

Urban Governance in Dublin: New ‘Departures’ in Housing Provision

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines recent reorientations by Dublin City Council in its development and implementation of housing and planning policies. The local state has played a major role in the recent transformation of inner Dublin whereby, building on central-government-initiated urban renewal programmes of the mid-1980s, it has introduced its own brand of entrepreneurial structures and approaches to reshape the city. The transformation of the inner city has been marked by the large-scale construction of private apartments and gated enclaves for middle/upper income groups, a population influx of about 30,000, a deepening affordability crisis for indigenous populations and a local state that is increasingly involved in preparing and ‘selling’ the city for capital. Dublin City Council has increasingly infused its housing policies with an entrepreneurial ethos, in for example, extending the ‘right to buy’ policy to its flats complexes, in its active role in repackaging social-housing estates for real estate development through the use of public-private partnerships and in its general commitment to increasing social mix in inner-city areas. This paper draws on the experiences of particular inner-city locales with a long industrial tradition that are now acting as ‘test sites’ for these new housing policies and highlights some grassroots resistances that have emerged in response. Finally, this paper concludes with a brief discussion of how the local state, once confronted with criticism or resistance has been able to innovate and adopt new administrative and governance structures.

Key Words: entrepreneurial governance, housing policy, gentrification