

EXTRACT OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN FIONA WOODS AND ANONYMOUS ACTIVIST, JUNE 2017, AROUND CLARINA PARK, BALLINACURRA WESTON.

FW: So we are standing here at the top of Blake's Boreen. . . on the statutory boundary which marks out this particular regeneration area.

ANON: Yes, we are just at the edge of it. In the middle of the road is where it ends officially.

FW: What exactly does the statutory boundary confer, what does that mean?

ANON: They were introduced in 2008 when they amended the ministerial orders which established the regeneration agencies. They included deposited maps as well as adding other people onto the regeneration board. The purpose of the deposited maps was to make it legal for them to board up a house in the area. Once an area has been marked out for Urban Renewal, that allows the council to purchase a house in the area and board it up without any legal obligations to refurbish and relet or any obligation to demolish if it's derelict. They can sit and wait.

FW: Even though the Regeneration Agency has changed, there has been a transfer from a semi-independent agency back into the council, the nature of the areas themselves, what this boundary actually marks out, that hasn't changed?

ANON: That hasn't changed and I thought it would. What they did when they handed power back to the council regarding regeneration, there was a transfer of functions and legislation was amended to say that the functions that once applied to the agency now applied to the council. I had assumed they would scrap it completely but they didn't. Those deposited maps for the north side and south side still are on the statute books. The red line still exists and the functions of the agency are now the functions of the council.

FW: We are going to walk down Blake's Boreen and we are going to walk around the Clarina Park Estate. Is that right?

ANON: Well, the former Clarina park estate is now gone. We will be going through Ballinacurra Weston and Clarina Avenue. We will then go up Hyde Avenue and Lenihan Avenue and Byrne Avenue because we are going to look at those houses as well.

FW: Sometimes, it's very hard to fathom the different logics that are operating. That's one of the things I'm interested in. These things happen and there must be somebody who has a logic for it somewhere but it's very hard to track it down. Often they are in conflict.

ANON: The logic is there. The official agenda doesn't correspond with their actual agenda which I believe is to get rid of everybody and then redevelop the land.

FW: Everybody, how far would that everybody extend, in the entire statutory zone?

ANON: Certainly they had named in the legislation, certain areas. They claimed only the named areas were targeted. That's stated in the legislation: "which includes" and then it names the areas.

FW: It was kept deliberately vague?

ANON: I have a letter from Regeneration say that the boundaries were so wide because then they could expand regeneration if they wanted to. I have that letter from Brendan Kenny. I also saw the deposited maps in advance of them being made law. ...It's smaller here... It's bigger up further.

FW: I know this is something of a problem corner for you because you have pointed out how dangerous it is. People

walk on that wall. There's a steep fall off on the other side.

ANON: Back in the 80s a child had a serious fall further up that boreen. He was hospitalised. They still do. Their plan was to remove the fence and knock that section wall and they were going to put rock armour in there.

FW: This is the rock armour?

ANON: Yes, That would create problems. It would have created a picnic area. As you know we've had problems there. Open space....a lot more vulnerable.

FW: Passive security (means) having the neighbourhood police the area?

ANON: Parts of the security worked because it's at the main road. If you have traffic going through that can provide passive security. But here there's no one really looking. The context of the passive security as it was outlined in the new plan. There was Garda... up in Dublin that came up with it. That's the design expert; he often features on Crime Watch. The context of that was with houses being built there. Passive security would be provided by new houses with the residents in them. There is no new houses there as you can see. So opening up the site that goes against their stated ideas.

FW: This site now, I've seen the houses that were on it on google earth from 2009, how long is it since the site has been cleared?

ANON: 2012, the last two houses were demolished.

FW: Were they inhabited?

ANON: No they were the Community Development Project.

FW: So, 5 years?

ANON: 5 years, they were all tenants. There was 49 houses in total. They were built in 1996. There was nothing wrong with them, physically.

FW: What happened was, this process of sequence of events that happen, where they start to, I think the term you use is de-tenanting?

ANON: De-tenanting, yes. They offer the tenant the same rate in another area. Then the house gets boarded up, looted and burnt out. I have loads of photos of that happening in Clarina Park. In Clarina Park they were all tenants. In the rest of Weston they were mostly homeowners. The tenants were peppered throughout the area. They removed them and then would board up the house on the block, or two houses on the block. They would get the homeowner to then sell their house back or as they call it become a tenant elsewhere. You go from a homeowner to a tenant and get compensated for €30,000. Of course that money would be gone in rent in three or four years.

FW: I can see why people would resist that.

ANON: Yes, as best they can.

FW: The fact that the house would be emptied and boarded up, that wouldn't happen in other parts of the city. They would either have to demolish or refurbish.

ANON: A house that was derelict they would have to demolish. A house that was not derelict would have to be refurbished and relet. That's the law.

FW: The stated logic of why they would board up, is there a stated logic?

ANON: The stated logic is to keep the property safe. In many cases it actually advertises the fact the property is now empty.

FW: As you have pointed out, first of all, people go in and strip the copper. Then often it becomes a dumping ground.

ANON: You can find examples of where the council has deviated from that policy, officially, in places like Anacusheen outside the regeneration zone in Burke Avenue which are 3 story duplex houses that were built in the 70s. There is only two tenants left in that block of houses near the station. Two tenants. Not the ones that are refurbished, the ones in Burke Avenue which is just off Lord Edward Street. There is only two tenants left in those. Looking at them you would think that they were all occupied because they are boarded up from the inside with curtains covering the boarding. At the back you can see the boarded. They are more secure.

FW: It is a very strange policy. It is very clear from what you have described that the boarding up process, I've seen your photos aswell, what that does is often you get leaks and then you get a lot of damp penetrating into the still occupied houses next door. It's a very strange decision . . . it's hard to fathom why you would do that.

ANON: It is because you do it once, you see what happens, do it twice you see it happen again, you do it a third time, they know that this policy isn't working and the effect it's having yet they are repeating it and repeating it and ignoring the complaints about it.

FW: It isn't working at least in terms of what the apparent objective is, but the suspicion is that there is some other unstated agenda.

ANON: Well, the unstated agenda would be what I call "intimidation by proxy." It puts pressure on the homeowner to get out and to take whatever deal they are offered. It becomes intolerable to live there. Especially if you are elderly and a lot of the homeowners here were elderly and are elderly. The estate is about sixty years old.