

Towards ‘Sustainable Communities’?

Community, Consultation and the Compulsory Purchase of the site for the 2012 Olympic Games

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Writing Cities. How do views shape words, how do words shape cities?

1.0 Introduction:

Past Olympic Games have often been criticised for failing to hold value or generate long-term benefits for their host cities, in spite of the enormous investments and exchanges of capital that relate to them (Atkinson et al 2008; Li & Blake, 2009; Vigor et al 2004). From the time that London began to frame its bid for the 2012 Olympic Games, the aim of sustaining value from it for the city and its people has been important. The idea of creating lasting value is central to the concept of 'Olympic Legacy'.

According to the International Olympic Committee Evaluation Commission report dated 6th June 2005, the London's 'Bid Team's' 'Olympic Games concept and legacy' were key to its success in securing the 2012 Games (International Olympic Committee Evaluation Commission, 2005, p. 71). In an article for the Guardian on 12th January 2003, Greater London Authority (GLA) Mayor Ken Livingstone argued that the prospect of an Olympic Games presented London, as it did Barcelona in 1992, with a 'unique opportunity'. This hinged on a view that an Olympic Games had the potential to attract huge levels of investment which could be harnessed toward the regeneration of London's East End 'economy and physical environment [combined] with the transformation of the city's, and even the nation's social capital' (Livingstone, 2003). The infrastructure, landscape and certain structures of an Olympic Park could be viewed and developed as 'catalysts' towards its long-term development as an active, mixed use piece of the city. This view was later reiterated in the GLA's '5 legacy commitments' published in 2007 (Greater London Authority., 2007, p. 3). Here Livingstone pledges a package of 'legacy' benefits for London in the wake of the Olympics which include '[m]ak[ing] the Olympic park a blueprint for sustainable living'.

This commitment coheres within a broader body of British New Labour urban policy relating to the creation and promotion of 'sustainable communities' of the future. Such policy includes *Sustainable Communities: building for the future* (2003), *Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1)* (2004), *The Sustainable Communities Act* (2007) as well as a wide range of regional and local policies and planning frameworks. Debate in the social sciences generated around these documents in recent years has focussed attention on the significance of sustainable communities policy from three key perspectives: on how to define 'sustainable communities', on how they may be constituted in place and practice, and on the efficacy of tools currently proposed for their delivery (Imrie et al 2008; Imrie & Raco, 2003). As a number of authors have suggested, community focussed policies under New Labour are reflective of a paradigm shift in terms of approach to regeneration. Property-led regeneration particularly in the 1980s, in focusing heavily on maximising short-term returns in the private property market, has attracted criticism for failing to adequately tackle its social and economic impacts, for example by ignoring the needs of more disadvantaged local residents directly affected by redevelopments (see for example, Imrie & Thomas, 1989). *Sustainable Communities: building for the future* and allied documents advocate participatory approaches to regeneration involving a cross-section of actors from private, public and voluntary sectors. Whilst 'public consultation' has, in these terms, come to be seen as one of the key tools for achieving 'sustainable communities', a quite different instrument advocated concurrently and somewhat ironically for realizing physical regeneration at the scale of neighbourhoods and districts is the 'Compulsory Purchase Order' (CPO). The CPO is a power invested in a development corporation or regeneration agency by central government to acquire privately owned lands using public funds. It is by means of this power that mega-sites - such as the London Docklands or the 2012 Olympic site - can be 'assembled' in order to facilitate the delivery of comprehensive redevelopment programmes. The site for the Olympic Park is situated within the Lower Lea Valley- a substantially post-industrialised part of East London long assigned for regeneration - and borders the emerging region known as the 'Thames Gateway', viewed as a major recipient for London's growing urban population over the next 20-50 years.

Speaking to the themes of this workshop, the broad aim of this paper is to examine relationships between contemporary policy geared to delivering a vision of 'sustainable communities' and certain processes of city-making that it influences. I focus on processes of public consultation undertaken by the London Development Agency (LDA, an executive arm of the GLA concerned with urban regeneration) in their process of assembling land for the 2012 Olympic Park. In doing so, I explore how the 'sustainable communities' vision becomes complicated in reality through contested understandings of both words and of the requisite instruments for delivering the vision.

The first part of this paper provides an overview of literature relating to definitions of 'sustainable community'. It is widely recognised that this term is slippery, meanings of each word having evolved historically and varying according to context, including the contexts in which they are brought together. UK Government think tank Demos argue that it is not only the slipperiness of the language but past experience that renders the UK government's assertion that the Olympics can help generate 'sustainable communities' unconvincing. Past Olympic Games have tended to be associated with problems such as the creation of venues which become 'white elephants' with little potential for a legacy reuse and escalating costs which, far from creating opportunities for regeneration, take host cities years to repay (Vigor et al., 2004, pp. 17-19). In these terms, whilst 'all levels of government argue that an Olympic Games provides the opportunity to deliver regeneration benefits to east London within the context of the Sustainable Communities Plan' (Vigor et al., 2004, p. 10) questions of how, where and for whom 'benefits' might be directed remain significantly unaddressed. The second part of the paper focuses on practices of community participation between 2004 and 2007 in the specific context of the Compulsory Purchase Order for the Olympic site. The analysis draws predominantly on material gathered through a series of interviews with seven representatives of former Olympic site business, residential and cultural groups in 2008. This is employed to suggest ways in which the linkage of consultation and compulsory purchase in practice may be problematical in the light of political aims to create 'sustainable communities.'

2.0 Sustainable development, communities and 'sustainable communities'

2.1 Sustainable Communities: building for the future

The 2003 'Sustainable Communities: building for the future' document established a set of broad constituents of sustainable communities which are set out in Table 1 below. It states that sustainable communities, essentially, are 'places where people want to live and will continue to want to live' (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister., 2003, p. 5). Planning Policy Statement 1 adds that sustainable communities are those that 'will stand the test of time, where people want to live and which will enable people to meet their aspirations and potential' (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). 2005, p. 3).

UNSUSTAINABLE	SUSTAINABLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low demand and abandonment • Empty homes • Homes falling below the 'decent homes' standard • Poor quality local environments • Apparent shortage of land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are prosperous • Have decent homes for sale or rent at a price people can afford • Safeguard green or open space • Enjoy a well-designed, accessible and pleasant living and working environment • Are effectively and fairly governed with a strong sense of community

Table 1: *The Characteristics of a Sustainable Community*

The introduction to *Sustainable Communities: building for the future* establishes that the document is intended, not merely to outline vision, but as to provide an instrumental 'programme of action' ODPM,

2003, p. 5). The substantive portions of the document are structured in a linear sequence of challenges, responses, resources and actions. Table 2 below outlines how the attributes of 'sustainable communities' are defined in relation to conditions that 'challenge' their existence in contemporary reality. The text then progresses quickly from these attributes to definitions of tools prescribed for their production.

A key political aim established in the document is to shift traditional land-use based strategy toward 'frameworks' that acknowledge the vital intersections between 'the way our communities develop, economically, socially and environmentally' (ODPM, 2003, p. 5). Whilst making clear that the delivery of sustainable communities must involve spatial planning, the document declares that this tool is not sufficient for 'meeting the diverse needs of all people in existing and future communities, promoting personal well-being, social cohesion and creating opportunity for all citizens' (ODPM 2005, p. 7). Following from this recognition that needs of communities are diverse and changing, the document states that 'partnership' in development - between policymakers at national, local and neighbourhood levels, developers, designers and project 'stakeholders'- is essential (p. 6). Different models of 'partnership' in development exemplify what many authors identify as recent UK government's broad objective of dispersing centralised powers amongst a spectrum of institutions and actors operating at regional and local levels. As Edwards argues, the 'government is seen as no longer having a distributive, directive function, but having one where it acts as a collaborator, or adjudicator between many different agencies' (Edwards, 2008, p. 1667). Both *Sustainable Communities* and PPS1 suggest that, further to partnership, processes of 'consultation' with communities impacted by development proposals are vital 'delivery mechanism[s]' Interestingly, consultation only became a statutory requirement under the 'Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act' introduced in 2004 (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). 2005, p. 16).¹ The policy is intended to address the 'fact' that 'too often in the past, delivery vehicles have been imposed on local communities rather than harnessing their expertise and knowledge' (p. 43). The respect accorded to local communities through this statement chimes with Imrie and Raco's argument that much contemporary British urban policy encourages 'the revival of citizenship and the activation of communities to spearhead urban change' (Imrie & Raco, 2003, p. 4). In these terms, the price for communities of respect and devolved power at the local level is responsibility for the urban futures to which they are simultaneously subject and statutorily involved.

Sustainable Communities makes clear that both powers and funds will be made available to development agencies such as the LDA and English Partnerships that operate between different levels of government and governance to assemble land for regeneration. This recognises the challenge of executing large scale urban plans on brownfield sites characterised by patchworks of fragmented ownership. Authors have pointed out that CPO processes, at least prior to 1997, tended to be problematic in relation to local communities (see, for example, Imrie & Thomas, 1989, 1997; Hall, 1998, pp. 928-929; Brownhill, 1993, pp. 42-44). Common criticisms have focussed on their typically 'adversarial nature' and tendency to signify the disempowerment of local people - often already disadvantaged - at the hands of state-sponsored organisations. As Imrie and Thomas notes, CPOs have often been presented to localities in nonnegotiable terms 'underpinned by a legal ideology which seeks to legitimise land acquisition by appealing to a broader public interest.' Interpretations of 'the public interest' in general terms, he suggests, have often been mobilised through CPOs to 'justify the ignoring of specificities of individual need' (Imrie, 1987, p. 1401). Raco has similarly argued that CPOs and their associated regeneration schemes have tended to be shaped 'by powerful, non local agents whose main concern is to maximise profit returns' (Raco, Demos, p 35) in the short-term, a kind of process which would appear to run counter

¹ Also see the "Community Involvement in Planning: The Government's Objectives"

to the notion of stable and long-term ‘public interest’. The frequent association of CPOs with *tabula rasa* approaches to development suggests not only the devaluing of local people but also of existing places, indicative for Raco of a broader philosophy of continually ‘prioritising change’ and for that matter concept and vision over continuity. The website introduction to *The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act* confirms that that it is actually intended to facilitate ‘LPAs, joint planning boards and National Park authorities [in making] a case for CPOs where it will be of economic, social or environmental benefit to [an] area.’ It also confirms a ‘widening of the category of person with an interest in the land who can object’ and details procedures relating to owner compensation.¹ In other words these measures serve to increase levels both of accountability in planning and power for local communities at early stages of large scale redevelopment proposals. This delegated power would appear, however, to be of questionable significance if it rests merely in the right to ‘object’.

CHALLENGES	RESPONSES
1. [to create] ‘decent’ homes, ‘decent’ places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment in social housing improvements • Protection for vulnerable occupants of private housing • Improving the quality of the local environment: ‘Living Places, Cleaner, Safer, Greener.’ Including tackling crime and antisocial behaviour • Raising the profile of good design
2. [to counter] low demand and abandonment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of strategic plans by partnerships of local authorities for whole housing markets • Sustained action through ‘Pathfinder strategic plans to replace obsolete housing with sustainable accommodation • Good quality, customer-focussed public services • Ensuring clean, safe, healthy and attractive environments in which people can take pride
3. [to create] a step change in housing supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that new homes already planned are built in the four growth areas of the South east of England • Promoting modern construction methods to get homes built more quickly, more safely and to a higher standard • Better targeted resources for affordable housing combined with measures to tackle homelessness • Encouraging home-ownership and modernising the ‘Right to Buy’
4. [to] tackle housing shortage whilst protecting the countryside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making the best use of land through development of previously developed land • That Greenfield land is not used wastefully, employing green belt and countryside protection tools • Increasing the supply of affordable homes in small rural settlements
5. [to create and promote] sustainable growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimising growth in the designated growth areas • Bringing together the best of design and planning to ensure that the built environment in new and expanded communities is of a high quality • To address public services and infrastructure needs to enable the new communities to function
6. reforming for delivery (to ensure the right <i>framework</i> of laws, structures and decision making processes, and the right skills, to support the agenda in this action programme)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reforming the planning system to allow devolution of power to the regions and more freedom for local government. • Strengthening planning at a regional level to ensure that strategies are coordinated and allowing sub-regional approaches to extend beyond individual local authority boundaries • Development of a skills strategy for sustainable communities in order to ensure we have the right people with the right skills

Table 2: Challenges to and Responses towards creating ‘sustainable communities’

Definitions of community and ‘consultation’ or ‘engagement’ are clearly key in reflecting who is included and how- at least at national policy level- it is envisaged that sustainable communities will be delivered. However, as Edwards and others point out (Edwards, 2008), focus on each of these terms has been

shown to present 'a number of dilemmas'. Not only are the terms subject to competing interpretations but they may encompass disjunctive agendas (Vigor et al., 2004, p. 8). *Sustainable Communities* speaks of the revitalization of communities and the creation of new communities in the same terms, with little acknowledgement of specific cultural or historical factors influencing their composition, or of the time it might take for communities to be forged.

2.2 the 'sustainable' 'community'

In an article for the research organisation Infed, researcher Mark Smith suggests that the definition of 'sustainable communities' 'takes place against the background of four linked phenomena: climate change, urbanization, economic growth and globalization', each vast in its scope and multi-scalar influence (Smith, 2008). In the context of 'communities', the term 'sustainable' relates as much to notions of stability and continuity in the life of 'neighbourhoods' as it does to notions of environmental quality or protection. Agyeman and Evans note that whilst the definition of the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature definitions of sustainability are the most cited, there remains no one 'agreed-on definition of sustainability' (2003, p. 36). They argue that, in fact, none of the broad definitions that are available sufficiently address questions of 'justice' and 'equity' which they hold to be 'of pivotal importance' in relation to communities (Agyeman & Evans, 2003, p. 36).

Sennett, in his now classic book *The Fall of Public Man* (Sennett, 1977), theorises the transformation of the meaning and embodiment of 'community' in Anglo-American culture. He contends that over the course of the 20th century, community became increasingly associated with 'intimacy', becoming thus conflated with notions of personal 'identity.' 'Intimate communities' are formed on the basis of shared attributes of identity amongst members. In *The Uses of Disorder* he argues that the perceived need for community to be defined along lines of shared identity has resulted in 'purifications' of social variety, evident in increased social and spatial segregations of different ethnic, faith, sexuality, socio-economic class groups across modern cities. Sassen (Sassen, 2001) has, more recently associated the increased production 'social geographies of difference' across cities, with economic polarizations of wealth, investment, industry and technology resulting from the advanced globalization of the economy.

Lees argues that one of the difficulties with the notion of 'community' in relation to British urban policy is its apparently all-embracing nature (Lees, 2003, p. 79). She contends that all-embracing or 'totalising' notions of 'the community' that encompass generalised values such as social harmony or order tend to downplay issues of cultural diversity, such as problems of urban social fragmentation resulting from economic polarisation or cultural/ ideological difference. Edwards argues that another problem with 'community' in relation to contemporary policy definitions lies in a tendency to conflate it with 'place', thus ignoring the variety of geographic scales at which communities cohere and the spectrum of relationships that community groups form with place. Place-based definitions of community can also have a 'homogenising effect' as diverse relationships to place are subsumed under common interests (Edwards, 2008, p. 1668). Frug argues that, as a first step toward addressing multiple social problems resulting from segregation and inequality in cities, there is a need to 'avoid the romantic sense of togetherness often associated with the term "community"' (Frug, 1999, p. 115). This chimes with a number of conceptions of public life that punctuate urban theory over the last fifty years, including Iris Young's articulation of modes of 'the being together of strangers' (Young, 1990), Jane Jacobs observations of the subtle balances of engagement and distance between strangers on a city street (Jacobs, 1972) and Erving Goffman's promotion of attitudes of 'civil inattention' in public places (Goffman, 1963, p. 84). Frug supports a conception of community that is a fundamentally 'heterogeneous' entity reflecting the real diversity of cities and no longer opposed to or threatened by otherness and difference (in Frug, 1999, p. 116). Whilst

the tools that Frug recommends in taking steps towards 'community building' (p. 115) may appear to simply dovetail with the policy literature outlined above - such as making alterations to regulatory frameworks to endorse stakeholder participation - it is clear that these only gain weight and meaning in the context of clearly articulated understandings of 'community' as heterogeneous and of its spaces as inherently contested.

In terms of the implementation of policy, it is arguably easier to work with broader conceptions of 'community' than complex, contested and specific ones. As Raco argues '[i]f communities can be variously described as place-based, interest-based, class-based, gender-based, and so on then policy makers at the local level, often working with limited resources... face an almost impossible task in resolving complex representational and practical issues' in relation to urban development (Raco, 2007). This raises interesting questions for 'community participation', not least of which is how 'consultation' can processes can be inclusive without denying the 'heterogeneity' of place-based communities. Edwards notes that 'it has been acknowledged that community groups have often been far from equal partners... and that partnerships themselves may not necessarily be democratic spaces which encourage participation' (Edwards, 2008, p. 1667). In this light, definitions of 'community' may be seen to rely on the specific contexts in which urban renewal actors both interpret and apply procedures determined through policy. As one such context, 'consultation' may be seen as a key forum in which community is not only defined but also constructed.

The following section considers how the pre-Olympic site communities have been both conceptualised and handled through public engagement processes relating to the 'Compulsory Purchase' of the Olympic site by the London Development Agency and the development of a land-use strategies for their relocation. In so doing, I highlight ambiguities inherent to a) the aim to create sustainable communities and b) the ways in which this aim and objective is applied in practice.

3.0 Communities, Consultation and Compulsory Purchase: the Olympic site 2004-2007

3.1 Communities on the pre-Olympic Site, 2007

The nature of 'community' life relating to the Olympic site at the time of the 'Compulsory Purchase' was extremely diverse. LDA's CPO summary document lists 792 separate parcels of land under different formal ownerships and up to 2,200 land and property interests. The 312 hectare site encompassed 208 businesses and a diverse range of cultural, recreational and productive user groups and uses. Whilst some of these were more or less permanent residents on the site, other groups made use of spaces within it intermittently. Different groups, relating variously to businesses, public or community spaces or residential sites had both different reasons for being located on the site and revealed different forms of attachment to it as a place in the compulsory purchase process. The cross section of uses and built forms were reflective of a series of historical if partial transformations through processes as diverse as 19th Century industrialisation and philanthropy, the destruction of buildings in the Second World War, and modern post-industrialisation.

Maps I have produced of the Olympic site as it was in 2007 (Figs. 1,2) reveal the diverse nature of its spaces and uses. These have been built up using Ordnance Survey data combined with the schedule of land-owners in the Compulsory Purchase Order for the Olympic site and with records from my walks around the site before it was closed to the public in mid 2007. Although it might be said that the site was predominantly industrial, the diversity of business uses and their distribution suggests a distinct lack of zoning, contradictory and casual planning. Businesses ranged between scaffolding pole suppliers, a

smoke salmon producer, newspaper printers, waste recycling, Chinese cash and carry shops and Halal butchery. Residential use formed a small proportion of the total area of the site but encompassed nonetheless a variety of types, from Traveller pitches to single person cooperative dwellings to a gated, private residence. Open space accommodated allotments, an informal market and private club grounds for cycling and athletics as well as a wide range of illicit activities. In many instances, apparently divergent uses existed adjacent to one another - churches next to bed makers, news printers next to Barnardo's offices. There was thus no fixed relationship between open space and community use or between buildings and private use. Private yards used for hoarding scrap metal or parking cars occupied a large proportion of the open landscape, whereas some buildings were used for congregational - if not strictly public - uses, such as churches. Some spaces could be characterised more in terms of collective 'disuse' than by use - such as derelict railway sidings- others by use and disuse simultaneously such as a dog racing track turned informal market.

Whilst different 'rhythms' (Lefebvre, Kofman, & Lebas, 1996, p. 229) of activity intersected across the site, it often appeared vacant. This related to the low proportion of residential and retail use in relation to industry and to the low rise and low density nature of the built fabric. In spite of the diversity of places of work, relatively few of these drew a steady flow of customers. Open spaces- streets, paths and river ways- were often far less populated by pedestrians than by articles of fly-tipped waste. Though the market attracted enough cars to cause congestion in all the roads around, it was convened only once a month, the rest of the time lying destitute. Community groups such as the churches congregated sporadically, producing moments of intensity punctuating episodes of quiet.

Social spaces such as churches allotments and cycle clubs, though existing in close proximity with each other complied with many of the characteristics of 'intimate communities' (Sennett, 1973, pp. 259-268) and revealed complex and variable relationships between community and place. Representatives from two of the residential groups reported in interview that whilst their own communities were tightly knit, they retained a suspicious distance from one another, at least until the CPO provided them with a common communicative ground. Apart from open space, almost all the work, leisure, shopping and education undertaken by members of these groups took place beyond the site. Many of the other social groups which were apparently isolated on the site - allotments, churches, sports clubs - belonged to other communities within London or beyond. The routes taken by Kingsway International Christian Centre (KICC) combi vans, for example, articulated connections within African communities living around the site, suggesting that the church formed a spatial node in a dispersed 'community network.' The allotment holders, though apparently distanced from neighbouring uses on the site and forming a tightly prescribed interest group with a special connection to the land, also each belonged to work and neighbourhood communities in the wider East End. For businesses, the combination of an un-regenerated site implying low property overheads combined with its proximity to central London was often strategically important. A representative from the salmon smoking firm H Forman's and Sons argued that 'delivery time's critical for us' (Interview, Forman, 20.11.08) in preserving a niche in city's food industry, enabled by easy access to central London's hotels and the House of Commons. In a few instances, spatial arrangements of proximate uses within the site created small places of social exchange. A venue called 'Club Dezire', for example, was situated to catch the passing trade of night time bus drivers concluding shifts in lonely hours. In general, I would argue that the pre-Olympic site reflected a curious inversion of the positive ways in which Sennett describes 'urban disorder' (Sennett, 1973): a complex topography formed from different kinds of introspection and isolation.

3.1 The Compulsory Purchase process

Numerous accounts and assessments of the site and its locale prior to the commencement of demolition represent it in generic terms as economically, socially and environmentally depressed, reflective of decades of underinvestment, 'one of the most deprived in the UK and Europe' (www.lda.org.uk). The Lower Lea Valley is said to suffer 'from high unemployment and low skills' (www.lda.org.uk), to have 'one of the worst public health records in the country' and 'three of the [five] Olympic Boroughs contain the third, fourth, and eleventh most deprived wards in the country' (Ryan-Collins & Sander-Jackson, 2007, p. 20). Capita Symond's *Environmental Statement 2004* on the site highlights the degradation and contamination of its landscape by waste and chemical industries. Such accounts are used to underpin the case for comprehensive 'social, economic and environmental renewal [that lie] at the heart of the London 2012 vision' (Ryan-Collins & Sander-Jackson, 2007, p. 20).

The London Development Agency (LDA) was endowed with statutory power to compulsorily assemble the land designated for the development of the Olympics under the *Regional Development Agencies Act 1998*. The 'assembly' of land forming Olympic site involved two separate Compulsory Purchase Orders. The first was a *Power Lines CPO*, confirmed by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on 4 April 2005. The second, relating to all property interests, was the *Lower Lea Valley, Olympic Legacy Compulsory Purchase Order 2005*, confirmed on 18th December 2006. In interview, an LDA representative confirmed its intention to avoid falling under the kinds of criticism levelled at the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) in the 1980s hinging on the lack of opportunity offered to land-owners to benefit from enormous profits accruing through the development of the Isle of Dogs (Hall, 1998). This representative also argued that the LDA sought to avoid generalising the 'needs' of different groups' in order 'to come to a better solution [and] to make sure that they're sited in the best place' (Interview, LDA, 14.08.08). The LDA sought to avoid having to draw down their compulsory purchase powers by negotiating towards 'private agreements' for relocation with each legal occupant. The LDA's 'Relocation Strategy' explains the structure of financial and advisory support and compensation available to these occupants including 'offer[ing] landowners a market value for their sites' (LDA, 2004, p. 10). The government's planning portal reports that this compensation, translated as a cost for acquiring the land for the Olympic site amounted to around £750 millionⁱⁱ. The LDA's website reports that a major advantage of negotiation is that solutions can be 'found to the satisfaction of all parties - making relocation [and compensation] a real opportunity'. Arguably, in these terms, the LDA's internal policy, developed through the experience of executing the land purchase process and thus confronting the real heterogeneities of 'community' 'need', went beyond requirements at national level. This recalls Imrie's argument that as implementations of policy are always situated 'the specific social contexts within which [they are] applied are a conditioning aspect of the particular form and content of ensuing legal processes' (Imrie & Thomas, 1997, p. 1402).

In spite of this deliberative approach to land purchase, a number of occupants, most prominently - though not without exception - the non-business users mounted a vociferous campaign against relocation. In 2005, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government announced that a Public Inquiry would be held before deciding whether or not to confirm the Compulsory Purchase Order. This was subsequently held between May and August 2006. In a bid to minimise the number of representations at the hearing, the LDA accelerated its negotiation processes with land-owners, producing 'a flurry of eleventh hour relocation deals.'ⁱⁱⁱ Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the dispersal of occupants from the site as a result of the CPO. By the time the hearing commenced in fact, 90% of the land was in the LDA's possession and 70% of the jobs on the site safeguarded, leaving a relatively small number of individuals still objecting. This inevitably strongly weighted the outcome of the enquiry in the LDA's favour. Also significantly influencing the outcome of the enquiry was the unmovable timescale for the development of the site for the Games. The LDA were virtually obliged to deliver a vacant site in July 2007. This timescale was met, despite negotiations with a several users, including the Kingsway International Christian Centre

and the group known as the Waterden Road Travellers, remaining incomplete. These are notable for the reason that they represent groups at the margins of mainstream society, and one might question how this example suggests that this is in any way altered through a more deliberative approach to land-use planning.

3.2 Consultation and Engagement

In accordance with the *Sustainable Communities* document and statutory law relating to it, The LDA stress the importance of 'consultation and engagement' in the development of planning objectives for the Legacy of the 2012 Olympics. In 2008, the LDA with the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) defined and published their own *Code of Practice for Consultation* (ODA & LDA, 2008). This defines consultation as '[a] process of dialogue between decision-makers and stakeholders with the aim of providing the opportunity to influence a decision or programme of action.' Engagement, on the other hand comprises '[r]elationship-building activities with stakeholders that enable more specific activities to then take place'. In these terms, whilst consultation is about working together on a project, engagement is about building the dynamics that might allow that to happen. Words 'dialogue' and 'relationship' both suggest processes of consensus-building through equal exchange. The ODA and LDA's document, unlike *Sustainable Communities*, acknowledges that as 'there is a wide diversity of communities living around it ... it is important not to treat the "community" as one homogenous mass' (ODA & LDA, 2008). This recognition has informed the development of an array of strategies for implementing consultation exercises, including 'quantitative methods' like surveys, and 'qualitative methods' like workshops, meetings and focus groups. One of the ironies of this CPO process, which may be seen to undermine notions that 'dialogue' and 'relationship' are constructed between people on equal footings, was that the development of the Olympics on that site was non-negotiable from the time that the bid was won. This fact has, indeed significantly coloured the perceptions of certain former user groups on the site of the roles and power they had in the process. As a representative from the allotment group said, 'you're playing their game and you have to' (Interview, Eton Manor Allotments, 01.09.08). Furthermore, in spite of early emphasis on communication with different user groups, outcomes of consultation as of negotiation and compensation are perceived to have produced variably satisfactory results. The same representative highlighted that a big problem was that so many people 'would be so cowed by authority that they would just agree to anything.'

It became clear to me through conducting interviews that 'value' was understood by different group on quite different terms. For some businesses, the strategic relocation of their activities and 'market value' compensation was adequate and advanced their situation. One of the former waste businesses reported that '[w]e're delighted with our new premises, as they allow us to develop our business in a way which would not have been possible were it not for the Olympic Games'. For other groups, particularly residential groups and allotment holders, it was not 'market value', but relationships, established over time within their group and with their sites that were important. At the Public Enquiry, a representative for the allotments objected to the CPO on the grounds that the loss of their site would catalyse the breakup of their community (LDA, 2006, pp. 315-316). Although the correct number of sixty seven plots were offered as a replacement for those lost, a series of factors - proximity to a busy road, appearance, a standard layout of sheds, a different soil - have indeed conspired to sever ties between community and land as within the community itself which couldn't 'sustain itself' (Interview, Eton Manor Allotments, 01.09.08). For a supportive representative from the residential group known as Clay's Lane, the demolition of mature plots flew in face of sustainability agendas which are 'all kind of rubbish' (Interview, Clay's Lane, 01.09.08) regarding the provision of locally grown food in the city. Moreover, it seemed to point to a fundamental failure in the LDA's conception of how to nurture and create 'sustainable

communities', for which time and continuity are of the essence. The failure of the relocated allotments suggests that whilst some uses can be deployed readily and strategically, others may not so immediately. This view was echoed by the Clay's Lane representative who, after failing to reach a negotiated solution for the relocation of his whole 'community', wound up accepting last minute terms for the relocation of individuals and families to different locations. Interestingly, however, a representative for the Waterden Road Travellers reported that their relocation to three separate though proximate locations was positive, as each of these sub-groups now involved a smaller number of families who had more in common with each other. For the representative from H Forman and Sons, 'market value' is a slippery term that discounted the amount of time required for negotiating terms with the LDA, the albeit temporary disruption of economic activities through relocation and the effects of relocation on staff. For him, speaking to me as the scale of current economic downturn was coming to light, the government's ultimate failure to comprehend 'sustainable communities' rests in what he calls 'the fried breakfast economy' of short term but massive growth in financial services at the expense of a manufacturing core, causing 'a huge heart attack [to build] up in the background' (Interview, Forman, 20.11.08).

Social ties between groups were strengthened by the common aim of opposing the LDA's proposals during 2005 and 2006. Owing to the energy and commitment of a number of plot holders, the case of the allotments drew particular support in the national press^{iv} as well as from social commentators such as Iain Sinclair, restaurateurs Rick Stein and Sam Clarke, becoming highly publicised. In Sinclair's commentary he referred to the arrogance of public institutions claiming to be able to 'imagine for us' what community and its places might be, and how to make them. A representative from one of the Traveller communities reported that on a number of occasions in 2006, they felt that their privacy was being infringed by journalists wanting to capture and make use of their story. Interest in their plight led to a High Court Hearing at the Court of Human Rights. The isolation of 'intimate communities' described above somewhat transformed in this context. Group leaders and supporters met in each other's homes, at local pubs or on the allotments to share experiences. As the process wore on inexorably, certain members of these groups began to pull apart. However, others remained strengthened, participating in active demonstrations of solidarity on the site in the run up to its closure in 2007 or pinning up posters and banners critiquing the Olympic Park proposals. Allegedly much negative propaganda was promptly pulled down, reflecting the assertion of law and enforcement over public opinion and reflecting how even the right to objection is only legitimated within certain contexts.

Representatives from the Waterden Road and Clay's Lane residential groups argued that a problem with the engagement process was not lack of engagement by the LDA but excessive communication, producing what is known colloquially as 'consultation fatigue.' The seven representatives I interviewed spoke of a feeling of exhaustion at the end of the Public Enquiry process. The Waterden Road Traveller group representative stated that it was not the proposal to construct the Olympic Games on the site or even the eventual settlement that bothered her - 'we got good out of it but really' (Interview, Waterden, 07.01.09) - it was the time it had taken to resolve alternative accommodation. The thirty five Traveller groups, at the time of writing, await completion of the bespoke housing being constructed for them and have continued to inhabit pitches on the Olympic construction site. Despite having the opportunity to 'negotiate' in local spaces such as cafes, takeaways or on site, a uniform complaint was that it was never a question of whether spaces and communities were worth salvaging but of how they might be removed quickly and quietly. To this extent, consultation seemed a token democratic gesture, belying decisions that had already been made. A number of groups are to this day campaigning for a final resolution of their relocation, notably the African church KICC, whose large congregation has proved difficult to accommodate spatially or amicably amongst neighbouring communities. Although the *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act* stipulates that groups must not be disadvantaged by the process, it is clear that the mechanism of negotiation does privilege those most skilled at conducting it - verbally, legally,

financially, through drawing on contacts and raising publicity. With the exception of those groups directly involved as stakeholders in the development of the 'Legacy Masterplan Framework', all those I interviewed replied in the negative to the question of whether they would seek to be involved in the consultations on the development of the 'sustainable communities' for the Olympic Legacy. The Waterden Road Traveller group representative's answer was the most definitive: 'I says no, I'm not going to go there, I think I'll go to the beach. Let somebody else take it on board for a change, you know what I mean, give me a break' (Interview, Waterden, 07.01.09).

4.0 Conclusions: From Policy to Practice

The broad aim of this paper is to examine relationships between contemporary policy geared to delivering a vision of 'sustainable communities' and processes of city-making that it influences. I began the paper by outlining the scope of the ODPM's 'Sustainable Communities: building for the future' document. I then undertook a brief review of recent literature relating to definitions of the term 'sustainable communities' in order to highlight strands of current debates about their use in contemporary British policy and the significance of these definitions for processes of consultation and engagement in contemporary planning. A key argument emerging through this review is the need to find ways of linking conceptions of community as 'heterogeneous' with tools such as 'consultation' which have often tended to treat them as homogenous. I also argued that whilst clearly articulated understandings of 'community' are important backgrounds for policy and process, 'the community' is actually constituted and shaped in the specific contexts in which urban renewal actors interpret and apply procedures determined by national policy. In the substantive part of the paper, I considered the role of consultation in the compulsory purchase process and the effects that the ultimate process of relocation had on the communities that inhabited it prior to July 2007. The LDA's policies and approaches relating to Compulsory Purchase and consultation, developed through the experience of execution and thus confrontation with actual heterogeneities of 'community' 'need', appeared to go well beyond requirements of national level policy. The LDA clearly recognise the need for consultation and engagement to take place in different ways and in different spaces, suited to the complexity of the community in which the project is situated. Nevertheless, experiences of consultation of former occupants of the site reveal interesting issues in terms of effects on community coherence, self-understanding and sense in which they were actually participating in a 'relationship' and a 'dialogue'. These issues highlight that the translation of policy to practice involves a number of 'interpretative' steps and inevitably produces varied and situated outcomes. However, as Imrie notes, translations of policy to practice 'are conducted within a discourse and culture which recognises a limited range of considerations and perspectives as legitimate' and which is characterised by uneven power relations (Imrie & Thomas, 1997, p. 1410). Questions remain as to how consultation can be more than token, worth huge investments of energy and funds, especially given concurrent pressures to deliver to immovable timescales and maximise land-values in order to redeem debts from the Games. Clearly 'relationship' and 'dialogue' are of essence to communities and if these, as the respondents to my interview suggest, require continuity and time to evolve, then consultation, as a community-building exercise marries problematically with development processes which are about rapid, dramatic change and short-term vision. In recent consultations on the Legacy Masterplan for the site beyond the Games, the LDA emphasise the need for long-term development perspectives that continually draw the public into the decision-making frame. My ongoing research considers how these worded promises evolve and unfold.

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Captions:

Fig. 1: Map showing the building uses of the site in 2007

Fig. 2: Map showing the open space uses of the site in 2007

Fig. 3: Map 1 showing the relocations of users from the Olympic site

Fig. 3: Map 2 showing the relocations of users from the Olympic site

Endnotes:

ⁱ Taken from: <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/england/professionals/en/1084473824536.html>

ⁱⁱ Taken from: <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/england/professionals/en/1115314064356.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ Taken from: <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/england/professionals/en/1115314064356.html>

^{iv} Tim Stewart, (2008) *Do we like new £2m allotments? Not a lot*, Evening Standard, 27.05.08