social and economic initiatives in which it is the avowed intent that community empowerment will play a strong part in the regeneration process (Idem). The three areas have in common that not only are they generally recognised as amongst those with the highest concentrations of problems, but also that these are being addressed as priority by these agencies using means which will involve the local residents in any decision-making about their own futures.

But beyond these basic similarities the areas differ significantly both in their histories and in their current circumstances. Furthermore each was very deliberately selected for examination in the current research because the decentralised local authority structures operate differently, in addition to which the opportunities for participation by activists vary. The following section of this chapter explore these differences starting with Gorbals, then Castlemilk and finally the East End.

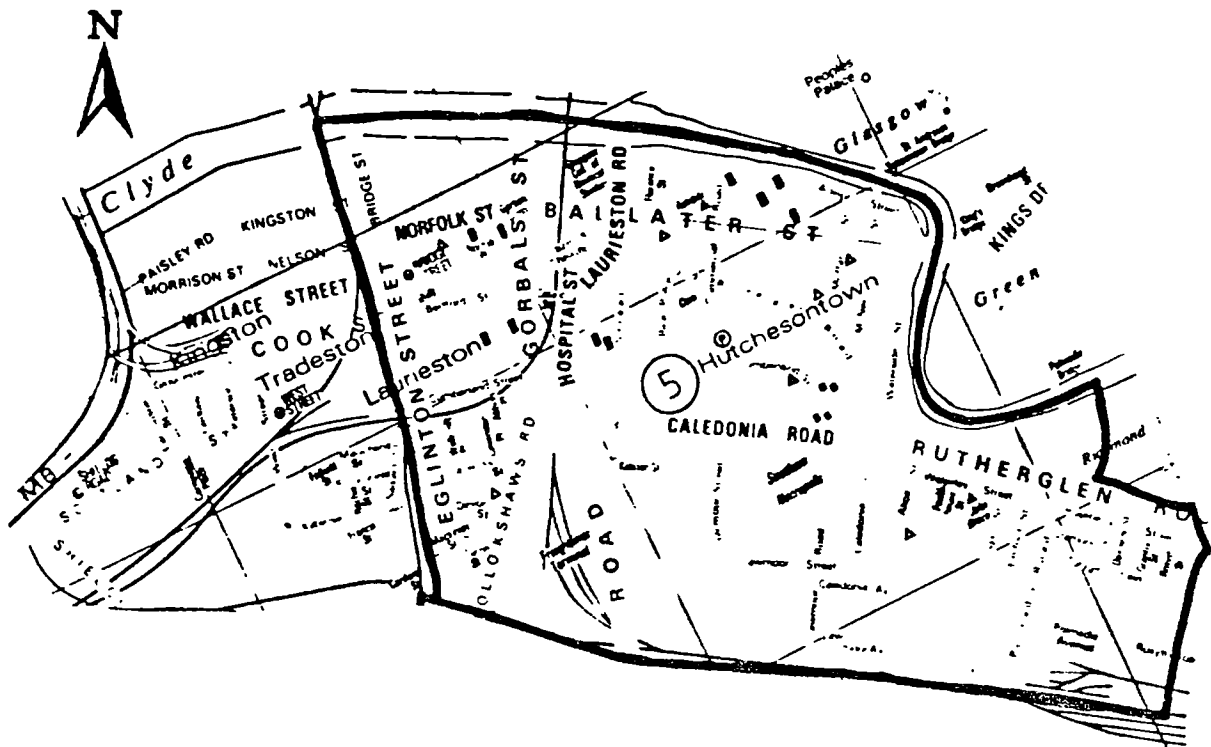
Figure 6.1 Priority Regeneration Areas



## GORBALS

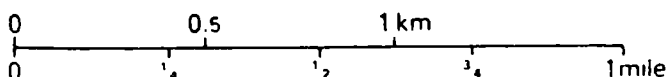
The case study area is that covered by the Gorbals Area for Priority Treatment which forms the catchment for Strathclyde Region's Gorbals/Oatlands ALC. It lies to the south of the Clyde facing across the river to the city centre, which is within easy walking distance. One boundary is skirted by the main railway south to London and a major arterial road, whilst it is dissected by a second which forms the demarcation between its two constituent sub-areas of Hutchesontown and Laurieston. The heavy volumes of traffic caused one wit of yesteryear to quip: "*There are only two kinds of pedestrians in Gorbals; the quick and the dead.*" (Bryant 1979b, p2). Furthermore parts of the area have been blighted for a considerable period of time by uncertainties over further road plans including a southern expressway through the adjacent Govanhill - the subject of a vigorous campaign of objection in 1970 (idem), and the proposed extension of the M74 which is now intended to flank the area to the south - the subject of a second bitter fight still reverberating [1] within the community.

Figure 6.2 Gorbals/Oatlands Case Study Area



Source: Strathclyde Regional Council 1984 APTs in Glasgow Division

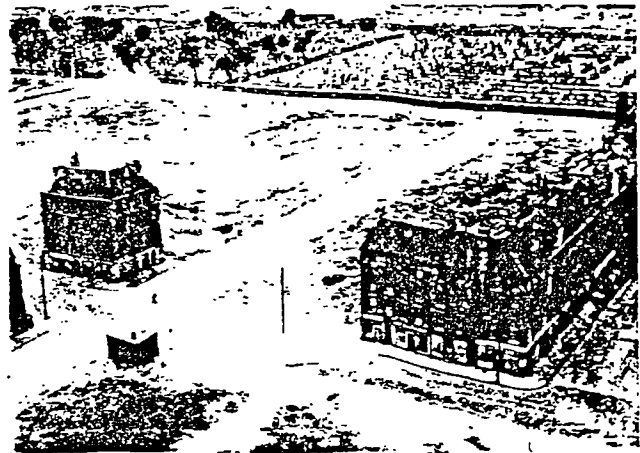
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## HISTORY OF GORBALS

A reputation, once forged, is hard to dislodge and probably that of Gorbals would at the peak of its notoriety have been recognised well beyond the confines of Glasgow. Its image to southerners would be the slums and gang warfare of 'No Mean City' (McArthur & Long 1935), the violence and murder of Jimmy Boyle's 'Sense of Freedom' (Boyle 1977). In a way it is perhaps a sign of the area's sense of pride in itself and gradual rehabilitation that the name has re-emerged in official usage once more where at one period (notably when the constituency was renamed Queens Park in 1969 (Ferguson 1979)) the name was studiously avoided to minimise stigmatisation. In a physical sense that Gorbals has been erased so completely that when Glasser, in his autobiography 'Growing Up in the Gorbals', describes returning after an absence of some years:

*'The whole of the Gorbals was wiped off the map, all the tenements for nearly a mile around the spot where the old Cross had stood, the little workshops and family businesses that had given the Gorbals bread and work and life, the ancient street plan obliterated en-tirely, leaving a desert ... One day I walked through that desert and could not decide where Gorbals Cross had been. Here and there in the devastation stood a bit of broken masonry, a jagged piece of railway arch, a gable with only the sky behind it. '(Glasser 1986, p37))*



OSCAR MARZAROLI, ANNE MARZAROLI ©  
GORBALS WITH SOUTHERN NECROPOLIS BEYOND. 1964

The Gorbals of his boyhood - and of the older of today's activists or councillors - held a population of 90,000 packed densely at 450 to the acre (compared with the 160 later considered desirable). They were housed, as 85% of the residents of Glasgow were at that time, in small tenemental flats. Home was a typical room and kitchen, families sharing a toilet on the landing and a washhouse on the backgreen. Employment was dominated by the ironworks of Dixon Blazes and the small businesses of the Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe for whom Gorbals was the first stopping off point. The area at that time in the thirties had a reputation for political activism splashed with the red of Clydeside speakers at rallies round Gorbals Cross or on Glasgow Green across the river. Interviewees {I}

speak of knots of men discussing national political issues on street corners and in the many pubs (a plan at one time advocated a reduction from 120 to 12 (Ferguson op. cit)), but little in the way of practical community activism.

This came in large part to the area through the group of Church of Scotland ministers who picked out Laurieston/Gorbals as the site for their unique experiment. Having looked around their choice fell on Gorbals because, unlike other areas surveyed, they felt it was still a sufficiently viable 'community' to be turned around (Ferguson op. cit). In one sense it was an odd choice since 46.8% of church goers professed to be Roman Catholics (Idem), reflecting the Gorbals history in housing the waves of Irish immigrants (Edward 1993) At the time no minister serving such an area was expected to have to live within his parish, but the three - Geoff Shaw, Walter Fyfe, John Jardine - came to live in Abbotsford Place following the model of French worker priests. Walter writing in a campaign report described the deteriorating housing conditions:

*'In 3 houses, 59 persons live; lavatories have not worked for a year and have to be flushed with a bucket. Tenants cook either on their own spirit stoves or on an open fire. The lighting was rigged up by tenants and in one place repaired with a plastic head square. In those houses where the light failed the tenants have to do without it and are expected to pay rent as usual. (Ferguson op. cit, p123)*

Though the original objective had been to attract local people into mainstream church-based religion, energy was quickly diverted into practical provision, especially of youth activities for all denominations. Geoff Shaw and Walter Fyfe joined the local Labour Party and rapidly moved into office bearing positions, with Geoff eventually going on to become a leading politician initially on the old Glasgow Corporation and then as the first Convenor of Strathclyde Regional Council. The emphasis was very much on direct action. They themselves dug the sandpits for a new play area, they edited the first community newspaper - The Gorbals View - they initiated Crossroads Youth & Community Association, they fought against Rachmanism in the area... Whilst achieving short-term benefits, this mode of working did little to cultivate local leadership. As a later Crossroads community worker wrote:

*'The local presence of Group members facilitated speedy responses to crisis and other issues. They were on the spot and available for assistance, twenty-four hours a day. ...it is possible that this very availability, coupled with the Group's policy of assuming leadership roles, may have functioned to inhibit the growth of resident controlled organizations in the Laurieston district. Local people tended to rely on the Group members to express their grievances'. (Bryant & Bryant 1982, p28)*

This changed with the adoption of Crossroads as a placement for community work students from Glasgow University and the arrival of paid staff. The unit became more actively involved in working with tenants over housing issues, one of which was the blocking of forced evictions from the final tenements to be demolished (Bryant 1979a), although even here the students were still themselves involved, and with supporting emergent Tenants Associations. At this stage in 1973, dispersion of the tenants from Laurieston (with many going to Castlemilk, the second case study described below) was well on its way.

The newly redeveloped area housed a population of 2,500 in 1,143 flats split between 384 in two 24-storey high-rise and twelve 7-storey access deck type. It was the latter, built to a Tracoba design imported from Algeria, which became known locally as the 'dampies'. They were constructed over the period 1969-73 with the first tenant entering in 1971 and reputedly the first complaint lodged with the contractors in that same year (Bryant 1979a). Crossroads became actively involved in 1975 giving support and assistance to the two Tenants Associations of Laurieston and Hutchesontown. Whilst first efforts were collaborative, these quickly became conflictual since the District Council refused to recognize that any structural causes existed for the problems, the condensation being attributed to the lifestyle of the inhabitants (Bryant idem). As related by Crossroads staff :

*'Strategies employed involved selective law breaking and the violation of social norms; withholding rent; organizing demonstrations and making personalized attacks on power holders.'* (Bryant & Bryant op. cit, p60)

As a result the relationship with the District Council as landlord was *'very strained and abrasive'* reflecting *'frequent attempts to undermine the credibility and morale of the local leaders mainly through allegations that the organising committee was not representative of the wider population in Hutchesontown E'* (Bryant 1979b,24). To counteract this accusation and to demonstrate the strength of their support, the organisers escalated the rent strike by setting up a widely publicised public meeting which attracted an attendance of 600 (achieving this by the coercive means of threatening to cease helping anyone who did not play at least some minimal part). This action eventually led to dampness from structural causes being admitted.

To keep the pressure up, a further event was deliberately held at the Citizens Theatre on the day before the District elections in May 1977, the year it may be recalled - see Chapter 5 - when the housing scandals threatened Labour downfall. Present on the platform were not only the local MP Frank McElhone and Regional

Councillor James Wray, but also the disgraced Mrs Cantley who had shortly before been forced to stand down as District Councillor for Hutchesontown. The pageant enacted that day, related in the 'Dampness Monster' (Bryant 1979b), involved a symbolic fight with Mr Anti Dampness triumphing over Mr Fungus and the five-man Dampness Monster. A drama of a different kind followed when disagreements broke out amongst the audience of 1,000 residents in the theatre about the '*quality of the support which had been given to the campaign by the local Labour party and over aggressive tactics which had been used by the campaign*'. The report of the meeting explains:

*'Some members of the local Labour Party resented the style and tactics of the campaign. It was too abrasive, bloody minded and went over the score in the demands it made on the local coun-cillors. Others alleged that it was really a front for left-wing sect or a rival political party. It is likely that the campaign upset some people because it could not be disciplined or controlled by the established political power structure of the Gorbals. The campaign was an independent organization which showed scant respect for reputations or political orthodoxy. In short the campaign was seen as a threat.'*  
(Bryant *idem*, p32)

Attitudes forged on that night persist to this day and its ramifications did not end there\*. In the short term, however, the campaign was successful in that by 1982 1,000 households had been rehoused and, after a lengthy period of debate over their future, the blocks were finally demolished.

## THE PRESENT DAY GORBALS

Gorbals to the visitor at the time this research began in 1992 literally had a hole at its centre, the former sites of Hutchy E and Queen Elizabeth Square seas of mud awaiting redevelopment. From this flattened landscape rise the remaining twenty three storey blocks which, together with the high rise at Stirlingfauld Place in Laurieston, house the majority of what remains of the population, pockets of colourful play equipment just blossoming at their feet struggling to combat the wider impression of greyness {O}. The unrelated buildings of the modern Sheriff court, the renovated Citizens Theatre and the intriguingly domed mosque fail to create any feeling of a strong physical identity such as Gorbals possessed in the past. To the east stand remnants of the red sandstone tenements characteristic of

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\* Under the then Labour Government McElhone held the post of minister in the Scottish Office with responsibility for Social Services, the funders of Crossroads as community work trainers. He used this position to wage a battle to cut off their grant, a campaign which only ended with the advent of the Conservative Government in 1979.



the old Gorbals, interspersed with new low rise estates. Roads still run from nowhere to nowhere for now irrelevant purposes. At the centre a start is only just beginning in 1995 on the new build housing of the Crown Street Regeneration project which forms the core of the renewal programme.

One objective of the latter is to increase levels of owner occupation which in Hutchesontown constitutes approximately 10% of the stock, the other 90% being split between the local authority and Scottish Homes own or housing association units. By the time the project is completed it is also aimed to have restructured the population profile both by altering the age structure, currently weighted towards the elderly, and by stabilizing its size somewhere above the 10,000 mark (GRA 1993). This would represent a massive drop since the demolition and dispersement policies of the 1950s when the figure ran at 50,000 (GDC 1984), the recent census figures being:

1971	:	18,397	1981	:	12,513	1991	:	9,300
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Whilst these statistics reveal the global picture, it has to be remembered that at an individual level some of those who now remain have lived through the disruption of twice seeing their home destroyed.

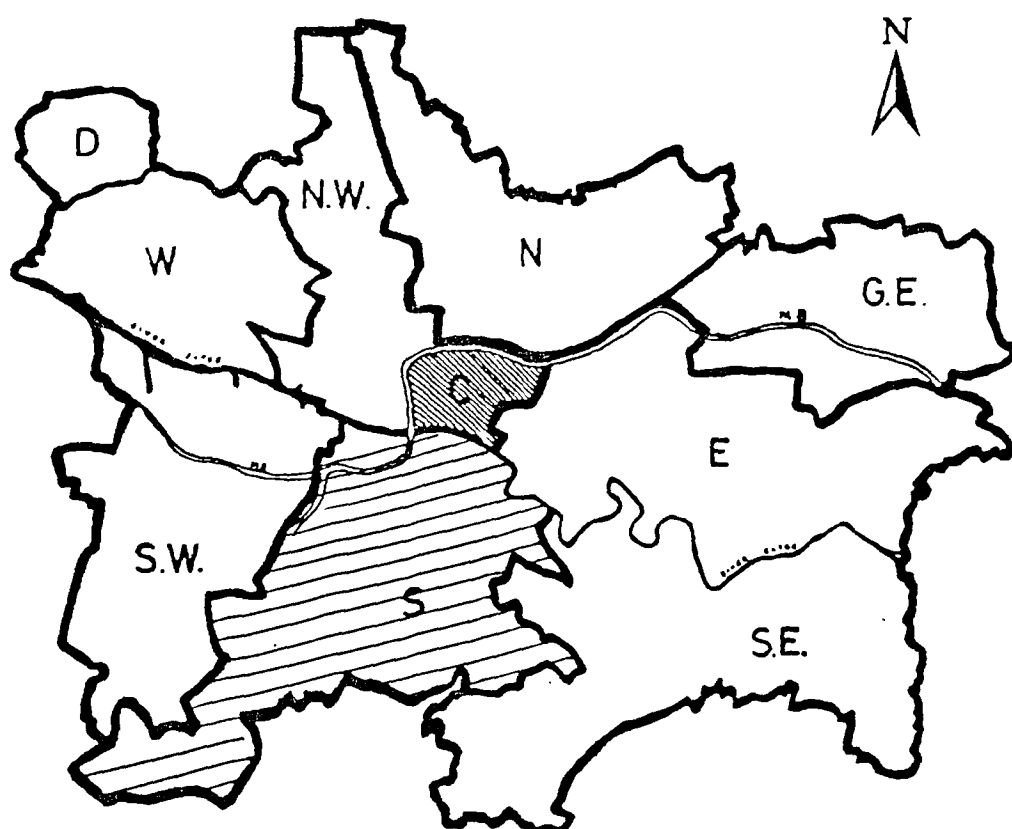
Historically, as we have seen, subdivisions with separate identities existed in Laurieston and Hutchesontown, with the Oatlands of the ALC title forming an enclave within the latter. This situation was recognized by the community's choice of establishing two community councils of the same name, the boundary between the two being the major road. However, the two have combined in the past, for instance in running the Gorbals Fair, and their key office bearers have known each other since their days together in the tenants association {I}. As we will see later, the origins of community divisions today lie more in warring personalities than in neighbourhood rivalries.

Not surprisingly housing in the short-term was cited by interviewees as the key community issue, but unhappiness is expressed firstly that planned improvements will not benefit current residents (which fuels belated attempts to gain greater input to the Crown Street Regeneration Project), and secondly that the narrow focus on physical/environmental regeneration adopted by the agencies concerned will overlook or 'water down' social problems such as the high levels of ill-health amongst the elderly or drug-taking amongst the young {I}.

## SOUTH AREA

The section of the city covered by the South Area Management Committee - of which Gorbals forms a component - stretches from the centre at the river outwards to the city boundary.

Figure 6.3 South Area Management Area



In housing terms it is an area of contrasts in that the Pollokshaws Housing Office both contains more local authority housing than any other district in Glasgow and the highest percentage (55%) of owner occupiers - mainly in the Victorian villas of such areas as Pollokshields, Newlands and the newer housing of Simshill - so overall it hardly forms a coherent unit. With a population of 116,625 the area is the most densely populated of the nine management areas and contains the largest percentage of those of ethnic origins (GDC 1994). Gorbals with a current population of 9,300 constitutes only 8% of the total for the South AMC. Nor is Gorbals the sole APT or the sole initiative since within the South there are further APTs in neighbouring Govanhill, in Carnwadric/Arden/Kennishead and in East Pollokshields, plus a special economic initiative in Govan and a comprehensive renewal project in Darnley.

## STRUCTURES AFFORDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATION

The form of community representation on the S-AMC is that every CC is offered a non-voting place at the table and there are two places for ethnic minority groups. This results in a potential committee membership of 38 comprising 11 District councillors, 6 Regional councillors, 3 MPs, 1 MEP\* plus 15 CC and 2 ethnic organisations. This committee oversees the actions of a team of District officials headed by the Area Coordinator. Monthly meetings are held in the city Chambers in the daytime. Amongst other things, the committee has ultimate say over the expenditure (1993/94) of an Area budget in the region of £380,000, an Environmental budget of £330,000 and Urban programme projects, in addition to overseeing a housing capital programme approaching £7 million.

G/O-ALC, by contrast, consists of a single Regional councillor, a Lead Officer drawn from the Community Education Department and an ad hoc collection of local groups, the two community council representatives being amongst the regular attenders. Over the study period meetings were held very irregularly (none at all for six months) and the average attendance - apart from the night when the Urban Programme applications were prioritised - was ten.

The final local authority initiated structure is a recently convened Forum set up by the Housing Department to bring together the TAs within Pollokshaws. This is, to date, mainly an information-giving body. Unusually for such groupings there is little common membership with other groups such as the CCs so that there are weak links from this into the S-AMC, despite the fact that (as we will see in the chapter on the Agenda) the committee deals with many housing issues including - in theory at least - the all important capital budget. Indeed the Pollokshaws Housing Manager sees this as a general problem since the community council members on S-AMC tend to be drawn from owner-occupiers or Scottish Homes tenants, who consequently have little firsthand familiarity with the District housing system [1].

The other opportunities for participation are provided by the multi-agency partnership brought together to attempt to bring about comprehensive urban renewal in this part of the city, the partners being GDA, SRC, GDC, Scottish Homes, local and national housing associations and the private sector. Gorbals Initiative is the economic arm, whilst Crown Street Regeneration Project is, as the name implies, dealing with the redevelopment of the gap site previously occupied

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\* The only AMC to adopt this category, but never in attendance over the research period.

by Hutchesontown E. Places are limited to the community councils a situation which is the subject of current negotiations (see below) and a potential cause of friction between competing contenders.

## ORGANISATIONS IN GORBALS

The dominant characteristic of organisational life in Gorbals is the deep-seated factionalism, as evidenced by the number of interviewees who declared they could never work with each other {I}, and by the attempt to form an Umbrella Group as described below. We have already seen the legacy of political antagonisms aroused by the history of Crossroads and the local Labour Party. Nonetheless the overlapping membership of the various groups - it is rare to find an activist on fewer than three - means that the schisms are not always clear-cut and unalterable. The following is by no means an exhaustive list, but covers the main groups which play a part in the local authority structures under consideration.

There are two community councils within the area - Hutchesontown and Laurieston - which have been in continuous existence since their first formation in 1978. Both have struggled to achieve the status and recognition they would wish to be afforded {I}. In part this is true of all CCs, in part in Gorbals it may be specifically traced to the attitudes of the early community workers at Crossroads, who were antagonistic to such generalist bodies in principle, preferring to give their support to issue-based groups (Bryant & Bryant 1982). The leading office bearers today came together in the Hutchy E dampness campaign and are also in the Labour Party, with the consequent personal ambivalence which may be imagined and which colours the attitudes of other activists to them personally and to the CCs. Since the form of community representation on the S-AMC is a seat at the table for every CC, they constitute the sole link into this structure.

Whilst this was also true for the ALC in the early days, membership was later widened to other (invited) organisations, a fact which the CCs regard as undermining their unique position as the statutory body to be consulted {I}. This is reflected in allegations by others {I} that the CCs question their validity when they attempt to play a part in the ALC. The main locus of the 'opposition' to the CCs lies with the Unemployed Workers Centre whose chairman is an ex-communist, ex-Labour supporter with a deep suspicion of all party politicians. His desire to wield wider influence is driven by a fear that the regeneration of the Gorbals will benefit incomers, whilst doing nothing for the present residents.

Given a choice, his preferred methods would be those of confrontation from outside 'the system' {I}.

Crossroads meanwhile is said to be "*a shadow of what it used to be*" {Q}, reputedly due to receiving Urban Aid from Strathclyde Region who imposed conditions that they should cease to be a 'political' campaigning body. Efforts are today mainly concentrated on youthwork and the Chairwoman tries to keep out of the factional quarrels {I}. However, a Crossroads staff member, in cooperation with the community worker from Social Work, has been instrumental in promoting the newly formed **Gorbals Umbrella Group**. This first had its origins in a Gorbals Regeneration Council initiated by activists concerned to achieve a greater say in the plans for Gorbals, especially those of the Gorbals Initiative and Crown Street Regeneration Project. It failed to unite all the factions and involve all geographic sections, which was the precondition for recognition by the authorities and public bodies. The task of the workers therefore became to produce a constitution which would achieve this aim, but at the first elections this proved only a partial safeguard. This in turn jeopardised their application for Urban Programme funding from the Region. Nor, at the time of the research interviews, had the Umbrella Group been accorded the recognition they sought in the form of places on the various structures. In seeking this, they are set on a collision course with the CCs over who will be the recognized voice of the Gorbals.

## POLITICS IN GORBALS

Gorbals contains parts of two District wards, Hutchesontown and Kingston, both served by Labour councillors, one of whom dates back to the Corporation, the second being first elected in 1988. The latter upset the community by his stand over the acceptability of the M74 road route (which had originally been planned to run north of the river) in order to prevent continued planning blight {I}. There is some muttering, even amongst Labour ranks, about the rights of councillors to represent views other than those of their local party or electorate {I}. Whatever the reason, both CCs appear {O} to have closer relationship with the other elected member. The third representative is the Regional councillor (chairman of G/O-ALC) also of recent standing, who described {I} having been invited in after the previous incumbent fell foul of the party. One interviewee, himself an ex party member, talks of the Gorbals scene as "*Grace and Favour*" politics {Q}.

Indeed during this block of interviews there were a number of accusations of manipulation of membership applications and packing of meetings (none of which could be corroborated but were frequent enough to indicate that there might be some truth in the allegations). That such behaviour has occurred in the past can be verified from the account of just such manoeuvres when Geoff Shaw himself first attempted to obtain the nomination as candidate to become the local MP. Supporters of Frank McElhone were brought in to pack the selection meeting (Ferguson 1979), numbers being swelled beyond the normal handful. This behaviour, whilst perfectly legitimate within the party rules, is necessarily resented by the opposition thus outmanoeuvred, and whispers of similar tactics being employed on recent occasions are one cause of internal schisms within the party and between today's activists {I}. In a moribund party where the usual attendance is ten, very little effort will be needed to achieve any outcome, the normal weapon simply being surprise (Sheridan 1994). This capacity of certain activists to control the nomination procedures constitutes a key lever of power, a theme to which the research returns in the Chapter on Accountability.

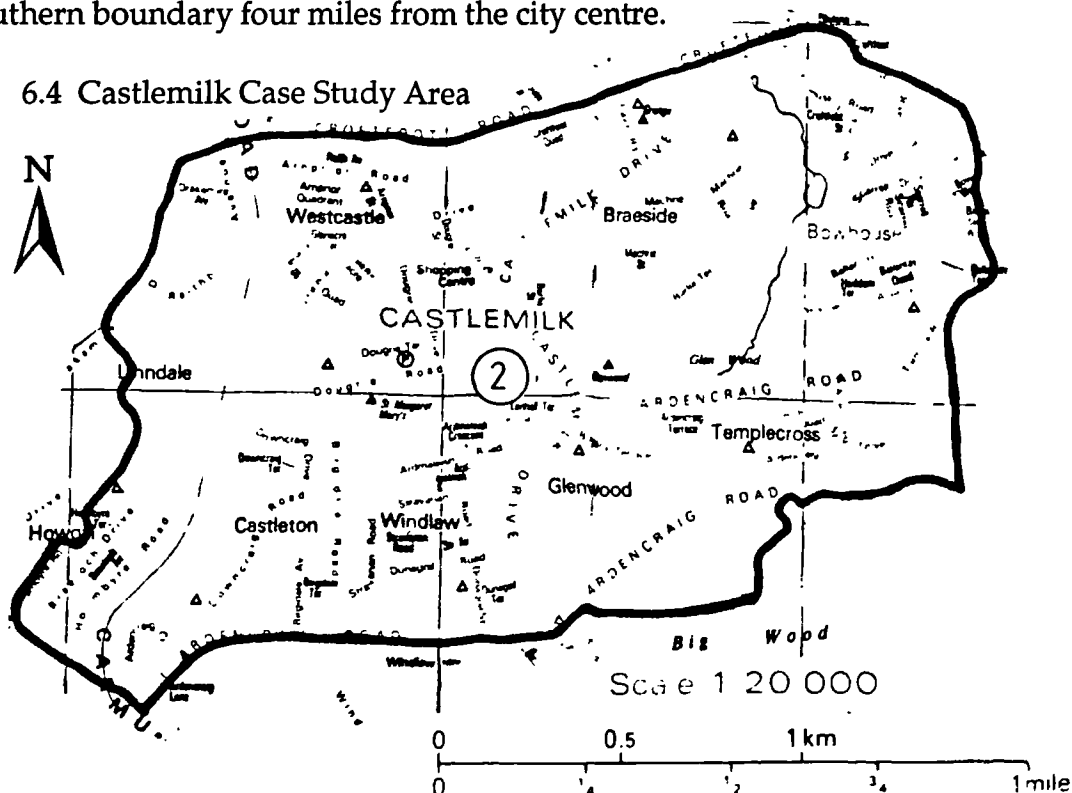
"There's a space where that building was.  
What was there before? A big black tenement?  
I can't remember. It's just that suddenly I notice  
it isn't there.  
I'm sure it was there yesterday."

Tom McGrath 1979

## CASTLEMILK

It was to Castlemilk that many of the slum dwellers of the Gorbals were dispersed, an entire estate of council owned blocks newly built in the 1950s on what had been a spectacular greenfield site within Glasgow's greenbelt close to the southern boundary four miles from the city centre.

Figure 6.4 Castlemilk Case Study Area



Source: Strathclyde Region 1984 APTs in Glasgow Division

### HISTORY OF CASTLEMILK

The 'history' of Castlemilk is encompassed within the lifespan of the older activists, now in their seventies, born and raised elsewhere in the city. The area takes its name from the Cassiltoun lands which, until the building of the housing scheme, were very much a rural backwater centering on the ancient village of Carmunnock (C-LHG 1993). The story of their move, as retold by the residents in the 'Big Flit' relates that, in terms of housing, they were 'thrilled' with the modern amenities of their easily-kept modern flats after cramped and unsavoury tenements (C-PHG 1990). But whilst the council had the organisation to build this element, they were forced to rely on an uninterested private sector for facilities such as shops, the construction of which consequently lagged behind (Checkland 1977). These early 'settlers' speak of mud where pavements were planned, of the dearth of shops, of children forced to attend their former schools, of buses which stopped their runs at the outskirts of the estate, of the only 'pub' being the

Labour club (a fact which accounts for its outstandingly high membership). They recount how bus fares loomed large in the family budget because any recreational activities had to be sought outwith the estate, elderly relatives remained behind in the clearance, and travel to work in the city entailed an eight mile round journey. Some people could not take the shock and left to return to their old home areas in the city centre despite its poorer housing conditions (C-PHG op. cit).

Organisational life in these early days was not unnaturally dominated by the need to form a strong voice for tenants, the decision being to go for a single TA for the whole estate. which at one time claimed 2,000 members (Jephcott & Robinson 1971). This brought to the fore many of the older activists who are still to be found in key positions on many of the management committees of projects and as representatives in the current participatory structures. The central TA has given way to local TAs, a coverage preferred by the Housing Department and elected members, who claim it to be beneficial for individual tenants (I), a view disputed by activists who see it as a ruse to 'divide and conquer'. One of the most forceful and respected chairman of the original TA was Iris McDonald\* who took on the councillors of the day:

*'One of the things you have to remember was that some of the councillors were inclined to be a bit paternalistic. They thought they knew best about everything and people were a bit in awe of them'* (C-LHG op. cit)

The fight that they conducted for better facilities continues to this day, with the demand for better shopping within Castlemilk remaining top of the list of demands (I). Not only was the estate never fully developed as it was planned (Checkland op. cit), but 'failures to invest in and maintain the housing stock, a lack of employment opportunities and associated problems conspired over the next 3 decades to turn Castlemilk from a place where people were happy to go into a place many people are desperate to leave' (C-P 1989)

## **PRESENT DAY CASTLEMILK**

In many ways it is difficult to provide a 'snapshot' of Castlemilk since it is an area in such flux that the statistics available lag behind what is happening on the ground. It is the site of one of the government's four Scottish Partnerships established in 1988 under 'New Life for Urban Scotland' (SO 1988). As such, it is

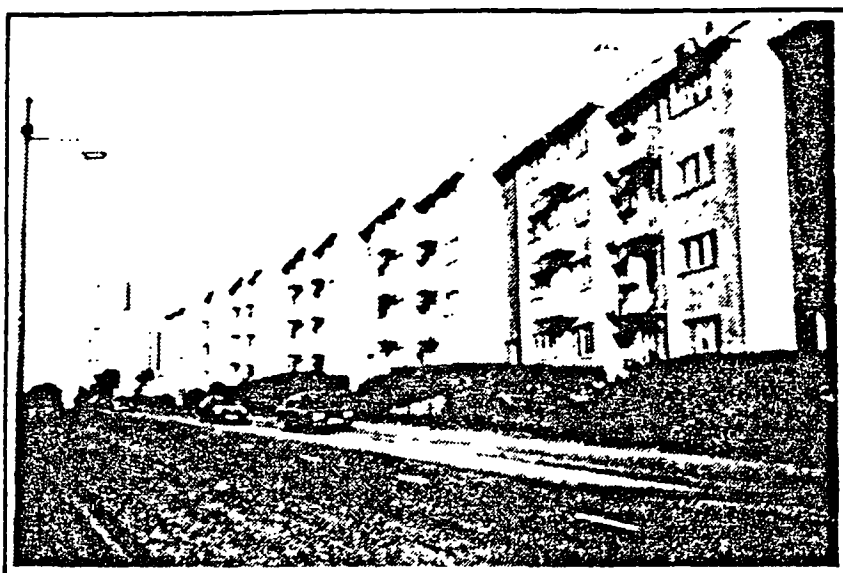
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\* In the early days of the Partnership she died whilst on the platform of a public meeting, an event which colours current activists' attitudes to the pressure put on volunteers to accommodate the timescales of bodies on which they are expected to participate.



the target for concerted efforts at physical, economic and social regeneration. With the Partnership now six years into its ten year term, many new urban aided facilities are opening up and the programme of restructuring housing is in full swing. During the research period one community representative was moved entirely out of the area so her block could be demolished, yet another was in a temporary decant; their support organisation moved from a perch in an underused school to custom built accommodation.

To the visitor this transition is visually apparent {O} in the contrasts between the monotone grey of the three or four storey tenemental blocks standing side by side with upgraded housing, the frontages enlivened with multi-hued ornamental features. The bright colours of the new swimming pool and sports centre sing out from the drab shopping centre, itself clad in scaffolding. In tenure terms, the stock was originally 100% District owned, a monopoly which only changed in 1988 when the controversial transfer of 1,076 units to the SSHA was transacted. At the start of the Partnership, of the approximately 9,750 properties, only 86 houses were in owner occupation (CP 1989), with 400 in community-based housing associations (including co-operatives). In some parts of Castlemilk, particularly the east and the high rise blocks, the stock was designated as 'no' or 'low' demand, with turnover rates running as high as 40% per annum. The Partnership objective is that by the finish there should be 20% owner occupation, 30% housing association and 50% Council stock. By 1992 the picture had become 80% public rented or housing association, 12% private sector, the remaining 8% being vacant (GDC 1992), but this disguises significant differences between sub-areas, with



MODERN DAY CASTLEMILK

sections on the west reaching 27% private, whilst parts in the east continue virtually entirely in the public sector. One major concern of the community is that what may be created is a three tier structure, one tier of owner occupation, one tier of renovated properties with increased rents beyond the reach of the current residents, and one tier of unmodernised properties (CUG 1989).

In population terms, an earlier dramatic fall is tapering off, the figures for successive censuses being:

1971	:	36,951	1981	:	23,400	1991	:	18,347
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It is estimated by the year 2001 this will have dipped yet further to something of the order of 13,000 - 15,000, with the long-term target that it should be stablized at 25,000 (GRA 1993). The structure meanwhile is skewed towards higher than the city averages of children and young people, matched by an under-representation of the elderly.

Although superficially monolithic, having built all of a piece, there are, as would expect in a place of this size, community sub-divisions. As we have seen above, there are firstly broad differences between east and west Castlemilk, with the latter considered to be more respectable and stable {I}. In community council terms there were four areas, namely Castlemilk East, Castlemilk Cathkin, Horseshoe and Phoenix, although these do not reflect residential names on the map. At the time of a survey conducted in 1993 twenty two tenants associations were listed (Blake-Stevenson 1993) but these have more to do with sub-divisions selected for renovation. Participants tend to say first and foremost that they live in Castlemilk and have fought to establish community strength through a common identity for the whole estate through their community organisations in the teeth of moves described above to fracture their solidarity.

In recent times there are two particular incidents which colour activist's attitudes today, the first being the sale of houses by the District Council to the then Scottish Special Housing Association in 1988, a controversial act which many feel was a betrayal of their trust since they allege that the move was conducted under cover of secrecy. The second was the 'walk out' of the Partnership in its early days when the community, and more especially the councillors who were excluded from its deliberations, felt it was not operating as they thought it should. This was an act which demonstrated community organisation of very significant strength

and determination; since it brought concessions, those involved have gained a considerable sense of self worth.

The paramount community issue is seen as being the need to tackle poverty, a subject over which they are at loggerheads with the Partnership who declared it was outwith their remit, as a consequence of which recourse has been made to the C-ALC to raise this matter (Kirk 1993). Officials see a need to improve the 'image' portrayed by Castlemilk to outsiders; to alter the perception of schools, for example, to increase their capacity to retain existing and attract new parents and pupils (I) (as part of the strategy for tenure diversification). Locals meanwhile deny that the place is as unpopular as it is painted, arguing rather that the majority of residents would wish to remain if their problems were addressed (CUG 1989).

### **SOUTH EAST AREA**

The section of the city covered by Glasgow District Council's South East Area Management Committee (SE-AMC) - of which Castlemilk forms a component - stretches from the river to the 1973 city boundary thus including the townships of Cambuslang and Rutherglen and the village of Carmunnock. This is the same area as is covered by Strathclyde Region's Local Committee (SE-LC). The population within the catchment as of 1991 totals 100,000 so that Castlemilk with 18,437 forms less than 20%.

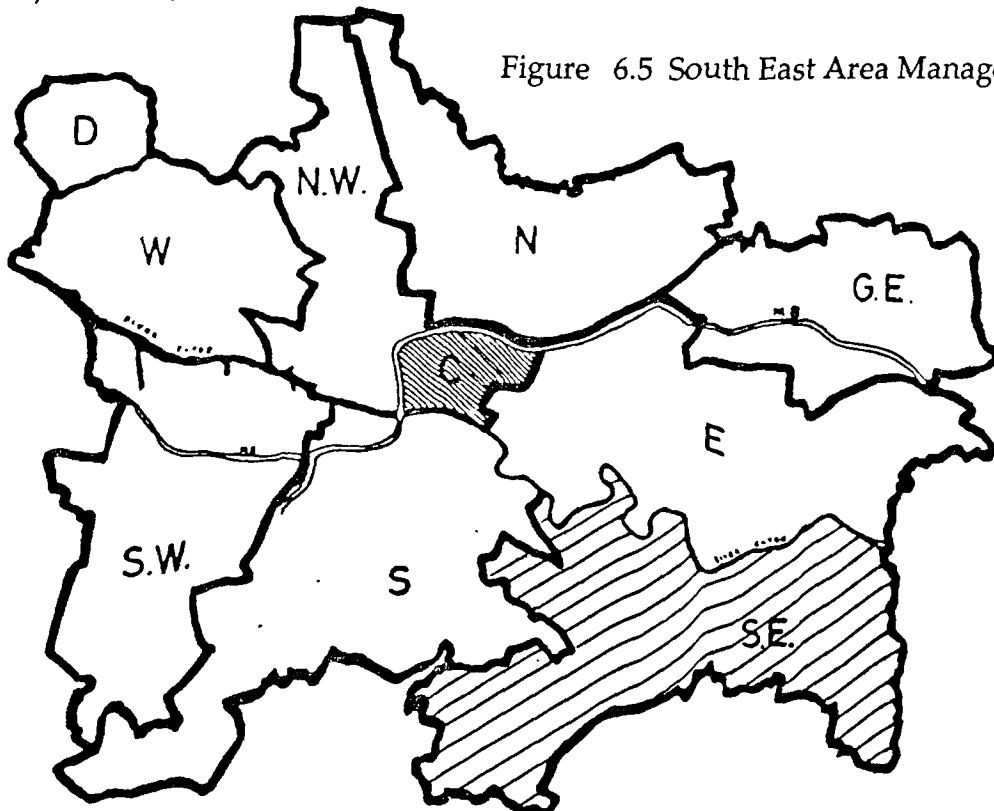


Figure 6.5 South East Area Management Area

Carmunnock remains an isolated village, but now close to the encroaching houses and industry of East Kilbride. Historically Rutherglen was a royal burgh and it remains a town with strong local affiliations, whilst Cambuslang in former times was dominated by the heavy industries typical of the West of Scotland and has suffered the consequences of their decline. Both were formerly in Lanarkshire outwith Glasgow city boundary until the 1973 local government reorganisation, and will return there under the proposals for unitary authorities. Although there are also pockets with APT status within Cambuslang, the Partnership status of Castlemilk necessitates that is the dominant initiative. As we will see in later chapters, these historical and current factors have repercussions for interrelationships on the SE-AMC.

## STRUCTURES AFFORDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATION

The particular form of the local government structures in Castlemilk has to an extent been dictated by the area's status as a **Partnership**. The factors which have led to this are firstly the provision of dedicated budgets necessitating that decision-making mechanisms of the local authority mesh in with those of Partnership; secondly there exists a network of local fieldworkers who are obliged to co-operate over planning and implementation of projects; thirdly recognition has been given to the Castlemilk Umbrella Group as the chosen community body from which community representation on the Partnership would be drawn.

Although both the SE-AMC and the C-ALC were in existence before the advent of the Partnership, their current format has been adapted in certain ways to accommodate the latter. For instance, the official recognition afforded CUG by the Partnership meant it was also in a strong position at the time of the 1991 review to play a leading role in deciding the form of representation on C-ALC (see below). The latter is undoubtedly taken more seriously, for example in terms of attendance of officers {M}, than elsewhere in Strathclyde; it is less clear that there has been any direct effect on the standing of the SE-AMC but it does enjoy a reputation as being the most highly regarded amongst councillors {I}.

## **Representation on the South East Area Management Committee**

The unique form of representation on the SE-AMC is through an election arranged every two years, returning two members from each housing district. In respect of the case study area, this means two members chosen from a zone including the village of Carmunnock besides the Castlemilk estate, a fact which causes aggravation to Carmunnock Community Council who continue to campaign for automatic recognition for CCs on the basis of their statutory democratic role {I}. The resultant committee of 20 thus comprises 8 District and 4 Regional councillors, 2 MPs and 6 community representatives. The compensating feature for their low numbers is that these reps are afforded voting powers (since they are not in a position to outvote elected members). This model was that favoured by the first chairman - Pat Lally - whose view was that large committees were "*inefficient in taking timely decisions*" {Q}.

A feature of the SE-AMC is that the structures include a special Castlemilk Regeneration Sub-committee consisting of the local ward councillors, the two SE-AMC plus additional community reps, which meets infrequently as and when required to debate solely Castlemilk issues. Its existence is in part historical (dating from the time when the Partnership did not permit attendance by District councillors who wanted some input mechanism via the community), in part due to Castlemilk's dedicated Urban Aid budget linked to its Partnership status. As we will see below, control of the election procedures is a contested issue amongst groups. The SE-AMC is also unique in having no formal meetings of the team of officers, a consequence of Lally's repudiation of corporate management techniques which lead to officers arriving at joint solutions which minimise later input by elected members {I}.

## **Representation on Castlemilk Area Liaison Committee**

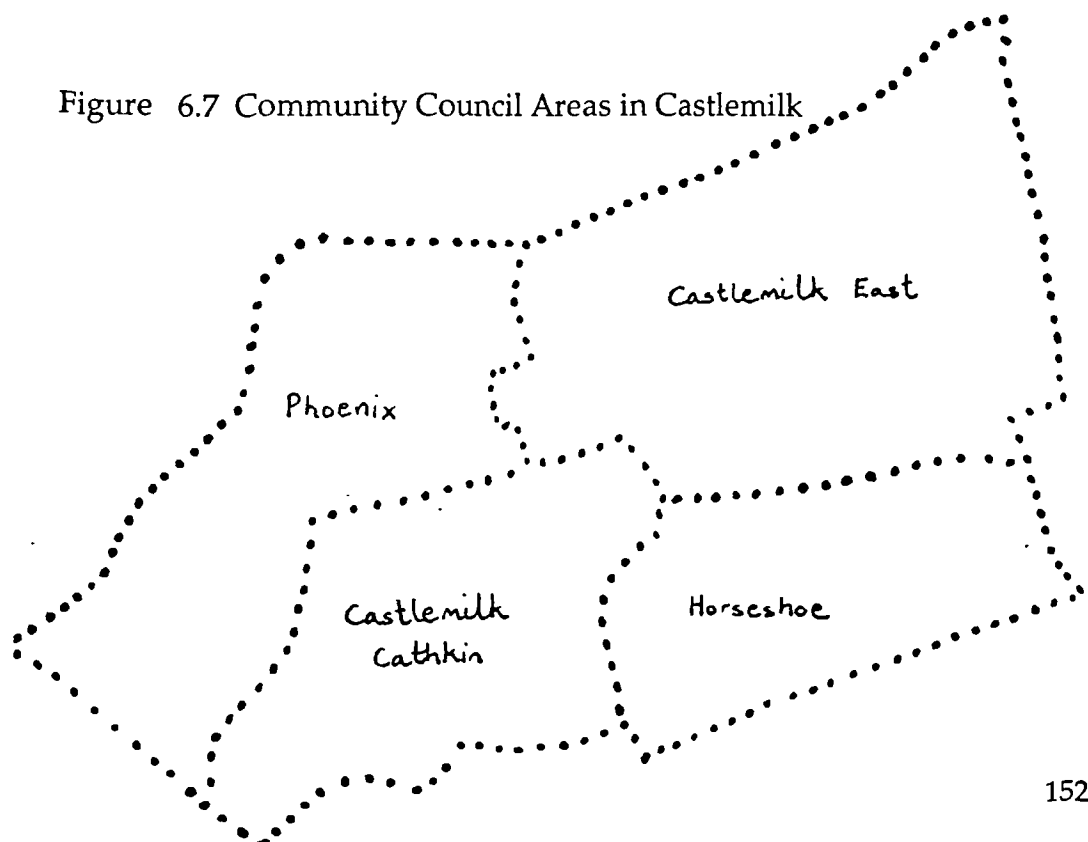
There are elections too for community representatives on the C-ALC, a recent development stemming from the 1991 review, and one in which Castlemilk is again unique. There are now ten places for the community which they regard as significant in affording them a substantial presence such that numerically they could outnumber the councillors {I}. By all accounts {I} this has led to a much more structured format for meetings, especially since the ten hold a pre-meeting to thrash out an agreed position (see Chapter 10). In addition, there are two community convenors who attend the Pre-Agenda meetings to discuss items for the forthcoming ALC and who alternate with the two Regional Councillors in chairing the meetings. The ALC, because of the existence of the Partnership, is



## Community Councils in Castlemilk

At the time of the discussions leading to the formation of community councils, the pattern preferred by those involved in Castlemilk was to divide the estate into four. Three of these were to adopt the conventional pattern for a CC of elected members forming a committee; in the area known as Horseshoe, by contrast, a radically different model was proposed in which all residents would be members entitled to attend meetings which would be operated without a standing executive. After some hesitation, this unusual proposal was permitted by the Secretary of State and enshrined in the initial Scheme for CCs in Glasgow provided it was brought into being at the first elections. For whatever reason this was never followed through, the CC which was ultimately formed being of a conventional type. It proved highly unstable and died off fairly rapidly thereafter. The other three CCs operated for some years, many of the leading activists today being office bearers, but at the time of the research all three had collapsed. In one case this was due to the prime mover becoming a councillor, whilst the erstwhile key members of the other two report that, with the advent of the Partnership, it no longer proved possible to attract sufficient ordinary members (reputedly due to the defection of members to their TAs which were actively involved in the expenditure of the enhanced housing budgets {I}) In this respect CCs differ from other local organisations in that they are strictly monitored by the District Council to ensure that their membership levels are adequate, a price that CCs pay for official recognition.

Figure 6.7 Community Council Areas in Castlemilk



## Organisations linking to the Case Study Structures

With respect to the case study structures, there are two organisations that play a part, the first being the Castlemilk Umbrella Group (CUG), the second being Castlemilk Housing Improvement Project (CHIP).

Mention has already been made of the **Castlemilk Umbrella Group** as being the body recognized by the Partnership. CUG was not created for this purpose, having already been established slightly earlier as a joint co-ordinating organisation for the plethora of voluntary sector groups, many of them urban aided projects. CUG is funded by Strathclyde Region, their budget for 1992/93 being of the order of £91,000 (CUG 1993), allowing the voluntary management committee to operate premises and employ a small support staff of their own.

Membership of CUG is open to any voluntary group on which 50% of the members or of the management committee are residents in Castlemilk, though the mainstay tend to be the social welfare type organisations supported and/or funded by SRC (with consequences which will be revealed below). Its original aim was to bring some order to the voluntary sector and to strengthen its input to the fight for recognition of Castlemilk as a special initiative area {I}. This became overshadowed by the coming of the Partnership and its choice of CUG as the vehicle for community input. This conferred on CUG a status which it would not otherwise have gained, or gained so quickly (as we have seen in the context of the early struggles of the similar umbrella group in Gorbals) It demanded and was granted, with little argument it would seem {I}, a parallel right to run democratic elections for community representatives on the ALC.

Up to that point there had been the usual *ad hoc*, 'by invitation' system still in operation elsewhere, but CUG argued for the fixed elected membership of ten. There was almost universal agreement amongst all respondents {I} that the revised constitutional arrangements have contributed to more effective operation of the ALC, for a number of reasons such as continuity in attendance, community solidarity and greater clarity of purpose. What dissent there is from this view comes mostly from the politicians who continue to criticize the community's "*lack of understanding of procedures*" {Q}. In conjunction with control of the ALC elections, CUG was also the body which conducted those for the Castlemilk Regeneration Sub-committee of SE-AMC, and moves were initiated for them to undertake those for the SE-AMC itself. CUG thus was regarded by the three official bodies as serving as the appropriate vehicle for organising democratic community elections and providing a unified voice for the whole of Castlemilk.



## Castlemilk Housing Improvement Project

The second organisation is the Castlemilk Housing Improvement Project (CHIP), a similar voluntary support agency servicing the joint Housing Forum which brings together the tenants associations. CHIP, by contrast, is funded by the District Council, their budget for 1992/93 totalling £123,564 which likewise enables the management committee to employ their own small support staff. A particular feature of CHIP is its generously funded training programme (£12K -Blake Stevenson op. cit) which was praised by several interviewees {I}, not all necessarily involved in housing issues.

The reason they were mentioned above as being of significance in the current context is that in 1992 there was a hiatus over the conduct of the elections for the two representatives on the SE-AMC which saw responsibility accepted by CHIP after it had been withdrawn from CUG partway through the process. Versions of this event and the reasons for it - whether devious/political or straightforward/practical - not surprisingly differ from interviewee to interviewee. Some activists, given a degree of dual membership, have a foot in both the CUG and CHIP camps with loyalties blurred; some deny that there was or is any disharmony between the two organisations; some see it as an act of unforgivable disloyalty for CHIP to have intervened in the dispute which might otherwise have been resolved in favour of CUG.

In practical terms the outcome was that the two sets of reps, those on SE-AMC and those on C-ALC are drawn from two different sets of organisations. Insofar as they owe allegiance to these - as we will see in the later chapter there are weaknesses in the lines of accountability - this at minimum means complex arrangements to ensure that 'the community' speaks with one voice when necessary. This causes specific problems where there is joint funding of an Urban Aid project by both councils where the SE-AMC and the C-ALC are the bodies through which a co-ordinated decision is required. On one contentious occasion the reps on the two bodies took a different stance over the desirability of a project and the authorities are accused of capitalizing on such divisions {I}.

## POLITICS IN CASTLEMILK

As already mentioned, in the early days the Labour Club was the only 'public house' on the estate, the exceptionally high membership of the Labour Party consequently being as much due to this as political enthusiasm (Keating 1988). A more recent feature of political life in Castlemilk is that, in common with the other peripheral estates in Glasgow, the Anti Poll Tax campaign at its height claimed a considerable following in Castlemilk. There is an account of an instance where a journalist visiting one highrise block encountered 100% support for non-payment (Sheridan 1994). Since this campaign was linked with Tommy Sheridan, who was expelled from Labour in Pollok as belonging to Militant, and since the latter went on to win seats on both the Regional and the District Councils, feelings might be expected to run high against Militant activists in Labour party circles.

Of the three District members who serve Castlemilk, the most prominent is Pat Lally, a longstanding councillor since the corporation days\*, who was unseated by SNP in the wake of the 1977 housing scandal. Subsequently he was not only rehabilitated, but rose to become leader 1986-1992, a position which he regained for a second time by defeating Jean McFadden in May 1994. As we have seen, he was the first chairman on SE-AMC and, as such, played a formative role in the model adopted there, specifically the limited community representation {I}. Of the other two councillors, one came from being a community activist involved with her community council and founder of CUG. She was followed onto the council by her husband who gained the adjacent ward. During the research period Regional elections were held using redrawn boundaries reducing the number of wards, resulting in a fight between the two Castlemilk councillors for the nomination. This contest went to a second round, with the final voting figures being 84-76 (an exceptionally healthy turnout for a nomination meeting where an average attendance might be of the order of ten). The chairman of CUG acted thereafter as election agent for the successful candidate, whilst his fellow community co-chairman of the C-ALC is a vociferous member of Militant and the Coordinator of the C-ALC is the ex Secretary of Castlemilk Labour Party. Since potentially Pre-Agenda meetings require these five characters to convene together, it is not hard to imagine that relationships at the ALC were, and remain, somewhat strained {I}.

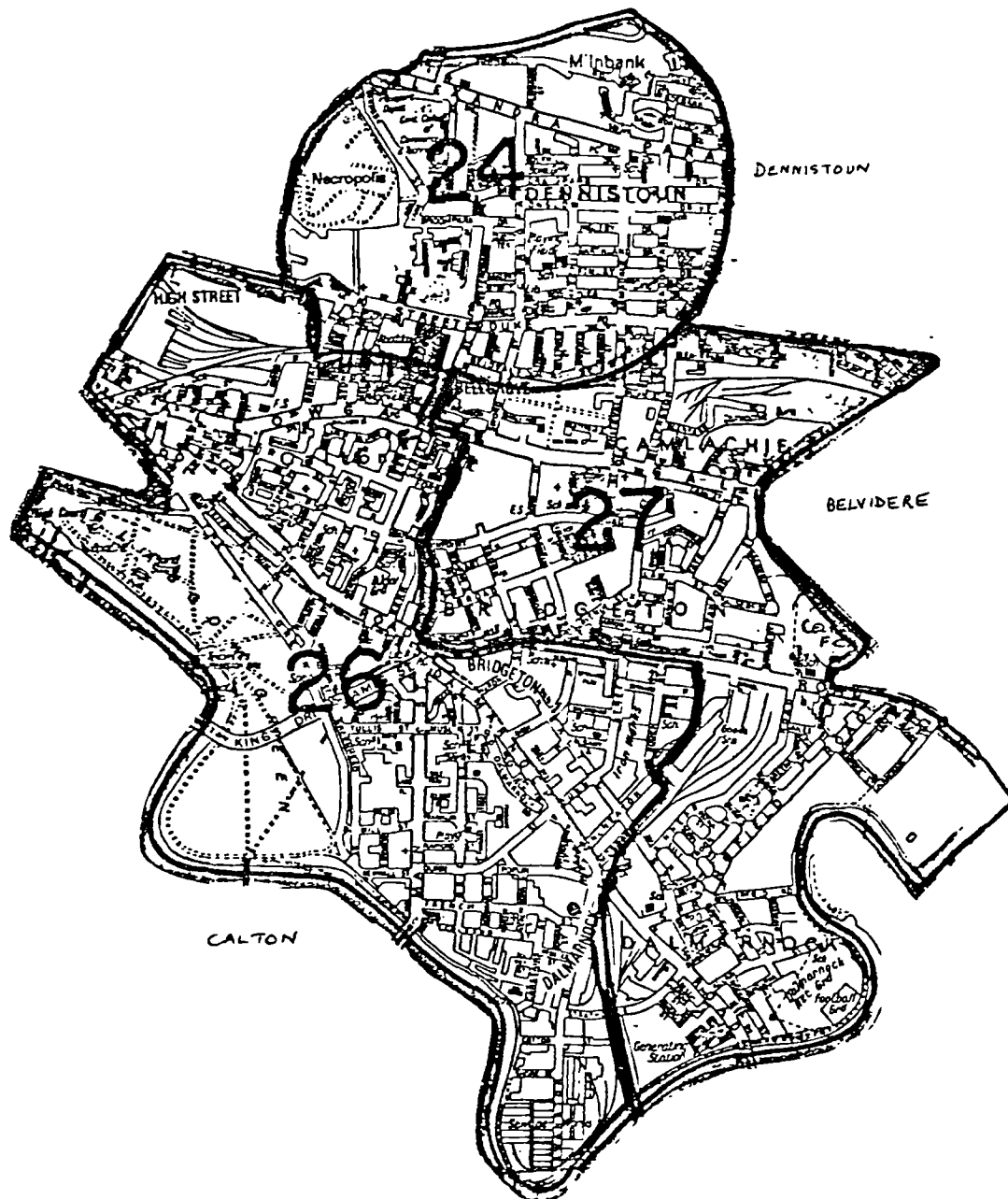
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\* He was Geoff Shaw's election agent in Gorbals where he originated.

## BELVIDERE

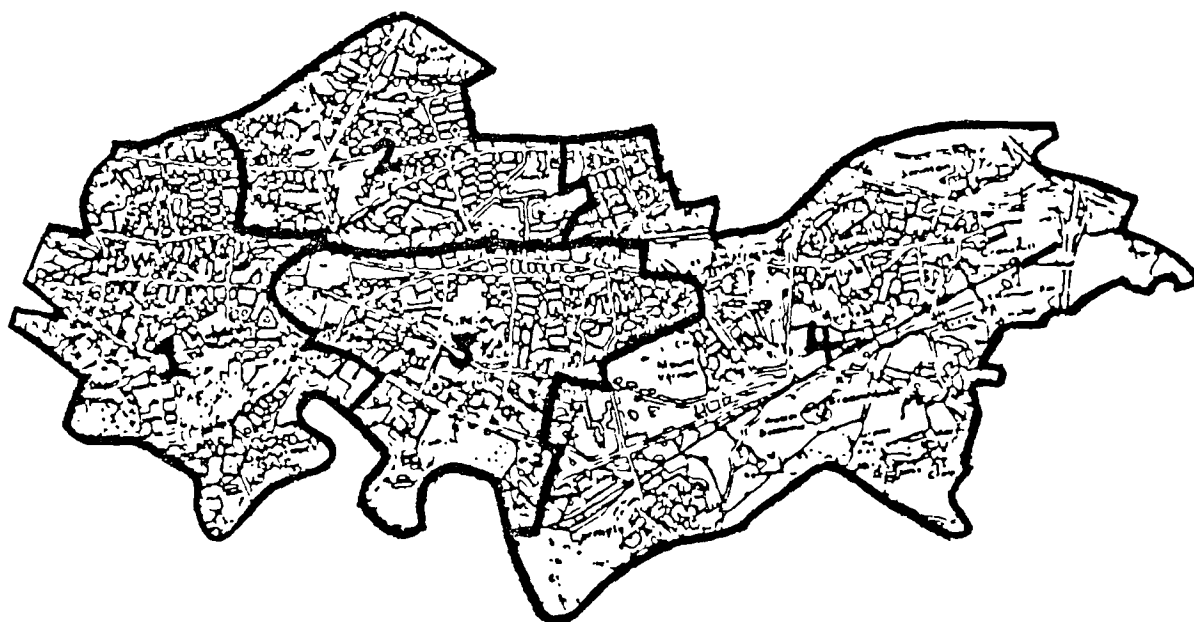
The case study area is that section of the East End nearest the city centre sandwiched between the M8 Edinburgh motorway to the north and the river to the south. Belvidere/Calton/Dennistoun ALC area is an administrative construction - its title being derived from the three District wards of which it is composed. For the purposes of creating ALCs the East End was simply sliced into four approximately equal portions where possible following appropriate ward boundaries. Even Belvidere is an artificial title which would not be used by local people to denote their home territories which they would respectively call Dalmarnock and Camlachie or Barrowfield.

Figure 6.8 Wards Forming Belvidere/C/D ALC Area



These ALCs therefore differ from those elsewhere in that they contain patches of middle-class/owner occupation alongside APTs. Thus B/C/D-ALC area is made up of three separate APTs - the long-standing Inner Gear dating from 1976, Camlachie and Milnbank added in 1994 - together with the main residential part of Dennistoun.

Figure 6.9 Area Liaison Committee Areas in the East End



## HISTORY OF THE EAST END

The East End, unlike Castlemilk, has a long history having developed by the gradual building on family estates and accretion round villages eventually incorporated within the city boundary. Thus the original core of the case study area comprises the twin weaving villages of Calton and Bridgeton on the lands of the Camlachie and Barrowfield estates (Adams 1980, Smart 1988). Inward migration brought first the Highlanders, many of them Gaelic speaking Catholics, followed by the Irish. By the 1850s the latter were flocking into Glasgow at the rate of several thousand a week, their presence in the area under consideration being reflected in the nicknames *Dublin Land* and *Wee Belfast* (Adams op. cit). Their presence also came to be significant in the future politics of the city since it was only after the settling of the Irish Question that they swung behind Labour (Keating 1988), and only then on a promise of separate Catholic schools, one of the

first of which was opened in Bridgeton. To house this wave, and the later influxes attracted by the burgeoning forges and foundries, firms began building poor quality tenements for their workers, first around Bridgeton and then expanding into Dalmarnock. Dennistoun, on the other hand, had been planned by a developer of that name to be a suburb of villas with gardens, only part of which was constructed. With housing and industry in competition, land prices rose such that the builders preferred the profits to be made from two and three storey tenements (Baird 1975).

Industry too was expanding apace. The traditions of weaving were not lost but converted to textile production, an activity dominated by Templeton's factory, whilst heavy industry came to the fore with over 30 firms located within the expanding East End. Of these, Beardmore's Parkhead forge feeding their linked shipbuilding enterprise on the Clyde rose to become '*the most important conglomerate in Central Scotland*' (Middleton 1987, p18). The pollution became so severe that it killed the trees on nearby Glasgow Green (Adams op. cit). Whilst the East End became the powerhouse of the city, the engine room where the wealth and energy that helped make Glasgow great was generated (GEAR 1980), the middle classes moved west leaving '*huge numbers of east enders trapped in poverty and in brutal housing conditions*' (Middleton op. cit, p20). In Bridgeton families, themselves cramped into a room and kitchen with large numbers of children, would be compelled by poverty to take in lodgers (Smart op. cit); ideally they would be night-shift workers who could occupy the family's beds during the daytime (Weir 1970). This added to the forces pushing up population densities such that Glasgow came to have the most heavily populated central area in Europe with 700,000 people (now near the total for the whole city) packed into 3 sq miles (Robertson 1958). Bridgeton at this time is amongst those places listed by Checkland (1977) as '*dense and festering, having the power of debilitation and death*'.

A number of political events linked to the East End led to it having something of a reputation for radicalism going back to the shooting of six protesting Calton weavers. During the first world war it was one of the areas at the forefront of the battles over rent rises, whilst strike action threatened Beardmores (Hume & Moss 1979), a particularly '*vivid folk memory*' (Keating 1988, p107) being the tanks sent into George Square by Winston Churchill in 1919 as a consequence of this action. That this would ever have led to revolution is, however, dismissed by Keating as a myth since the root of the unrest in Beardmores was the selfish desire of the skilled workers to prevent 'dilution' by the unskilled or women as replacements for those away at the war. It was the housing conditions that led to the upsurge of

support for the Independent Labour Party which saw Shettleston produce three of the famous Red Clydeside MPs, with Jimmy Maxton becoming the representative for Bridgeton in 1922 with the help of the Catholic vote. Not all energies were constructively channelled, the decade which took the Red Clydesiders to parliament also seeing the upsurge in gang violence with the Billy Boys of Bridgeton amongst the most notorious (Smart 1988).

There have been a number of tussles too over Glasgow Green which had seen its first community usage as the place frequented by the washerwomen of Bridgeton. It was threatened first by railway development in 1847 and then by coal mining in 1858 (Smart op. cit). The proceeds from the latter were intended to finance a £100,000 debt accumulated by the then council in purchasing the McLellan Galleries and land for Kelvingrove and Queen's Parks, the hostile feelings of East-enders to this being summed up in the words of the song (Smart ibid):

*'Wi sticks an stanes, we'll come John,,an fecht while we've a spark;  
Ye'll never get the Glasgow Green to pay the west-end park.'*

More recently it was only the intervention of the Secretary of State after an Examination in Public in 1979 which cancelled a plan for Glasgow Green to be the point at which a new Hamilton road would intersect with the planned eastern flank of the inner ring road (Donnison & Middleton 1987). More recently still when the District council unveiled plans to allow some waterlogged and unplayable football pitches\* to be commercially developed in order to pay for upgrading which could not otherwise be afforded - a plan which might appear rational to an outsider - community campaigners were once more embattled backed by *"East End councillors who knew what their life was worth"* Q}. Any usage other than as a public open space continues to be an emotive subject since *'as a meeting place for large demonstrations it has a special place in Glasgow's social history* (Middleton op. cit, p15). This then is the mix of political myth and folk memory which forms the inheritance of today's activists.

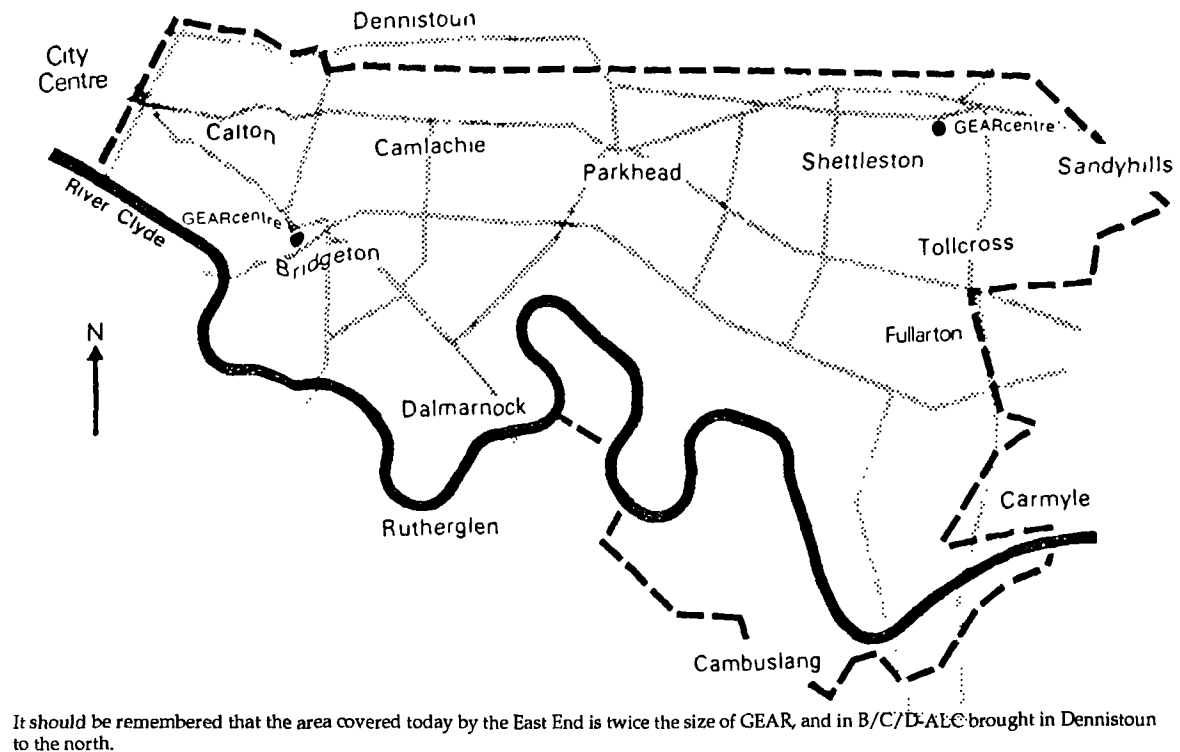
## GLASGOW EASTERN AREA RENEWAL

The actual event which brought many of the latter to the fore was the establishment in 1976 of GEAR - Glasgow Eastern Area Renewal {I}. By that point the East End was in decline, much of its industry failed or dispersed, the older properties demolished leaving gap sites, dereliction and blight (Middleton op. cit).

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\* The first home of Rangers football club.

Figure 6.10 Map of GEAR Area



As a consequence of the slum clearance policies which saw the erstwhile residents decanted in the 1950s to the new towns and peripheral estates, what was to be the GEAR area had suffered a dramatic 68% fall in population from 145,000 in 1951 to 45,000 in 1978 (Gibb 1983; Middleton op. cit). It was already the suggested site for six of the Corporation's planned Comprehensive Development Areas (CDAs); in the event the Scottish Office, mistrustful of the capacity of the local authority to carry through such a large-scale regeneration project, intervened. One of their concerns was not just the size of the population, but its structure with a rising proportions of the very young and the very elderly, the unskilled and those with low educational attainment (Wannop & Leclerc 1987). In May 1976 the Secretary of State for Scotland announced the setting up of the GEAR project which was to be a totally new concept, bringing together all the organisations responsible for managing the various services in the area to work in partnership to solve the problems of the East-end. But due to the political haste with which it was announced, no forethought had been given to exactly how this was to be brought to fruition (Keating op. cit).

It consequently took some time for any strategy to emerge, which finally found expression in six main objectives (GEAR Undated):

- \* TO HELP RESIDENTS SECURE EMPLOYMENT
- \* TO RETAIN AND CREATE JOBS
- \* TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE
- \* TO IMPROVE THE ENVIRONMENT
- \* TO CREATE BETTER HOUSING
- \* TO INVOLVE THE COMMUNITY

The latter section continues: 'If GEAR is to be successful, then the people of the East-end must take an active part in creating that success, must take a pride in the new future that is being built' (idem). Thus it was the intention from the start that there should be community involvement, though there is perhaps a hint that their role was seen as to *take pride* in the outcome as planned for them, rather than play a genuine part in planning. This certainly accords with the view of Betty McAllister, chairman of C/B-CC who recounts {Q}:

*"I went along to this meeting and in those days I was new to all this, just a 'wee wifie in a head scarf'. There were are these men in suits with their briefcases. Mostly English. They didnae seem to know what to do with me, kept staring. Then they started describing these high rise flats they had planned. I just said "Oh no, we don't want that". They didn't know where to look."*

Her account is borne out by another participant, this time a community professional, writing about his experiences of participation:

*'This aspect of the work had to be learned as things proceeded, and it must be said that in its early stages participation was very faltering and even inept....It was unfortunate that there was little knowledge of people's ideas and aspirations in the early stages of the project and the network of community work staff was not established until the project had been running for some three or four years'. (Anderson 1985, p48)*

He goes on to describe the various working parties (supposedly) providing opportunities for involvement, none of which, in his opinion, successfully operated in a manner easily accessible to local people:

*'Local organisations were aware of the formation of the working groups and several of them sought representation, but, in general, their aspirations were thwarted. It appeared there was a great fear of involving local lay people'... This consistent refusal to allow effective local participation on what was the prime planning process seriously affected the credibility of the GEAR project with local organisations and created feelings of secrecy and 'Big Brother' ... It is the traditional professional attitudes which may have to change before we can expect true devolution of administration to the level of locality where people can feel confident enough to join in the planning for the future of their area'. (Anderson op. cit, p49)*



Some hint of the reasons for the community's frustrations can be gleaned from comments they made in a survey conducted at the time that they preferred SDA officials because (Donnison 1987, p289) *'they are the people who will come to our meetings, and send the same person to our next meeting - in the evenings and at weekends too'*. Certainly today's officials acknowledge that GEAR veterans, particularly those of C/B-CC, are "manically suspicious" {Q} that the full truth is being withheld and have inculcated similar attitudes in their followers.

One factor was the lack of experience of officers in responding to the community's demands when these were not expressed in officialese:

*'... a District planning official who complained that it was impossible to communicate with the people of the area, and who compared them unfavourably in this respect with the middle classes of the west end. The problem of communication is due partly to the fact that planners, like other officials and professionals rarely live in the east end and do not base their offices there. It would not be so hard for them to understand what local people were saying if they did not have to make a cultural leap from the security of their middle-class suburbs to the very different life of the area they serve. These obstacles are themselves partly created by bad planning.'*  
(Middleton op. cit, p32)

To return once again to Betty McAllister, her feeling was that the community failed to understand, and were given no help to understand, the economic issues of creating jobs, but *"we got the housing right"* {Q}.

This partial success in fact reflects the relative levels of spending; estimates of the final figures indicate that over the period 1976-1984 of the total expenditure 60% was on housing, the relative amounts for other sectors being industry 13%, social/community 10%, infrastructure 10%, environment 7% (Pacione 1982). Thus by the end of this period the tally in the housing field was (EEMU 1988) :

4,000	tenements rehabilitated
8,000	interwar stock modernised
2,000	new public sector houses built by GDC/SSHA/HAs
2,000	new private sector houses built

such that two thirds of the residents were by then living in an improved home, all this being achieved 'without population displacement' (idem).

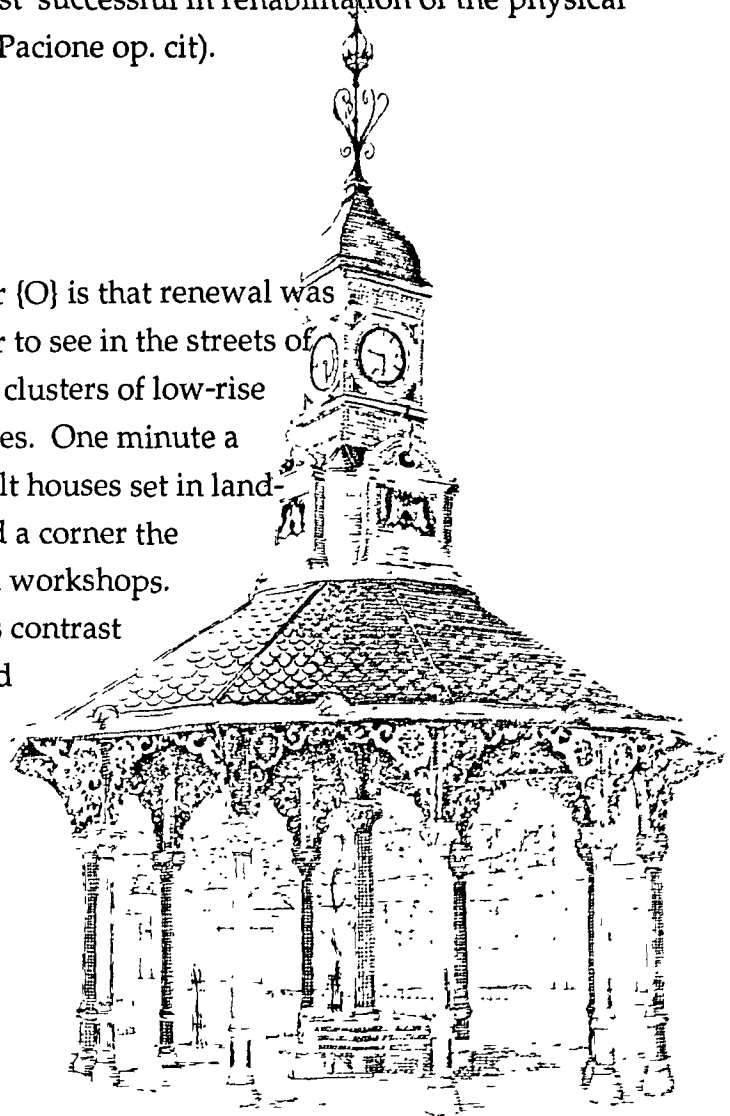
Whilst in one sense this latter fact is a reason for congratulation (as it is clearly meant in the text), one outcome was that GEAR had little impact on the Scottish Office's original objectives of demographic change. In part this was because the resident population successfully argued against changes which did not benefit

themselves, in part because insufficient changes were made to allocations policies (Clapham & Kintrea 1987). Furthermore not much dent made in the high levels of unemployment since, although the East End finished 'job rich' compared to how other parts of the city had fared over the period, the unskilled residents were unable to compete (McArthur 1987). The assessment of the project overall was that it was deemed to have been most successful in rehabilitation of the physical environment, particularly housing (Pacione op. cit).

## AREA TODAY

The overall impression to the visitor {O} is that renewal was piecemeal, the legacy of GEAR clear to see in the streets of renovated red tenements and small clusters of low-rise homes sandwiched between gap sites. One minute a pleasant view of streets of brickbuilt houses set in landscaped gardens; then turning round a corner the derelict old blackened factories and workshops. Rows of the boarded disused shops contrast with the futuristic glassed trapezoid of the Parkhead Forge mall.

At Bridgeton Cross the elegant cast iron umbrella, renovated to its former state as one significant symbol of the newly reascent East End, now again gives shelter to the destitute for whom it was first constructed (Turok 1987).



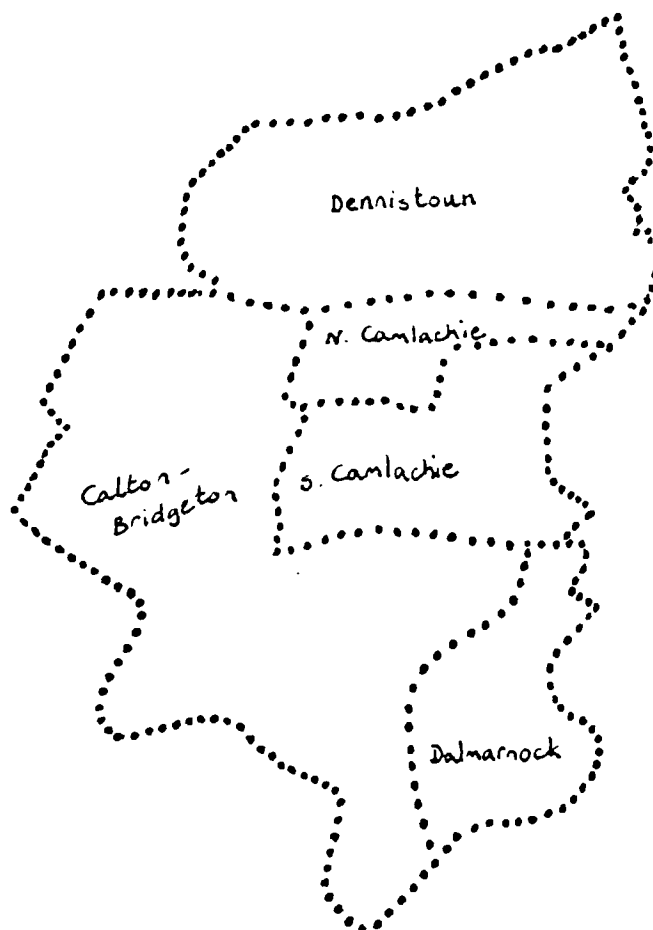
Despite all that was achieved, in 1994 the Regional Council are applying for almost the whole of the East End bar the middle-class fringes to be recognized by the Scottish Office as eligible for urban programme {M}, and it continues as one of the Regeneration Alliances priority sites for regeneration (GRA 1993). The vehicle now is the East End Partnership, one arm of which is economic, the other arm of which is social, which links into the East End Area Management Committee (see below). Within the case study area there are two special initiatives in Barrowfield and Dalmarnock involving the Social Work and Housing Departments in measures to tackle their particular problems.

The effects of past allocation policies, which require the accumulation of large numbers of points to be eligible for the most popular housing, have been to create population segregation rather than balanced neighbourhoods (Clapham & Kintrea). Thus the current averages for housing tenure in B/C/D-ALC at 32% owner occupation/private rental and 64% public sector/housing association, disguise a range from 54% owner occupation in Dennistoun to 94% public rented in Dalmarnock, with Calton at 30% owner occupation close to the city average of 32% (GDC 1992). In terms of the age structure of the population, by the end of GEAR this had been brought close to the city averages and remains so as of the 1991 census. The size of the population, which in the case study area is now of the order of 28,000, has stabilized and for the future is predicted as *'likely to reflect the city trends'* (GRA op. cit).

### Community Councils

There are at the moment five community councils within B/C/D-ALC - namely Dalmarnock, Calton/Bridgeton, North and South Camlachie and the residential part of Dennistoun proper (excluding Haghill) - which gives an indication of the sub-divisions recognized by the community based around the erstwhile villages of the same name.

Figure 6.11 Map of B/C/D-ALC Community Council Areas



As might be expected in an area as large and diverse as B/C/D-ALC, there is no common priority issue which is paramount with all sections, each rather pursuing its own parochial needs. Thus, Milnbank to the north, a pocket of public sector stock passed by during GEAR, is pressing for modernisation of their housing through the tenants association; Dennistoun CC is concerned to prevent yet more of their large houses being taken over for institutional uses; Calton/Bridgeton CC is seeking urban aid for youth projects; organisations in Camlachie/Barrowfield are active in tackling drug related problems; the fight in Dalmarnock is to gain a foothold in land use planning [1]. What solidarity there is tends to be between the grouping of CCs in the East End combining to fight their rights as consultative bodies previously recognized during GEAR (GEAR 1980), but eroded with the coming of the EEMU.

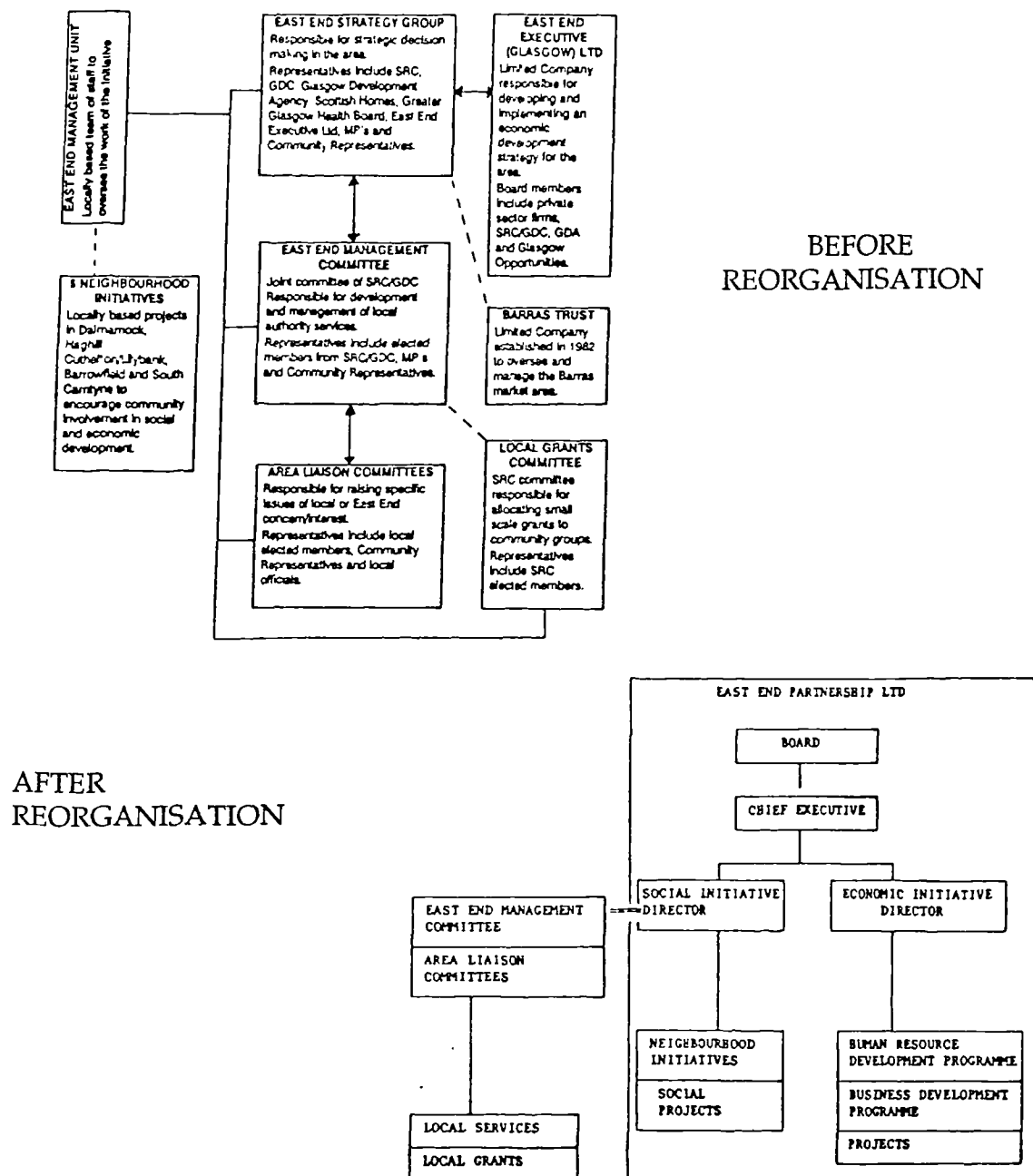
## STRUCTURES

When GEAR as such was wound up in 1986 the two local authorities, taking the view that its task was not completed, formed a successor joint social and economic initiative. This was based on an EE-AMC area of double the size extended beyond the GEAR boundaries northwards to include Dennistoun and outwards to the city boundary to incorporate Garrowhill etc. The Initiative operated from the **East End Management Unit (EEMU)** based in Parkhead Library with a staff headed by a Coordinator originally drawn from the District Council, whilst his deputy came from the Regional Council, carefully balanced in recognition of the joint funding from the two councils.

The decision-taking structures were altered just at the time the research began from that shown at the top overleaf to that shown at the bottom splitting the social and economic elements. Taking the former first, like its counterparts the EE-AMC comprises 11 district councillors, 8 regional councillors, the 4 relevant MPs plus community representatives. Being a formal committee of the two councils it differed - as has been explained in detail in Chapter 3- by operating under separate legislation which governs joint committees of this type, specifically that restricting co-option of and voting by non-elected members. There was a combined grant making system, and the input of SRC was recognized in alternating the convenorship between the two councils on an annual basis.

However, despite the nominally joint structures the Region has (for reasons that are now remain obscure\* ) never fully played a part, the EE-AMC being viewed as a 'District' mechanism. As we will see in a later chapter, this fact is reflected in the paucity of Regional items on the Agenda. At times this led to the bizarre situation of having a Regional councillor as Convenor of what was de facto a District committee and for this to be serviced by a Regional employee. Despite this lack of political commitment, the parallel team of officers included Social Work and Education on a regular basis 'by invitation' [I].

Figure 6.12 Structures in East End before/after Reorganisation



\* The officer concerned was the only one unavailable for interview.

Mirroring the EE-AMC the four ALCs are nominally joint structures bringing together SRC, GDC and MPs with the usual 'open door' for community group members from the respective catchment area. In B/C/D-ALC the invitation list for the latter extends to about twenty groups or urban aid projects, including any tenants associations and community councils. The chair likewise alternates on a yearly basis between the two councils, the community providing the vice-convenor. Meetings are convened on a six-weekly cycle to conform to Regional Council practice, rather than the District's four-weekly pattern. Each is held within its respective area with that in B/C/D rotating periodically around the sub-areas. Administrative support comes from the staff of the EEMU whilst officers in attendance are drawn from both councils. The latter tend to come 'when needed' (partly because community reps complained at one time at feeling uncomfortably outnumbered {I}), but there are normally six or seven present on any occasion {M}. The same officer may sometimes have to make the same presentation to all four ALCs on separate nights in quick succession.

The intention of the **Strategy Group**, as its title implies, was to oversee broad objectives and forward planning. This too included four ALC community representatives, but its erstwhile chairman relates unrepentantly that in his view their interests were too parochial and limited for them to have any capacity for long-term strategic planning so that {Q}:

*"If anything really important was coming up, we sorted it out at a pre-meeting and then got them to agree"*

This group is now acknowledged to have been unsatisfactory and has been replaced in the new structure by the **Partnership Board**. The community membership has been retained, but its form is under dispute since the restricted number of places is seen by the community as putting them at a disadvantage.

It is the respective ALC which selects community reps to participate in the EE-AMC, the EE Partnership, the EE-AMC grants sub-committee, and the Urban Aid prioritisation group. There is currently a single place at the EE-AMC and Partnership for one rep from each ALC, a total of four overall, whilst the community have continually fought for a minimum of two from each ALC on any structure they are involved with. Just before the research began there was also a dispute over the groups from whom representation can be drawn with the CCs claiming that a commitment was made that this should be from them alone, whilst the authorities deny that this was ever formally agreed by them.

To add to the complexity, in the morning before each EE-AMC there is a **Briefing Meeting** convened by the CCRC but attended by the EEMU staff able to explain items on the forthcoming Agenda. Up to the dispute over representation only the 16 East End CCs were invited to send someone to this meeting (which tallied with them being the sole source of representation) but this has now been expanded to 'anyone who wants to come', much to the chagrin of the CCs but with the (bemused?) acquiescence of the ALCs. To fight their corner, the CCs have now established their own separate **East End Community Council Strategy Group**.

When, during the research period, the Region decentralized to its new **Local Committees**, a case was made for the EE-AMC to be allocated this additional role.\* The need to make this case seems odd in the light of the supposed pre-existing joint status of EE-AMC, but it now actually became the combined committee which it was in name before. Under the legislation as it has been interpreted, when either council is to take a 'financial' decision, only elected members of the respective council is entitled to take part or vote. It now discusses the core Agenda of Regional business with Regional officers formally in attendance, thus doubling up its responsibilities to that date.

This confused even one local Regional member who in interview proved totally unaware of this radical change having been informed that in the East End "*nothing was altered*" {Q} It also led to an embarrassing situation for the (Regional) Convenor on the first occasion of the committee meeting {O} in its new guise (the venue being the City Chambers home of the District) when there was no other SRC councillor present (and no substitute conveniently to be found on the premises) with a result that certain items of business - which for legal reasons required a minimum quorum of two - could not be enacted.

It is due to the way events have unrolled that the EE-AMC, as Local Committee, is anomalous in having places for the community; the normal model elsewhere in Strathclyde other than the Initiatives is that the community are permitted to attend the Local Committee as silent observers, but in terms of direct participation are restricted to the ALC. This anomaly somewhat undermines the Region's claim {O} that co-option is not permissible *under the legislation*'.

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\*For party political reasons it had initially been proposed that there should be a local committee combining the East End and Greater Easterhouse in order to weaken the impact of Militant who had two councillors in Easterhouse (II)

It can readily be seen that the East End structures are complex so that the inter-relationships less than clear for all stake-holders alike. The constant changes have also contributed to the high degree of ignorance and confusion which prevails, as we have seen, not only amongst the community. Added to this there continue to be behind the scenes battles at the centre over what is remitted downwards to Local Committees (I), leaving officers at best bemused, if not recalcitrant. Lines of accountability for all concerned in these East End structures are muddled, a topic which will be explored in more detail in the later Chapter 10 - Representation and Accountability.

## ORGANISATIONS IN BELVIDERE

Mention has already been made of the five CCs currently existing in the area, but to understand something of the undertow of relationships between them we need to delve into some of their history. Firstly Dennistoun was not a part of GEAR and consequently shared nothing of this common experience. Secondly, more recently, there was a rift between C/B-CC and Barrowfield over the necessity for a project to support the families of drug-users (I). Much more significant and long-lasting, however, are the circumstances which led to the formation of Dalmarnock as a separate CC because originally it had been a part of a tri-partite Calton/Bridgeton/Dalmarnock CC (matching their APT area of Inner Gear). Basically D-CC was a creation of the District council who in 1984 were seeking a community body to head up the proposed Dalmarnock Initiative (Jeffrey 1990). The lengthy consultative procedures for the establishment of a new CC raised much bitterness, the view being expressed from Dalmarnock that the combined C/B/D-CC had not served their interests. Since the chairman, Betty McAllister (who doubles as chairman of Calton Residents Association), was on record as saying *'I love Calton and I think the people in the East End are the best people in the world ... therefore they deserve the best'* (Smart 1988, p83) perhaps her order of priorities accords with the sentiments expressed. Meanwhile C/B-CC were saddened at the loss of solidarity and enraged at the defection. Since the community worker who was supporting the Dalmarnock groups subsequently emerged as the Initiative Coordinator, a post he holds to this day, and since the then key personnel on C/B-CC are still in office, relationships remain sour.

These events are significant because there can be no doubt that Betty McAllister - partly through sheer strength of personality - controls the community input to the local authority structures. The core of regular attenders at B/C/D-ALC come



from the C/B section of the catchment; although they sign in from the various other projects with which they are involved, they have in common their membership of C/B-CC. Notably the places on the EE-AMC, EE Partnership, Urban Aid Sub-group and the Grants Committee are all either filled by members of C/B-CC itself or by people proposed by it {O}. A councillor once defeated in the nomination process confirms that Betty has the same power to swing the outcome there also {I}, which would go some way to account for her inordinate capacity to control these processes.

One other significant organisation - Calton Athletic - plays no part in the ALC itself and is in no way accountable to it currently for funding but had applied for Urban Programme. In 1993 this came up for consideration by B/C/D-ALC, one of whose tasks is to prioritise applications before making their recommendations to the EE-AMC and Glasgow Division Community Development Committee. The ALC decided that it should be given a low ranking {M} but, in the course of deliberations at higher levels, it was decided that nonetheless the request should go forward to the Scottish Office, a decision which community representatives on B/C/D-ALC consider makes a mockery of their efforts.

## **POLITICS IN BELVIDERE**

The B/C/D-ALC area comprises three District Council wards; of the respective councillors, one is of long-standing (but never attended an ALC meeting during the course of the research), one died to be replaced by a candidate new on the scene, the third also being a fairly recent arrival having won the seat at the 1992 elections. He relates joining a wellnigh defunct Calton Labour Party as a sixteen year old, whereupon he was immediately catapulted into the post of Secretary {I}. Over the majority of the research project he was serving as the Convenor of B/C/D-ALC, one of his first positions of responsibility and one for which he was given no 'training'. Respect for his standing was dented by a much publicised court appearance over an incident in which he assaulted someone in a pub. He was followed into politics by his brother - who coincidentally is the regional councillor for Gorbals - and his mother. The latter is a core member of C/B-CC besides currently holding the office of ward chairman, whilst he continues as secretary. Since she was selected to represent B/C/D-ALC on the EE-Partnership, on which her son is a co-member, there is considerable muttering about the stranglehold key personalities exert, accompanied by much shrugging of the shoulders and denying of any responsibility for confronting this reality either by

those within the charmed circle or by those amongst officers who might challenge it {I}.

Due to the way the boundaries were chosen, the area was served by three regional councillors, one with their ward entirely within B-ALC, two with half a ward apiece. At the 1994 elections based on new boundaries one was re-elected, one shifted to a ward elsewhere and one lost the nomination. This last councillor was replaced by a community activist from the Gorbals\*, who was given the appointment of Convenor of B/C/D-ALC at only his second attendance. The voting at the meeting at which he successfully ousted the previous councillor to gain the candidature was 10-7 (Herald 1994), indicating not only that the party is hardly in a much more healthy state than recounted above, but also what small numbers it takes to control such a significant source of community leverage.

## REFLECTIONS

The intention of this final section is to begin to tease out the themes to be covered in detail in the subsequent chapters, and specifically to explore the interplay between the models of decentralised structures and the areas in which they operate. Whilst decentralisation is in essence a top-down enterprise undertaken by the local authority, the actors involved come to the process with their own attitudes and ambitions; nor are they necessarily merely passive recipients since they may seek to control or amend their situation.

The first factor which we might anticipate would affect the way the structures operate is the size of the respective area covered in that this is linked to the localness of the issues being debated and the magnitude of the constituency for which any given actor is the voice. In this sense Glasgow's AMC areas with populations around 100,000 must be regarded as large. Indeed it has been pointed out that, when the East End was expanded to its present boundary, its catchment formed the size of unit from which English authorities were starting out when they decentralise (Clapham & Kintrea 1987). Thus in Islington a total of 165,000 is divided into 24 neighbourhoods with an average of 6,500; in Tower Hamlets the comparable figures are 161,000 split into neighbourhoods of 14,000-32,000 (Burns, Hambleton & Hoggett 1994). The three ALCs with respective populations of around 9,000 18,000 and 28,000 come closer to the latter, but would still verge on the large compared with Islington.

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\* Interviewed as such in the course of that case study.

But the relative diversity of the area also comes into play. For example, Castlemilk in many ways is homogeneous in that many of the residents share a common history, live under comparable conditions, have access to (or lack) common facilities. Belvidere is not only larger, but is made up of sub-areas with a very strong sense of their historical and social identities. One comment on the (poor) level of consultation during GEAR argued that, in the absence of any umbrella organisation, it would have been *'logistically very difficult to involve the 'community'*. *The GEAR area contained many communities'* (McGregor *et al* 1992a, p51).

Taking these two factors in combination, an estimation can be made of the problems to be faced by particular participants in acting as a voice on an AMC with a given model of representation. The following table is constructed on the basis of (very simplistic) measures of size and diversity. The first column represents the size of the 'constituency' served by participants based on the number of District council wards encompassed. Thus the B/C/D-ALC rep on the EE-AMC is expected to speak for 3 wards. The very rough measures for diversity are the numbers of CC areas, taken as representing a community sense of geographical locality, and the range of percentages of publicly rented housing by sub-area, taken as representing experience of one of the major issues dealt with by AM Committees (and tentatively of social/economic conditions). Again the B/C/D-ALC rep has the task of channelling potentially the most variable views. It is to be anticipated that difficulties will be experienced by those reps obliged to act on behalf of areas of which they have no first-hand experience as a resident and in which they have no direct stake or indeed with whom they may be in competition for scarce resources. These problems will be exacerbated where communications are poor or individuals/communities are antagonistic to one another, themes to be explored in the chapter on Accountability.

Table 6.2 Size and Diversity

		SIZE	DIVERSITY	
		PARTICIPANTS CONSTITUENCY ON AMC	SUB-AREAS	PUBLIC RENTAL
GORBALS	S	1 per 1/2 GDC ward	2 CC	90%
CASTLEMILK	SE	2 for 3 GDC wards	4 CC	70 - 100%
BELVIDERE	E	1 for 3 GDC wards	5 CC	46 - 94%*

\*Spatially segregated by wards

Before considering other factors coming into consideration in the interplay between areas and structures, the following Vignette illustrates the different ways in which the groups of participants from the different case study areas reacted to the advent of Local Committees during the course of the research.

#### VIGNETTE

When the Region formed the new decentralised Local Committees (LC) they potentially altered the position of the ALCs in a number of ways by bringing decision-making closer to their level. Firstly the 23 ALCs in Glasgow had nominally reported to the Glasgow Division Community Development Committee, but in effect all contact was with the Chief Executive's Department. It was GDCDC which took the final decisions on the Urban Programme recommendations made by the ALCs, but otherwise links were minimal. Small grants were allocated by Local Grants Committees of councillors covering 2 or 3 wards.

Under the reorganisation proposals, 9 Local Committees were formed with the intention that GDCDC would be scrapped and its powers along with others remitted downwards. Local Grants Committees too were to be abolished, their budgets amalgamated under the new units which now comprise 4 to 6 wards; consequently applicants have access to a larger fund but one not ring-fenced for their area. These LCs were to have a general remit to implement the Region's empowerment policies, specifically to support ALCs and strengthen community involvement.

At the time the community interviews were being conducted in Gorbals the S-LC had been established and had already held their first meetings. No explanation of the new system had yet been made to G-ALC which had not met over the relevant period. Key interviewees were unaware that changes were pending {I} or what their significance might be. When eventually a presentation was made, the only concern of reps present {O} was whether a final decision on the Urban Programme had been remitted down to this level which might mean that community priorities (which had been ignored in the past) would prevail to a greater extent than when such decisions were taken centrally.

Community representatives in Castlemilk were well aware of impending changes long before their implementation. They argued strongly against the cessation of ring-fencing of Castlemilk's element of the Local grants and were not placated with the counter-argument that they now had access to a greater amount. They expressed concern that power relationships between the ALC and the centre might be adversely affected and subjected the Chief Executive to an aggressive grilling over the matter {I}. A request was lodged that the C-ALC Agenda should be adapted to incorporate SE-LC items.

The changes were less apparent in the East End since the EE-AMC simply took on the mantle of Local Committee. Interviewees could scarcely explain the existing structure, let alone any amendments to it, the more so in the context of various other changes to the Partnership occurring simultaneously. Written explanations were contained in papers {M} and questions invited, but there was little reaction at the time. Only belatedly did key representatives wake up to the changes and were then aggrieved that their significance had not been made clearer at the time {O}. Whilst not having any specific objection, suspicions were expressed that officers were following some hidden Agenda.

The differing behaviour of the groups reacting to the identical event is illustrative of a number of parameters which may inhibit or enhance their effectiveness. In a practical sense we can hypothesise that the availability of resources such as access to information in good time to take effective action, support from staff outside or inside the local authority play a large part in Castlemilk's more effective participation. In a psychological sense, the past history of key activists is manifested in their capacity or desire to shape the outcome. Thus again in Castlemilk we observe in their manner of intervention a belief that they can exert control; in Belvidere a conception that they ought to be able to; in Gorbals no apparent feeling that they could or should do so. The reasons for these differences are topic of later chapters, in particular that on Constraints.

Final chapters examine these structures firstly as vehicles for responsiveness or empowerment, and then as models of participatory democracy. Here we have begun to see some of the questions that need to be addressed. If the strategy is to provide the mechanisms through which the 'voice' of service consumers can be channelled (Burns, Hambleton & Hoggett op. cit), whose voices are being added to the processes and which excluded? What of those which traditionally are silent or only dimly audible? What sectional interests come to the fore and what part is played by party politics?

It had been hypothesised that models which allow first-hand local knowledge and lived experience to be deployed, as on ALCs with smaller catchments and more parochial agendas, and the AMC with a place for each CC, ought to allow local knowledge and views to be injected. Furthermore that this brings to procedures a valuable contribution which would otherwise be absent. Where decentralisation is deployed as a mechanism for extending our system of representative democracy, the premise is that newcomers will be attracted into the political arena. But is this in reality what is happening? From the above it will be seen firstly that invitations to participate are exclusively limited to organisations, consequently to pre-existing activists. What is more, they are by no means politically naive, but rather may simultaneously be playing a key role in their local ward in which case, like councillors, they will owe allegiance to party. Whose interests do they then serve and what quality do they inject into the decision-making process which was not already available through the representative and party political system? It is in this context that it will be argued below that the crucial question is whether recognition is given within the structures to their distinctive status as delegates, whether steps are taken to ensure that they are truly mandated by and accountable to their constituency.

## CHAPTER 7

### TAKING PART

The literature highlights two aspects of local government committees which are of significance in the current context. The first is that councillors themselves do not find the traditional system to be satisfactory, with complaints about jargon laden paperwork arriving too late for meaningful consultation. Elected members also often perceive themselves to be dominated by their own officers. In particular, there is seen to be a lack of opportunities for discussion of problems and policies for their solution, committee time being devoted to decision taking at the expense of these activities.

The second is that when participation by lay people is added in, there has been a failure to adapt the proceedings of such traditional committees to their presence so that they suffer similar difficulties. But it will be argued here that in their case the lack of time for prior consultation has more serious consequences since it dictates the role that they are able to play. The result is that they become pseudo-councillors, sometimes with even larger 'constituencies' to serve, with very weak lines of accountability to the groups on whose behalf they are expected to speak.

This chapter explores what the defects of traditional systems are considered to be, providing a Vignette of the way a typical committee will be conducted. This is followed by some ideas on how a meeting which encouraged participation might be structured drawn from commentators in the fields of organisational management and social psychology. The findings in relation to the case study committees examine how they function, how they appear to an outsider and how the interview respondents perceived them. Final reflections consider whether they have been suitably adapted for their purposes.

## **DATA**

Data for this chapter come from interviews and observation at committees, backed by scrutiny of minutes of meetings. The latter provided such information as attendances or absences, agenda items and the degree of turnover of personnel. It also allowed an evaluation of the nature of the paperwork in terms of quantity and quality.

## **INTERVIEWS**

The specific interview questions relating to this chapter covered how the interviewee would describe taking part, whether the committee operated satisfactorily (any problems with the way information was presented, if there was sufficient time for discussion), how members interacted (whether any stakeholder was dominant), the perceived aim and the usefulness of attending. In the case of those who were not directly involved parallel questions probed their perceptions from outside and reasons for not or no longer attending as the case might be.

## **OBSERVATION**

The original plan had been to observe each case-study committee in operation at minimum three times at intervals over the research period:

1. Before commencing interviews;
2. Halfway through interviewing;
3. When interviews had been completed.

the idea being to gain a preliminary impression of what it might be like to arrive as a newcomer who knew no-one, and thereafter gradually to have a more complete knowledge of who was who. It was assumed that more of what was happening would be apparent and appreciated as the stake-holders, their perceptions and commentary became known.

In the event observation extended beyond this mostly for practical reasons because it proved the easiest way to make initial contacts, but also to catch key events at first hand to make comparisons. For example, in Castlemilk whether there were any differences between meetings with a community member or a councillor in the chair. The Region's three new Local Committees and the Glasgow Division Community Development Committee were visited in addition, primarily to assess linkages from the ALCs into the remainder of the structure.

The continuity of attendance at a longer series of meetings proved to have added advantages as extra commentary was imparted by neighbours once my reasons for attending became known. In addition to which a conception grew that the research was being taken seriously.

The actual method of observation was semi-invented since little could be found in the literature - largely devoted to psychological experiments in laboratory settings or group behaviour in industry - which was readily transferrable to committees. Those techniques which might have been applicable went into too much microscopic detail for the present situation - eye contacts, body language - and/or required taping the meeting - how long an individual spoke, the nature of their intervention. The technique evolved is very broadly based on Bales (1950) 'Interaction Process Analysis' as adapted by Ballentyne (1992) in observing the meetings of Strathclyde Regional Council's Community Centre Management Committees. It involved:

- Mapping the seating arrangements
- Evaluating the roles of chairman and Lead Officer
- Watching informal contacts between actors
- Noting timings of agenda items
- Looking for signs of affiliations or conflicts
- Counting interventions by community representatives
- Noting the kinds of topics on which they spoke
- Listening out for any mention of needing to be mandated
- Estimating the likely effectiveness of such interventions

One of the main contentions of this research is that little thought has been given to how to engage non-elected people in decision-taking, that the general tendency has been simply to add them on as if their role were identical to that of councillors taking part in 'traditional' committees. Thus the major failing of the area sub-committee meetings in Birmingham, according to Hambleton & Hoggett, *'is reflected in their inability to appreciate the need to develop a new style and form of working which will encourage local participation.'* (1987, p62). The following sections therefore begin by examining the operations of a typical local authority committee, after which there follows a brief survey of some of the difficulties councillors themselves experience with these procedures and an introduction to the approaches of the Region and District Councils in establishing their respective new systems.



## THE TRADITIONAL COMMITTEE SYSTEM

A point had been reached pre the 1970s reorganisation where Dearlove summed up current views when saying 'no-one had a good word to say for committees' (1979, p169). These were seen as contributing greatly to the overall lack of internal co-ordination, a separate service committee having been established independently to oversee a single department each time a new function was allotted to local government. The growth in professionalism was criticised as both minimising councillor control and re-inforcing divisiveness. The various Royal Commissions ( Maud 1967; Redcliffe-Maud 1969; Wheatley 1969) also came to the view that there were too many committees and sub-committees, and furthermore too many councillors on each of these, as a consequence of which policy-making was subsumed by trivial day-to-day administration. Evidence submitted to the Widdicombe Committee quoted in their 'Report on the Conduct of Local Authority Business' reads:

*'From a management point of view, there would be much to be said for reducing the number of members on individual councils very considerably ... These numbers do not seem necessary to secure effective local representation and invariably make for unwieldy administrative arrangements. Some of the substantial overhead cost within local government is devoted to servicing committees whose real purpose is often to find something for members to do. If membership of councils was much smaller economy, efficiency and effectiveness would be enhanced. Experience suggests that bodies with membership of more than 18-20 people are unwieldy and are too large to allow effective discussion and debate....Finally it would reflect the current reality: in practice almost all authorities are run by a relatively small number of members who comprise "the leadership".'* (p172)

Thus the Paterson Committee (1973) proposed that the new Scottish Authorities should severely restrict the number of committees (in Glasgow a reduction from 20 to 7) and that none should have more than 1/3 of the full complement of elected members. The Thomas Committee (1983) too had recommended that Councils should take a serious look at the quality of their report writing which was regarded as being of a poor standard, specifically that a standardised format be adopted to make papers readily intelligible.

In the event this advice was ignored, with the Councils post re-organisation operating much as they had before. That elected members continued to experience problems was highlighted by a survey (Martlew 1988) of Scottish councillors conducted in the 1980s which saw them complaining of lengthy

agendas, papers full of jargon, poor quality reports with only a single option. Far from aiding councillors, the new methods of Corporate Management adopted in the wake of the Paterson Report (op. cit) were regarded as having strengthened the stranglehold of professionals (Young 1973) such that *'it is a brave layman who will challenge a consensus of experienced professional men.'* (Elcock 1986, p101). On the basis of interviews with members of Birmingham City council Newton lists eleven tactics allegedly used by officers to get their way in spite of members sitting on committees. He quotes the comments of one member stating:

*'It is a subtle blend of bullshit and flannel and making sure that things go their way. And writing reports. Report writing, I would say, is the most important part of their job. They put out so many reports that you get swamped by it all. You can't read it ... It's all protective confetti for the officers.'* (Newton 1976, p156)

There are complaints also about the sheer quantity of papers with which councillors are expected to cope, vividly illustrated by the individual who reported:

*'I don't need an alarm clock in the morning because every morning I've got a call from the postman; half past, quarter past seven; the thump every morning when the mail drops is incredible. Now I've to read all that paper, because sure as fate I'll be at a meeting and someone will ask a question on a bit which I have'nt read. And you look a real fool when you stand up and say something and someone says "Oh but it's in the report there".. Now, even the physical reading of paper takes a hell of a long time...'*  
(Martlew op. cit, p109)

The other side of the coin is the senior official interviewed for the current research who remarked *"Councillors don't want to read complicated reports. They just want to know how it affects their ward"*{Q} as a result of which there is no incentive to make improvements.

## COMMITTEE ETIQUETTE

There are two conventions which hold sway at a 'traditional' local authority committee, which may enhance efficient decision-taking but inhibit open debate. The first is that officers do not disagree with one another in front of elected members. Any officer who departs from this mode of behaviour will be disciplined, as was confirmed by one {I} who had come newly to the council from another sphere. If officers from different departments hold views which are at variance, these will be thrashed out in advance and a common front adopted. Occasionally if they cannot win their point any other way, someone will deviate from this code to embarrass an officer from another department in public {O}.

The second convention is that councillors of the same party do not disagree with each other in front of officers, especially once the party line has been set in the political group. If the topic is not one of sufficient moment to have warranted a line being pre-set, then a councillor is expected to support the respective chairman. Again any (junior) councillor who departs from this mode of behaviour will be disciplined by the whips, as one such described {I}. The result is to drive meaningful discussion to an earlier, private stage in the proceedings. As the Leader of the District Council commented wryly {Q}:

*"We have a pre-group meeting (without officers) and then go into a meeting with a battery of highly paid officers who are well informed, we don't take their advice before we take a decision."*

Commenting from the inside knowledge of Strathclyde, Young writes:

*'The committee process itself with its pre-determined agendas, its rules of procedure, its focus upon itemised decision-making at the expense of policy-making too often becomes a chivalrous ritual, a substitute for real action. It does little to encourage constructive communication between the two main participants - councillors and officials let alone the public at large - or to bring and exploit their special skills and experience.'* (Young 1981, p18)

He diagnosed the ills of committees as follows (Idem, p18):

- (a) Size An average of 15 - 20 councillors plus twelve or so officers gives three times the effective number for creative exploration of issues.
- (b) Role To take decisions. Councillors become impatient of colleagues who question fundamental issues and are generally keen to move on to 'next business'.
- (c) Collusion of Chairman and Chief Officers Basic political loyalties, if not whips, can be guarantees to carry the day for predetermined recommendations.
- (d) Inertia Officers can generally rely on the caution of the average member to act as a brake on the dangerous, radical idea.
- (e) Professional Control Committees relate to and are controlled by a single department organised around a set of professional skills and perceptions.
- (f) Cinderella Issues Those issues which are low in priority of professionals or overlap with other departments create rivalry and therefore fall into the cracks between departments and committees.

If community participants are then added to a committee which operates in this fashion, the result is that they too have to revert to the 'outsider' tactics. Those with friendly access to the relevant officer or able to lobby through their active membership of the dominant political party can continue to employ these alternative means of access, whilst those without risk joining in a sterile event. The following Vignette illustrates how any committee they join will be organised.

#### VIGNETTE

In preparation for the forthcoming meeting, the Clerk will liaise with officers over any items to be included. Should it prove that there is any dissension over a report, the departments or the team of officers will be brought together to thrash out an agreed option. Some days before the papers are to be issued, the Clerk and officers, if needed, will meet with the chairman to finalise the Agenda and highlight any problems. The chairman will indicate the political position on issues or may consider that discussion at the party group meeting is required for a line to be adopted. At this meeting, where officers are barred, the Leadership will present their case whilst representatives of the city-regional party will be in attendance urging adherence to the manifesto promises. Fellow councillors may take the opportunity to force a vote on the decision they expect the committee to reach.

Three days before the meeting the 1/4" thick wodge of papers are posted in the members' pigeonholes for collection. There they join the pile from the three main committees and accompanying sub-committees on which the councillor sits, the replies from officers on points raised, data on plans for the ward, the correspondence from constituents ... Knowing something may be coming up, the vigilant ward party secretary buttonholes his councillor in the tea-room to remind her of her promises to her local supporters; at home on the answerphone awaits a phone-call from a community group urging their case. An officer meanwhile is in quiet conversation with a backbencher feeding her salient facts he knows she is keen to raise, whilst another is warning a favoured pressure group that an item they are interested in is on the forthcoming Agenda.

On the day of the meeting, six to twelve officers arrive, whilst the Clerk, knowing how difficult the councillors find it to provide cover for all the many meetings, checks anxiously that there will be the necessary quorum of six from the potential twenty. An isolated member of the public finds a copy of Agenda sheet, but no accompanying papers, lying on the chairs for spectators. The Chairman enters, but has to await a tardy colleague (who strolls in at the last moment asking for a replacement set of papers for the one left behind unread) before starting the meeting. An officer presents her report, which she takes as read but "*would be willing to answer any questions*". Discussion is invited but, there being no dissent, the report is noted for implementation. An agenda of twenty items or so will be progressed in this manner in half an hour to an hour, with councillors drifting in and out of the room for items of particular interest.

## NEW STRUCTURES POST REORGANISATION

Councillors operating in the system of service committees adapt by becoming specialists, this being particularly true of Chairmen who become defenders of THEIR department (Elcock op. cit), with backbenchers consigned to the role of an '*occasionally rebellious stage army*' (Dunleavy 1980, p144). It was to break with these constricting traditions that Strathclyde Regional Council (SRC) and Glasgow District Council (GDC) experimented with change, each doing so in a particular fashion. In addition to the advocated techniques of Corporate Management - the Policy & Resources Committee, the Chief Executive and Team of senior Directors, SRC in the early days tried out a number of innovative structures. The council at the time was newly created and willing to try out new methods. The main thrust came from a diagnosis that when any committee has the twin functions of deliberation and decision-taking, the deliberative side is the one which becomes lost (Young 1977). The purpose of the experiments was therefore to split this off by creating separate mechanisms for in-depth debate which would feed into policy making; these included Officer/Member groups [bringing together a small group of councillors and junior staff], area based Divisional Deprivation Groups [bringing together councillors and officers to address social issues], Local Grants Committees [giving groups of ward councillors a say in how grants were allocated to groups], and ALCs aimed at bringing local lay people in APTs into decision-taking. These new forms were seen as requiring different skills:

*'The style and rhythms of the work entailed in this sort of structure are very different from those to which officers and councillors are used. Chairmen of such groups are not there to expedite business but rather to enable issues to be explored and to help individuals cope with their new roles.'* (Young 1981, p28)

But many of the councillors and officers who were implementing these innovative techniques came from earlier councils which had operated in the 'traditional' manner and it proved difficult to achieve the necessary change in culture. Already by the late 1970s some had atrophied since '*the new democracy proved very demanding*' (Ferguson 1979, p229); others were in danger of reverting to the old ways with Chairmen, in particular, preferring the dominant style (Martlew undated).

The District Council meanwhile had complemented the techniques of Corporate Management at the centre with decentralised AMCs much along the lines envisaged by Stewart (1974) in '*The responsive local authority*' whereby a team of officers considered a geographical area as an entity instead of each addressing

separate service functions. It was intended also to provide a more meaningful role for the backbenchers in tackling problems on a ward basis. The innovative element lay more in the team, with no particular attempt to alter the committee mode of operation apart from incorporating MPs and Regional Councillors. This in itself led to large committee sizes, as did the later addition of community representation which was only brought to fruition after the committees had already been in operation for nearly two years. By this time the style of meeting had fossilised in the 'traditional' mode. If, as we have seen, councillors themselves feel powerless to exert control from within the system, we would expect to find that community participants could be even more at a loss coming from outside unless some cognisance were taken of their presence and very positive steps taken to adapt procedures in ways which allow them to make a meaningful contribution. So what might such steps be?

## MEETINGS TO MAXIMISE PARTICIPATION

Many of the ideas which become applied in Local Government originate in theories of management developed for industry. Thus the consensus of advice about the disadvantages of size was derived from warnings about the potential dangers of the expanding firm (Robinson 1931). It was with the aim of making local government **efficient** that the suggested reduction in numbers and size of committees was advocated, with the citation above being from the evidence of the Audit Commission seeking lower costs. But what would be the optimum size if the objective is participation?

Again the research findings on this topic come from theories developed in the fields of organisational management or psychology, largely as applied to businesses. Some applications are in mainstream operations, some in special participatory structures such as the recent vogue for Quality Circles aimed at joint problem-solving. It has been concluded from various studies (Argyle 1979) that five is the optimum number for all present to feel sufficiently at ease to play a part spontaneously; above this number there is a trade-off between increasing skills, knowledge and diversity of talent, but diminishing chances of any individual participating unless the Chair is particularly vigilant in ensuring that everyone is brought in.

Without this, in larger groups inputs also become skewed to those who feel confident to speak; Handy (1993) talks of individuals have differing **thresholds of participation** so that:

*'One man finds no difficulty in speaking in a group of twenty strangers, another will find a group of ten too large unless he knows them well, or has some official role in the group. Studies have shown that those who participate most in a group are perceived as having the most influence. This means that as a group gets larger the influence pattern will get distorted in favour of those with low thresholds of participation. This distribution of influence may not be in accordance with the distribution of knowledge or experience. The 'neglected resource' is a common feature of groups.'* (p155)

In larger groups there is also a greater pressure to conform to the group norms (Thibaut & Kelly 1959), with those unable or unwilling to do so being effectively excluded (Siegel & Lane 1974). Looking at voluntary participatory models, Pateman (1970) found that these are more attractive to management grades than to the shopfloor (see Chapter 1). Nonetheless in the case of Quality Circles there is some evidence that these are more difficult to sustain for white-collar rather than blue-collar workers (Temple 1986), whilst both kinds need the skills of a trained facilitator and will only prosper in a company with a culture that favours a participatory style. Finally it is imperative that they be structured appropriately for their purpose (Jeffrey 1992).

Whether the objective of adding community representatives is consumer feedback or empowerment, then, the implication is that this will be achieved more readily in a small group with a chairman and/or lead officer well versed in facilitatory techniques. If the aim is to involve working-class people from APTs, who may be low in self-confidence and consequently have a high threshold of participation, meetings should be carefully planned if the community are not to become a neglected resource. As we saw in the previous chapters, however, the catchment areas for AMCs and ALCs were dictated by other considerations entirely, and as we will see below the same is true of the numbers in attendance. So how do they operate in practice? What follows are some relevant data on the case study committees, followed by a description of how they appear to an outside visitor.

## CASE-STUDY MEETINGS

Specific information relating was gathered from a survey of minutes which covered all the **potential** case study ALCs in Glasgow for the year preceding the fieldwork, those of the **actual** case study AMCs for the same year, and those for the case study ALCs and AMCs over the subsequent fieldwork period. Specific data were collected on:

- Total numbers listed as present\*
- Which individuals attended/missed
- Continuity of attendance and turnover
- Quantity of agenda items
- Numbers of pages of documentation
- Complexity of reports - technical terminology, figures, maps, acronyms
- Any items raised by the community
- Number of occasions on which votes were cast

Table 7.1 overleaf summarises the findings for the case study committees. In the figures for attendance the first number is those actually present on average, followed by the potential total in that category, whilst the symbols ' > ' and ' - ' respectively indicate an occasional appearance, or that this category is not invited. The estimate of turnover of personnel in the final rows is based on continuity of attendance by the same individuals at successive meetings. This is low at all AMCs with co-options and a dedicated team of officers for the area concerned, and at Castlemilk ALC with its elected representatives. It is high at the other two ALCs with their open invitation to attend and spasmodic attendance by officers.

It is clear that many councillors do not consider it worthwhile to come. Indeed the overall figures for the year disguise the fact that certain councillors never came at all whilst others were faithful in their attendance. It is conspicuous that regional councillors do not attend the District's AMCs, not even the East End which was supposedly a Joint Initiatives and became a Local Committee. The same is true for the regional officers except in the East End. Nor do the district members and officers, with the occasional exception of the relevant Area Coordinator, normally go to Gorbals or Castlemilk ALC. This is a clear sign of the lack of cooperation which exists between Strathclyde and Glasgow being echoed in these structures.

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\* Visitors, public or elected members not on the committee and are not usually listed



Table 7.1 Meetings of Case Study Committees

	SOUTH	S. EAST	E. END	GORBALS	C'MILK	B'DERE
<b>PRESENT</b>						
GDC Cllr	5 [11]	7 [8]	5 [11]	-	0 [3]	1 [5]
SRC Cllr	0 [6]	1 [4]	1 [7]	1 [1]	1 [2]	2 [3]
M.P.	> 1 [3]	0 [2]	1 [3]	-	> 1 [2]	> 1 [2]
CC	11 [16]	-	2 [3]	2 [2]	-	2 [5]
Com Rep	> 1 [3]	4 [6]	1 [1]	Core 2 Floating 14	6 [10]	Core 5 Floating 17
Projects	-	-	-	> 4	1	Floating 12
Bodies	-	-	-	> 2	1	Floating 11
<b>OFFICERS</b>						
GDC	10	11	12	> 1	> 1	3 - 7
SRC	0	0	10*	0 - 6	7	3 - 10
<b>AVERAGE TOTAL</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>MEETINGS</b>						
Number	11	20	8	7	10	9
Day/Night	Day	Day	Day	Night	Day	Night
Held	Central	Central	Central	Local	Local	Local**
<b>ITEMS</b>						
Number	16	11	19	6	7	13
Pages	60	30 - 112	70 - 140	4	12	60
<b>TIME</b>						
Meeting	1½ - 2 hr	¾ - 1½	1 - 1½ hr	25-45 min	1½ - 2 hr	1 - 2½
Per item	6 min	5 min	3 min	6 min	10 min	8 min
<b>TURNOVER OF PERSONNEL</b>						
Reps	LOW	LOW	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
Officers	LOW	LOW	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH

\* This number was much the same both before and after the East End became a Local Committee

\*\* Moved around three community venues

## OBSERVATION AT MEETINGS

Meetings of the case study committees were attended periodically throughout the research period. All are open to the general public, the presence of an outsider being scarcely noticeable at AMCs, whereas at ALCs it will be conspicuous. However, in both contexts I became familiar over time through personal interviews.

### Area Management Committee Meetings

For some, conditions may well be intimidating. Meetings of AMCs are held in the daytime in the centre of Glasgow at the City Chambers, the latter being an imposing Victorian building with elaborate tiling and chandeliers, uniformed attendants and public rooms resplendent in flocked wallpaper, oil paintings and leather armchairs. The first initiative test is to locate the room in which the meeting is to be held since this information can only be learnt on the day either by approaching one of the liveried Council Officers or progressing up a flight of marble stairs to the corridor off which various rooms are situated. Arrived here, the timetable for the day is displayed but few members of the public ever penetrate this far {O}.

Councillors, representatives and MPs plus the respective Coordinator and senior officers take their seats around a large mahogany table, the Chairman across from the Coordinator, whilst the rest of the team of officers on call to answer questions crowd on lesser seats around the walls, thus giving a semblance that they are answerable to the committee. The room will appear very crowded since, excluding any extra visitors or outsiders in attendance or spectating members of the public, the normal attendance will total 20 to 30 (See Table 7.1), District councillors other than the Chairman tend to appear and disappear spasmodically, sometimes summoned by a whispering Council Officer. Given that on average the meetings visited lasted about an hour to an hour and a half (including a break for tea) in which time up to 20 items had been covered, debate was minimal.

Indeed in the course of observation at AMCs certain community reps never spoke at all (the same being true for certain councillors), whilst the most persistent reached twenty (mainly minor) interventions in one session. This appears to tally with the prediction in relation to the skewing on input, especially since the **intervenors** could be judged to be middle-class.\* It had been expected that the

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\* None was from a case study APT

South AMC would differ in that there the CCs have their own seat at the table, but from limited observation this did not seem to make any difference. One can only surmise that conforming to the prevailing norms of behaviour exerted a stronger influence.

Over the period the minutes were examined, the necessity for a vote to be taken proved to be an extremely rare occurrence, indicating that dissent is minimal. There were only two occasions during the fieldwork on which the pre-ordained line was seriously challenged. One involved a clash between councillors of the same party which led to a vote being taken; it had all the appearances of being caused by a clash of personalities {O} and left the community participants bemused {I}. The other involved a community council querying the recommendation of an officer backed by the CC's own ward councillor {O}. In the event another senior councillor found a way to get the decision postponed until the CC could be satisfied since he felt the community participant was being unfairly bullied and railroaded {I}. As another officer present on this occasion commented, it indicated a failure by the officer to *"do his groundwork with the CC before the meeting"*

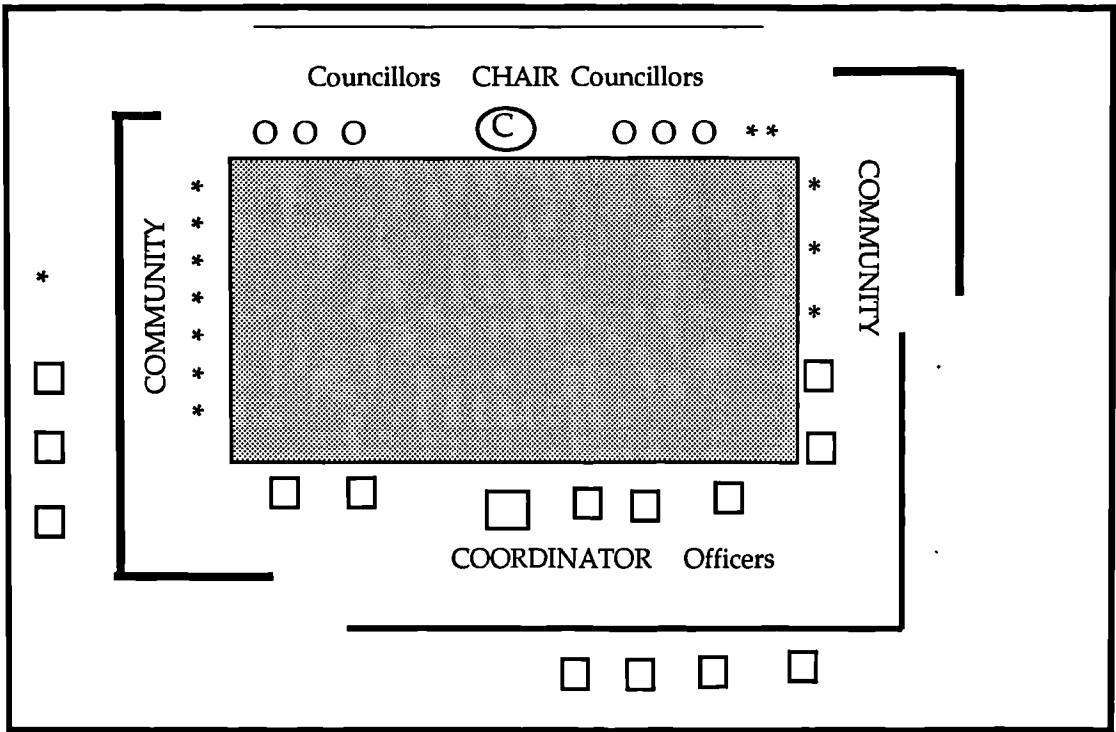
### **Affiliations at AMCs**

Groupings differed between the three AMCs. At the South no Regional councillors or officers attended, whilst CCs outnumbered elected members about two to one. A certain community solidarity was in evidence, representatives exchanging pleasantries before the meeting commenced and tending to back one another. At the South East there was only the occasional Regional member and the four reps were normally outnumbered two to one by councillors. But here the solidarity was visible between Castlemilk councillors and reps who sat en bloc at a different part of the table to the Cambuslang/Rutherglen/Toryglen contingent. On occasion a Castlemilk councillor would intervene to make a point on behalf of a community participant. The latter asked questions more often in the separate meetings devoted to monitoring - especially Castlemilk housing contracts where progress on site was at issue. At the East End where officers from the two councils outnumbered reps and councillors combined, the four reps congregated together but two never spoke. These meetings were more than usually dominated by the Chairman who drove the business through with maximum speed and minimum debate by either councillors or community. Both evinced every sign of being a neglected resource, as would have been predicted from the literature under these conditions.

The charts below and overleaf give an impression of how people arranged themselves at the three AMCs highlighting the blocks and the way certain groupings dominated the scene. It is the convention for the Chair to face the Townclerk, but others sit as they please.

### SEATING PLANS OF AREA MANAGEMENT MEETINGS

Figure 7.1 Seating at S-AMC



### KEY











REGIONAL COUNCIL		DISTRICT COUNCIL		COMMUNITY	
				*	
	CHAIRMAN		CHAIRMAN	MOST DOMINANT 	
	COUNCILLOR		COUNCILLOR		
	COORDINATOR		COORDINATOR	LEAST DOMINANT 	
	OFFICER		OFFICER		

Figure 7.2 Seating at EEMC

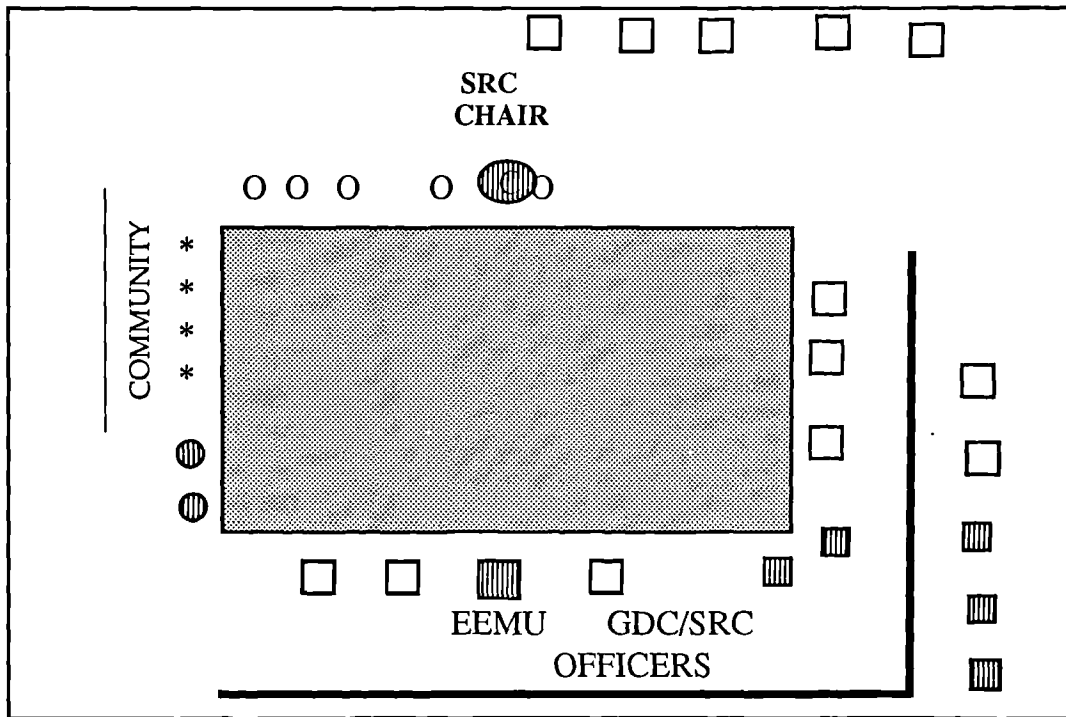
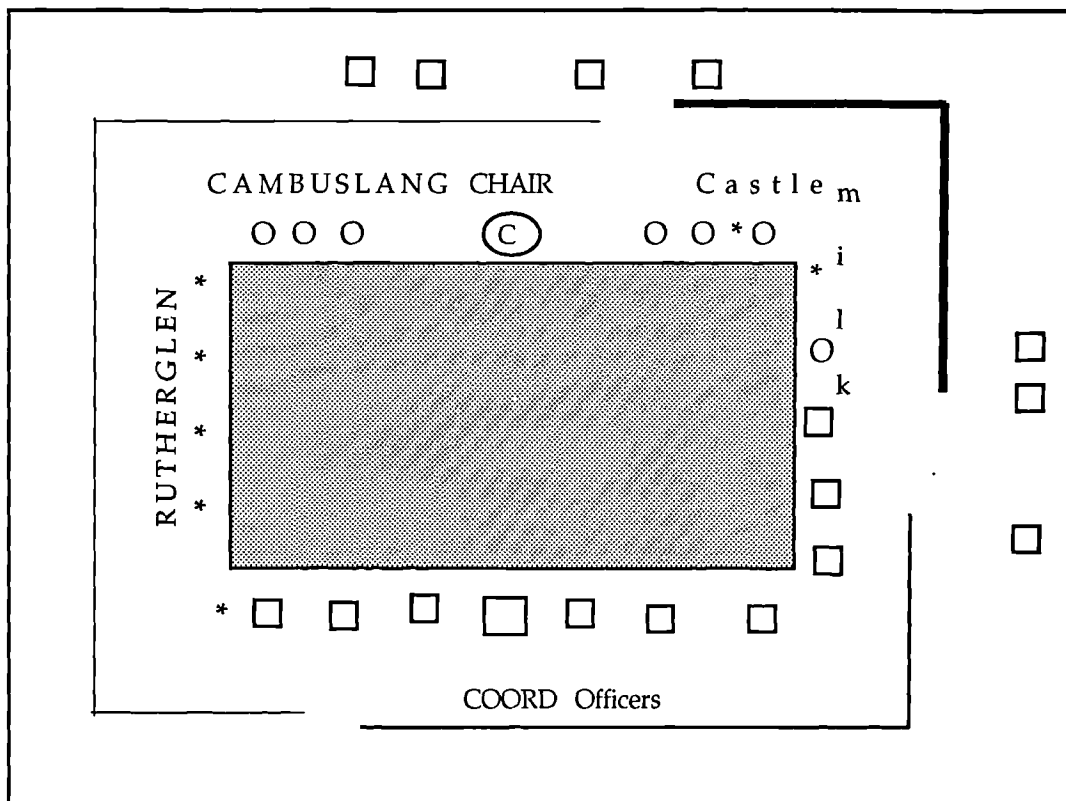


Figure 7.3 Seating at SE-AMC



## OBSERVATION AT AREA LIAISON COMMITTEES

Meetings of ALCs, by contrast, are held in the locality in a familiar community venue, normally at night to suit the volunteers. Attempts are made to generate a friendly setting - smoking permitted,\* tea and coffee provided, (some) councillors or officials in casual dress. Nonetheless on the two with the open invitation to groups, the summoning of officers to give account the frequent presentations by organisations and projects, means that numbers can be high - over thirty at a well attended event. Whilst there proved to be a faithful core, the most characteristic feature was of a constantly fluctuating sea of unfamiliar faces. Since introductions were seldom made, it could be impossible to know who was who {O}.

Everyone, visitors included, sat round one, consequently long, table which made it difficult to hear the proceedings and militated against intimacy. This was reinforced by the tendency for a 'top end' to develop with the Chairman flanked by the Lead Officer, any support staff, and fellow councillors from both councils, whilst the 'bottom end' was occupied by the community. Visually this conveys a 'them and us' picture of two sides pitted against one another (See the ALC charts overleaf). Interestingly at the one meeting visited in Castlemilk when the community chairman was on duty, the pattern was neatly reversed.

The atmosphere at the three ALCs differed markedly. Gorbals not only failed to meet regularly, but was sparsely attended by officers, covered little ground and generated minimal discussion, though the atmosphere was surprisingly cordial considering the undertones known to exist. In part this could be attributed to the style of the Chairman who made particular efforts to set people at ease.

Castlemilk, with its high attendance of officers from the Region and the Partnership was an altogether more weighty affair. Here the community too had rehearsed their arguments in advance, appointing a single spokesman to deliver these on the day. However, the community's ability to have a greater control over proceedings in terms of chairmanship and Agenda setting did not appear to be reflected in any greater team building between the three categories of stakeholders. If anything the reverse, with the community's newly built solidarity pitching them into repeated, albeit polite confrontation. With four different chairmen operating in rotation, they had little impact on the style of operation.

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\* Rates of smoking are notably higher in high stress areas

The diagram shows a rectangular container. The top edge is labeled 'TOP' and the bottom edge is labeled 'BOTTOM'. Inside the container, there is a central rectangular area filled with a dense dot pattern. Surrounding this central area are several symbols: a vertical line on the left, a circle with horizontal lines, a rectangle with horizontal lines, and several asterisks. The symbols are arranged in a way that suggests a specific layout or arrangement of components within the container.

### Figure 7.4 Seating at ALCs

The prominent feature of Belvidere was its domination by the Bridgeton/Calton cohort led by the chairman of their CC (See Chapter Case Study Areas) who on occasions gave every appearance of being in the chair. Her style was combative, liking nothing better than to grill an officer on their performance so that councillors were on occasions forced to their defence in an unusual reversal of roles. Other participants played little part, but obviously enjoyed the spectacle. These meetings were the longest and on occasions quite rowdy.

## INTERVIEW RESPONSES ABOUT EXPERIENCES

The opening question was a general invitation to describe their **experience** of taking part. Some interviewees were newcomers who provided first impressions; some were involved in more than one example or had been attending over a lengthy period of time, thus being in a position to make comparisons. Where the interviewee was not or no longer actually attending the meetings, the question was amended to impressions from outside.

Newcomers to AMCs from all three categories - whether councillors, officers or reps - agreed that the setting was intimidating and that it took some time to be able to cope {Q}:

*"You're frightened to make a fool of yourself"*  
*"Junior officers don't normally go to committees. You feel very exposed"*  
*"You're flying by wire up there"*  
*"It's all about self confidence, being a community rep"*

Even at ALCs there were comments such as {Q}:

*"I was made to feel very unwelcome"*  
*"Its very confusing and nobody explains who anybody is"*  
*"They (other community reps) said "You can't let every wee tea group in here.""*

The replies from those who had been going to AMCs for a while became more polarised between the groups with the more jaundiced reps typically describing the experience as *"frustrating"* because *"it's all sewn up in advance"*, whilst officers applied such terms as *"boring"*, *"irrelevant"*, *"waste of time"* or *"trivia"*. It was, however, pointed out that councillors require and Departments expect that officers as members of the team attend AMCs in case a question comes up, even if they have no actual significant items on the Agenda. Since councillors are under no similar obligation, not surprisingly those who do appear are supportive since



those (mostly senior) District councillors and almost every Regional councillor choose not to attend (see Table 7.1).

The criticisms of AMCs from outsiders mostly arose because the restrictions on numbers meant they could not participate:

*"You couldn't get speaking, so we stopped going."*

*"I used to go, but sat round the edge you can't follow what's being said."*

The descriptions of ALCs meanwhile as:

*"All hunky dory, easy going, nothing controversial."*

*"Nice cosy, comfortable, cup-of-tea kind of meeting."*

*"No heavy debate"*

implied that their friendlier atmosphere was held against them as avoiding unpleasant conflict likely to arise were contentious topics to be truly debated.

Moving on to the question about the **presentation of issues**, Table 7.1 provides an indication of the amount of homework required with papers distributed ranging from the skimpy 4 pages handed out on the day at Gorbals ALC to the mammoth 140 pages issued for one East End AMC. The SE-AMC had slipped into the (strictly illegal) habit of tabling late items, doing so at every meeting observed. On Castlemilk ALC community reps now refuse to debate any item that arrives too late for prior discussion at their pre-meeting.

Whilst complaints in regard to ALCs mostly related to the lack of information, those relating to AMCs concerned quality rather than quantity:

*"Some papers you feel you need to study them for a fortnight to really understand."*

*"You're halfway there when you can crack the jargon. Then you can challenge them."*

Combined with the **speed of decision-taking** this leads to a situation where:

*"Sometimes a decision has been taken before we realise."*

*"Page 1, page 2, page 3 and out you go. Then they say it was discussed at the last meeting."*

As it happens the above were all quotations from community reps, but might equally have been from councillors, whilst officers confessed that the habit was not to bother much since, as one put it:

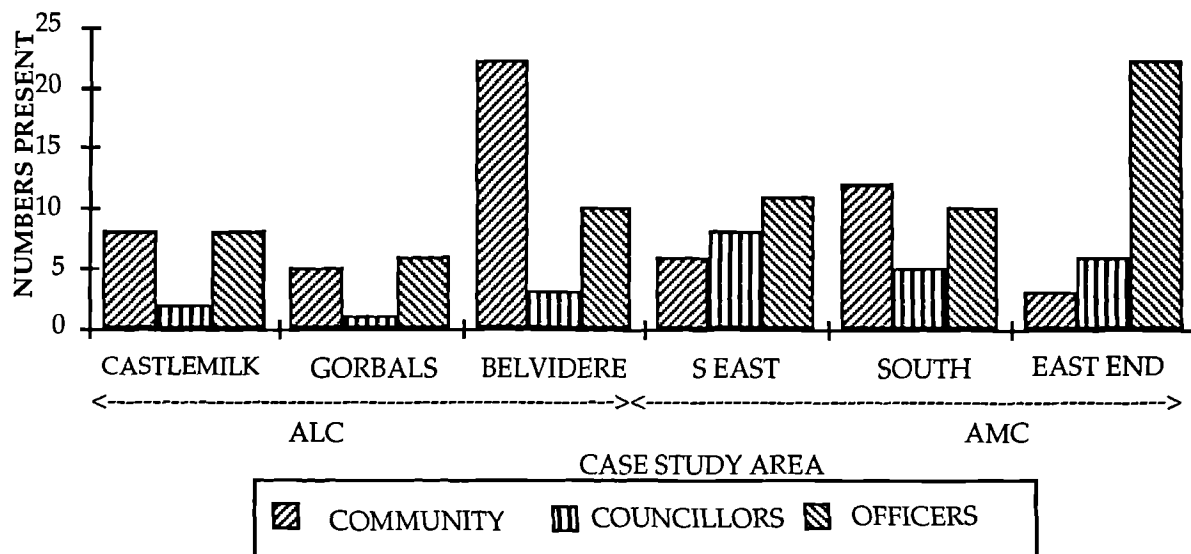
*"I went to a lot of trouble at the start. Spent ages having graphs made by one of my staff to show the information a way it could be easily interpreted. Then it was 'noted'. So now I don't try."*

## RELATIONSHIPS

Having covered the mechanics of the meetings, the next question was angled at exploring what were considered positive or negative features in terms of the people involved and their interrelationships. There is absolutely no doubt that the community participants view the scene in terms of themselves pitted against more powerful forces; responses could be broadly categorised into those concerning dominance through numerical superiority and those concerning dominance through power to control proceedings.

The following chart in Figure 7.5 shows in graphical form the average numbers of each group of actors at meetings by case study area:

Figure 7.5 Average Numbers at Meetings



### Numbers on Area Liaison Committees

Taking the ALCs, in Gorbals the general criticism was that there were {Q} “too many officers” but the blame for this was put on the failure of sufficient numbers of community activists to attend. In Belvedere, despite the preponderance of community groups, the complaint likewise was of too many officials (in which they included paid workers from the voluntary sector). Apparently in the past it had been agreed that they should come by invitation only but as one ex-participant put it {Q} “they crept back and now it’s just a talking shop”. Community Council members in both Gorbals and Belvedere also aver that the meetings had been much better before they were widened to other groups; in part this annoyed

them because of the implications over their status, but there was a genuine belief that smaller numbers had made for a better level of debate. In Castlemilk where numbers are more evenly balanced, community representatives stressed the importance of their numerical strength in forming a concerted block.

The issue of numerical strength of community reps was not politically threatening to councillors on ALCs since - apart from the dedicated UP budget in Castlemilk - they have no powers to take decisions which are ultimately taken elsewhere in the local authority. Their main concern tended to be as one put it {Q} *"It's the same old faces wherever you go"*. Officers, who interpreted their role primarily as giving information (see below), favoured high attendances by community reps as aiding efficient dissemination.

### **Numbers on Area Management Committees**

Overall in the case of AMCs whatever their numbers the community reps regarded the officers as dominant. Thus on the S-AMC where it might have been expected that the community would have some sense that they were in the ascendancy due to their numerical supremacy, this appeared to make no impact on them feeling it was *their* meeting {I}. It was noticeable when watching {O} that the only section in the meeting when they played a large part was when minor grants to local groups were under consideration. Whilst they did occasionally operate en bloc the Gorbals rep said this could cause awkwardness since he was loath to support another CC automatically when he {Q} *"didn't understand the issue."* "On the South East the Castlemilk community reps sought to overcome their deficiencies by affiliating with councillors and it was reported {I} that they had convened a special meeting with the local members to insist that they speak up more for Castlemilk. In the East End Belvedere ALC had submitted an (unsuccessful) request for more community places, a demand also backed by the joint CCs. The latter became so concerned over their own position that towards the end of the period of the research they formed a 'Union' to fight their corner. As one CC office bearer saw it:

*"Our request was brushed under the counter because they were frightened there would be too many community voices at the table. If it looks as if we might win something they collect some more councillors out of the tearoom. I feel we are there on sufferance."*

The numbers issue is a concern for councillors on AMCs because - despite their title as advisory - they have de facto decision-making powers. The district councillors were consequently adamant that, as elected members accountable to

the electorate - that ultimate control must lie with themselves. This they had achieved on the case study AMCs either by restricting numbers (SE and EE) or by not granting the vote (S). One councillor talked of his *"horror at what goes on elsewhere in the city"* {Q} where such restrictions had not been in force. In some cases mention was also made of the dangers of providing access to reps of an alternative political persuasion (this was at the time when Militant were at the height of their influence in Glasgow). As the Leader put it most graphically *"I didn't come there as a member of the Labour Party to be told what to do by the opposition."*

The only respondents to comment on the absolute size were those professionals with a concern for community development who were of the view that it was counter-productive in terms of participation. For instance, the observation that the community reps noticeably spoke up about small grants on the S-AMC was attributed by a community oriented officer to a lack of progress towards policy issues. His previous experience with Housing Associations was that though new committee members started out in this way they could with time be encouraged to move on, but the size of AMCs did not permit such team building to occur.

Surprisingly, the quality of chairmanship was not often mentioned as a contributory factor. Only one rep in Gorbals made any comment which was to the effect that the current councillor was a vast improvement on the previous one who he described as a {Q} *"Stalinist"*. This matched with the observed behaviour of this councillor {O} (see above) and also with his description his own role as {Q} *"trying to keep the officers from dominating"*. One officer able to make comparisons over time also commented that the present incumbent on S-AMC was 'middling' in permitting time for discussion by comparison with one predecessor who {Q} *"couldn't wait to get away."*

Whatever the formal structure in which they operated, overwhelmingly the community activists described relationships as confrontational:

*"THEY will try to pull out the stops and we are there to stop them"*

*"There's a lack of trust; we're sure they hide things"*

*"You never feel they tell you the whole story"*

*"The top officials come here that condescendingly"*

*"It's still them and us agin them."*

*"We've learnt to be sneekit same as them"*

*"They offer us beads like they did the Indians in America"*

For some these attitudes of suspicion and hostility were long ingrained from previous encounters with officialdom, many of them being tenants of a housing

department with a past reputation for authoritarian management; some of them, as we saw earlier from the history of the case study areas, derive from prior experiences of poor consultation; some of them have been recently triggered by a specific incident. For instance, in Castlemilk the year before the research there had been an event at the ALC in which the reps were certain they had been told lies so that the new officer, who had inherited her predecessor's reputation, described going into the area now as visiting {Q} "*shark infested waters*".

## ROLE AND USEFULNESS

The next two linked questions concerned the perceived **aim** of the committee and its **usefulness**. In the light of the confusions amongst the initiators objectives, it comes as little surprise to find a wide range of interpretations of the respective role. Few of the actors displayed familiarity with the written versions of the remits, the majority claiming they had never seen such a thing. The exception was Castlemilk ALC where there had been involvement of CUG in rewriting the regulations, which were then ratified by the full ALC. This ignorance resulted in the remit by and large being defined in terms of what was actually covered on the Agenda rather than what might or ought to be the purpose.

Figure 7.6 Description of Role of Area Liaison Committees

	ACTUAL	IS NOT	NOT MENTIONED
C O M M U N I T Y	Unclear	Community problems	Services
	Urban Programme		Action plans
	Prioritisation	Councillors listening	
	Information		
	Making officers accountable		
C O U N C I L L O R S	Giving community a say (e.g. UP)	Mainline services	Corporate working
	Hearing community problems		Area slant to services
O F F I C E R	Unclear	Making officers accountable	Corporate working
	Provision of information	Hearing community	Area strategies

Figure 7.6 indicates the initial responses to the question on the role of an ALC listed in the order of frequency. The first two columns show actual replies, the first being positive descriptions of what the committee is for. The second indicates an expression of what the role either definitely should not be or ought to be but is not. The final column indicates aspects of the written remit not mentioned which might have been relevant to the respective category of interviewee.

Thus the function of the ALC as written\* includes as an objective 'Identification of deficiencies in service provision' and defines one responsibility as being the 'Preparation and monitoring of local strategy.' But no community representative ever claimed this aim spontaneously, and denied it when prompted. Nor did they see the ALC as a place they would go to with a problem. There was unanimity, however, that the prime purpose was its one clearly devolved function of making recommendations on the Urban Programme. The next most frequently mentioned role was the imparting of information, the direction of flow being from officers to the community, rather than officers or councillors listening to the community.

Amongst elected members the most frequently cited objectives were {Q} "*giving the community a say*" in taking decisions, specifically the Urban Programme, or "*hearing community problems.*" The latter is at complete variance with the community response. Questioned on the remit of the ALC in regard to services, no councillor was of the view that this was appropriate and some were unaware of their own policy in this respect. Officers consequently felt that the remit of the ALC itself and their own role in attending was ambivalent. When pressed for an answer that most often given was provision of information, with an emphasis on putting your service and department in a good light. Only one mention was made of using the community as a sounding board for proposals. Finally the Lead Officers and those in the Chief Executive's Department more closely in touch with Regional policy, stressed the ALCs role in terms of the Social Strategy with its emphasis on tackling social problems through empowerment. Amongst this group there is an awareness of the written remit, but all reported that councillors were reluctant to allow service provision to be scrutinised (see Chapter on Agenda Setting).

Whilst the answers in respect of the usefulness or otherwise of the meetings broadly reflected the reported role, there were additional informal reasons for attending. Thus whilst the community valued the information given out, they

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\* To add to the confusion there are various versions in circulation. A new revised one was supposedly in production as a result of the Review, but had not yet been issued.

also added it was valuable getting to know the officers who served their area so they could make personal contact direct. A surprising aspect was the number of officers who came to hear information about what other departments (of their own council) were planning. Councillors who did attend mentioned keeping in touch with groups but worried that {Q} *"wherever you go it's always the same old hands at every meeting"*, whilst the majority who did not gave exactly the same reason for not needing to bother.

Finally amongst the community there was a minority who appeared to use meetings as spectator sport or for personal therapy:

*"I love all those bright young things."*

*"I'm on my own so I need to get out."*

*"At the beginning it was to keep me off the alcohol."*

*"If I didnae I'd have to find something to do on Thursdays".*

The table shown in Figure 7.7 indicates comparable responses to the question on the role of an AMC.

Figure 7.7 Description of the Role of A M Cs

	ACTUAL	IS NOT	NOT MENTIONED
C O M M U N I T Y	Budgets/Grants	Community problems	Listening
	Monitoring		Officers/Councillors made accountable
		Setting area priorities	
C O U N C I L L O R S	Being democratic	Mainline services	More say in ward
	Opportunities for community	Consultation on area viewpoint	Area slant to services
	Monitoring services		Corporate working
O F F I C E R S	Unclear	Joint problem solving	Corporate working
	None in decisions	Area strategies	Hearing community
	Access to budgets		

In the light of the wide-ranging but sweepingly defined written remit of the AMC (see Chapter Case Study Councils) and its very diverse activities, respondents unsurprisingly differed on what they picked out as predominant. The first thought amongst community reps was finances, whether the prioritising of budgets (a significant annual event) or deciding on grants (a minor but constantly recurring event). The exception was Castlemilk reps on the SE-AMC who saw monitoring (i.e. of housing contracts) as the prime role. Councillors too cited this activity on all AMCs, but secondary to vaguely defined aspects such as {Q} *"being democratic"* and *"letting the community take part in decisions."* By contrast most officers regretted the narrow emphasis on monitoring, citing that it did not make them accountable in a meaningful way or feed into policy-making. They tended to be scornful of each others' performance at committee, with the most painfully honest referring to colleagues replies to questioning as {Q} *"mincemeat"*. Only the planning officials, whose own profession naturally inclines them to such a mode, talked of corporate working, and then only to bemoan a failure to achieve it even within the team.

Face-to-face contacts were again cited by community reps as the main side benefit of involvement with such remarks as:

*"Councillors used to go off to the Chambers, you couldn't get near them in those days"*

*"Answers come quicker and are more reliable"*

*"I ferret out information. The information I get is informal."*

*"They can't say they haven't received your letter."*

Officers too reported that much of any usefulness came from informal aspects of the meetings such as approaches made to them at the start, during tea or afterwards. For instance, on one visit there was a queue six deep {O} to speak to the Parks official and he remarked on the value of this for him {I}. Occasional officers were honest in admitting that they could manipulate the situation to embarrass fellow officers in public, to put pressure on their own departments to pay attention to community demands or to get what they wanted through a service committee by citing AMC support for their position. Otherwise, as we saw from their descriptions above, most found AMCs irrelevant to or a distraction from their mainstream activities (for reasons which are explained in the chapters on Agenda Setting and Constraints). As one officer summed it up:

*"I feel for community people who are there, because there seems to be a general disregard for the importance of the meeting. It must be fairly obvious"*.



Although the specific questions about **empowerment** came later, one or two of the respondents saw the usefulness in personal terms of learning to perform in a previously alien environment:

*"Confidence - it's about recognising that we, the people of the city of Glasgow are employers of council officials. Without us they wouldn't have a job, so I don't fear anyone when I go to meetings"*

*"I used to be put down easily. If an officer said 'Leave it to me' I would accept and await the reply. Now I'm much less accepting."*

## REFLECTIONS

Given the emerging picture of these structures as frustrating to the community, boring for officers and irrelevant to many councillors, it is interesting to speculate why they continue to enjoy any support and why greater efforts have not been made to achieve changes.

Firstly this is because they operate perfectly adequately as vehicles for disseminating **information** which officers are keen to give and the community to receive as we see from their respective comments. Next it derives from the informal rather than formal parts of the meeting in providing a setting for making and maintaining **contacts**. To activists who remember councils in the days before even this degree of access was afforded, this opening of doors is regarded as a decided improvement over the previous state of affairs.

The literature on motivation in the workplace talks of the individual's complex calculus of what a situation should offer them in terms of concrete/financial or social/psychological rewards and the effort to be expended in gaining them (Handy 1993). It would appear that activists (and community workers who energise them) weigh up potential rewards in much the same way. The financial inducement in the present case is access to grants. In this context it has to be realised that, since the restrictions placed on Local Authorities, the Urban Programme has come to be one of the remaining pockets of unallocated funding. As such it is access to UP which holds and attracts involvement on ALCs (see comments on role), hence the jockeying and fierce resentments surrounding the packing of certain ALC meetings at the annual round of prioritisation; hence the absence of concern in Gorbals at the failure of the ALC to be convened over the rest of the year; hence also Dennistoun's lack of interest in Belvedere since their area is not an eligible APT. The turnover in attendance can also be attributed to

this source since as one councillor sourly put it {Q} "*they come until they get their Urban Aid, after that you never see them again.*" Whilst this facet of AMCs is not as pronounced in dominating Agendas, its magnetic pull is nonetheless visible in responses (see Figure 6.3).

When we come later to look at constraints, it will be seen that the obverse to this is the dampening effect of funds with strings overtly attached in terms of not attacking the council (for instance Crossroads in the Gorbals) or self imposed {Q} "*You better not give so and so a hard time or they might put restrictions on you.*" It would be hard to find a community activist from an APT who is not personally involved in the management of an UP project.

From the community perspective the other parameter in the equation is the **energy** it would take to achieve changes. If a structure is not achieving the desired ends it is much easier to drop out than to stay in the hopes of battling for change from within. As we have seen, for councillors the 'traditional' committee is the accepted norm about which they may occasionally grumble, but which they make little attempt to amend. It seems reasonable to conclude that one reason why Castlemilk reps display more effort is that they were the only ones to be involved in the review process which opened up channels for them to exert an influence.

One other possible reason from the literature on the personal psychology is the concept that individuals are either **Origins** or **Pawns** (de Charme 1968), the former regarding themselves as directors of their own lives, whilst the pawns feel external factors are in control. As a consequence the latter will not expect to be able to achieve change. In an extreme form this theory was propounded by a local community worker who said of ALCs:

*"When push came to shove the middle class wouldn't put up with what goes on our ALC. Here people are brought up to shut their mouths and take it."*

But unless it is accepted that there are very different concentrations of Origins in the case study APTs, this theory would not explain the variation between the change-oriented community reps in Castlemilk and their equivalents elsewhere. It would seem more probable that this can be attributed to a mixture of greater familiarity with the potential role, support from within the ranks of the authority, and an opening through which influence could be brought to bear.

## DATA

A general impression of the kinds of issues being dealt with had been gained during the preliminary stages of choosing case studies when the minutes of a number of potential subjects had been examined. Specific data relating to the items covered on agendas were compiled by examining all of the papers relevant to each case study committee over the period May 1993 - May 1994, the same year as the observations were carried out. This period comprises a complete cycle of the local authority financial calendar. Every item was assigned to a category depending on the content, its origin and whether presented for information, consultation or decision.

In the case of the AMCs as formal committees, this task was relatively straightforward since all minutes are printed in the monthly bound volume readily available in public libraries. All minutes are recorded in a standard way so that the source can be accurately pinpointed and the outcome in the way of action is clearly defined. ALCs, being informal bodies, the minutes are of a very variable style and standard; indeed they were not necessarily consistent from one meeting to the next. Also because the meetings are conducted in a relaxed manner, allowing interjections, the minutes do not accord neatly with the written agenda circulated in advance, the source of an item is not always entirely accurately attributed and at times no outcome is mentioned. Caution therefore has to be deployed in placing too much significance on findings and where possible facts were cross-checked at interview.

The actual method by which the agenda was compiled in each case was ascertained at the outset from the respective Area Coordinator or Lead Officer. Thus by the time interviews were being conducted the facts were established; what was being investigated was interviewees' familiarity with these mechanisms and any reported usage, which in turn was correlated with the actual outcome of any application for an item to be considered.

Comments by interviewees in relation to the distribution of the papers chiefly arose either in the context of the queries in relation to difficulties over taking part in the meeting and the presentation of issues, or in the context of accountability. The specific interview questions relating to the compilation of agendas covered who was involved, where the issues came from, whether there were matters not being discussed which the respondent considered important, and finally how action was progressed.

## CHAPTER 8

### AGENDA PAPERS

Much of the literature on the subject of the papers issued for committee meetings in which community participants are involved concentrates on their content. There is criticism of failures to adapt traditional methods developed for elected councillors - who themselves complain that they have problems with the format. There is criticism too of domination by officers who, whether deliberately or otherwise, produce documents that only they can fathom. The tenor of the comments is that no effort has been made to make the committees more 'user friendly'. But an aspect which is entirely overlooked is how the papers are actually sent out. Yet it will be argued here that this is, if anything, much more significant. The reason is because it lies at the root of how community participants are able to perform their role.

The starting point of this chapter is therefore the procedures for distribution of papers, firstly in the sense of who receives them, secondly how long before each meeting they are circulated. The former is important since - knowledge being power - the recipients will be in a favoured position vis-a-vis others. Depending on their attitude, they may share or not as they see fit. The second aspect, that of timing, has a crucial effect on the role forced upon participants. If papers arrive at the last moment, it is not feasible to consult adequately with constituents, so again participants are in danger of being cut off from their grassroots. Together these two factors can contribute to participants becoming divorced, whether they choose to or not, from those for whom they are supposed to speak. Some *good democrats* struggle with this, whilst *bad democrats* turn it to their advantage as 'gatekeepers' into the system.

The remainder of the chapter then examines the actual content of the agendas looking at the sources of items, in particular whether they come from the council or from the community, the subject matter and types of topics. The final sections examine how, and by whom, the agendas are compiled. If there is a mechanism for community input, then what use is made of it? The assumption here is that control of the agenda is likewise an aspect of power, and would consequently be expected where an objective is empowerment.

## **DISTRIBUTION OF PAPERS BEFORE MEETINGS**

As stated in the introduction the linked questions of who gets the papers, and when, are crucial to the role that participants can play because the individual in receipt may, deliberately or consequentially, become isolated from the 'constituency' for which they are expected to speak if they are prevented from consulting. This section therefore looks at the circulation of the papers from these two aspects.

### **LEGAL REGULATIONS**

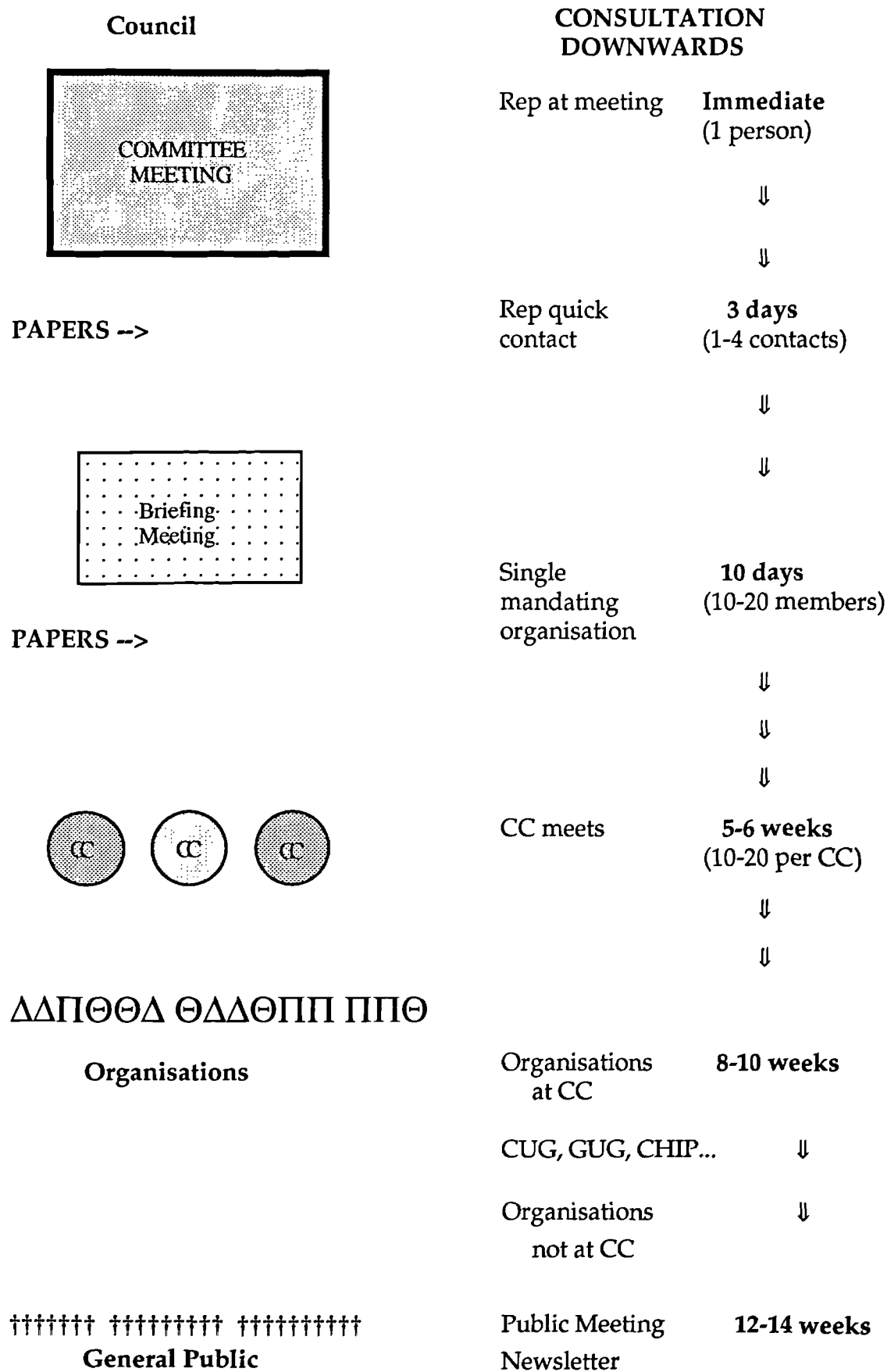
The availability of papers for (sub)committees of local authorities is governed by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985. This stipulates that all papers must be issued to councillors three full days (counting weekends) before any meeting and must at the same time be available for inspection by the public. Adequate copies must be supplied on demand at the meeting itself. No items are to be tabled on the day unless it is anticipated that a motion will be moved to exclude the press and public, and this can only be done on the basis of grounds specified in the Act. These regulations hold for all AMCs as formal committees, but not ALCs.

Even this timetable is troublesome to councillors as is evidenced by complaints in the literature (Martlew 1988), firstly that it allows insufficient time simply to read papers, understand issues, possibly contact an officer for a fuller explanation. Secondly it inhibits consultation with any outsiders such as the ward party or voluntary organisations whose opinion the councillor wishes to seek.

### **TIMETABLE REQUIRED FOR FULLSCALE CONSULTATION**

The diagram in Figure 8.1 gives an idea of realistic timings that would be required, on the basis that groups meet once a month, to permit meaningful contact to be maintained at various levels downwards. What is illustrated here is that where the chosen representative receives the papers for the first time at the meeting this person can only respond with a single individual's immediate view on any issue. Where they have 3 days (the legal minimum), they may manage a quick check with a select coterie of their choice, or with 10 days perhaps - depending on the timing of that organisation's own meetings - with their own grassroots organisation or umbrella group. A full 5-6 weeks would

Figure 8.1 Time for Information Dissemination Downwards



be needed to guarantee fitting in with the occurrence of a CC meeting. This would disseminate information to any nominated member from an organisation represented at the CC, but should that person wish to consult, a further four-week cycle has to be accommodated. Were the CC then to carry out even minimally its stated role of 'ascertaining' local opinion, this would extend the period yet further whilst they issued a newsletter (informed) or held a public meeting (consulted). Clearly this very lengthy timescale is not one which can easily be accommodated by the normal day-to-day processes of the local authority which demands efficient decision-taking, and could only be contemplated where an issue was not urgent. But the excuse of swiftness is often used whatever the matter concerned, whether one where the council is under a legal obligation to decide a matter within a given time (development control applications), or one which could well be taken slowly. No attempt has been made to differentiate {I}.

## CURRENT PRACTICES OF AMC AND ALC ISSUING PAPERS

All AMCs endeavour to issue papers ten days in advance in recognition of the need to allow a more generous timetable than is the norm. This helps councillors who collect their papers at the City Chambers but time elapsed in the post plus any intervening weekend can still mean that community representatives only receive theirs 2 or 3 days in advance. This short notice was the source of frequent complaint {I}. The same timetable is observed by Belvidere ALC, and has been demanded in Castlemilk under their Code of Practice for conduct of meetings. But in Gorbals ALC it has been the practice for a simple reminder letter to be circulated in advance, with supporting papers and minutes handed out to those who turn up on the night. This habit disadvantages those who are not frequent attenders and a community protest to this effect {O} produced an improvement for a short period. The tight timing is particularly problematic if a complex issue has to be understood and imparted to others. As one respondent put it {Q}:

*"It's a problem of time to develop the points in documents. For them to demystify it for us and then for us to demystify it for the punters out there. The opportunity to do that doesn't exist."*

Mis-timing is one of the manipulative manoeuvres described by Saunders (1977) being employed by cynical managers to frustrate empowerment.

In order to speed up circulation, one solution is to send the only copy of the full papers direct to the specific representative who may have no resources to copy them (McGregor *et al* 1992b). Whilst adopted with the best of intentions, this practice can exacerbate the problems of mandating where the representative is the sole recipient since their grassroots organisation(s) then remain unaware of both their arrival and their content. This certainly proved to be the case in some of the community councils {I}. Any representative so minded can then effectively divorce themselves from their constituency. The consequence is that they become a barely accountable 'representative' only able to proffer their own unsupported opinion, which contributes to the creation of 'gatekeepers' as will be discussed later in Chapter 10.

## SOURCE OF ITEMS ON AGENDAS

The second aspect of the agenda papers, which is of especial concern in the current context, is how their content is decided since this represents a prime element of control over the proceedings. Specific interview questions asked whether there were any mechanisms for community issues to be included, what use was made of these and success rates in getting concerns addressed. Not putting certain items forward can be a mechanism for maintaining power by avoiding unwanted discussion (Bachrach & Barratz 1962). Experience in America indicates that community groups, even those with a recognised position as the link into the Townhall, tend to be reactive rather than proactive (Berry, Portney & Thomson 1993). This is a criticism which is also levelled at CCs {I} as a reason for by-passing them in favour of other organisations. Analysis of agendas for the AMCs and ALCs included the respective source.

The table on the next page indicates the numbers of items on agendas together with their source. Here the first block represents District Council service departments, whilst the second block covers Regional Council services; the section entitled administration/policy refers to general matters concerning the operation of the committee itself, whereas budgets/grants singles out financial items; the final non-council section indicates items relating to other bodies such as central government, the voluntary sector or information about local projects. Specific requests from the community for local issues to be debated are shown as a separate heading.



Table 8.1 Source of Agenda AMC and ALC Items

SOURCE	SOUTH	SEAST	EAST END	GORBALS	C'MILK	B'DERE
<b>SERVICES</b>						
HOUSING/DARS	16	42	24	1		6
CLEANSING	4	10	2			3
PARKS	10	11	8			2
PLANNING	3		1		1	9
ENV. HEALTH	3	3				
LIBRARIES	3	6				1
ESTATES	2	1	2			
SOCIAL WORK			5		2	4
COMMUNITY EDUCATION			2	1	1	2
EDUCATION			4	3	7	5
ROADS/TRANSPORT			4		6	3
POLICE					3	5
SEWAGE/WATER			1			
CONSUMER TRADING			1			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>INTERNAL</b>						
ADMIN/POLICY	11	16	21	2	7	14
GRANTS/BUDGETS	55	54	28	27	38	16
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>NON COUNCIL</b>						
OTHER BODIES	1				3	2
PROJECTS INFORMATION		1		3	7	25
COMMUNITY REQUESTS		1	1		6	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>42</b>

Source: Compiled by analysis of meeting papers for period May 1993 - May 1994

On a note of caution, it should be borne in mind that the last category is only recognisable when the community employ one of the formal mechanisms available to them to request that a matter be raised so that it is noted as such. The possibility exists that an item that appears to come from a department has its origins in community concerns. It could indeed be argued that a sensitive officer will be attuned to local issues, so that there is no requirement to raise matters down other channels. In an attempt to check on this, participants were questioned as to whether the committee covered the issues they felt were important to their area.

## COUNCIL ITEMS

The first observation to be made about the table is that a large proportion of the matters dealt with by both AMCs and ALCs relate to budgets and grants, which accords with the interview data in the previous chapter which demonstrated that this was seen as the prime role of these structures from a community perspective. At AMCs there is an almost equal balance between items generated internally and those emanating from council service departments, with the latter dominated by District functions. Whilst Regional functions appear at the East End this only began to any extent once it became a truly joint committee in November 1993 when it became a Local Committee. The ALCs are more variable with Gorbals barely touching on services at all, Castlemilk including a modicum of Regional services only, whereas the services of both councils feature prominently at Belvidere. This does not accord with the written remit of an ALC which is expected to oversee existing service delivery and look for gaps in provision.

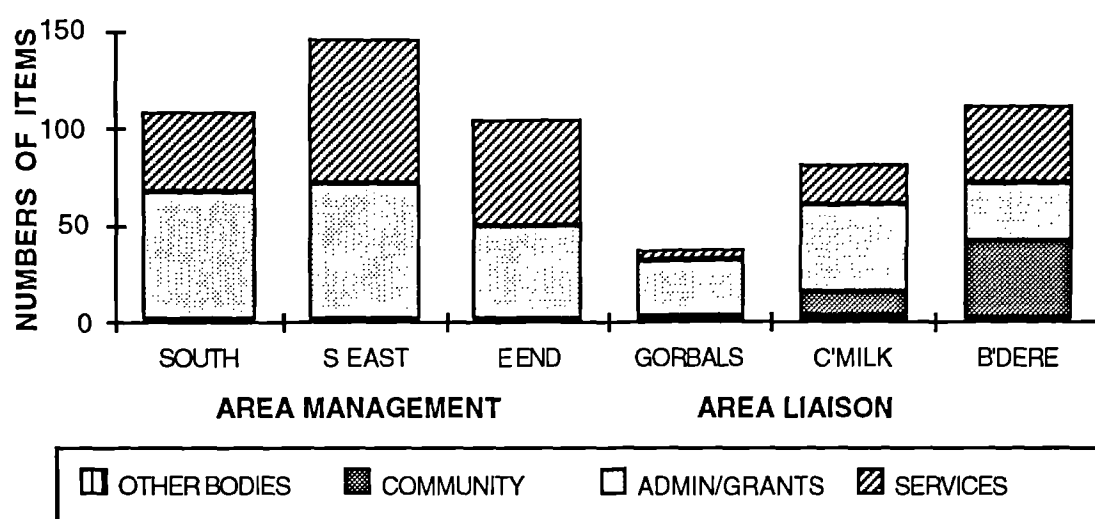
## NON-COUNCIL ITEMS

Looking at the items which come from outwith the council, there is a small category which covers such topics as the government's consultation on the future of water services or the Urban Programme, proposed closure of hospitals in Glasgow which would impact on the areas. At ALCs information is being provided about local projects with this forming the largest category of all at Belvidere. Again this tallies with participants' responses when they reported that the usefulness of these meetings was as a source of information. That AMCs are not places where the community raise problems is clearly illustrated by the minimal number shown from this source. At the S-AMC there was none and the tally was only 1 at SE-AMC the East End. ALCs demonstrate a considerable variation from fifteen at Belvidere (where there is a special agenda slot for the community to raise points) to zero at Gorbals over the year. Thus neither committee is operating in ways which encourage the community to bring forward their problems.

## VOLUME OF BUSINESS

The committees differ also in the amount of ground they cover as can be seen more readily from the graph depicted below. Although simplistic in that it is only a measure of the number of items covered, which may not convey the time involved or the seriousness of the topic, this does give some idea of the relative degrees of activity.

Figure 8.2 Volume of Business



The AMCs all deal with a substantial quantity of business only matched by Belvidere amongst the ALCs. The SE-AMC was able to cope with more by convening twice each month, with one session entirely devoted to monitoring of services, which accounts for their higher ratio at this AMC. As we saw in the previous chapter, these meetings were the shortest, the briefest lasting a bare twenty minutes {O}. The failure of Gorbals ALC to be called over six months is reflected in the minimal amount of business conducted, as is the domination of these few occasions by the prioritisation of Urban Programme applications.

## TYPES OF BUSINESS

However, of more significance than the mere numbers of items is their nature since the agenda may contain large volumes of trivia or a single item of real import. Here it is useful to divide the business between the regular, routine matters which arise at almost every meeting and what may be termed the 'set pieces' which are dealt with annually.

## Routine items at AMCs

Despite their title as advisory/supervisory committees, AMCs in fact have delegated control over budgets, the three main programmes being the Area Budget, Urban Programme and the Environmental Budget. In addition, they have responsibility for overseeing progress of expenditure under the housing capital programme. The table below provides an indication of the size of funds involved taking the example of the South AMC.\*

Table 8.2 S-AMC Budget

SOUTH AMC BUDGETS 1993/94	
AREA BUDGET	£380,450
ENVIRONMENTAL BUDGET	£330,500
URBAN PROGRAMME Capital Revenue	£1,103,060 £924,487
HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME	£6,387,000

Much of the routine financial business is concerned with progress chasing on this expenditure. Another regular item is the allocation of grants to local groups mostly below £1,500, many as low as £200 (below this amount the Area Coordinator has a delegated authority without requiring committee sanction). As we saw in the previous chapter, these grants were when the community participants intervened most frequently, whereas they were silent when the £M were under discussion.

The second category of routine business falls under that part of the primary remit of an AMC which is described as: To monitor the effectiveness of the Council's policies and services at a local level through supervision of the Area Management Teams and of service department activities. It might be imagined from this that here was the opportunity to receive feedback from the community participants on the adequacy or otherwise of the council's performance as a provider. However, in reality most items are simply monitoring reports indicating relative success or failure to comply with pre-set contract conditions.

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\* The other two AMCs have larger and more complex budgets due to the Castlemilk Partnership and the East End Joint Initiative

In this context, it will be helpful at this point to paint a little of the background. Up to the time when central government obliged local authorities to go out to tender, the majority of services were supplied by Direct Labour Organisations (DLOs) of District employees with Glasgow's Labour dominated administration operating a no-redundancy policy protective of their staff. Gradually more and more of the work such as catering, cleaning, parks and cleansing has since been opened up to Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT). The Council recognised that one potential means of ex-DLOs winning contracts was for these to be consolidated as large city-wide entities for which few firms would have the capacity to compete {I}. Another was to oblige each department (and such bodies as Housing Co-operatives) to use the other departments' services rather than any external commercial enterprises {I}. In the event, the ex-DLOs enjoyed a high level of success in the first round of contracts which are currently still in force, but inexperience or the desire to win meant that some of the contract specifications were poorly defined.

To return to the role of AMCs, there are clear tensions between them and the centre. Thus AMCs played no part in defining the contract specifications {I} or the placement of the initial contracts; nor does it appear that their experiences will feed into the next round. The fact that the contracts are laid down centrally means that there is an emphasis on city-wide uniformity that runs counter to area variations which could only be encompassed by budget increases. The councillors continue as protective of these operations and, as such, are not open to honest feedback on performance {I}. The result is that, as Gaster (1992) predicts many of the key issues of service quality are excluded from discussion.

In the case of Parks and Recreation the problems are further exacerbated by the way the department has been restructured. Elsewhere every service has designated an officer assigned to each AMC as a permanent member of the respective team, whereas Parks have a single officer who acts as the interface with all the AMCs. The high incidence of Parks items appearing at AMCs is evidence of the resultant poor relationship between the AMCs and the centre. The community meanwhile find it very hard to feed their complaints into this system, finding the monitoring reports presented to committee an unsuitable vehicle {I}. It would appear that these circumstances serve to frustrate the prime purpose of AMCs in allowing the voice of the consumer to be heard in any meaningful way.

## **Routine Business at ALCs**

No similar routine business is conducted at ALCs which as we have seen, do not perform their assigned role of monitoring progress on local strategies or devising projects and proposals for improved co-ordination and development of Regional Council Services. Both Gorbals and Castlemilk are dominated by items relating to the supervision and evaluation of the various projects running under the Urban Programme. The one regular item at Belvidere is a slot for Planning, but this is used preferentially for providing an update on progress of applications through the system rather than on receiving comments on new ones yet to come before the Planning Committee - information giving rather than consultation {M}.

## **SET PIECES**

More significant than the repeated monitoring and progress chasing, however, is the determination of programmes in the first place. It is at this point that the committees and their community participants have a potential to influence priorities for spending over the next year in their areas.

## **Set Pieces at AMCs**

There are four major District programmes which come before AMCs each year on two of which - Housing Capital and Revenue Options - they are consulted, and on two of which - Area Budget and Urban Programme - they have the final say. Parallel consultation on Regional programmes was just beginning to appear at the East End during the research period as it converted to a Local Committee. The AMCs decide their own mechanisms for dealing with these matters and Table 8.3 overleaf shows the method employed in the year under review. Where a special meeting is called, the budget is the only subject to be discussed that day and can be covered in some depth. However, the community are not always included in these deliberations. For instance, they are excluded from debating the Housing capital budget at the S-AMC (so that the councillors can have a frank interchange {I}). Where these budgets are being dealt with in the course of a normal AMC meeting there is very little time for more than rubber stamping. To give an idea of the type of programme being debated in this way, the officers' UP proposals before the S-AMC for 1995/96 comprised 17 projects totalling £1,885,000 capital and £1,473,000 revenue, all of which were agreed without discussion {O}.

Table 8.3 Set Pieces

ATTENDANCES AT SET PIECES			
DISTRICT	SOUTH	SOUTH EAST	EAST END
RECOMMEND			
HOUSING CAPITAL	Special sub-committee Councillors only No reps invited	Special SE-AMC All invited  Castlemilk 1[2]	During EEMC Usual members  B'dere 0[1]
REVENUE OPTIONS	Special S-AMC Usual members 9[15] present Gorbals 0[2]	During SE-AMC Usual members 5[6] present Castlemilk 1[2]	Special Finance Sub-committee 1 rep each ALC
FINAL DECISION			
AREA BUDGET	During S-AMC Usual members 11[15] present Gorbals 1[2]	Special SE-AMC Usual members 2[6] present Castlemilk 0[2]	Special Meetings Assessment Panel 3 GDC/3 SRC/ 1 rep
URBAN PROGRAMME	During S-AMC Usual members 6[15] present Gorbals 0[2]	During SE-AMC Usual members Castlemilk Dedicated Budget	During EEMC Usual members 2[4] present Belvidere 0[1]
REGION	GORBALS	CASTLEMILK	BELVIDERE
RECOMMEND			
URBAN PROGRAMME	Special Subgroup 1 SRC/6 reps then Special ALC Final priorities Glasgow Division Community Development Committee (GDCDC)	Special Subgroup 6 reps then Regular ALC Formal decision GDCDC	Special EE Group 3 reps per ALC then Regular ALC Prioritised by EEMC Final priorities GDCDC

In this Table the first figure is the number of people actually present and the figure in brackets shows the potential total, first for all members, then for the case study where known.

Nonetheless it would appear that there are significant opportunities for AMCs to influence all the major programmes of expenditure in their areas. A hint that all is not quite perhaps as it appears may be gained from examining attendance records for community participants at these set pieces. Where appropriate and/or where this information is available, the table also indicates the actual numbers present compared with the potential. It would appear justifiable to conclude from the low attendances whether at special or normal meetings that participants do not, in truth, find these especially valuable occasions. It is note-worthy that the participants from the case study areas were seldom present.

### **Set Pieces at ALCs**

The only set piece at the ALCs is their involvement in ranking applications for Urban Aid, the final decision on which lies with the Scottish Office. The normal procedure throughout Strathclyde is that a set of policy guidelines are adopted centrally to ensure that projects conform to the Social Strategy and will have the maximum chance of success with the Scottish Office. Suggestions for projects sought from Departments and the Voluntary Sector are channelled in the first instance through the respective ALC which, in theory at least, has a developed strategy for action against which these applications will be judged and ranked. For Glasgow, these local rankings are then forwarded to the Urban Programme Sub-committee of the Glasgow Division Community Development Committee (GDCDC) where they are in competition for a limited budget so that some will be rejected or given a very low priority at this stage. After a city-wide ranking has been developed this will be ratified by GDCDC for forwarding to the Scottish Office. The situation in Castlemilk differs somewhat from this norm due to their Partnership status in that there is a dedicated budget so, although the ALC proposals have to be ratified, they do not have to compete with other areas, which in effect means that Castlemilk ALC is the final arbiter.

Again each ALC decides their own mechanism for processing applications though it happens that in all three case study areas it has been the practice to appoint a small sub-group to undertake the preliminary steps of sorting out applications with the assistance of Social Work and Community Education Officers and allowing each applicant a hearing. Membership of this sub-group is therefore a plum role with the consequence experienced community reps wishing to ensure that their candidate will be involved take care to be present on the night when this



sub-group is chosen {O}. To give an idea of the order of magnitude of the funds potentially at stake the various programmes currently in operation in the East End run at about £2 million per annum. The special dedicated budget in Castlemilk runs at an annual figure of £3.725 million revenue and £1.25 million capital split on a basis of 40% District, 40% Region and 20% Joint.

#### VIGNETTE

A particular group in the East End was already out of favour with the community, for reasons never discovered, and the subject of some earlier criticism at Belvidere ALC. Since they were not at the time grant aided by the Region, however, it was deemed that the ALC had no power to bring them to book in any way.

They next bought premises with a donation allegedly not made for these purposes and proceeded to propose their use in a way contrary to the Local Plan, to the wishes of the local community council, and to the view of the District Council Planning Department, Planning Committee and local member.

When they then applied for Urban Aid for their project this was assigned the ranking of Low Priority by the Sub-group, a view ratified by the ALC. However, when the final rankings reappeared at EE-AMC after central processing, this project was the only one with such a very low priority to be agreed for forwarding to the Scottish Office. What had gone on behind the scenes there is no means of knowing. It might be surmised that the Region were hoping in this way to gain the right to exert control. The local District member at this meeting formally asked for his dissension to be recorded.

When this outcome became known at the ALC, there was much indignation at the way the views of the community and the councillor had been ignored. The defence presented was that the ranking as 'low' could be interpreted as meaning that the project was desirable, but not as desirable as those above it afforded 'medium' or 'high'. The ALC took the highly unusual step of instructing that a letter be sent direct to the Scottish Office expressing their lack of support for this project.

In the event 14 out of the 22 proposed projects were rejected by the Scottish Office who gave as their reason in this particular instance that the proposal did not represent '*a genuinely new asset, resource or service.*' Meanwhile Belvidere ALC have introduced a new category of 'Rejected' into their ranking system for the subsequent financial year so that there can be no future dubiety about the view being expressed.

There are a number of potential sources of tension inherent in these structures, of which those between centre and periphery were the most immediately apparent. Both councillors and community participants express concerns {I} that they might put several night's work into screening applications and setting rankings only to find that local views were overturned, that neither the centrally set policy guidelines nor the Scottish Officer priorities accorded with local preferences. Many comments to this effect appear in written submissions during the ALC review {M} and were repeated at meetings in both Gorbals and Belvidere {O} (See also the Vignette). In defence the officers at the centre point out firstly that there is no point in forwarding to the Scottish Office applications which it is apparent will not meet their criteria, and secondly that the community and community work staff are at ease with traditional projects with a social focus but seldom bring forward ideas with an economic focus {I}.

## INFORMATION, CONSULTATION OR DECISION MAKING?

As one Regional Councillor described during interview {Q}: "*We don't really take that many decisions. You have to seek amongst the papers to find the bits where we've actually got to do something.*" This section therefore looks at the fate of agenda items in the sense of whether or not any action is subsequently taken. Once again the AMC data are unequivocal since the minutes always detail whether an item was '*Noted* ', meaning it was merely supplied for information, whilst action is indicated by such terms '*Approved*', '*Dealt with*' or '*Instructed*.' However, the slipshod nature of some ALC minutes means that detective work is required to uncover purposes and outcomes from expressions such as '*a presentation*', the lack of instructions for action, or the absence of any signs of feedback thereafter.

Disregarding matters on agendas which relate to internal administration, the outcomes are depicted in the graphs overleaf. The size of the circle is proportionate to the volume of business conducted over a year, the pie slices indicate those items which appear in the papers as items to be noted, and those where a decision of some kind was required. As can readily be recognised a large proportion of every committee agenda is dominated by the submission of information. It is noteworthy at AMCs that monitoring statements fall into this category which gives some indication of their status in dealing with contract compliance rather than providing a vehicle for effective consumer feedback.

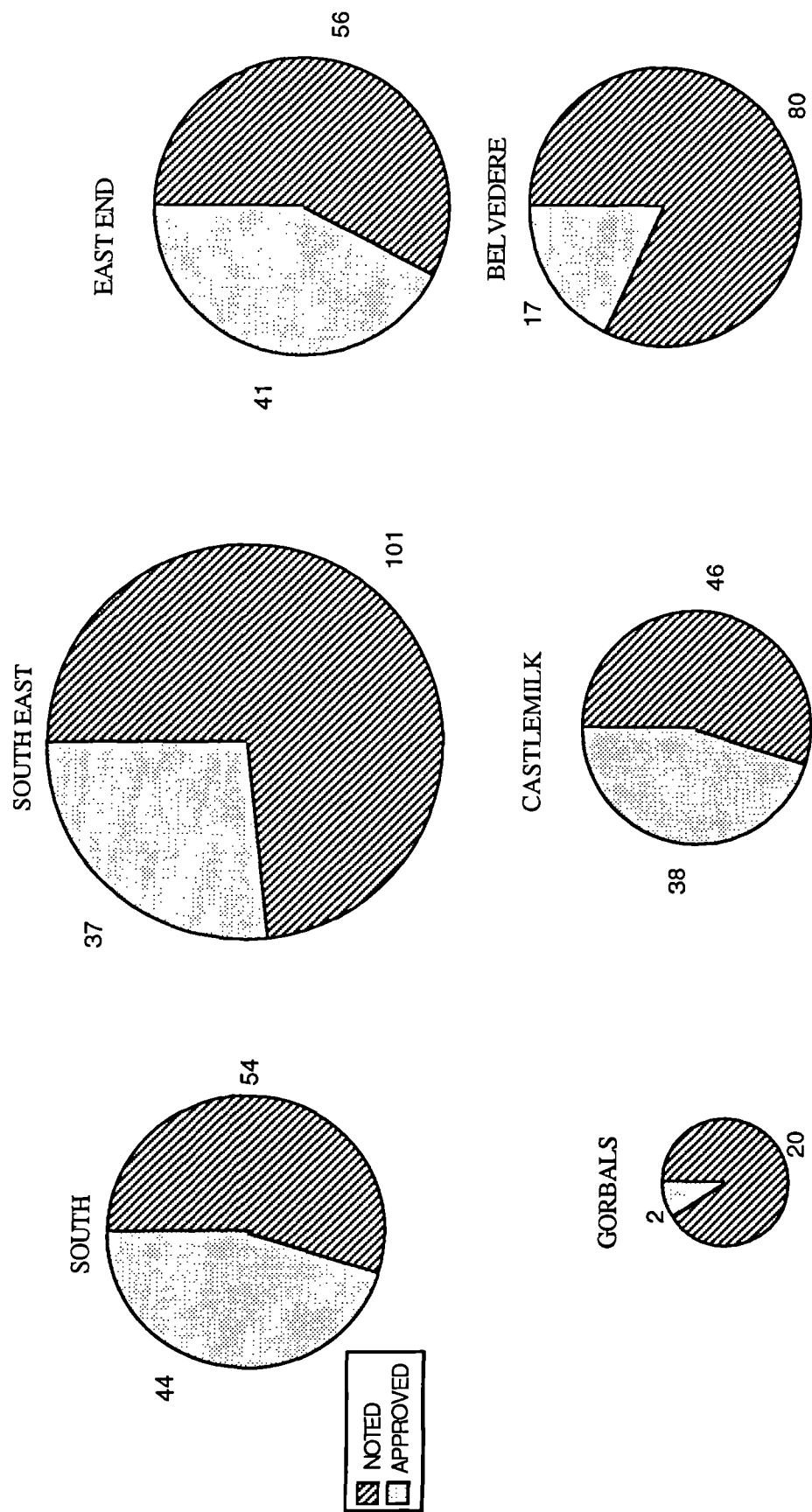


Figure 8.3 Chart of Numbers of Items Noted or Approved for Action

## HOW AGENDAS ARE COMPILED

One of the assumptions in the literature is that, if committees are genuinely to be 'participatory', then agendas should be structured to encourage this. The topics must be 'relevant' since '*issues which do not affect will not engage*' (Handy 1993, p280) and these have been found to be '*tangible issues more directly related to every-day experience of residents*' (Taylor 1991, pXVII). For instance Hambleton & Hoggett quote the following criticisms with respect to Programme Area Teams in Newcastle:

*'The fact that Team meetings are structured in a manner of council committees ie with lengthy agendas, formal reports and more than half the time given over to applications for grants, militates against discussion in depth of issues affecting the area.'* (1987, p58)

and the Area Committees in Birmingham:

*'Little thought has been given to agenda construction. If the idea of the area sub committee is to promote local forms of democracy then the agenda should be designed with the explicit purpose of enhancing public involvement and participation. Giving the public the half hour for their say is a valuable and important innovation, but it does not go far enough - the whole agenda needs to be structured to stimulate the involvement of local people.'* (1987, p62)

If, as councillors aver, the structures under review are intended to allow the community to air their problems, we should expect to find mechanisms particularly geared to allow this to happen. Yet Table 8.1 indicating the sources of agenda items reveals a considerable variation in the numbers directly generated from community requests for matters to be raised. These are virtually absent at AMCs and Gorbals ALC whereas at Belvidere they rose to 15. This section will therefore examine who decides which matters should be discussed and what the mechanisms are through which requests are to be channelled. This is followed by interviewees views on how agendas are, or should be, arrived at and their perceptions of the responsiveness of the structures to community input.

### Involvement in Agenda Setting for AMCs

The normal procedure in the District Council is that the Town Clerk who services a committee has responsibility for drawing together a draft agenda. By and large this will consist entirely of items submitted by or commissioned from officers since it is rare for any councillor to play a proactive part in suggesting topics

(Young 1981). Some days before finalisation this draft will be discussed at a Pre-agenda meeting with the Chairman who has the final say on what is to go forward.

This then is the precedent for the mechanisms adopted by AMCs. The first point to make is that there are no set rules about how agendas should be compiled so that each committee has evolved its own practices which, as will be seen below, vary from one to another. The **South East**, where the Team no longer meets as such, follows exactly the standard procedure outlined above. In the **South** the draft agenda drawn up by the Area Coordinator is agreed at the meeting of the team of officers before being finalised with the Chairman. In the **East End** the task was undertaken by the Head of the East End Management Unit (EEMU) after a team meeting including both Regional and District officers; theoretically this is ratified at a Pre-agenda but in practice this stage had lapsed under the then Chairman due to time pressures {I}. There is no involvement of community participants in any of these procedures. All three Coordinators agree that the setting of the agenda is officer led and officer dominated {I}. Nevertheless they report that there have been no moves from the community that this situation be changed, a view corroborated by a survey of CCs (Duncan & Hemfrey 1987) which reported them as satisfied.

### **Involvement in Agenda Setting for ALCs**

By contrast pressure has been exerted on the ALCs to open up the processes. In general, it was one of the points made during the ALC Review (SRC 1991) which highlighted how little time was actually devoted to local issues. Of the comments made by the three case study ALCs no particular demand for inclusion has been expressed in **Gorbals**. In **Castlemilk** a demand was met that there should be two community Chairmen who would be entitled to attend the Pre-agenda meeting. Likewise it was agreed that the community rep from each **East End** ALC (who sits on the EE-AMC) should be permitted a place at the Pre-agenda which is held centrally for all four ALCs. Were all to attend therefore this meeting would comprise 4 SRC Convenors/Vice-convenors, 4 GDC Convenors/Vice-convenors and 4 community reps plus Community Education and Community Development staff. In practice the experience of community participants was that they could exert little influence by this late stage since they were simply vetting a predetermined list, and most have resigned in frustration or ceased to attend {I}. The three Lead Officers are of the view that nonetheless the community do have sufficient access through other mechanisms available which are outlined below.

## MECHANISMS FOR REQUESTING ITEMS BE INCLUDED ON AGENDAS

All of the committees have mechanisms for requesting that subjects be raised, some of which could be described as 'formal' some as 'informal'. This section examines these in detail and estimates their respective success rates in use.

### Mechanisms at AMCs

Regulations for access to committees are laid down in the Standing Orders of the District Council. Councillors may write to any (sub)committee, whether they be a member or not, requesting that an item be included which will be granted automatically\*. They are permitted to attend to speak to their own item. One channel for the community is thus via any elected member. Members of the public can request that a deputation be heard which may be permitted at the discretion of the relevant committee. Finally the formal Code of Practice for Community Councils in Glasgow decrees that a committee decision may be delayed to allow the relevant CC to be consulted and, in addition, that the respective AMC will be the arbiter on any complaint that they have not been consulted on a local issue. But all of these mechanisms have to be employed considerably in advance. There is no slot at AMCs for matters to be raised spontaneously for immediate discussion under Any Other Business, nor for requests for inclusions on future agendas. One way that is used innocently or deliberately to circumvent this is to use an existing agenda item as a pretext for raising a semi-related topic.

Table 8.4 Mechanisms for Placing Agenda Items

AREA MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES		
	BEFORE	DURING
FORMAL	In writing to Coordinator Via councillor Deputation	None
INFORMAL	Via officer Via councillor	Raise during related topic

\* This right may be reconsidered because the new Militant councillors are using every available means to disrupt the smooth running of council business.

From the low incidence of community items, it can be concluded that these very formal mechanisms which have to be utilised in advance are not conducive to easy access and, as we will see below, this is borne out by interview responses. However, it could be argued that this is not a criticism which can be validly levelled at AMCs if they are geared to consumer feedback not empowerment, so do the ALCs, which definitely have this as an objective, fare better in this respect?

### **Mechanisms at ALCs**

ALCs allow access in advance through the normal type of formal channels which, as described above, involve community participation at Pre-agenda form Castlemilk and Belvidere. Over and beyond this, at Castlemilk there is an annual occasion for setting out topics to be dealt with. In practice, other issues have been squeezed out by the necessity to concentrate on the Urban Programme since the dedicated budget means that the ALC have delegated powers over Joint and Regional applications in all but name. It was hoped that this pressure would diminish once a developed strategy was in place. With the advent of the Local Committee, the community attempted to have the ALC agendas adapted to the pre-fixed cycle of matters to be discussed there, a move not welcomed by the Regional Councillor {I}. What might have been a similar annual occasion for agenda setting - the East End Conference - has not been developed for this purpose (to the regret of certain respondents {I}). In Gorbals, one public forum brought health issues to the fore, but the exercise has not been repeated. Over the study year there were no visible incidences of the formal mechanisms being exploited at Gorbals or Belvidere, and the one or two occurrences at Castlemilk were problems of a very minor nature.

All three ALCs do have a slot at the end of the meeting under the heading of Any Other Competent Business where spontaneous items can be raised. At Castlemilk this is the only mechanism for intervening during meetings but is strictly limited (at the community's own request) to information giving. This rule was originally introduced to prevent officers tabling reports on the day, thus militating against the community having time to form an opinion or be mandated in advance. Whilst the opportunity to raise matters theoretically also exists at Gorbals, in practice it is not being exercised. At Belvidere AOCB is often used, as indeed is any moment during the meeting at the Chairman's discretion, to ask questions which are dealt with there and then. But in addition there is a standing agenda item called Future Items where requests can be made for particular topics to be

raised at the forthcoming meeting or for an officer or representative of an outside body to be present. In practice this route is exclusively employed by Calton/Bridgeton CC to pursue matters where their own status is insufficient to bring officers to account but the status of the ALC means that a response will be forthcoming. Were the CC to be accorded the recognition supposedly guaranteed under the Code of Practice, it would not be necessary to (mis)appropriate the ALC in this way.

## **INTERVIEW RESPONSES**

As already stated, the actual method by which the agendas were compiled and distributed were ascertained before interviews commenced, the purpose of the questioning being to discover whether the respondents were aware of the processes and were of the opinion that relevant community issues were being addressed. This topic was explored particularly with those not directly involved on the committees including the officer bearers of any CCs in existence, Umbrella Groups, Joint Forums, that is with activists who might have been expected to be knowledgeable.

### **COMMUNITY ACCESS TO AGENDAS**

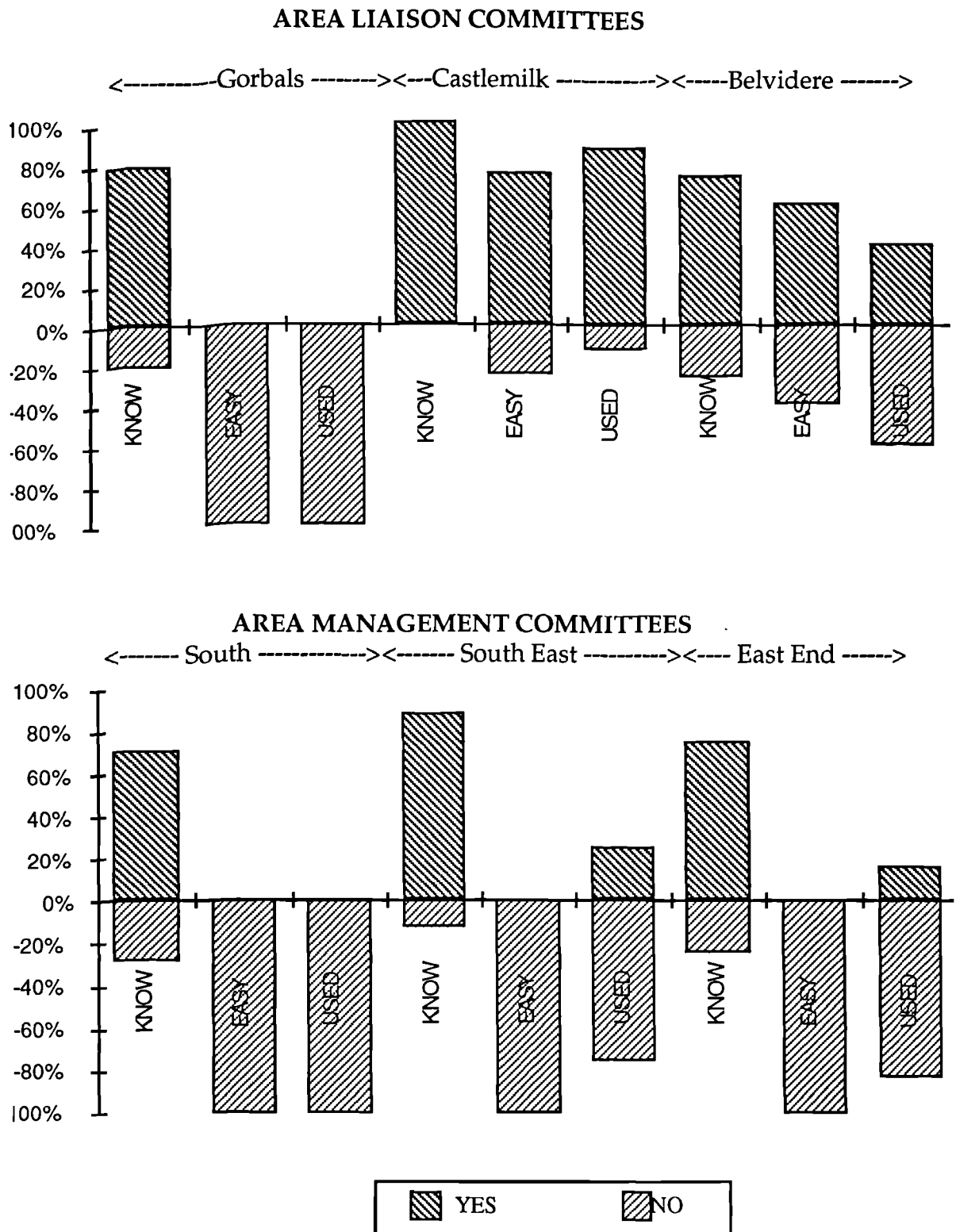
The results are shown overleaf where the graph for each committee indicates the percentage of community respondents who reported that they knew how the agendas were compiled, felt it was easy to have an item included and reported having attempted to do so.

#### **Community Access to ALC Agendas**

By and large most interviewees proved to be cognisant of the mechanisms in place for ALC agenda setting, with the greatest ignorance amongst non-participating CCs in the East End. In Castlemilk there was a very positive view that the community had a large say on the agenda; indeed the reported usage is considerably higher than the actual numbers of items appearing would warrant (see Table 8.1). This appeared to be because the ALC was adjudged much more responsive in this respect than the Partnership since the latter had refused to allow the issue of poverty to be addressed (Kirk 1993). Those of a contrary view tend to be individuals with higher ambitions for the ALC to be addressing really substantial problems not the humdrum points being raised.



Figure 8.4 Community Access to Agendas



Percentage of Respondents replying Yes and No to whether they know the mechanism, whether it is deemed easy to use and whether it has been used in practice.

There is a clear difference on **Belvidere** between the insiders, predominantly from Calton/Bridgeton, and the outsiders from the other CCs. The latter have ceased to regard the ALC as relevant because of its domination by Calton, but at the same time make no effort to have their own concerns aired there. The former make frequent use of the special slot, but the CC secretary maintained that their requests were not always followed up {I}. When checked, this allegation proved to be unfounded, apparently owing more to her ingrained suspicion than to objective truth. Two reasons were propounded for the outcome in **Gorbals**, the first being that the 'old guard' from the two CCs take the line that the ALC is not meant to be about anything except the Urban Programme, the second that the ALC is so ineffective at pursuing action that there is no point in turning to it.

### **Community Access to AMC Agendas**

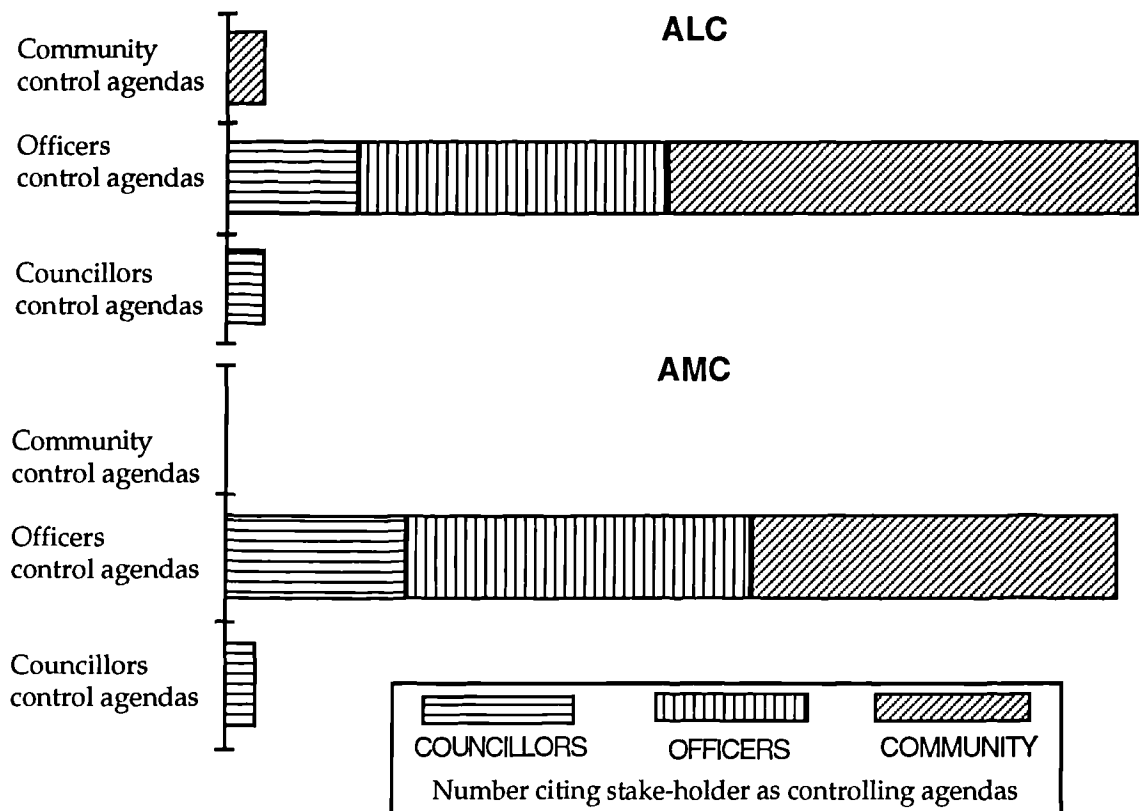
Again community activists display a relatively high acquaintance with the means to gain access to the respective AMC, though there were some gaps amongst non-participating CC officer bearers. However, there was almost universal agreement that AMCs were not places that dealt with or could be persuaded to deal with community issues; this perception in itself meant that few requests were ever lodged, which in turn means that the system is not under pressure to adapt.

## **CONTROL OF AGENDAS**

That the officers are viewed by all parties as being in control is demonstrated by the two graphs on the next page which plot the responses of each category of stake-holder in relation to AMCs and ALCs. Whatever the committee and whichever the area the overwhelming - and usually unprompted response - was that these structures are both officer-led and officer-dominated.

No **officer** anywhere thought that the community exerted any influence. Opinions amongst officers involved with AMCs differed as to whether this had ever been or should be the intention. By contrast, officers involved with ALCs acknowledged that this was the objective and that ALCs were failing to achieve it (for reasons to be discussed in the next chapter on Constraints).

Figure 8.5 Who is perceived by Stake-holders to control Agendas



Amongst the **community**, even those who claim that it is easy for them to gain access, the majority subscribe to the view that ALCs are controlled by the officers. It is very much a minority view that the community have anything other than a minimal input, and this view was not propounded at all in relation to the AMCs.

It is also a minority view amongst **councillors** that they themselves control affairs, which accords with the dissatisfactions they expressed that caused Stewart to describe them as '*prisoners of the agenda*' (1974, p36). Predictably chairmen are more likely to be of a contrary view, but even they are not unanimous. Indeed it appeared to be more a point of doctrine than an expression of actuality since one councillor who adopted this position did not himself bother to attend pre-agenda meetings {I}. Councillors tended to blame the community for the lack of local issues, stating that openings existed so it was up to participants to exploit them. A contributory factor could be that the councillors themselves are reactive rather than proactive, since this sets the conditions within which the community are then operating.

## REFLECTIONS

The two aspects of the agenda papers analysed here both clearly illustrate the fact that these structures and their operating rules were introduced top-down by the two councils for purposes of their own devising. The procedures involved have been based on traditional local authority modes of operation minimally adapted to the presence of community participants in a way which circumscribes the role which they can play and contributes to the emergence of an elite of 'gatekeepers'. This derives from the muddled thinking over the purpose of community participation, whether to provide consumer feedback, set area priorities and policies, achieve empowerment ...

There has been a reluctance, if not refusal, to recognise the fundamental difference between elected representatives and mandated delegates coming from the community. The latter has been described in the following terms:

*'The role of delegate involves taking information or views from a community group to the forum concerned, and reporting back what happens. This requires communication skills but also practical resources such as multiple copies of papers on occasion. The role of delegate is different from the role most councillors play as representative in that councillors are expected to make up their own minds about issues in the light of general policy guidance from their political party.'*  
(McGregor et al 1992b, p79)

The timing and distribution of the papers is crucial in that it effectively dictates whether mandating is feasible and, if so, how far down consultation can reach in the time available. If a realistic timescale for full information dissemination is three months, this raises serious doubts about any organisation which allows at most ten days. The difficulties encountered become greater the wider and more diverse the constituency. In this respect the system at the South AMC of allowing each CC a place should shorten the timescale compared with the system in the South East of an elected individual serving a wide area containing very disparate groups.

That such a generous timescale sits ill with rapid decision-taking is the dilemma which faces the local authority; that anything less causes problems for meaningful community participation is the fact which 'bad democrats' exploit and the dilemma which concerns conscientious participants anxious to serve the true interests of those for whom they wish to speak, a theme to which we return in Chapter 10 which deals with accountability.

On the question of agenda setting, it is axiomatic to most commentators thinking that for participation to be 'meaningful' those involved must play a part in this. As Morris puts it most vividly: '*Whoever sets the agenda, drives the vision, drives the discussion, drives the action*' (1993, p219). However, it is not so clearcut that this has to be so in all cases. It could, conversely, be argued that whether or not there should be involvement depends on the end objective of the participation. If this is to obtain consumer feedback on the delivery of services or an area perspective on priorities, it could be that allowing the community to divert the purpose to the discussion of parochial minutiae and comparatively trivial short-term problems, would in fact be to downgrade the potential for them to take part in a very meaningful exercise. It is only when empowerment is the objective that the question of who decides what is discussed becomes significant. If then to control the setting of the agenda is a measure of devolved power-sharing neither model is achieving this outcome to any meaningful degree. Of the two structures, the ALCs prove more accessible, but nonetheless may be more validly criticised in this respect in that empowerment is one of the stated objectives of the Region's Social Strategy

## CHAPTER 9

### CONSTRAINTS ON EFFECTIVENESS

Whilst some of the constraints to be considered here are of a practical nature, for example under-funding, it is clear from the literature on experiences elsewhere that more are due to failures to embed decentralisation policies. Too little thought is given to the need to fit the new committees meaningfully into the rest of the authority's decision-taking and policy-making structures. Their status remains ambivalent, their impact often being dependent on the drive and personal commitment of key individuals, rather than clear rights to consultation or devolved authority.

In addition, consideration has to be given to the role that participants are expected to play and how they are to be effective in carrying it out. Whilst the literature stresses the need for training and support for participants, it is assumed that, were these to be available, they would be universally welcomed. But it is argued here that this will not necessarily be the case. Firstly for a variety of reasons the activists themselves may refuse to take up opportunities on offer. Secondly the support, especially financial support, may come with unacceptable strings attached which seek to co-opt dissent.

The aim of this chapter is to explore the factors which might be expected to inhibit the operation of the committees from a local authority standpoint and might effect the extent to which community participants can intervene effectively. The first group of these are external in that they derive from the legal framework and funding regime imposed by Central Government. The second category comprises those internal council policies affecting the ways in which the decentralised structures have been set up, their status within the overall local authority decision-making and the time burden they impose on all the stake-holders. Finally there are such practical issues as the level of resources and staffing available both to the committees themselves from the respective councils, and to those involved within them in terms of training and support. Each of these broad themes is explored separately below, followed by some reflections on their interrelationship and relative significance.

## DATA

The questions which were probed in the interviews were chiefly derived from the documents relating to the various reviews commissioned by the authorities themselves. These include, in the case of the AMCs, the internal report which deals only with the councillors concerns, and for ALCs, the external SAUS (1990) report plus the SRC Review (1991) which incorporates the points made by individual ALCs themselves in their responses, thereby providing some insight into the views of participants. Personal data on such features as the officers' backgrounds and professions were collated, whilst in the case of the community activists a profile sheet (see Chapter on Methodology) was completed as part of the interview. In order to be able to draw some conclusions about the consequences of the level of resources in terms of funding and officer time contributions, the case studies were specially selected to illustrate the differences between structures operating at a low level (Gorbals ALC), a medium level (South and South East AMCs, Belvidere ALC) and a high level (Castlemilk ALC and East End AMC).

The interview questions for this section began with an open-ended inquiry as to anything which the consultee thought prevented the structure from operating well. Since it was anticipated that it would be impossible to pursue every possible avenue in the course of each interview, when the chapter was originally planned it had been the intention to provide a table of the particular factor first mentioned by respondents. This was on the assumption that this would be what they considered the most significant. In the event even this limited approach proved untenable because many of the problems encountered came to light under an alternative subject heading at another point in the interview. For instance, lack of confidence, education or training was often mentioned first in the preliminary section on Taking Part, whereas the lack of funding for community representatives' telephone bills emerged under Accountability as contributing to inadequate communication links with their constituency. Furthermore when it comes to resources the participants start out from such very different situations as to render a strictly numerical comparison of their comments meaningless. What is presented below therefore represents a conglomerate picture as it transpired piece by piece without any weighting by frequency of individual comments by particular stake-holders.

It had also been hoped to consider the impact of some personal characteristics of participants which could be hypothesised to have a bearing on their involvement. In this context it was never envisaged that what was significant was purely their demographic 'representativeness'. This is not the point at issue if it is accepted, as is argued here, that their role is that of a mandated delegate. What is relevant is that they accept, and the other stake-holders accept, that this is indeed their role (which forms one aspect of the later chapter on Accountability). Rather the indicators chosen were those which form some measure of their ability to perform the delegate role, taking characteristics which might predispose them, namely:

- long-term residence
- strong community networks
- membership of multiple organisations
- high support for participation

or indicate vested interests that might muddy their lines of accountability :

- loyalty to a single organisation
- local factionalism
- attachment to an urban programme project funded by the authority
- support for or active membership of a political party

The aim was to tease out psychological orientations which might contribute to them behaving as a 'good' or 'bad' democrat when forced to act as a gatekeeper.

When it came to personal characteristics which might affect their capacity to grasp issues or intervene in meetings it proved virtually impossible to devise any objective criteria of relevance. Since all are residents in APTs they are drawn from a narrower socio-economic spectrum than the city norms (see Case Study Areas) which basically rules out class comparisons. Educational level appeared irrelevant since many of the participants are elderly, having left school some decades ago. Experience in a Trade Union providing negotiating skills was too infrequent to be included, being anyway overshadowed by training in assertiveness. The evidence from low frequencies of interventions (see Chapter Taking Part) points to problems with committee procedures - speed, lack of time, picking the right moment - rather than lack of confidence or skills {O}.



## EXTERNAL CONSTRAINTS ON COUNCILS

There are a number of external influences on decentralisation by local authorities, namely the legal framework of Acts within which it has to operate, the two-tier system of councils and lastly the budgetary regimes set by central government.

### LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Some mention has already been made in earlier chapters of the restrictions imposed on co-option of non-elected members onto council sub-committees - which affect AMCs and the newly formed Local Committees (LCs) - and onto joint committees of two councils - which affect the East End joint initiative. These are contained in the Local Government Scotland Act (1973) and the Housing and Local Government Act (1989). The amendments in the latter arose from recommendations of the Widdicombe Committee aimed at strengthening accountability by limiting decision-taking to elected members only. The effect of the 1973 Act on joint committees is to restrict numbers but permit voting powers, whilst the effect of the 1989 Act would be to permit unlimited numbers but debar the vote. The relevant clauses have been brought into force in England, but in Scotland it would have totally demolished the existing operation of joint initiatives such as those in Easterhouse and Drumchapel. In consequence the Secretary of State delayed laying the requisite Statutory Instrument before Parliament whilst a solution was sought and, as of 1994, these clauses are not in force in Scotland.

Nonetheless, whether mistakenly or deliberately to avail themselves of a convenient excuse to debar full community involvement, they are cited by some (predominantly Regional) officers as having to be applied. For example, this is the reason given for not including community membership on the Local Committees. Hambleton & Hoggett (1984) certainly pointed to the earlier legislation being overstated as a constraint, but this legal complexity does undoubtedly make it difficult to mount a challenge as the CCs in the East End have attempted to do in demanding increased numerical membership on the AMC there. Equally it can be a genuine constraint on any council minded to empower the community by devolving decision-taking.

On a more positive note, the new Local Government Scotland Act (1994) means that decentralisation of some form, which is currently voluntary, will be mandatory though its exact form is left up to the new councils to devise under 'guidance' from the Secretary of State for Scotland. The position on co-options

reverts to that under the 1989 Act. It is clear, however, that there is to be encouragement of public involvement (SOED 1995).

## **TWO TIER STRUCTURE**

In so far as a purpose of decentralisation was to achieve improved corporate working between the local authorities by bringing councillors and/or officers together round a table - and certainly both have attempted to involve the other to some extent - this has been frustrated by the existence of the two-tier system (Keating & Midwinter 1983). At its simplest, the District and Region operate in different locations in Glasgow making attendance at each others meetings more problematic. Strathclyde's partial coverage of ALCs in APTs did not mesh with Glasgow's full coverage of AMCs (Ferguson 1982). Boundaries of their services are not co-terminous and have been decentralised separately both within the individual councils and with respect to one another (see below).

But more significantly there has always been a degree of hostility between Glasgow and Strathclyde since their inception (Alexander 1982) which spills over into their attitudes to each other's decentralised structures {I}. As we saw earlier, District councillors are not or seldom at ALCs (Table 7.1), and vice versa the Regional councillors and officers play little part in AMCs despite being officially a part of them. This ambivalence also extends to attempts to aid the community participation; it is not unknown for a Regional community worker who supports a group in contention with the District Council to find their career threatened {I}. This antagonism has been reactivated by the forthcoming abolition of the Regions. Whilst officers face an uncertain future, councillors from the two authorities are already reported to be vying for wards or angling for powerful leadership positions and chairmanships {I}.

## **RESOURCES**

Central government has exerted financial restraints on the decentralised structures in two different ways, one affecting the capacity of local groups to participate, one the structures themselves. With respect to the former, one feature is the limited funding for community groups in general and community councils in particular. As was described in Chapter 2 this stemmed from the views of the Wheatley Commission who did not see why a community council should be

handicapped by the lack of a fixed source of income. In the event this sanguine view proved far from the mark. In fact CCs can find it difficult to conduct their own affairs (SOCRU 1986) and can be very ill placed to play an effective participatory role in the decentralised committees {I} unless they have access to additional grant aid (see below).

In relation to the structures themselves, decentralisation, which itself may incur additional costs especially if the centre is not slimmed down, was introduced against a backdrop of ever increasing central government restrictions on local authority budgets. The consequence is that there are fewer and fewer opportunities for meaningful decision-taking over financial matters as services become reduced to those which there is a statutory obligation to provide or are subjected to CCT. As the councils have less room for manoeuvre, so it is less feasible to allow area preferences and priorities. An additional result has been that the Urban Programme, being three quarters funded by the Scottish Office, looms larger as it becomes one of the few remaining pockets of unallocated money.

## INTERNAL FACTORS

Whilst the above constraints arise from exogenous pressures on authorities, the effects have on occasion been exaggerated by internal council policies which may have a direct or indirect bearing on the operation of their decentralised structures. Those factors dealt with here are area size and boundaries, duplication within the committee system exacerbating the time burden created, and the relative status afforded to decentralised structures within the respective councils. Wherever feasible some concrete measure of the effects is first derived, before recounting perceptions culled from the interviews.

## AREAS

When introducing a scheme of decentralisation any council has to choose whether to opt for full or partial coverage. Glasgow District chose the former and, because of resource constraints, opted for a small number of areas (originally 8 plus centre) based on their housing districts. The result is areas large in both geographic extent and population size - of the order of 100,000 - containing numerous 'communities'. Consequently agenda items relating to one part of the

area do not concern participants from other parts. For example, representatives from CCs in this situation report that they only speak to their own items and otherwise refrain from comment {I}. This fragmentation means that there is seldom feedback on the overall provision of any service. AMCs in addition have a greater potential for co-optation in that the representatives from different areas learn of each others conditions.

The issue of service boundaries per se is less of a problem for AMCs where steps have been taken over time to achieve alignment, but nonetheless the internal review (GDC 1985) still states that Departments have generally not taken steps to cater for area management. One aspect of this concerns disaggregating data collected service by service to provide relevant information broken down on an area basis (GDC op. cit). Again resource constraints have meant that the necessary IT equipment to achieve this has not been provided {I}.

Strathclyde, by contrast, chose to concentrate their efforts on partial coverage basically restricted to APTs producing 23 ALCs in Glasgow alone. Even at this relatively smaller size respondents report that they are unfamiliar with the problems of adjacent neighbourhoods. Thus in Castlemilk - the largest of the ALCs in population size at about 17,000 and the least diverse in character - interviewees seldom lay claim to being competent to speak for the whole area, either restricting themselves geographically (i.e. tenants of a sub-area) or by specific interest group (i.e. youth or elderly) {I}. Those who do see their role as speaking for Castlemilk as a whole base their competence to do so from multiple membership of varying grassroots groups, which causes them extreme difficulties over allocating their time. Whilst the external SAUS review (SRC 1990) concluded that this partial coverage had contributed to the initiatives being marginalised within the council, the external resource constraints combined with the number of structures have resulted in them being underfunded, as will be discussed below

The SAUS review (op. cit) also highlights another difficulty of the decentralisation processes in that in Strathclyde this has taken place separately for the different services, as a consequence of which there is no coincidence between boundaries and no joint use of premises, for example, between the two main community orientated services of Community Education and Social Work. Even at the time of a recently completed reorganisation of the Community Education the opportunity was not taken to achieve a match between the new area boundaries and those of the Local Committees {I}.

A final confusion results from the fact that the two councils have proceeded independently, even though AMCs supposedly include regional councillors and deal with regional functions. Strathclyde's Local Committees cover almost identical areas to Glasgow's AMCs, but do not include District councillors and do not deal with District functions. One result is that there are no examples of the common English pattern of a Neighbourhood Office providing a joint Housing and Social Work service. On the ground this has added to the complexity of the patterns which exist in parallel.

Taken overall there are at minimum three sets of decentralised structures impacting on any given APT, added to which non-coincidence of boundaries can potentially multiply this number. Consequently officers, councillors and communities can find themselves involved in more than one committee covering their service, ward or locality, so that time to devote to them becomes a very significant constraint.

## TIME

In both councils the decentralised structures have been added on without any concomitant slimming down of the number of central service committees or their functions, the effect of which is to double up the system to be serviced. As one councillor succinctly remarked {Q} *"We've aye added on"*. For instance, when the new Local Committees were created in Strathclyde it had been the intention to disband the Divisional Community Development Committee since its tasks could largely be devolved but, in the event, this has not been done although it is now meeting less frequently. Yet even before the creation of this new layer the system was suffering severe overload (Martlew undated).

## Councillors' Time

Councillors with choices to make have to decide which committee is the most worthwhile for them to support. With the exception of convenors, they report that their method of selection is to flip through papers seeing if some geographical place name points to their ward being affected, or if some agenda heading coincides with a topic of special interest to them {I}. By and large they seldom visit each others' councils because it can involve extra preparation plus travel, parking and so forth, and prevents casual dropping in and out as an effective use of their time.

Amongst senior councillors who are convenors of central committees, priority has to be given to the task this generates, nevertheless this probably masks their preference for what is still deemed a higher status activity. Even an avowedly community orientated SRC councillor reported that he was treated with much more respect by officers once he was elevated to a central convenorship {I}. Attendance records certainly bear out that senior councillors are less likely to attend {M} .

### Activists' Time

One of the interview questions asked participants to estimate the amount of time they spent on their involvement in a given period, but this line of questioning proved futile since most were unable to do more than guess, the minimum starting at about 20 hours a week. That the sheer amount of time required is also a constraint on participation is illustrated instead by the following quotations which provide a flavour of the comments on this topic:

*"Its just impossible to get to everything you ought to."*

*"You begin to think there must be more to life than running to the Council chambers."*

*"The other day my daughter asked if she could make an appointment to see me its that bad."*

*"The phone rings from 9.30 a.m. to 9.30 p.m."*

*"3-4 nights a week on top of working. Then I had a heart attack, so now I've cut it back"*

*"Last month about 25 letters and 50 phone calls."*

*"I reckoned up and I'm on eleven committees altogether."*

In the case of those AMCs with direct CC representation the problems are minimised since the CCs see themselves as automatically validated to speak for their whole area by virtue of their own status, but considering Castlemilk ALC, any representative has to be on at least one grassroots organisation to be eligible for election, should attend at minimum the pre-meeting where they are briefed and mandated, and preferably be active in CUG itself. In addition, as mentioned above, many see involvement in multiple organisations as the validation for their right to speak on behalf of Castlemilk.

Analysis of the profiles of participants in the case study areas demonstrates that 72% are members of three organisations or more\*, but this covered a spectrum

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\* Even this figure may be inaccurate since some hyper-active interviewees had difficulty in recalling how many and others they hadn't thought to mention would later emerge.

from one up to the maximum cited of nine in which the respondent was a key office bearer in six. Of these 77% are on the management of an Urban Programme project. A separate question revealed that 49% are in addition active members of a political party, at the Regional elections two being election agents for candidates, two standing for election themselves. Some were politically sympathetic but felt active membership was inappropriate since it might affect their neutrality, but others had been refused membership by the dominant clique {I}. Whilst much of this activity is self-imposed, it nonetheless results in time constituting a very significant constraint.

The **time of day** that meetings are held can also have an impact on attendances. Belvidere and Gorbals ALCs are held at night which is intended to favour the volunteers. All AMCs and Castlemilk ALC are held in day time which makes it hard for those councillors or potential representatives in regular employment, but means officers can be in attendance without incurring overtime payments. The outcome of a combination of the effects of time and timing can be that community participants are drawn predominantly from the elderly and the unemployed (McGregor *et al* 1992b). In the present case studies an additional category was workers in Urban Programme projects whose voluntary management committees saw a benefit in allowing time off. The review of participation in Castlemilk (Blake Stevenson 1993) recommended that meetings be switched to night-time to widen the pool of potential participants; this was contemplated for the ALC but the fear was that it might not succeed whilst the predominantly elderly currently involved were very loath to come out after dark {I}. As will be seen later in the chapter on Accountability, these factors have an effect on the vested interests represented.

## **STATUS OF DECENTRALISATION WITHIN COUNCIL STRUCTURES**

The status of the decentralised committees within the councils would appear the most significant amongst any internal constraint in that other aspects - commitment of time and resources, seniority of staff and councillors in attendance, use as a consultative body - flow from it. This section therefore examines some indicators which provide a proxy measure for the position of these structures within the rest of the decision-taking apparatus of the councils, backed by perceptions culled from the interview responses of the stake-holders.

One indicator has already been touched on, namely that senior councillors (judged by longevity of service and positions within the leadership) are to be found in the convenorships of central committees with the biggest spending powers. The same is true in the hierarchy of officers, so that Area Coordinators with modest authority over dedicated budgets but none over departments lie in the middle ranking, whereas ALC Lead Officers performing this task as part of their broader remit have minimal authority and status to match. Furthermore being locally based fieldworkers, they suffer from the attitude Taylor (1986, p127) pungently describes that *'the less contact with the public, the higher the status of the job'.*

The AMCs continue to meet centrally and, with the exception of the East End Initiative, none operates from a local dedicated office within the area (though this had been the intention for all AMCs in the early days {I}). The stated justification for this - lack of resources, need for close daily contact with councillors, convenience for officers with central headquarters - glosses over any reluctance on the part of Area Coordinators to disperse away from the centre for the reasons outlined by Taylor (ibid). Whereas ALCs at least meet in local premises, none has a base which is uniquely its own. In an important sense this renders these structures invisible.

### **Status as Bodies to be Consulted**

Nor are they conspicuously employed by the councils as bodies to be consulted. Over the three years under investigation, ALCs were used as such on only two occasions {M}, both in connection with their own internal workings in the Review of ALCs (SRC 1991) and in the Social Strategy for the 90s. Indeed they are actually by-passed when the Region seeks views on such issues as improved road traffic measures or potential school closures where there is a statutory duty to consult, as if the ALC as a body per se has no standing in such matters. Vice versa, no issues generated by ALCs appear as such on the agenda of the central Glasgow DCDC {M}, not even the annual action plans or reports of activities which they supposedly (but do not in practice) produce for this purpose. The ALCs, whilst having no powers of their own, consequently lack any systematic means of feeding into either the central decision-taking or the policy-making of the Region except weakly through the funnel of the Chief Executive's Office {I}.



Examination of the documentary evidence reveals, by contrast, that AMCs enjoy considerable devolved powers with their minutes only being forwarded to the parent Policy & Resources Committee 'for information'. They are consulted from time to time by the main service committees, in particular the Planning Committee, although the decision to do so lies with those committees and etiquette inhibits AMCs from playing an overtly campaigning role (Hastings, McArthur & McGregor 1993). Nor are their recommendations always adhered to. It is indeed not unknown for councillors, safe in the knowledge that a final decision is taken elsewhere, to play act enthusiasm for some cause at an AMC in front of community representatives, before returning to a service committee where they adopt a completely contrary stance. This behaviour causes considerable annoyance to officers in the know {I}, and would cause even more annoyance to and cynicism amongst participants were it to be revealed. One of the perceived advantages of the Local Committees with true devolved powers is that the transparency of the decisions will mean that {Q} "*councillors will have nowhere to hide.*"

The way that the Councils have responded to the imposition of CCT has also had a knock on effect on the capacity to devolve decisions. As has already been mentioned, the contracts have deliberately been kept large and centralised. One of the Area Coordinators had argued strongly for the AMC under these circumstances to be the 'client' which placed the contract, but the proposal was overruled {I}. This not only debars local decision-taking, but withdraws previous powers to pursue area strategies for creating employment for small firms within the catchment thus running counter to declared social and economic policies.

### **Stage of consultation**

The final aspect of status concerns the stage at which participation in any decision takes place. By the point at which any item appears on an agenda it has already been the subject of much preliminary discussion. Any plan will have been developed by professionals within a department, tossed around by the team of officers, passed through the political system, so many parties will already be signed up to it. If this is the first moment at which dialogue begins with the community, participants are being brought in when all that remains is a final formal decision. Their choices are hence reduced, as are those of councillors not party to the foregoing, to acceptance or rejection normally of a single option which in itself preempts alternatives (Young 1973). Should they reject a preconceived plan, this will not be popular with its initiators. As a consequence

groups can come to have an undeserved reputation for operating in a confrontational manner (Morris 1993) since the only role left for them is opposition. It would seem that their only acceptable status at the committee stage is that of acquiescent rubber stamps.

### **Perceptions of Status**

That these factual indicators reflect the low status accorded to decentralisation is borne out by interview responses. Across the stake-holders it was the majority, if not wellnigh unanimous, view that ALCs were of negligible and AMCs of marginal standing overall. The ALCs were seen only as having some influence on the Urban Programme priorities, and the AMCs as restricted decision-making within their devolved budgets. Neither was regarded as playing more than a minor role in mainstream policy-making.

The only views to the contrary were expressed by the respective convenors who, whether from doctrine, wishful thinking or determination, rated their standing more highly. One chairman of an AMC cited an instance of their joint power to counteract the centre when all operated in concert, but admitted that such occurrences were rare {I}. Even these enthusiasts talked in terms of influence rather than power.

The Area Coordinators conceded that if they had any capacity to achieve an impact this came not from recognised authority but from power of personality, skills in manipulation, or support from a powerfully placed councillor {I}. One claimed that their standing amongst other colleagues was as {Q} *"overpaid Town Clerks"*. This had led the Area Coordinator for the South East to disband the team and the team meetings on the grounds that departmental officers ganged together to stand against him, being unwilling to grant him recognition as a fellow professional. Lead Officers for the ALCs meanwhile, whose actual authority is even less, had had a choice of pursuing similar strategies to achieve an impact, or of opting for the minimum necessary. Whilst none openly conceded to this in interview, the Review speaks openly of officers who saw the role as an unwelcome adjunct to mainstream workloads and an unwarranted imposition (SRC 1991).

## RESOURCES

That lack of resources will constitute a constraint is self evident; indeed ALC case studies were chosen to illustrate the effects. This section looks at three linked aspects of resourcing of the structures, namely the funding regimes, the availability of support staff and finally access to training. Each is examined from a local authority and a community viewpoint.

### FUNDING

Some of the effects of (under)funding of the structures themselves have already been touched upon - the external budgeting restrictions, the lack of premises, the shortage of staff time, the absence of appropriate data, the non-payment of overtime - as has the link between this, the duplication in the system and perceived low level of commitment. The aim of this section is therefore to flesh out the picture by comparing models enjoying different levels of funding.

#### Funding of AMCs

Unfortunately no total costings for an AMC are available since such items as venue rental, issuing of paperwork are hidden in central administration. The basic staffing level comprises a full-time Area Coordinator, whose role combines that of clerk to the committee, team leader and limited outreach in the community. In the early days this post was filled by secondment of 'high fliers' from various disciplines, but latterly the incumbents have come from the ranks of Town Clerks. They have now been allocated an administrative assistant and two of the case studies had additional secondees developing project action programmes. Funding was not included in the deficiencies listed in the internal review (GDC 1985a); nor was it mentioned by interviewees in relation to AMCs. The one exception was the Area Coordinators themselves, one of whom advocated that their salaries should have been pitched at a level further up the hierarchy so that they had greater authority through rank, one of whom would have welcomed outreach workers to build up liaison with participating communities.

## Funding of ALCs

By contrast the funding for ALCs emerged from the Review (op. cit) as the major constraint on their effectiveness as reported by both officers and participants. Firstly no separate posts were created as the role of Lead Officer fell to be provided by the Community Education and Social Work departmental staff. Where there exists a multiplicity of APTs within their catchment areas, this put a considerable strain on manpower. There were also difficulties over the seniority of staff to be involved; a higher ranking officer might have more clout in negotiation but little time to spare; vice versa a lower ranking officer could possibly spare more time but with less capacity to act. Those concerned also describe a considerable degree of friction between the two departments {I} due to each attempting to minimise the burden. On the side of the Social Work Department there was also resentment that the structures had been {Q} “*dreamed up*” by the Chief Executive’s to incorporate participation without their expertise in the field of community development being tapped . Furthermore they objected to the ambivalent role of Lead Officer potentially combining both administration in running meetings and developmental support to participants. Their opinion was that the two should have been clearly demarcated, with Social Work community workers only involved in the latter {I}. Next there was no additional administrative backup, any costs incurred in issuing paperwork and so forth having to be squeezed from the respective departments. There is no budget assigned for publicising meetings, which have to be held in rent-free SRC premises. Lead Officers meanwhile were under instruction to keep minutes and action to the minimum, whilst their line managers were not always willing to spare staff or meet such costs.

## Comparison of the Case Studies

Of the case study ALCs, Gorbals is representative of the average throughout Strathclyde in operating at this level. Although this is not the only factor, it does seem probable that underfunding has some bearing on the low level of performance especially in the sense of the lack of follow up action of which current activists complain {I}. In contrast, the existence of the Partnership in Castlemilk and the consequent dedicated Urban Programme allocation to be overseen by the ALC, led to SRC introducing an additional post for a full-time Coordinator responsible to the Lead Officer in the Social Work Department, backed by administrative support. There is clear evidence {M} that here the routine of meetings is enhanced and adequate follow up initiated. Again whilst

the greater relative effectiveness of Castlemilk cannot be entirely attributed to the single factor of funding, the clear differences between this ALC and that in Gorbals must derive in part from this feature, providing an indication of the minimum level of resources required for an ALC to function.

The structures in the East End have been jointly funded by the two councils, with a recent additional complexity in that the old post of Head of the East End Management Unit (EEMU), incorporating the role of Area Coordinator to the EEMC and project supervisor of local initiatives, has now been linked into the East End Partnership as Director of the Social Initiative (ranked alongside the Director of the Economic Initiative headed up by the Chief Executive). As already stated, there is a local headquarters at Parkhead Library employing various staff, amongst them a Community Conference Organiser (redesignated Support Officer). As the title implies, the responsibility of this officer was to arrange the annual East End Conference in conjunction with local people, but the role has also come to include servicing the four ALCs. It does not, however, extend to outreach developmental work with groups which falls to community workers (see below). Provision is made for administrative backup for all five committees, the ALCs meeting in the East End moving around community-based venues, and the AMC since its designation as a Local Committee alternating between the City Chambers and SRC headquarters. This funding has allowed officers to accede to demands from participants on Belvidere ALC that it become more of a body in its own right in taking up issues. Not everyone agrees with these arrangements, with criticisms voiced that it leads to excessive officer domination {I}. One ex-community activist now recently elected as a Regional councillor went so far as to term the East End set-up a {Q} "*monstrosity*" which swamped out meaningful intervention by councillors and community alike.

### **Funding for Community Participants**

It is salutary, before moving on to consider the funding of community participation to remember that elected members, more especially backbenchers, themselves complain of the inadequate level of resources for their work as a representative. They too talk of no allowances for paid time off work, poor accommodation, little secretarial assistance {I}. Indeed interviews with them had to be conducted in the tea-room or a borrowed committee room for the lack of any private facilities. It is therefore not surprising to find a degree of ambivalence about funding community intervention when this has not infrequently come to be seen as opposition to the council.

The arguments in relation to the need for high levels of resourcing of participation and for its link with effectiveness in impact have been well rehearsed elsewhere (Arnstein 1969; Taylor 1986; McGregor *et al* 1992; McArthur 1993; Beresford & Croft 1993). It is worth noting that the point which Arnstein herself was making was that participants needed to be made aware of their entitlements - which on the American scene at the time were generous - and that they must have access to independent advice and technical expertise. It is therefore the intention here merely to highlight aspects which are relevant in the particular cases under investigation. One such is the need to maintain a good network of grassroots communications which can involve arranging meetings, photocopying documents, typing reports. It was in relation to this that frequent mention was made of excessive telephone bills (up to £100 per quarter) incurred in consulting with groups to ensure that their viewpoint was represented. This was seen as essential in ensuring that the representative at any meeting is truly mandated. The difficulties could be proportionately greater the bigger the constituency to be served, so that they would be at a minimum for a community council such as Laurieston covering a small area and having its own seat at the table to speak for itself, and would be greatest for an elected representative on the SE-AMC. Yet an application by the latter for funding from SE-AMC to perform the appointed role was, in fact, refused [I].

In practice, a difference began to emerge between those groups, including CCs, which have to rely on their own resources, those which have informal access to a local project or support agency, and those which run their own project. The least well placed were Dennistoun CC and Carmunnock CC which, not being in APTs, have no access to UP project assistance. Basic administration grants for CCs in Glasgow come from the District Council and amount to an automatic £300 per annum which can be topped up on request by additional grants to purchase small items of equipment or print newsletters. However, funding is both short-term and piecemeal, a far cry from the guaranteed £20,000 at then prices envisaged in the Green Paper (see Chapter 3). Universally the groups in APTs had some means of tapping into help from an UP project where they served on the management or which they operated themselves. At the upper-most level came organisations linked to umbrella groups with the specific remit of providing facilities for the voluntary sector, notably Castlemilk Umbrella Group (CUG) and Castlemilk Housing Information Project (CHIP).

Another funding issue that arose was costs incurred in attending meetings, the participants often having to rely on their own organisation to pay these which

was regarded as unjust if they were engaged in what amounted to public service. ALCs have no budget at all for this purpose, but AMCs do, in fact, make a modest payment for expenses although some respondents appeared not to have been made aware of this. However, it certainly makes no allowance for loss of earnings for daytime meetings so that the minority in employment can be substantially out of pocket. For instance, in the East End the grants sub-committee was brought onto the same day as the AMC to suit the councillors who were failing to form the necessary quorum, with the consequence that the meetings run morning and afternoon with a lunch break when participants have to find themselves a meal in the city centre. One of the CC's demands in their response to the consultation on the future of Local Government (C.C.F. 1992) was that their involvement in local government should be treated in this respect like jury service. Meanwhile a finding of the Commission on Citizenship (1990) was how few employers are sympathetic even to unpaid time off for public service, an attitude which hampers some elected members (I). Evidence from a national survey of volunteers (Lynn & Davis Smith 1992) has demonstrated that 75% are not reimbursed for their efforts, with the result that volunteering is skewed towards the higher socio-economic groups. As was seen above, timing of the meetings also skews the catchment, so the two factors together have a combined limiting effect. The only incidences of interviewees in this category were both self-employed, whilst UP workers took advantage of their time off in lieu. In a sense the problem is rendered invisible because it has the effect of ruling out potential attenders who cannot afford such a loss or do not have a benevolent employer. This limitation restricts the pool from which participants can therefore be drawn, exacerbating the time burden on the few available.

The final issue with funding implications was that of access to expertise, particularly technical planning or legal advice. Whilst a middle-class area may house professionals willing to offer their assistance, APTs have little likelihood of being able to tap into self-help of this nature. It was also generally beyond the capacities of the staff in local support agencies, only Castlemilk being fortunate in have a Law Centre. Otherwise reliance had to be put on city-wide organisations which had to ration their limited staff or charge a fee which, though modest, was beyond the purse of neighbourhood groups.

Grant aid was nowhere available from the local authorities who were reluctant to start down what would undoubtedly be an expensive road. Furthermore, since they would in all likelihood have been funding campaigns against themselves, their refusal to do so was hardly unnatural. It is specifically because it generally

arises in a situation of confrontation that this aspect of resourcing becomes contentious. It is interesting to note that in America payment is provided on the grounds that it is in the public interest to have well-informed opposition which may save on expensive mistakes (Lucas 1975). One of the arguments propounded by Glasgow CCs in their submission on their future under the unitary authorities (CCRC 1993) was that they should have automatic funding such as a power to precept on the rates, not their current dependence on the District Councils. In a similar vein, Arnstein (op. cit) was insistent that where the disadvantaged people who were the target of the American programmes entered the arena with a history of suspicion of and hostility to the authorities, it was essential that they have advice from sources they would trust, which she saw as having to be independent from those authorities themselves.

In summary the graph in Figure 9.1 depicts the spectrum of resources available for the structures, on the one hand, and to the community groups on the other. For the structures to operate at an optimum level takes a combination of both sides being adequately funded. It would be no surprise to find that Gorbals, where both the ALC and the CCs which supply the chief participants fall at the bottom end of this spectrum, compared unfavourably with Castlemilk, where both the ALC and CUG from whose membership the participants are elected fall at the top end. However, the problem with this simplistic analysis is that funding does not always come without strings attached; dependence on the Urban Programme, where local authority approval is required, can make participants vulnerable. This can result in forms of self-policing {Q} *"You better not give so and so a hard time or the Region might put restrictions on you"*. Or overt pressure may be applied either to groups themselves, as was alleged in two instances {I}, or to the resource agencies which support them {Q} *"We were warned not to be 'political' or ..."*. Instances were cited of individuals being harassed either indirectly as where key activists were reported being under pressure to accept rehousing, or, at its most insidious, directly as in the case of one interviewee who lost his job {Q} *"because I was too outspoken."* One jaundiced councillor went so far as to accuse central government of favouring the UP not because it cured deprivation, which it was maintained it did not achieve, but because {Q} *"it bought off trouble"*.



# COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS

Casual  
Project  
Help

Structured  
Project  
Help

Structured  
Local Authority  
Support

Community  
Umbrella Group  
Premises/Staff  
+ Training  
Budget

CC Only

CC with  
UP Project

CC with  
Initiative

CASTLEMILK  
HOUSING  
INFORMATION  
PROJECT

CASTLEMILK  
UMBRELLA  
GROUP

GORBALS  
UMBRELLA  
GROUP

DALMARNOCK CC

CASTLEMILK ALC  
REPRESENTATIVES

CASTLEMILK AMC  
REPRESENTATIVES

HUTCHESTOWN CC

SOUTH CAMLACHIE CC  
NORTH CAMLACHIE CC  
CLATON/BRIDGETON CC

LAURIESTON CC

DENNISTOUN CC  
CARMUNNOCK CC

EAST END  
AMC

CASTLEMILK  
ALC

BELVEDERE  
ALC

SOUTH EAST  
AMC

SOUTH  
AMC

GORBALS  
ALC

Dedicated local staffing  
Administration  
Local base

Area Coordinator  
Administration  
No local premises

Included in staff remit  
No administration

## LOCAL AUTHORITY

Figure 9.1 Match between Resources and Structures

## TRAINING

At the outset it should be made clear that what is under consideration here is training for all stake-holders, not just community participants. This is stressed because there was a clear assumption in certain quarters when this question was raised that it was merely the latter to whom reference was being made. Having looked at provision, there will be some discussion of likely uptake since experience has demonstrated this is just as problematic. Indeed in research amongst Scottish councillors Martlew & Nassmacher (undated) found that there was a minority view that lay members should never be trained since, becoming 'brainwashed' by their professionals, they would lose their value as amateurs. Since training is conspicuous by its absence in the present instance there is little danger of this. By this is meant specific induction into the workings of local government in general, or data on the remit, responsibilities, budgets or powers of the decentralised committees. Nothing on these subjects is offered to those who attend, the nearest being a one-off past session for CCs put on by CCRC. Only as late as 1994 did SRC begin to put together a programme angled at ALCs as part of their Social Strategy of empowerment. This threw up how ignorant many were of the role of the committee in which they already took part {M}, this being as true of officers as of participants (councillors failed to attend) . But nothing had yet been available in the case-study areas.

The interview question consequently shifted to the desirability of training were it to be developed, what its content might be and by whom it should be provided. Within the scope of the time available, it was never feasible to pursue every angle in depth, so the following can only provide the flavour of the various contributions without any weighting by frequency. Indeed this proved to be a topic on which there was little consensus and what there was crossed boundaries between categories. In one camp came the councillor who echoed the above sentiments, expressing concern that training created a community elite which became {Q} *"distanced from the grassroots"*, his reasoning for leaving them all at the same level of ignorance, but he was joined there by a group of representatives just as reluctant to be trained. This was variously ascribed by the other pro-training parties as arrogance or a belief amongst the long-serving that {Q} *"they knew it all already"*. More sinisterly they did not see a need for newcomers to be trained, indeed at Belvidere ALC the old guard were vociferously anti an offer from the community worker {O}, his interpretation being that this posed an unacceptable threat to their own entrenched positions of power {I}.

Of those who would welcome training, opinions likewise divided on its content and target audience. As with resources, a difference emerged between those representatives with access to local projects where they had had opportunities for introductory training and those who had not had anything at this level. The latter were seeking very basic skills {Q}:

*"How to speak up in meetings"*

*"Reading maps"*

*"Committee procedures and how to come in at the right point"*

*"How to handle people in authority"*

*"An information pack for beginners"*

whereas those who had had a programme pitched at this level were looking for a course or written materials describing the remit of the committee, its powers, plus background information and statistics in relation to agenda items. Officers and community might appear united in wishing elected members acquired proficiency in chairmanship, but for some this meant dealing expeditiously with strict agendas, for others developing a participatory style of debate. Community and councillors could be at one in desiring officers to learn plain written English and simple oral presentation skills, plus an understanding of and empathy for a lay person's non-technical approaches. Officers and councillors variously shared a common belief that participants should {Q} *"learn proper procedures"*, *"stick to the point under discussion"* and *"curb their aggression."* Those authors who express concern that councillors and officers deal more favourably with middle-class volunteers who operate in a similar style to themselves (Newton 1976; Hain 1980; Boaden *et al* 1982) would view such comments with suspicion, but the same point was reiterated by participants about themselves or their mates. One popular form of training mentioned was assertiveness or negotiating skills, experience of which was valued by the few with a background in trade unions.

For those expressing aversion to training, some had had earlier experiences which left them unconvinced of the benefit. Some simply saw it as yet another time burden on top of those already described. In this vein one fieldworker felt the whole idea created an added imposition, that the role of the community should be to raise problems, not to be troubled with how a solution to them could be found which should be left to the paid professionals. One grouping felt it was pointless unless it led to some form of recognised accreditation which might help them gain employment, whilst the hostile reaction of others arose from their conception that it would inevitably be set up by officers whose aim would be indoctrination. Finally there was a view that it did not provide the answers in that {Q} *"we could be trained to the eyeballs and it would make no difference unless attitudes changed."*

At root there is a clear split between those who see training as a technique for combating the system and those who see it as a technique for operating more successfully within it, either of which might be a means to empowerment. It is precisely because training is always viewed in this light that it becomes so contentious. Nobody mentioned it as a means of providing the community with the tools necessary for them to carry out their assigned role in consumer feedback - organising an appropriately mounted public meeting, conducting an opinion survey - or producing their own programme for action - planning for real, mapping gaps in facilities. It is also why commentators constantly call for its delivery from an independent source (Arnstein op. cit; Taylor 1986), overlooking the possibility that this may not always be the best mechanism in every instance. An insider with intimate expertise on how the council works in practice may in truth be better placed to impart such knowhow. The decisive factor is much more their motivation, which may be just as enlightened or just as manipulative as any outsider. Indeed were reliance to be put on Strathclyde's community workers, many have been found to be ill trained themselves in the workings of the council and have little firsthand experience of day-to-day involvement with its committees (Barr 1991). Elsewhere social work managers have proven hostile to both empowerment strategies within their own service and to involvement in the political arena (Daniel & Wheeler 1989). Nor, as will be explained in the next section, are all community workers favourably inclined to the involvement of activists in local authority structures.

## SUPPORT

Over and above occasional training, ongoing day-to-day support to community representatives from developmental staff could be a factor in enhancing performance. For instance a community development policy has been a deliberate feature of some English authorities embarking on decentralisation, with the establishment of a special committee to oversee implementation (see Chapter 2). A specific research question addressed the actual availability or otherwise of this type of support, attitudes to the desirability of this, and finally uptake of any such offers of assistance. Additional interviews were held with local fieldwork managers and central policy officers to explore this issue.

## Availability

The District Council has no community development committee nor does it employ staff with community work training. They have been phasing out staff within the Housing Department whose developmental remit primarily involved TAs, but also marginal responsibility for CCs. The latter do have access to the Community Councils Resource Centre, staffed by Strathclyde University through a contract from the District Council, which provides centralised information, training and research, but not neighbourhood outreach.

Strathclyde Region does have a series of Divisional Community Development Committees (DCDC), to which ALCs were linked until the advent of the Local Committees. The council employs developmental staff in both Social Work and Community Education Departments, and it is from these services that the Lead Officers are drawn. However, their role in development has never been clarified, with some arguing that it be restricted to administration. In part this stems from the council structure since the two departments are directly responsible to Social Work and Education Committees, not to the respective DCDC which can consequently only request but not direct that staff be deployed {M}. In part it reflects a lack of firm commitment from councillors to their own deprivation strategy which enjoys greater support amongst elected members with an APT in their ward, but rouses some resentment amongst those who do not {I}. In part it derives from reluctance of the Departments to divert staff to this activity, preferring alternative strategies of working with single issue groups {I}. In the absence of a clear directive from the centre that effort is to be put into improving the performance of ALCs or the participants within them, the decision lies with local managers. Their attitudes are coloured in turn by the elected members locally some of whom, as the Review (SRC op. cit) makes clear are less than supportive of the concept of power sharing.

In practice, of the case study ALCs only Castlemilk has the benefit of the input from a Regional community worker, whose role is chiefly to service the Briefing Meeting where representatives sort out what line they are going to adopt. However, she does also attend the ALC and has on occasions been tempted to intervene on behalf of the representatives if need be. It is also her responsibility to ensure that the SE-AMC representatives are supported, which had been organised through CHIP, these then being the only AMC participants who have any kind of assistance in this way.

## Uptake

However, this is not because opportunities are not available in the East End, but because there both councillors and activists are uniformly vitriolic about community workers, some of their comments being along the lines:

*"They play their own games"*

*"Stirrers the lot of them" "Far too political"*

*"They follow their own agendas, not the community's"*

*"I wouldn't trust one as far as I could throw an elephant".*

That some would have such attitudes had been anticipated due to adverse experiences with GEAR (Chapter 6), but the same sentiments were expressed by newly elected councillors, one an incomer to the area. In Gorbals the worker from the Social Work Department and the one from Crossroads had been active in setting up GUG, so they were tarnished in the eyes of the rival organisations, mainly the CCs. They in turn regard the ALC as not worthy of their or the community's energy to push for improvements. The history of community work in Gorbals is also one of opposition to involvement with formal area-wide structures (Bryant & Bryant 1982).

Negative attitudes to community workers are thus to be found amongst all stakeholders. Other officers may be none too keen to have a colleague aid the community in quizzing them and their plans. Glasgow District meanwhile have little liking for SRC workers who {Q} *"stir up trouble"* in challenging city policies. In the case of SRC councillors, despite their constantly reiterated adherence to the Social Strategy with its emphasis on empowerment, there are signs of reluctance to give whole-hearted allegiance to measures which favour participants who may then adopt a contrary line, the more so when they are rivals within their own party or from the opposition {I}. Attributing to the community worker any views expressed by the participants can then be a convenient justification for ignoring them. Workers caught in these moving sands can experience immense tension between loyalties to the grassroots and to their employers (Howard 1990), and community perceptions of how they balance this equation lie at the root of the acceptability or otherwise of their assistance.

On the evidence from Castlemilk it is tempting to conclude that the support from a development worker can make a very positive contribution to the performance of participants where trust has been established. All but one of the ten participants certainly saw it as crucial, the one being critical that on a single occasion she had been {Q} *"too directive"* in advocating a line of action being

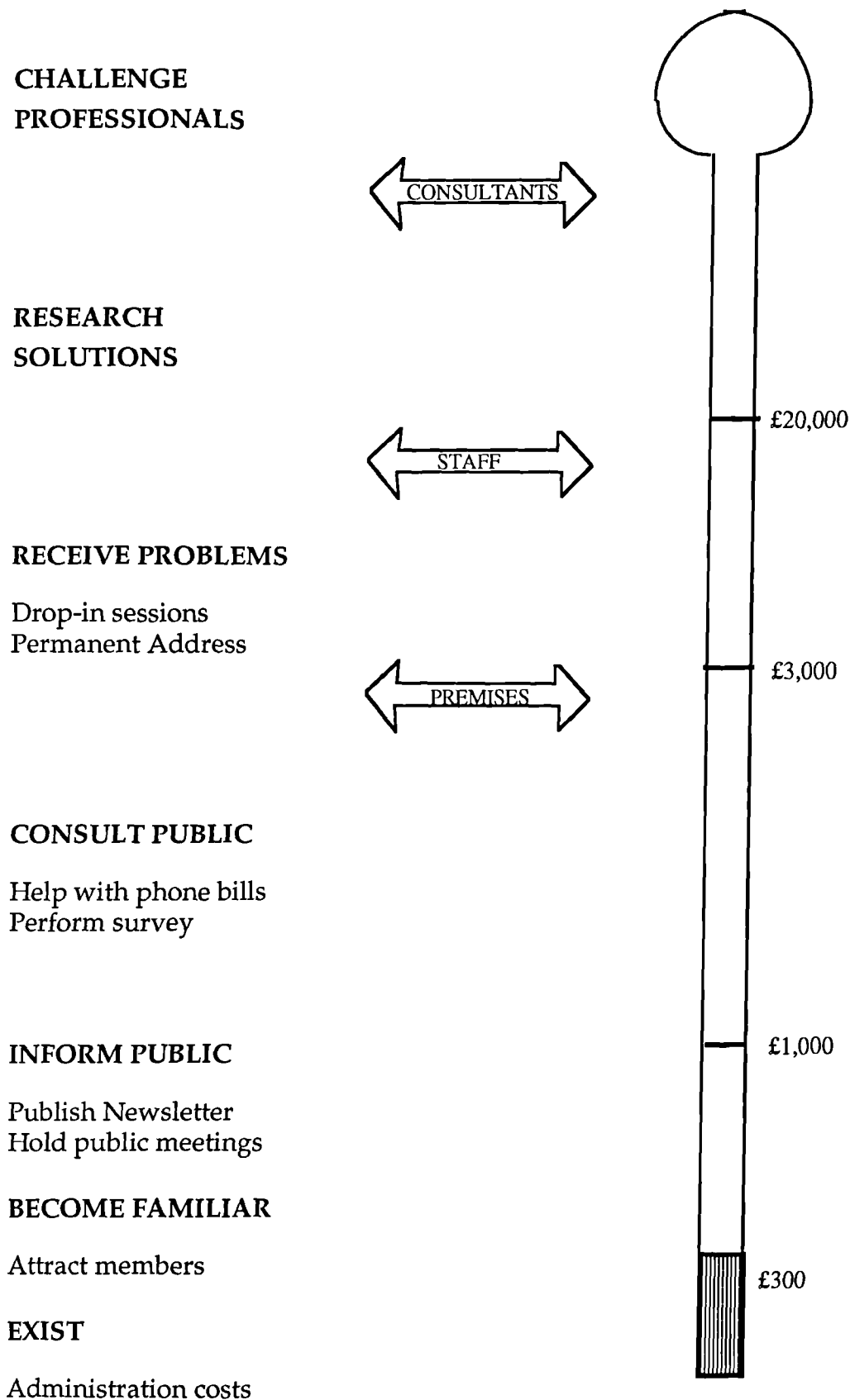
pushed by a fellow representative who was *"politically motivated"*. But the regional councillor meanwhile was frank in his condemnation of community workers as a species stating {Q} *"....they deliberately lead the community astray. Stirrers, never happier"*, maintaining that on at the ALC *"community representatives are being manipulated."*, so that to that extent this support may even be counterproductive. In the case of the only group in a position to employ its own development worker - Dalmarnock CC which heads up a local initiative with its own staff-a hint this degree of support is not always empowering is evidenced by the fact that it is not the CC but this staff member who attends the ALC {M}. In America, where funding levels are generous this phenomenon has been noted (Marshall 1971; Haerberle 1989), with the professional staff tending to form close relationships with bureaucrats to the exclusion of the disadvantaged volunteers.

## REFLECTIONS

Although the various threads have been considered under separate headings so that they can be explored individually, they are in truth interwoven. The voluntary, unenforcible nature of decentralisation policies means that they need not be pursued at all, there being no external enforcement; legalities hamper thoroughgoing devolution of powers which affects the status of the devolved units; the choice of areas is dictated by resource constraints which restrict staff input. Duplication, pressures of time and the feebleness of devolved powers result in diminished authority to command action which results in yet further lack of status. The stage of intervention pushes groups into confrontation which leads to reluctance to provide the means to strengthen them and so on round.

Taking funding, training and support in combination it is possible to begin to construct a 'ladder of resources', loosely based on Arnstein's famous ladder of participation, sufficient to permit a group to perform at different levels. The diagram in Figure 9.2 serves to depict this pictorially. At the bottom-most point no great injection of funds to the community is required for them to receive information but, as they are required to move upwards to more demanding roles, resources or rather their lack becomes more and more a constraint. As has been described, this point can be reached very quickly for residents in an APT with a consequence that the structures are barely accessible to the very residents they are most supposed to help.

Figure 9.2 Resources Required to Perform at Different Levels



Source: Author's original



If participants are to be fully able to carry out their role they ought to be in good contact with their grassroots, which would involve funding for such activities producing a newsletter to provide information, or preferably holding public meetings or performing surveys to ascertain opinions. But the really significant step forward is that the public and the local authority should be aware of the presence of a body which they can approach reliably through a permanent address. Thus it has been found that in the case of community councils it is having their own premises that is the launch-pad for performing their representative role effectively (CCRC 1991a). Research in one APT showed that the same only became true when they could also employ their own development worker (Jeffrey 1991).

In the lower reaches the provenance of these funds is of less significance and they could be substituted by modest fundraising. But problems arise as the higher reaches are approached, the first being that the volunteers can actually become dis-empowered. For this reason it has been argued groups have to be allowed to progress gently up the ladder over time (Jeffrey 1990), not suddenly elevated to an unaccustomed height as was the case for Dalmarnock CC with the consequences outlined above. The second, and more serious, is the powerful effect of increasing dependence on local authority funding levels which could no longer be matched from elsewhere, leading to greater vulnerability to cooption of dissent. This theme is pursued further in the next chapter on Accountability.

This very interdependence of all the various constraints makes it more problematic to disentangle which features are the most significant, but a few tentative conclusions seem in order. From the point of view of the practical restrictions logically those affecting the local authority side have to take precedence over those on the community side if only because they determine the value of the structures into which the participants are invited. Likewise any lack of commitment to decentralisation itself comes ahead of any hesitancy over participation in undermining the power of the committees to which this is introduced. It is this ambivalence that has allowed the service committees to be retained and with them the power and pull of the centre. If one factor has to be singled out above all others it must be this failure to bring about the requisite changes in the organisational culture as a whole which ironically has to be strongly driven from the centre to overcome the forces of inertia and resistance at the peripheries.

## CHAPTER 10

### REPRESENTATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

In Direct Democracy, where every man speaks for himself, there is no need to address the question of representation and accountability. In Representative Democracy we are accustomed to validation by ballot box creating periodic accountability to the electorate. But in the shift to Participatory Democracy, no such ground rules apply. The linked questions of what form the representation is to take and how accountability is to be achieved, are therefore central to the whole concept. It is argued here that the distinguishing feature of participants is that they are mandated spokesmen for their communities. A contention of this thesis is that neither council has recognised that, as such, they require to be validated in entirely different ways from elected members, and the participatory structures have to be adapted accordingly. Secondly, it has been argued that participation in an organisation alongside councillors whose election has been decided along party political lines, is of a very different nature to other spheres where this is not the case.

This chapter therefore examines the various issues surrounding 'voice' option, namely what purpose is to be served in adding a particular set of voices, whose voices are to be selected and how they are to be incorporated. The starting point is those questions which the initiators of democratisation have to address when they start out, and how these were answered in the cases under review (Who did they want?). This is followed by a section which looks at how the councils selected the participants in practice, consequently whose voices they began to listen to (Who did they get?).

Examination of the structures in terms of the formal and informal lines of accountability demonstrate cleavages which permit the emergence of 'gatekeepers' who control entry on behalf of the rest of the community. The evidence also indicates that the particular activists involved are highly active in local politics. The consequences, it is argued, lead to the councillors and officers only becoming responsive to a very narrow band of voices.

## DATA

The questions relating to the original *objectives* were answered by reference to any existing documentation or written comment at the time. This was then used as the basis for interviews with those policy initiators still available. All categories of interviewee were questioned as to the purpose they thought was being served by the structure with which they were involved, whether they had ever seen a written description or been given any explanation/training. Depending on the stake-holder, this was followed by a query as to whether it was intended to and had succeeded in achieving any aim specific to themselves e.g. corporate working by the team of officers, accountability or responsiveness of the councillors, listening more sensitively to community views, releasing local knowledge of participants ...

### Accountability

All categories of stake-holders who took part in the meetings were firstly asked who they spoke for when present, the purpose of them being there and to whom they saw themselves accountable. If at some point during the interview they said 'we', this was clarified to establish who 'we' was in this context as a means of checking on whose behalf they were acting. Activists were requested to list the organisations to which they belonged, and in addition whether they were active in a political party if this had not already become apparent. As an added indicator, note was taken of how they signed into meetings they attended. They were questioned as to the method of (s)election, how they were validated and how they maintained contact with their 'constituency'. This was then cross-checked wherever possible. For example, every CC Chairman and Secretary was visited to discover, if they themselves were not at the meeting, to what extent their representative spoke with the group's cognisance. Similar questions were put to any support organisations and community workers.

Officers and councillors were asked their views on the benefits/disbenefits of introducing voice, and how they coped with the outcome especially where conflicting opinions or priorities emerged. Furthermore, to what extent the relevant committee, in general, and community participation, in particular, had made any difference to their work. Specifically if it played any role in improving responsiveness and accountability to the public, what contribution it could or should make to local authority decision-making.

## WHO MIGHT THE COUNCILS WANT?

We have already seen the degree of confusion surrounding the overlapping, or indeed conflicting, aims of various decentralisation initiatives. Useful starting points in disentangling the purposes to be served are the tables which appear in Chapter 2 as Figure 2.3 - Ways of strengthening voice in local government - and Figure 2.6 - Possible objectives of decentralisation. In the current context, we can discard those which relate to physical relocation in neighbourhood offices or devolving activities totally outwith the council. A table of the remaining possible objectives might then contain the following elements:

Figure 10.1 Possible Objectives of Democratisation

<b>OPEN</b>	Citizens rights at meetings Increased accessibility Transparency Strengthening accountability Better informed decisions
<b>RESPONSIVE</b>	Improving existing services Listening to problems Changing relationship Attending to local priorities Service planning and policies
<b>EMPOWERMENT</b>	Councillors more say in ward Offsetting disadvantage Devolving decisions Inputs from the normally excluded Shift power
<b>POLITICS</b>	Retain support for public services Strengthen representative system Increase voting turnouts Win support for political party Extend democracy via participation

Source: Derived from Burns, Hambleton & Hoggett (1994) and Hambleton (1992)

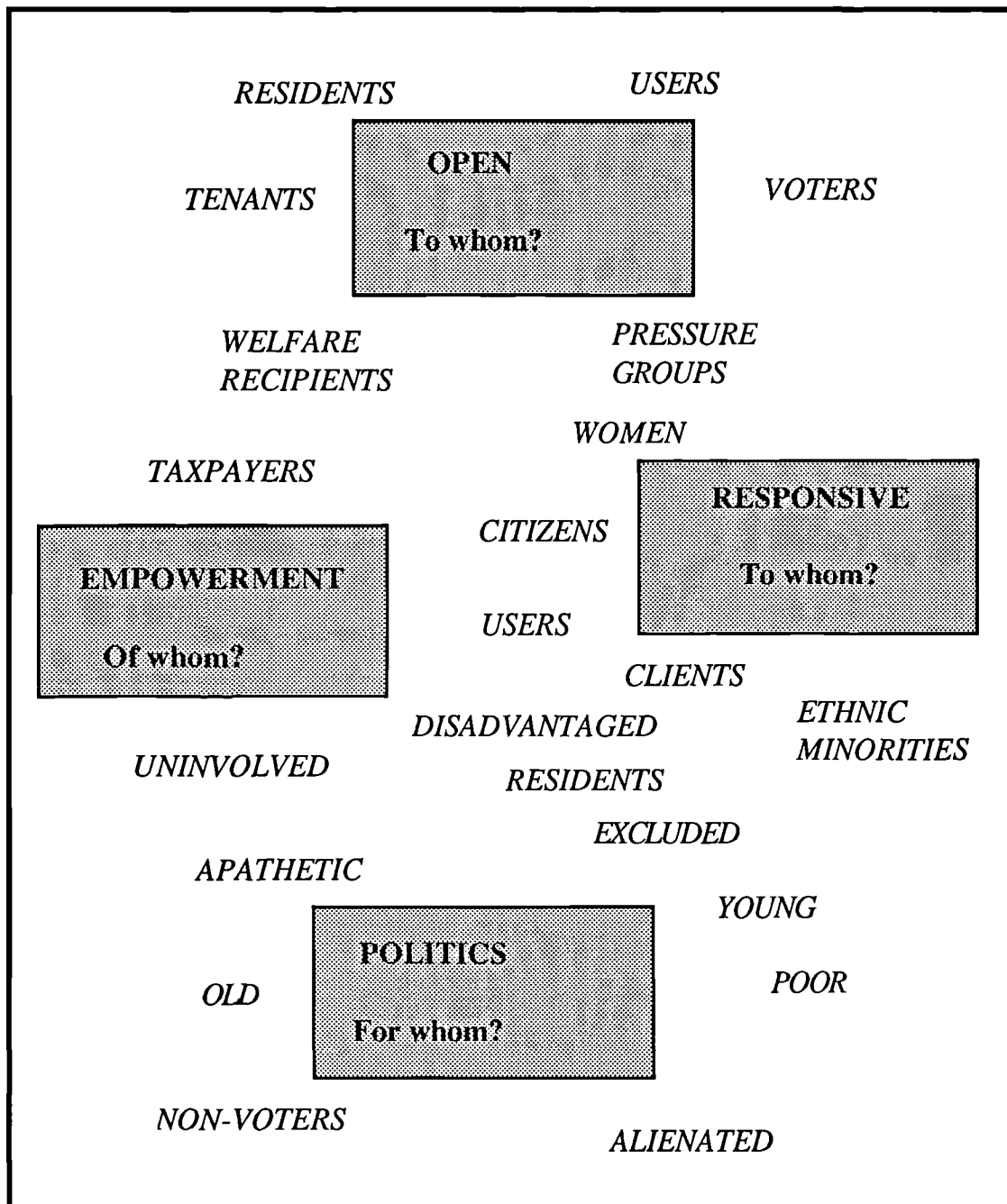
The question then to be answered is who are to be the beneficiaries of the changes? Any apparent consensus surrounding the basic concept of decentralisation begins to melt away once the solutions proposed by various policy advocates are examined. A pointer to this can be seen in the terminology employed in the literature which displays a range of expressions covering citizens, clients, residents, users, community, public, customers, often slipping from one to the other as if each were equally applicable or interchangeable one with another (Markham 1992). Yet in truth there are some very clear differences between categories which are of significance in developing a model of decentralisation capable in practice of meeting the desired outcome. All consumers may be citizens, but not all citizens will be consumers; clients stand in a very specific relationship to professionals; potential employers can be regarded as consumers of the education services just as much as current or potential users of a school in terms of parents or pupils. If the aim is one of containing costs, is this to be achieved by making local government more accountable to taxpayers, whether national or local, or by avoiding inefficiency by matching services more sensitively to the priorities of the residents actually using them.

We move beyond mere semantics when concrete plans have to be devised to implement some form of decentralisation strategy. Taking as a starting point the broad aims of variously:

- \* Open government
- \* Improving responsiveness
- \* Broadening politics
- \* Shifting power

the various strands can be teased out to form the diagram depicted overleaf illustrating the questions which still remain to be addressed in selecting the people who are to be involved in the decentralisation processes in order to match these to the objectives to be served.

Figure 10.2 Who are to be the Beneficiaries?



Source: Author's original

Now the question to be addressed is to whom the council is to be responsive, for whom they are to be open, who is to be empowered and who is to be brought into the political arena? Too often, as we have seen earlier from the literature, in their haste to get their scheme up and running, the door is opened before due care has been taken to thinking about such questions.

## CONSEQUENCES

The consequences of not considering these points adequately before plunging in is that those who come forward are often self-selected from amongst those who have a 'natural' propensity to participate. The single criterion is usually that they should be resident in the chosen catchment area. When what is being sought is consumer feedback on services such a simplistic approach may or may not mean that the voices are those of users. Certainly if there is a ceiling on the number permitted, it is very unlikely that amongst these will be a consumer of every function that the councils provide. If the participants are added to a committee just as if they were elected councillors and treated as 'representative', there may be no one in a position to speak with any authority on certain topics. To take but one example, there is a tendency in the case study areas for participants to be elderly, i.e. over 65 years, so that there may be no parents with school-age children.

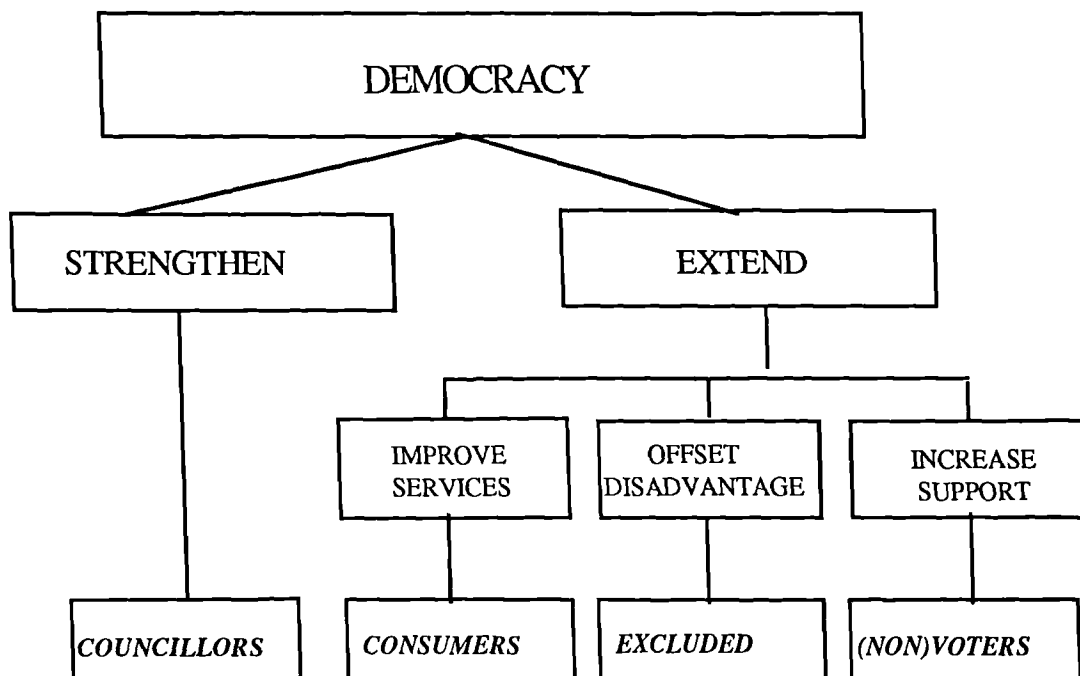
There are particular difficulties if the aim of the democratisation is to offset disadvantage in some way. Here the initiators have to be especially clear whether they are seeking those individuals to speak in their own right, or whether they can rely on champions on their behalf who may be found amongst those already active. Simply establishing a forum in a deprived area is extremely unlikely to be any guarantee that those who volunteer automatically will themselves be disadvantaged, nor does pursuing new voices by avoiding the established activists ensure that those found can be accepted unquestioningly as representative.

Indeed the essence of this thesis is that the wrong question is being addressed. What should be asked is not whether the individuals can be accounted truly representative by some geographical or demographic criteria, but whether they have a good network of local contacts, whether they accept their role as spokesperson for the wider community. In turn has the council adjusted their structures to allow the community participants to play this role?

## MATCHING VOICES TO OBJECTIVES

To return then to the vexed issue of matching the voice to the desired objective, the starting point has to be clarity on the fundamental issue of whether the participation is basically to render the councillors more effective as the ultimate decision takers, namely the aim is that of *strengthening* the existing representative system, or the participation is to allow some say in those decisions, namely that the aim is that of *extending* the representative system. Within the latter we have already singled out the possible alternatives of improving service provision or offsetting disadvantage, to which can be added some notion of increasing democratic involvement. As listed in Figure 10.1 this can be in order to retain support for public services seen as being under threat, of increasing public interest in politics as evidenced by turnouts at elections, or winning support for your own party over others. Returning to the diagram of motivations depicted in Figure 3.1, the first stage of mapping objectives would then have the appearance of the following diagram:

Figure 10.3 Beneficiaries of Differing Models



Source: Author's original



## WHO SHOULD DECIDE?

Then comes the question of who should choose the participants, broadly is this to fall to the council or to the community? There are pitfalls in either. It is well documented that any form of participation is a minority occupation (Boaden *et al* 1982; Verba & Nie 1972) and that involvement in anything bordering on 'political' action in Britain is even tinier. Apart from occasional voting or signing a petition, one estimate puts this at about 10%, with an active 5% of 'supergladiators' (Parry, Moyser & Day 1992). To accept self-selection thus risks skewing the intake, the disadvantages being greater the more the objective is to reach the normally silent. For this reason, some authors argue that the local authority must retain powers of selection as a duty to the wider society to whom they are accountable (Deakin 1984a) or to protect the interests of the inarticulate (Daniel & Wheeler 1989).

The counter argument is that if the opinions expressed by the community are contrary to the council line, the authority will have a natural tendency to block off such voices. To be acceptable is to be middle-class, professionally organised, non-aggressive and to follow a line very similar to the council's own (Cockburn 1977; Khan 1989; Newton 1976). Since the intention is that the councillors and/or the officers should be exposed to alternative priorities, views, options to their own, it would defeat the object for them to decide what to hear from whom.

The potential consequences of failure to consider these points is well charted in the literature which also illustrates the constant emphasis on the need for participants to be representative:

*'Rationale for membership has to be transparent and justifiable. Those individuals who are habitually politically or socially active are by definition not typical of the community but how do you involve the habitually non-active?'*

*'Co-opted members may have views which represent only a sectional interest or they may operate as individuals not as representatives ... most voluntary organisations are single interest groups.'*

(Beale, Coen & Homer 1994, p43).

*'Unless the system is genuinely representative it will tend to institutionalise the views of a single dominant group within a local community and they may then attempt to use their position to maintain their insularity'* (Charters 1994, p29).

*'The interests of the poorest and weakest might not be served by giving more power to the community ... In many areas there is a very tight-knit cross-membership spanning community groups, voluntary organisations and political parties which makes up the activist minority'*

(Daniel & Wheeler 1989, p131).

*'The result is often closer to farce than democracy, a stage army whose cast is in the final stages of meeting addiction engages in sham manoeuvres that are passed off as negotiation between the statutory and voluntary sectors'*  
(Deakin 1984b quoted in Daniel & Wheeler)

But what these commentators overlook is that inescapably the voices that will be heard must be those of activists. The crucial factor is not that they should themselves be typical of those for whom they speak, but first and foremost that the views which they express should be truly those of their constituents. Furthermore in concentrating on the problem as one of 'representativeness' they are ignoring the fact that it can be the way that the structures operate that cause this to be significant. This will be true if no allowance is made for participants to be spokesmen delivering a line which has been widely debated.

Where the emphasis is on empowerment the search becomes concentrated on reaching the silent majority whose views, it is assumed, are not being expressed by the current activists. To have succeeded is to have sidelined the old voices and to have brought new people into the processes; their newness is all that is needed to validate them in the eyes of the initiators. The risk that this strategy runs is that the old voices will re-emerge with all their former faults in any new structure created to circumvent them. What is needed is to tackle these head on, not attempt to by-pass them.

Finally it overlooks the way in which participants feel they can be validated. In the case studies there were two groupings of participants. The first were those from community councils, who might only belong to the one organisation, but felt that its status as a statutory body onto which people were elected gave them an automatic right to speak for the wider community. The second was those involved with issue groups who were very suspicious of anyone who only belonged to one group since this could mean that they had a vested interest on its behalf. Membership of a multiplicity of groups was taken as a sign of broad based interests plus a wide network of contacts.

Moving on from the theory, how then did Glasgow District and Strathclyde Regional Councils approach these issues? The next section looks first at why the initiators of the various decentralisation policies in these authorities saw a need for change and who they sought to include in their efforts.

## THE ORIGINAL OBJECTIVES

Needless to say, given all that has gone before about the lack of clarity in establishing decentralisation schemes, the mixed motives for doing so, the failures of implementation, it is difficult to be categorical in defining the exact objectives in the present instance. Nonetheless we must have some feel for what these are, however approximate, before we can proceed to evaluate the match between these aims and the qualities to be added by any participatory element.

### OBJECTIVES OF AREA MANAGEMENT

Area Management, as recounted in Chapter 5, was the creation of a Chief Executive fresh from the Paterson Committee with new ideas about corporate management, and a Leader who had seen her Labour colleagues ousted by a housing scandal. As she recounted shortly thereafter:

*'In retrospect our objectives were not properly defined ... we were groping towards an area perspective in the decision making process .. we were groping towards improving the delivery of services to make them more responsive to local demands.'* (McFadden 1982, p103)

The aims she goes on to list are as follows:

- \* Overcoming cynicism and apathy
- \* Improving delivery of services responsive to local needs
- \* Responding to public desire to be involved
- \* Recognising that CCs needed strengthening
- \* Identifying priority problems
- \* Enhancing the role of councillors in their wards
- \* Tackling multiple deprivation

The remit as first stated became

Monitoring the effectiveness of the Council's policies and services at a local level through supervision of the Area Management Teams and of service department activities.

The emphasis was on councillors being in a better position to take the right decisions by bringing *'local knowledge to bear on local problems'* (McFadden idem). But it is clear that even at this early stage involving the community was by no means favoured by all councillors (Ferguson 1982).

The suggested vehicles were CCs and TAs. The latter might well have been the obvious choice since the Area Management was housing-led and it was this service above all that was seen as in need of improvement (Jackson 1984). On the other hand, they were specialists in tenants issues and AMCs were to be about co-ordination of all services, including the Regional functions. CCs by contrast, were generalist but perhaps the natural choice as the statutorily recognised body to be consulted by the District Council through their Code of Consultation. One pragmatic factor in their favour was simply that TAs were far more numerous. In the early days 'voice' was to be kept small to achieve a manageable committee, certainly not numerically superior to the District councillors who numbered about 9 per AMC. Thus the first ever model permitted 3 places for the 15 CCs concerned. The emphasis was on diminishing the potential threat to the councillors {I}, little consideration being given to the problems such a structure might create (CCRC 1983).

## OBJECTIVES OF AREA LIAISON COMMITTEES

Strathclyde Region's Area Liaison policy was one which grew out of practice, the first model having been set up by an individual East End councillor {I}. He describes the purpose as being *"something like a surgery, but for groups who wanted to bring me their problems"* {Q}. Sometimes he would bring along an officer to respond. In a sense the participation here came first and the purposes grew afterwards. Gradually the idea was adopted as part of a deprivation strategy to give voice to residents in APTs and the purpose became codified (see current remit in Chapter 5). There seemed no need to answer the question who should be involved since it was taken that any resident in an APT qualified as disadvantaged and the meeting was theoretically open to all-comers. In the event invitations were preferentially extended to project groups receiving Urban Programme or issue groups performing educational or social welfare type functions coming under the Region's remit. CCs and TAs were even refused entry in places on the basis that they were 'District' organisations {I}.

As a joint initiative of the two councils formed as the successor to GEAR, the structures in the East End have some characteristics of both the other two models. The past history of participation is too convoluted to detail here, but some flavour of it can be gained from the current disputes as pictured in the Vignette appearing later in this chapter.

## OBJECTIVES OF LOCAL COMMITTEES

The newly established Local Committees exclude community places thus clearly coming into the category of strengthening representative democracy by devolving decision-making to the local ward members only. It was, however, an aim that this should make the councillors more responsive and accountable, in general, and that they would form closer links with ALCs, in particular {M}. The community was excluded because it was deemed by the initiators {Q} *"too much for colleagues to stomach at the outset"* although it was hoped to gain support for this later {I}. Meanwhile meetings were to be open to the public, who have a right to attend as observers. That not all councillors accept even this very minimal role is evidenced by the reluctance of one Local Committee to advertise its meeting {I}, whereas on another the public were invited to take some part in the discussion at the invitation of the Chairman {O}.

Putting together these findings and the interview responses as to the purpose to be served the picture emerges as shown in the following Table.

Figure 10.4 What were the Councils' Objectives?

	AREA MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES	AREA LIAISON COMMITTEES	LOCAL COMMITTEES
Strengthen Councillors	X X X		X X X
Co-ordination	X X X		
Improve services	X X X	X	
Responsiveness	X X	X	?
Offset disadvantage	X	X X X	
Input from CCs/TAs	X	?	
Political awareness	X X		?

X XX XXX Overt purposes in ascending order of primacy ? Possible intentions

## DO THE QUALITIES OF ACTIVISTS MATCH THE AIMS?

Next to be examined will be the match between the qualities of the activists and those which the councils were ostensibly seeking. If what was sought was local knowledge, is this being brought to bear? If the aim was to offset disadvantage by bringing in voices which are not normally heard, is this being achieved?

## DO THEY INJECT LOCAL KNOWLEDGE?

Clearly one quality which participants were expected to impart was local knowledge, but are the participants any better qualified in this respect than the councillors and in what terms is this to be defined? In all cases the primary criterion for eligibility is residence within the catchment area at the time of appointment\*, whilst a Glasgow councillor has to reside in Glasgow, a Strathclyde councillor in Strathclyde but not within their respective wards.

The usual measure of 'localness' for an elected member is the number of people they have to represent. In this respect councillors in Britain compare poorly with their counterparts elsewhere, the figures for European countries being:

Figure 10.5 Ratio of Councillors to Citizens

France	1 : 110
Sweden	1 : 120
Italy	1 : 400
West Germany	1 : 420
Denmark	1 : 1,000
UK	1 : 2,200**

From Wilson & Game (1994)

Even this picture is better than that for Strathclyde where the relative figures based on the old wards were 1 Strathclyde and 2 City councillors per 20,000 people. In the more generous Unitary system, the figure becomes 1:4,000 outside Glasgow and 1:7,000 residents within Glasgow.

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\* One community representative left the relevant area but nonetheless was not disqualified.

\*\*UK figures include only councillors of principal authorities, not members of parish or community councils which accounts for some of the apparent differences

<b>CASTLEMILK</b>	C-ALC	10 elected from umbrella group 124 member organisations/TAs Briefing meeting for 10 participants	Population 16,000 3 district wards 4 CC areas*	1 : 1,600
	SE-AMC	2 elected from Housing Forum 34 member TAs/Co-ops and Carmunnock CC	Population 24,000	1 : 12,000
<b>GORBALS</b>	G-ALC	Invitation to Issue groups/projects and CCs	Population 9,000 1 1/2 district wards 2 CC areas	1 : 4,500
	S-AMC	Place for every CC		
<b>EAST END</b>	B/C/D-ALC	Invitation to Project groups, TAs and CCs	Population 28,000 4 District wards 5 CC areas	1 : 5,000
	EEMC	1 chosen from each ALC Briefing meeting for CCs widened to all		1 : 28,000

\* The Castlemilk CCs are not in operation

Figure 10.6 Participants and their Constituents

As a crude comparison, Figure 10.6 calculates the comparable populations per community participant as a very rough rough measure of their localness. This is straightforward for the AMCs and C-ALC where there are fixed places. In Gorbals and the East End the figure is based on the average for the relevant CCs. By this measure the 10 participants on C-ALC at 1:1,600 would be rated much more favourably than a councillor, whilst those on S-AMC approach the national figure for a Unitary councillor at 1:4,000. At the other end of the spectrum, the 2 community representatives on the SE-AMC are significantly worse at 1:12,000 whilst that on the EE-AMC speaks for 1:28,000.

Taking alternative criteria, the table also shows the number of groups forming the catchment from which the participants are chosen, together with an indication of CCs or neighbourhoods (as evidenced by traditional local placenames). By this measure the ratios for the participants on the AMCs are 2:5, 2:2 and 1:5 CC areas respectively. As already described in the chapter dealing with the case study areas, the task is more straightforward in Castlemilk where sub-areas are nonetheless relatively homogeneous and there is a considerable history of organisations serving the whole of Castlemilk. By contrast, the task in the East End is problematical in that the 5 areas are highly disparate and have an even longer history of going their own ways. Judged in this way only S-AMC, with a place at the table for each CC, comes near to tapping into local knowledge which is likely to be superior to that of a councillor. Yet according to Jean McFadden (op. cit), this was the very quality that was to be brought to bear.

## **ARE THEY NORMALLY SILENT?**

One aim in offsetting disadvantage is to bring into the field people who are not normally those who would come forward, so is this the case on ALCs where this is one of the objectives? Taking as a criterion that the participants should be 'deprived' the only guarantee of this is that the catchment of the ALC is based on an Area of Priority Treatment as defined by the Scottish Office - see chapter on Case Study Areas. This is true for the whole of Gorbals, all of Castlemilk excluding Carmunnock, and Belvidere apart from the residential section of Dennistoun. However, by no other measure could the participants be deemed to be the uninvolved, since their selection is based on group membership. Indeed as we saw earlier, the average for the participants is 3 groups or more. It seems that the causal direction of the relationship is more that they have to be already



empowered to participate in structures of this nature, than that they become empowered by participating within them. Furthermore, as we will now see, there is a very high probability that they will also already be politically active in their local party ward.

## **LEVELS OF POLITICAL ACTIVISM IN GLASGOW**

Despite its long domination in Glasgow, the Labour party is weak at the grassroots (Keating 1988). A measure of this is apparent from the rules drawn up for nominations to the new Unitary wards. The national body for Scotland had proposed that a quorum at the selection meeting should be 12, but this was cut to 8 at the insistence of Branches which pointed out that in certain places the membership was not strong enough to meet this requirement. That is, it would be impossible to find 12 paid up members in 4,000 residents. Given the larger wards in Glasgow, the figures thus become 8 out of 7,000 and nonetheless some of these meetings were inquorate, with published voting figures for the most highly contested safe seats running at 8:5; 16:14; 7:7 (Herald 1995).

The exceptions to this picture are some of the former dry areas in Glasgow where the Labour Club was the only place where the public could go to drink. Castlemilk falls into this category and the healthy vote of 80:70 at the Regional selection meeting (Herald 1994) bears witness to the high membership level which flows from this. A former party activist spoke of well attended and lively debates at parliamentary constituency meetings {I}.

## **POLITICAL ACTIVISM AMONGST PARTICIPANTS**

Set against this backdrop, the degree of political activism amongst the case study activists is all the more sharply differentiated. In total 42% of declare themselves to be members of a party, of whom 38% are Labour supporters. Amongst the latter are to be found 3 election agents, 1 proposer and 1 candidate (Herald 1995). Of those who actually participate in meetings as representatives on AMCs or on a regular basis at ALCs, the percentage rises to 62% but this disguises some variations between areas. Perhaps surprisingly, despite the high membership in Castlemilk, their presence is smaller amongst the core here, whereas it reaches nearly 100% in Belvidere and Gorbals. This is reflected in the high number of respondents who commented on Labour domination in those areas {I}.

The picture which emerges then is of a self-selected group of hyper-active participants already well to the fore in community affairs and prominent in local political circles. Clearly if such people are treated as representatives just like other elected members, they will not match the councils' set objectives of consumer feedback or empowerment. The literature points to such people as having much more in common with elected members than the remainder of the population (Budge *et al* 1972). On this evidence, the councils are not hearing from the people they wished to reach unless those who actively participate provide satisfactory channels into the structures on their behalf. For whom then do the activists claim that they speak?

## WHO INTERVIEWEES SAY THEY SPEAK FOR

Turning to the question of for whom activist interviewees saw themselves working for, some chose a primary geographic unit, some a base organisation. In the former case, the points made in the previous section were borne out in their replies since the majority in Castlemilk maintained they spoke for the whole area, those in Hutchesontown, Laurieston or Oatlands cited their respective neighbourhoods by that name, and those in the East End by the six names of local neighbourhood identified there. Every respondent had a 'home base' organisation whether a TA, CC or UP project which constituted their grassroots and/or governed their field of expertise. Above this there could be a hierarchy of units which claimed their loyalty and it was clear that they differed in how they saw themselves as accountable, variations occurring between individuals and in the same individual on differing occasions for reasons which are examined later.

## FORMAL ACCOUNTABILITY

There were only two instances where there were agreed formal arrangements to mandate community participants before each meeting, one in the East End before EE-AMC, the other in Castlemilk before the C-ALC. The local authority has a feedback system to the ALCs after the EE-AMC, whilst after the SE-AMC and the C-ALC the community have established their own procedures. Elsewhere there are no set mechanisms for either mandating or feedback.

In Castlemilk the 10 participants in the C-ALC are elected from the 126 member organisations of CUG to whom they are held to be accountable. Before each

forthcoming C-ALC the 10 participants are called together to discuss the Agenda. This meeting is attended by the worker from CUG and the support senior community worker from the Social Work Department. It is to CUG that a formal report back is made and the written Code of Good Conduct (CUG 1992) recommends that they should attend CUG meetings. Not all are able or willing to do so {I}. There is thus something of a cleavage between the constituent groups, the 25 or so organisations normally attending CUG and the C-ALC representatives.

Meanwhile the 2 participants on SE-AMC are elected under procedures which vary as the AMC decides, in the research period at meetings organised by CHIP. There being no time for mandating, the two meet together and phone any group they feel they need to. They try to have a *"feel for what might be going to come up"*{Q}. Of their own volition, they feed back to the Housing Forum meeting. When CHIP wanted this enforced (because an earlier representative refused to attend), the Town Clerk replied in writing that there was no such obligation {M}. The lines of accountability are consequently weak since they can be ignored without sanction. As one current participant remarked {Q}:

*"I'm not the type of person who would do that kind of thing, but there should be a clear statement of who they are accountable to. It shouldn't be up to the individual."*

In the East End the participants to attend the EEMC are chosen by the respective ALC, are briefed before the EEMC by the Briefing Meeting and only report back to their ALC. The Agenda for the AMC is discussed at the Briefing with EEMU officers in attendance to explain items, and the minute is contained in the ALC papers. Consequently there is a cleavage in the line of accountability which caused the Co-ordinator to call the Briefing *"perverse"* {Q}. An idea of the consequences can be gleaned from the Vignette which appears on the next page. In the words of the Belvidere representative onto the EEMC{Q}:

*"I think the whole thing is working back the way instead of forward. Lets face it, we're talking about things that's all passed and you're going to work back doon the way. What we've got now isnae working."*

Perhaps the most surprising thing about this individual is not that he so blatantly exploits the weaknesses in the system of accountability, but that he made no secret of explaining his methods.

1. This individual's first loyalty lies with his local Tenants Association (TA), a fact which he openly acknowledges. At the time of the interview he was also an elected member of the local community council (CC). But he reported that he was often at loggerheads with them.
2. In addition, he was their chosen delegate to the ALC\* where he maintained that he often spoke to his own point of view, not that of the CC.
3. From the ALC he was the chosen representative onto the AMC. It was for this reason that he retained his membership of the CC because the common understanding of the rules at the time of his original selection was that they stipulated that only a CC could be granted a place.
4. The agenda papers for each AMC meeting were posted direct to the representative, with a copy to every CC. These AMC papers were not tabled at the ALC prior to the AMC meeting, although sometimes the agenda, sometimes the minute was included in the ALC papers after the event. An opportunity was provided at the ALC for a report back.
5. In earlier days there had been a joint meeting of the 7 local CCs to liaise with one another but this had fallen into abeyance. Although there was a loose agreement that the AMC representative would go round and visit other CCs periodically, this had never come to fruition.
6. The method by which these CC representatives onto the AMC were mandated was thus not by their respective ALC, but through a specially convened Briefing Meeting held on the morning of the AMC meeting. In the event, the representative in question was 'unable' to attend the Briefing Meeting. This meant firstly that he attended the AMC meeting unmandated by his own CC, the ALC or by the joint CCs locally or for the whole area. Secondly it meant that other CCs from his ALC had to try and catch his ear within 10 minutes before the AMC meeting, or rely on the CC representatives from other parts of the city to convey their desire.
7. Versions differ as to who had the right to alter the format of this Briefing Meeting. One side hold that historically this was convened by the Community Councils Resource Centre (CCRC) at the behest of the CCs and agreement had been reached that the AMC officers would be in attendance to explain the issues coming up at the AMC meeting in order that their significance could be understood. Thereafter the representatives would be mandated on behalf of all the CCs in attendance as to any line they should take. The alternative view is that CCRC was approached to hold this meeting by the officers, who therefore had the right to suggest changes.
8. During the course of the research a number of disputes were rumbling, sparked by a ruling that there had never been any agreement that places should be restricted to CCs, followed by a decision of the officers/AMC/ALCs to expand the Briefing Meeting to include other voluntary sector groups which attended the ALCs. Currently an overall review of the structures is in progress.

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\* Not the ALC which forms the case study for this research

## LEVELS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

No activist claimed, as some councillors might (Newton 1976), that they had the freedom to act in the public good. All had some concept that their views had to be validated on an ongoing basis. However, a distinction was made between feasible and inappropriate levels of accountability. Thus participants acknowledged that at minimum they should be spokesperson for their home base organisation. There was a high volume of complaints about not even achieving this due to the difficulties over paperwork, timing and the impossibility of mandating. The problems were not considered so great by office bearers who had more feel for what their group was likely to think.

However, opinion was much more divided over whether anyone should or could rightly be expected to be accountable to a wider grouping such as a forum, umbrella group or ALC. For example, it was the universal view amongst office bearers of CCs that it was unreasonable to expect one CC to speak knowledgeably for another or to maintain sufficient contact to be able to do so {I}. Nonetheless they grumbled about the fact that current representatives did not even try. Some went so far as to state that it was entirely wrong for them to be expected to put trust in another. In the same vein, the actual representatives put in this position maintained it was unrealistic {Q}:

*"I cannae possibly speak for all they areas."*

*"One rep to speak for 7 CCs was a nonsense quite frankly - you could'nt do it."*

They were quite upfront about the fact that they would maintain solidarity with other CCs only so long as this was not in conflict with the interests of their own.

The following diagram illustrates structures which act to reinforce or weaken accountability. At one end of the spectrum lies the participant who is only obliged to speak for their home base organisation which is guaranteed its own place on a committee which operates in ways which enforce accountability. At the other end of the spectrum appears the participant who is expected to speak for a large number of disparate groups for whom there are limited places on a committee which operates in ways which do not demand accountability. On this scale the South-AMC with one place for each community council would be the closest to the left-hand end. The East End-MC with places limited to one for an ALC covering highly differentiated neighbourhoods in a structure with cleavages in the lines of accountability would lie far to the right.

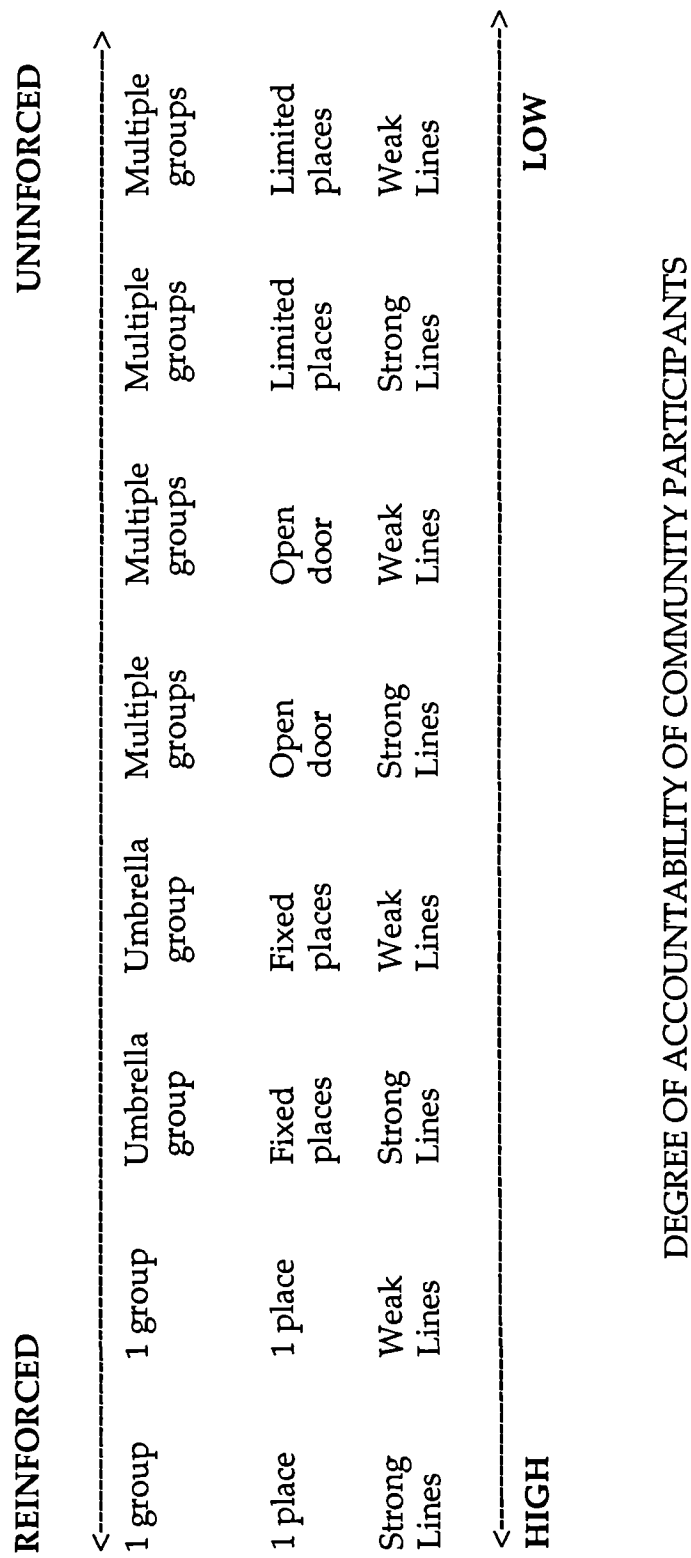


Figure 10.7 Structures which Reinforce or Weaken Accountability

## GOOD AND BAD DEMOCRATS

Amongst participants a distinction began to emerge between what might be termed 'good' and 'bad' democrats. The good democrats conceived their role clearly as being that of a mandated delegate provided this was at a feasible level. They fretted that they were forced to behave badly because, as we have seen, the structures did not permit this. They judged the councils as being hypocritical in accepting their views and their 'representativeness' when it suited but querying this when it did not {Q}:

*"The thing that makes me laugh is that because we are community reps therefore, to be abiding by good practice, we have to go and consult effectively, but they do nothing about being accountable to the community. The officials are paid for by people in this community and the members are elected by people in this community, but they are not accountable. Though if we as community reps fall down, they're down on us like a ton of bricks."*

*"They make underhand comments; Who have YOU discussed that with... Not publicly in meetings, because they wouldn't dare because if they did we would obviously be able to take it up with them fair and square"*

*"They expect us to run our backsides off consulting on big hefty documents that they produce which have nothing to do with what local people say the issues are. If we don't make a job of speaking to every person it affects, then they don't think what we say is valid if it is against what THEY want us to say. If it is what they want us to say, they'll take anything"*

*"They just want us to rubber stamp what they would have done anyway. If we said we don't want X, they would accuse us of not being representative. But if we say we've spoken to five community reps and they all think X is a good idea, then they would take that fine and railroad it through. And we are used. I personally think we should tell them all to take a running jump and get ourselves organised."*

Bad democrats, on the other hand, made the system work to their own ends and saw no necessity to make themselves voluntarily accountable. They felt it was up to others to mount a challenge if they wanted; meanwhile it was perfectly justifiable to them that they gained advantages for their neighbourhood or interest group {Q}:

*"I'm for the elderly. There's others can speak for the young. In fact they get much more attention than we do, so I don't see why I should be expected to shout for them as well."*

*"Well they would wouldn't they. I suppose we would if we were in their place, but its for the good of the area not for ourselves, it's the area we do it for."*

*"It works for us in our area. It's up to them to make it work for their's."*

*"As I see it that's just sour grapes because we are more successful than them. We work hard for what we get."*

If bad democrats appoint themselves into certain positions they can become gatekeepers who control access by the rest of the community. Given the laxness of the councils' lines of accountability this can readily be achieved, thus blocking voices from being heard. However, there is not a neat divide into 'good' and 'bad' at all times but a sliding spectrum of behaviour. Whilst some may struggle to behave in accordance with their ideas of good conduct at all times, and whilst some may never struggle at all, those who profess to be good may become bad on occasions deliberately or through force of circumstances. There were two definite triggers, money and politics.

### **Urban Programme as a Trigger of Bad Democrats**

As we saw earlier, Urban Aid is the mainstay of much community activity and looms large for this reason. It is equally important to officers as a supplement to their budgets and to councillors who want projects in their own wards.

Controlling the prioritisation procedures is therefore of supreme significance. Those who are good democrats the rest of the year may tip over into 'bad' if they have a vested interest at stake. In an APT it would be the rare exception to find an activist who does not have some kind of involvement with an UP funded project either on the management or as a beneficiary of services. As one respondent, more honest than some, summed it up {Q} *"I try and speak for the whole area, but when it's the UP, then it's everyone for themselves."*

Since the Strathclyde UP recommendations are in all areas made by small sub-committees, their membership is crucial. One might have expected that this would be fiercely fought, but in no case was this apparent {O}. One possible interpretation could be that the gatekeepers have too tight a rein for such an overt challenge to be contemplated, whilst the councillors could rely on influencing the outcome elsewhere in the decision chain (see Vignette in Chapter 8). Certainly it was particularly noticeable in Gorbals that when the final ranking was to be decided by the full ALC, on the two annual occasions during the research that particular meeting was attended by people who had never been there before or since {O,M,I}.



## Political Loyalty as a Trigger for Bad Democrats

It is apparent that many of the issues which come up at the formal stages of dialogue have already been discussed in the Labour Branch, with some respondents in Belvidere and Gorbals going so far as to maintain that this is where the real discussions take place {I}. It should not, however, be concluded that Labour party membership is necessarily an indication that there is a straightforward alliance with the local member. There are advantages and disadvantages to these close links. The first bonus is simply that of being better informed about how the local authority system works, which committee covers which functions, which councillors are on which subcommittees, which officers deal with the area. Benefit can be gained from this inside knowledge if in its absence there are difficulties over easy access. The second advantage is awareness of how and when the councillor may be vulnerable, consequently seeking alliances in the community. As an officer put it {Q}. *"for three and a half years councillors listen to officers, but for six months before an election you definitely notice them swing to the community."* An astute activist will know how to play on this desire to seek alliances. An especial moment of vulnerability for a sitting councillor wishing to be re-elected is the selection meeting, so that the capacity to swing the decision one way or another can be a key element in an activist's power.

But not all Labour members are necessarily allied with their ward councillor or they may disagree over a specific position that their local member has adopted. A councillor has to serve the interests of the city as a whole, not only or always those of the ward, which can result in them being forced to take a line which is deeply resented by their Branch. One instance, much cited in Gorbals, was the considerable dissension there had been over the proposed route of a new major road, an issue on which Branch members felt that their views had been overruled by the councillor who felt that a speedy decision would resolve matters and allow re-development to proceed. The community may then use the structures open to them to thwart their own member, or may lobby alternative councillors for their support, neither of which is likely to be favourably regarded. At nomination time some of the participants may back the unsuccessful candidates for selection or may even wish to stand themselves. Such opposition will naturally affect relationships thereafter and will spill over into the structures where both parties are present {I}

It has been found that activists and elected members inhabit a stratum removed from the electorate, that their concerns are out of tune with those of the strata below (Budge *et al* 1972). Consequently, where membership of a political party is high amongst the participants, their voice is inevitably politicised which affects the qualities which they bring to the structures in which they are involved. It follows that the voices being heard, if not strictly mandated by their constituents, will not reflect the latter's true opinions. Given the weak lines of accountability which have been demonstrated, it can readily be hypothesised that bad democrats will respond to political considerations when the stakes are high.

The potential of the activism of participants happened to be particularly significant during the research period because the political scene was exceptionally turbulent. In 1994 there were Regional elections returning a reduced number of elected members from redrawn wards. Furthermore in the run up to the forthcoming Unitary authorities, some councillors were seeking renomination in an area which would later make them favourably placed to be selected for the forthcoming councils. The consequence was that in places the nomination battles were hard fought, that in Castlemilk, for instance, necessitating a second ballot meeting (Herald 1994). Selection to the new Glasgow Unitary Authority during 1995 was so bitterly contested, with accusations of cheating flying and meetings having to be rerun, that one senior party official forced to adjudicate in the many conflicts declared '*This has been the worst period of my life. I hope I never have to go through anything like this again*' (Herald 1995).

The enmity was sparked by the ongoing leadership dispute between the two contenders from the District and their supporters, plus the addition of Regional councillors with their own leader, the respective sides vying for supremacy as old alliances splintered. With party membership so small, every individual selection vote became magnified in value. It is hard to envisage that any community activist who is a Labour member will not have been swept into the hostilities. At the time of writing, the community fallout has yet to come, but the price may be heavy for those who allied themselves with what proves to be the losing side, and beyond them for those whose voices are only to be heard through this filter.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY OF OFFICERS**

The questions to be examined next concern the committee from the viewpoint of officers in asking whether there has been an alteration in their working relationships. Firstly do those involved with the District structures believe that there has been any improvement in corporate working or a shift to an area perspective as was hoped by the initiators? Do those involved with the Regional structures feel these have made the intended impact on redressing disadvantage? Do either see that community participation has had an effect on the outcome? Finally from the viewpoint of the community, is their perception that the officers have become more accountable to them?

### **DISTRICT STRUCTURES**

All the District officials concurred that working together as a team to solve problems and building an area perspective had been the twin aims of the initiators in relation to how officers were to operate. None felt that either objective had been achieved.

#### **Corporate Working as an Antidote to Departmentalism**

There was unanimous agreement amongst officers that departmentalism was rife, as it always had been, the advent of Area Management having made no dent. All acknowledged that their first loyalty remained to their own line management; since corporate management had not been made to work effectively at the top of the hierarchy there was no means or incentive to ensure that it worked lower down. There was also a prevalent view that many of the services were so disparate that they could never realistically be welded together. Both the cutbacks and CCT were seen as having intensified divisions, the former because it set them one against the other in bidding for funds, the latter because it had introduced commercial secrecy. Whilst the contracts were monitored, the monitoring itself was not rigorous enough to be meaningful, neither linked to annual budget proposals nor fed into any procedures for future specification. The only officers to rue this situation were the planners whose training leaned towards a strategic approach.

The barriers between Region and District had not, it was felt, been broken down by Area Management because the Region had not been prepared to cooperate fully. Regional officers in the South and South East did not attend the team meetings, whilst councillors only came to AMCs spasmodically. Even in the East

End which was formally a joint Initiative, the coordinator was of the opinion that relationships had actually been better before the advent of the EEMU which was seen as *"empire building"*{Q}.

### **Area Perspective**

Nor did any officer accept that there had been any more than a minimal shift to area-based policies, all being of the opinion that the centre and its central service committees continued to be where the significant matters were settled. Area Management simply slowed decisions down without improving them. Nothing of consequence would be presented to an AMC unless it had been cleared centrally first. Consequently that was where the most powerful councillors congregated, from which it followed that Departmental heads paid scant attention to Area Committees. The Area Coordinator had not been afforded sufficient status to counterbalance this.

Opinions were more divided over whether greater devolution of decision taking to areas should be advocated. One view was that this would weaken the power of the centre to stand up to the pressures from central government, whilst the counter-argument was that there should have been geographical decentralisation into local mini town halls bringing services under one roof readily accessible to the public. Both sides felt that the current structures were stagnating for lack of any policy vision.

### **REGIONAL STRUCTURES**

As Regional officers saw it, their main problem was that the objective of ALCs was so vague that their role in them remained ambivalent, this despite the recent review which had been supposed to address these issues. Whilst the policy rhetoric was of empowerment, they had been given no clear directive as to how this was to be brought about. Nor had Strathclyde Region injected sufficient resources. Furthermore there was a feeling that the current emphasis was now on economic initiatives, social initiatives having been consequently marginalised. They saw themselves as accountable in the first instance to the respective department, thereafter to the politicians. Since the latter did not insist that the impact of services be put on the agenda or that the Action Plans be produced, there was no pressure on officers to do so. This lack of monitoring of the performance of ALCs was attributed by the responsible Chief Executive to the councillors wishing to avoid the *"embarrassment of exposure of the true state of affairs"* {Q}.

## HAVE OFFICERS BECOME ACCOUNTABLE TO THE COMMUNITY?

In the light of the foregoing, it comes as little surprise to find that neither set of officers believe they have been forced to become any more accountable to the community. But they maintained that the general way that professionals operated meant that they were much more responsive to the public nowadays. The kind of professional arrogance that might have been acceptable in earlier times would not now be tolerated. However, the officers did see it as in their own interest to be aware of the likely community reaction to any proposal so that they could as one put it “*save the councillor’s unexpectedly encountering strong opposition*” {Q}. Some went so far as to say that councillors by and large were ineffective in calling officers to account, so that the community participants had little hope of having any serious impact. The latter anyway seemed sadly content to deal with parochial minutiae.

Officers generally were very aware of any close links between activists and councillors which they might have to weigh up in making recommendations. But they were ambivalent about the consequences. In certain ways it made their life easier if they were not put into a position of having to side with one or the other stake-holder. In any case, in the absence of any political will or central drive for change, they saw little chance of breaking the hold. The findings uphold the conclusions from the literature that the community are more likely to prevail if their demands are ‘*politically acceptable*’ to councillors (Darke & Walker 1977, p84). As officers see it, realistically this is only natural.

These attitudes can put the community workers in a very invidious position since they may be the only party with a responsibility to achieve change. In seeking to broaden out participation and bring in new voices they risk offending both the old guard activists and the politicians, both of whom may seek to ostracise new entrants. The community worker will be accused of following their own agenda, not that of ‘the community’. Fellow officers too resent their activities if they strengthen the community to mount a meaningful challenge {I}.

## DO THE COMMUNITY FEEL OFFICERS ARE ACCOUNTABLE?

It is difficult to categorise neatly what different activists thought on the question of whether officers were more accountable, their answers being best presented as a series of relativities. Thus those who had memories stretching back before these structures were in place expressed a positive attitude that officers were now much more approachable than they had been. But this was held to operate better in

informal contacts than in the formal setting of committees, and better at the local level in face-to-face dialogue than with the centre. Officials it was felt had a good sense of how the community felt on specific crunch issues when *"they know we are determined"* {Q}. Newcomers saw themselves as less efficacious than did those with more experience, whilst the 'gatekeepers' rated themselves highly in bringing officers to book.

Furthermore, variations were apparent between the models as well. In Castlemilk participants in the ALC regarded it in a favourable light because officers here were seen as more responsive than at the Partnership. The contribution of CUG in shaping the rules gave them assurance that the committee operated in a way that they could influence. In their eyes the District was deemed to pay scant regard to community opinion (because they did not recognise CUG as the body from which participants should be elected). The perception of the participants on SE-AMC meanwhile was that you could not always expect to win an officer entirely to your point of view, but you could perhaps move them towards a compromise. In Belvidere, Calton/Bridgeton CC office bearers, as the prime insiders, ranked their success rate high. The greatest usefulness, though, was cited as being able to force an answer out of an officer who {Q} *"can't pretend they didn't get your letter"*, which would not have been necessitated if the council had enforced proper consultation with the CC. Participants from other parts of the area felt overlooked in the face of this domination by Calton/Bridgeton, which was blamed too by some non-participants for their failure to become involved. In Gorbals officers do not attend the G-ALC, but their absence did not appear to concern the majority of participants who saw value only in terms of gaining access to UP. Other activists saw it as a prime weakness of the ALC, attributing the absence of officers on the lack of commitment by Strathclyde. Success in the view of the two participants on the S-AMC, who worked closely together as allies of longstanding, was to be won by lobbying councillors or fellow CC colleagues before the meeting proper, not confronting officers during it.

Despite what the officers reckoned as their low degree of formal accountability, the core activists overall estimated their own efficacy quite highly. But they still depicted the situation as one of confrontation, 'them and us', so that to win through they had to resort to the typical outsider tactics. Perhaps this accounts for the apparent discrepancies between the two accounts.

## ACCOUNTABILITY OF COUNCILLORS

Understandably no councillor came out against the concept of participation as a means to make them more accountable to the public, but they did express a number of reservations about its operation in practice. They attributed the problems in the main to the history of activism in Glasgow as one of opposition to councillors, rather than one of working together with them to gain common aims. Being subjected to constant confrontation they found tedious and was something to be avoided if possible, this being the most frequent reason given by those who had given up attending meetings involving the community. Least of all did they countenance making themselves accountable to political opponents or alternative party factions.

Members facing the demands of centre versus ward, Labour Group versus District Executive, manifesto promises versus practicalities, supporters versus electorate, described their task as a constant juggling act of weighing priorities. Additional input via community participation was just one more factor to be added to the calculations. The problem they found with demanding activists was that they were not prepared to understand the constraints under which elected members operated. How quickly a councillor can come to hold this position was illustrated by two activists who had become councillors, one not long before the research period, one during it. Both reported regretfully having swung round the position of advocating better working relationships, rather than community control as they had when on the outside.

A substantial group were of the view that involvement should stop at consultation, with decisions taken only by elected members, and that this should be made quite clear. They argued that theirs was the legal responsibility and must remain so; there should be no possibility of the community being in a position to outnumber or outvote them. This line of thinking was not confined to District members, but was to be found also amongst Regional councillors regardless of their council's policies on empowerment. A minority regretted that the structures had failed to make councillors any more accountable, for which they blamed colleagues in the above category who were not prepared to open themselves up to greater scrutiny or protected themselves by conniving at the close links with the Labour party in their ward.

## DO THE COMMUNITY FEEL COUNCILLORS ARE ACCOUNTABLE?

Insofar as the core activists are members of the Labour party, they have access to their ward councillors through other means. The same may be true if they are on their respective community council since councillors are ex officio members of CCs. Where the relationship is satisfactory, they will not then be dependent on the structures as their only means to achieve accountability. Indeed the two stakeholders may be operating in consort to make the officers deliver, with the elected member relying on the community participant to make the points which they the member are prevented from advancing when the Labour whip has been applied. Those participants who are solely reliant on the structures will be either those who are non party political or those who use them to mount their opposition.

Party members in this last group criticised councillors for failing to abide by the wishes of their Branch. This was particularly true where there had been a recent controversy, as in the case of the Gorbals councillor over the proposals for the new road. In Castlemilk the participants on the SE-AMC reported having called a meeting of the three local members to demand they stand up more for the area, a move which was said to have had an impact {I} (but was never mentioned by the councillors). This pattern of behaviour is the mirror image of that about which the elected members themselves complained when they decried the lack of appreciation of the constraints under which they had to operate when balancing local desires against other factors.

Those outside the charmed circle have largely reacted by operating outwith the formal structures. Thus in Belvidere 3 out of the 5 CCs do not attend either the ALC or the Briefing Meeting. The fourth CC has only recently become actively involved again recently because their member at the ALC has been *"approved by Calton/Bridgeton after a period of disagreement"* {Q}. In Gorbals the main opponents of the 2 CCs have moved into the Umbrella Group where they are embarking on an ambitious take-over of the ALC itself, claiming it should become a community structure instead of a local authority one. In Castlemilk CUG members feel the district councillors are totally unaccountable to them, only turning up at the C-ALC when if wanting to push through a joint UP application, whereas they claim a reasonable working relationship with the Regional councillors. CHIP members, by contrast, view Strathclyde councillors as unaccountable, and have a working relationship with the district councillors except when challenging them over certain housing policies.



## REFLECTIONS

The cumulative effects of the faults in the structures, the weak lines of accountability and the selective responsiveness of councillors and officers can stack up in ways such that only certain individuals or groups benefit.

### HOW THE STRUCTURES CREATE GATEKEEPERS

Due to the way participation has been organised, certain individuals can come to be in a position where they form the conduit through which participation by the rest of the groups and the wider community is channelled. These are the individuals for whom the term *gatekeeper* has been coined. They can come to the fore through sheer force of personality, because they are long-serving veterans who are seen to have experience, or through groups placing trust in their office bearers. It can happen because, for the reasons explored above, community participants are forced to operate as unaccountable representatives. Finally it may be that those active in the political field are in a favoured position to make the most of opportunities which are presented.

The consequences will depend on whether these gatekeepers then choose to act as 'good' or 'bad' democrats. Good democrats will seek to open up pathways for those dependent upon them for access; bad democrats will exploit their position to the maximum for their own group's or neighbourhood's advantage. Good democrats will feel uncomfortable if expected to speak for others when they remain unaware of their preferences; bad democrats will justify their behaviour as acting 'in the public good' just as some councillors might. Good democrats will always feedback to their constituency if it has not been feasible to be mandated in advance of a meeting; bad democrats will feel no obligation to make themselves voluntarily accountable if it is not demanded of them. Good democrats will actively campaign for the reform of the representation so that lines of accountability are clear and enforceable; bad democrats will do nothing to correct the weaknesses in the system.

An example of one such individual is described in the Vignette. It can be extremely difficult for the good democrats to police the activities of their colleagues if their attempts are undermined by the poor lines of accountability. As one participant discussing this problem put it "*There is no structure which can be totally proof against the bad behaviour of the people within it*" (Q).

If a bad democrat becomes a gatekeeper and if they also happen to be in the Labour party, then the perception grows that party membership is essential to be successful in gaining entry. Non party members then tend to shun involvement, so that party members dominate, reinforcing the perception until it becomes a reality. It can be envisaged that if the situation is to the advantage of the sitting councillors, it could become perpetuated since there is no political will for change. Officers too will have no incentive to seek improvements since their political masters do not wish it. If, by contrast, the situation is to the disadvantage of the sitting councillors, they might be tempted to undermine the credibility of the participant or seek means to avoid or eliminate them.

There is a very strong perception amongst all stake-holders in the East End that Belvidere is dominated by Calton/Bridgeton through their links to the Labour party, to the detriment of other neighbourhoods. This came through in interviews without prompting. Whilst the gatekeepers in Gorbals are also reported to be in the Labour party, so too are many of the activists trying to break their dominance. Here there are internal factions within the Branch with volatile alliances forming and breaking. Officers were concerned more with this ingrained factionalism than with party allegiances, though SNP activism was mentioned as a contributory factor in councillors' attitudes. In Castlemilk party politics was rarely mentioned spontaneously in interviews (and was lower amongst participants), though the one Militant was mentioned. Even then it was more for her combative style and youthful lack of diplomacy. There were some signs of resentment of the continuing domination by veterans *"who've aye been there"* {Q}.

The picture which emerges is of structures which are not equally open and accessible for all, whilst officers and councillors are more accountable in some quarters than others. The first key is direct involvement as on the ALCs with an open door approach and on the AMCs as the occupant of one of the places at the table. Where the latter are restricted, there is evidence that political activists are in the majority amongst those who constitute the gatekeepers. From this it may readily be surmised that these activists will be more favourable placed to succeed in pursuing their objectives. In a sense it is irrelevant whether this comes about simply because it is the nature of activists to be political activists, because the structures attract the kinds of activists who favour political action, or because councillors form better relationships with party sympathisers, the end effect is that those who are non party political are grossly underrepresented.

This in itself might not be of consequence if these individuals merely operated as the channel through which other voices were heard, but the structures can operate in such a way as to render them unaccountable to their constituency either before or after meetings they attend. Even on the South AMC with the most direct representation through CCs, no effort has been made to ensure that the views expressed are those of the CC after due deliberation, *let alone* those of the community whose views the CC are supposed to 'ascertain, coordinate and express'. Only on C-ALC have some measures been adopted to observe a code of conduct allowing minimal prior discussion, and these only at the insistence of the community participants.

The councils have failed to acknowledge the fundamental distinction between an elected member and a mandated spokesman. In so doing they have wasted an opportunity since with a little imagination and a more systematic approach, it would not have been difficult to devise appropriate mechanisms - a subject that will be examined in more detail in the chapters which follow. They have failed too to open the doors to the voices they sought, instead those which are penetrating belong to a very privileged few, a far cry from the injection of local knowledge or the offsetting of disadvantage by lowering the barriers for the excluded which the councils were pursuing when they set out.

# CHAPTER 11

## EVALUATION OF EXISTING MODELS

The aim of this chapter is to assess how the models selected by the two councils perform in relation to their respective chosen objectives, and what alternatives might better serve these purposes. Thereafter the final chapter of conclusions will return to the opening question of participatory democracy, asking to what extent the case studies provide relevant examples and what alternatives might better serve if this were the starting point.

What follows begins first with a general evaluation of the context in which the structures operate, examining whether certain prerequisites are met. Have there, for instance, been any reported changes in attitudes amongst councillors and officers, and what in the eyes of the community activists is the current degree of commitment of the local authorities to decentralisation, in general, or participation, in particular. For if these requirements are not met, the decentralised structures cannot operate fruitfully whatever their form.

In questioning the community respondents about their feelings in relation to attitudes it became clear that not only did they feel at times that their presence was unappreciated, but that some had experienced deliberate attempts to ensure that their voices were not heard. Echoing Arnstein's ladder of participation, their experiences form the basis for a matching ladder depicting steps in the elimination of unwanted voices.

This leads into an assessment of the weaknesses of the particular models isolating those factors both in the format of the committees and in the context in which they operate in the case study areas which contribute to their performance. Finally two new models are outlined which seek to rectify these defects, the first being one for a council seeking to be responsive to local feedback and priorities, the second one for a council seeking to achieve some degree of empowerment.

## PREREQUISITES

In reaching any conclusions as to their success, it is not enough simply to examine the decentralised committees themselves, there being certain prerequisites which must first be met. It is these which will now be considered.

## DEVOLVED MANAGEMENT

Whilst for convenience in considering types of decentralisation a distinction has been drawn between geographical, managerial and political forms, this is not to imply that they can operate adequately in isolation. Indeed it is a central tenet of Hambleton, Hoggett & Burns (1994) that all strands must be present. Likewise the new Scottish Office draft Guidance on Decentralisation for Unitary Authorities, whilst spelling out the suggested alternatives of political, managerial or physical decentralisation which councils might explore explicitly state that 'meaningful Political decentralisation can only be achieved if appropriate managerial structures are in place' (SOED 1995). Logically if officers do not themselves have decision-making powers at the respective committee level all their actions will have to be cleared elsewhere.

Neither of the councils have aspired to full geographical decentralisation in the sense of physical relocation to a 'mini-townhall', only the East End Management Unit having a local presence. Nor have geographical subdivisions been neatly aligned, with many boundaries still forming a very poor fit though there are field officers with local responsibilities. The actual extent of managerial devolvement is difficult to identify since it does not always equate in practice to what on paper might appear to be the case. Certainly the Lead Officers of the ALCs have virtually no role beyond clerking the meetings (SRC 1991). The Area Coordinators have a right to bring their team of officers together but any joint action, as one put it, "*cuts across the strong established departmental lines*" (Q). Evidence from the interviews with officers supports the conclusion that the departmental hierarchy in both councils retains its ascendancy.

## CHANGES IN ATTITUDE TO DECENTRALISATION IN THE COUNCILS

This indicates too that there has been little shift in attitudes amongst senior officers towards a firm belief in decentralisation, a finding which is confirmed by junior officers in both councils. Continued resistance is reported amongst Regional officers to delegating meaningful departmental decisions down to the new Local Committees {I}. A high level of distrust still exists between Region and District which inhibits cooperative joint action, a situation which the then Town Clerk encountered when Area Management including regional officials was first outlined. Equally in both councils elected members who do believe in decentralisation report that many, if not a majority, of their colleagues are at best ambivalent when transparency of decisions means there is *"nae place to hide"* {Q}. There are then few signs of the required shift in the culture such that the area based committees are truly embedded.

## POLITICAL STABILITY

It is clear from the history of initiatives elsewhere in the UK that, as described in Chapter 2, decentralisation can be very vulnerable to changes in political control, especially if the Conservatives gain power from Labour part way through establishment (Walsall, Stirling). There can be problems too if the geographical distribution of parties entails sub-units of a different political complexion from the centre (Tower Hamlets). In this respect the longevity of the schemes in Glasgow and Strathclyde must in some measure be attributed to their very large Labour majorities over the period, plus a distribution which guarantees that the vast majority of local committees remain in Labour control (though the erstwhile Liberal enclave in Rutherglen and Militant at its height did cause some reverberations). It was abundantly clear from Leader2 that Area Management would have been abandoned had this not been so when he stated categorically that *"I didn't come here to be told what to do by people from other political parties"* {Q}. By the same token the likelihood is that any community activists in APTs will be traditional Labour supporters, their percentage of the votes cast in the most recent elections in 1995 in the case study areas being 68% in Castlemilk, 69% in Gorbals and 79% in Belvidere.

There are dual dangers in this. Firstly it heightens the potential for political patronage at ward level, a prime reason why the Town Clerk was vehemently opposed to delegation of landuse planning decisions to even area level on the basis that such decisions must be maintained at the centre to avoid potential corruption {I}. The other consequence has been that progress on further review and implementation of decentralisation stultified whilst factionalism within the respective Groups has become rife. Glasgow District has never openly discussed its procedures and the only internal review was shelved in the leadership switches. Area Coordinators confirm that there has been no concerted effort by them to achieve change {I}. Meanwhile the final recommendations which concluded the extensive consultation exercise in the Region's 1992 review of ALCs still await action.

A particular feature of this situation as it affected Glasgow District was the failure to slim down the number and powers of the central service committees. Both the Town Clerk and Leader1 agree that this was politically unacceptable for the simple reason that the capacity to appoint convenors of committees is the 'sweetener' that an embattled leader can deploy to guarantee support with Labour Groups factions. This accounted too for the early demise of policy-oriented Programme Area Teams which were the early corporate structure to match the Area Management Teams at the centre {I}. Labour domination can also result in the community participants being regarded as the opposition, contributing to the entrenched 'Them and Us' attitudes revealed in the interviews. Whilst there exists the political stability required to prevent the collapse of decentralisation, a price has been paid in other respects.

## CENTRAL DRIVE

It is one of the ironies of decentralisation that to succeed it must be strongly dictated from the centre and driven continuously over a sustained period of time. Yet for ideological reasons the greatest believers can be loath to cede this fact. Leader1, when questioned, still adhered to the view that she was correct to leave each AMC to develop as its members preferred despite recognising not only that many councillors did not fully support her vision, but that her rival Leader2 used his local SE-AMC as a powerbase from which to attack {I}. As the first Convenor of the Unitary Authority for Glasgow she would again advocate proceeding in the same manner on the grounds that imposing a central version would be "*quite unacceptably paternalistic*" {Q}. But not to do so opens the door to the kind of drift

pictured above, a scenario which is replicated in Strathclyde where it is acknowledged that ALCs have never been properly monitored to ensure they carry out their written remit whilst officers complain of a lack of managerial backing for those in the field {I}. By contrast the need for firm direction has been acknowledged in the case of Local Committees which have a fixed Agenda set centrally of issues that all will consider in the same annual cycle. Without some degree of pressure the kind of policy dilution at local level described in Chapter 2 appears inevitable.

## COMMITMENT

In sum the picture which emerges is of a lack of firm commitment to decentralisation itself except as a bolted on extra to the traditional service committees and departments - exactly the structure which the literature warns against. Whilst it is hazardous to extrapolate backwards as to whether this has always been the case, the evidence from Glasgow District is that faith gave way to political expediency at a very early stage. Councillors there today talk more in negative terms of it being hard to get rid of AMCs than in more positive tones. Few saw any scope for greater delegation, with the initiator now regarding her earlier hopes as *"naïveté about what could be achieved to conquer councillors desires to head up a departmental fiefdom"* {Q}. To take the documentary statements from Strathclyde, by contrast, the language of empowerment of councillors, staff and community has been strengthened over time {M}. Behind the scenes officers openly recognise that the council has been highly ambivalent, there being little political pressure on them from elected members to carry policies into effect.

Against this background we turn now to the perceptions of activists seeking their views overall on the local authorities' attitudes, specifically the degree of sincerity in regard to participation.

## COMMUNITY COMMENTS ON COUNCIL ATTITUDES

Differences became apparent between activists comments on the overall degree of commitment of the two councils, especially where a participant had experience of taking part in both structures. But there were certain similarities in that, as we saw above, the atmosphere in both cases was described as one with two opposing camps (as we saw graphically in the way the parties sat around the table). Some commented that this was historically the way that activism had been conducted,



but that now a fruitful way ahead could be alliances between councillors and community pitched against officers [I]. There was a quite widespread, and sometimes vehemently expressed view that it was the latter who controlled affairs and therefore it was their behaviour which was paramount:

*"The reality is paid officials run both the Region and the District"*

*"Councillors have very little power"*

*"Like it or not, it's the officers who run this city"*

*"I don't find our councillors hostile, they just don't seem to have a clue. That can be just as damaging."*

*"Officers see us as meddling busybodies not letting them get on with their programmes."*

There was a tendency therefore to attribute any faults in the system more to the officers than to the councillors, although the more sophisticated could trace the connection back.

## COMMUNITY COMMENTS ON GLASGOW DISTRICT

Where participants expressed frustration with the District Council, as the majority did, it was either a feeling that they had little hope of influencing outcomes - *"It's all sewn up"* [Q] - or that they could only affect minor changes - *"not influence the broad direction"* [Q]. That their assigned role, for instance, in housing policy whilst ostensibly to advise on allocating the capital programme came down to *"Which windaes would you like?"* [Q]. In their eyes at least it was not that Area Management Committees did not have meaningful decisions to take, it was just that they were not truly allowed opportunities to intervene:

*"All these structures want community lackeys. They don't want dissidents."*

*"No organisation wants someone inhibiting their action. What they want is a committee that sat and heard their report and went away again. They don't want people saying "that's not right"."*

*"The last thing the AMC wants is intelligent community people sitting round that table - uncontrollable, independent thinking effective human beings."*

The activists thus saw themselves engaged in a war of attrition - embarrassing officers, lobbying councillors, demanding delegations - that is typical outsider behaviour despite their supposed insider position. Just how hard it could be to get a serious issue with city-wide implications discussed is illustrated by the following vignette which highlights the degree of political knowhow which is required.

1. Safe Castlemilk is a local organisation funded by central government to address issues of safety in the environment of Castlemilk. As such they had conducted a survey of parents to assess their priorities on problems to be pursued. Amongst these drinking in public places was at that time not ranked high as a matter to be tackled. Meanwhile one of the 3 local Labour GDC ward councillors viewed it as a serious issue which he raised in the context of the Crime Prevention Panel (CPP).
  2. Safe Castlemilk, in view of their own findings, requested that the CPP consult more widely before proceeding. A special meeting was therefore called with a wider invitation list than normal. In the event, the councillor was unable to attend and it was deemed that the agenda item could not be discussed *'in his absence'*.
  3. An off licence opened in the row of shops which constitutes the main shopping precinct of Castlemilk. The drinking moved round to the front nearby, accompanied by begging, other unpleasant behaviour, suspected drug taking all taking place in the presence of small children. What had previously not been deemed priority now became a significant problem and, knowing that Safe Castlemilk had been involved with CPP over this question, the public began to call into Safe Castlemilk's office nearby amongst the shops offering to *'sign the petition'*. As a result of this expression of public concern, Safe Castlemilk decided to call a public meeting to which the councillor was invited in view of his earlier concerns.
  4. At this meeting Safe Castlemilk and the councillor expressed their concerns and sought views on the concept of some form of bye-laws to inhibit such behaviour in public places. There was considerable debate about whether this should be a blanket cover of Castlemilk or only certain defined areas such as the shopping precinct, near schools ... General support was expressed for the idea itself {O}.
  5. The proposal was then taken to C-ALC and gained their support, after which a request was forwarded to SE-AMC to put this item on the agenda. At the committee meeting the idea gained widespread support not only from Castlemilk members (who include Leader2) and community representatives, but from other areas as well who wanted similar restrictions applied in their own localities {O}.
  6. The minute of this meeting lists the action to be taken as:
    - (i) support the request from Safe Castlemilk
    - (ii) intimate this support to the Policy & Resources Committee
    - (iii) request the opportunity to participate in identifying appropriate designated areas within the SE area should the council agree to pursue the implementation of such bye-laws.
- which reflects anxiety that the actual areas to be covered by any such bye-laws should be recommended/decided by SE-AMC.
7. Meanwhile use had been made of the District Labour meeting to quiz the Labour Executive of the ruling Labour group under Leader1. It seemed unlikely the matter would be taken up because it appeared to emanate from Castlemilk/SE-AMC and was therefore associated with Leader2.

8. Separately the ward councillor raised the matter spontaneously at the Labour Group where it unexpectedly won widespread (non-factional) acceptance. These two pressures led to the Labour Executive and the Policy & Resources Committee putting the item on their respective agendas. It was agreed to establish a Working Party to investigate the matter in depth. Progress was, however, slow due to the complexity of the legal and policing problems involved in achieving regulations which permitted social open-air drinking in the popular tourist restaurants of the city centre, whilst controlling unfortunate aspects elsewhere.

9. Meanwhile Leader2 defeated Leader1 by a very narrow margin at the Leadership election in May 1994.

10. In August 1994 the Working Party reported that a bye-law of some kind was supported by the Procurator Fiscal and Police. Policy and Resources decided to approve in principle but to remit to AMCs for their comments on areas causing problems.

11. A request for this matter to be considered was therefore circulated to Area Co-ordinators listing the very detailed data required to back up the demand for a bye-law. AMCs were only given 2 weeks to respond, *'a very daunting task in a very short timescale'* as the cover letter describes.

12. SE-AMC did manage to include this as a late item, but the time for reply was by now reduced to 1 week. This AMC was better placed than most to provide the necessary data as it was in this AMC that Safe Castlemilk first made their request.

13. A report to P & R in September indicated that all AMCs were broadly in favour, but could not supply the details required within the time allowed. some favoured a total ban to avoid problems of displacement. 3 had remitted the item down to the community for a direct response.

14. P & R decided in November to proceed to draft a bye-law whilst continuing to collate community responses.

This vignette illustrates how just getting this problem onto the Council's central agenda required considerable political manoeuvring (by someone high in Labour ranks who later became a District member). Thereafter, following the lengthy deliberation in the Working Party, hasty consultation with the AMCs all but precluded a reasoned response by communities. Further it demonstrates the considerable sticking power required of a community group in pursuing action since an item first raised at SE-AMC in September 1993 is listed there at February 1995 as awaiting a response from the Scottish Office. Indeed an irony of this saga is that Safe Castlemilk meanwhile folded when its funding was withdrawn.

## COMMUNITY COMMENTS ON STRATHCLYDE REGION

The frustration with the Region, by contrast, is not as one might expect that the committees fail to carry out their remit (with which many activists remain in ignorance), but that their power sharing efforts do not live up to their promises; that is they stand accused of hypocrisy:

*"Their policy of involvement is just words."*

*"Consultation - we don't believe they believe in it."*

*"Theories are great, it's what they do about them."*

*"Nobody wants to give us power."*

*"Empowerment is not pursued as a policy"*

*"They put out these statements about people power."*

*"Empowerment shouldn't stop at consultation"*

*"SRC are great on rhetoric, but practice doesn't match policy."*

The quality of the comments from participants indicates a much greater dislike of the Region for advocating empowerment, whilst failing in the eyes of their detractors to deliver on these promises, than there is of the District for the hindrances to intervention.

But there are yet more serious accusations, both from outsiders and from those who currently or formerly took part, that deliberate efforts are made in some quarters to ensure that certain voices are not being heard. In considering these comments it should be borne in mind that it was difficult to assess the veracity especially of the more extreme comments which could not be cross-checked with other respondents since each had been promised anonymity.

## ELIMINATING VOICE

The form of access to the decision-making structures can be controlled by differing parties. As we have seen, the activists may be very weakly accountable, partisan and hold vested interests. Bad democrats may become entrenched gatekeepers who prevent others becoming involved. The council may rightly need to find ways to open up the system. On the other hand, opening the door to participation is bound to mean that councillors and officers will be exposed to alternative views which they may not wish to hear. They may then tend to seek out those who will echo their own opinions. If the council wishes to exclude unwanted voices, it has a number of techniques which can be deployed to achieve this end.

The ladder depicted overleaf in Figure 11.1 is entirely drawn from reports by interviewees of behaviour that had been experienced. Whilst the motivation imputed to it is that of the respondent, the placement on the ladder is the author's. Lest it be thought that these are the complaints of community participants about an intransigent council, it should be made clear that councillors too reported instances of officers applying such techniques to themselves, community-oriented officers cited instances amongst fellow officers or councillors who were held not to favour participation. Furthermore the centre might deploy them to maintain or regain ascendancy over the devolved decision-making processes. Finally excluded or marginalised activists described instances where such measures had been used by gatekeepers to maintain their position.

At the lowest rung comes a group of actions, the effect of which is to ignore certain voices. The first comes from only opening up the structures to certain groups, the simplest reason being unawareness of their existence. In the absence of community outreach work it is understandable that mailing lists may be inaccurate. But there were also accusations of deliberate omissions or invitations to named individuals within groups rather than a group as a whole. Gatekeepers it was said made newcomers feel unwelcome, sometimes querying their credentials. At the next level there was a widespread view that issues the community wished to discuss were seldom included in agendas predominantly compiled by officials (see Chapter 7). Obfuscation is a technique of which officers are accused by councillors and community alike who see the use of jargon and lengthy reports as a deliberate ploy to keep them at a distance.

The purpose of the ambiguous agenda, it is claimed, is to disguise what is coming up so that its significance is not appreciated, whilst the inaccurate minute of action, as it implies, is seen as a means of avoiding the obligation to perform. Calling a meeting with insufficient notice or consulting during a holiday period can have the effect of preventing involvement by those who are unable to be available. To claim that there is insufficient funds in the budget is to curtail argument since it can be impossible for the outsider to counter, whilst the version brought into currency by CCT is to aver that what is desired is not within the terms of the contract.

Figure 11.1 Ways to Eliminate Unwanted Voices

<p>Opposition will jeopardise funding  Outspokenness putting job at risk  Support resources to be withdrawn</p>	<b>THREATEN</b>
<p>Move in political adherents  Pack membership with allies  Bring in extra councillors</p>	<b>INFILTRATE</b>
<p>Access to budget decisions  Grant funding  Priority attention</p>	<b>FAVOUR</b>
<p>Overturn decisions elsewhere  Claim commercial confidentiality  Invoke selective voting powers  Maintain committee as advisory  Change quorum  Invite different parties</p>	<b>MANIPULATE RULES</b>
<p>Aims of Community Worker not participants  Unrepresentative views  Unprofessional presentation  Aggressive style</p>	<b>INVALIDATE</b>
<p>Not in contract  Claim insufficient funds in budget  Consult during holiday period  Urgent meeting with insufficient notice  Incorrect minute of action  Ambiguous agenda</p>	<b>AVOID</b>
<p>Confuse  Local authority agendas  Selective invitations</p>	<b>IGNORE</b>

It is the credibility of the speaker which is queried at the next rung. Conflict in particular is frowned upon so that an aggressive style can undermine a perfectly valid point, as can a case which is not well argued, both of which are seen as putting lay people in general, the working class in particular, at a disadvantage. But the reason most used to discredit - as we have seen throughout - is that the views expressed are unrepresentative. A variant on this is to maintain that the community did not come to any disputed opinion of their own volition, but have been stirred up by a community worker following his or her own agenda. Documentary evidence of such practices is provided by the following quotation from the CHIP Annual Report (1993/94):

*'One issue the project has often been accused of by certain officials over the past years is that project staff impose their views on groups and tenants which they then relay to officers. To set the record straight; the role of staff is to provide information, advice, training and support to tenants to assist them to examine the issues they are faced with and express their opinions in the best possible way.'*

A very significant element in power is to be in control of the rules. In the present instance on occasions it was not even clear who had the right to change them, a situation ripe for manipulation. For instance conflicting answers were sometimes given over whether a particular committee had decision-making powers or could only make recommendations, the complexity of the government's legislation adding to the confusion. This was especially true of financial matters where only councillors of the relevant council could legally vote. The charge of changing the quorum may or may not then be ill founded, as may that of invoking the regulations. A committee that is one minute advisory and the next capable of taking a decision is at best confusing, at worst readily sidelined.

Claiming commercial confidentiality is the next step up from "*not in the contract*" in respect of CCT in rendering the central provider unaccountable to the local purchaser even where the latter are the councillors or fellow officers from another department. As a last resort in this category of manipulating the rules, any decision taken at the lower level can be declared to have only the status of a recommendation which can subsequently be overruled elsewhere. In the context of the current research, the most frequently cited examples were the Urban Programme at ALCs from the community perspective, and the housing programme at AMCs from the councillor/officer perspective.

It may seem surprising to find 'showing favour' at such a high rung up the ladder. This derives from its two-edged nature in simultaneously offering the community privileged access to funding but offering the councils a means of control - see Chapter 9. Thus whilst access to grant funding for an organisation can on the face of it be beneficial, as we saw it can have a self-imposed inhibiting effect of "*we better not give them trouble*" {Q}. The other reason for its high ranking is that it clearly acts to the disadvantage of those not chosen; to favour certain parties is not to favour others. As became clear in Chapter 10, there exists a widespread perception in Gorbals and Belvidere that Labour party membership plays a part in these processes, contributing to accusations of undue patronage.

Instances of the more serious forms of behaviour in the top two rungs were the least open to corroboration by subsequent respondents. Nonetheless, if true, they are the most insidious since much the most deliberately hostile acts, especially at the level of threatening withdrawal of funding from an organisation or individual. There was at least one instance where a number of respondents, including both local and central officers, vouchsafed that a grant to the community was likely to be blocked because the 'wrong' people (in the eyes of the councillor) had been elected to the management committee. That such action indeed occurs is apparent from the well documented struggles between Crossroads and the local MP seeking their closure described in Chapter 5 which cause current activists to speak of the organisation today as "*a shadow of what it was*" {Q}. There was also a well authenticated instance where a single individual had been 'blacked', the community being informed that no grant would be forthcoming if this individual were to be involved, thus facing them with the choice of receiving money or asking the individual to withdraw.

Altogether in the course of interviewing, there were seven separate instances where behaviour lying in the top three levels was alleged, four involving Urban Programme funding and three involving individuals. There is also a high perception that such behaviour is linked to political manoeuvring. Even if the reports were to be entirely without validity, which appears unlikely where they are so frequent, the very fact that they are given credence means that they affect attitudes and behaviour. If, for instance, there is a perception that to be in the Labour Party is to be favoured, activists are likely to be motivated to join. Any repercussions in the community as a consequence of the bitter factional infighting for nomination to the Unitary Authority will come after the field research was completed, but it is to be anticipated that there will be significant costs to be paid.



## ARE THERE DIFFERENCES IN OUTCOME?

So far it is the macro features of the structures which have been assessed, but if the models are put under the microscope do variations emerge as they impact on and interact with different areas of the city? If so, to what factors can such differences be attributed? To return to the selection of the case studies, the AMCs were chosen primarily on the basis of the form of participation. It was hypothesised that the system in the S-AMC with a place at the table for each CC would demonstrate different characteristics from that on the SE-AMC and EEMC with restricted membership. The assumption was that both the council and the community would benefit from having direct lines of communication. To a lesser extent the EEMC was picked in order to provide an example of a joint initiative where there might be a more unified approach and where the ALC covers the functions of both councils. Finally it was anticipated that the nature of the three areas and residents' prior history of involvement could colour any outcome.

## ARE THERE DIFFERENCES IN OUTCOME BETWEEN AMCs?

In the event, it was impossible to discern significant variations at this level. The effects of the form of participation were masked by the failure to meet the prerequisites and by the format of the committee itself. This is not to say that it is irrelevant, but that its relevance could not be demonstrated under these circumstances. If anything it was the participants on the SE-AMC who expressed the greatest belief in their efficacy, a fact which can be traced to the backing of professional staff from their support agency. The EEMC proved in reality not to be operating fully as a joint venture between the two councils until it became a Regional Local Committee halfway through the research. After this the pressure to operate efficiently in taking a greater number of decisions exacerbated a situation which already ran counter to effective community intervention.

Questioned on their personal assessment of the extent to which their presence had any impact on the decision-taking process, the reactions of participants were almost equally negative in all areas, with the following statements representing the flavour of their responses:

*"You can talk all you like, but they don't have to take it into account."*

*"It's difficult to argue when its cut and dried"*

*"With all the cutbacks, they just say there's no money. You can't really do anything then."*

*"It works well if we support the officer, but not otherwise."*

*"About nil, it just validates decisions."*

*"Officers don't bother a ginger about it."*

*"None on the inner system, the real power."*

*"Aspirations over here. What's possible over there. You're involved in a process of achieving something somewhere in the middle."*

*"Here's the option. Blah blah blah. Do you agree? Well most of the time you do but to do this properly, sensibly you need to raise relevant questions. Sometimes you feel you can't ask."*

*"You're never ever successful in the longterm; the decision is warded off, but it always lies there to be resurrected."*

*"Having the vote might make councillors sit up and listen; but they would probably change the regulations or decide things somewhere else."*

## **ARE THERE DIFFERENCES IN OUTCOME BETWEEN ALCs?**

In the case of the ALCs it was clear from the outset that there were sharp distinctions. Indeed there were initial problems in selecting case studies since as the Chief Executive maintained *"There is no such thing as a typical ALC."* One distinguishing parameter was assumed to be the level of resources since the Region's review had highlighted deficiencies in staff time for Lead Officers as the most significant factor contributing to the poor performance of ALCs. In this respect Gorbals was taken as similar to the majority in the degree of support it enjoyed to be contrasted with Castlemilk and the East End where the presence of the Partnership and the Initiative respectively guaranteed the services of a fulltime officer. The Partnership also brought in its wake the higher status afforded to the ALC within the Region as reflected by the presence of all the field officers and delegated decisions on the UP budget, which in turn demanded more structured participation all of which it was presumed would have a bearing on the performance of C-ALC. The Initiative was again expected to provide an insight into a joint GDC/SRC format for an ALC more closely integrated into the EEMC. Finally there was an assumption that the differing nature of the local area and its social history would play a greater part at the more parochial level of an ALC than at the AMC.

It came as no surprise therefore to find that the level of resourcing proved the main factor distinguishing the ALCs with Gorbals universally assessed by all stake-holders as having no significant impact whatever. Its sole raison d'être was seen as the annual prioritisation of the UP. Indeed it was not even in operation at all over six months during the research period without this causing any adverse comment. The convenor and Lead Officer had both been pre-occupied with the reorganisation of the Community Education Service, and the participants had applied no pressure.

The participants grumbled that the G-ALC was *"not taken seriously"* {Q} but expressed no likelihood of effecting change. Past experience had left them wary that *"councillors tell you lies"* {Q} and:

*"with a gut feeling that whenever big bodies say XYZ, we always treat it with a degree of suspicion that they may be trying to manipulate or misuse us - blind us in some way."*

Efforts at change centred on GUG whose long-term ambition is to totally supplant the G-ALC with a community run alternative. As their spokesmen put it:

*"Partnership. I don't see it in a lot of cases. If they're going to build something here, it discussed at planning, council, region what have you and they formulate something, some plans, some models. Then they say "Ah now we better go round the community with this and tell them what we hope to achieve." What we're saying is when you come to discuss, it should be with a blank piece of paper."*

*"I would say if you have an Umbrella Group in any area whose remit is confined to just talking and making recommendations, which may or may not be listened to, but do not have some say in the fiscal policies over monies coming into the area; then I think it boils down to a talking shop without any real power, without any ability to change or modify anything. It just becomes another grouping in the area with no teeth."*

Many of the current stake-holders involved in Castlemilk remember C-ALC in the days when it operated like that in Gorbals. They all acknowledge that the situation now is much improved, a fact which is attributed variously to the coming of the Partnership, the establishment of CUG, the level of resources and community development support and the swap from an open door policy to an elected membership of a size sufficient to outnumber councillors.

Among participants there were two camps, both of which recognised that C-ALC still had little impact on the mainstream of the Region's policies, but which divided over their degree of hope for improvement. Thus the first group felt that they had reshaped the way UP was distributed and could now move on to other issues:

*"You can't do it all in a couple of months. It will probably take another couple of years before we really get round to it all and achieve our aims."*  
*"The ALC is looked on by community reps as being in reasonably good shape, it has achieved a fairly clear remit, it has good representation, there is a feeling the machinery is there."*

*"It's not our intention to continue to be a rubber stamp. There are possibilities within the ALC that we need to tap into which we haven't done well enough yet. Part of that is about confidence and knowledge. We are still waiting for it to happen."*

The second group are less sanguine that the future will bring improvements:

*"Some of the best people have dropped out because the better they are the more frustrated they become. Experience may be counterproductive."*

*"UP is spent more in accord with local priorities, but I don't feel I've changed anything at that (Policy) level."*

*"The Region is no better - well they've moved a bit but not for the right reasons."*

*"Experience of actually being in the mechanisms is quite hard and frustrating and therefore quite likely to turn people off rather than make them want to tell their friends it's really fun being involved in the democratic process."*

The greater degree of integration of B/C/D-ALC into EEMC which had been expected in fact fails due to the cleavages described in the linkages. Each consequently operates more or less in isolation at its own level. As we have seen 80% of the officer-driven agenda consists of information, the feature for which the ALC is valued by participants. This is reflected in the latter's assessment of their capacity to achieve an impact: *"Occasionally we can stop something because we know about it in advance"* {Q}. Otherwise the general evaluation is that they can have little effect:

*"We're overruled at every turn. We can't carry it forward."*

*If your'e overruled, your'e beaten."*

*"Officers don't bother a ginger about it."*

*"The just say "It's the cutbacks. Sorry BUT ..." There's not a lot you can say about things when they say that."*

*"What we need is better councillors, not this sham."*

Of those who recall the ALC in earlier times, the consensus is that in a contrary way because the ALC is expected to play a more serious part, it has actually become harder for the community to intervene:

*"The officers have hijacked the ALCs."*

*"There's no proper discussion any more. Now it's a talking shop."*

*"When it was just CCs, it worked much better. It's a shambles."*

*"That sounds fine on paper what they're feeding us. But at the bottom line you've always to think what's at the back of it."*

*"To my mind they neither take the ALC or the AMC seriously. I feel we are there on sufferance."*

*"Having the vote might make councillors sit up and listen, but they would probably change the regulations."*

The comments in both Gorbals and Belvidere display a degree of entrenched suspicion deriving from the activists previous experiences of involvement.

Of the three ALCs Gorbals is the most poorly rated in terms of perceived impact which ties in with expectations due to its low level of resourcing, with little officer time to pursue action. Belvidere is valued as a prime source of up to the minute information which may be exploited to prevent some unwanted development, but is overall not estimated itself to have any impact with few aspiring to hope for improvement. Only in Castlemilk is it possible to find activists who have faith that, even if the ALC has a low impact at the moment outside the Urban Programme, it lies within the grasp of the community to achieve the necessary changes.

We may speculate about why this should be so. In part it may be related to residents prior history of involvement. Both Belvidere and Gorbals are still dominated by activists who go back to the days of previous stages of regeneration. In the former the experience is of GEAR which, as was related in Chapter 5, had a poor reputation in terms of participation. Attitudes forged then persist to this day and have rubbed off on the subsequent generation. In the Gorbals the two main activists on the CCs, who dominate both at the S-AMC and the G-ALC, hail from the tenants movement at the centre of the fight over the dampness campaign. Both too are key members of the local Labour Party embroiled in the antagonisms that campaign generated at the time which too spill over to this day.

By contrast, Castlemilk is at the early stages of its first experience of major regeneration with the coming of the Partnership. Whilst the history of activism is retold as one of fighting against the elected members, this does not appear to have sparked the same degree of distrustful hostility. Here too the Umbrella Group has had constant support from the community workers not only in their own employ but also within the local authority who, it may be presumed, have influenced the way community involvement has evolved. It is in Castlemilk, it may be recalled, that there are the fewest signs of gatekeepers controlling entry into the structure who are simultaneously in the Labour Party.

## FEATURES TO BE SOUGHT IN ALTERNATIVE MODELS

To reiterate the introduction to this chapter, in seeking to put forward new alternatives to the models developed by the two councils at present the aim is merely to suggest improvements which would strengthen their capacity to deliver the apparent objectives. These are taken to be the injection of local knowledge and feedback on service provision, in the case of Glasgow, and greater leverage to affect the decision making system for Strathclyde. The major defects of Area Management are seen as deriving from its 'bolted on' status within the overall District structures and the failure to adapt the traditional committee format. No meaningful feedback about services has been achieved since the community participants are unable to bring their knowledge to the table. The council cannot be responsive to local views since they provide no opportunities for these to be expressed. In this context gatekeepers emerge because of the restricted numbers of places and the lack of mandating.

The major defects of Area Liaison are seen as deriving from their marginality to the mainstream activities of the Region and ambivalence over transferring power. Whereas some minor elements of control have been shifted to the community, the major elements of control remain with the council. The only area in which the participants have any potential say is the prioritisation of the Urban Programme, yet it is in precisely this aspect that they demonstrate the highest degree of vested interests. In this context gatekeepers are tempted by the lure of substantial grant funding.

Arguably the greatest problem in suggesting amendments is to achieve a balance which protects the local authority from domination by a minority but which prevents the councils from by-passing unwanted voices in the ways described above. One which inhibits the occurrence of gatekeepers, especially ones exhibiting party political bias, but guarantees rights of access. The starting point is to examine each of the current structures in turn examining whether they achieve the purpose for which they were designed and thus what modifications are required to achieve these ends.

The summary overleaf provides an overview of the main deficiencies of the Area Management Committees as they operate at present, addressing the question of why they fail to achieve the assumed objective of 'responsiveness' and what steps would be needed to rectify these faults.

## DO AMC PRODUCE DECISIONS BASED ON RESPONSIVENESS?

ONLY SELECTIVELY

### BECAUSE:

- The structures are unimaginatively based on the representative system with no account taken of an adapted role for community participants
- Limited places mean that extremely restricted numbers can be directly involved whilst the timing is insufficient to permit prior mandating
- Decision taking involves very lengthy agendas with a few minutes for each item and committee etiquette precludes in-depth discussion
- Officers dominate the agenda setting processes to the exclusion of topics arising from community priorities
- Local knowledge cannot be brought into play, especially where some community participants have constituencies larger than councillors
- Services are not subjected to systematic review and existing monitoring systems are impenetrable
- CCT and protection of DLOs has a centralising effect plus "*not in the contract*" reactions to demands
- The community are brought in far too late in the process when options are minimal

### THIS MODEL COULD WORK IF:

- The mechanisms were rethought to recognise the difference in roles between elected councillors and community participants as delegates
- Fast decision taking was separated from deliberation feeding into policy making so that real dialogue could be established at a slow pace
- Use were made of CCs, TAs, issue groups, user panels as bodies to be consulted outwith the committee system
- CCs were offered training and access to the Market Survey Department to perform scientific surveys to '*ascertain, coordinate and express*' local views as is their assigned role
- Groups were invited to name the services causing the most problems and these were the subject of in-depth discussion with the relevant officers, any deficiencies requiring finance being fed into the revenue budget proposals

## ROLES OF COUNCILLORS AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS

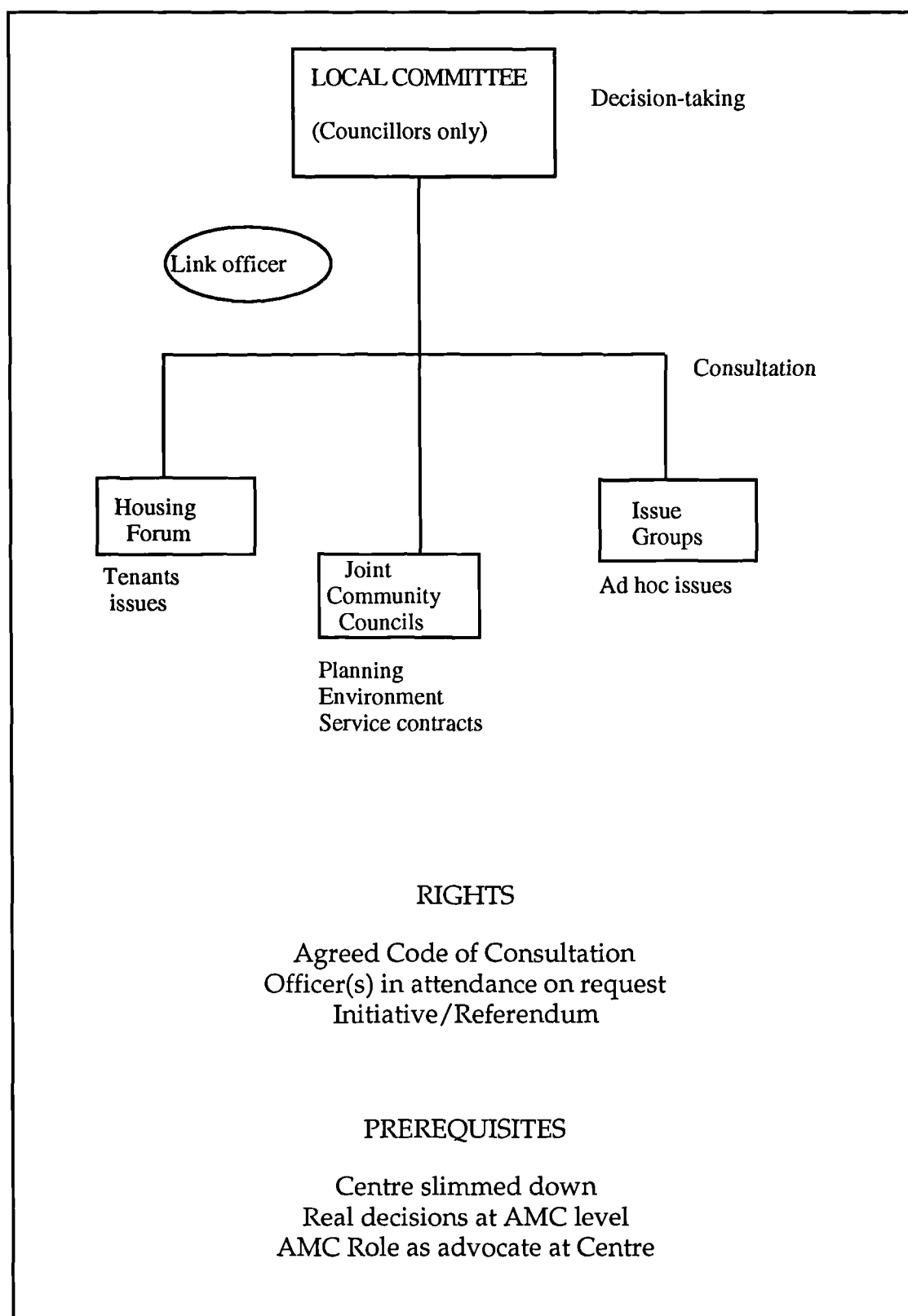
The first proposal is that there should be a clear separation between the roles of elected members and of participants. The former it is argued should perform their distinct representative function, which the participatory element should complement and supplement. For this reason the two parties should not be involved together in joint decision taking. There are a number of justifications for putting this forward. The first is simply for the sake of clarity and transparency. If there are faults with the representative system, then they should be addressed directly, not muddled by adding in additional pseudo-representatives who may replicate all the same faults without the safeguards of accountability at the ballot box. The effect should be to lessen the perceived threat to councillors, which in turn would mean there was less provocation for the latter to fight back.

The second grouping of reasons revolve around the practical defects in the current involvement. If participants were situated outwith the day-to-day decision taking system they could be brought in earlier on in the processes of problem statement and evolution of solutions. The constraints of speed, the timing of papers and the prevention of proper mandating could be avoided. Without the need to protect the numerical superiority of elected members, a greater number of individuals can be incorporated thus lessening the burdens on those who choose to play a part. The more involved, the less the danger of the emergence of gatekeepers. If the necessity for formal co-option onto a committee in accordance with local government regulations is eliminated, this opens up the possibility of short term involvement of a more ad hoc form which should prove more popular with those not willing to make long term commitments. Indeed horizons could be widened to incorporate the types of compulsory participation envisaged in the next chapter.

This too could be a way of ensuring that those with the greatest interest or expertise came forward. For instance, within the membership of a single CC there is often organised sub-division of responsibility with different people dealing with topics as such as planning, transport and traffic, health or community activities. The present restriction on places at the table means that the selected person is per force a generalist on the many topics which are on the officer-driven agenda. This then is the reasoning which leads to the amended model in which the participatory element is now removed from the committee stage entirely.



Figure 11.2 Model for Greater Responsiveness



## NEW MODEL FOR GREATER RESPONSIVENESS

Since the committee is now entirely made up of elected members a number of advantages would follow. In legal terms the committee would then be a decision-taking body not limited to a supposedly advisory status. At minimum this would clarify its standing within the local authority, at maximum it could then be allowed far stronger delegated powers without this threatening the representative role of councillors. Further the Local Committees could then be recognised as the purchasers of services under CCT, their capacity to monitor the contracts thus becoming meaningful.

What is proposed in place of limited seats at the table is a pluralistic approach with different groupings brought in depending on the issue. These may or may not meet together around a table. For instance, if there were more genuine consultation with community councils and the latter were required to perform their allocated role of 'ascertaining' the views of the residents within their catchment area, there would be no need for them to use the committee to liaise with officers after the formal business has been conducted or to force a response from reluctant officers as Calton/Bridgeton-CC do at Belvidere ALC.

But there could be merit in forming a standing committee of CCs to debate jointly those matters where they have been assigned an enhanced part to play under the new Unitary Authorities. Promises have been made that legislation will be enacted to grant CCs a right to receive all planning applications and authorities are to be sent guidance on informing CCs about licences (CCRC 1995). CCs are also well placed in their role as watchdog on the ground to monitor the performance of contractors set against agreed Service Contracts, the details of which are clearly spelled out. They could also imaginatively be used, with the aid of professional support and analysis, to conduct local surveys of public opinion or consumer feedback. This would go further in providing CCs with a meaningful part to play than the one they are currently afforded.

On the other hand, discussion on tenants issues could be remitted to any local joint Housing Forum of Tenants Associations which would appear a more appropriate body to consider such matters as the housing capital budget allocations. The third proposed element consists of temporary groups brought together to tackle specific issues which the community have highlighted as problematical, an approach pioneered by South Somerset Council under the Liberal Democrats (SSDC 1995). This would permit those with particular

interests, any specialist groups or specialists within CCs or TAs to consider certain chosen topics in depth. An alternative approach is the creation of a panel something like a jury to debate with issues with professional input, an idea which has been used with success in Germany (Stewart, Kendall & Coote 1994). Either of these techniques allow the time burdens of involvement to be shared more widely. All these forums could be granted the right to request that an officer be in attendance on occasions to provide guidance or a councillor to provide a channel into the political system.

To ensure that the local authority holds to their obligations there would need to be an agreed Code of Consultation with an appeal system should any party feel aggrieved. This could be supplemented by rights to call for a Referendum or Initiative. The former mechanism would allow a disputed proposal to be put to a local vote, whilst the latter would provide an opportunity to put a proposal backed by a percentage of the electorate to a popular vote, a device much used in the Cantons of Switzerland (Bogdanor 1992). Such rights would have to be codified to ensure that the council did not take advantage of the plurality of forums to by-pass debate or switch to a grouping that seemed more amenable to their point of view.

Such a structure seeks to achieve a balance between the rights and obligations of the council, on the one hand, and the community on the other. It should inhibit the emergence of gatekeepers and the possibilities of political patronage which the current limited places can foster. But equally it should ensure that unpopular or minority voices can penetrate. By these measures there would seem a greater hope of rendering the representative system of democracy responsive to its citizenry than has been achieved by supplementing it with a few lone voices.

Next the summary overleaf provides an overview of the main deficiencies of the Area Liaison Committees as they operate at present, addressing the question of why they fail to achieve the assumed objective of 'empowerment' and what steps would be needed to rectify these faults.

## DO ALC s ACHIEVE EMPOWERMENT?

ONLY marginally

### BECAUSE:

- The structures are not universal, existing only in the given selected Areas of Priority Treatment, and therefore not regarded as mainstream
- Necessary links into the other main council structures have never been sufficiently developed
- There is no recognised right to consultation as a body to be used for these purposes by the Region
- The remit to examine the impact of council services has never been systematically pursued
- Lead officers dominate the agenda setting processes to the exclusion of major topics arising from community priorities
- Performance is dependent on the enthusiasm of the local councillor and/or lead officer
- Community development workers have no clear role in providing support and training for the activists
- The wider public are not encouraged to play any part since invitation is to groups only

### THIS MODEL COULD WORK IF:

- The mechanisms were rethought to recognise the difference in roles between elected councillors and community participants
- Forums were created universally with a high degree of community control over the mode of operation
- Strong connections between these forums and Local Committees were fostered by a Link Officer with authority to pursue action
- Rights were conferred on the forums and codified in the form of written Standing Orders with associated means of Appeal

In addressing the question as to whether ALCs have led to 'empowerment' we have first to have some notion of how this is to be defined. In this debate there are considerable differences of opinion in the literature and amongst interviewees. Some authors also argue that there must be a devolved budget. There are activists who measure power by the possession of a vote. Views differ on whether having actual decisions to take must be an element. One view is that this is the ultimate measure in being given responsibility, the counter argument being that energies may be expended on minor activities which mean that none are available for the ongoing role of watchdog on major policies and budgets.

Returning to the definition of power outlined in Chapter 1, two elements were distinguished. The first was defined in terms of a transfer of authority to exert control, the second in terms of enhanced capacity of the participants to wield influence. Taking the former, the concrete measures of transfer of authority were identified as control over the decisions on who participates, who chairs the meetings, who draws up the agenda and overall who sets the rules. The following table analyses the situation in each ALC separately.

Table 11.1 Measures of Control at ALCs

	CASTLEMILK	GORBALS	BELVIDERE
PARTICIPATION	Community election No advertising to the general public in the area	Groups notified by letter Open meeting	
CHAIR	SRC Councillor/ community shared	SRC Councillor only	SRC/GDC Councillor Community Vice chairman
AGENDA	Dedicated officer	Lead officer	Dedicated officer
Pre-agenda	Joint chairs	-	Joint chairs/Vice chairs
Access	In advance	In advance	At previous meeting
RULES	SRC	SRC	SRC/GDC
Local	C-ALC/CUG	-	-

By this criterion, only Castlemilk participants enjoy some measure of authority over the operations of the C-ALC, but the ultimate power to make the rules overall lies with the Regional Council.

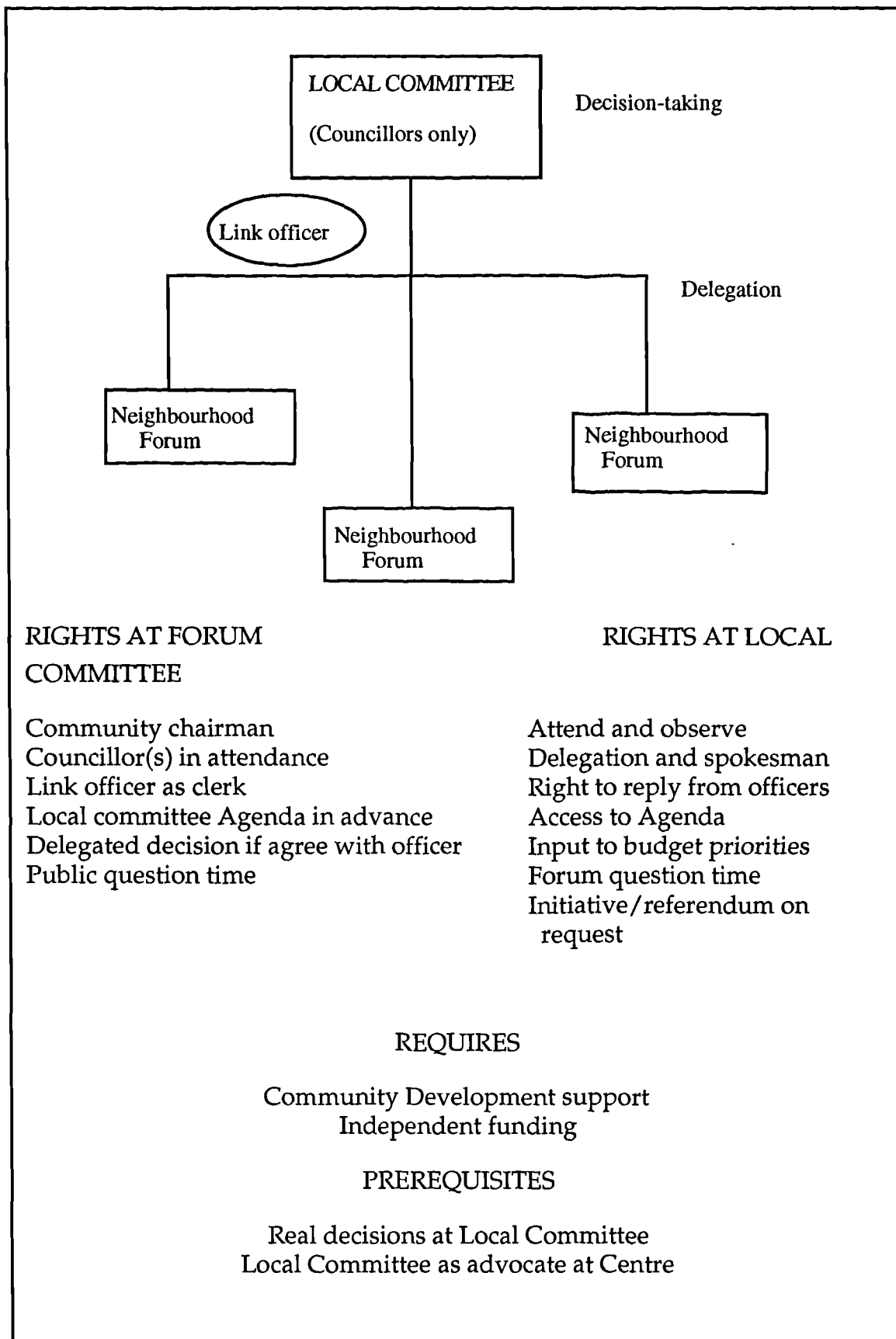
The second approach is based on the arguments of Cairncross, Clapham & Goodlad (1994) in discussing tenant empowerment that power is not some sort of entity that can be transferred. Rather it takes the form of a complex game, in their case football, in which different parties may come to be in the ascendancy when for some reason their leverage is enhanced. By this analysis some of the participants may be empowered some of the time. This may come about for entirely extraneous reasons - i.e. in Castlemilk the Partnership meaning the ALC has a higher status - because it suits the power holders to cooperate temporarily with the community, or because the community find a way to boost their advantage - i.e. pressure group tactics, lobbying, alliances with officers and councillors, control of Labour party nomination procedures ...

On this analysis the fact that the council retains overall power to change the rules means that the community's degree of control is ever endangered. The aim in proposing an alternative model is therefore to codify the community's rights in respect of transfer of authority in order that their capacity to exert leverage within the system is both maximised and made more secure

## **NEW MODEL FOR POWER SHARING**

In this model the whole area of the respective Local Committee is subdivided into permanent Neighbourhood Forums. Again the community are sited outside the committee, for all the reasons already discussed, but there are strong, clearly codified links between the forums and their Local Committee. Unlike the loose groups which are appropriate for feedback in the previous model, these forums require to be properly constituted and regulated as a price they pay for being entrusted with certain delegated powers. They would comprise delegates from any CC, TA or Urban Project operating within the catchment as of right plus any other organisations they considered appropriate. But this membership would be fixed from one AGM to the next so that at any given time it is clearly identifiable. In recognition of its community nature the meetings should be chaired by a local participant, but would be clerked by the Link Officer to the relevant Local Committee to create a channel to drive issues forward, a solution found essential by Islington (Burns, Hambleton & Hoggett 1994). To provide the political linkage, councillors should be in attendance, but only intervene at the invitation of the Chair (in Islington they sit with the general public).

Figure 11.3 Model for Power Sharing



The main purpose of the Neighbourhood Forum (NF) would be to provide an arena in which local issues could be aired. To this end they should be open to the public, well advertised and provide a section for public questions. Meeting cycles would be meshed so that the Agenda for the forthcoming Local Committee (LC) could be made available and the Link Officer questioned on relevant matters. In this way neighbourhood opinions would be familiar at the subsequent LC meeting. The NF should have the right to request that a decision be postponed until they have had an opportunity to sound out views (a right which CCs in Glasgow currently enjoy under the Code of Practice but seldom exercise), the LC only being permitted to overrule such a demand if it can be shown that time dictates a rapid decision. Finally, where they wished this responsibility, the NF could be the final arbiter on certain decisions provided they agreed with the officer's report, a device successfully used in Islington for planning matters (Burns *et al idem*). Only if the NF disagreed, would the question be decided at a higher level.

At the LC level the NF members may attend, obtain papers and observe, as is the case anyway with local authority committees which have to be open to the public. In this way the community are in a position to be certain that their views will be correctly transmitted. It also provides the opportunities to gain information so prized at ALCs, and to become familiar with and known to the team of field officers which were seen in the research as one of the main values of attending AMCs. The NF should enjoy a number of mandatory rights under the Standing Orders at LC, the first of which is that of requesting a delegation to present their case through selected spokesmen. Success stories reported in the interviews in relation to AMCs had often been pursued in this way [I]. Officers should be obliged to respond at the LC to points at any NF which required an answer. In addition, NFs should be able to submit prior notice of items to be included in the formal agenda. As in the earlier model, it is proposed that they have rights to call for a Referendum or Initiative. In particular, NFs should have a role in submitting budget proposals and in the annual set piece of prioritising the revenue and capital bids for expenditure.

Not every NF will necessarily wish to make use of all these rights and responsibilities at once or in the same respects. They should be permitted to negotiate which they want and when. It is assumed that there will be an ongoing need for community development support. Where this should come from is a more problematic question, there being pros and cons to any solution. The



advantage of community workers employed by the local authority is that they can operate as insiders within the structure with greater access to information and fellow officers. But, as we have seen, they can be vulnerable should the council seek to curtail their activities. By contrast, where the community are in a position to employ their own staff, the latter are outsiders to the system. As such they may enjoy greater independence, thus instilling trust, but lack insider status. They may be better placed to support the community in a confrontational situation but have less capacity to aid them to achieve improved working relationships. On balance the advantages of being within the system probably outweigh the disadvantages if the council is fully committed to the philosophy of empowerment.

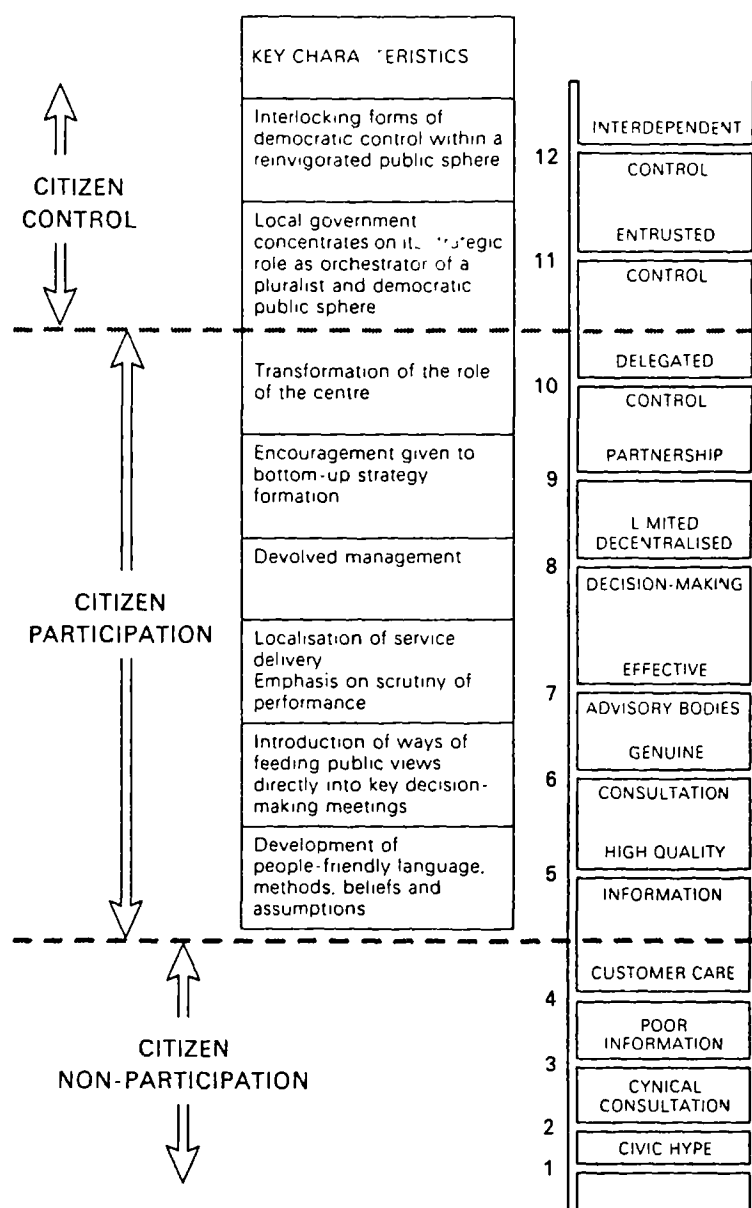
At root these dilemmas are linked to the source of funding because the staff will not be as truly free from influence as this scenario envisages if their employers grant support comes ultimately from the council. This has been shown to be the case with both CHIP, as described in this research, and with CUG, as described elsewhere (Hastings forthcoming). Their total dependency on local government funding was one of the issues raised by the Glasgow Forum of CCs in their response to the Scottish Office consultation on local government reform (CCF 1994) Lack of an adequate level of funding, both for their own activities and for support agencies such as CCRC in Glasgow, was highlighted in the replies from CCs all over Scotland as a prime reason for their failure to perform their given representative functions as envisaged by Wheatley. More damaging even than the inadequate level of funding though was the vulnerability to co-option or threat. Only if a dependable independent source of grant aid can be secured will organisations be free from the kinds of attempt to interfere recounted above in *Eliminating Voices*.

Of the case studies the structure which came closest to the model outlined was Castlemilk ALC and this was the one in which party politics appeared to play the least part. Despite the high membership of Castlemilk Labour Party the numbers amongst participants were low by comparison; there seemed no signs either of the emergence of politicised gatekeepers who completely dominated entry as was the case in the other examples. All this despite the high stakes of virtual control of the dedicated Urban Programme budget. Allowing the community a greater say in the formulation of the 'rules of the game' leads, it would appear, to freer access to the politically uninvolved.

## WHERE WOULD MODELS APPEAR ON A LADDER OF INVOLVEMENT?

If the current and proposed models were to be placed, where might they appear on the ladder of citizen's participation? In answering this question it is not assumed that the aim should be citizen control, merely that the step on the ladder should conform to that to which the councils aspired. For this assessment use is made here of the amended ladder which is depicted below.

Figure 11.4 Where Would Models Appear on Ladder?



Source: Burns, Hambleton & Hoggett 1994

Taking first the AMCs, the presumption is that the aim of the District Council, were it to be wholeheartedly pursued, would be that the committees should be 'Effective Advisory Bodies' with 'Limited Decentralised Decision-making'. However, in reality as bodies they currently fail to reach rung 7. The aim of the alternative proposals locating the various forums outwith the committee is that these should offer external advice through 'Genuine Consultation', that is the forums should lie around rungs 6 and 7, permitting the AMC itself to become effective at rungs 7 and 8. This remains an essentially top-down exercise controlled by the local authority, but with the limited rights of the public codified in writing to ensure that the council cannot relegate them below their guaranteed level.

In the case of the ALCs the objective appears to strive for a rung approaching 'Partnership' at 9 and the true position to hover between Gorbals at 'Non-participation', Belvidere at 'High Quality Information' and Castlemilk at 'Limited Decentralised Decision-Making' in respect of the Urban Programme only. The aim of the alternative proposals is to provide a framework within which such partnerships are achievable, but by shifting greater authority over the 'rules of the game' to the community it is Neighbourhood Forums themselves which decide the level to which they wish to aspire so that the structure shifts to one which becomes bottom-up.

## **CAN THE TWO MODELS BE RECONCILED?**

A duty has been put upon the new Unitary Authorities under the Local Government etc (Scotland) Act 1994 that by April 1997 each must have produced a scheme for decentralisation. The task which faces the new city council in Glasgow is whether the two systems which have existed up to now can be reconciled.

## **WHAT FORM OF DECENTRALISATION IS ENVISAGED?**

In laying this duty upon the councils it would seem that Central Government was simply adopting the suggestion put forward by Highland Region (see page 72), without having any particularly clear view on which form of decentralisation was to be favoured [I]. The legislation promised that the Secretary of State would issue guidance, but what emerged was deliberately non prescriptive. The advantages are enumerated as enhancing local democracy, re-invigorating local involvement

and a positive opportunity for real community partnership, whilst the key objectives are listed (SOED 1995) as:

- 6.1 to bring services and decision making closer to the public where this will result in an improvement to the service;
- 6.2 to enable the public to influence and shape the design of those services and the way in which the council serves its community;
- 6.3 to provide more effective and responsive local government.

The 'guidance' comprises directions that schemes must not be bolted on, should enjoy commitment from all parties, and that councils must be clear which form they wish to adopt amongst the political, managerial or physical alternatives. Finally the Secretary of State will neither approve nor reject any proposals, but simply ensure that the requisite consultation, including that with community councils, has been correctly carried out.

Additional preliminary 'advice' has been issued by the convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA 1995) which, if anything, is even less prescriptive (though good practice proposals are promised hereafter). The Scottish Community Education Council meanwhile see decentralisation as an opportunity for local democracy and community empowerment, urging that councils should adopt a development driven approach which would be flexible, responsive and innovative (SCEC 1995).

## **THE MODEL PREFERRED BY COMMUNITY COUNCILS**

Community councils had hoped that under Unitary Authorities their position would be strengthened, their main demands being for legal rights to consultation, especially over planning, licensing and transport/traffic issues, and for adequate assured funding (Duncan 1993). The former has been promised (under separate legislation), but no action has been taken on the latter. Specifically with respect to decentralisation, their Scottish Association is merely lending support to CCs in local negotiation with their respective councils, their blueprint, however, being along the lines of the Area Management system existing in Glasgow [I]. CCs in Glasgow are campaigning for the model of AMC, such as the S-AMC amongst the case studies, which grants an automatic seat at the table, but they are also demanding that they be given the vote. Not content with influence, they see this as a symbol of true 'empowerment' [I].

## DOES THE EAST END JOINT INITIATIVE POINT THE WAY?

Since the East End Initiative is operated jointly by Glasgow District and by Strathclyde Region, in this sense the structures there already serve as an example of how such a system might look under a Unitary Authority, so is this a model which should be emulated? The EEMC as a decision-taking body was certainly under strain from the moment at which it became a Local Committee with devolved regional matters to deal with. The agendas became lengthier, the time for discussion even shorter and community input at the meeting was already minimal. The argument for separating off the community, advanced above for reasons of clarity in responsibility of representatives, is here bolstered by a simply practical one that participants can play no meaningful role by this stage.

The ALCs provided universal coverage, which represented a shift away from those based on APTs with the objective of offsetting disadvantage. but the middle class area failed to become engaged because it was not eligible for Urban Programme which was the major 'carrot' for community involvement. The meetings were valued for downwards dissemination of information, but the upwards linkages were missing, misaligned or clogged. To expect a single forum to achieve both the Strathclyde's supposed objective of empowerment and the District's desire for consumer feedback on services seems doomed to achieve neither. All the evidence points to the need for structures each clearly designated to play a particular part in the overall system that is close to the Responsiveness model outlined. Guidance based on the results of the current research would argue strongly for diversity because:

*'...crucially, what some local authorities have slowly begun to learn is that a society built upon a plurality of interests and identities requires a plurality of forms of participation - there is no single right model, only single wrong models.'* (Hoggett 1995, p108).

## CHAPTER 12

### DEMOCRACY REVISITED

The ground rules of Direct Democracy appear straightforward in that every citizen is expected to speak for themselves; those of Representative Democracy have become familiar in that we are accustomed to elected members validated at the ballot box to serve for a period in the public interest. As described in the opening chapter, Participatory Democracy hovers uncomfortably between the two with its ground rules very much open to debate. The more so if it is to be combined in a hybrid system alongside an existing representative system which may consequently require to be modified accordingly.

This chapter therefore looks once again at the case studies, but this time to evaluate the existing structures as forms of Participatory Democracy. Whilst the previous chapter examined them from the point of view of the local authorities' own objectives, defined as responsiveness and offsetting disadvantage, here they are examined from the point of view of any democratic objectives to highlight what lessons can be learnt about how the ground rules should operate.

It was beyond the scope of this limited research to consider any impact that may have been achieved in such areas as rallying support for a particular political party or increasing voter turnouts which are the factors often taken as a measure of success. Discussion is restricted to three areas, namely whether the structures have created opportunities for informed debate, whether they have any capacity to increase trust in the representative system, and whether they lower the barriers to involvement. This is followed by a consideration of the particular effects of participation within an environment influenced by party politics.

Thereafter the closing sections return once again to the themes of Chapter 1 in relation to the role of citizens in a democratic state, considering the contrasting theories of participation as a right which the state has an obligation to secure, and participation as an obligation which the state has a right to compel.

Representative democracy sought to address one set of problems, namely the national scale necessitated in governing a modern state, the need for specialisation in a complex industrial society, and the time involved in taking decisions. The role of the citizen was narrowed accordingly to the occasional voter with few day-to-day means to hold his representative to account. As we saw in Chapter 1, this is no longer seen to be sufficient. The turning point in our thinking in Britain is attributed to the consequences of the first world war in which so many men died; if they have to pay the ultimate sacrifice, the argument goes, they should not be denied some say in the decision to go to war.

Thus it is maintained that social justice requires that the individual deserves more:

*'... as an argument for participation in a different key, that we owe it to people as human beings to consult them about what is going to happen to them and what they are going to have to do. Otherwise, we are merely pushing people around as if they were things not men. Men are rational agents, and ought to be reasoned with about what they are going to do, and all the more so about public legal enactments they are going to be obliged to carry out. Since nobody can contract out of the body politic, and all are required to conform to regulations, we show disrespect to man's rationality if we expect any one to hearken to our laws but are not prepared to listen to his views.'* (Lucas 1976, p 152)

To the concept of citizenship as described by Marshall (1950) which in the eighteenth century brought civil rights - equality before the law, liberty of the person, freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to own property and conclude contracts, in the nineteenth brought political rights - to take part in elections, the right to serve in bodies with political authority - in the twentieth brought social rights - the right to a certain standard of economic and social welfare - should be added the right to self-determination (Gould 1988).

Liberal democracy according to this vein of thought, stands accused of putting undue emphasis on the individual at the expense of the collective, whilst Socialism suffers the reverse. To some the case is so self evident that it can be claimed *'The fundamental principle that citizens have the right to participate in decisions that influence their lives is, however, no longer debatable.'* (Oosthuizen 1984). In another camp stand those whose criticism is that representative democracy, in general, Liberal Democracy in particular, is a thin form of democracy in which:

*'Individuals taught to think as isolated participants in the market are unlikely to be able to think as common participants in the polity. Liberal Democracy makes of this limitation a virtue by treating politics as an arena of market competition.'* (Barber 1984, p 255)

This denies both opportunities or requirements for citizens to play a full part in their own self government. The call is for 'strong' democracy which returns to forms of day-to-day involvement for everyone so that all can enjoy the educational and psychological benefits of engaging in debate through which they will become 'we-thinkers' (Barber op. cit).

The undue emphasis on the freedoms of individuals has undermined any conception that the state too has rights, amongst them the right to expect citizens to perform certain duties in return for benefits derived. Indeed the state is deemed to have been at fault:

*'... in the corrupted liberal orders, under which the state, failing to fulfil a large part of its obligations to the citizen, and the citizen, failing in large measure to observe the principle of duty, together give legitimacy to the moral primacy of a politics of rights, generally understood as mere claims to the satisfaction of wants. In such circumstances, the state fails in its duty to enhance the civic bond, and the citizen fails in his duty to play the citizen's part; and both contribute to the acceleration of the process of civic disaggregation.*

*Moreover, it is an outcome (and further cause) of the displacement of the true moral relations between the civic order and its members that the a-civic, or asocial, 'universal plebeian' has been permitted, by default, gradually to become the archetypal citizen, or ostensible citizen, of the corrupted liberal democratic order. The universal plebeian is, inter alia, the citizen in whose eyes citizenship has been ethically reduced to the possession of a passport, the right (diminishingly exercised) of suffrage, and the entitlement to a cluster of insecure benefits furnished by public provision. Just as the mere payment of taxes-for-services is not sufficient to ground a citizen relation, so the dutiless receipt of benefit is not a true badge of civic identity or belonging.'* (Selbourne 1994, p 28)

Critics of very disparate dispositions thus merge in advocating participation.

Alternative solutions are suggested to deal with the distance/scale problem. There are those who see exciting new prospects of bridging space by means of new technology. In the US Columbus has already held its inaugural electronic town meeting (Percy-Smith 1995) to decide if cats should be licensed; Holland has pioneered the weekly panel survey of consumer attitudes via home computers (McLean 1989); in Britain we have our first MP accessible by E-Mail and the 1995 TUC Congress is on the Internet. We are to be world citizens of a Virtual Democracy (Guardian 1995).

There are those by contrast, who call for decisions to be broken down and returned to lower levels. They envisage a reformed society of voluntary associations or cooperatives coming together in a form of Associative Democracy



(Hirst 1994). Or statistically representative panels will be summoned from amongst volunteers who express an interest in particular issues or subject areas to form a Demarchy (Burnheim 1985). Most theorists, however, accept that the representative system is inevitable for large assemblies, even at the city level, but wish to see it complemented and supplemented with more direct forms in addition. So what light does experience of participation as democratisation shed on possible models in such a hybrid system.

## DEMOCRATIC OBJECTIVES OF PARTICIPATION

The first problem is that any democratic objectives of participation are even less clearly articulated than the other aims of responsiveness or offsetting disadvantage. From Hambleton's list in Figure 2.6 two elements are listed under political awareness. One relates to enlisting support for a particular political party, an aim it would appear for the Liberals in Tower Hamlets (Lowndes & Stoker 1992). The other concerns retaining political support for public services, which as recounted in Chapter 3 was a concern amongst Scottish Councils. The adapted listing in Figure 10.1 also includes increasing voting turn-outs, strengthening the representative system. To these in the present case studies can be added a desire for better informed debate at AMCs (McFadden 1982), and bringing in non-voters at ALCs. But there would appear to be even less overtly conceived hopes for changes in attitudes amongst those involved. A tentative final list might therefore read:

Table 12.1 Objectives of Participation

*	Support for particular political party
*	Increased voting turn-outs
*	Support for public services
*	Informed debate
*	Increased trust in the representative system
*	Lower barriers to involvement
*	Ownership of resultant decisions
*	Produce 'we-thinkers'
*	Recreate community solidarity
*	Reintroduce obligations to the state

These aims, as can be seen, shade from enhancing the representative system at the start to creating 'better' citizens at the end.

It is beyond the scope of the present study to evaluate whether some of these objectives are being achieved, but it can shed some light on the more limited aims of creating informed debate, increasing trust in the representative system and lowering barriers to involvement. As before, let us assume that the council wishes to achieve the maximum effect for the minimum participation, what could they hope to achieve?

## INFORMED DEBATE

There are two ways that the desire to create informed debate might be interpreted. In the first version the information comes from the community, possibly via its participants, and the debate takes place within the representative system. The community may contribute the problems to be addressed (set the agenda) and inject local knowledge. This would appear to be the vision of Jean McFadden (1982) for the AMC. A second interpretation would be that information came from the 'experts', whether professional or community, and the debate included the lay people whether councillors or participants.

It is clear in the current case studies that little or no information is percolating upwards which would result in the debate amongst councillors and officers being better informed. Nor, as we have seen, is there debate around the table at AMCs since the meetings are for the purposes of taking decisions, so participants can in no way be said to be learning such skills and disciplines. At ALCs the information flow is downwards and discussion again minimal.

## Information

Were the councils to wish to maximise the upwards flow of information, they would be better to contemplate entirely different means for achieving this. Involving people in committees inevitably limits the number who can be reached so that mechanisms such as surveys would be far more effective :

*'But not very much participation is needed to elicit essential information, and to involve people very fully in decision-making is neither the only nor the best way of securing the necessary flow of relevant information and argument. All that is required is a certain amount of openness on the part of government. Proposals should be publicized before they are finally decided upon, and there should be an opportunity for anyone to apprise the authorities of any facts or considerations he thinks relevant.'*

(Lucas op. cit, p140)

By adding community council places at the table the District are hearing from individuals; had they consulted with CCs by letter they could have heard from 98

groups; by asking their own Market Survey department to cooperate with CCs in producing door-to-door leaflets or newsletters they could have conducted a sample survey throughout the city, and so forth.

## Debate

That councils are poor at debate is a fact much bemoaned by reformers. One of the proposals in the Widdicombe review (HMSO 1986), for instance, was for separate deliberative committees. It was to meet this need that Strathclyde experimented with Member/Officer Working Groups to examine issues in depth. Stoker queries why it is that the public parts of the council system are the ones which are opened up, whilst the parts where meaningful discussion takes place continue to be held in private:

*'In other western democracies there is a stronger interest in creating forums which enable political leaders to debate issues in public - select committees, scrutiny reviews, commissions, blue-ribbon forums. Building on the limited experience of similar initiatives in Britain political leaders could be encouraged to move their deliberations about policy development into public forums, inviting a range of interested participants to give evidence or present options. Public discussion in such a deliberative manner provides a sounder basis for civic leadership than behind-closed-doors policy development.'* (Stoker 1994, p14)

Reflecting on Scottish experience of empowering communities, amongst suggested strategies Barr lists:

*'... evidence that the performance of power structures is genuinely open to influence. This will include political committees and departmental decision-making procedures. (The closed nature of party political policy decision-making may need to be an area for especially close scrutiny).* (1995, p131)

In part the councils have chosen their route in good faith for reasons that have to do with their interpretation of how people become empowered. The argument runs along the line taken by Lally {Q} *"We have involved them in real decisions."* so they have real power. They might achieve more by attaining real influence as Richardson puts it:

*'Where consumers participate in bodies with few decision-making powers, or where their status does not entail voting rights, they have, by definition, few formal powers. It is therefore easy to argue that they have little power, that they are basically at the mercy of those with formal powers, whether involved with them or elsewhere. This may be so, but it cannot be assumed from the start. As long as they are able to convince those with such powers of the merits of their case, or to worry them sufficiently about the consequences of taking other action that the desired decisions are taken, they can be seen to have effective power - whatever their formal status.'*

*Conversely, where consumers participate in bodies with many decision-making powers and have full voting status in them, they have, by definition, some formal powers. It might be argued that they therefore have some power, that they can affect the course of decisions taken. Again, this may prove to be the case, but again it cannot be assumed from the start. As long as the other decision-makers are able to convince them of the merits of their case, or to worry them sufficiently about the consequences of taking other action that their desired decisions are taken, the consumer can be seen to have little effective power - despite their formal status.' (1983, p83)*

As we have seen, the councils do not even make much effort to present the merits of their case. From their interview responses, the community participants seem, however, to be in accord with Lally in evaluating their formal powers rather than their impact on decisions which is, as they themselves acknowledge, by and large minimal. They appear to value the symbols of power over the capacity to achieve an impact.

## **INCREASED TRUST IN REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY**

The proxy measure taken for this increased trust is usually that non-voters should register and come to the ballot. Such a narrow quantitative outcome would clearly not come near to satisfying the call for strong democracy (Barber op. cit), nor is it within the scope of this research to evaluate whether any such outcome has been achieved. Rather here the focus will be on the kind of conditions under which an increase in trust might be anticipated, concentrating first on the few participants/activists and secondly on the wider public beyond.

If we take as a measure of trust that activists believe that their elected councillors and appointed officers are more accountable to them as community representatives, the evidence from the case studies is mixed. As recounted in Chapter 10, councillors in the main feel their duty stops at consultation. Most of the activists, meanwhile, have alternative means to interact with elected members. The officers do not regard themselves as accountable, not even to councillors *let alone* the representatives, though they may have an eye on the views of the wider community. Activists do feel there is more openness than there used to be, but mostly due to informal contacts with officers. Only in Castlemilk ALC do participants, due to their ability to dictate the rules, regard the system itself improved, though the atmosphere is still described as 'Them and Us'. this provides a pointer to how greater trust could be generated amongst the few who are directly involved.

But if the desire is to inculcate greater trust in those outwith this inner circle, can this be achieved? That is do people have to be participants themselves for such benefits to accrue? Since the current study only extended to interviews with activists, pointers on this question can only be culled from elsewhere. There is some evidence that under the right conditions attitudes amongst non-participants can be affected. One example comes from the different, but related, field of regeneration where in Israel it was found that residents who felt well represented were more positive in their evaluation of project activities (Churchman 1992). A study of five cities in the US where there were structures to integrate Neighbourhood Councils (NC) with Townhalls showed that local people rated the system as open to themselves provided the NC was easily approached to raise a problem and provided the NC was seen as being taken seriously by Townhall (Berry, Portney & Thomson 1993). The significant factors were listed by these authors as being that the NC were obliged to carry out extensive outreach work (for which they had funding), which met the first criterion. In addition, that they had a right to consultation/comment on zoning applications and their views, at least on local priorities, carried weight. The latter meant they had economic muscle since they could influence decisions concerning businesses and commerce.

This situation differs markedly from that in the case studies. The structures here actually inhibit the participants from keeping in touch with their own grassroots group, whether CC, voluntary organisation or Umbrella Group, and certainly do not require outreach to the general public. Nor do these groups have anything approaching economic muscle.

Indeed, as was apparent from the comments in response to the Scottish Office from CCs themselves (Duncan 1993) and from the councils on which they depend (see Chapter 3), CCs are at best weak, at worst by-passed. Only a minority of authorities have produced the Code of Practice on Consultation required by the 1973 Act (CCRC internal report). Their funding levels throughout Scotland averaged at £607 per CC per annum, with the worst placed receiving only £50 (ASCC 1995), whilst an active CC reported its expenditure to provide a neighbourhood office at £10,000 (private letter to Scottish Office). Only with the coming of the Unitary Authorities has there been a promise that CCs will be granted legal rights to be informed of planning and licensing applications (which would put them on a par with NCs and zoning). CCs are constantly adjudged to have failed because they are unrepresentative, not because they have failed at outreach. If the councils were seriously interested in increasing levels of trust in themselves, on the US evidence from Neighbourhood Councils, this has to have been a lost opportunity.

## REACHING (NON) VOTERS

If reaching people is evaluated in purely numerical terms of the numbers of direct participants in the case study then the picture is far from impressive. The calculation is simple for AMCs with their fixed places, the result demonstrating that in a city of around 300,000 electors (a guesstimate since poll tax has affected numbers actually registered) there are 85 participants at any given moment. The case study ALCs with their floating attendances at a generous estimate involve about 60 participants in a population of 56,000 or 1:930. In addition, these 150 odd people are not only atypical in being activists, they are certainly not non-voters, indeed they are not just party supporters but in fact comprise a very high percentage of party members.

As one measure of the opportunity lost, the 98 out of 114 CCs which are in existence throughout the city have a capacity to reach 2,000 members (CCRC annual report) who are still volunteers, but ones who strive to be non-party political. So if a genuine effort had been made to allow time for consultation downwards and mandating, and provided the good democrats were encouraged at the expense of bad democrats, far more people could have been reached. This might have been just as effective without any necessity to meet around a table if the relationship were limited to consultation, not involvement in decision-taking. Without the straight jacket of small numbers dictated by the meeting format, there could have been exciting opportunities to reach people which might have begun to make contact with non-voters.

## LOWERING THE BARRIERS

The barriers to involvement still remain high, how could they be lowered further? Some commentators would see the evidence of gate-keepers who are bad democrats as confirming fears that opening up affairs to participation only brings to the fore the wrong kind of people. Wrong in this context can be defined as working class authoritarians (Thompson 1970), as the over dominant middle class (Boaden *et al* 1982), as the '*municipally patronised community elite*' (McGrail 1995, p201).

Whoever they are deemed to be, the result will be unfair. But what the case studies demonstrate is that it is the nature of the structures which creates the gate-keepers. This offers hope that remedies could be found. The next four sections consider what action might be contemplated to inhibit the natural volunteers, to reach the non-participants, to entice in the reticent or to compel non-volunteers.

## INHIBITING NATURAL VOLUNTEERS

The likelihood of the emergence of community gatekeepers and unaccountable bureaucrats exercised the minds of the architects of Direct Democracy in Athens, where they evolved methods to deal with these problems which are still of relevance to us today. They dealt with both by selecting incumbents of fixed positions by lot and then severely restricting terms of office. No citizen was permitted to serve on the Council, which dealt with day-to-day matters and organised the Assembly, for more than one year at a time or two years in a lifetime. In addition, they took turns 50 at a time area by area. Within the representative system, the Levellers in the 1700s contended that Members of Parliament in Britain should serve for two terms of 2 years each (Arblaster 1994), and within very recent times there has been recall for sitting MPs.

In the current case studies it is very clear that the more entrenched gate-keepers could easily be debarred by imposing short terms of office and forbidding the holding of multiple public offices. The domination of Belvidere ALC and the East End AMC by Calton/Bridgeton CC could be ended at a stroke by circulating the AMC place periodically to the other 4 CCs on a rota basis. It is likely, were this to be done, that C/B-CC would swiftly move to make the incumbent accountable. That this is not done, despite widespread recognition of the problem, owes everything to the ambivalent attitudes of the councillors who absolve themselves of any responsibility, even maintaining that they can do nothing because changes must come from the community. The improvements at Castlemilk-ALC only came about in the context of a review by the council which incorporated suggestions from the Umbrella Group.

If the desire is to reach more people, then there are two modes of approach. One is to channel their views indirectly via the activists who do volunteer, by ensuring that they are truly speaking for their constituents. This would strengthen the existing structures. The other is to tap their views directly, which would by-pass or eliminate the need for the current structures.

## REACHING VIA ACTIVISTS

Taking the former, it would not be difficult to devise remedial action to promote good democrats at the expense of bad ones by strengthening accountability of community representatives to their immediate constituency and beyond that to the public. This involves ensuring that the representative is discussing with their

group(s) the forthcoming agenda, not just reporting back the meeting outcomes after the event. Some ideas are quick to implement - send additional agendas to group secretaries, write direct to all groups asking that they reply via their representative ... It is perfectly feasible, if slower, to demand that any participant who purports to speak for a group provide evidence such as minutes that that group has discussed the matter and supports the view put forward. Beyond that, at the expense of more time, similar proof of public views can be required.

For instance, when Glasgow District was contemplating what policy to adopt on amending the issuing of liquor licences where there had been 'wet' and 'dry' areas within the city, they consulted via CCs but demanded concrete proof of how the CC had collected views within their own area, by survey or holding a public meeting, and the percentage of those pro or against change, not just a yes or no. Under these circumstances CCs were being asked to carry out their actual written remit of 'ascertaining, coordinating and expressing' the views of their public.

To claim, as Pat Lally did [1], that such moves are impossible because they would destroy efficient decision-taking is to claim that on every occasion speed is of the essence. Yet the Vignette of the request for a reconsideration of the regulations on drinking in public places (see page 300) demonstrates that a considered policy change may take over two years to come to fruition. The resolution is straightforward. If speed is needed, leave the community out. Where it is not, bring the community in early not at the last moment when they can play no meaningful part except that of unwanted opposition (Morris 1993).

As we have already seen, the US NCs are required, and funded, to produce newsletters. In addition, developmental outreach is performed both by volunteers and by community workers either supplied by the respective Townhall or employed by the NC itself (Berry, Portney & Thomson op. cit; Haerble 1989). The aim is two-fold, to establish channels of communication so that the NC is in close touch with its constituency and to bring in new blood. In the case studies, Glasgow AMCs have no access to specialist community development staff, and in Strathclyde outreach work of strengthen the ALCs is not a universal priority, depending rather on the attitudes of individual staff. The latter may be entirely against the whole idea of the community becoming close to the local authority, fearing that the motivation is to legitimise decisions or coopt dissent (Barr 1991). Where there has been support, as in Castlemilk, from both staff employed within Social Work and staff responsible to CUG and CHIP, domination by gatekeepers may persist but domination by bad democrats is less in evidence.



## REACHING NON-PARTICIPANTS

It is not the intention here to dwell on the means to reach more or new people directly outside any structure for providing face-to-face encounters. Suffice it to mention such measures include consumer surveys, telephone opinion polls and the like to tap individual feedback on existing services or alternative priorities. The objection from a democratic point of view to such devices is that any feedback remains uninformed since there has been no exchange of views which might change opinions (Fishkin 1991). In addition, the evidence from the women's movement (Phillips 1991) indicates that where there is a desire to reach the socially isolated, especially those with low estimates of their personal efficacy, the discussion meeting format was much to be preferred over any method which treated women singly on their own, a finding which is of relevance to those concerned to offset disadvantage. They pointed though to a need for assertiveness training to counteract domination even in their studiedly non-hierarchical organisations.

## ENTICING THE RETICENT

Attention, rather, turns to means to reach more or new people directly within some kind of structure which overcomes this criticism. As we saw in Chapter 10, the 'supergladiators' are prepared to expend an extraordinary amount of time on their voluntary activities even at the expense of leisure and family commitments. This, it is assumed, is offputting to others who have no desire to devote such an inordinate amount of their life to never-ending meetings, who are not willing to join Deakin's infamous '*stage army*' of meeting addicted activists (see page 267).

However, it should not be deduced that they are entirely unwilling. As Lucas argues '*the customary distinction between the concerned activist and the uncaring mass is too crude*' (op. cit, p232). If the barriers are to be lowered, then people have to be allowed to care only about one issue which concerns them deeply or for a short time (Stoker 1994). Here the responsiveness model wins over the empowerment model for two reasons. One is that it allows this kind of specialisation since different groups can be formed short or long term to concentrate on particular issues. A day conference can be held to discuss safety and traffic management; topic groups can be formed to link with the Elderly or Youth Forums. Mention has already been made of opening up Member/Officer Groups to a wider catchment. All allow for face-to-face dialogue, provide opportunities to weigh evidence before reaching a judgement, thus contributing collective advice. Rights to Referenda and Initiative then ensure that the decision to consult will not always

lie with the authority, nor will the topic to be addressed always be of their choosing. A survey has shown that there is strong public support for innovations of this kind with 78 and 61 per cent of the sample respectively thinking such powers desirable, whilst 53 and 49 per cent indicated they would make use of such devices (Dunleavy & Weir 1994 quoted in Stoker 1994). Such a system begins to spread any educative effects of Direct Democracy more widely.

## COMPELLING THE NON-VOLUNTEERS

Even this may not be sufficient to entice in those who are most alienated or most lacking in confidence. But once what is being asked of people is a short term commitment, we can contemplate a step onwards beyond accepting voluntary service to exacting obligatory service. The one vestigial example which still exists of Athenian democracy in Britain today is the jury system in the courts where citizens are selected on a rota basis. Here too we have their solution to the question of avoiding the emergence of oligarchy, namely payment to those who would otherwise be at a financial disadvantage in carrying out their duties. Advocates for a return to such a system include Fishkin (*op. cit*) who envisages a deliberative opinion poll, in his example a representative sample of electors are brought together for a week to select candidates for the US presidency. To date there have been experiments in two countries with advisory citizen juries, one of planning cells in Germany organised by a Research Institute on behalf of local councils wanting to know public views, one in the US where the projects have been arranged by an independent charitable organisation (Stewart, Kendall & Coote 1994). A novel aspect of the German version was payment to employers to free their staff to fend off refusal by small firms. Those who have been involved are reported to have enjoyed the experience and in Germany the financial inducement of a daily payment was said to be unnecessary. As a means to test out views, these particular examples are expensive with an average jury in the US costing \$50,000 (in 1994) at Regional level or \$400,000 (in 1993) at National level, and in Germany costing £13,000 (in 1992) at City level and £105,000 (in 1985) at National level.

The advantage of a degree of compulsion is that it brings into the fold those who are otherwise reticent to put themselves forward. Since these are known to include those in poverty in deprived areas (Geddes 1995), if authorities are serious about offsetting disadvantage they need to move beyond establishing structures which attract only the existing activists. In so doing they will upset those Liberals who believe that all compulsion leads to tyranny and those community workers

who believe that any dialogue with the authorities inevitably leads to muffling of legitimate dissent. We need a new concept of benevolent compulsion.

For it is a short step onwards to far greater degrees of compulsion and voices are already raised whose tenor is that the state should reinvigorate its obligations to provide opportunities or its right to demand service in return for benefits. Barber (op. cit) lists amongst his institutions for strong democracy forms of conscription for all young people for a period of two years in a choice of five Corps, with options for this to take the form of military or community service to inculcate national bonding. A similar scheme has been proposed in Britain (McCormick 1995) and is actually in operation in 3 trial areas. Ostensible citizens are to be cured of their over-dependency by schemes akin to workfare:

*'When the principle of duty ceases to be the sovereign principle of the civic order, and dutiless right rules in its stead, the process of civic disaggregation is accelerated and can barely be halted. To secure the citizen's fulfilment of duty to the civic order to which he belongs by acts of public or community service is a precondition (among others) of arresting of such process, as well as a task of the civic social-ism of the future. A further precondition of the gradual restoration of the civic order from disaggregation is that many of the practical duties which have to do with its guardianship and well-being - and which are are present carried out by paid public servants on its behalf, and, in respect of some duties, in entire moral absolution of the citizen body - should be increasingly shared by the citizens themselves. Thus , n the provision of social care for the elderly and for children at risk, in nursery care, in medical and educational auxiliary service, in the maintenance of a night-watch and the guardianship of public buildings, in the protection of the environment and the upkeep of place, in safeguarding the quality of foodstuffs and other supplies of the civic order, and in related acts of local oversight and administration, the citizen's co-responsibility for the condition of the civic order to which he belongs must be increasingly permitted, encouraged by inducement, and enforced by sanction. (Selbourne op. cit, p232)*

The threat of sanctions here moves far beyond benevolent compulsion.

## INHIBITING THE INFLUENCE OF PARTY POLITICS

So far the discussion has ignored the evidence from the research that in Glasgow a very high percentage of participants and activists are supporters or members of the Labour Party. Since Glasgow is virtually a one-party state, amongst those who are active such a finding is not altogether surprising. However, as this aspect has not been highlighted in other studies there is no means of knowing if this is unique to this city and to these models or would be found wherever such initiatives are established, whichever the party and whatever its level of domination. Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that the picture here is commonplace, what are the lessons?

Some of the measures already considered above may be sufficient to reduce the influence of party politics, but some solutions may require a complete revision of the structures. The difference in choice is dependent on alternative analyses of the causal direction. One possibility is that the nature of the current structures at the interface between community and council inevitably attracts those types of volunteers who are at ease in a political setting or who are themselves ambitious to become elected. The other, more sinister, interpretation is that councillors and officers and, on occasion also activists, are hand-picking certain individuals who are less threatening or allies who support what they themselves are seeking. It was not within the scope of this research to provide any pointers to which might be at work (though the unsolicited comments incorporated in the Ladder of Ways to Eliminate Voice in Figure 11.1 shed some light on this). The aim was the more modest one of discovering if the tacit assumption that community volunteers were non-party political was borne out in practice.

However, we can perhaps hypothesise that the more the community are admitted to fora in which they share real decision-taking with councillors and the more significant those decisions are to the councillor(s) concerned, the greater will be the temptation to manipulate the rules, favour with grants or infiltrate. On this basis it would appear that a committee with powers is more vulnerable than a purely advisory one restricted to wielding influence. It was for this reason in the foregoing chapter that the proposed models were not hybrids involving community alongside elected members, and clearly left all or significant decision-taking with the representative system.

If it is basically the predisposition of the volunteers which attracts them to these committees, then the measures to strengthen their accountability, discourage gate-keepers and support good democrats may suffice. If other volunteers are being

positively discouraged by the present incumbents, then outreach through community development could help to counteract their domination. In addition, the responsiveness model with multiple opportunities via special interests would increase the sheer number of places which would have to be infiltrated. On the other hand, if it is that councillors and officers are choosing to consult where dissent is least likely, this model may be more vulnerable to manipulation. It is more troublesome to see how to safeguard against this by producing binding Codes of Practice.

There are real dangers were councillors to be in a position to favour their political friends within the community, or the latter to be in a position to demand such favours. If decisions over budgets are devolved, strengthening accountability alone is insufficient, so is leaving the decision within the representative system when this only comprises one or two councillors with local ward loyalties. The responsiveness model is irrelevant (since it can not be given grant-making powers) and the empowerment model is problematic. This poses a real dilemma for those who maintain that the neighbourhood forums will only be meaningful when they have control over a local budget.

For councillors to go to the lengths of infiltrating committees with their political allies, the activities of that committee have to be of significance. In this respect an Area Committee or a Neighbourhood Council with devolved powers might attract interest. It may be recalled that it was for reasons such as this that the Town Clerk in Glasgow had been against devolving development control decisions to AMCs. A committee or group with consultative powers only, or a Working Party or Single Issue group preparing an in-depth study, should not warrant such attention. If the picture in Glasgow is not unique, then it seems simplistic in the extreme to rely on the community participants and/or the groups from which they are drawn never being partisan. Therefore in a setting where party politics dominate, on balance models of participation limited to consultation to achieve improved responsiveness from the representative system are to be preferred.

## **CHOICE OF STRUCTURES**

Of the two models proposed in the previous chapter, each has its advantages and disadvantages viewed as a vehicle for enhancing democracy. The responsiveness model opens up more opportunities for people to become involved for shorter periods and allows individuals to specialise. It can cope with city-wide groups who share a community of interest rather than an area based community. It should be less prone to the emergence of entrenched gate-keepers. On the other

hand, with so many centres of discussion to choose from, it is considerably easier for councillors or officers to by-pass one group in favour of another which represents less of a threat. The empowerment model is more demanding and requires individuals to be generalists caring about a specific neighbourhood. Under our present legislation it is the only one to which devolved decision-taking can be permitted but, if meaningful decisions are passed down, it may be more vulnerable to manipulation and infiltration.

## **LESSONS FROM THE RESEARCH**

This study set out to show how the way in which participation is structured can cut the participants off from those for whom they are supposed to speak. The lessons here would apply universally in any context where an element democratisation is introduced. Indeed it can be that elected members become cut off from their constituents in exactly the same way and for the same reasons, but in the representative system they are validated by the periodical ballot to act in the public good. If it is assumed that this is not the role of participants, then the structures have to be rethought to allow them time to consult. The same would be true for the class representatives for students in university, for parents on School Boards, for workers on the Boards of Directors ...

On the other hand, the political scene uncovered here is unique to Glasgow. Within Glasgow, it differs area by area, very much dependent on the relevant key individuals. It could well be that even against a different backdrop the picture that emerged would not have been the same since the research period covered times of particular political turbulence. The fights for nominations as candidates to stand for the Regional and Unitary Authority elections were particularly bitter with diminished numbers of seats available, changes in boundaries and the leadership factions. Allies in the community may have been more than usually necessary to secure an outcome.

Nor can the causal direction for the high level of political activism be deduced for certain, though there does seem a high probability that structures of the kind under examination here would favour individuals who feel at ease in a political, if not party political, environment. If this is so, then decentralisation initiatives which include democratisation incorporating community participants not only need to improve their accountability to their constituents but to build in additional safeguards to prevent political packing. The more real decision-taking is devolved, the stronger these safeguards will have to be.

## THE ROLE OF CITIZENS

Finally let us return to the broader themes from the literature in Chapter 1, reconsidering in the light of this research the questions of stability and conflict, participation as a right and participation as an obligation.

### STABILITY AND CONFLICT

Concern in relation to stability, as outlined in Chapter 1, began with a view that bringing the masses into the arena would destabilise government by the ruling elite since it would engender conflict within the system. Subsequently, the worry became that those alienated from the democratic processes, namely the poor, needed to be brought into the fold because of their potential to cause disruption. In Britain the social problems associated with unemployment, the drugs culture and consequent crime are regarded as sources of unrest (Hirst op. cit). Society is seen to be polarised to a greater extent than in the recent past as a result of Conservative policies since 1979 (Hutton 1995). Welfare provision Galbraith (1992) contends has been a victim of its own success in improving the lot of the working classes who, having joined an expanded middle class, have contributed to a culture of contentment where the majority will not pay taxes for the minority still excluded who are seen as socially containable.

Added to this concern is another that increasingly the middle classes, especially those devoted to single issues, are taking to the streets as the only way they feel their voice will be heard. Recent demonstrations over the export of calves have resulted in £7M in police costs. There is new urgency about the drive to increase trust in representative democracy since the state becomes ungovernable if the citizens do not consent. So

*'If decentralisation initiatives can 'turn grumbles into politics' they are making a valuable contribution to local democracy.'* (Geddes 1995, p16)

In the short term opening up local government may increase conflict and present authorities with uncomfortable levels of anger which they seem loath to face:

*'Whoever fears conflict fears democracy, and yet local government still seems strangely unprepared to accept and respond to conflict.'*  
(Hoggett 1995, p108)

Experience of the efforts in Glasgow is that the vast majority are still out there grumbling. The pragmatic reason for councils not to be lulled into a belief that the current structures have legitimated their decisions is that such unchannelled grumbling may become ignited.

## PARTICIPATION AS A RIGHT

In the sense that democracy is about the rights of individuals to self government, participation as explored in Chapter 1, implies channels for Voice to be expressed and listened to within Representative Democracy, to which Gould (op. cit) adds the right to self development though provision of opportunities for Direct Democracy. The current study adds to the growing evidence, however, that not everyone is equally likely to exert their rights. In the name of egalitarianism far more needs yet to be done to devise structures which reach out indirectly via those who can exert such rights. In the name of self-development far more needs yet to be done to explore alternatives which will entice them in. It may even be that a degree of benevolent compulsion is called for to incorporate those who are more reticent about putting themselves forward. The developmental reason for councils to evolve their structures is based on a view that the state owes individuals the right to control their own lives.

## PARTICIPATION AS AN OBLIGATION

Which brings us to the problem of those who do not want to accept responsibility. The Utopian scenarios of Demarchy and Associative Democracy tell us nothing about what to do if individuals do not want to join in. Whilst people demand rights, they are far less likely to demand obligations. Unions clamour for rights to collective bargaining and picketing, not obligations to guarantee a fair day's work. Students press to be on the faculty committees, not to promise to hand in their essays on time in legible handwriting or to attend tutorials having read the relevant books. Governments are more popular if they confer rights than if they extend duties. The Citizens Charter is full of promises to consumers but barely mentions the obligations (Markham 1992). Mrs Thatcher's active citizen has volunteered for the Neighbourhood Watch or the School Board (or both).

Most authors would be with Lucas when he writes:

*'Decision-taking can be a chore, and should be recognized as such. Many people do not want- and should not be told to want - to devote more time and energy to it than they have to. They have their own lives to live and should be allowed to do so without undue pressure to participate very much in public affairs.'* (op. cit, p 160)

In summary, the chart overleaf lays out the choices discussed here, matching the motivation for a particular solution and its practical features to the view of the role of the citizen within the state which underpins it.



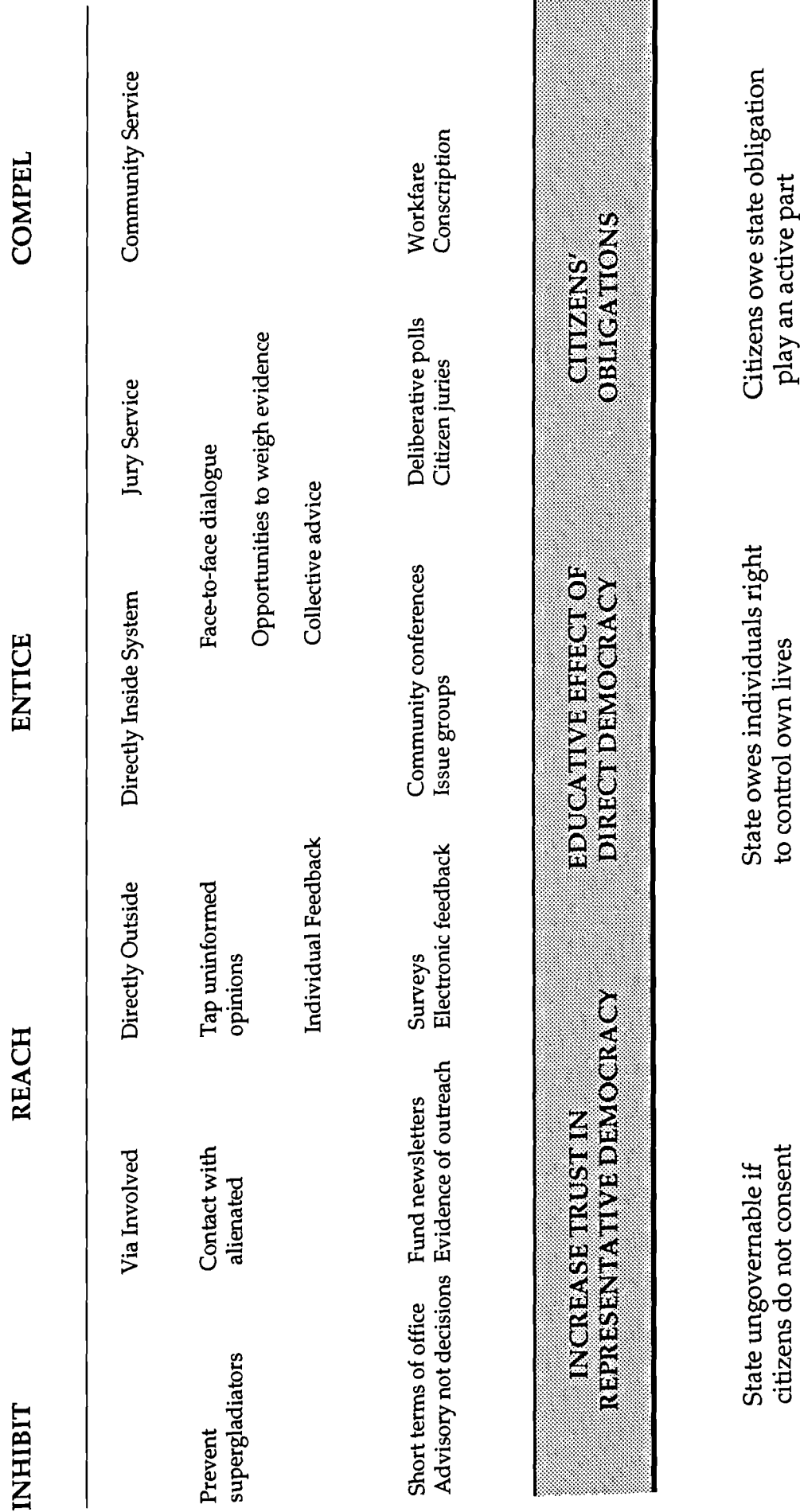


Figure 12.1 Spectrum of Involvement

PRELIMINARY INTERVIEWS WITH CENTRAL MONITORING OFFICERS

AIM; To explore similarities / differences between examples of the same structure with a view to formulating criteria for selecting case studies.

LEGAL

Is the committee purely advisory or has it decision making powers  
What is its status within the council and to which committee does it report?  
Are there legal constraints on community representation?  
Is there a common set of rules? Set by whom? Ratified by whom?

REMIT

Is there a written remit and who has access to this?  
What devolved powers have been granted?  
Do these include budget setting / grant giving / Urban Programme  
Who decides the remit

MEMBERSHIP

Which councillors? From organising authority From other authority MPs  
Which officers? Lead officer In attendance Support workers  
Who from community? How chosen By whom

MEETINGS

Where and when are they held?  
Who receives the invitation / agenda / papers and when?  
Are the minutes circulated / displayed / lodged for public examination  
How is the agenda compiled?

RESOURCES

What level of support and resources is provided?  
Is there adequate staffing?

DIFFERENCES / SIMILARITIES

Do individual examples of models differ and if so why?  
Are the reasons objective ones or human factors / attitudes / commitment?

EVALUATION

How are the structures evaluated and against what criteria?  
How would 'success' be defined?

## CHECKLIST FOR OBSERVATION AT MEETINGS

## SETTING

Central	<input type="checkbox"/>	In locality	<input type="checkbox"/>
Daytime	<input type="checkbox"/>	Night time	<input type="checkbox"/>
Imposing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Comfortable	<input type="checkbox"/>

## ATMOSPHERE

<----->		Standing orders <input type="checkbox"/>
Formal	Informal	
<----->		Voting <input type="checkbox"/>
Consensus	Conflict	

## SEATING PLAN

Who sits where around the table\*

Stakeholders by groups ☐ Community en bloc ☐

Do they seem of equal status?

What do the relationships appear to be?

Are there signs of alliances?

## TIME

How much time is spent on each item?

How much time is spent on types of activities?

Is there informal interaction at breaks?

## INTERVENTION

Community speak

<----->	
Often	Seldom

Who speaks and when?\*\*

Does the intervention appear meaningful and successful?

Is discussion dominated by the chair/lead officer ...?

Do certain community representatives dominate?

---

\* A plan was drawn for each occasion that a committee was attended showing exact details

\*\* An actual count was kept for community representatives

## INTERVIEWEE PROFILE OF COMMUNITY ACTIVISTS

Name ..... Date ..... Committee .....

Male ☐ Female ☐

Age Below 20 ☐ 20-39 ☐ 40-60 ☐ Over 60 ☐

Length of living in area Under 5 years ☐ 5-10 ☐ Over 10 ☐

Last stage of education .....

Training since .....

Employed Yes ☐ FT ☐ PT ☐ UP ☐

No ☐ Housewife ☐ Retired ☐

Most recent job .....

Any Union experience? Yes ☐ No ☐

Housing Owner ☐ Tenant ☐

Involvement in organisations 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ More ☐

Is any of these a political party? Yes ☐ No ☐

In an average week, how much time is involved? .....

When did they first become involved and why? .....

How long have they been involved with the AMC/ALC? .....

## CHECKLIST FOR EXAMINATION OF MINUTES OF ANY PARENT COMMITTEE

**AIM:** To establish the linkages upwards and downwards with the council and the extent to which the decentralised committees can influence central decisions.

1. Are the minutes of the lower levels incorporated?
2. If submitted is this for information or for (formal) ratification?
3. Do items from lower levels appear on the agenda for action?
4. How often does this happen?
5. On such occasions, are recommendations accepted or rejected?
6. Are items being remitted downwards?
7. If so, is this for
  - information
  - action
  - advice
  - consultation?
8. What is the frequency of this occurring?

CHECKLIST FOR EXAMINATION OF MINUTES OF AMC/ALC

1. Who is present at each meeting  
  
Councillors Officers Community  
Total size of committee when all present  
Normal attendance figures  
Faithfulness of attendance  
Seniority of officers  
Turnover of personnel
2. Analysis of items dealt with  
  
Are the issues parochial or wide ranging?  
Do items involve information, consultation, prioritisation or decisions?  
How many are in each category?
3. Are there signs of follow up action and linkages?  
  
Are there reports back on action taken and matters arising?  
Is there outgoing/incoming correspondence?  
Are there reports from councillors/officers?  
Are there reports from community representatives?
4. Control of agenda  
  
Where do items come from?  
Are they generated by officers or by councillors?  
Is there a mechanism for raising new business at meetings?  
Is this used by the community and accurately implemented?
5. Signs of conflict  
  
Are there indications of discussion/debate/argument?  
Is voting in evidence?  
Have the rules been challenged?

## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

**A. TAKING PART**

1. How would you describe your experience of taking part?
2. Does the committee operate well?
3. Is the information being presented in suitable form?
4. Is there time to discuss issues properly?
5. How do various members get on with one another?
6. What do you see as the aim?

**B. AGENDA SETTING**

1. How is the Agenda for the meeting compiled?
2. Who is involved in deciding what is discussed?
3. Where do the issues come from?
4. Are there matters not being discussed?
5. How is action progressed?

**C. ACCOUNTABILITY**

1. Who would you say you represent?
2. What do you see as your role?
3. Is the line you are going to take discussed in advance?
4. Does party politics play any part in the decisions taken?
5. Is the Council listening more sensitively?

**D. CONSTRAINTS**

1. Are there things which prevent the committee from operating well?
2. Is there a need for more resources/time/training/expertise ...?
3. Is there a need for support to community participants?
4. What do you consider is the status of the committee?

**E. PARTICIPATION/EMPOWERMENT**

1. What part can/should the community participants play?
2. How much influence do/should they have?
3. Can participants cope with the business?
4. Is being involved a burden?
5. Are all viewpoints being conveyed?
6. How much power should be transferred?
7. Have you learnt anything by being involved?

**F. IMPACT**

1. Has the structure achieved its aim?
2. Is anything being done differently?
3. Has the Council changed?
4. Is this due to participation?
5. Have attitudes changed?

## LIST OF INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

The following lists the interviewees by category. No individuals are named since all were promised anonymity. The number of interviews does not tally exactly since some individuals fell into more than one category; certain key individuals were interviewed twice.

Activists

Participants on ALCs	26	
Participants on AMCs	9	
CC Office bearers/Umbrella		66
Groups/ Non-participants	24	
Paid staff	7	

Councillors

Ward councillors for areas	15	
Convenors of committees	8	29
Policy initiators	6	

Officers

Local lead officers	8	
Field officers/Managers	12	
Central policy/Departmental	21	43
Policy initiators	2	

Commentators

Political activists	2	
Academic	5	9
Scottish Office	2	

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The local interviews were spread over the case study areas such that around forty interviewees were questioned in each area



## CONDUCT OF INTERVIEWS AND ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW RESPONSES

The purpose of this appendix is to describe in more detail exactly how the interviews were conducted and thereafter how the responses were analysed. The latter is of particular importance in that whose voice is represented in the analysis (and whose is not so included) is potentially a source of bias.

### STAGE 1

In preparation for conducting the interviews, the topics to be covered were listed on a master sheet according to the corresponding chapter headings. The relevant listing is shown in Appendix A6. Notebooks were laid out with spaces for notes on responses on the right hand page, for analysis on the left hand page. A tape recorder was to be used as back-up and to make a complete record of the actual expressions used.

### STAGE 2

The individuals next on the schedule were observed at the relevant committee partly to see them in action there, partly to have a notion of how the particular meeting was conducted, partly to identify a specific incident which would provide a good opening to conversation.

### STAGE 3

A letter was sent to each individual shortly before the proposed date for interviews, explaining the nature of the project and the contribution they might make. Thereafter they were contacted, whenever feasible in person at a meeting they attended, and arrangements made for an interview at their convenience.

### STAGE 4

After preliminaries (such as permission to tape), the interview proper began with the identified incident and conversation flowed from this. It was to take as natural as possible a course whilst ensuring that all the main topic headings were covered. Outline notes were taken continuously throughout. On average, each session lasted around two hours, but even this did not always allow every sub-question to be followed up in detail. Finally the personal profile was completed for activists if such items had not emerged in the course of discussion.

## STAGE 5

The first stages of analysis of the interview responses consisted of marking against the notes the chapter heading to which a comment should properly be assigned:

A Taking part   B Agenda setting   C Constraints   D Accountability  
E/F Participation/empowerment   G Impact

This was done by noting the gist of every informant's views under each heading and, in addition, by writing down their exact words where the interviewee illustrated their point particularly pertinently. From these notes, a brief indication of their gist and tenor was collated on the left-hand side of the notebook under the selected topic headings.

## STAGE 6

In preparation for writing up a chapter, all the coded comments on that topic were collated together, noting the category of respondent - councillor, officer, participating or non-participating activist - together with the type of model whether AMC or ALC and the geographic area.

## STAGE 7

The material was analysed in two ways, one being quantitative, one qualitative. Each of these topics was then taken in turn, all remarks relevant to this item being tabulated and examined to display any patterns which might emerge by asking the questions:

- Did all three categories - councillors, officers, activists - express similar or widely divergent views?
- Could differences be discerned between newcomers and old stagers, low and high ranking individuals, junior and senior officers, or leading and back-bench councillors?
- Were opinions the same whichever the model comparing AMC with AMC, ALC with ALC or AMC with ALC?
- Were opinions the same whichever the area comparing Castlemilk, Gorbals or the East End?
- Were opinions the same whichever the dominant authority, Glasgow District or Strathclyde Region?
- What, if any, was the relevance of the respective level of resources (funding, full-time staffing, developmental support ...)

This type of analysis provided quantifiable rankings of majority opinions where these existed.

## STAGE 8

These rankings were then tabulated using Excel to create the bar charts and pie charts which appear in the text. for example, the following table shows the answers to the question relating to who controls the agenda setting firstly at ALCs, secondly at AMCs, broken down by the category of interviewee.

	COUNCILLORS	OFFICERS	COMMUNITY
COUNCILLORS	3	10	0
OFFICERS	0	24	0
COMMUNITY	0	36	3
	COUNCILLORS	OFFICERS	COMMUNITY
COUNCILLORS	2	12	0
OFFICERS	0	23	0
COMMUNITY	0	24	0

In the text, the resultant chart is depicted on page xxx.

## STAGE 9

The quotations were selected, on the other hand, to provide a qualitative feel for the actual views expressed. As explained in the body of the text, these should not always be taken as strictly indicative of the *respective weight* of opinion. In addition, to protect anonymity promised to all informants, their provenance is occasionally deliberately obscured. They were intended as an illustration to portray the types and strengths of feeling. However, the number of comments similar in tenor do provide some idea of the frequency that the issue sparked off a reaction and the strength of the feelings portrayed. But not all informants were equally forthcoming. Some had clearly given a great deal of thought to the situation in which they found themselves. This was particularly true, for example, in Castlemilk where the Umbrella Group and the participants had contributed to drawing up the constitution. On the other hand, others had very little to say, having given little thought to structures or being unaware of how they operated in practice. The latter was, for instance, often the case with community council office bearers who did not themselves attend meetings. Indeed part of the reason for interviewing them was exactly to ascertain their degree of knowledge.

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