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## **Multiculturalism and Governing Neighbourhoods**

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## **Multicultural polities and places**

One of the more remarkable things about the European Union was is the way it recreated its own origin myth in the 1980s. In the face of changing global patterns of production, so the myth runs, it was necessary to create an economically unified and efficient European region by the expansion of the (then) European Communities to the south and the completion of the single European market. The subplot in this origin myth was that the promotion of competitiveness, both within the European region and globally, would also create losers as well as winners within the region. Whether deriving from statesmanship or Paretian concepts of welfare, the myth recognised the need to compensate the losers within the Union in order to secure the political legitimacy necessary to underpin the economic unification of the region.

All myths have real effects in terms of the ways that they shape human behaviour and understanding. So, by the time the Union was formally born in 1991, it recognised that the potential losers were not only the southern member states, but were also scattered throughout the region in declining industrial areas and within major urban areas. Thus, issues of combating social exclusion entered the European Union's agenda alongside its birth.

One of the more curious aspects of the creation of the European Union is that it is explicitly being constructed as a "multicultural polity". With the exception of Belgium and Switzerland (and possibly the United Kingdom), the emergence of each of the member states has been rooted in a strong identification between ethnicity and nation state. At the same time, migration and immigration are creating specific places within Europe which are ethnically highly diverse. While the discussion of multicultural *polities* is still rooted in theories of international relations, the discussion of multicultural *places* is rooted in questions of social diversity, citizenship, ethnic division, hostility and racism. In turn, these discussions of the impact of (ethnic) diversity seem to proceed quite separately from discussions about urban and neighbourhood governance even though the debates about governance are strongly linked to issues about urban competitiveness and competition in the context of the emergence of the (multicultural) European economic region and polity.

This paper is part of a much larger project focused on social exclusion and urban neighbourhoods. The larger project has two phases. The first phase was a detailed investigation of the social dynamics within ten "socially excluded" neighbourhoods in eight different member states<sup>1</sup>. The second phase of the project is designed to investigate issues associated with neighbourhood governance and builds on the results of the first phase. This paper is one of a number of pieces of work designed to develop the linkages between the two phases of the project.

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<sup>1</sup> This phase, "Social Exclusion in European Neighbourhoods: Processes, experiences and responses" (SOE2-CT97-3057) examined neighbourhoods in Sweden, Denmark, Germany, United Kingdom, Ireland, Portugal, Italy and Greece and is reported in Allen, Cars and Madanipour (2000). The second phase, "Neighbourhood Governance: Capacity for social integration", also includes neighbourhoods in the Netherlands and will start later in 2001. The phrase "socially excluded neighbourhoods" is a shorthand way of referring to those degraded neighbourhoods which are home to groups of people at risk of social exclusion. Our main concern is with the social processes affecting residents. Because land and housing market processes tend to concentrate and contain these groups in specific parts of cities, to a greater or lesser extent in different cities, we refer to these areas as "neighbourhoods", but problematising the concept of neighbourhood is central to our research aims.

The aim of this paper is to begin to develop a nuanced view of multiculturalism which can be used to analyse the problems which (ethnic) cultural diversity raises for governance in socially excluded neighbourhoods. This task has some urgency for three reasons. First, in all but one of the neighbourhoods in the first phase of this project, cultural diversity was a fact of life and strongly imbricated in local social dynamics<sup>2</sup>. Second, wherever we presented the results of the first stage of our research to ground and policy level officials, we found considerable confusion about problems of ethnic division, hostility, racism and integration. In no case were officials able to see themselves as members of a specific (ethnic) cultural group. Third, it is hardly possible to create a multicultural and supranational polity, the European Union, without raising issues of race and ethnicity. While there are many ethnicities throughout Europe itself, they are all white. Thus, to create a "European ethnicity" as a social grounding for further political union directly creates the risk of simultaneously institutionalising racism in the process.

While it is possible to find excellent work looking at specific places, the general literature on ethnicity and public and/or social administration is founded on a very thin concept of anti-racism. Lewis (2000) gives an excellent account of the need for a ground-shift from concepts of anti-racism to concepts of multiculturalism. Parekh (2000), however, provides the most richly nuanced theoretical treatment of the idea of multiculturalism and provides the strongest basis for analysing the dynamics we observed in neighbourhoods across Europe.

This paper proceeds in two stages. The first stage lays out the results of our previous study of neighbourhoods and argues that the present situation could be characterised as a never-ending circle. The second stage outlines the major components of a multicultural perspective and argues that such a perspective provides some useful guidelines for rethinking the general problems of neighbourhood governance.

### **Social exclusion, neighbourhoods and regeneration**

Our research set out to document the local dynamics of social exclusion and to assess current "neighbourhood renewal" policies from the point of view of both residents and professionals working in the neighbourhoods<sup>3</sup>. On the whole, we found that these localised programmes did not meet all the objectives which had been set for them and/or often functioned in ways which tended to undermine social cohesion within the neighbourhoods. Two different kinds of explanations can be advanced for the relative ineffectiveness of local programmes in terms of combating social exclusion. One explanation is based on the nature of the population living in these neighbourhoods and the other is based on the nature of the welfare state at the end of the twentieth century. Both explanations are partial and both fail to illuminate any strategic approach to breaking the never ending circle associated with the everyday experience of social exclusion.

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<sup>2</sup> The exception was a monocultural neighbourhood in Dublin.

<sup>3</sup> The "neighbourhood renewal" policies and programmes were different from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, ranging from complete physical renewal of the housing stock through to coordinated social programmes aimed at specific groups within the population.

### ***The people are the problem***

The first explanation for why local programmes were ineffective in combating social exclusion locates the "problem" in the nature of the people living in the neighbourhoods. In only two or three cases, could the neighbourhoods be characterised (historically) as "traditional" communities, that is, tightly knit working class communities with strongly shared values, needs and interests, and most significantly, characterised by dense informal networks. In other cases, the neighbourhoods had developed quite differently, as gaps in an urban fabric which could accommodate newcomers to the city or as newly built social housing given over to households meeting each other for the first time as neighbours-but-strangers. Nevertheless, the older and more longstanding residents tended to create a myth of the "good old days", when everyone knew and cared for everyone else. In fact, eight of the neighbourhoods had changed very sharply over the last ten to fifteen years.

Two elements of change were very distinctive. First, the increasing significance of the tertiary sector as a source of jobs, affected all the neighbourhoods. In areas of de-industrialisation, this meant that the job based solidarities which traditionally brought young people into the world of work were eroded. Other places, however, were characterised by a population making the leap from rural agricultural employment to the urban tertiary sector in a single generation. In both situations, however, the pressing need was for forms of socialisation, support and skills appropriate to insecure and low paid employment in the commercial, personal or retail service sectors. The forms of solidarity which had supported young people in the past were no longer available or appropriate, given the scale of structural change in the job market.

The second striking area of change in seven of the ten neighbourhoods was associated with immigration and ethnic diversity. Although the processes and history of immigration in each of these neighbourhoods was very different, the current situation was the same. Two or more groups, regarding each other with mutual incomprehension and/or hostility, lived together within the same public and private spaces. The consequence of these processes of change was that in all the neighbourhoods, three separate dimensions of social difference divided people along a single axis. The very normal conflict between younger and older generations (which is part of wider processes of socialisation) was made more difficult because the elderly had relatively little to offer youngsters, in terms of access to job networks and appropriate social skills for entering new kinds of job markets. As longstanding residents, elderly people felt their neighbourhoods had been invaded by newcomers, and furthermore, these newcomers were (ethnically) different and did not join in the "life of the neighbourhood" as they should. Thus, social diversity bred division along the lines of generation, length of residence and/or ethnicity in all the neighbourhoods. The weakened (supposed) solidarities of the "good old days" could not be mended, extended or rebuilt across these divisions. Despite all the diversity and hostility which we observed, however, the problems of youth and a responsible transition to adulthood formed a dominant theme in the anxieties of people living and working in the neighbourhoods.

### ***The welfare state is the problem***

The second line of explanation for why programmes were ineffective in combating social exclusion locates the "problem" in the nature of the welfare state at the end of the twentieth century. In order to explain this, we developed an ideal-typical model of

the European postwar welfare state as it had developed by around 1975<sup>4</sup>. This model has three key components which are relevant to understanding the effects of wider institutional structures on the neighbourhoods which we studied:

1. Employment and the economy in general are, or will be, dominated by factory based mass production techniques and a set of supporting labour market institutional structures (eg mass trades unions, wage differentials and bargaining related to manual skill levels, male employment, etc). Within this system, most members of the (industrialised) working force could look forward to reasonably steady employment and steady increases in material incomes (Lipietz 1998).
2. State sponsored welfare systems support the operation of mass factory based economic systems. Three elements have particular significance for the production of everyday life:
  - Educational systems were designed to meet the skills required from new entrants to the labour force and to act as major agents of socialisation, so that the experience of compulsory education provided a "cultural training", which helped fit children into the roles they would play in adult life.
  - General social insurance systems were designed to support workers (and their families) through periods of short term unemployment, illness and old age. Such systems also provided, on a discretionary and/or needs tested basis, minimal levels of help for those unwilling or unable to enter the labour force. This double system of assistance stigmatised those requiring discretionary and/or needs tested help and, thus, helped to support labour discipline.
  - Housing systems were designed to ensure that *workers* were well housed and to provide part of the package of increasing material incomes for those who were steadily employed.
3. Political systems comprised a set of institutions centred on the (ethnically homogeneous) nation-state and built on the assumption that their main function was to manage growth and decide the allocation of fiscal resources among different functionally divided programmes of state activity.

This model focuses on the main institutional structures which shaped everyday life in the neighbourhoods. It is robust enough to allow us to distinguish the specific modes of operation of different kinds of welfare states throughout the member states we studied<sup>5</sup>. By locating the model at a particular turning point in time, it also allowed us to explore different processes of economic change in the member states. Finally, the model allowed us to focus on what emerged as the main concern among almost all those interviewed across the neighbourhoods and countries: A generalised anxiety about the maintenance of basic social order.

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<sup>4</sup> We originally labelled this a "fordist" model, reflecting its roots in the work of Alain Lipietz (1998). However, this locates it too strongly within just one of a set of different explanations for structural change after 1975. Since there is a high level of consensus on the main elements in our model among a wide variety of analysts, it is probably better just to label it the "European postwar model" to reflect its development between 1945 and approximately 1975.

<sup>5</sup> The biggest element of differentiation was between the dualist systems in southern Europe and the universalist systems of Scandinavia and the United Kingdom.

Using the model to explain the situation in the neighbourhoods highlights three points. Firstly, all European economies are now, in 2001, firmly based in the tertiary sector. Secondly, the functionally (and professionally) divided bureaucratic machinery through which the postwar European welfare state operated has not changed substantially (cf Taylor-Gooby 1996). It is still functionally divided and deeply bureaucratic. Thirdly, the political structures for managing the delivery of "everyday welfare" have responded to lower rates of economic growth and structural change by fragmenting into systems of inter-ministerial, inter-authority and inter-departmental bargaining, whatever level of government is responsible for particular service delivery. Furthermore, the party political structures which integrated the management of the welfare state have disintegrated in important ways. Vertical linkages have weakened so that small parts of localities, such as neighbourhoods, have more difficulty articulating common demands upwards. The linkages between labour market institutions and leftist parties have weakened as a consequence of economic change. As structural change has created anxieties about "governability", processes of "governance" (the processes of linking disparate interest groups, stakeholders and organisations) have come to be as important as "government" (the management of departmental structures) (Pierre and Peters, 2000). Thus, the overall pattern of change since 1975 can be characterised as a combination of structural economic change and the design of new political mechanisms coupled with the persistence of functionally organised, bureaucratic welfare state systems. Elsewhere, we have called this a process of disjointed structural change (Allen and Cars 2000a, 2000b, 2001).

This pattern of change has important consequences for the people who live in the neighbourhoods we studied. Localised service delivery agencies, already fighting to maintain their resources within functionally divided organisational structures, were enjoined to join the "governance revolution" by coordinating their efforts within the neighbourhoods. The theory was that coordination would, by making local spending more effective, compensate for reduced levels of resources. In practice, local agencies were simply torn between processes of governance, that is, devoting resources to developing and establishing mechanisms of local coordination with other agencies, actors and stakeholders, on the one hand, and processes of government on the other hand, that is, fighting to maintain the existing level resources coming to them within their own vertically structured departmental processes.

The changes we observed in the neighbourhoods are part of a wider set of urban changes. Elsewhere, Elander and Blanc (2000) have pointed out that urban fragmentation and widening socio-economic disparities have eroded the role of local government as the leading policy maker. Stoker (2000) notes that the relevant actors for tackling any specific problem are now found spread across the public, private and voluntary sectors, creating immense problems of coordination within the public sector. These patterns create the need for new types of political skills and resources, capable of coordinating activities both across different sectors of government who have shared responsibility, and where responsibility is shared between public and private actors. As a minimum, it is necessary to ensure that different actors do not obstruct each other. The aim of ensuring that public actors and private partners share the same objectives is yet more difficult to achieve (Pierre 2000). The consequence is that public agencies are torn with tensions as they try to combine their traditional role as

service providers with a desire to enhance their role by working with other partners and providing local leadership (Burgess *et al* 2001).

In the programmes in the neighbourhoods we studied, the tension between governance and government was expressed in terms of developing new forms of local accountability and transparency, alongside traditional methods of accountability upwards within bureaucratic structures. Local accountabilities to residents were, in theory, the natural complement of local coordination. In practice, the demand for local accountability, made from above, enhanced the conflict for agencies between facing upwards within existing structures and facing outwards towards other local agencies and actors.

As a consequence, local accountability mechanisms tended to lead to consultative and/or participative forums which were very weak for four reasons.

- Firstly, they tended to draw on those residents who were already most concerned about matters in the neighbourhoods, that is the elder and long established residents, excluding the newer and younger groups who had come to the areas more recently. Ironically, this approach tended to undermine the legitimacy of those residents who did become involved since their "representativeness" was easily questioned. In this context, in most neighbourhoods, locally elected politicians were conspicuous mainly by their absence, so that resident representatives were implicitly expected to bear the weight of "political legitimacy" no matter how they were selected or elected.
- Secondly, these forums were established in the context of intense interdepartmental bargaining behind the scenes. Thus, while their existence was necessary for each of the agencies, no single agency had a specific interest in developing and supporting these forums in ways which would allow them to articulate effective demands which would change the pattern of (vertically divided) resource allocations to the neighbourhoods.
- Thirdly, for each agency, maintaining the opacity of its structures was more important than transparency to residents since transparency to residents was also transparency to other agencies and a source of vulnerability in inter-departmental bargaining for resources. For each agency, the important struggles were "with other agencies" located in other departments, not "for residents" living in the neighbourhood. The effect was to enhance residents' feelings of powerlessness vis-à-vis the larger structures delivering services to the area, creating a situation in which all local professionals working in the area were identified with a faceless "them". At the same time, these processes introduced a further local status division (based on personal knowledge of local bureaucrats) which enhanced divisions within the neighbourhoods. This further delegitimised resident representatives, since they were, in practice, unable to "deliver" much to the neighbourhood and, at the same time, subject to the envy or distrust of other residents due to their enhanced status locally.
- Fourthly, the only reasonably stable inter-agency view of residents in such circumstances tends to be that they are a relatively homogeneous group characterised by "multiple disadvantage". To privilege or prioritise any particular demand from residents is to simultaneously privilege specific agencies and social groupings within the neighbourhood. Consequently, it becomes very difficult for



inter-agency coordinating mechanisms to recognise the significant elements of social and cultural diversity within the neighbourhoods.

The introduction of special funding schemes designed to "renew" these neighbourhoods often exacerbated these problems. Such schemes change the balance of power among local agencies, often in unpredictable ways and/or in ways unrelated to any analysis of local social dynamics, enhancing agencies' tendencies to dig in and fight their own corners. Where the schemes involve substantial capital investment, they often disrupt daily life for residents. The dynamics of ensuring that large scale capital investment is spent efficiently are, in any case, unrelated to the much slower and more diffuse dynamics of establishing local forums and coordinating mechanisms (cf Taylor 2000). Parachuted in, these schemes enhance all residents' sense of powerlessness. They illustrate very clearly the paradox of the late twentieth century welfare state: It delivers services hand in hand with powerlessness.

These comments present a very bleak picture. They need to be qualified in three ways. Firstly, where resources were directly available to and controlled by groups of residents, for example, through community work initiatives, residents experienced an enhanced sense of power based in their own capacities. Secondly, there was one initiative, which enjoyed exceptionally powerful political support within the local authority, and so was able to operate in a manner which recognised diversity among residents and was designed to enhance residents' capacities in the course of a massive resettlement programme. Thirdly, there were a number of very successful, usually small scale initiatives which focused very sharply on specific groups and which were characterised by exceptional professional leadership. In other words, overcoming the tendencies inherent in welfare state structures required identifying and delivering *strategic resources*, either workers committed to and controlled by residents, or significant political support, or professional leadership.

In conclusion, what is clear from this second line of explanation is that solutions which rely on the existing structure of agencies within a neighbourhood, while forcing them to coordinate their activities and develop consultative forums, are likely to be self-defeating.

### ***Disjointed structural change***

Neither of these two explanations, one locating the "problem" in the people who live in the neighbourhoods and the other locating the "problem" in welfare state structures, shows how the neighbourhoods have been created by disjointed structural change. Basic economic structures have changed, altering the employment possibilities for people living in these neighbourhoods<sup>6</sup>. Political structures and processes are changing at formal levels to emphasise the skills of governance over those of governing. Although concepts of "democratic representation" are still potent, elected politicians are more preoccupied with the governability of whole urban areas than with governance within the neighbourhoods. However, alongside these changing economic and political structures, welfare state *structures* have changed relatively little. The overall welfare state structures are still functionally and professionally divided, designed to deliver goods and services to specific client groups. The whole

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<sup>6</sup> Although this simple observation doesn't do justice to the significant proportions of people living in most of these neighbourhoods who are dependent on social insurance and/or social benefits for part or all of their income and who are effectively outside the labour force.

structure, economic, welfare state and political, has become disjointed. The overall effect is that the imposition of neighbourhood based coordinating and governance mechanisms within the current structural configuration creates a set of processes which could be characterised as a never-ending circle of ineffectiveness.

### **A new vision of neighbourhood governance**

There are two types of solutions to the problems outlined above. One is to consider what types of resources are necessary to create a virtuous spiral out of a never-ending circle of ineffectiveness. This can certainly be effective in particular circumstances, but there is no guarantee such circumstances will occur everywhere or, even, where they do occur, they can be sustained. Burgess *et al* (2001) give an excellent review of the elements which explain reluctance to change: Motivational (mistrust), organisational (lack of resources and impenetrable bureaucracies), institutional (complex procedures to access funding), political and cultural barriers (unfavourable labelling) and economic (excessive time and costs of active engagement by residents). Their review suggests that, at best, never ending circles can only be converted into a slightly different shape, such as a never ending ellipse.

The second type of solution is to recast the problem by formulating a strategic *vision* within which the disparate resources available to and within neighbourhoods can be used more effectively. Along these lines, Taylor (2000) suggests that it is necessary to find ways around the system in order to generate real change. We argue that it is more a problem of breaking out of the system than finding ways around it. In other words, formulating the problem of combating social exclusion as one of "effective resident participation in the delivery of services" simply leads to solutions which reproduce the problem. What is necessary is to look for a new way to formulate the problem. Elsewhere, we have referred to this as a problem of creating effective micro-political processes and structures within neighbourhoods (Allen and Cars 2000a). What we are searching for is approaches to understanding the problem which are rooted in the social dynamics among residents, rather than in the dynamics of inter-agency service delivery. In the remainder of this paper, we discuss a key part of creating micro-political processes, which is creating the social infrastructure of cohesion within neighbourhoods. We see this as a key part of the problem, given the tendency we observed for processes of "resident participation in service delivery" to contribute to social fragmentation, rather than to social cohesion among residents.

We take inspiration in this task from three sources. One is Healey's definition of planning as "managing a shared existence in space" (1997). Building on this perspective, Healey suggests that formal institutions provide a 'hard' institutional infrastructure in neighbourhoods, which needs to be combined with a 'soft' infrastructure of relationship building so that sufficient consensus and mutual learning can occur to develop the social, intellectual and political capital required to manage a shared existence in space. Our analysis of the social and institutional dynamics in the neighbourhoods we studied suggests that the problem lay in a hard infrastructure which inhibited the formation of soft infrastructures.

The second source of inspiration is LeGales' (1998) definition of urban governance, which can be adapted to neighbourhoods. He defines governance as:

- The capacity to form a collective actor from diverse local interests, organisations and social groups and with sufficient internal integration to be able to formulate collective goals
- The ability to represent the 'local collective actor' to the market, other parts of the city and various levels of government.

Along these lines, Amin and Thrift argue that successful local governance depends on an "institutional thickness" characterised by four factors: a plethora of civil organisations, a high level of social interaction among different social groups, coalitions crossing individual interests and a strong sense of common purpose (1995). There was clearly the potential to generate institutional thickness in the neighbourhoods we studied, given their social diversity, but existing local social dynamics tended to generate division, rather than integration, out of this diversity. This inhibited the formation of the kinds of networks linking diverse groups which could underpin developing the mutual trust, learning and reciprocity basic to creating Healy's soft infrastructure or Amin and Thrift's institutional thickness.

The third source of inspiration derives from the neighbourhoods themselves and, in particular, their cultural diversity. It is difficult to escape the observation that while we were looking at *European* neighbourhoods, a significant proportion of the people we saw were *not* (ethnically) European<sup>7</sup>. Furthermore, in several neighbourhoods it was clear that "non-European" groups had a sophistication and cosmopolitan outlook which served as an important resource in devising everyday living strategies in difficult material and often hostile social circumstances. It would be fair to say that these groups often possessed higher levels of certain kinds of social capital than many of the "European" residents.

Granovetter argues that economic and administrative actions are embedded in social relations (1985). However, it was clear in the neighbourhoods that the social relations which conditioned administrative and institutional actions were distinctly monocultural – rooted in the dominant or host culture. Cultural diversity was seen by administrators as a problem, because people did not behave as expected, rather than as a potential source of ideas for re-solving the issues which arise in the course of managing a shared existence in space.

These considerations of multiculturalism raise two distinct questions. On the one hand, how can multicultural resources be harnessed as a strategic resource for neighbourhood governance? On the other hand, how does attempting to do this lead us to rethink approaches to developing effective neighbourhood governance? In order to begin to answer these questions, we have turned to Parekh's recent work on the political theory of multiculturalism (2000).

### **Does a fish know it's swimming in water? Cultural diversity and multiculturalism**

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<sup>7</sup> Although, in most cases, they were either European *citizens* or had rights of permanent residence.

Parekh's work has been designed to get beyond the implicit assumptions about ethnicity which underlie the development of European political theory and institutions. His intellectual strategy is designed to problematise the specific preconceptions which any cultural group brings to its political practices and, thus, to open the door to considering other kinds of practices. It is for this reason that we believe his work is helpful in reconceptualising the nature of neighbourhood governance as one of the significant sites within the emerging European polity where cultural diversity is highly relevant. The beginning point for Parekh's work is, thus, a definition of culture as:

A historically created system of meaning and significance, or . . . a system of beliefs and practices in terms of which a group of human beings understand, regulate and structure their individual and collective lives. It is a way of understanding and organising human life. The understanding it seeks has a practical thrust . . . and the way it organises human life is not *ad hoc* and instrumental but grounded in a particular manner of conceptualising and understanding it (Parekh 2000, 143).

The problem this creates for governmental and governance arrangements is that:

By definition a multicultural society consists of several cultures or cultural communities with their own distinct systems of meaning and significance and views on man and the world. It cannot therefore be adequately theorised from within the conceptual framework of any particular political doctrine which, being embedded in, and structurally biased towards, a particular cultural perspective, cannot do justice to others (Parekh 2000, 13).

For this reason, "a multicultural society faces two conflicting demands and needs to devise a political structure that enables it to reconcile them in a just and collectively acceptable manner". On the one hand, it needs to "foster a strong sense of unity and common belonging among its citizens, as otherwise it cannot act as a united community able to take . . . collectively binding decisions and regulate and resolve conflicts" (196). On the other hand, it "cannot ignore the demands of diversity . . . Diversity is an inescapable fact of its collective life" (Parekh 2000, 196).

Parekh's views echo much of the literature on urban governance and in particular, LeGales' definition of the collective actor. But the difference between his vision of diversity and that which underlies the governance literature is that Parekh does not assume the legitimacy or adequacy of the norms of political behaviour, structure and processes which characterise the dominant cultural group. Rather, he argues that "multiculturalism is about the proper terms of relationship between different cultural communities. The norms governing their respective claims . . . cannot be derived from one culture alone but through and open and equal dialogue between them" (Parekh 2000, 13). Thus, his view implies that effective and acceptable neighbourhood governance structures need to be designed from the bottom up by the specific groups involved in an area and not imposed from the top down as a condition

of the operation of agencies within the area. Structures imposed from the top down tend to derive from the monocultural political assumptions of the host culture and thus, privilege the participation of members of the host culture living in the neighbourhood. For this reason, top down type structures, that is, structures rooted in inter-agency dynamics, can intensify cross-cultural tensions<sup>8</sup>.

In saying this, it is important to understand that Parekh's exploration of the possibility of multiculturalism is rooted in his study of societies characterised by very deep tensions and conflicts among different cultural groups eg Israelis and Palestinians, Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs in the Indian subcontinent. In such circumstances, the capture of state or governmental organisations by one of the groups threatens other groups. Even in situations which are not characterised by overt conflict, mutual incomprehension can breed mistrust and a feeling of threat

Consequently, Parekh's vision of multiculturalism is necessarily dynamic. Multiculturalism emerges from the way that "cultures constantly encounter one another both formally and informally and in private and public spaces. Guided by curiosity, incomprehension or admiration, they interrogate each other, challenge each other's assumptions, consciously or unconsciously borrow from each other, widen their horizons and undergo small and large changes" (Parekh 2000, 220).

Thus, the hallmarks of a multicultural society are that each culture has incorporated some elements of the other(s) and acquired a multicultural dimension, while at the same time new, multiculturally constituted phenomena emerge, "imaginatively transforming the elements borrowed from different traditions into something wholly different" (Parekh 2000, 220). The two processes, multiculturalisation of existing traditions and the emergence of multiculturally constituted new ones, are closely related to and reinforce each other. Like all processes of cultural change, the growth of multiculturalism is unplanned, open-ended, multi-stranded, pulls in different directions and is constantly in the making. Because Parekh's understanding of what multiculturalism can be is built on a model of societies characterised by severe conflict, the central normative element in his theory derives from a belief that such tensions can only be resolved by recognising their very deep roots in the differences between cultures. It is a fundamental element of this perspective to see the beliefs and practices of a host and/or dominant culture as analytically on a par with the beliefs and practices of other cultural groupings.

The dynamic, continually evolving nature of multiculturalism suggests that the problem of designing governance structures and processes needs to be conceived of as a process within which different structures become appropriate at different points in time. The problem is not one of searching for a "single best structure" valid for all

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<sup>8</sup> Some everyday examples will help illustrate this. Europeans assume that the chairperson for a meeting derives his/her legitimacy from election, not from "age" or "wisdom" or "skill in resolving conflicts". Another assumption is that disagreements can, and sometimes should, be finally resolved by voting among the members of the meeting, not by continuing the discussion until a mutually satisfactory solution is arrived at or, alternatively, be arbitrated by the eldest and wisest person in the group. Again, there is a clear presumption that during meetings, individuals should speak in turn to the whole meeting, rather than taking time within meetings for people to discuss matters more generally among themselves.

points in time, but one of a process of thinking through and negotiating changes in governance structures as the multicultural social and institutional capacities of people living and working in the neighbourhoods develops.

Parekh's treatment of multiculturalism contains two additional elements which are significant for creating a vision of neighbourhood governance: the way multiculturalism is supported by decentralisation of power, and the way that private and public realms interact.

Parekh argues that:

Decentralisation of power has a particularly important role to play in ensuring justice in multicultural societies. Since different communities regularly encounter each other in the normal course of life at local or regional levels, respect for their differences at these levels matters to them greatly and shapes their perceptions of each other and the state. It is also easier for the local and regional bodies to accommodate differences than it is for the central government, because the adjustment required is more readily identified, limited in scale, not too costly and is generally free from the glare of publicity. There is also greater room for experimentation, mistakes are more easily corrected, and different areas can learn from each other's good practices (Parekh 2000, 212).

While Parekh's main concern is with the formal institutions of government, his insights apply with even more force to neighbourhood management. However, his ideas conflict with deeply institutionalised ideas about accountability in local government. In particular, they suggest the need to develop much more expertise in thinking through criteria for identifying acceptable "outcomes" rather than the "output" oriented exercise of accountability which is more common. More precisely, if local governments are to support the kind of experimentation and dynamic evolution of neighbourhood governance which seems necessary to support the emergence of multiculturalism, then leaving these emerging governance structures free to define local projects, aspirations, needs, etc is a way of leaving neighbourhood micro-political spaces open to develop. The ability to negotiate the definition of "outputs" among different cultural groups within a neighbourhood is itself the single most important "output" of multicultural neighbourhood governance. Thus, the desired "outcome" needs to be defined in terms of well-functioning multicultural neighbourhood governance mechanisms, and sophisticated criteria for assessing movement towards such mechanisms need to be developed. If neighbourhood governance mechanisms are held to be accountable simply for the delivery of specific "outputs", delivering the "beans to be counted" in Power's metaphor (1997), then this kind of accountability interferes with developing the multicultural negotiating skills which are fundamental to the desired outcome.

Parekh also argues that it is especially important for local and regional government to foster a vibrant civic culture because "intercommunal tensions are less frequent and more easily managed when there is an extensive local network of formal and informal cross-communal linkages nurturing the vital social capital of mutual trust and

cooperation" (Parekh 2000, 212). A flourishing civil society is important because it creates numerous opportunities for members of different cultural communities to meet and pursue common cultural, economic and other interests on a regular and relaxed basis. As people become used to each other, cross-cultural understanding and trust are built up, including the skills to negotiate and live with unresolved differences. The bonds of cross-cultural friendships and common material interests make the burdens of the occasional incomprehension and irritation "inherent in most intercultural encounters" (Parekh 2000, 222) easier to bear.

This suggests that financial, practical and moral support for a wide range of groups to "do things themselves" is a necessary pre-condition for designing effective multicultural neighbourhood governance mechanisms. Funding programmes, in particular, but also other forms of practical support can be designed to encourage multicultural interaction and to draw on, draw out and strengthen the social capacity of the individuals and groups involved. What is equally, if not more, important are the implications for developing institutional capacities: To manage such programmes, to learn what community interests and priorities are from the demands on these programmes, and to tolerate service provision from voluntary groups outside the welfare state institutions. This argument also supports the emphasis on learning how to assess the outcome of a well functioning multicultural neighbourhood governance mechanism since supporting funding programmes of this nature is, effectively, recognising the ability of different groups to define those outputs which they desire. One of the crucial institutional capacities which is required at local (or regional or central) government level is managing funding programmes of this nature in a way which supports the development of multicultural governance rather than undermining it by generating intergroup rivalries.

Parekh also argues that the public realm is important in supporting a multicultural civil society by providing a public welcome to the presence and contributions of different cultures, patronising social and other events, and seeking ways to incorporate different cultural contributions into the 'high culture' of the society and throughout all its institutional spaces. However, the public realm is also the realm of political activity – the governance of the society – and a monocultural public political realm can undermine and inhibit the emergence of multiculturalism in the private realm<sup>9</sup>. The conduct and content of political activity needs to recognise that established political language, standard accents, and prevailing political values can discourage the participation of those unused or unsympathetic to them. In the political realm, there is a need to:

Welcome new conceptual languages, modes of deliberation, forms of speech and political sensibilities, and create conditions in which their creative interplay could over time lead to a plural public realm and a broadbased political culture. Even established political values should not be treated as non-negotiable. If they can be shown to be unfairly biased against certain cultures or to exclude other equally worthwhile political values, a critical dialogue on them should be

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<sup>9</sup> Parekh's concept of "private realm" is more extensive than the usual concept of "civil society". He uses the concept of private realm to refer to those aspects of personal and family life which are not usually included in the idea of civil society.

welcomed as a step towards a richer moral culture enjoying a broad cross-cultural consensus (Parekh 2000, 223).

Much of the literature on neighbourhood governance focuses on the locality itself. Parekh reminds us that the nature of the wider public realm is also important in supporting locality based governance. Proactive anti-racism policies, forms of positive action, and so forth are essential supports to locality based initiatives, just as locality based initiatives can serve as experimental sites for developing and refining these broader policies and actions.

In conclusion, it is possible to use Parekh's work to develop a critique of the literature on urban and neighbourhood governance. The easiest way to summarise the effect of this critique is by articulating a number of "principles for designing neighbourhood governance".

- Neighbourhood governance mechanisms must be designed from the bottom up in order to take account of the specific cultural groups living and working in the area. The problems of conflict resolution are specific to the configuration of cultural groups in the area – different configurations can be expected to lead to different problems and methods of conflict resolution. The implication of this point is that there is no one specific model of neighbourhood governance which can be said to be "best". Rather, there are only models which fit the configuration of groups who are to be involved in them. This is a positive observation. On the one hand, it gives us a way of understanding why some neighbourhood governance mechanisms are so easily exclusive. On the other hand, the shoe fits both feet. It is necessary to look at governance mechanisms from the point of view of each of the cultural groups in the area (including the host group as a specific cultural group) to identify the sources of mutual incomprehension and irritation.
- The second point is an extension of the first. Governance arrangements should be expected to evolve over time. What may work at the moment of first contact may become outmoded as multicultural understandings develop and mature. Particular formal safeguards for the position and interests of specific groups may become unnecessary as other groups begin to internalise an understanding of the group and the interaction between groups imaginatively transforms elements from different traditions into something new. This general theme, of the evolution of governance mechanisms, is underdeveloped in the governance literature in any case, reflecting the short run nature of many programmes. Parekh's work gives the problem both a new twist and a new urgency.
- Outcome is more important than output in assessing the adequacy of neighbourhood governance mechanisms. Frequently, central government based neighbourhood renewal programmes allow considerable choice to local initiatives in terms of defining "output measures" However, once these measures are selected, they become the basis for an "upward facing accountability", and in this way, they displace consideration of the considerably more difficult political question of how local accountabilities are exercised. This point becomes especially important in the context of neighbourhood governance mechanisms which are tailor made to the configuration of cultural groups within the neighbourhood and which may be evolving in nature as multicultural mechanisms and understanding develop. This point is especially important because the



development of multicultural governance mechanisms requires the institutional space for experimentation, for learning from mistakes and for learning from each other. Focusing on output rather than outcome closes up these institutional spaces.

- New kinds of strategic and practical institutional capacities are needed to support multicultural neighbourhood governance. In some places, “simply” enhancing multicultural sensitivity would be an advance, requiring considerable leadership throughout wider governmental and governance systems. In other places, practical capacities to foster a wide variety of local groups, pursuing their own aims and finding places to interact, are required. At the same time, these orientations and capacities need to be supported throughout the public realm. This is not a chicken and egg problem, but rather one of being committed to starting and maintaining a process to the point at which it becomes institutionalised as “second nature” to local actors, one where the absence of multicultural actors begins to be seen as something strange and requiring explanation. Moreover, the dynamic nature of multicultural phenomena means that the development of these capacities is not a once and for all activity, but is, rather, a mode of thinking and acting which can respond to continually changing multicultural relationships. Of particular importance in developing these wider institutional capacities is the ability to distinguish when intergroup dynamics are regressing, and developing skills of knowing when and how to step into such situations.
- Finally, much of the neighbourhood governance literature is premised on the ideas that “conflicts should be resolved” and “problems should be solved”. However, Parekh makes the point very strongly that the question is one of being able to distinguish between those conflicts which need to be resolved to promote multicultural governance and those conflicts with which we can all live. This point is very important. Parekh's vision of multiculturalism rests as much on learning to tolerate, even welcome, difference as it does on negotiating the resolution of intergroup conflicts. The promise of Parekh's work in thinking about multicultural phenomena in designing neighbourhood governance mechanisms is that multiculturalism should, in the best circumstances, yield new ways to approach old conflicts and problems and, at the same time, help in distinguishing between those conflicts which have real consequences and those which arise from the 'irritation of incomprehension'.

All these points suggest that criteria for assessing the success of neighbourhood governance arrangements in multicultural neighbourhoods can be formulated in terms of the development of multicultural institutions. In formulating the conclusions in this way, they echo at the local level what we expect at the European regional level – that institutions will evolve and change over time, that they need to satisfy all the participants, that complex package deals are more successful than single issue decisions, and that the pace of change will vary from time to time.

## **Conclusions: Building the social infrastructure of cohesion**

The aim of this paper was to develop a view of multiculturalism which could be used to analyse the problems which cultural diversity raises for governance in socially excluded neighbourhoods. The first half of the paper summarises the results of a

detailed study of the social dynamics of ten socially excluded neighbourhoods within eight of the European member states. This summary links local social and institutional dynamics with an analysis of a process of disjointed structural change across Europe over the last quarter century. As a consequence of the way local situations and structural change are interwoven, programmes of social and/or physical renewal within these neighbourhoods, linked with attempts to enhance local coordination and create mechanisms of neighbourhood governance, tend to create a never ending circle of ineffectiveness and powerlessness. This analysis indicates a clear need for new ideas about neighbourhood governance.

The second half of the paper was spurred by the observation that the neighbourhoods were generally characterised by high levels of (ethnic) cultural diversity while the existing literature on -- and practices of -- neighbourhood governance are deeply rooted in mainstream European political practices. Parekh's recent work on the political theory of multiculturalism offered a way of looking at intergroup relationships which is relevant to understanding issues of ethnic exclusion within the neighbourhoods (and ethnic occlusion in the literature).

More unexpectedly, however, using Parekh's multicultural theory yielded a number of critical insights into ways of thinking about neighbourhood governance more generally. It seems that the deep rooting of existing ideas and practices of governance in western European political theory and practice leads to a kind of premature specificity in neighbourhood governance practices. The general force of the analysis in the second half of the paper identified a number of strategic criteria relevant to thinking about how to design practices of neighbourhood governance in specific situations: the need to design governance mechanisms which are relevant to the specific actors concerned, which are capable of evolving over time as relationships among actors develop, which allow for the creation of local accountabilities and allow learning from experience, and which require new kinds of social and institutional capacities both locally and in the wider political context. In summary, the analysis highlighted the kinds of social infrastructures necessary to support building cohesion within all neighbourhoods.

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