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The Challenge of Community Participation in the Delivery of Public Services

Exploring Local Participatory Governance in Ireland

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Exploring Local Participatory Governance in Ireland

By Chris McInerney, Tipperary Institute

and

Dr. Maura Adshead, University of Limerick

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NESF Preface to *The Challenge of Participation: Exploring Local Participatory Governance in Ireland*

The participation of the community in governance is a key component of local democracy. This Discussion Report, *The Challenge of Participation: Exploring Local Participatory Governance in Ireland,* was originally commissioned by the NESF from Dr. Chris McInerney and Dr. Maura Adshead as an input into a planned larger project on community participation in local governance aimed at identifying the mechanisms that enable such participation in Ireland. An assessment of such participation mechanisms in local governance is long overdue, particularly in the light of the forthcoming White Paper on *Stronger Local Democracy.*

This Discussion Report, *The Challenge of Participation: Exploring Local Participatory Governance in Ireland,* provides an excellent and coherent framework within which to understand the range of community participation/governance mechanisms currently in operation in Ireland. The division of these existing mechanisms into the following four 'zones' provides a particularly useful roadmap:

- Zone 1 – In-house Participatory Governance: Examples include local authority Strategic Policy Committees, Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees;
- Zone 2 – Moving Towards Governance 'Out There': Examples include City and County Development Boards, RAPID structures;

- Zone 3 – Participatory Governance 'Out There': Examples include Area Based Partnerships; and
- Zone 4 – Civil Society Organisations: Examples include associations representing local communities, ethnic minorities etc.

The Discussion Report also provides detailed case study analyses of the operation of such participatory governance mechanisms, and identifies the enablers of and barriers to effective participation. The following were identified by the report as particularly important for effective participation:

- It is not sufficient to simply create structures without establishing more solid participatory foundations, which would lead to conscious and conspicuous changes in institutional culture and practice;
- Capacity-building programmes, particularly in the skill of collaboration, are important to avoid lead-organisation domination;
- Specialist external supports can be particularly effective in providing technical assistance and helping to overcome skills deficits;
- All parties need to adopt a distinctly problem-solving focus in community participation work;
- Appropriate funding is needed for civil society organisations to enable them to participate effectively; and
- Civil society organisations themselves need to develop ways to collaborate more effectively among themselves.

An NESF Plenary Session was held in October 2009 to discuss an earlier draft of this Discussion Paper, *The Challenge of Participation: Exploring Local Participatory Governance in Ireland*. This Plenary Session was attended by 100 stakeholders and the Discussion Paper was warmly welcomed and was the focus of an engaged and well informed discussion. Formal responses to this Paper were made by Ms Marie Carroll, Director of the Southside Partnership; Mr Ivan Cooper, Director of Advocacy at the Wheel; and Mr Joe Horan, County Manager of South Dublin County Council.

Marie Carroll outlined the significant changes that are occurring in the local development sector currently. She identified a number of such changes including the decline in focus on community participation; the importance of specialist staff to promote participation; trust among partners who enjoy very different formal power and control over resources; and the role the NESF could play in maximising the learning about participatory governance in partnerships, by feeding this into national level policy.

Ivan Cooper outlined why community participation and caring values are even more critical during a time of downturn and uncertainty, as they can help people feel involved in something bigger than themselves. It is important therefore that resources, structures and processes for community participation remain in place. And there is a need to continue to try to work collaboratively despite cutbacks that are likely to occur.

Finally, Joe Horan spoke about how organising work in new ways can be very helpful in providing better outcomes for communities, including clustering organisational functions in new ways, pooling datasets, and setting up protocols in organisations, for data sharing, and for dealing with critical incidents. He also noted that 'a one size fits all' model is inappropriate for local authorities, and the assumption that all local authorities are locked into one process needs to be challenged. He argued that funding could be used more effectively in positively promoting pro-social behaviour than in dealing with the aftermath of anti-social behavior. He outlined innovative projects carried out in South Dublin County Council, including work with a school which was losing its school population and teachers. To revive it, the council worked with the teachers to build a virtual learning environment. Since initiation of this project, suspensions and expulsions among children in first year have dropped from 90 children to none; and absence rates have been halved. Another project has provided Travellers with work experience in the Council, and this has led to 29 of 50 of the Travellers who completed this training gaining employment.

It is not possible to do justice to the richness of the discussion at the Plenary here. However, it is worth emphasising some points that arose including:

- The need to understand local participatory governance within the wider framework of other forms of participation in local government, such as local elections;
- The need to find innovative ways to manage the necessary tensions between a variety of views in local government;
- The need not just for effective and engaged links between representative organisations and the local community but also between local government organisations and the community;
- The need for further exploration of the four zones of community participation in local government, and the links between them; and
- The value of completing more detailed case studies.

This Discussion paper itself makes a number of recommendations including:

- Supporting an exploration of the Irish public administration system so as to more deeply understand how it has evolved and how it might be facilitated/encouraged to embrace participatory governance approaches;
- Undertaking discussions and open explorations with public officials to find out what they think about participation;
- Establishing administrative and evidence-based justifications for participation;
- Illustrating the valued-added impacts of participatory governance processes;
- Exploring options to locate governance and social inclusion processes within a stronger legislative framework;

- Investigating how cultures of public service and a recognition of the roles and rights of citizenship can be incorporated into public administration training programmes; and finally
- Exploring mechanisms for rewarding inclusion and participation champions so as to encourage others to take risks and to be entrepreneurial around participation.

When this Discussion Paper was commissioned it was the intention of the NESF to follow its normal work practice in completing Reports, that is, to establish a Project Team representative of the four pillars of its social partner members; to consult with a wide range of interested stakeholders, practitioners and experts; and deliberate on the findings before agreeing a final report based on the full range of information and opinion gathered, including the points raised at the Plenary session.

In the event, this did not prove possible as the Government recently decided to streamline the work of policy advice within NESDO (the National Economic and Social Development Office) by absorbing the NESF, and its sister organisation the NCPP, into the NESC. This means that the usual timeframe which the NESF has to carry out such work was not available to us. Nonetheless, given the value of the work to date, we have decided to publish this Discussion Paper, *The Challenge of Participation: Exploring Local Participatory Governance in Ireland,* as it is, and hope that it will serve as a useful input into the forthcoming White Paper.

Finally, it is important to note that good governance structures are there to facilitate each of the partnering organisations in carrying out their original mission. In the case of local community organisations, this includes the many projects initiated to better serve different socially excluded groups. A great deal of learning ensues from these projects – not just the successful projects, but also the unsuccessful. Much of this learning remains local and this constitutes a significant loss at national level.

In this respect, the Irish Local Development Network (ILDN, formerly PLANET) made a proposal to develop collaborative links with the NESF. The purpose of this collaboration was to enable the on-the-ground learning from the activities of the 53 local development companies to be collected, analysed and reported to Government, enabling central policy makers to review the appropriate policy and its implementation in a timely way. This information would also be disseminated nationally by the NESF, enabling each local partnership to learn fast and efficiently from each other's experience and expertise in particular areas of social exclusion.

This proposal was well received by the NESF Management Committee and it was proposed to further develop the proposal. In the event, another central vehicle will now have to be found for this working collaboration, and it is my personal hope that that will happen.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to Dr. Chris McInerney and Dr. Maura Adshead, to all those who attended the Plenary Session, and to those who submitted observations and comments on the draft Discussion Paper. We trust that our work in this vital area of how communities can meaningfully participate in the governance of their local areas, and thereby enliven and enrich democracy, will be a useful input into future work in this area.

Dr Maureen Gaffney

Chairperson
National Economic and Social Forum

Introduction and Overview

The concept and practice of participatory governance has been increasingly prominent since the first national social partnership agreement, *The Programme for National Recovery* (1987-90). This was followed by the *Programme for Economic and Social Progress* (1991-1993) which laid the basis for a series of pilot governance experiments at local level. Since that time, a variety of national and local governance processes have been developed, particularly in the period following the publication of the *Better Local Government* White Paper in 1996. While at national level, social partnership is often credited with making a significant contribution towards dealing with the 1980s recession; its impact at local level and its contribution of local governance mechanisms is less clearly understood. There is, moreover, some concern about the proliferation of governance mechanisms and formulas and the role that they play.

This report seeks to:

- Assess the adequacy of existing participatory structures at local level;
- Identify successful best practice models at local levels; and
- Generate a template to mainstream community participation to maximise the potential for the more effective participation of local communities in the design and implementation of public policies.

To achieve these objectives the terms of reference for the report emphasised the importance of:

- Reviewing literature on community participation both nationally and internationally;
- Identifying the community participation infrastructure that currently exists in both the local authority and community and local development spheres;
- Sampling a number of local authorities and community and local development agencies;

- Working with local personnel to identify models of community participation that have measurable or identifiable positive outcomes; and
- Building on the analysis of case studies to make practical suggestions and recommendations for best practice in the realm of participation by local communities in the delivery of public services, and how barriers and constraints in this process could be best tackled.

The conclusions drawn in this report reflect, in part, the experiences of a limited number of cases, albeit that many of these conclusions are reinforced by other research in Ireland and/or internationally. Moreover, it is noted that the cases explored within the terms of reference of the report represent more formalised and institutionalised examples of participatory governance. Other research opportunities remain to explore in greater depth those processes that may be less formalised, issue-specific and more short-term in nature.

In particular, and given the NESF's remit in the area, the report is concerned to examine how the formulation and implementation of policies to enable local participatory governance have been implemented in a way that contributes to achieving social inclusion objectives. The report is mindful that while virtually all local level mechanisms have some level of social inclusion remit, different mechanisms accord differing levels of priority to achieving social inclusion objectives.

In approaching this task it was considered necessary to review some of the conceptual underpinnings that inform or might inform approaches to participatory governance. Section 1, **Why Participatory Governance**, explores the foundations upon which participatory governance might be built, looking in turn at: the relationships between participatory governance and concepts of democracy; public administration; social inclusion and public policy. This will subsequently facilitate deeper examination of real world examples of participatory governance and will uncover some of the inherent tensions and challenges that confront participatory ambitions. Section

1 of the report concludes the conceptual analysis with a brief review of more contemporary theory and international practice in developing participatory approaches.

Section 2, **Participatory Governance in an Ideal World**, identifies some of the features identified in literature on the topic that can contribute to effective participatory governance at all levels. Here, the concept of deliberative democracy is discussed, as is the importance of understanding notions of associative democracy. More practically, the main elements of Empowered Deliberative Democracy are highlighted which are particularly important, given their basis in the real world of participatory governance.

Section 3, **Mapping the Landscape of Local Participatory Governance in Ireland**, introduces some of the main participatory processes at local level and describes them in terms of their origins, purpose, participants, internal governance arrangements, degree of focus on social inclusion and oversight. Alongside this treatment of the formal mechanisms for participatory governance, section 3 also introduces a number of less formal mechanisms, which are recognised more by custom and convention than by explicit policy provision. We argue that these 'governance light' processes offer important insights into alternative forms of community action engagement with the democratic system. Finally, in section 3, the realm of local level civil society is surveyed. This is situated within a brief understanding of how civil society has emerged in Ireland more generally but seeks to understand some of the key, specifically local, characteristics that affect engagement within participatory processes.

Section 4, **Experiencing Participatory Governance in Ireland**, introduces empirical experiences of local level participatory governance in Ireland. In doing so, it describes and analyses case study material from 11 local level experiences, from six different types of participatory mechanism, namely: County/City Development Boards, local urban regeneration initiatives, local development companies, RAPID, Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) and Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees (LTACC). These case studies have been chosen to reflect a mixture of: locations, urban and rural experiences, governance format and type, lead organisations,

historical experience, and political and public administration influence. This section also introduces the considerations of a focus group on collaborative planning, broadly defined, comprising perspectives from the local government sector, the local development sector, educational institutions, environmentalists, and independent planners.

Overall Section 4 assembles the learning from a number of local experiences in Ireland and assesses the degree to which these experiences have contributed to the realisation of a social inclusion agenda. In doing so, the relationship between the theory and practice of participatory governance is explored, enabling a series of recommendations to be made that might enhance the role of participation in addressing social exclusion.

Finally, Section 5, **Towards a Template for Local Participatory Governance**, draws from the conceptual and empirical materials presented in the earlier sections to develop a framework within which more progressive forms of local level participation in decision making can be built.

Section 1

Why Participatory Governance – the Conceptual and Policy Context

Introduction

1.1 In Ireland, as in many other countries, societies have witnessed an emerging trend towards the creation of governance structures, processes and mechanisms, to the point where some commentators have talked of the drift from government to governance and "profound shifts in authority relationships".[1] While it can be argued that these drifts and shifts may not be as profound as some commentators would suggest, it is true nevertheless that significant elements of public business, in the past the exclusive realms of politicians and bureaucrats, have moved into arenas where a greater number of societal actors see themselves as stakeholders and/or decision makers. The reasons for this trend have been extensively addressed elsewhere[2]. Many of these commentaries reflect an increasingly common concern, namely, that dynamic contemporary societies are less governable by the old methods of command and obedience and as a result, newer and more adaptable forms of decision-making are necessary.

1.2 Although it is clear that there are definitive shifts in the nature of governance, which are often referred to as 'new governance', still there is no uniform definition of what these shifts might entail. Despite a general agreement on the underlying reasons for new trends towards governance, still there are many different ways of defining and describing it. In order to anchor the discussions on participatory governance in this report, we use the definition adopted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as an appropriate working

1. See J Pierre and G B Peters (2000) Governance, politics and the state; and Michalski, W, Miller R. and Stevens, B (2001) Governance in the 21st Century: Power in the Global Knowledge Economy and Society. Note – full references are in Annex 1

2. G B Peters (1995) Introducing the topic; C Pollit (1995) Management Techniques for the Public Sector: Pulpit and Practice; D Savoie (1995) What is wrong with the New Public Management; J Pierre and G B Peters (2000) Governance, politics and the state; Michalski, W., Miller R. and Stevens B. (2001) Governance in the 21st Century: Power in the Global Knowledge, Economy and Society; Santiso (2001) Good Governance and Aid Effectiveness: The World Bank and Conditionality

understanding of what is meant by governance. The UNDP approach suggests that the notion of governance refers to:

> The system of values, policies and institutions by which a society manages its economic and social affairs through interactions within and among the state, civil society and the private sector. It is the way a society organises itself to make and implement decisions – achieving mutual understanding, agreement and action. It comprises the mechanisms and processes for citizens and groups to articulate their interests, mediate their differences, and exercise their legal rights and obligations[3].

1.3 In order to facilitate the exploration of participatory governance mechanisms at local level in Ireland, it is helpful to take a look at some of the conceptual underpinnings of participatory governance; in particular, how governance fits into contemporary understandings of democracy, public administration, social exclusion/inclusion and public policy. A discussion of each stimulates consideration of alternative ways of thinking about governance and raises questions that help us to analyse our consideration of recent Irish experiences.

Participatory Governance – Tensions, Challenges and Expectations

1.4 A broad review of the literature on participatory governance suggests four underlying rationales for the development of participatory governance:

— A democracy rationale;

— A public administration rationale;

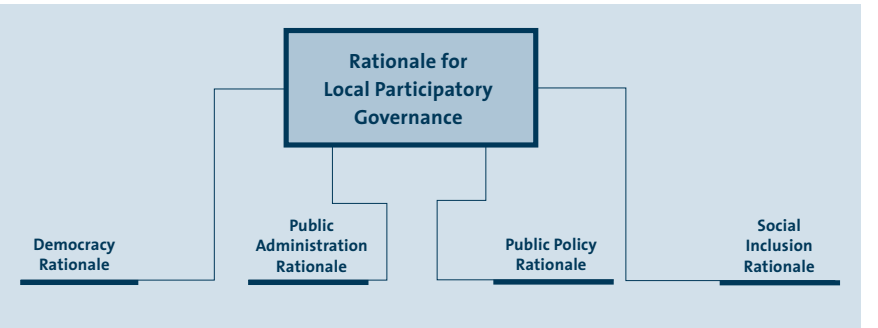
— A social inclusion rationale; and

— A public policy rationale.

In this section, these alternative rationales are explored, and illustrate that a range of tensions, challenges and expectations confront efforts to construct more participatory forms of governance.

3. Nahem (2004) Governance Indicators: A Users Guide:2

Figure 1 Establishing the Rationale for Participatory Local Governance



The Democracy Rationale

1.5 Democracy, participatory governance and social inclusion, despite being intrinsically connected, as concepts remain distant from each other, both in theory and in practice. While some aspects of democratic theory display a deeper interest in understanding equality and inequality, and some analyses of social exclusion express views on the incomplete nature of citizenship and the weaknesses of the democratic system, the mainstreams of both have failed to merge. **Participatory governance is the potential bridge between the two, offering ground where democratic practice can take account of the need to build more inclusive societies and where understandings of social exclusion can be enriched by deeper appreciations of the nature and purpose of democracy.**

1.6 Within these debates about the state of contemporary democracy, there are two main competing tendencies:

i. those "which celebrate its ascendancy and

ii. those which are concerned about its deficits"[4].

For those concerned with deficits, contemporary practice is sometimes described as "democracy with adjectives, low intensity democracy, neo-patrimonial democracy, semi-democracy" (Luckham, et al. 1999)

4. J Gaventa (2006) Triumph, Deficit or Contestation? Deepening the 'Deepening Democracy' Debate:3

and is increasingly manifest in declining voter turnout in elections, and increasing distance between citizens, democratic institutions and democratic politics[5].

1.7 Different democratic expectations also find expression in the contrast made between notions of **formal and substantive democracy**, where formal democracy refers to the institutions, procedures or routines of democratic systems; while substantive democracy refers to the redistribution of power and the degree to which an individual citizen is able to participate in the decisions which affect his or her life[6].

1.8 These distinctions can also be seen in the contrast between democratic approaches that serve **aggregative as opposed to those that advocate more integrative ambitions**. In this regard, aggregative approaches, largely served by the formal institutions of representative democracy, focus on "procedures serving to distribute power and influence and regulate conflicts". By contrast integrative approaches, achieved by increased participation, concentrate on "procedures serving to produce democratic citizens" and, as such, it is proposed that any efforts to promote democratic empowerment must have both "**democratic institutions which ensure individuals have an equal access to channels of influence**" (aggregative measures) but it must also have procedures to "**contribute to the production of democratic citizens**"[7] (integrative measures). For many, participatory governance processes are important such procedures. For others however, maintenance of formal, aggregative and, some might say, elitist approaches are preferable, both to guarantee legitimacy but also to maintain existing patterns of privilege and influence.

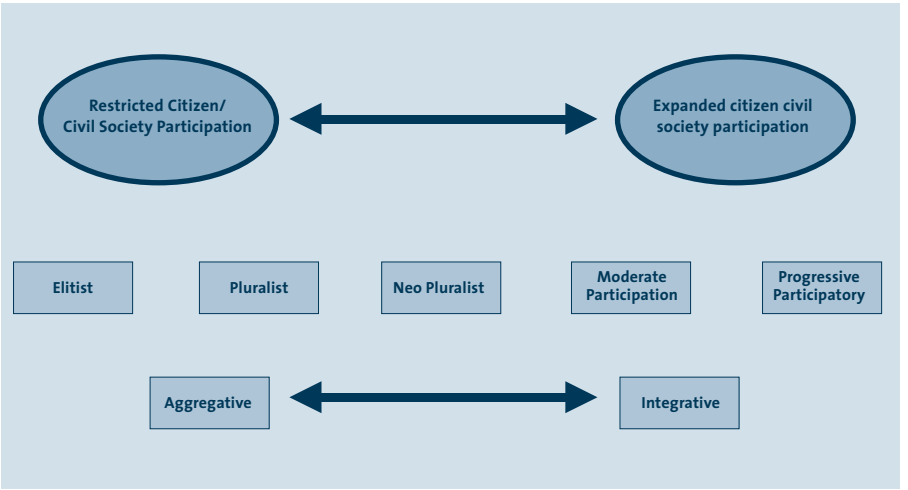
5. For discussion on this see C Pateman (1970) Participation and Democratic Theory; T Clarke and C Stewart (1998) Community Governance, Community Leadership and the New Local Government; Luckham, R; Goetz, A M. and Kaldor, M (1999) Democratic Institutions and Politics in Contexts of Inequality, Poverty and Conflict. Working Paper 104; A Phillips (2004) Democracy, Recognition and Power

6. Luckham, R; Goetz A M. and Kaldor, M (1999) Democratic Institutions and Politics in Contexts of Inequality, Poverty and Conflict. Working Paper 104.

7. G Sorensen (1997) Democracy and Empowerment:557

1.9 Although at first glance it may seem that these are two quite distinctive and separate ideas about contemporary democracy, in reality the division between these views is less clear-cut and it may even be argued that the division is an artificial one. Instead of seeing these perspectives as competing theories of democracy, they are perhaps best viewed as points along a spectrum of liberal democracy, where the extent of participatory mechanisms, as well as the take-up that they enjoy, represent the alternative varieties of democratic practice possible. Thus on a spectrum of democratic practice, approaches described under the rubric of participatory democracy most often function alongside - rather than instead of - the representative democratic system and "should complement and be compatible with the primary institutions of large-scale modern societies"[8].

Figure 2 The Spectrum of Contemporary Liberal Democracy



1.10 The degree to which diverse ambitions can be accommodated is of course the core challenge of developing participatory governance processes. It might be argued, for example, that the inability of some democratic systems to meet the challenge of engaging citizens and

8 B R Barber (1984) Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age:261

other residents is due to "the type of political theory currently in vogue, dominated as it is by an individualistic, universalistic and rationalistic framework. Such a framework erases the dimension of the political and impedes envisaging in an adequate manner the nature of a pluralistic democratic public sphere"[9].

Box 1

Challenging questions for democratic practice

- **To what extent, if any, is there an interest in reflecting upon or reviewing the functioning of the democratic system in Ireland?**
- **Is it possible to accommodate ambitions for more substantive democracy without substantial change in the established institutions of formal, representative democracy?**
- **Have local participatory governance mechanisms contributed in a meaningful way to the development of a more substantive, integrative democracy?**

Civil society as a core component of the democratic system?

1.11 Clearly a discussion about the nature of democracy and its relationship to participatory governance would not be complete without a consideration of the role of civil society as a core component of the democratic system. While it is possible to spend considerable time rehearsing different debates on the exact meaning of civil society, one useful working definition sees it as:

> An intermediate realm situated between state and household, populated by organised groups or associations which are separate from the state, enjoy some autonomy in relations with the state and are formed voluntarily by members of society to protect or extend their interests, values or identities.[10]

9. C Mouffe (1999) Deliberate Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism:745

10. J Manor; M Robinson and G White (1999) Civil Society and Governance – A Concept Paper:3-4

1.12 Conventional treatments of civil society suggest that it is often understood in juxtaposition to 'the state' and by reference to 'what it is not'. In this vein, the comparison is usually made with the functions of the state. These are largely concerned with the management of the economy, the functioning of formal regulation and accompanying enforcement mechanisms in a predominantly market oriented approach that is primarily concerned with generating profit, income and wealth. For others, civil society is often presented as being the vehicle for "self organisation for particular purposes of enhancing intrinsic social values"[11]. Thus, for those concerned to address political and economic inequality, the concept of civil society is uniquely important, being one of the few ways in which those who are marginalised can come together to seek ways to "improve their lives through mutual aid and articulation of group consciousness"[12]. For others however, political, economic or social equality will not be a priority and may actually be seen as a threat, emphasising that within civil society there will inevitably be a variety of outlooks, perspectives and agendas.

1.13 In practice, civil society continues to mean different things to different people, leading one to suggest that defining civil society is like trying to "nail jelly to the wall"[13]. Civil society hosts a variety of associational forms with a multiplicity of civic values, cultures, aims and ambitions. It is clear that not all elements of civil society are necessarily concerned with social values, intrinsic or otherwise, and may actually seek to undermine generally held values. Thus, care must be exercised in conceiving of civil society as a single, public sphere.

1.14 It has been further suggested that where there is a desire to promote political and economic equality, the notion of civil society as a single, undifferentiated entity actually facilitates domination by the more powerful and privileged. In such cases, participatory approaches simply create an alternative layer of elite civil society representation.

11. I M Young (2000) Inclusion and Democracy:160

12. Ibid.:165

13. See Edwards M. (1998) Nailing the Jelly to the Wall: NGOs, Civil Society and International Development. http://www.futurepositive.org/docs/JELLY.doc

Much experience within developing countries highlights the dangers of 'elite capture' of participation opportunities and the continued marginalisation of excluded groups[14]. Indeed it has been suggested that "far from being a benign or neutral space in which the interests of the poor and powerless can be articulated, civil society often reproduces the class, gender and racial hierarchies of capitalist states and societies"[15]. To overcome this, multiple forms of civil society organisation are seen as the ideal arrangement to enable organisation by "subordinated public groups such as workers, poor people, ethnic minorities, racialised groups and women" leading to the creation of "subaltern counter-publics"[16].

1.15 While recognising such dangers, participation within civil society is still seen as providing an important opportunity for citizens to engage more actively within contemporary democracy. Within this there is an assumption that civil society will engage in partnership with the state. However, the idea that civil society should inevitably partner with the state in governance arrangements is not uniformly held. For example, civil society has been envisaged as a place where "people choose to live their public lives and solve their joint problems"[17]. In this, more independent view it is anticipated that civil society may be involved in:

i. changing the terms of political discourse;

ii. legitimating different forms of collective action;

iii. convening policy oriented fora; and

iv. generating responses from government as a result of fear of political instability.

14. For discussions on the experience of elite capture see R C Crook and A S Sverrisson (2001) Decentralisation and Poverty Alleviation in Developing Countries: A Comparative Analysis or, is West Bengal Unique; P Smoke (2003) Decentralisation In Africa: Goals, Dimension, Myths And Challenges; A Cornwall and V S P Coelho (2004) New Democratic Spaces: The Politics of Institutionalised Participation; A Phillips (2004) Democracy, Recognition and Power; Hickey S. and Mohan G. (2005) Relocating Participation Within a Radical Politics of Development.

15. Luckham R.;Goetz A M. and Kaldor M (1999) Democratic Institutions and Politics in Contexts of Inequality, Poverty and Conflict. Working Paper 104:21

16. N Fraser (1990) Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy:67-68

17. J S Dryzek (1996) Political Inclusion and the Dynamics of Democratization:481

In such scenarios, civil society remains distinct from the state thereby ensuring that it flourishes in an oppositional as opposed to a co-operative or co-opting climate.

> If the impetus for democratisation begins in oppositional civil society rather than in the state - and I would suggest that this has almost always been true historically - then, counter-intuitively, a degree of exclusion in the pattern of state-interest representation is desirable if civil society and so democracy itself are to flourish"[18].

1.16 Whatever the theory, in reality it is generally acknowledged that complete detachment from the state is rarely an option for civil society organisations. However, where such organisations actively choose to engage with the state, their interactions may be productive only when certain conditions are met. Thus,

i. the group's desired outcomes must be capable of "being assimilated to an established or emerging state imperative" i.e. the agendas of the civil society organisation and the state must overlap; and

ii. "civil society's discursive capacities must not be unduly depleted"[19], i.e. civil society organisations must retain their ability and freedom to express options, perspectives and beliefs.

Whether such conditions can be met is far from certain, leading to the conclusion that in some cases at least, "inclusion in the polity beyond the state is more appropriate" and may actually contribute more to democratisation[20].

1.17 Where such benign forms of inclusion cannot be found, there may be negative consequences for civil society potentially leading to a taming of grassroots movements as a result of being asked to "behave responsibly in governance bodies"[21] where the nature of responsibility is decided by state officials. Ultimately, the assimilation of civil society

18. Ibid.:482
19. J S Dryzek (2000) Deliberative Democracy and Beyond: Liberals, Critics, Contestations:84
20. Ibid.:85
21. A Fung and E O Wright (2001) Deepening Democracy: Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance:34

into state processes may be detrimental for the prospects of democratic renewal, as suggested by one former Irish government minister.

> [To achieve...] an integrated approach to social and economic and environmental objectives and policy, you must re-imagine and reform the democratic process. Democratic reforms should build on the representative democracy which is deeply embedded in Europe, by encouraging the integration of a participative dimension, at local, regional, national and the European/international level. An integrated approach will require not only different policies by government, but different ways of doing government business at all levels in our society both at Dail and local authority level. This requires deep reforms of our democratic institutions and ways of imagining ourselves as democrats. Such reforms in my view will only be driven from 'outside' by civil society, not from within, although I am certain there will be many allies 'within' for such deep democratic reforms[22].

From invited to popular spaces

1.18 Discussions on democratic participation and civil society are sometimes framed by reference to notions of participation in invited as opposed to popular spaces[23]. The distinction sometimes drawn between **"invited" participation spaces** which are frequently state convened and **"popular spaces"** which are brought about at the initiative of various civil society organisations, offers a useful way of understanding some of the tensions that accompany participation in governance processes. **Invited spaces** are seen to suffer from rigid interpretations of participation; the allocation of only limited responsibility to community participants; an absence of clarity on roles and responsibilities; and an unwillingness by participants to question the actions of the state. **Popular spaces** on the other hand are often seen as arenas in which greater participation can be generated and

22. P de Rossa (2006) Speech by Proinsias De Rossa MEP

23. A Cornwall and V S P Coelho (2004) New Democratic Spaces: The Politics of Institutionalised Participation

more attention paid to process issues, though their linkage to decision-making processes remains unclear[24]. The need to distinguish between different participation arenas or spaces has also been identified leading to suggestions that citizens may need to "oscillate between protected enclaves, in which they can explore their ideas in an environment of mutual encouragement, and more hostile but also broader surroundings in which they can test those ideas against the reigning reality"[25].

The challenge of representation

1.19 Where the voices of civil society are articulated by the selection of representative spokespersons some immediate challenges emerge, mirroring many of the dilemmas of the mainstream democratic orthodoxy. For civil society engagement to be legitimate, it is suggested that representatives need to act on the authorisation of those they represent, and that they are subsequently accountable to them. Crucially, a number of fundamental components of progressive representation are advanced, concerning representation of **interest, opinion** and **perspective** (Young 2000).

i. The first of these, as might be expected, requires that the **interests** of those represented are looked after.

ii. The second, focusing on opinion, extends the representative role to encompass an understanding of and willingness to voice the **opinions, principles and values** held by those who are represented.

iii. Finally, and perhaps, most importantly, perspective implies that the representative has an **understanding of the social and life experiences of those he/she represents**. This becomes especially important where different groups experience different social and economic realities.

24. A Cornwall (2002) Making Spaces, Changing Places: Situating Participation in Development. Working Paper 170; A Cornwall and V S P Coelho (2004) New Democratic Spaces: The Politics of Institutionalised Participation

25. J Mansbridge (1996) Using Power/Fighting Power: The Polity:57

Box 2

Additional questions / challenges to understandings of democracy

- **What value is placed on the role of civil society as an element of a healthy democratic system?**
- **Is it seen as important that civil society maintain a capacity to be distinct and largely independent of the state, and has this been visible in the design of participatory processes?**
- **Is there adequate recognition of the differences within civil society and, in particular, its role in facilitating the emergence of voices from within marginalised communities?**
- **How can participatory mechanisms be developed that preserve the democratic vitality of civil society?**
- **Equally, has civil society paid adequate attention to its own obligations, particularly the needs of legitimacy and accountability?**

The Public Administration Rationale

1.20 Having explored the democratic underpinnings for participatory governance it is crucial to also reflect on the role of the public administration system and, in particular, its capacity and/or willingness to accommodate notions of participatory governance.

1.21 Alongside the representative institutions generated by most democratic systems, public administration is seen as being essential to provide continuity in a system that sees politicians come and go but which sees public administrators in place for many years[26].

26. J D Aberbach (2003) Administration in an Era of Change

1.22 Crucially, within a public administration context notions of participatory governance have sometimes been premised on assumptions that greater involvement by sectional interests and/or the public will lead to a better performance by the bureaucracy and may, in the process, begin to address some of the acknowledged distrust felt towards state institutions[27]. Whether such a view is always shared by the public administration system is not always so clear cut.

Revisiting the bureaucracy basics

1.23 To begin to understand how public administration might or might not accommodate increased participation, particularly by marginalised groups, it is important to be aware of some of the basic characteristics of bureaucracy. Generally,

- there is a clearly identifiable hierarchy of relationships, both within the bureaucracy and in relation to the elected representatives;
- clear lines of responsibility can be identified, tied to the hierarchical system;
- related hierarchical discipline operates according to formal and informal rules;
- there is usually an emphasis on control and, as a result, a tendency towards rigidity, uniformity and predictability;
- fixed structures are established over time with change occurring only gradually and incrementally;
- it is possible to identify shared values amongst bureaucrats, that relate to the formal and informal rules of the systems; and
- these are assumed to generate a profile of a typical public servant that is permanent and impartial and free from corruption or bias[28].

27. G B Peters (2004) Governance and Public Bureaucracy: New Forms of Democracy or New Forms of Control; G Murphy (2006) Interest Groups in the Policy Making Process; G Stoker (2006) Why Politics Matters

28. Richards and M Smith (2002) Governance and Public Policy in the UK:45-46

1.24 It is sometimes suggested also that **the modern state and its bureaucratic structures in particular are guided by principles which are functional and instrumental in nature, in which "the state must treat its citizens as objects to be processed and controlled"**[29]. The dominant effect of such an approach is further enforced by a tendency within public administration (and in democratic practice as a whole) towards placing greater value on the expert and on his/her technical knowledge and language resulting in a situation where "the ordinary citizen's voice has been drowned out and her participation in decisions and policies affecting the common good has been reduced to meaningless ritual"[30].

1.25 By contrast, it has been suggested that while the administrative state may be dominated by these ways of working, other parallel and frequently competing approaches exist. Some approaches, particularly those preferred by community-based organisations, emphasise more open communication in place of overly formalised rules.

1.26 **While it is not inevitable, these different approaches may clash, perhaps explaining the potential combustibility of at least some participatory governance mechanisms and** making it difficult for some "citizens to view administrative decision-making as responsive to their moral, ethical or existential concerns"[31]. **The implication of this is that the capacity for participatory governance is likely to be poor where more functional and formal approaches cannot accommodate more communicative and less formal preferences.**

1.27 In practical terms these approaches can be aligned to different ethical perspectives which provide the motivating forces of public administration (described in Figure 3 below). In an analysis of alternative public administration perspectives, three governing rationalities for public administration have been identified: *control-centred ethics* based on rules and regulations; *discretionary ethics*, implying a greater freedom to act within the administrative realm; and, *deliberative ethics,* in which

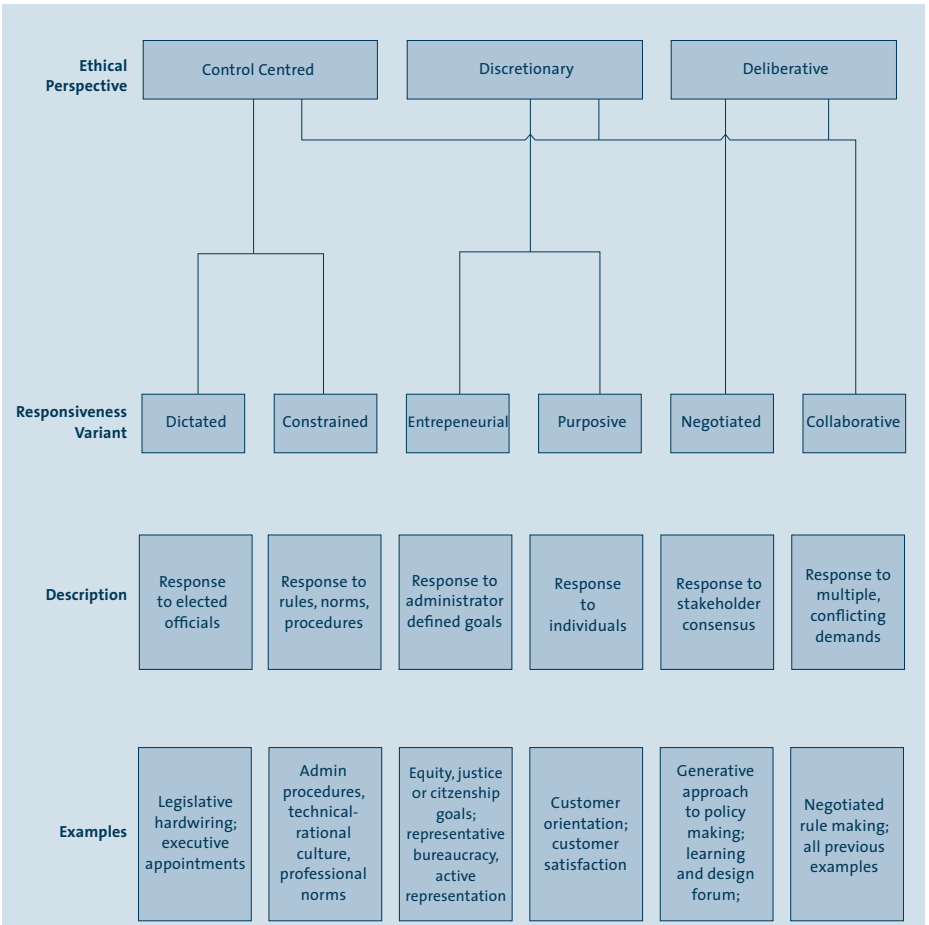
29. T Kelly (2004) Unlocking the Iron Cage: Public Administration in the Deliberative Democratic Theory of Jurgen Habermas;40

30. K G Evans (2000) Reclaiming John Dewey: Democracy, Inquiry, Pragmatism and Public Management:319

31. Ibid p.43

the potential for a more collective approach to public decisions can be achieved[32]. These different perspectives are illustrated in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3 Variants of Public Administration Responsiveness and Associated Ethical Perspectives, With Examples



Source: Adapted from Bryer (2007) The contrasting ethical perspectives of public adminstration

1.28 It can be argued that the public administration system's response to the challenges of participatory governance and to the particular challenge of community participation is, to a great extent, determined by its own ethical perspectives. Thus, for example:

i. Where control-centred ethics dominate, the degree of responsiveness is typically dictated either by political masters or senior administrative figures and is constrained by the limits applied by rules, procedures and regulations.

ii. Where discretionary ethics prevail, the public administration system may become capable of more *purposive* and *entrepreneurial responsiveness* which enables administrators to act "based on recognition of different needs of groups of people"[33] or to focus more on individual citizens, seeing them as customers whose needs must be met, if necessary by the adoption of more flexible rules and approaches.

iii. Finally, where deliberative ethics prevail, the potential emerges to generate collaborative responsiveness, within which public administration can become open to "new ways of thinking and behaving and in which they change their thoughts and behaviours according to the consensus-based decisions of their stakeholders"[34].

1.29 The discussion of differing capacities for public administration systems to be responsive to citizens illustrates the complexity of attempting any kind of reform process and indeed there is already a distinctive literature that suggests that most public administration systems are implicitly anti-reform. To assume that public administration systems are intrinsically and intentionally anti-reform is, however, too simplistic a conclusion. Instead, it can be argued that any system of public administration is capable of containing a variety of both complementary and contradictory reform capacities, dependent upon a wide range of internal and external influences. Some elements of the system may tend towards a more technical, control-centred

32. T A Bryer (2007) Towards a Relevant Agenda for a Responsive Public Administration

33. Ibid p.486

34. Ibid p.487

approach; others towards an entrepreneurial path; and still others towards a nurturing of citizen participation. In the day-to-day cut and thrust of politics, it seems reasonable to expect that participatory governance processes may be *in vogue*, but that they find themselves operating beside, or inside, public administration systems that are largely driven by control-centred ethics and more formalised rules and processes.

1.30 It becomes important, therefore, to understand that as new forms of governance and new modes of participation are developed, participatory governance does not replace older models of decision-making. Instead, participatory governance develops within and beside alternative models of government, leading potentially to conflict, confusion and clashes of values, as participation and governance encounter hierarchy and traditional modes of control[35]. **Inevitably, this generates systems incompatibilities and established administrative hardware may struggle to run demanding governance software, often without the motivation, knowledge or capacity to do so**.

Box 3

Additional questions / challenges for public administration

- **Can public administration systems be supported to relax the influence of control-centred perspectives and instead embrace more deliberative perspectives which might enable participation to take place?**
- **Has the emergence of participatory governance processes at local level in Ireland led to any reconfiguration of the influence of different ethical perspectives?**
- **Is the distinction between different types of approach (formal and functional versus communicative and less formal) a reality in practice, and, if so, what is needed to achieve a good balance between the two?**

35. G B Peters (2004) Governance and Public Bureaucracy: New Forms of Democracy or New Forms of Control; T A Bryer (2007) Towards a Relevant Agenda for a Responsive Public Administration

The Social Inclusion Rationale

1.31 The degree to which participation is identified as a central element in processes of social *inclusion* is far from certain and largely depends on how those processes of social *exclusion* are described and understood.

1.32 Originally a French concept referring to '**a breach in the bond and mutual obligation that exists between the state and the citizen**' increasing use of the term by a variety of politicians and policy makers in different political contexts has inevitably led to a degree of 'conceptual stretching'. Social exclusion is now a concept suffused with multiple competing and often contradictory understandings, informed by a miscellany of ideologies, historical analyses and visions for the future of society. Emphasis is variously laid on: income, deriving from economic activity or the provisions of welfare state; on access to services; and, less frequently, on access to decision-making[36]. Despite uncertainty about its meaning the term is now widely used. The European Commission, for example, suggested that:

> The concept of social exclusion is a dynamic one, referring both to processes and consequent situations... More clearly than the concept of poverty, understood far too often as referring exclusively to income, it also stakes out the multidimensional nature of the mechanisms whereby individuals and groups are excluded from the component practice and rights of social integration and identity[37].

1.33 In the Irish context, whilst Irish governments have continued to use the term poverty when dealing with and referring to the disadvantaged, they have typically done so in ways that embrace a broader definition of poverty that reflects the understanding of social exclusion outlined by the European Commission. The Irish National-Anti Poverty Strategy (NAPS), launched in 1997 following its introduction by the 'Rainbow government' coalition at the 1995 UN Summit on Social Development, proposes that:

36. H Silver (1994) Social Exclusion and Social Solidarity: Three Paradigms; R Atkinson and S Davoudi (2000) The Concept of Social Exclusion in the European Union: Context, Development and Possibilities

37. European Commission (1992) Towards a Europe of Solidarity: Intensifying the Fight Against Social Exclusion, Fostering Integration. COM (92) 542:8

> People are living in poverty if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living that is regarded as acceptable by Irish society generally. As a result of inadequate income and resources, people may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities that are considered the norm for other people[38].

1.34 Both these definitions emphasise the multi-disciplinary, dynamic and process-based characteristics associated with the concept of social exclusion and contrast with the Anglo Saxon tradition of research on poverty, which is generally considered to be more narrowly concerned with distributional aspects such as "the lack of resources at the disposal of an individual household or individual[39], and is considered by some to "patronise or denigrate equal citizens"[40].

1.35 Whatever definition is taken, it is still the case that mainstream considerations of social exclusion pay less attention to issues of citizenship and political rights – perfectly illustrating the gap that exists between considerations of democracy and participation and considerations of social exclusion. Instead, we see the emergence of alternative discourses surrounding the incidence and growth of social exclusion. Across Europe, throughout the 1980s a discourse on redistribution dominated, joined in the 1990s by two further discourses: one emphasising the need for social integration of the excluded, principally via paid work; and the other stressing the reasons why such integration was unlikely ever to occur. Within these discourses, differing conceptual, definitional and ideological variations emerge. However, the unifying factor is a shared, primary focus on those who are excluded, either as the target for action or as the source of the problem[41], ultimately creating the basis of the emergence of a 'moral underclass discourse' (MUD).

1.36 In the MUD, the "socially excluded are presented as distinct from the rest of society" and the main concern is the behaviour of the poor rather than processes within wider society[42]. A consequence of this may be the

38. Government of Ireland (1997) Sharing in Progress: The National Anti Poverty Strategy:3
39. G Room (1995) Poverty in Europe: Competing Paradigms of Analysis:105
40. H Silver (1994) Social Exclusion and Social Solidarity: Three Paradigms:3
41. R Levitas (2004) Lets Hear it for Humpty: Social Exclusion, the Third Way and Cultural Capital
42. Ibid.:44

categorisation of those who experience exclusion into categories of deserving and undeserving poor. More importantly, it leads to the situation where responsibility for moving from exclusion towards inclusion rests with the individual experiencing exclusion, thereby introducing what has been called a "performative notion of inclusion", where it is the performance of the excluded person that dictates whether or not they are included, not the performance of the social, economic or political systems[43].

1.37 Other approaches have however, focused more attention on social, political and economic systems and introduced the notion of *system breakdowns* as a cause of social exclusion[44]. This suggests that the causes of social exclusion, instead of resting with the individual, result from breakdowns in one or more systems of society:

— the democratic and legal system to promote civic integration;

— the labour market to promote economic integration;

— the welfare system to promote social integration; and

— the family and community system to promote interpersonal integration.

Taking this analysis it is suggested that:

> [...] tackling social exclusion requires action on many fronts simultaneously. However to achieve social inclusion as a result necessitates a programme of reform that tackles the institutions of the powerful and the powerless. Unless changes are sought in the behaviours, structures and processes of those whose actions exclude, there is a danger that all that will result from policies to tackle social exclusion is a pathologising of the excluded (Sullivan 2002).

1.38 For the purposes of this report, it is the clearly the potential breakdown within the democratic and legal system and the potential of participatory governance to address that breakdown which forms the primary concern (though it could of course be argued that the operation

43. R Levitas Ibid:48

44. J Berghman (1995) Social Exclusion in Europe: Policy Context and Analytical Framework

of the other systems impact on the capacity for participation as well).

1.39 For this reason, concerns regarding access to decision-making and empowerment enter more strongly into the social inclusion agenda – an approach that is articulated by the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)[45]. In this approach, the income and the non-income components of exclusion are both highlighted, as illustrated in table 1[46]. Income factors relate to unemployment, underemployment and low productivity and to the status of, and/or access to, welfare provision. The non-income or human factors relate to: poor access to basic services; the presence of conflict and insecurity; and, crucially, to disempowerment and exclusion from decision-making - elements that resonate with the potential of participatory governance.

Income factors	Non-income/human factors
· Unemployment/ underemployment · Low productivity · Status of/access to welfare	· Poor access to basic services · Presence of conflict and insecurity · Disempowerment · Exclusion from decision-making

Source: Adapted from UNCDF (2003)

Table 1 A holistic understanding of social exclusion

45. UNCDF offers a combination of investment capital, capacity building and technical advisory services to promote microfinance and local development in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). See http://www.uncdf.org/english/about_uncdf/index.php.

46. UNCDF (2003) Local Government Options Study - Draft Report

Box 4

Key questions / challenges for social inclusion

- **To what extent is participation in decision-making seen as an important element in efforts to advance a social inclusion agenda?**
- **Have institutions within the democratic system and/or the public administration system demonstrated concern to understand/adjust how their own practices may promote or inhibit social exclusion and/or inclusion?**

The Public Policy Rationale

1.40 Finally, in terms of the rationales upon which participatory governance processes might be built, it is important to note that public policy, in Ireland and internationally, has addressed the role and importance of participatory governance processes.

Supporting voluntary activity

1.41 In Ireland government policy making has gone some way to exploring the value of cultivating a more participatory democratic culture. The White Paper, *A Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector* (Government of Ireland 2000), initially promised in 1974, and produced after many years of discussion and procrastination, made a number of significant statements emphasising the need for a stronger participatory approach:

> The rapidly changing economic and social situation in Ireland requires serious consideration on how best to influence society in order to make it socially and economically inclusive, to make it a place where equality of treatment, opportunity and access, and respect for the autonomy of the individual, are the norm. There is a need to create a more participatory democracy where active citizenship is fostered. In such a society the ability of the

> Community and Voluntary sector to provide channels for the active involvement and participation of citizens is fundamental[47].

1.42 Referring to the need to promote more active citizenship, the White Paper set out a view of citizenship as "a political activity which gives citizens the opportunity to shape the society in which they live. Groups are given the opportunity to become involved in identifying local needs and developing strategies to meet these needs" (Government of Ireland 2000). Whilst in theory this suggests an expanded role for citizens as political actors; in practice, the involvement was mostly limited to those groups identifying and meeting local needs only and largely concerned a range of voluntary associations. While local-level processes are important, in an Irish context, with local powers relatively narrow and weak, even a significant role at local level may have limited impact upon broader participatory cultures in the body politic.

1.43 Insofar as it defines participation, the White Paper reaffirms the primacy of electoral politics and limits the extent of participatory aspiration:

> Participation in this context can be defined as an exchange between citizens and government, *between those who make policy and people affected by policy choices*. Participation and dialogue allow greater public involvement in governmental action. To be meaningful, participation should lead to more successful outcomes. Its precise form is shaped by the problem at hand. However, such *participation must be balanced against the democratic base of elected governments, since no group other than elected representatives has a mandate to speak for the whole of society*. Participation is a way of sharing responsibility for policy choices and hence represents a wider and more participatory democracy. *While retaining ultimate responsibility for decision-making with elected representatives, participation is essential in the achievement of a wider consensus*[48].

47. Government of Ireland (2000) White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector:63

48. Ibid.:90-91. Emphasis added

1.44 This approach has been reaffirmed more recently in the *Green Paper on Local Government Reform*. It introduces the potential for experimentation with various forms of participation, such as participatory budgeting, but reaffirms the "role and primacy of the elected member"[49].

1.45 Thus a clear distinction is made in the Irish policy context, between those who "make policy" and those who are "affected" by policy choices, such as those from within the community and voluntary sector. Nevertheless, while setting limits on the extent and nature of participation, these policy statements still provide some conceptual underpinning for participatory democracy and participatory governance in Ireland. In an attempt to give substance to these aspirations the White Paper made a number of practical policy proposals, including:

- Provision of multi-annual funding as the norm for priority services and community development activities;
- Creation of Voluntary Activity Units in relevant Government Departments to "support the relationship with the Community and Voluntary sector";
- Organisation of policy fora by relevant Departments and agencies to facilitate consultation and participation by the community and voluntary sector;
- Publishing "'Best practice" guidelines in relation to consultation by statutory agencies with the Community and Voluntary sector and in relation to funding mechanisms and systems, to which all Government Departments and statutory agencies will be expected to adhere" and
- Restating "A strong Government commitment to follow up and implement all the decisions in the White Paper. An Implementation and Advisory Group, drawn from relevant Departments, statutory agencies and the Community and Voluntary sector itself, was established to oversee the implementation of the White Paper decisions and to pursue other issues that arise" (Government of Ireland 2000).

49. Department of the Environment (2008) Stronger Local Democracy - Options for Change: A Green Paper on Local Government Reform:82

1.46 Follow-up on these and other proposals from the White Paper has been limited and concerns have been expressed that the ambitious rhetoric has shrunk considerably on contact with the real world of politics and public administration. According to a report commissioned by community and voluntary sector members of the Implementation Group and Advisory Group, a number of significant problems were identified including:

— differing perspectives on the purpose of the White Paper;

— varying levels of commitment to its implementation, including a perception of a low level of commitment on the government side, at both political and administrative level; and

— discontinuity of membership on the statutory side and the selection of junior personnel to service the committee, allied to perceptions that statutory members were not being given a mandate by their departments[50].

As a result working relationships on the implementation and advisory group were "poor and untrusting. There is no sense of common purpose. The voluntary and community sector representatives have not been shown parity of esteem"[51]. The tenor of these comments on the White Paper would suggest that it has not lived up to the expectations of at least some of those within civil society, notably the community and voluntary sector.

Towards Active Citizenship

1.47 Following the *Supporting Voluntary Activity* White Paper the Government appointed a Taskforce on Active Citizenship, charged with making recommendations to promote more active citizenship and identifying "the extent to which citizens engage in the issues that affect them and their communities"[52]. Although the precise meaning

50. B Harvey (2004) Implementing the White Paper: Supporting Voluntary Activity - Report for the CV 12 Group

51. Ibid.:3

52. Taskforce on Active Citizenship (2007) Report of the Taskforce on Active Citizenship: Foreword

53. Ibid.

of 'active citizenship' is unclear, it is variously referred to as being about "engagement, participation in society, and valuing contributions made by individuals, whether they are employed or outside the traditional workforce"[53]. This definition seems to imply citizenship duties as well as rights and is ultimately concerned with the "underlying values which shape behaviour by individuals as members of communities"[54].

1.48 It could be argued from the earlier discussions of democracy that the Task Force report adopts a narrow concept of democracy, which is restricted more to expressions of formal, as opposed to substantive, democratic practice. In doing so, the Task Force's implicit concept of citizenship is strongly focused on the roles of individuals in society, and its suggestions to address democratic deficits are primarily concerned with the establishment of an independent electoral commission to encourage voting and to undertake related education and publicity activities. While it does make a series of recommendations on the provision of education for citizenship, it describes this process almost exclusively in formal pedagogic terms.

Promoting social inclusion

1.49 To date, public policy in Ireland has identified the local level as a site for promoting social inclusion. The mainstream local government system itself has increasingly been ascribed a role within central government policy on the promotion of social inclusion. The original National Anti-Poverty Strategy, published in 1997, made some reference to the role of local government, although this was in very general terms only: "social inclusiveness and equality of opportunity will be fostered through a renewed system of local government"[55]. The *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (2000-2002) expanded on this to emphasise the strong linkage between the NAPS and local authorities, with the statement that the Department of Environment and Local Government; the then Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs and the Combat Poverty Agency would "jointly introduce the NAPS initiative in local authorities" with the promise that "poverty proofing will be extended on a phased basis to a local level through the local authorities and Health Boards"[56].

54. Ibid:3

55. Government of Ireland (1997) Sharing in Progress: The National Anti Poverty Strategy:21

56. Government of Ireland (2000) Programme for Prosperity and Fairness:79

1.50 A clear legal basis for a renewed role to promote social inclusion was also established by the 2001 Local Government Act, providing that "a local authority, in performing the functions conferred on it by or under this or any other enactment, shall have regard to [....] (g) the need to promote social inclusion"[57]. This legal basis therefore informs the functioning of the Strategic Policy Committees and while not expressly requiring them to take on social inclusion responsibilities, certainly enables them to do so if they see fit.

1.51 In more recent times the *Towards 2016* national agreement, the *National Development Plan (2007-2016)* and the *National Action Plan on Social Inclusion 2007-2016* reiterated the prominent role of local authorities in the area of housing and accommodation, responsibility for which is shared between local authorities and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG). Within this, local authorities are responsible for the provision of Traveller accommodation and the functioning of the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees.

1.52 To translate these national priorities into action, local authority corporate plans are seen as providing the opportunity to "embed social inclusion in the work of the local authorities across their range of activities". To this end, it recommended that the "cross-departmental team involved in the development and drafting process ensure that addressing poverty issues and tackling social exclusion is properly reflected in the local authority's corporate plan"[58].

1.53 A number of distinct institutional developments further highlight the changing role of local government/governance in promoting social inclusion. Originating in the national *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (2000-2002) provision was made for the establishment of five pilot social inclusion units in local authorities. In practice eight such units were developed. These units have more recently been placed on a permanent footing and the programme extended to include another nine units, thereby bringing coverage to half of all County/City local

57. Government of Ireland (2001) Local Government Act: Section 69.19.g

58. Department of the Environment (2003) Guidelines for Local Authorities in the Preparation of Corporate Plans for 2004-2009:15

authorities by the end of 2008[59]. At national level the Combat Poverty Agency[60] has provided specific institutional supports to enhance local government's social inclusion capacity, including the establishment of a Local Government Anti-Poverty Learning Network; support for the development of Local Anti-Poverty Strategies and the creation of a Local Authorities Social Inclusion Group. This group has been now mainstreamed within the Institute for Public Administration (IPA) and is chaired by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

The OECD and participatory governance

1.54 Beyond Ireland, there are a variety of sources that point to a growing acceptance of the value of participatory governance. In particular, the much quoted Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has examined 'why' and 'how' relationships between government and citizens might be addressed. Dealing with the why, the OECD argues that there are three principle benefits to be gained from increasing government-citizen engagement, as follows:

i. "Stronger government-citizen relations encourage citizens to spend time and effort on public issues" thereby strengthening the development of public policy.

ii. Greater trust in government is built by increasing access to information, consultation and participation opportunities and, "strengthening government-citizen relations enhances the legitimacy of government".

iii. Increased provision of information and consultation opportunities and active participation "makes government more transparent and more accountable" thereby creating the basis for more active citizenship in society[61].

59. The establishment of the additional nine social inclusion units was announced in July 2007 in keeping with the commitment set out in the "Towards 2016" social partnership agreement. See http://www.environ.ie/en/LocalGovernment/LocalGovernmentAdministration/LocalGovernmentSocialInclusion/News/MainBody,14836,en.htm

60. Recently amalgamated with the Office for Social Inclusion of the Department of Social and Family Affairs, into the new Social Inclusion Division

1.55 Regarding government's role in policy-making the OECD concludes that the issue to be addressed is:

> ...less whether to lead than how to lead. Governments can practice leadership in two ways. They can either practice leadership ignorant of citizens' direct concerns and input. This gets governments into crises of lack of trust. Or governments may practice leadership open to citizens' concerns and input. This gives government the chance to tap into wider resources of citizens and civil society in order to develop better policies and gain more trust and legitimacy[62].

1.56 Thus, it seems that in both national and international policy spheres, there is a legitimised impetus towards the promotion of participatory governance. What remains unclear, however, is the extent to which these policy dispositions have found practical expression, bearing in mind the democracy, public administration and social exclusion/inclusion issues discussed above.

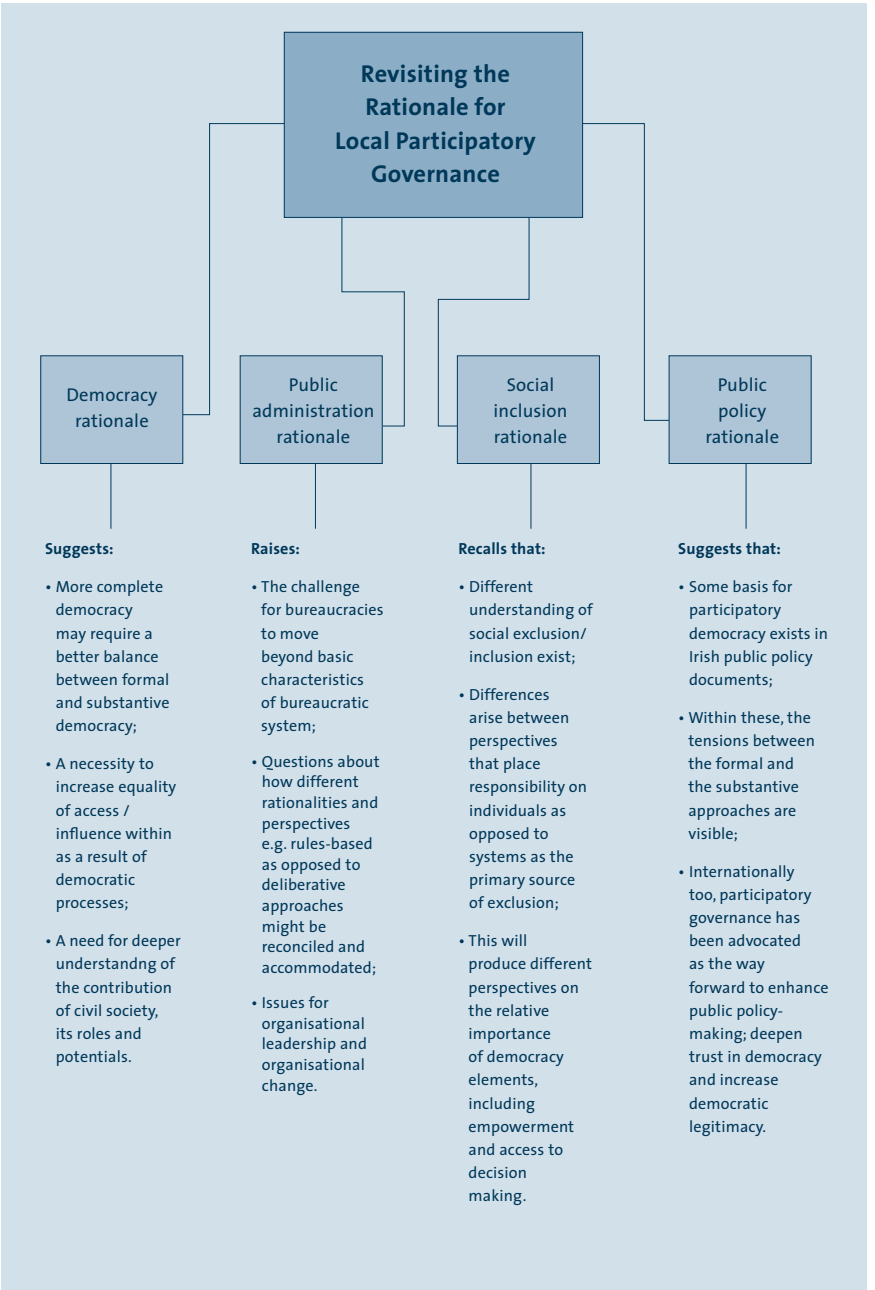
Conclusion

1.57 In this section the conceptual underpinnings of and for participatory governance have been briefly explored. These are summed up in figure 4 below. Essentially, it would appear that for participation to be meaningful there will need to be a move to embrace substantive democratic ambitions; to adjust the orientation of public administration systems; to more adequately define and understand the scope of the social exclusion/inclusion experience; and to translate national and international public policy into more sustainable participatory outcomes.

61. M Gramberger and J Caddy (2001) Citizens as Partners: OECD Handbook on Information, Consultation and Public Participation in Policy Making. p.18

62. Ibid.:22-23.

Figure 4 Revisiting the Foundations for Local Participatory Governance



Section 2
Participatory Governance in an Ideal World

Introduction

2.1 The objective of this report is to understand the experiences of local level participatory governance in Ireland. Having established some of the conceptual platforms upon which participatory governance should be built, it is also helpful to present a benchmark against which practical experiences can be judged. One way to do this is to reflect briefly on some of the more idealised forms of participatory democracy and participatory governance.

Deliberative Democracy

2.2 Deliberative democracy is one of the most widely referenced participatory formulae and has been described in a variety of fashions. In general terms it can be seen as "any one of a family of views, according to which the public deliberation of free and equal citizens is the core of legitimate political decision-making and self government"[63]. In essence, it provides the different participants in the democratic process the opportunity to make proposals for how best to solve problems or meet legitimate needs. Consequently, deliberative democracy aims to "shift from bargaining, interest aggregation and power to the common reason of equal citizens as a dominant force in democratic life"[64].

2.3 At the core of deliberative process is the notion of reasonableness, which is complemented in an acceptance of other participants as equals. Consequently, participants are expected to operate from a "principle of deliberative inclusion", meaning that it is not enough just to give the views of others "equal consideration" but that "politically acceptable reasons" for choices are offered[65].

63. J Bohman (1998) The Coming of Age of Deliberative Democracy:401

64. J Cohen and A Fung (2004) Radical Democracy:24

65. J Cohen (1996) Procedure and Substance in Deliberative Democracy:102

2.4 To operate in the deliberative mode certain basic principles need to be observed:

i. Participation should be informed by certain norms particularly that all participants have a right to initiate discussion, to question and to debate;

ii. the topics for deliberation must be open to question by all participants; and,

iii. the rules of the deliberative process should be open to question as should the agenda for discussion[66].

2.5 Other recurring ideals cited within deliberative approaches that supplement these aspirations are reciprocity, inclusion, equality, reasonableness, publicity and accountability, where:

i. Reciprocity refers to the requirement of mutual respect and being willing to treat others as one might like to be treated;

ii. the principle of inclusion emphasises the involvement of those affected by an issue in discussion;

iii. the aspiration towards equality requires that where inclusion does occur, all can participate on an equal basis, without fear of domination;

iv. the objective of reasonableness requires a willingness not only to have opinions but to listen to the opinions of others, leading to considerable exploration of the nature of public talk and dialogue; and

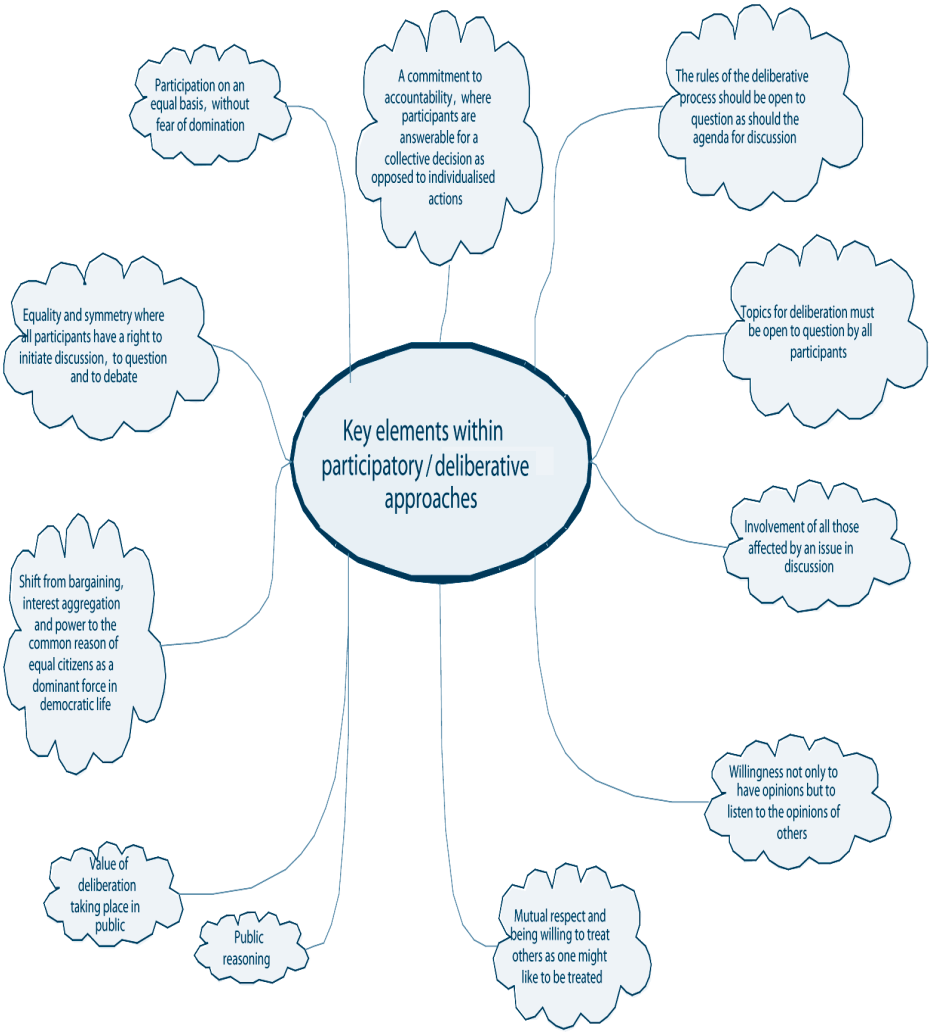
v. finally, the principle of publicity emphasises the value of deliberation taking place in public, and is linked to a commitment to accountability, where participants are answerable for a collective decision as opposed to individualised actions[67].

66. S Benhabib(1996) Towards a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy

67. B R Barber (1984) Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age; I M Young (2000) Inclusion and Democracy; J Bohman (1998) The Coming of Age of Deliberative Democracy; I M Young (2000) Inclusion and Democracy

2.6 Taken together, these deliberative guidelines present a challenging framework, both to build alternative concepts of democracy, but also to analyse the deliberative credentials of existing governance processes. These are summed up in figure 5 below.

Figure 5 Key Elements within Participatory / Deliberative Approaches



Associative Democracy

2.7 Another important variation on the theme of participation in democracy and governance is the notion of associative democracy. While there are a variety of associative democracy interpretations, each emphasises the role of associations in decision-making, albeit there are different versions of what this role should be.

2.8 In one perspective associations are viewed as a channel through which many functions can be devolved from the state to a variety of citizens' associations/organisations. The aim of this is to "separate service provision from supervision at all principal levels of government within the nation state"[68]. In such a scenario the role of the state changes, becoming more focused on revenue generation, which can then be used to contract self-governing associations to undertake service provision, for which the state assumes oversight and quality assurance responsibilities. The main suggested benefit arising from this is a reduction of state involvement in the minutiae of day-to-day service provision, leaving it more able to deal with the increasing complexity of modern societies.

2.9 However, there are other versions of associative democracy which are particularly important in the context of this report. In these, arguments are advanced that democracy needs to be underpinned by a "social base", that is, some degree of organisation amongst citizens[69]. Without this, aspirations towards political equality or economic equity cannot hope to be achieved. Moreover, in its absence, the needs of poorer interests will not be represented. It is further suggested that associations can make important contributions to problem solving, and, by extension, to solving the particular problems faced by poorer groups. However, it cannot be assumed that these associations or organisations will automatically come into being, particularly those required to generate political equality. Consequently, the state may need to play a role in ensuring that such organisations are encouraged into existence and to ensure that they are maintained[70].

68. J Hirst (2000) Democracy and Governance:29

69. J Cohen (1996) Procedure and Substance in Deliberative Democracy

70. J Cohen and J Rogers (1997) Can Egalitarianism Survive Internationalisation? Working Paper 97/2

2.10 Associative democracy therefore "proposes to use state resources to address representational asymmetries and promote the organisation of interests that do not find adequate expression in the existing associational ones"[71]. However it is not considered sufficient to simply enable the emergence and functioning of associations, it is also required that these associations are included in relevant deliberative fora with a view to contributing their local knowledge on specific or generalised problems. As well as contributing to enhanced policy efficiency, it is argued that the inclusion in deliberation may generate a degree of 'other regardingness' (that is, a willingness to consider the position of others), through which attachment to entrenched positions may be lessened[72].

Empowered Deliberative Democracy

2.11 Empowered deliberative democracy (EDD) represents an attempt to more concretely address the institutional and democratic challenges posed by broader notions of participation and deliberation. In contrast to the more theoretical discussions on deliberative and associative democracy above, EDD draws on the real life experiences of a number of participatory processes in the United States, Brazil and India, and extrapolates from them the key dimensions of a more progressive approach to participation and decision-making.

2.12 EDD extracts three core principles from five practical experiences. These suggest that an EDD framework should:

i. be concerned with the resolution of specific and "tangible" problems;

ii. seek to achieve the active participation of those directly affected by the problem and by relevant officials; and,

iii. privilege the use of deliberative approaches to locate solutions[73].

71. L Baccaro (2002) Civil Society Meets the State: A model of Associational Democracy:3

72. J Cohen (1996) Procedure and Substance in Deliberative Democracy:113

73. A Fung and E O Wright (2001) Deepening Democracy: Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance:17

2.13 In emphasising the role of deliberation, it should be noted that EDD requires participation in deliberative decision-making, not just in relatively powerless, non decision-making, deliberative arenas, many of which may be little more than post-decision legitimisation.

2.14 Alongside these statements of principles, the following institutional design characteristics or properties are seen as necessary:

i. devolution from centralised administration to empowered "local action units", "endowed with substantial public authority"[74] and described in the report of the Power Enquiry as "co-governance"[75];

ii. the need for "centralised supervision and coordination" to "reinforce the quality of local democratic deliberation" by "co-ordinating and distributing resources, solving problems that local units cannot address by themselves, rectifying pathological or incompetent decision-making in failing groups and diffusing innovations and learning across boundaries"[76]. The purpose of this feature is to encourage decentralisation while at the same time tempering the capacity for unrestrained and possibly ill informed local action;

iii. the location of the state at the centre of the deliberative process, not at the margins, drawing from the empirical experiences which, it is suggested, "colonise state power and transform formal governance institutions". The objective in putting forward this design feature is to avoid leaving state institutions intact while civil society organisations engage in a variety of externalised

74. Ibid.:21

75. The POWER Inquiry was set up in 2004 to explore how political participation and involvement could be increased and deepened in Britain. For more information see http://www.powerinquiry.org/. Co-governance can be distinguished from other forms of participation and consultation by a number of distinct values. Accordingly, co-governance arenas:
– offer ongoing, institutionalised forms of engagement;
– have a degree of agenda-setting power;
– have decision-making power or, at least,
– have a high degree of influence on final decisions. G. Smith (2005) Power Beyond The Ballot: 57 Democratic Innovations from Around the World:56-57

76. A Fung and E O Wright (2001) Deepening Democracy: Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance:22

policy processes, thereby seeking to "change the central procedures of power rather than merely attempting occasionally to shift the vector of its exercise"[77]; and

iv. the necessity for certain enabling conditions, the most significant of which is seen to be the balance of power between the participants in the deliberative process. The suggestion here is that if this balance is roughly equal, it is more likely that the deliberative process will work because readily available alternative means of decision-making do not exist.

2.15 It is perhaps EDD's grounding in *practice*, as opposed to *theory*, that has facilitated useful self-criticism and which ultimately makes it a more credible and useful tool for deepening democracy. Amongst the criticisms it identifies are:

i. the vulnerability to problems of power and domination, particularly domination by elites;

ii. the potential for powerful actors or "institutional contexts" to limit the extent of deliberation;

iii. rent-seeking behaviour by powerful groups;

iv. the creation of unrealistic expectations of local participation, especially in the context of the political apathy referred to earlier, and finally,

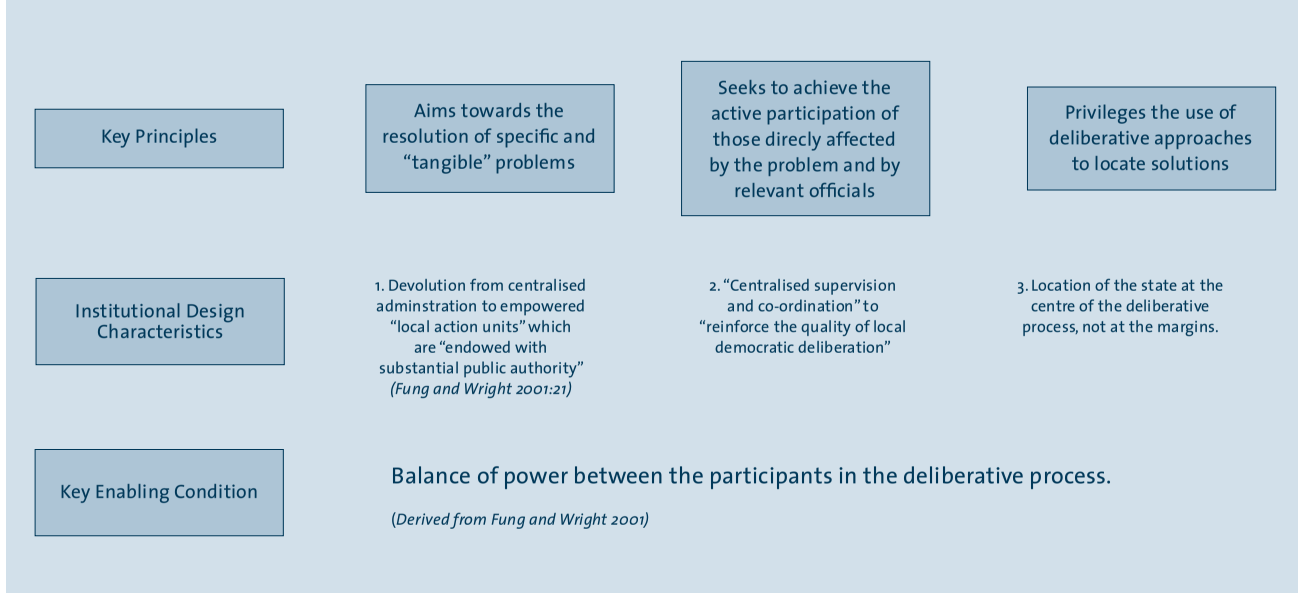
v. difficulties in sustaining participatory approaches over the longer term[78].

In identifying these potential weaknesses, however, EDD demonstrates the value in more openly naming barriers to participation as a first step in overcoming them. The core elements of EDD are described in figure 6 below.

77. Ibid.:23

78. Ibid.:33

Figure 6 Key Elements of Empowered Deliberative Democracy



Conclusion

Box 5

Conceptual and practical challenges for participatory governances

From the discussions in Sections 1 and 2 it becomes possible to suggest a number of statements that need to be considered and deliberated without which exploration of local level case studies will be incomplete. Thus, it may be expected that:

- Participatory governance processes are unlikely to be sustained over time without a distinct democratic rationale and mandate.
- Even if such a mandate is present, there may well be tensions with the formal, representative component of the democratic system which may prove unable or unwilling to accommodate more substantive, participatory supplements. Mechanisms to manage and transform these tensions need to accompany the development of participatory processes.
- From a democratic perspective, there needs to be a recognition of the role of civil society, as distinct from and independent of the state.
- However, while saying this, civil society has to adequately address itself to issues of democratic legitimacy and accountability.
- Equally, systems of public administration will need to prepare to be more responsive to participatory impulses. Participatory processes are unlikely to contribute to enhanced delivery of public services in public administration environments where control-centred perspectives continue to dominate.

Continued >

Box 5, *continued*

- **Consequently, efforts to initiate institutional change and to build local state capacity towards participation and deliberation will be needed.**
- **In particular, in terms of promoting social inclusion, there needs to be a recognition that inclusion is not just about income, it is also about having the opportunity to participate in the democratic process and to be involved in decision making.**
- **To achieve such results, however, there is a need to recognise that state institutions too need to reflect on their own weaknesses and not just concentrate on the weaknesses of those who experience exclusion.**
- **In terms of public policy, public policy commitments to deepen participation and the role of civil society are of little value if action is not adequately taken to translate and implement such commitments.**
- **Finally, standards set by international theory and practice offer a useful framework against which to judge participatory experiences in Ireland.**

Section 3

Mapping the Landscape of Participatory Governance in Ireland

Introduction

3.1 Since the publication of the *Better Local Government* White Paper in 1996 there has been a significant proliferation of governance institutions at the sub-national level in Ireland. Before this point, a variety of self-organising, local development networks existed side by side with a functionally limited local government system, with only limited formal connection and co-operation between the two. The publication of the *Better Local Government* White Paper advanced efforts to promote increased co-ordination but expressly avoided acting on recommendations that might have led to any real devolution of powers from the centre to the local.

3.2 In terms of local governance, the White Paper addressed itself to two main areas, the first dealing with enhancing democracy, primarily through measures to enhance the role of local elected representatives in policy making, and the second relating to the wider role of local government, particularly in the co-ordination of existing local development activities. These objectives were served by a reorganisation of the local authority committee structures, leading to the formation of Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs), and through the establishment of a multi agency, coordination structure, the County/City Development Board (CDB). Pre-existing, local development governance networks continued to function, but they were required to do so in closer co-operation with the local state apparatus.

3.3 Alongside these, other local governance arenas have emerged. For example, shortly after the *Better Local Government* White Paper, national legislation on the provision of Traveller accommodation was enacted, introducing for the first time a governance dimension into this area of local authority responsibility and leading to the establishment of Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees (LTACC)[79]

79. Government of Ireland (1998) Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act

in all city/county local authorities. Later, in 2001, and arising from the national *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (PPF) process, the *Revitalising Areas through Planning, Investment and Development* (RAPID) programme was introduced to address the particular needs of disadvantaged communities in 45 urban areas. Other similarly formalised mechanisms have also been created including county childcare committees, local sports partnerships, territorial employment pacts and local and regional drugs task forces, as illustrated in figure 7 below. A common characteristic of all of these mechanisms is that they have been established by the state and, in effect, participation in them is by invitation from the state.

3.4 The purpose of this section of the document is to describe and map the landscape of participatory governance at local level in Ireland. For the purposes of clarity this landscape is divided into four different zones.

i. In the first, examples of the more formalised or 'invited'; participatory processes located within local government arenas are described.

ii. Then there is a description of processes introduced that broaden the practice of participation and governance and begin to move it somewhat beyond the substantial influence of the local government environment.

iii. In the third zone, governance structures that are more independent of government are illustrated.

Each of these governance types are described according to their origin and purpose; their membership; how they are administered or supported; their social inclusion remit and the degree of national or other oversight. The functioning of these processes will be illustrated by reference to a series of case studies in the next section.

iv. Finally, it is also considered important to note the existence of less formal participatory processes, those that exist within civil society or which can, using earlier terminology, be described as 'popular spaces'. Inevitably, given the scale of this report, it is only possible to describe those structures and processes that are commonly present, not those unique to individual areas or circumstances.

Zone 1: In-House Participatory Governance

3.5 A number of participatory governance mechanisms established within the last number of years are located firmly within the local authorities and are supporting the delivery of services traditionally and exclusively within the functional remit of the local government system. Two of these are described here to illustrate this type of local governance, the Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) and the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees (LTACCs).

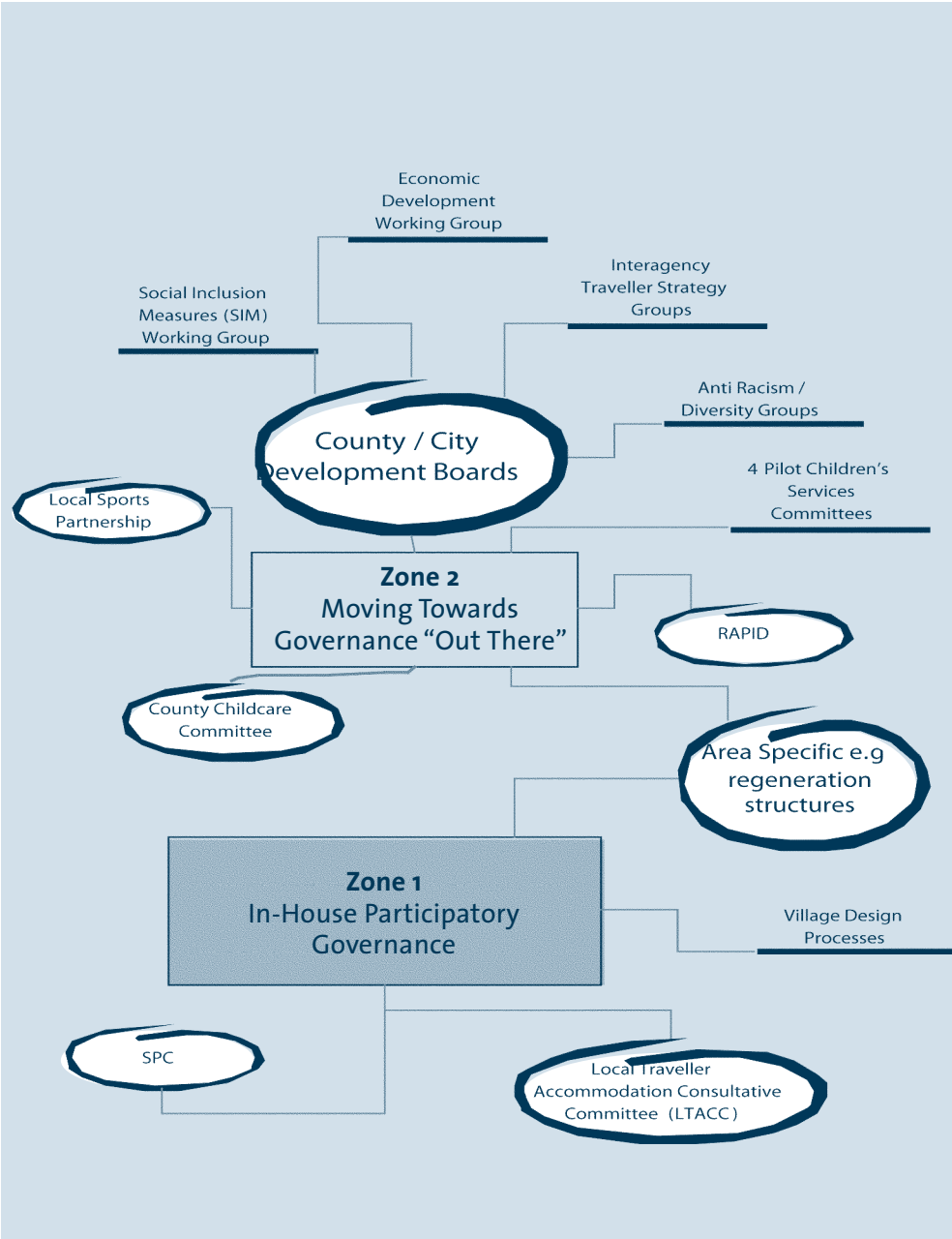
Strategic Policy Committees

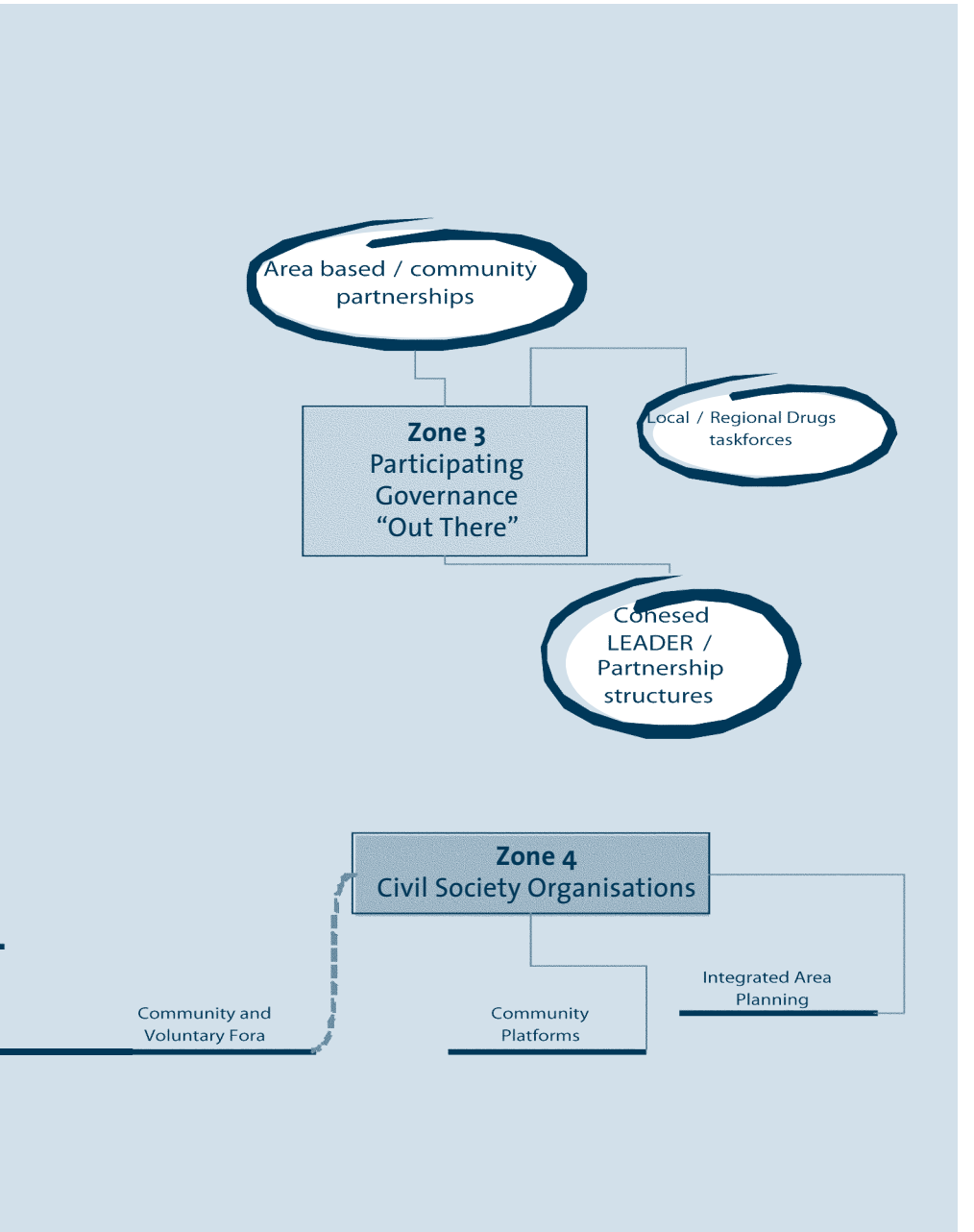
3.6 Originally proposed in the Better Local Government White Paper, and subsequently elaborated by a series of guidelines produced by the responsible government department[80]; the operation of the SPCs was subsequently legislated for in the *Local Government Act* 2001. The creation of the SPCs was seen as a means of strengthening the role of councillors in the policy/decision-making process within local authorities and was based on a concern that "councillors should have a better and more focused involvement in the development of policy generally and [...] should also be more involved in the strategic monitoring of local authority operations"[81]. The desire to expand the role of councillors was motivated in part by perceptions of councillor preoccupation with operational matters as well as from their restricted role arising from the separation of powers between the executive manager and elected representatives. It was also intended that both the role of SPCs and of elected representatives within local authorities would be strengthened by establishing a related Corporate Policy Group (CPG), comprising the chairpersons of all SPCs and the chairperson of the entire council.

80. Government of Ireland (1997) Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Strategic Policy Committees; Department of the Environment and Local Government (1998) Guidelines and Seminar Proceedings; Department of the Environment and Local Government (1999) Strategic Policy Committees: Revised Guidelines

81. Government of Ireland (1996) Better Local Government: A Programme for Change:15

Figure 7 Invited Participatory Governance Mechanisms




Area based / community partnerships
Zone 3
Participating Governance
"Out There"
Local / Regional Drugs taskforces
Cohesed LEADER / Partnership structures
Zone 4
Civil Society Organisations
Community and Voluntary Fora
Community Platforms
Integrated Area Planning

3.7 In terms of focus, it was envisaged that the SPCs would be established to reflect the principal service areas of the local authority, with each SPC being directly serviced by a senior management official with direct responsibility for that area of service. The guidelines for the operation of the SPCs were drawn up by a government appointed committee, which included national-level, social partner representatives. It was made clear, however, that the SPCs were to be of an advisory nature only. They were: [to] "focus on policy formulation, and their work feeds into the full council. They are not decision-making bodies in their own right. The council will still be the policy making body"[82]. It was also stressed that the role of the SPCs was to be on policy not operational issues and that members were not to get involved in matters which were the responsibility of the executive[83].

3.8 While the introduction of a renewed local authority committee system was in itself noteworthy, from a participatory governance perspective it was the decision to reserve one third of the available places on the committees for relevant civil society interest groups that drew most attention, thereby introducing an institutionalised social partnership dimension into all local authorities for the first time and mirroring the national process. The Strategic Policy Committees thus introduced the potential for formal, participatory processes in the mainstream of local governance for the first time and, crucially, created a direct linkage and overlap between representative and the participatory democratic processes.

3.9 In terms of their institutional position the SPCs are firmly located within the local authorities: each SPC is serviced by the staff of the relevant service directorate within the local authority executive. Internal governance therefore is dominated by a single lead organisation, in this case, the local authority. No additional staff members or skill sets were made available to support the introduction of the SPCs.

3.10 The guidelines establishing the SPCs clearly emphasised that they should have a "commitment to fostering social inclusiveness

82. J Cullen (1998) SPCs and Local Government Reform:15

83. D Connolly (1998) Practicalities of SPCs: A Manager's Perspective

and equality in line with the principles of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy and to the involvement of the community/voluntary/disadvantaged sector"[84]. Apart from this, given their location at the heart of local government, the SPCs are governed by the general requirements to promote social inclusion described in section 1.

3.11 At local level, the SPCs are accountable to and advise the elected council. Formal reporting on the operation of the SPCs is largely limited to inclusion of their activities in the annual report of the local authority and to the provision of information in line with Freedom of Information requirements[85]. And while there is an expectation that local authorities would report on the activities of the SPCs to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, no partnership-based scrutiny process has been put in place.

Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees (LTACC)

3.12 The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees (LTACC) originated from national legislation governing the provision of Traveller accommodation through the preparation of Traveller accommodation plans and the establishment of an issue specific participatory governance mechanism[86]. Its status in legislation thereby created an expectation that its provisions had to be complied with. Shortly after this White Paper was produced, the government of the day completed legislation on the provision of Traveller accommodation, with provisions specifically governing the LTACC.

3.13 The intention behind the creation of the LTACCs was to provide a forum to discuss the frequently contentious issue of accommodation for Travellers. According to the legislation the functions of the LTACC are all either advisory or liaison, including:

(a) to advise in relation to the preparation and implementation of any accommodation programme for the functional area of the appointing authority concerned;

84. Department of the Environment and Local Government (1998) Guidelines and Seminar Proceedings: 79

85. Department of the Environment (1999) Revised SPC Guidelines:20

86. Government of Ireland (1998) Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act

(b) advise on the management of accommodation for travellers, and

(c) provide a liaison between travellers and members and officials of the appointing authority concerned[87].

However, while the committee may advise the local authority on the development of an accommodation plan, the adoption of such a plan remains a reserved function of the elected members.

3.14 According to the legislation, membership of the LTACC is to be drawn from the local authority (officials and elected representatives) and from Travellers and Traveller bodies, with a legally defined formula to ensure that elected representatives would make up no more that half of the membership and Traveller representatives no less than one quarter. It was also prescribed that the Committees would regulate their own business and procedures, by standing orders or otherwise[88]. Alongside the local committee, a National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (NTACC) was established to provide advice to the Minister in relation to Traveller accommodation issues. The membership of this group comprises both public administration and civil society representatives, and, in particular, representatives of Traveller organisations[89]. The NTACC produced a report on the operation of the local committees in 2004, highlighting experiences from different parts of the country.

3.15 The LTACC is institutionally embedded within the local authority which provides both the chair of the Committee and the officials to service its functioning. As such its management is dominated by the local authority, primarily by the responsible officials. In most cases, responsibility for the operation of the LTACCs lies within the sections dealing with the provision of public housing.

3.16 The LTACC has a direct social inclusion orientation given its focus on accommodation for Travellers. In saying this however, it cannot be taken for granted that there will be a common understanding of or agreement on just what this might mean in practice.

87. Ibid.:Section 21

88. Ibid.:Section 22.1 & 2

89. Ibid.:Section 20(2)

Zone 2: Moving Towards Governance 'Out There'

3.17 A number of other governance mechanisms have been established which are more independent and broadly based but which still retain significant links to the local government system. In general these mechanisms establish local networks to promote co-operation and co-ordination amongst a range of state and non-state bodies with interests in a range of social, cultural and economic arenas. To the fore amongst these are the County/City Development Boards and RAPID as well as Local Sports Partnerships and County/City Childcare Committees.

County/City Development Boards (CDBs)

3.18 The origins of the County/City Development Boards can also be traced back to national level policy processes. Alongside the enhanced role envisaged for local councillors in the SPCs, the *Better Local Government* White Paper also signalled a move to widen the influence of local government within the local development process and acknowledged its disconnect from existing local development processes:

> The local development initiatives, as originally launched, did not relate significantly to local government which, given its existing administrative structures and comprehensive geographical spread, in different circumstances might have been considered the appropriate base. The limited financial resources available to local authorities, the demands of the traditional services and the lack of buoyancy in their financing system were seen to limit their capacity to take a wider role in community development[90].

3.19 Like the SPCs, the CDBs were specifically referenced and accorded legal status in the 2001 Local Government Act, thereby embedding their position within the governance landscape.

3.20 The County/City Development Boards (CDB) were the vehicles designed, amongst other things, to remedy the disconnect between local government and local development and, in doing so, would ease

90. Government of Ireland (1996) Better Local Government: A Programme for Change:23-24

the institutional clutter that had emerged. As such they sought to generate "increased collaboration and joint working in relation to specific projects and operational issues, where the opportunity for this exists", to be accompanied by a process of mutual training and awareness raising on the intricacies of the local government and local development systems[91]. One of the key functions of the new structures was to enhance co-ordination, co-operation and integration of effort amongst existing bodies, largely through the production of a ten year development strategy.

3.21 The membership of the CDBs is drawn from the local authorities, including officials and elected representatives; local statutory agencies; social partners and representatives of the local development networks, that is, the area based partnership and LEADER companies. In the case studied, this currently includes fifteen nominees of state agencies, nine elected representatives, six representatives of local development organisations and four civil society nominees, one each from the business and farming organisations and two from the local community forum. The process for securing civil society participation onto the CDB is the same as described above in relation to the SPCs.

3.22 In terms of institutional location and internal governance, the CDBs are seen as an independent network though their chairing and support is provided by the local authority as a dominant, lead organisation: "A Board shall, in so far as is provided by this section, operate under the aegis of the relevant county council or city council but is otherwise independent in the performance of its functions"[92]. This provision illustrates the somewhat confused nature of the CDB, where it is serviced by local authority officials, is chaired by an elected member of the local authority but is, at the same time, supposed to be independent of the authority. Functional responsibility is located within the community and enterprise sections of the local authorities which were specifically established in the aftermath of the *Better Local Government* White Paper. They are overseen by a director of Community and Enterprise situated at assistant County/City manager level in the local authority, supported by an additional staff complement, many of whom were recruited from outside the local government system[93].

91. Ibid.:25

92. Government of Ireland (2001) Local Government Act: Part 13, Section 129.2

As such, while a dominant lead organisation takes responsibility for the management of the network, it has in most cases been supplemented with specialised staff. In more recent times it should be noted that localised changes are taking place within[94] different local authorities leading to the merger of community and enterprise sections with other parts of the local authority.

3.23 The CDB in particular was seen as having a role in relation to the promotion of social inclusion and its early operation was to be guided by loosely defined principles of both community development, described as providing "an outlet for local communities to be fully involved in, to influence, and to shape local decisions"; and of social inclusion, with particular attention to the retention of the pre-1996 network focus on social inclusion. Attention was also to be paid to other principles including: partnership/participation; democratic legitimacy; voluntary effort; simplicity; value for money; process and flexibility. The social inclusion focus of the CDBs was articulated more clearly in 2000 when sub structures known as Social Inclusion Monitoring (SIM) working groups were established within the CDB, with the remit to enhance co-ordination, and pursue, where possible, joint action around social inclusion themes. Membership of the SIM consists of representatives of state agencies, the local authorities and civil society.

3.24 The CDBs maintain an ongoing relationship with the parent Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. However, there is no formal, national level monitoring structure, though various reviews have been undertaken of the operation of the CDBs[95]. The most recent of these recommends the establishment of "a national co-ordination group to give impetus to the work of CDBs"[96], offering

93. In the early stages of their development these were dedicated positions but were subsequently adjusted so that the director and support positions were absorbed into the mainstream staffing system, with the directors also assuming responsibilities for other services within the local authorities.

94. Task Force on Local Integration (1998) Report of the Task Force on Local Integration:34

95. R Boyle; P Humphreys; O O'Donnell; J O'Riordan and V Timonen (2003) Changing Local Government - A Review of the Local Government Modernisation Programme. CMPR Research Report, No. 5; Indecon International Economic Consultants (2008) Review of County/City Development Boards Strategic Reviews and Proposals for Strengthening and Developing the Boards

96. Indecon International Economic Consultants (2008) Review of County/City Development Boards' Strategic Reviews and Proposals for Strengthening and Developing the Boards:62

some degree of national level overview. This recommendation has been accepted by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and an administratively dominated group has been established comprising the junior minister in the parent department, as well as senior representatives from a range of other government departments and the Health Service Executive (HSE)[97].

3.25 Deriving from the CDB system a series of other participatory mechanisms have evolved, though the existence of these varies from place to place. For example, some groups have been established dealing with economic development issues, others addressing anti-racism and diversity concerns while in all areas, Interagency Traveller Strategy Groups have been set up on foot of national policy decisions.

Revitalising Areas through Planning, Investment and Development (RAPID)

3.26 RAPID (*Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development*) is a local regeneration mechanism produced by the national agreement, the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness*. The genesis of this initiative can be traced to a community and voluntary sector proposal to target investment in disadvantaged areas. By contrast with some of the other local government related models, RAPID has not been established on a legislative basis and is also noteworthy for the fact that it origins came largely from outside of the administrative system.

3.27 The RAPID Programme focuses on forty five disadvantaged urban areas and provincial towns and was rolled out in two parts. The first selected twenty five larger urban centres in early 2001, while the second extended the programme to a further twenty provincial towns a year later in early 2002. RAPID is directly focused on "the regeneration of disadvantaged areas via co-ordinated action by all local stakeholders"[98] and seeks to achieve increased investment in the forty five designated areas, improve integration and co-ordination of services and enhance opportunities for community participation in the development of the different areas. Each RAPID programme prepares a plan and implements a variety of actions in accordance with the plan, some of which are then

97. J Allen (2008) Circular Letter LG 05/08

98. Fitzpatrick Associates (2006) Evaluation of the RAPID Programme:20

funded by central government departments. The types of activities undertaken generally relate to the "physical environment, crime and safety, health, education and training, and services for children and families"[99].

3.28 The principal vehicle for participation in the RAPID programme is the Area Implementation Team (AIT). Participants in the AIT generally include nominees of state agencies, including local government, as well as representatives of the local, target communities. In certain cases, elected representatives also sit on RAPID structures. Below this level, the choice of participation mechanisms varies from place to place, in some cases enabling a more localised engagement to take place between state officials (for example, the police) and local residents.

3.29 The AIT is generally supported by a full time, specifically recruited coordinator, located within the local authority but reporting to the AIT and to a senior local authority manager, generally the Director of Community and Enterprise. As such, it is a form of embedded management within a dominant lead organisation, though the extent to which the lead organisation exercises dominance is inevitably effected by the choice of co-ordinator; the disposition of the local authority; the role of other state agencies and by the strength of community input. It has been suggested that the location of RAPID staff within the local authorities has been "an important asset"[100].

3.30 The RAPID programme has a clear and distinct social inclusion focus and represents "an unprecedented commitment towards tackling poverty and exclusion"[101]. However, as with the LTACC, just what this means in practice varies between RAPID areas and between those involved in individual RAPID programmes.

3.31 At national level implementation of the RAPID programme is led by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs while Pobal, an intermediary organisation originally created by the European Commission and the Irish Government, is responsible for programme implementation. In addition to these administrative structures, a

99. Ibid.:23

100.Ibid.:34

101. B Ahern (2001) Speech by An Taoiseach

separate national monitoring committee has been established to which individual RAPID programmes must report on a regular basis. The monitoring committee is chaired by the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, thereby providing a high-level political input, and comprises representatives of a number of national government departments, state agencies and social partners.

Additional Issue Specific Mechanisms

3.32 A number of other, issue specific mechanisms have been set up on the basis of local authority boundaries and, in a number of cases, retain strong connection with the local authorities. To the fore amongst these are County Childcare Committees and Local Sports Partnerships. The institutional configuration of these structures would appear to vary from place to place, in some cases being closely linked to the local authority, in others exhibiting almost conscious independence. The key features of these processes are illustrated in table 2 below but are not described in detail here.

3.33 It should also be noted that in a number of locations, area specific regeneration initiatives have been established, dealing either with regeneration across large areas of a city, as in Limerick; focusing on specific locations in larger cities, such as Ballymun; or addressing the needs of particular areas in smaller provincial towns. These initiatives have adopted a variety of institutional formats, in some cases establishing a significant institutional footprint, in others being delivered from within the local government system.

Zone 3: Participatory Governance 'Out There'

3.34 In some cases, the transitions towards new forms of collaborative networking or governance can be described as governance beyond government, illustrating the potential for decision-making processes to proceed either in the absence of or with only limited involvement by traditional government institutions. In some ways, the development in Ireland in the early 1990s of different forms of area-based, local development partnerships can be seen in this light.

Local Development Processes

3.35 In Ireland, since the early 1990s, a number of what are commonly described as local development mechanisms have been established. The Area Based Partnerships (ABPs) that resulted from the *Programme for Economic and Social Partnership* (PESP) were effectively the first in a series of local governance processes established to address various dimensions of local economic and social development. The subsequent inclusion of a structured local development programme in the second *National Development Plan* (1994-1999) was not only a major innovation in national planning, but also an important political response to demands from local and regional interests that the spirit of partnership as envisaged in the 1988 reform of the EU Structural Funds was not being fully addressed in Ireland[102].

3.36 These bodies have been positively commented upon as exercises in "democratic experimentalism" though it was suggested that there was a failure on the part of government to embrace the innovation produced by them[103]. However, while acknowledging that some positive contribution to building participation has been made, some commentators have suggested that local development partnerships "do not enliven local democracy to any extent"[104].

Around the same time as these social inclusion focused partnership mechanisms were developing, others with a focus on economic and enterprise development were also being put in place, including structures to implement the EU LEADER and LEADER + programmes, designed to focus on rural areas, and the County and City Enterprise Boards[105].

3.37 One of the most important defining elements of each of these local partnership structures was their establishment by the central state with strong influence from the EU, as largely independent entities operating outside of the control of local government[106]. Clearly, national

102. Walsh, J. (1995) Local Development Theory and Practice: Recent Experiences:13

103. C Sabel (1996) Ireland: Local Partnerships and Social Innovation

104. P Teague (2006) Social Partnership and Local Development in Ireland: The Limits to Deliberation. British Journal of Industrial Relation, 44:3 p. 440

105. A more extensive review of these and other local partnership structures has been undertaken by J Walsh et al, 1998.

106. By comparison with the ABP's and LEADER companies, County Enterprise Boards have had a much closer relationship with local authorities.

government and the European Commission chose to establish these partnership processes outside of and in parallel to the existing local government system, undoubtedly producing some degree of tension and resentment from local government personnel and elected representatives. As a result they have been described as "instruments of national policy – a means of circumventing traditional local organs of public administration, including local government, to address difficult social problems at the local level"[107]. The problems associated with this were subsequently recognised in the *Better Local Government* White Paper which, concluded that; "Through lack of resources and inability to respond to problems which transcend their traditional functions, local authorities have tended to be by-passed by the growth of new forms of community development organisations, many of which are attracting state and EU support"[108]. And while these resource and functional constraints are not accepted by all, the reality was that a somewhat cluttered array of local development instruments or networks had been brought into existence, with little local state control and/or participation. Ultimately, it was this institutional clutter the prompted the Devolution Commission to focus on the local institutional landscape and which ultimately led to the production of the *Better Local Government* White Paper.

3.38 Since 2006 the government has made further efforts to enhance cohesion between the actions and structures of the various local development entities, especially Area Based Partnerships and LEADER companies, with a view to inducing a "radical shake up" (O'Cuiv 2006) of the delivery of community services.

3.39 Broadly speaking, the local development entities had a remit to promote social and/or economic development in their areas, the balance between these depending on the particular mechanism. For example, the mandate of the LEADER programme specifically related to the development of rural areas and did not have a strongly defined social inclusion focus. Thus, County and City Enterprise Boards and LEADER programmes were clearly designed with a strong enterprise dimension, intended to provide a local response to prevailing economic realities. However their economic focus was broad and was premised

107. J Walsh, S Craig and D McCafferty (1998) Local Partnership for Social Inclusion:228

108. Government of Ireland (1996) Better Local Government: A Programme for Change:6

on the notion that the generation of economic activity in a local area would automatically benefit those living within its catchment area. Area Based Partnerships/Community Groups included an economic dimension in their objectives but this was seen as just one part of an integrated approach to social inclusion and the particular needs of named target groups, generally alongside education and community development measures.

3.40 All of the local development entities employed partnership models, usually involving a combination of representatives of statutory organisations; trade unions; the business sector and community/voluntary sector representatives, though not all pursued the involvement of all partners with equal vigour. Elected representatives were specifically precluded from participation on these structures until 1999[109].

3.41 In the case of the local development entities, dedicated institutional arrangements were put in place to support their operation, though the size and scale of these varies from place to place. Equally, the nature of the institutional capacity varied depending on the primary objectives to be delivered. For example, some area-based partnerships developed strong community development capacity.

3.42 Of the various local development mechanisms, historically only one, the Area Based Partnerships/Community Groups, have a direct focus on social inclusion. As a result of the cohesion process where newly amalgamated companies have been brought into existence, both the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme and the Rural Development Programme emphasise their role in promoting social inclusion.

3.43 For the local development sector national oversight in the past has varied. Given that the Area Based Partnerships/Community Groups were funded through Area Development Management (ADM), subsequently Pobal, there was a high degree of national level monitoring and oversight. In addition, funding to the local development sector was monitored via a variety of national development plan monitoring structures. For the Leader programme, monitoring and national oversight was managed via the responsible national departments, the Department of Agriculture and more recently, the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. A summary of the key features of these various mechanisms is set out in table 2.

109. Interdepartmental Taskforce on the Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems (1999) Preparing the Ground: Guidelines for the Progress from Strategy Groups to County/City Development Boards

Table 2 Key Features of Local Governance Mechanisms in Ireland

	1. IN-HOUSE PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE		ZONE 1 OR 2
	Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs)	**Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees (LTACC)**	**Area Based Regenerative Initiatives**
Origin	Government policy / related legislation (1996 Better Local Government White Paper)	Government policy / related legislation (Traveller Accommodation Act 1998)	Initiative specific - some locally driven, others nationally motivated
Purpose	To provide functional, policy specific advice	Interest group specific service provision	Physical, economic and social regeneration (emphasis usually on physical regeneration)
Participants	2/3 elected representatives, 1/3 social partners	Local authority officials, elected representatives, Traveller community representatives/ organisations	Area specific
Form Of Internal Governance I.e. How It Is Managed	Dominant lead organisation i.e. local authority	Dominant lead organisation i.e. local authority, usually via housing department	Varies – internal local authority and / or separate dedicated capacity established
Social Inclusion Remit	Non specific – required to take account of social inclusion concerns	Social inclusion specific	Usually social inclusion specific
National Oversight	Relatively weak	Relatively weak	Varies

2. MOVING TOWARDS GOVERNANCE "OUT THERE"				3. GOVERNANCE "OUT THERE"
County / City Development Boards (CDBs)	**RAPID**	**Local Sports Partnerships**	**County Childcare Committees**	**Local Development Companies**
Government policy and related legislation (1996 Better Local Government White Paper)	National social partnership (Programme for Prosperity and Fairness)	Government policy and legislation (Irish Sports Council Act 1999)	Government policy (National Development Plan)	Programme for Economic and Social Partnership (PESP) / EU
General, economic, social and cultural planning / strategising. Production of issue specific strategies. Some issue specific sub groups set up	Geographical regeneration	Co-ordination of local efforts to promote the development of sport, through information, education and project implementation	Provide advice, information and assistance on a wide variety of topics in the childcare field	Initially to address local unemployment, later widened
State agencies, elected representatives, local authority officials and social partners	Community representatives, state agencies, local authority officials and elected representatives	State agencies, community representatives, educational institutions, business interests	Varies – state agencies, community reps, local development companies, trade unions, providers	Social Partners, state agencies, elected representatives (elected representatives added post 1996 BLG White Paper)
Supplemented lead organisation i.e. via Community & Enterprise sections	Supplemented lead organisation i.e. dedicated staff within Community & Enterprise sections	Sub-structure of the local authority in some areas. Established as separate legal entity in others. Dedicated staff	Dedicated administrative capacity. Established as a separate legal entity in many cases	Dedicated administrative capacity in specifically constituted structures
Non-differentiated – should take account of social inclusion concerns	Social inclusion specific	Non-differentiated	Non-differentiated	Social Inclusion specific
Relatively weak	Relatively strong	Irish Sports Council oversees and supports	Office for the Minister of Children	Historically strong – may be weaker in future

Zone 4: Civil Society Organisations

3.44 It has been suggested that 'Ireland shows higher levels of engagement in informal social networks and community activism than the UK, higher rates of involvement in membership organisations, and a greater confidence that ordinary people can make a difference to public decision making' (Hughes et al, 2007: 440). This part of the report deals with the first of these and describes where civil society delivers or engages in local governance processes and/or mechanisms. In the next section where a number of particular governance experiences are examined in more detail, assertions as to the degree of confidence or otherwise in public decision making will be tested.

State-Civil Society Relations at Local Level in Ireland

3.45 There is a marked contrast in the nature and extent of civil society participation in governance at local level and national level in Ireland. Nationally, the prominent economic actors - the trade unions and the business/employer organisations - are key contributors to the national partnership process. Their commitment to national partnership has been cemented, in the past at any rate, by the perceived benefits accruing to their members from the array of tax, wage, labour relations and pro-competitiveness measures. It has been suggested that the community and voluntary sector, on the other hand, has effectively occupied a supporting role, generally prioritising social policy concerns that largely appear supplementary to the main partnership agenda[110].

3.46 At local level this domination by the main economic actors is not replicated, nor is the existence of a menu of issues of immediate interest tying their representatives into the governance process and perhaps explaining why their presence in local governance arenas is relatively less prominent. For the community and voluntary sector the situation is quite different, with a variety of local partnership initiatives having been actively cultivated by the sector and seen as arenas where local practice and policy concerns can be voiced. Consequently, most analyses of civil society participation at local level

110. N Hardiman (2006) Politics and Social Partnership: Flexible Network Governance; E Connolly (2007) The Institutionalisation of Anti Poverty and Social Exclusion Policy in Irish Social Partnership

have tended to focus on the community and voluntary sector components.

The changing nature of local civil society – revisiting the democracy rationale

3.47 While there remains a consistency in the nature and structure of many civil society entities, the community and voluntary component of local civil society is considerably more fluid. This is illustrated by the changing role of the Community Development Programme (CDP), established in 1990 by the Irish Government 'in recognition of the role of community development in tackling poverty and disadvantage'[111]. In its early years, the official description of the Programme saw it playing a role in 'encouraging greater participation in public decision making [..]', 'influencing change in structures, policies and processes which contribute to poverty and exclusion' and 'seeking an equitable distribution of power and resources in order to ensure a fairer society'[112]. As such, the CDP process was very much in line with the vision of associative democracy described earlier, where the state assumes a responsibility to encourage the development of associations amongst marginalised groups that might not otherwise emerge. Since its establishment the Programme has grown considerably, from 15 projects in its first year to 181 by 2007, making the programme one of the principal mechanisms of support to community development in Ireland.

3.48 However, in more recent times, the mission and structures of the CDP would appear to have been adapted to fit new political and economic realities. For example, in its early stages, support for 'setting standards and promoting good practice' was provided by the specialist staff of the CPA but by 2009 this role has disappeared and instead, operational responsibilities are now assumed by civil servants located in the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, few of whom have any specialised knowledge of community development or social exclusion.

111. Department of Social Welfare and Combat Poverty Agency (1995) Working Together Against Poverty: An Information Pack on the Community Development Programme

112. Ibid.

3.49 More importantly though, significant changes in the functions of the programme have been introduced. Nowadays, the CDP is largely described in terms of service delivery, such as: 'provision of information, advice and support to particular target groups [...]', providing 'practical assistance to community groups, for example, photocopying'; 'provision of adult education courses and training opportunities'; 'support for local enterprise and job creation initiatives' and 'support for participation in local development initiatives'[113]. CDPs are expected to '[...] deliver government policies and provide services in the public interest and it is essential that this is done in an equitable, transparent and non partisan way' leading to the conclusion that the state is using 'local community groups as a low cost public expenditure mechanism for the delivery of its responsibilities for welfare provision'[114].

3.50 Most recently, proposals have been made by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht affairs to create a single programme to support community development by integrating the CDPs into the operation of the local development companies. However, as shown earlier, this involves integrating independent civil society organisations into non-civil society, local development structures. This represents a significant undermining of local civil society structures and further weakens the potential for more substantive local democracy.

3.51 The possible implication of these changes is the substantial transformation of community development projects from independent civil society organisations to sub-contracting extensions of the state where interest group advocacy is no longer possible. If this proves to be true, the potential for any democratic form of participatory local governance would appear to be undermined.

113. Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (2008) Community Development Programme

114. Combat Poverty Agency (2007) Submission to the Minister of State and the Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs on Community Development and Disadvantage and on the Community Development Programme 2007-2013:20

"Organising" the community and voluntary sector

3.52 Prior to the development of the types of participatory governance processes described in Zones 1-3 above, there was little imperative for the community and voluntary sector or, indeed, broader civil society to come together to organise collectively at local level in Ireland. Indeed, apart from sector or issue specific coalitions, it could be argued that even where there are shared or common interests, civil society has remained largely fragmented.

3.53 At national level, social partnership opportunities, initially through the NESF and later in preparation for the *Programme for Competitiveness and Work*, induced some level of co-operation between national community and voluntary sector organisations. However, there is little to suggest that state-induced structures such as the community and voluntary pillar, have developed a strong sense of coherence or, indeed, that its members necessarily operate from shared principles of equality, solidarity and social justice. By contrast, the national Community Platform, which currently has almost 30 members, was created on the initiative of national anti-poverty/ social inclusion interests and, as a consequence, operates from the basis of strongly shared values.

3.54 Parallel efforts to stimulate a greater degree of co-ordination between community and voluntary sector organisations at local level were undertaken in the wake of the *Better Local Government* White Paper. Here, however, the level of fragmentation is possibly even more pronounced. While the introduction of the various local development companies in the early 1990s did provoke some degree of co-operation to enable participation in the new structures, it was only with the advent of CDBs and SPCs that a state-led effort emerged to rationalise the structures of the community and voluntary sector. The guidelines that accompanied these mechanisms offered different routes for different social partners and directed that the traditional social partners, that is, trade unions, business and farming organisations, should select their nominees onto the new structures directly from their national bodies. On the other hand, it proposed that the community and voluntary sector should develop "special,

localised nomination arrangements" through the establishment of local community and voluntary fora[115].

3.55 Basic guidelines for the establishment of these fora were set down in the report of a government-appointed, interdepartmental task force on the integration of local government and local development in 1999 (Interdepartmental Taskforce on the Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems, 1999). Participation on this national task force was limited to representatives of government departments and local authorities, though there was a limited degree of consultation with social partners. This report primarily provided guidelines for representation onto the County/City Development Boards but these were also applied to the SPCs. While the report proposed that it would be up to each area to determine how a forum should be organised, a standard formula was followed in most parts of the country. Thus, in most cases, the establishment of a community and voluntary forum was facilitated by staff of the County/City Development Boards and there was a general trend to organise on a geographical basis, setting up a County/City wide structure supported by sub-county or sub-city fora[116]. However, in some cases community fora have also organised on the basis of interest groups. With the subsequent creation of other local governance mechanisms such as County/City Childcare Committees and Local Sports Partnerships, Community/Voluntary Fora have become established as the mechanism for selecting community/voluntary sector representation on a variety of mainly county/city-wide structures.

3.56 In a small number of areas such as Cork City, Wicklow, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown and South Dublin, specific anti-poverty community platforms/coalitions have been established. In others, such as Galway City, equality/inclusion structures have been created. However, while in some cases these have secured recognition and

115. Interdepartmental Taskforce on the Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems (1999) Preparing the Ground: Guidelines for the Progress from Strategy Groups to County/City Development Boards:19

116. S Cosgrove and N Ryder (2001) Community and Voluntary Sector Involvement in the New Local Authority Structures – Report for the Local Government Anti Poverty Learning Network.

places on some of the new or existing governance structures[117], in other cases local authorities, in particular, have been reluctant to accord them any validity, instead preferring to focus on the single, community/voluntary forum route. In this regard it is suggested by some that the dominance of and difficulties in using single public, non-differentiated, geographically-based mechanisms as a route to participation in governance arenas restricts the potential for social inclusion interests to emerge[118]. In particular, the role of generalised community and voluntary fora as the dominant institutional form of community participation emerges as a weakness, not least because they may be servicing governance arenas that themselves do not have a dedicated social inclusion focus. And while the messages coming from the responsible national department from time to time reinforces the need to ensure a focus on social inclusion[119], there are no provisions to ensure that such social inclusion outcomes are generated.

Area-specific civil society representation

3.57 While state-induced community and voluntary fora are emerging as the principle mechanism to solicit participation on a variety of local governance structures, in some, more localised cases, alternatives have been developed.

3.58 For example, in the RAPID case, participation is usually drawn directly from the communities targeted by the Programme, usually necessitating a localised process of (s)election. Similarly, structures such as the LTACCs are more concerned with the engagement of a distinct community of interest. In this case, national legislation emphasises direct participation by Travellers as well as participation by Traveller organisations, though in some case the presence of the latter was resisted[120].

117. B Harvey (2002) The Role of the Community Sector in Local Social Partnership

118. Community Workers' Co-operative (2004) Evaluation of the Local Government Reform Process; S Cosgrave and KW Research Associates (2007) The Voice of People in Poverty in Local Government Structures and Processes - A Study of Community Fora

119. M Ryan (2007) Circular Letter LG 27/07 Funding for the Community and Voluntary Fora, 2008

120. National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (2004) Review of the Operation of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1988

3.59 In other cases, community-based efforts have been initiated and supported to develop their own processes that might enable them to engage more effectively with the local state in less formal governance and deliberative processes. One such case in point is the Integrated Area Planning process (IAP) which has been underway in a number of communities in South Offaly and County Galway over the past number of years with the support of Tipperary Institute. In this process, local communities are facilitated to "develop a shared vision and agreed set of objectives and actions around local development priorities within a collaborative planning framework"[121]. A key element of the IAP is an emphasis on the planning process as well as the actual plan itself"[122].

Conclusion

3.60 In this section, it has been shown that the landscape of participatory local governance in Ireland is populated by a variety of different mechanisms. These mechanisms have been divided into different zones, some situated more strongly within a local government ambit, others broadening the governance experience, while others still represent examples of more independent forms of governance. Feeding into these, a fourth zone contains key elements of civil society, particularly the community and voluntary sector. It should be noted that, in practice, it cannot be assumed that each and every governance mechanism within a given zone will produce the same participation and/or social inclusion outcomes. In reality, within each of these zones there will inevitably be a spectrum of participation experiences, some more progressive than others.

3.61 The presentation of these different mechanisms in an ordered and systematic way illustrates that simplistic claims about the multiplicity of local structures are misguided and perhaps, somewhat populist. Instead it is shown that the individual zones offer different opportunities for participation and, most importantly, for the realisation of social inclusion ambitions. This will be illustrated in the next section when some of the empirical experiences in these different zones are discussed.

121. Fox Timmons & Associates (2009) The Integrated Area Planning Process in West Offaly, Phase 3

122. For more information see Lynch C. et al (2008) Integrated Area Planning: A Collaborative Approach to Decision Making. Tipperary Institute

Section 4
Experiencing Participatory Governance in Ireland

Introduction

4.1 In this section of the report experiences of participatory governance in Ireland are presented. These experiences have been accessed through:

i. Hosting a number of conversations on collaborative planning and participation with an informal focus group comprising a number of senior local authority personnel, local development staff, environmentalists, democracy activists, and personnel from educational institutions and from independent planning perspectives; and

ii. Undertaking a series of case studies on participatory processes. In total, experiences from 11 case studies will be presented. The case studies will reflect on the experiences of six different types of local participatory governance, including: County/City Development Boards; Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs); RAPID; Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees (LTACC); Local Development experiences; and area specific regeneration initiatives.

iii. Case studies have been selected to ensure a mix of:

- Governance objectives e.g. interest group-specific, area-specific, policy-specific, general development etc;
- Governance type e.g. local government-based, local governance-based, local development-based;
- Locations e.g. a balance between urban and urban/rural locations;
- Local authority types; and
- Social inclusion specificity.

4.2 In each case study a number of issues are looked at, including:

- The environment in which governance takes place;
- Approaches to the management of the governance process;
- The existence of consensus about goals and outcomes;
- The presence of shared values, norms and understandings;
- Approaches to communication including the nature of speaking, dialogue and deliberation;
- Experiences of trust and investment in relationship building;
- Issues concerning legitimacy and accountability;
- Inclusiveness, in particular the level of commitment to ensuring participation outcomes as well as participation opportunities;
- Institutional flexibility and the potential for institutional change; and
- Approaches to dealing with differences in power.

Limitations

4.3 While a number of cases across different governance types are examined, no claim is made that these cases are typical of all governance experiences, nor that they can be seen as representative of all or of similar type of mechanisms. Rather they represent a collage of experiences from which it is possible to draw some general conclusions about local level participatory governance in Ireland and, in the process, help to illustrate what may work well in different circumstances.

The lessons emerging from the cases examined are presented below.

The Governance Environment

4.4 In the last section a distinction between different governance zones was drawn. Here, it was proposed that governance processes may be located firmly within local government structures or, they may illustrate a shift away from more direct government control or, finally, they may be created as processes largely independent of direct local government control. What emerges from the cases we have looked at is that the context in which governance takes place would appear to matter considerably.

4.5 The different cases studied operate within quite distinct environments and can be distinguished by the degree to which dominant institutional personae exist, be they party-political, bureaucratic or civil society, or, indeed, a mix of the three. The SPC cases are located in an environment that is dominated on one hand by the administrative culture of local authority officials and, on the other, by the party-political cultures of the elected representatives. By contrast the CDB and RAPID cases are sited in administratively dominated, multi-agency (state and community) settings, with some limited party political engagement. The LTACC context, while incorporating more significant political party engagement, is also administratively dominated, though in this case by a single state organisation, the local authority. In the case of the regeneration initiatives explored, the provincial town initiative is located within a town council structure, albeit informed by locally-driven and noticeably strong, inter-agency approach. The second regeneration initiative was established as a stand-alone structure outside of the local government environment, albeit informed by a strong local government ethos, producing some tensions between the two approaches. The remaining cases, two urban and one rural local development companies, are specifically designed structures, both of long standing, that have developed their own distinct institutional identity, influenced by a strong community development ethos.

4.6 A number of the cases appear to have generated an environment conducive to dialogue (if not results in all cases). In particular, the CDB, RAPID, local development and provincial town regeneration cases would appear to provide positive partnership contexts, with virtually

all being described in a very positive fashion by participants. Another regeneration initiative, despite producing mixed views of its success, did provide robust community fora for expressing alternative views. In the words of one participant; "at least we know that we can fight here". This is important, as while not everyone will agree, having a space where disagreements can be usefully aired helps to support participatory governance. However, the distance between such community fora and the actual decision-making level remains an issue in this case.

4.7 By contrast however, the SPC and LTACC experiences suggest that dialogue and participation may be more difficult where political or administrative control substantially outweighs the inputs of the other participants. In one SPC case, the inbuilt majority of elected representatives produced a politically competitive environment, exacerbated by performance and suggested grandstanding for the benefit of local media. The effect of this was to minimise the role of civil society participants and to generally lower the quality of discussion and dialogue, to the point that it had to be questioned if meaningful dialogue is possible in such circumstances. It must be acknowledged here that the circumstances of this SPC case study do not necessarily represent the experiences of all SPCs across the country. However it is helpful in as much as it does isolate some of the behaviour likely to inhibit participation. Indeed, by contrast, in the second SPC case, care was taken to ensure that the acknowledged tensions that did exist between the representative and participatory dimensions were not allowed to impede civil society participation. Crucially, though, the key learning here is that where institutional dominance occurs, participation suffers[123].

4.8 In the case of the LTACCs, while political representatives were involved, administrative domination rather than political competition is identified as the factor undermining more effective dialogue, though this may be a consequence of the particular imbalances of power between elected and executive in Irish local government. In one LTACC, there was a strong sense that Traveller participation was tokenistic,

123. It is noted that research on the SPC process carried out by the Institute of Public Administration in 2004 concluded that actually hostility to civil society participation on the SPCs was considerably less than might have been anticipated. See IPA (2004) Review of the Operation of the Strategic Policy Committees.

with no real bearing on the outcomes and planning of the group. From both LTACC cases, it was clear that in conditions of administrative domination, governance processes are challenged to provide constructive collaborative spaces.

Managing Participatory Governance

4.9 Strongly related to the operating environment and seen as a significant determinant of the likely effectiveness of a governance network is the manner in which the governance process is managed. Different forms of internal network management or governance have been identified within collaborative networks:

i. Participant-governed networks, where participants take an active, shared role in network management;

ii. Lead organisation-governed networks, where, as the name suggests, a lead organisation takes on to provide management support; and

iii. Network administrative organisation (NAO), where a dedicated administrative capacity is established (Provan and Kenis 2008).

The cases studied can be usefully compared using this framework, though some context-specific adjustment of these categories is necessary.

4.10 All of the cases can be seen to be governed by variations of the lead organisation and the network administrative organisation (NAO) formulae. In no case is a network governed or managed by the participants on a shared basis.

The CDB, SPCs, LTACCs, and regeneration initiative are all administered by lead organisations, albeit with important differences in approach. Both the LTACC and the SPC cases are governed by a dominant lead organisation, the local authority, which retains power of decision-making, has limited accountability to all network members and which facilitates the network in a manner of its own choosing. No specialised staff members were recruited to support or inform the participatory ambitions of these mechanisms nor was any specific training in participatory processes undertaken to enhance existing capacity.

4.11 The form of governance adopted by the CDB, on the other hand, can be described as a supplemented lead organisation. In this case, a specific unit with additional staff was created within the local authority to support the CDB operation, although these staff also undertake roles other than the servicing of the network, and have moderate levels of accountability to the network members. Many of the staff recruited came from outside the local government context and brought with them significant community development or local development skill sets. In the case of the regeneration initiative, while the formal home of the process is located within the local authority, there is a clear sense that the local authority does not seek to exercise a dominant role. While particular staff were not recruited to support the regeneration process, the input of the local RAPID programme staff, of local HSE community work staff and of highly committed and senior local authority staff are seen to have greatly aided the process.

4.12 Both RAPID cases were managed through what can be described as an embedded network administrative organisation, where a dedicated management capacity has been created, with strong accountability to the network members, albeit with support staff being located within the local authority. However, the staff involved displayed a strong sense of accountability to the management structure, the Area Implementation Team. Ironically, the location of responsibility for the management of the RAPID programme within the local authorities was criticised in the early stages of the programme[124]. However, the case studies examined here suggest that, in the right circumstances, such a location may be appropriate, particularly to secure purchase and to enhance the democratic legitimacy of the exercise for other statutory participants[125].

4.13 Finally, in the cases of the local development entities, a specific network administrative organisation was established to manage the mechanism. This enabled the creation of a partnership management structure from the early stages and enabled recruitment of specialist

124. E O'Callaghan (2003) Building Sustainable Communities: Community Participation in the RAPID Programme

125. Local Interview 23: State Agency Representative (19.10.2007) Statutory Body; Fitzpatrick Associates (2006) Evaluation of the RAPID Programme

staff, with relevant skills. Thus, potential exists to establish management processes that are capable of responding to participatory impulses.

4.14 From the case studies it emerges that the highest levels of both trust and inclusiveness are reported where the mode of network governance is not dominated by any individual partner organisation and where appropriately skilled staff are available to support its operation. Lowest levels of trust and inclusiveness are associated with situations where the management of the process is distant from and not easily influenced by participants, as in the LTACC cases. This reinforces claims that that the form of network governance is a key determinant of capacity to prioritise inclusiveness and to generate trust and, ultimately, to ensure network effectiveness and institutional change.

Agreement about Goals and Values

4.15 From the cases examined it would appear that there is little, if any, agreement on the causes of exclusion and/or related goals to promote inclusion. In effect, the different mechanisms bring together various sets of pre-existing ideas, understandings, beliefs, values, biases and approaches. In some cases the distance between the values sets of participants was narrow, while in others there were significant clashes in basic values and beliefs.

4.16 The absence of a shared understanding, or even a process to arrive at it, is perhaps less surprising in the SPC and CDB processes, which, while expected to have a focus on social inclusion, in themselves are not exclusively social inclusion-oriented. However, the absence of a shared understanding within social inclusion-specific mechanisms is more noticeable. For example, in the LTACC cases, there were strong echoes of the moral underclass discourse discussed earlier[126], competing with and confronting analyses pointing to systems failure as the cause of poor provision of Traveller accommodation[127]. However, these conceptual underpinnings or belief systems were not always

126. R Levitas (2004) Let's Hear it for Humpty: Social Exclusion, the Third Way and Cultural Capital

127. J Berghman (1995) Social Exclusion in Europe: Policy Context and Analytical Framework

openly articulated and instead produced recurring, substitute conflicts that inevitably proved difficult to address. In the absence of clarity about the causes of social exclusion, progress towards the location of collaborative solutions may be delayed. This would appear to be less of a problem in higher trust contexts, such as the RAPID cases, where mutual confidence in deliberative potential appears to have eroded defensiveness and instead has enabled a shared conceptual clarity to evolve over time.

4.17 Similarly, while it was perceived that the local development company board members did not necessarily share a common understanding of exclusion, this was not seen as an overt barrier to the efforts to provide practical, problem-oriented solutions to local experiences of social exclusion.

4.18 Finally, in the regeneration initiatives, it was clear that there were different understandings of the problems to be addressed, not only between state organisations and between state and community organisations, but also between different communities within the regeneration areas. However in one case at least (the provincial town), despite all of these differences and with a considerable investment of time, it proved possible to progress the initiative and to achieve benefits for all stakeholders.

The Nature of Speaking, Dialogue and Communication

4.19 The cases examined each present their own unique experiences of speaking, hearing, dialogue and deliberation, although, in some cases at least, it appears that there is much speaking, little hearing, limited dialogue and even less deliberation. The creation of governance networks capable of facilitating and enabling inclusive dialogue and deliberation is in no small part a reflection of the ethical perspectives and forms of communication adopted by the different network members, discussed earlier in section 1[128].

128. T Kelly (2004) Unlocking the Iron Cage: Public Administration in the Deliberative Democratic Theory of Jurgen Habermas; T A Bryer (2007) Towards a Relevant Agenda for a Responsive Public Administration

4.20 From the cases studied there would appear to be little doubt that the nature and quality of deliberation is influenced by the norms and values that may dominate in any given governance process. Despite the fact that all but one case originated in national level decision-making, the principal source of operational norms and values is the local institutional environment and individual local actors.

4.21 In some cases, the local mechanisms go beyond the national guidelines to enhance participation as evidenced by the RAPID and at least one of the regeneration programmes. In others they simply meet the letter as opposed to the spirit of the guidelines, as evidenced by one SPC example. It can be argued that in most cases there is, to varying degrees, a preponderance towards control-centred ethics within which responsiveness is largely constrained by existing administrative rules, norms and procedures and, in the case of the SPC, an element of party-political control.

4.22 This is not to say that all networks were constrained to the same degree, nor indeed, that all network members necessarily operated from the same ethical perspective. The RAPID and the local development cases and also one of the regeneration initiatives display a strong dynamic towards a deliberative ethic while still functioning within largely administrative constraints. However, whether this represents a broader institutional shift or localised influence exerted by a minority of individual agents is uncertain. Clearly, individuals may operate from a variety of such ethical perspectives. However, the degree to which these co-exist or conflict with the larger institutional perspective will determine the capacity to stimulate ongoing change in institutional practices. At the other end of the spectrum, the SPC and the LTACC cases exhibited a strong trajectory towards bureaucratic control and associated technocratic domination and, as such, governance impulses appeared to make little inroad into prevailing institutional cultures.

4.23 It is worth noting that of the 11 case studies explored in this report, only one, the provincial town regeneration initiative, originated locally – all others were driven from the national level. In this case, it is instructive to observe how participants, particularly those from state agencies, have observed visible shifts in the ethical perspectives

guiding the process, moving from a moderately rules-centred process to one where collaboration and deliberation are more highly visible and regarded.

4.24 In practice, in the SPC and the LTACC processes, there was some evidence of conflict between the functional- and rules-orientation of some elected representatives and officials, and the communicative orientation of civil society representatives, though in one of the SPCs this was less marked. Within the LTACC experiences the tendency of officials to maintain control in a highly contentious area of public policy was confronted by the communicative emphasis of civil society, Traveller representatives and some elected representatives. In one SPC case, achieving the most basic public acknowledgement, i.e. being introduced at a meeting, was a problem for civil society representatives, while hardly noticed by officials and elected representatives. Dialogue in this case was further impeded by perceptions of political grandstanding and a hierarchical process, based on political party allegiance, to access speaking rights. Consequently, there was a clear sense that participation in the governance mechanism was highly unequal.

4.25 By contrast the RAPID, CDB, local development and at least one of the regeneration experiences presented a substantially more positive dialogue experience and a stronger sense of equality amongst participants.

4.26 A number of lessons arise from this:

i. While institutional perspectives cannot be seen simply as the sum of the individual attitudes, it would appear that the influence of individual, strategically placed staff can be significant in stimulating more effective forms of communication. In a number of the cases looked at, reference was made to the importance of recruiting staff from outside the local government system, to both supplement the available skillsbase but also to introduce additional ethical perspectives and institutional experiences as well as revitalising the pool of norms and values. In other situations, particularly the local development case, the creation of a dedicated structure, where the institutional expectation is towards

communication and dialogue, proved crucial. However, it is also clear from the provincial town regeneration initiative that the role of visionary local government personnel can be crucial, where such personnel are open to external involvement and to adjusting their expectations of how public business is conducted.

ii. Secondly, where more functional perspectives confront governance participants operating from a communicative rationale and where there is little willingness to cede some ground to the other, dialogue becomes extremely difficult. Overcoming this situation requires learning and adjustment from both civil society and administrative or political actors. To enable such adjustment to happen, it may be necessary to support the dialogue process with independent chairing, mediation and/or facilitation support to mediate the tensions between the control centred approaches of the local state and the more deliberative/communicative outlooks of civil society. In the case of the one local development example, it was clear that it was seen as helping to play such a role, illustrating the value in the continued independent operation of local development processes.

Participation and Partnership

4.27 The role of the state in facilitating participation by excluded communities emerges as a significant issue in the case studies. In certain situations, for example in the RAPID cases, the local state has actively facilitated participation in a very positive fashion through the development of specific institutional strategies and the allocation of resources to support them. It has also recognised the difficulties and challenges involved in engaging people from disadvantaged backgrounds and has put in place appropriate measures to ease these difficulties, as shown in one case by the employment of a facilitator to support participation by a highly marginalised grouping, Traveller men. Most importantly, it has cultivated a culture where participation, particularly of those from disadvantaged backgrounds, is valued and respected. However, in the other cases, it is obvious the state shows less concern to support participatory processes in a way that might substantially transform participation opportunities into participation outcomes.

4.28 In one of the regeneration cases and in the urban local development case, similar high levels of support for participation are shown by the provision of dedicated support personnel, by ensuring that meetings are timed and facilitated in a way that maximises participation and by provision of relevant training and capacity building opportunities.

4.29 The remaining cases were less active in pursuing participation outcomes. While some level of support has been provided in the CDB case, the SPC and LTACC experiences generally point to a combination of inattention to participation possibilities as well as, in one instance, to deliberate manipulation of participation processes. In the latter case, participants were initially hand picked and efforts made to exclude participants of the local Traveller organisation from participation, despite it being provided for in the governing legislation.

4.30 What emerges from the case studies is that participation by those from disadvantaged communities requires intensive and resource-rich supports, without which participation will either not happen or will happen in a way that is cosmetic and tokenistic, leaving participants less rather than more empowered. However, the general impression is that less than adequate levels of investment of time or resources have been allocated to transform participation opportunities into more concrete participation outcomes.

Routes to Participation

4.31 The mechanisms generally used to secure participation have been described in the last section. However, a key issue emerging from the case studies, worth repeating here, is the questionable merit of exclusively relying on a single mechanism, such as community/voluntary fora, as a means of securing the input of disadvantaged communities, unless those fora are constructed in ways that protect against domination by better off communities. And while it may be administratively neat and convenient for local authorities to have only one community and voluntary sector mechanism to relate to, such convenience will neither enhance participation nor promote social inclusion.

Trust and Relationship Building

4.32 In all of the case studies trust or the lack of it emerges as a central factor in the effective functioning of the governance process. Trust has been defined as "the willingness to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations about another's intention or behaviour"[129] and it is suggested that mechanisms that "cultivate trust and embody "a direct appeal to moral principles" may be the most effective form of enforcement mechanism[130]. The veracity of this is illustrated in high trust environments such as RAPID. Here, there appeared to be a greater openness to express and accept vulnerabilities which, in turn, reinforced confidence and mutual respect. The local development and at least one regeneration case also exhibited high levels of trust, though it was clear in all the cases that trust accumulates over time and thrives with long term commitment of time and personal energy.

4.33 By contrast, relatively low trust environments were reported in one of the SPC cases and in the LTACCs, characterised by an absence of respect, by conflict and frustration, and an unwillingness to take risks or enable risk-taking. Clearly, the active cultivation of trusting relationships is essential. Without them and in the presence of ongoing, unaddressed and sometimes disguised antagonisms, governance processes cannot hope to work. In these cases there is limited evidence of investment being made in the basic building blocks of trust, communication and relationship. While the RAPID examples and the CDB benefited from the presence of skilled staff and facilitative chairpersons, and the local development company and one regeneration process consciously invested in trust-building exercises and processes, the LTACCs and the SPC did not enjoy such a mutually reinforcing combination of skills and disposition.

4.34 And whereas the contribution of the elected chairperson in one of the LTACCs was positively commented upon, it was evident that little institutionalized effort had been made in either LTACC to address the perceived problems of administrative domination. In the same way,

129. K G Provan and K Kenis (2008) Modes of Network Governance: Structure, Management and Effectiveness:237

130. V Lowndes and D Wilson (2003) Balancing Revisability and Robustness? A New Institutionalist Perspective on Local Government Modernization:282

one of the SPC case studies presents an image of low trust and limited relationship building, an experience that differs from the conclusions of a government report on their operation which concluded "that an important by-product of the SPC process has been a better relationship between elected members and groups representing different interests within the local area"[131].

Institutional Flexibility

4.35 Institutional change, both positive and negative, is visible to varying degrees in the different case studies. In the RAPID and one of the local regeneration cases, change has also been produced in no small part as a result of individual initiative. And while welcome, questions inevitably arise about sustainability in the absence of broader and deeper institutional dynamism. In the RAPID cases, it could be argued that, to an extent, some change in rules and behaviour has been achieved through the operation of the Area Implementation Team (AIT), though the longer term sustainability of the 'common sense' ingredient may be less certain.

4.36 In other cases, looking at the evidence of institutional change it could be argued that a categorisation of "all change, no change" would appear to most adequately describe the change process in at least two of the cases[132] . Indeed, these recurring examples, the LTACC and at least one SPC case, support the contention that "new institutions in local governance are likely to be resisted (or hijacked) by those who benefit from existing arrangements or see new rules as hostile to their interest. They are likely to be adapted in ways that suit locally-specific institutional environments"[133].

4.37 Meanwhile, the CDB case occupies a space somewhere in between; neither fully subsumed into the dominant local authority institutional setting nor succeeding in constraining or adjusting the behaviour

131. Institute of Public Administration (2004) Review of the Operation of Strategic Policy Committees:42

132. V Lowndes (1998) Multi-organisational Partnerships in Local Governance: Processes of Institutional Change, Stability and Adaptation

133. V Lowndes and D Wilson (2003) Balancing Revisability and Robustness? A New Institutionalist Perspective on Local Government Modernization:280

of CDB members through embedding their institutions into more co-operative or participatory processes. On the latter issue, the national evaluation of the social inclusion co-ordination mechanisms, established under the CDBs, suggests that these efforts have largely failed to "provide direction in terms of tackling the difficult and contentious issues around co-ordination and integration such as agency boundaries, overlap and duplication", which are ultimately the problems that the whole CDB process was set up to address[134].

4.38 Finally, the local development cases are a clear example of institutional evolution with a distinctly social inclusion and community development orientation. As such, the cases explored suggest that the local development entity successfully inhabits and mediates the space between the purely civil society and the purely state sectors. As such it plays a role in facilitating, mediating, advocating, translating, and interpreting a variety of different relationships, albeit with a distinct social inclusion ambition. And while there is much talk currently about the future of local development structures, it would appear from this case at least, that the continued presence of this type of independent institutional capacity is still very necessary.

4.39 In general, there are indications from the case studies of both institutional inertia and innovation. Institutional blockages have been attributed to:

- An absence of skills in collaborative working;
- Restricted agenda setting;
- Restrictions on the introduction of staff with specialist skills and knowledge;
- Facilitation of insider/outsider distinctions when specialist staff are recruited;
- Lack of or low priority for training/awareness-raising on governance and, in particular, social inclusion;

134 NDP/ CSF Evaluation Unit (2003) Evaluation of Social Inclusion Co-ordination Mechanisms:ii

- Inadequate national-level support and follow-up for governance processes;
- Stifling of individual innovation and initiative;
- Lack of linkage with performance measurement processes and indicator development;
- Predominance of a culture of service delivery; and
- Absence of a democratic vision.

On the other hand, institutional innovation has been stimulated by:

- Introducing non-traditional staff, especially to facilitate and support governance and social inclusion;
- Enhancing the infrastructure of local government by the establishment of specialist units, such as the social inclusion units;
- Collaborative agenda setting;
- Provision of specialist external supports, such as that provided by the Combat Poverty Agency;
- Ensuring a strong national monitoring role, at both an administrative and political level;
- Creating and recognising the potential for localised, accessible governance processes, which may be particularly appropriate in dealing with issues of social exclusion;
- Providing adequate support structures to convert participation opportunities into participation outcomes; and
- Development of alliances to resist lead organisation domination.

4.40 In addition, it was suggested by some respondents that further innovation could result from the parallel provision and prioritisation of training and awareness-raising, essentially building the commitment, duty and public service dimensions. The "change through enforcement" argument was also made, with specific suggestions that consideration be given to the location of governance and social inclusion processes

within a stronger legislative framework. This echoes comments within the evaluation of the national Strategic Management Initiative which considered that "Just as much of the thinking around greater openness and accountability was 'hardwired' into the civil service through innovative legislation, the next phase of civil service modernisation may need to be marked by similar innovative hardwiring".[135] Alongside this, the development of a stronger national level capacity to review and stimulate local governance processes, thereby matching the type of institutional support currently provided to national partnership by the National Economic and Social Council and the National Economic and Social Forum, was also introduced as a possibility.

Dealing with Differences in Power

4.41 Any discussion of dynamics within local governance institutions would be incomplete without reference to the issue of power and the related issue of dissent. There is no doubt that all of the governance processes described in this section take place within contexts of unequal power relations. In governance processes where the state plays a strong facilitative role, and due to the scale of resources under its control, it inevitably occupies a more powerful role. The RAPID case illustrates what can be achieved when the state is willing to temper the exercise of its power somewhat and concede norm and value dominance, albeit aided by nationally provided balancing factors and individual personality considerations.

4.42 However, other local level processes, such as the LTACC and at least one of the SPC cases, suggest little willingness to adjust the pre-existing power relationships. And while the softening of power distinctions in the RAPID case, and in the CDB to some extent, has enabled community voices to be more freely exercised, other experiences illustrate that there is often little room for dissent and for the articulation of alternative perspectives, ultimately negating the potential of so-called governance processes.

135 PA Consulting Group (2002) Evaluation of the Progress of the Strategic Management Initiative/Delivering Better Government Modernisation Programme:85

4.43 A related concern within the LTACC and SPC cases is the fact that the locus of power lies so significantly outside the actual governance arena. In the LTACC, decision-making power rests with the officials servicing the committee, not with the committee itself, while in the SPCs, power is either held by the executive manager and/or by the full, elected council. However, other research suggests that, in general, recommendations from SPCs are taken on board by the main council body. However, for some non-elected members of SPCs at any rate, the absence of direct decision-making power is seen as a weakness. As highlighted in the earlier discussion on empowered deliberative democracy, there may be a questionable benefit in participating in relatively powerless governance processes, though this was not always a deterring factor for civil society organisations.

In fact, few civil society respondents envisaged a future relationship with the state outside of governance and collaboration. Even in situations where a results-based assessment of the process appeared to question its value to participating organisations, the general refrain was one typified by "better in, than out" or some vague hope that a more favourable outcome might be generated at some stage in the future. The inherent danger within this is a creeping diminution of civil society autonomy and the further "blurring of boundaries between the statutory sector and civil society"[136].

4.44 Only one respondent raised the option of employing protest alongside partnership as an option to move beyond the limited progress being made within the formal, invited and state-facilitated governance space. Whether for funding reasons, from a belief that governance is the best option or simply following a trend, it would appear that most civil society organisations have assumed that their interests can be served only within such collaborative arrangements, potentially limiting their capacity for analysis and sacrificing protest as an important tool for change.

136 R Meade (2005) We Hate it Here, Please Let Us Stay! Irish Social Partnership and the Community/Voluntary Sector's Conflicted Experiences of Recognition

Testing the Case Studies

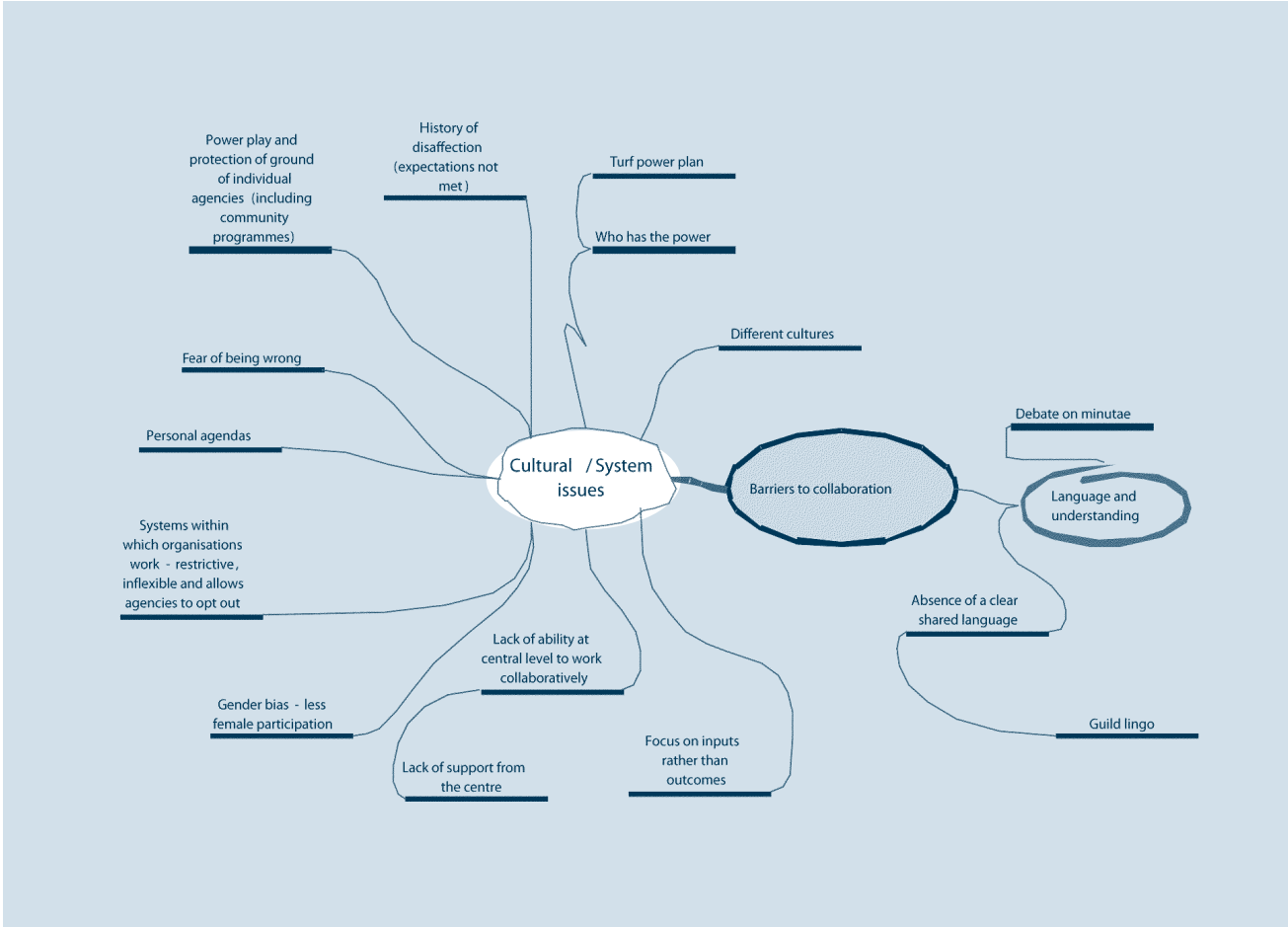
4.45 Finally, in this section, the conclusions of the case studies were compared with the conclusion of a focus group convened to share perspectives on what factors inhibit and what factors enhance collaborative engagement at local level. This focus group included a number of senior local authority personnel, local development staff, environmentalists, democracy activists, personnel from educational institutions and from independent planning perspectives. The initial considerations of this group have been mapped and are presented in figures 8-10 below.

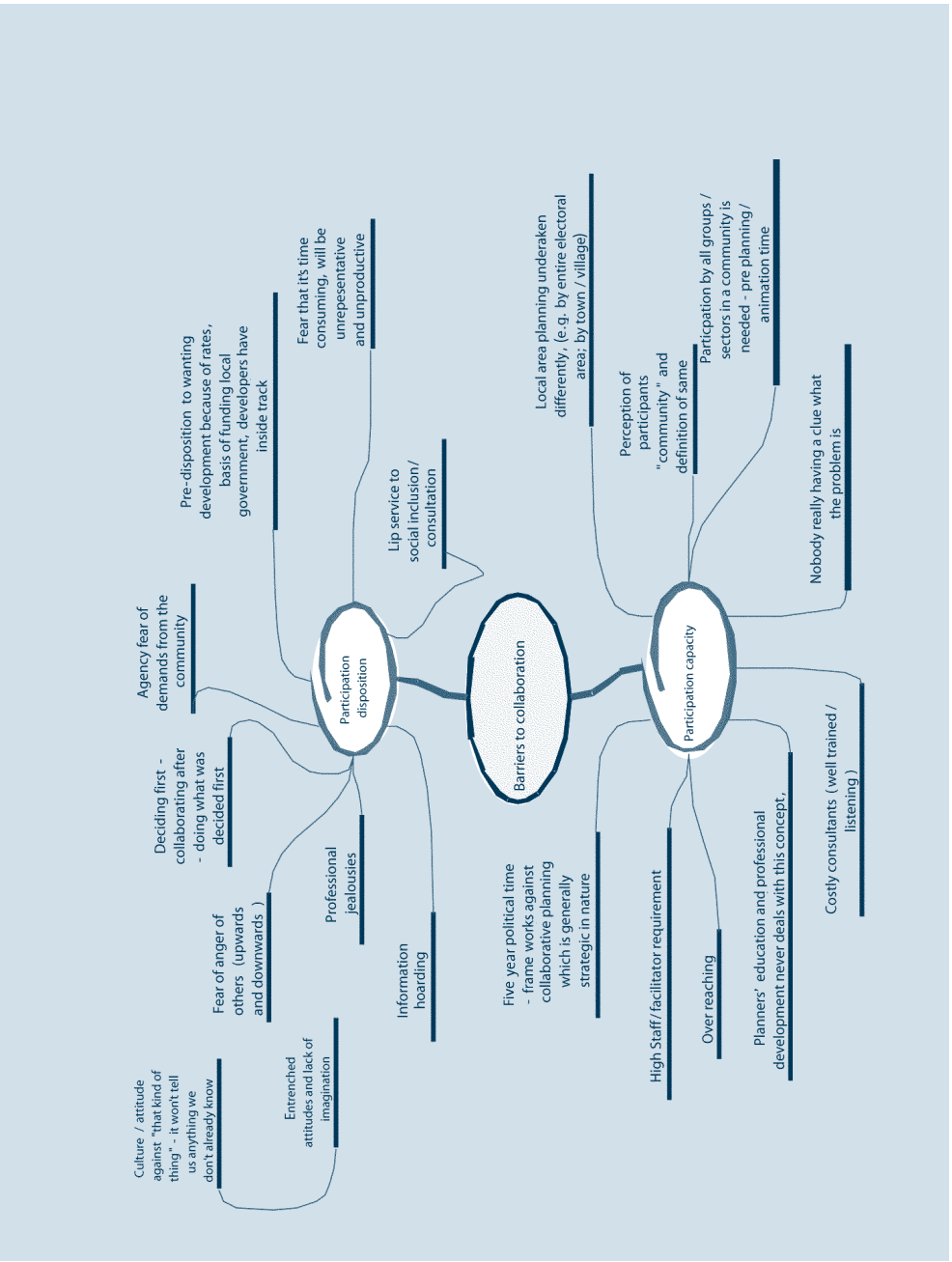
Barriers to collaboration

4.46 What emerges clearly from these discussions is a significant focus, again, on institutional and cultural factors as the most significant factors inhibiting collaboration. While language and understanding have also been identified as significant, it could be argued that these are by-products of particular cultural legacies. Similarly, barriers that stem from negative disposition or attitude can be located within an institutionalist framework. Finally, inadequate capacity is identified as an obstacle to increased participation and collaboration, both in state and civil society contexts.

4.47 In addition, the existence or otherwise of a disposition towards participation was seen as closely related to the capacity to facilitate participatory processes, echoing the institutional development issues emerging from the case studies. Interestingly, in the focus groups discussions, the weakness of early-stage training on participation in a variety of relevant professional contexts was highlighted.

Figure 8 Barriers to Collaboration/Participation




Barriers to collaboration
Participation disposition
Participation capacity
Culture / attitude against "that kind of thing" - it won't tell us anything we don't already know
Entrenched attitudes and lack of imagination
Fear of anger of others (upwards and downwards)
Deciding first - collaborating after - doing what was decided first
Professional jealousies
Information hoarding
Agency fear of demands from the community
Pre-disposition to wanting development because of rates, basis of funding local government, developers have inside track
Fear that it's time consuming, will be unrepesentative and unproductive
Lip service to social inclusion / consultation
Five year political time - frame works against collaborative planning which is generally strategic in nature
High Staff / facilitator requirement
Over reaching
Planners' education and professional development never deals with this concept.
Costly consultants (well trained / listening)
Local area planning underaken differently, (e.g. by entire electoral area; by town / village)
Perception of participants "community" and definition of same
Particpation by all groups / sectors in a community is needed - pre planning / animation time
Nobody really having a clue what the problem is

Enabling participation/collaboration

4.48 Having identified potential barriers, participants in the focus group also identified what they considered might be ways to advance collaborative approaches. These are summarised in figures 9 and 10 below. What emerges firstly from the discussions is the need to provide adequate training and capacity building, not just in service provision, but in the earliest stages of education of potential decision-makers. In addition, it was considered that greater attention to highlighting and modelling the benefits of participatory approaches needs to be taken.

Figure 9 Deepening Participation and Collaboration

4.49 However, in addition to these, a whole series of both macro- and micro-level structural changes were identified. This illustrates that while much can be achieved at a local level, significant national-level attention needs to be paid to the organisation of government and governance at local level if the opportunities for and benefits of participation are to be optimised.

Figure 10 Structural Change to Promote Participatory Approaches

Summary and Conclusions from the Case Studies

4.50 This section has explored governance experiences within case studies located in the different governance zones. From the case study experiences, some lessons and conclusions can be drawn.

Zone 1: In-house participatory governance

- **Where there is a tendency for governance processes to be rules centred and/or dominated by bureaucracy or by political actors there would appear to be less commitment to and/or capacity for open dialogue and deliberation.**
- **In these circumstances there is likely to be limited consensus around goals and/or values.**
- **While there may be some degree of focus on results it is less certain that agreement can be reached about which results are desired in the absence of more structured commitment to dialogue and deliberation.**
- **Equally, where power continues to rest with the local government system, primarily with officials, the prospects of achieving progressive participatory governance is weakened.**

Zone 2: Moving towards governance 'out there'

- **In the cases looked at, there is some evidence of a shift from rules-centred processes and perspectives towards more entrepreneurial and deliberative approaches.**
- **In some cases considerable progress has been made towards identifying and achieving agreed results. In others, the extent of the terms of reference resulted in lower capacity to deliver tangible results.**
- **While specific discussions on values did not necessarily take place in all cases, the stronger orientation towards participation created sufficient trust to enable progress to be made.**
- **Communication in the cases studied seems to be less of a problem in comparison with other mechanisms, aided by the fact that all participants could easily have their say and**

could shape the agenda for discussion. Different forms of expression appear to be valued.

- Specific measures were put in place in a number of cases to enable participation to take place, including the allocation of dedicated staffing resources, although this has weakened in more recent times.
- However, there are little shifts in power, although power relationships are less overt.

Zone 3: Participatory governance 'out there'

- In the cases studied, this has usually occurred through the creation of local development bodies.
- In the cases examined, a focus on participation, particularly by disadvantaged groups, informed the process from the very early stages, including a specific focus on community development.
- As a result, distinct institutional characteristics and capacity have been developed, including a strong values-focus on social inclusion.
- However, historical design and implementation factors have created tensions between the local government and local development systems.
- In general, the cases studied are oriented towards problem-solving, within a limited number of thematic and geographical areas.
- In terms of communication, a focus on dialogue and deliberation is preferred.
- As with the some of the other governance processes, dedicated resources have been allocated and maintained to optimise the operation of the process.
- Power would appear to be more equally dispersed amongst participants.

4.51 In the next and final section a broader template for the design of progressive, participatory governance at local level will be presented, drawing from the lessons offered by these case studies and by the reflection in section 1 on the conceptual underpinnings of participatory governance.

Section 5

Towards a Template for Local Participatory Governance

Introduction

5.1 Thus far, we have considered the extent of participation within various governance mechanisms by drawing on a range of conceptual, policy and empirical experiences. Alternative approaches to participation have been accessed by:

— reflecting on key areas of democracy, public administration, social inclusion and public policy;

— exploring conceptual constructions of idealised participation; and

— investigating the experiences of those involved in efforts to operationalise partnership approaches in a variety of settings.

5.2 This final section of the report draws on these different sources to offer some suggestions about how local participatory governance processes can be enhanced by:

i. Exploring the enabling conditions required to realise the full potential of participatory governance processes;

ii. Presenting a typology for participatory governance and characterising two types of participatory process, one where participation is supported and one where it is restricted; and

iii. Offering some conclusions as to how participation can be deepened within the different governance zones as described in section 3.

Creating the Enabling Conditions

5.3 In section 1 of this report the treatment of community participation within discussions on democracy, public administration, social inclusion and the framing of public policy was discussed. What emerges quite clearly from these is that in order for local participatory governance to become embedded, certain higher-level enabling conditions need to be recognised and addressed.

5.4 In reality there needs to be an acknowledgement that it is not sufficient to simply establish local governance mechanisms and, in some way, hope that they can break through deeply rooted and sometimes uninviting sets of values, institutional cultures and relationships of exchange and communication. Instead, the establishment of participatory processes needs to be accompanied by strong signals which leave no doubt that such processes are not simply an administrative realignment but that they represent a real shift in our political culture and approach towards decision-making.

Enabling democracy

5.5 In order for this to happen, exercises in participatory governance need be seen as cornerstones of the democratic system, not as marginalised impositions upon pre-existing established and possibly complacent patterns of decision-making. Viewed in this light, local-level participatory processes offer opportunities to deepen the democratic experience and the meaning of citizenship. In an era of growing cynicism and distrust of decision-makers, greater attention needs to be given to the potential of participatory governance to revitalise and reinvigorate democratic life.

5.6 It can be argued that progress towards achieving truly embedded forms of local participatory governance cannot be made in the absence a broader review and renewal of democratic values. The creation of competition between representative and participatory forms of governance is an unnecessary and unhelpful distinction, which often obscures the potential for democratic evolution. As a result of such competition governance arrangements that are located in a democratic environment dominated by representative and, some might say, elitist concepts of democracy are always likely to struggle to achieve parity of esteem, respect and inclusion. Whilst it is clear that representative processes must continue to play a central role in democratic expression, ongoing pubic disengagement from electoral processes provides ample evidence of the need to adjust democratic norms and expectations[137].

137. For worthwhile discussion on this issue see Gramberger and Caddy (2001) Citizens as Partners: OECD Handbook on Information, Consultation and Public Participation in Policy Making; G Stoker (2006) Why Politics Matters

5.7 Rather than pursue overly simplistic debates about the merits of representative versus participatory democracy, it can be argued that an initiative designed to engender reflection on the nature of Irish democracy and to establish the role and validity of multiple democratic forms is more than overdue. Some limited efforts to do this have been undertaken, but a deeper and more concerted effort is warranted[138]. This issue was examined by the Constitution Review Group some years ago but treatment of the potential for increased citizen participation was not pursued to any great depth. More recently, a democratic audit was undertaken under the auspices of TASC, the Think Tank for Action on Social Change, following the model developed by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, IDEA[139]. Whilst providing a valuable benchmark, the TASC audit was not however in a position to investigate how citizens might envisage a deeper form of democracy.

5.8 In reality, despite more than 20 years of national and local-level participatory processes, it could be concluded that the predominant approaches and attitudes in the system of public administration and in the political system more generally have changed very little. It is, for example, unfortunate that the great variety of local participatory processes are more likely to be regarded as new ways of dealing with difficult or so called 'wicked issues', or as some kind of extension of the public administration system, rather than as core elements in the state's democratic infrastructure. Arguably, in a time when economic and environmental challenges loom large, it is opportune to address ourselves more firmly to a consideration of how we approach decision-making. It is in this context that the opportunity to articulate a clear vision for deeper local democracy and local governance is proposed, an opportunity that has already been missed on many occasions in the past[140]. And, while this would ideally be a national initiative, there is

138. See for example Government of Ireland (2000) White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector; Taskforce on Active Citizenship (2007) Report of the Taskforce on Active Citizenship

139. D S Beetham; S Bracking; I Kearton and S Weir (2002) International IDEA Handbook on Democracy Assessment

140. J F Keoghan (2003) Reform in Irish Local Government

no reason why any progressive local authority could not sponsor such a process. Perhaps in the absence of any clear national initiative, the challenge remains for the local state, political and administrative, to embrace the potential of inclusive deliberative democracy and co-governance possibilities.

5.9 It may also be noted that just as the state can generate debate on the nature of democracy, civil society too might well undertake a parallel, or where possible, a shared process of reflection on the nature of democracy and the role of civil society therein. Such an effort would be enhanced by civil society playing a stronger role in capacity-building initiatives for and with elected representatives and by the pursuit of more regular dialogue between civil society organisations and political parties. It is clear from a number of the cases studied that this is absent.

5.10 In stimulating progress on this issue of democratic renewal and ensuring that it retains a clear linkage with subsequent policy-making and implementation processes, a body such as the NESF can play a key role. In particular, the unique composition of the NESF as the most significant social partnership mechanism to include political parties, allows it to assume a role in facilitating engagement between political parties and civil society at both local and national level to explore this issue.

Enabling public administration

5.11 There is little doubt from the earlier conceptual discussions and from the evidence presented by the cases studied that the public administration system is central to the existence and operation of many participatory governance processes. In fact, it could be argued that it is the public administration system and its officials - not the political system – that has become the primary interface for community participation. In the past, this has contributed to tensions between the participatory and representative processes. However, it has also placed considerable pressure on public officials to deliver on expectations for participatory processes that, often times, they are ill-equipped to deliver.

5.12 This is not to say that, in some circumstances, officials themselves may be ill-disposed to deliver on participatory ambitions and may see the more formal involvement of civil society organisations as interference in how they carry out their functions. Thus, there can often be a mismatch between pre-existing public administration cultures and the requirements of participatory ambitions. In effect, many public officials and/or systems simply may not believe in the value of participation and most especially, may not see its value as part of efforts to promote social inclusion. Indeed, as noted by the Irish Government itself, "Embedding anti-poverty practice across local authorities is a slow task and will take time to achieve given current organisational culture in local authorities[141].

5.13 Armed with this acknowledgement, it can be concluded that there is a need for conscious and resourced efforts to stimulate processes of cultural change within the public administration system so as to enhance a disposition towards inclusion, as is suggested by the case studies and reiterated by the work of the OECD. In other words, the system of public administration must recognise the validity of alternative norms and values and be able to name and recognise the role and impact of alternative rationalities, helped by a willingness to "start from the citizens perspective"[142]. To support such a process of cultural change requires the provision of structured programmes of training and capacity building designed around a Knowledge, Disposition and Skills (KDS) framework, so as to increase knowledge of social exclusion, enhance disposition towards the needs of those who are marginalised and build the skills necessary to promote inclusion[143].

141. Government of Ireland, 2003 National Action Plan Against Poverty and Social Exclusion: 55

142. M Gramberger and J Caddy (2001) Citizens as Partners: OECD Handbook on Information, Consultation and Public Participation in Policy Making:93

143. C McInerney (2004) Civic Education - A Practical Guidance Note; C McInerney and V Williams (2007) Getting Off the Roundabout: A Social Inclusion Learning Programme for Local Authorities in Wales

In this regard, a number of avenues might be pursued, by the NESF or the NESF in partnership with others including, for example:

- Supporting an exploration of the Irish public administration system so as to more deeply understand how it has evolved and how it might be facilitated/encouraged to embrace participatory governance approaches;
- Undertaking discussions and open explorations with public officials to find out what they think about participation;
- Establishing administrative and evidence justifications for participation;
- Illustrating the valued-added and impacts of participatory governance processes;
- Exploring options to locate governance and social inclusion processes within a stronger legislative framework – *"Just as much of the thinking around greater openness and accountability was 'hardwired' into the civil service through innovative legislation, the next phase of civil service modernisation may need to be marked by similar innovative hardwiring*[144]*";*
- Investigating how cultures of public service and a recognition of the roles and rights of citizenship can be incorporated into public administration training programmes; and finally
- Exploring mechanisms for rewarding inclusion and participation champions so as to encourage others to take risks and to be entrepreneurial around participation.

144. PA Consulting Group, 2002:85 Evaluation of the Strategic Management Initiative

Enhancing Local Participatory Governance Processes

Why a Local-level Focus is Important

5.14 From a participatory democracy perspective, the local level can be seen to offer particular potential to deepen the democratic experience.

5.15 On a positive note the local level affords citizens the opportunity to participate in issues of direct relevance to them. At this level, citizens can more easily see and understand decision-making processes so that they are in a stronger position to demand direct accountability, either through representative or participatory processes or both. One dimension of the local, the neighbourhood, is seen as the level at which "citizens most often meet and talk, both informally and in associations, about issues that affect them on a daily basis"[145]. It may also be the level at which civil society organisations can more effectively engage with and involve citizens, thereby broadening the potential for participation.

5.16 Focusing on governance at the local level also addresses many of the impracticality charges levelled at participatory, deliberative approaches. While participation by large numbers of citizens in national level debates and decision-making is clearly problematic and few examples of national level deliberative or co-governance experiences exist around the world, a number of more strongly democratic innovations at local level can be pointed to[146]. Complexities of scale are often identified as amongst the most difficult to overcome in efforts to build stronger participation in decision-making[147]. Given the validity of these concerns about scale, it is therefore logical to focus

145. V Lowndes and H Sullivan (2008) How Low Can You Go? Rationales and Challenges for Neighbourhood Governance:64

146. G Smith (2005) Power Beyond The Ballot: 57 Democratic Innovations from Around the World

147. See C Pateman (1970) Participation and Democratic Theory; C B Macpherson (1977) The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy; B R Barber (1984) Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age; M E Warren (1996) Deliberative Democracy and Authority; A Fung and E O Wright (2001) Deepening Democracy: Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance; J Parkinson (2003) Legitimacy Problems in Deliberative Democracy

on decision-making arenas where these complexities, while present, can be managed and overcome with more immediate and accessible local decision-making[148]. Indeed the existence of prior participatory successes at local level in Ireland reinforces arguments that this is where further progress can be made.

Towards a Template for Local Participatory Governance

5.17 Drawing from the conceptual material and the case studies, two participation 'types' can be identified that express the alternative extremes that could potentially (and in some cases do) exist:

— one that supports participatory governance;

— and one that restricts it.

5.18 In reality, of course, most of the case studies fell somewhere in between these two extremes, but a discussion of the features that pushed them closer to one type or the other helps to clarify those actions and conditions that support participatory governance and those that do not.

Supporting participatory governance

5.19 The ideal-type governance mechanism that supports participatory governance is likely to have the following characteristics:

- It operates in a context where **no one institutional or individual participant dominates**. Where there is a potential for such dominance, specific balancing measures are developed. In addition, the context may be one in which different forms/levels of engagement are recognised and valued;

- **Management responsibilities are shared between or at least owned by all participants** helping to create a common sense of responsibility and commitment, though inevitably, some members may take on more active management responsibilities than others;

148. Clearly, within any discussion on local level participation, the delineation of the notion of "local" is crucial. In the empirical examples presented in the last section a range of different local governance examples were explored, both at neighbourhood and a larger local authority level. Therefore, for the purposes of this document, local is understood as including governance processes at the level of the county/city or below.

- **There is a shared understanding of the goal(s) at hand** or at least willingness to explore competing perspectives. In addition there is a commitment to focus on results, solve problems and undertake concrete actions. As a result confidence is built amongst participants;
- It is also informed by **common or shared values and attitudes**, explicitly stated or implicitly assumed, or at least there is likely to be an openness to explore values and questions of attitude;
- The **dominant style of communication/modus operandi for the groups is deliberative**, acknowledging the perspectives of all participants and giving equal status to each. Thus, a variety of narratives are seen as relevant and, as a result, all participants feel that they are enabled to participate and can contribute to setting the agenda for discussion and action;
- In addition, **trust between members is high**, providing a secure basis from which to address difficult problems and/or produce innovative policy solutions. This does not assume the existence of trust as a starting point but as something that arises from the governance context, from approaches to management, from goal and value-orientation and from communication style;
- The **legitimacy and commitment to mandate and accountability of the governance process is also high**, so that the activities and actions of the group are seen to be representative of the needs and wishes of its various constituencies.
- **Inclusion and participation are actively and consciously pursued** via a range of measures designed to ensure the highest rates of engagement;
- At an institutional level, **all participants in the governance process are open to and accepting of the need for institutional change**; and
- **Finally, there is an awareness of power differentials and efforts are made to lessen their impact.**

Restricting participatory governance

5.20 More or less the exact opposite of this constitutes the 'ideal' type that restricts participatory governance, one where:

— The **context allows for the dominance of individual, participating institutions** and relegates others to a secondary position;

— **Management arrangements are not shared, but tend to be dominated by one lead participant** and thus the management style/obligations of one lead participant may determine how the governance process operates;

— There is **little shared understanding of the goals at hand and in some cases, participants in the process have an interest in achieving diametrically opposing results**. Tension and/or conflict may arise over the terms of reference for the group especially if goals/desired results are not explicitly stated;

— Arising from this, and in an attempt to enforce one view over another, **the modus operandi tends to be control-centred and instrumental** i.e. focused on achieving preset results, rather than deliberative. In this case, the primary direction of responsiveness is to bureaucratic or politically-established 'rules';

— In consequence of the above, **trust between members is likely to be low or non-existent**, so that many proposed 'solutions' to proposed 'problems' tend to reflect dominant and traditional ways of tackling an issue;

— This scenario is also **likely to be characterised by problematic legitimacy and accountability issues**, with low levels of commitment to establishing mandate and poor accountability mechanisms. Moreover, the main direction of accountability may actually be to bodies outside the governance mechanism itself;

— In addition, this scenario is likely to see a **less than active approach to encouraging inclusion**, seeing the creation of participation opportunities as opposed to participation outcomes as the extent of the obligation;

— For all of these reasons, **the institutional flexibility in these kinds of governance mechanisms tends to be low**, thereby undermining the original impetus for participatory governance, when there is little or no change in the style of governing; and

— **Power differentials are not seen as a problem** and may be overtly exploited in the pursuit of certain goals/outcomes.

Table 3 summarises the key features of these different governance types.

Table 3 Scenarios Supporting/Restricting Local Level Participatory Governance

Supporting Participation	
Context	■ Not institutionally dominated by one partner or dominance consciously minimised ■ Potential for different forms/levels of engagement recognised
Management	■ Management arrangements shared between members ■ Principal accountability to participants ■ Open agenda setting
Goal Consensus	■ Clarity and agreement about results/desire outcomes ■ Mutual confidence ■ Action-oriented
Value Orientation	■ Norms, values and understandings shared or processes to explore them undertaken ■ Deliberative
Style of communication/ Modus operandi? Dominant mode of interaction	■ Deliberative, dialogue, listening orientated ■ Different forms of expression valued ■ Mutually respectful and parity of esteem
Trust	■ High trust environment
Legitimacy & accountability	■ High
Inclusiveness	■ Active
Institutional flexibility	■ Open to change ■ New processes/approaches embedded

Mediating Factors	Restricting participation
■ Progressive national/local level design and ongoing monitoring ■ Leverage mechanisms, including funding control ■ Individual personality factors	■ Institutionally dominated – no mitigation
■ Range and specificity of functions ■ Participant capacity ■ Staff capacity ■ Accountability relationships	■ Management arrangements dominated by some members ■ Principal accountability to external source ■ Directed agenda setting
■ Result-oriented planning ■ Acknowledgement of alternative perspectives ■ Result-based planning ■ Individual personal factors	■ Uncertainty about desired results/outcomes ■ Lack of confidence that basic goals are shared
■ Recognition of differing values ■ Concious team-building/leadership processes ■ Individual personality factors	■ Absence of shared values ■ Control-centred norms and values ■ Disputed/contested ambitions
■ Staff capacity ■ Commitment to communication ■ Individual personality factors	■ Instrumental ■ Prioritisation of technical, knowledge expertise ■ Absence of respect/parity of esteem
■ Commitment of time/resources ■ Conscious trust-building efforts	■ Low trust environment and low prioritisation of trust building
■ Strong monitoring processes ■ Creation of mandate/feedback mechanisms ■ Capacity to represent experience/perspective/opinion	■ Low
■ Conscious participation strategies with resources ■ Utilisation of external facilitators e.g. CDPs, FRCs ■ Awareness of power differences	■ Latent
■ Individual personality factors ■ Centralised monitoring and incentivisation	■ Change, if at all, is cosmetic

Making a Difference – Mediating between Supported and Restricted Participation

5.21 While it is important to understand the characteristics of 'supporting' and 'restricting' approaches to participatory governance, it is perhaps even more important that we are cognisant of the range of factors that are likely to tip the balance from one to the other. From our earlier conceptual and empirical investigations, a number of such mediating factors become apparent

Creating a conducive environment

5.22 In order to encourage and create an environment conducive to active participation,

- It is desirable that governance processes be informed by best practice in the design and operation of participatory governance, both in Ireland and internationally. Given its role in supporting policy implementation, this is another potential role for the NESF.
- There is a need for effective and ongoing monitoring of governance processes, not simply as a means of evaluating a narrow range of outputs, outcomes or impacts but also to focus on how contributions are made to enhancing and deepening democratic participation. A by-product of such monitoring may be to focus the minds, particularly of less enthusiastic state agency personnel, on their contribution to the operation of the governance mechanism.
- Individual personality factors play a very significant role in determining whether the context is conducive to participatory governance or not. While individual agency is important, there is a need to lessen reliance on the vagaries of individual disposition and ensure deeper and more embedded institutional commitments to the concept of participation. Efforts to 'win the hearts and minds' of institutions and key individuals towards participation need to be more conspicuously supported.
- Consideration might also be given to designing strategies that would help facilitate participation, particularly where the issues under consideration may be contested, for example, by appointing suitably experienced, independent chairpersons or using external facilitation.

- Finally, given that not all governance contexts are immediately conducive to participation, the creation of a diversity of governance types is important. This would create potential for models of good practice to be developed that can act as a bridge or an interpreter between the often diverse cultures of community and local state structures.

Management

5.23 Involvement in the management of governance networks has the capacity to build mutual trust and confidence. To optimise participation in the management of the governance process, the following are important:

- Focusing on participant capacity is a key issue. While some participants are likely to be comfortable in taking on a more active management role, others will not, particularly where participants are from disadvantaged backgrounds and are confronted by the less familiar and more formal mechanisms of a board or management committee.

- In such circumstances, where efforts are made to adjust management styles and decision-making processes in a way that suits all participants, opportunities for wider involvement can be created.

- Moreover where the range and specificity of governance functions are seen to be of more immediate relevance, the potential for communities and/or their representatives to take on a more hands-on role is increased.

- Crucially though, ownership of the governance process will inevitably be weak if actual accountability lies outside of the process and not within it, i.e. where the group has no real decision-making power and where the officials responsible for servicing it are more concerned with the external bureaucratic and political environments than with the concerns of participants.

Consensus creation

5.24 Another mediating factor between supporting and restricting participation is the ability to foster a climate of consensus. This can be done by:

- The creation of opportunities in which perspectives, contrasting or otherwise, can be voiced. This does not involve sacrifice of all such perspectives, though where differences do exist it does require that there is sufficient interest in taking account of the needs of other participants.
- Ideally, once perspectives have been shared, common ambitions and possibilities can be identified.
- Achieving a shift in planning to a focus on results and outcomes is also desirable and, as such, participatory process should emphasise capacity to address tangible local problems and provide relevant solutions, including service delivery.
- Again, the role of individual personality factors in encouraging and managing such consensus-oriented processes cannot be underestimated.

Values, communication and trust

5.25 Underpinning the capacity to achieve consensus and build trust are the twin issues of values and communications.

- In circumstances where there is some commonality of values it is possible to imagine solutions to local problems being found. However, even in circumstances where values contrast, some potential for progress exists, even where the distance between opposing values is of obvious importance. Crucially though, it would appear that some degree of acknowledgement of diverging values and related ambitions are important.
- Consequently, governance processes that pay at least some attention to values would appear to have greater potential to achieve results that benefit a range of different participants.
- Equally, processes that recognise and afford parity of esteem to different modes of communication have the capacity to produce benefits for a wider range of participants.

- However, where communication ability is judged in terms of technical or bureaucratic knowledge, most community-based participants will be alienated. In such circumstances trust will remain low.

- By contrast, where multiple forms of communication are valued and where there is a commitment of time resources and there are conscious, confidence-building efforts, real and sustainable trust can be built.

Legitimacy and accountability

5.26 Undoubtedly a significant challenge facing participatory governance processes are the twin pillars of legitimacy and accountability. In this instance:

- It is important that the necessary enabling conditions, discussed above, are put in place, thereby ensuring that participatory processes are firmly anchored within the democratic and the administrative systems.

- Alongside this, however, there must be a commitment from participants to observe high standards of accountability, ensuring that they operate with an appropriate mandate and commit to feeding back to their particular constituency. Within all of the cases studied in this report it is arguable that achieving a high standard of accountability presents an ongoing challenge.

Inclusiveness and participation

5.27 The evidence examined in this report highlights the fact that the establishment of participatory governance processes in and of itself is no guarantee that they will be inclusive, or that meaningful participation will result. Instead:

- What emerges clearly from the case studies is that effective participation is most likely to occur when it is supported by conscious participation strategies.

- Inevitably, this will involve the commitment of time and dedicated resources and, potentially, the support of groups who may themselves not participate within the immediate governance

process e.g. community development projects, family resource centres.

- Meaningful participation is also likely to occur where there is an acknowledgment that the power differentials between participants from state and civil society, as well as those that exist within civil society, have a direct impact on participation. While these power differences cannot be easily removed, mechanisms to mitigate them can be designed, ranging from conscious efforts to change attitudes to initiatives that place some control of funding decisions in the hands of community representatives.

Institutional flexibility and innovation

5.28 To date, the role of individual personality and agency has emerged as a significant factor mediating the space between supportive and restricted participatory governance. However...

- Reliance on individual agency inevitably sets boundaries on the potential of participatory governance practice to inform processes of institutional change and cultural evolution, and retards learning and change potential.

- Moreover, it leaves governance mechanisms vulnerable to the fluidity of staffing arrangements, especially within the public sector.

- Important efforts have been made to enhance institutional infrastructure. For example, within local government, community and enterprise departments were initially established and introduced new skills into the local authority system. Specialist social inclusion units have also been established, although these have had limited scope and resources, have often been staffed by personnel with no specialist knowledge of social inclusion and have been perceived as marginal to the core business of the local authorities. Meanwhile, outside local government, the creation of local development companies has been observed as an example of institutional innovation that promotes participatory governance.

- However, it could be argued that the institutional experimentation that has taken place to date has been marginal and may, as a result

of financial restrictions and inadequate local commitment, begin to be gradually assimilated back into the more traditional structures of local government. There can be little doubt that if this continues to be the case, participatory governance will be weaker as a result.

Enhancing Participatory Governance within Different Governance Zones

5.29 In addition to the general presentation of factors that differentiate between supportive and restrictive participatory governance, it is useful to more concretely identify some of the factors that may influence how participation in governance might be enhanced within the different zones of governance described in section 3 of this report.

Zone 1 In-house participatory governance

5.30 At a conceptual level it is acknowledged that public administration systems will operate from quite identifiable ethical perspectives. In keeping with the nature of bureaucracy, these are often control-centred, where control originates either from political sources or from established bureaucratic practice. In some circumstances other forms of ethical perspective may temper the control orientation by introducing stronger elements of entrepreneurial and/or deliberative impulse. However, where a control-centred ethic persists, without a deliberative balance it would appear logical to conclude that participatory governance processes will struggle to meet the aspirations of all participants.

5.31 The case study material presented in the last section reinforces this conclusion. While not all experiences of governance within local government processes operate in the same way, it is clear that where pre-existing political and/or bureaucratic practices place restrictions on the capacity of civil society participants to contribute as equal partners, participation will be more cosmetic than real.

5.32 In addition, there is evidence that, in some cases at least, pre-existing political and bureaucratic cultures have been reluctant to embrace broader participation and, in some cases, appeared hostile to the external imposition of 'outside' influences. While some research indicates that this has lessened, other anecdotal evidence would suggest that it still persists.

5.33 In all of the cases examined, the governance mechanisms operating within the local government system were essentially advisory in nature and did not have any decision-making capacity, thereby restricting their potential to fully engage all participants. And while civil society participants held on to the hope that they might have some influence, there was a clear recognition of their subservient roles.

5.34 Finally, the examined experience of the governance mechanisms operating within local government indicates little if any active effort to stimulate or optimise participation from within civil society. While the formal requirements to provide access to the governance mechanisms were eventually complied with i.e. participation opportunities were provided, there is no evidence of further effort to ensure that the participation experience would be a productive one. This may be in part due to the fact that no additional resources were provided to support participation, nor were the responsible staff supported to enrich their own understandings of what the participatory processes were intended to achieve.

To address these issues:

- It must be recognised that where governance is expected to take place within a context dominated by the existing cultures of the local government system, it is not sufficient to simply create structures without establishing more solid participatory foundations.
- If participation and the maintenance of governance processes remain an aspiration of government policy, conscious and conspicuous processes of institutional change will need to be undertaken, thereby signalling that such mechanisms are more than cosmetic additions to the local government system. And while there are many positive examples of a deliberative shift within local government, it might be argued that these occur largely as a result of individual agency rather than institutional choice.
- As well as addressing institutional culture and practice, the involvement of specialist external supports to provide technical assistance and support to help overcome skills deficits remains

a necessity, though it is recognised that in the short-term the financial capacity to resource this is under considerable stress.

- In the meantime however, it may be possible to develop mechanisms to curb lead organisation domination. For example, it may be possible to appoint independent chairpersons with requisite experience in participatory processes to certain governance structures, to ensure that they function in a way that is supportive of all participants.

- In addition, it may be possible to promote shared capacity-building and awareness-raising opportunities for officials and civil society in understanding how collaborative working and shared agenda-setting might work in practice.

- Finally, where possible, it is seen as advisable to introduce or develop specialist staff to facilitate and support governance and social inclusion.

Governance Zone 2 – Moving towards governance 'out there'

5.35 This zone encompasses many of the more recent innovations in participation since the introduction of the *Better Local Government* White Paper in 1996. And while in many of them there is a close relationship with the local government system, it is evident too that they have succeeded in creating their own operating cultures within which broader participation is facilitated and in which participants, particularly those from local communities, have gained strong ownership of the decision-making processes. This is particularly noticeable in both of the RAPID cases examined. However, it should be noted that of all of the governance zones identified, this one probably contains the broadest spectrum of governance experiences.

5.36 In the cases examined, conscious efforts were made to support the operation of the governance mechanism with the recruitment of staff, many of whom brought with them direct experience of community participation or community development, illustrating that where an investment in participation takes place, more visible participation outcomes are produced.

5.37 However, while supports were put in place, it is less clear that, in all cases, the investment of time and energy into participation has translated into concrete, tangible results. This may result from weaknesses in planning but may also derive from terms of reference that are so broad as to make the achievement of results more difficult.

5.38 The case study experiences and international best practice suggest that governance processes that are more distinctly problem-solving, neighbourhood-oriented and results-oriented have a greater potential to succeed. However, it is also clear that the capacity to replicate an intense neighbourhood focus is limited by staff and other resource constraints. However, such processes do offer the opportunity to develop templates and models of best practice which can be repeated.

Governance Zone 3: Participatory governance 'out there'

5.39 Many of the local development entities that can be located under the heading of 'independent governance' mechanisms were originally set up to address concrete and distinct problems that existing systems were unable to address. They were also established to address these problems in a new and innovative way, leading to widespread international recognition of their contribution.

5.40 Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that, in their original design, a significant weakness was embedded by creating an unnecessary distance between the new governance processes and mainstream local government systems, particularly by excluding elected representatives from their make-up. This is not to suggest that they should have been part of the local government system, simply that the best possible configurations of co-operation should have been installed.

5.41 It is important to acknowledge that the new governance processes have established their own unique institutional cultures and approaches. For many, though inevitably not all, participation, social inclusion and voice are core values. The case studies suggest that in the right circumstances, these processes are accessible, responsive and capable of addressing themselves to problem-solving, in a way that more established bureaucracies are not.

5.42 In the current social and economic context, it can be argued that this unique capacity needs to be maintained. While the development of closer links and co-operation with the local government system is necessary, this should not take place in a way that weakens the local development culture.

Governance Zone 4: Civil Society Organisations

5.43 Irrespective of the governance type discussed above, civil society organisations play a role. In some circumstances this may be very significant, in others, more marginal.

5.44 In an era where participation in governance arenas is increasingly the norm, civil society (while recognising its highly fragmented nature) is continually challenged to fully understand how it sees itself and how it sees its relationships with the state. Thus - how does it protect its autonomy from government and reassert the role of an independent civil society in achieving a healthy democracy? - as is proposed by a range of international bodies. The current drive towards community organisations assuming delegated service delivery roles potentially undermines capacity to participate in governance arenas, especially where funding streams are accompanied by restrictions on advocacy, as is the case with some HSE funding contracts. In effect, civil society organisations are being told that in order to receive funding to provide services to their communities they have to abandon their role as democratic actors within participatory processes.

5.45 Moreover, recent government decisions to create a single community development programme by integrating the funding stream for the Community Development Programme into the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP) under the auspices of the local development companies, suggests that there is either little understanding of or concern for the maintenance of a vibrant civil society. This development is all the more worrying as it removes a significant layer of capacity from within disadvantaged communities, effectively removing the type of associational structure discussed in

149. S Cosgrove and N Ryder (2001) Community and Voluntary Sector Involvement in the New Local Authority Structures – Report for the Local Government Anti Poverty Learning Network; B Harvey (2002) The Role of the Community Sector in Local Social Partnership

section one. It is perhaps more ironic that such decisions have been taken with only minimal engagement with the communities affected. This would appear to reinforce an earlier conclusion that despite 20 years of partnership processes, there is only limited evidence that a culture of deliberation and communication has been embedded within the public administration system.

5.46 While weakness in state capacity can be highlighted, so too civil society organisations have demonstrated significant capacity weaknesses in a number of the cases studied. One possible source of weakness may be the fact that the impulse for collective action is nowadays almost always reactive or induced and, in many cases, is directly shaped by the state, even within the limited number of more independently organised local community platforms[149]. To address social exclusion at the local level, like-minded civil society organisations might do well to consider the creation of some form of local social inclusion alliance, so as to build a collective analysis and capacity to carry it forward into local governance arenas. In doing so, a greater balance can be struck between the increasing pressure on civil society organisations to assume service delivery roles and the need to retain a focus on advocacy, so as not to lose their potential as agents of social and economic transformation.

5.47 Civil society is also challenged to reflect on its role in the creation or elimination of social exclusion, the reality being that, just as democratic and legal systems have a role to play, so too family/community systems have been identified as important arenas where exclusion occurs. And while there is an evident need to reflect on how civil society organisations embrace social inclusion ambitions, in a governance context there is a particular pressure to explore whether different civil society arenas have the capacity to accommodate diversity and promote equality. And in situations where the state, for its own technical or instrumental reasons, gives preference to generalised, single, civil society publics, such as the community and

150. J Mansbridge (1996) Using Power/Fighting Power: The Polity

151. A Cornwall and V S P Coelho (2004) New Democratic Spaces: The Politics of Institutionalised Participation

voluntary fora, it is imperative that civil society organisations strive to retain their right to decide their own organisational structures. In particular, civil society organisations, concerned with social exclusion, need to once again prioritise the creation of **'popular' spaces at local level** within which analyses and unconstrained agenda-setting can take place and which allow for the creation of "protected enclaves"[150]. These popular spaces can negotiate a co-existence with the increasing number of 'invited' spaces, some of which have co-governance potential; others of which represent a greater challenge [151] .

To a certain extent, the reformation of popular spaces may demand a rebalancing of time commitment away from invited spaces or may simply require different individuals or groups to prioritise different spaces.

5.48 To ensure that civil society is enabled to continue to play a role, consideration should be given to:

- Providing funding supports for civil society organisations through independent institutions, thereby enabling them to play a dual role – as service delivery agents and also as advocacy organisations; and
- Challenging civil society organisations to more effectively organise to optimise participation opportunities at local level.

Conclusion – the Merits of Diversity in Governance Processes

5.49 This report illustrates that the realm of participatory governance is complex, both conceptually and in practice. Still, however, all of the conceptual and empirical investigations point to one uniform conclusion, that participatory governance needs to be understood as an important constituent element of the democratic system, bringing with it the potential to develop a more active form of citizenship and a more integrated and responsive democracy. Thus, participatory governance should not *only* be regarded as a means of solving difficult problems, though it clearly can play a role.

5.50 In particular, the unique and independent role of civil society needs to be emphasised and protected, in particular that part of civil society which articulates the experiences, perspectives and opinions of disadvantaged communities. There is a danger that policy makers and/or detached academic observers will fail to appreciate the function of civil society and its need to exist independently of state structures. Civil society is not there simply to act in accordance with state policy or directive. To be most effective in a healthy and mature democracy some degree of creative tension between state and civil society must be enabled and, indeed, encouraged.

5.51 This report has distinguished between different governance zones and suggests that a consideration of these differences reveals a great deal about alternative capacities to promote community participation in the delivery of public services. Increasingly, however, there is tendency to blur the distinctiveness that exists between these different governance processes at local level, though it is clear that each has its unique characteristics and capacities to enable participation, facilitate deliberation and address concrete problems. Economic pressures have led to calls for rationalisation amongst governance mechanisms. And while rationalisation may be possible it is important that that ill-informed and poorly judged conclusions are avoided. There is a real possibility that much will be lost and little will be gained.

Annexes

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Terms of Reference and Constitution of the NESF

1. The role of the NESF will be:
   - to monitor and analyse the implementation of specific measures and programmes identified in the context of social partnership arrangements, especially those concerned with the achievement of equality and social inclusion; and
   - to facilitate public consultation on policy matters referred to it by the Government from time to time.
2. In carrying out this role the NESF will:
   - consider policy issues on its own initiative or at the request of the Government; the work programme to be agreed with the Department of the Taoiseach, taking into account the overall context of the NESDO;
   - consider reports prepared by Teams involving the social partners, with appropriate expertise and representatives of relevant Departments and agencies and its own Secretariat;
   - ensure that the Teams compiling such reports take account of the experience of implementing bodies and customers/clients including regional variations;
   - publish reports with such comments as may be considered appropriate; and
   - convene meetings and other forms of relevant consultations appropriate to the nature of issues referred to it by the Government from time to time.
3. The term of office of members of the NESF will be three years. During the term alternates may be nominated. Casual vacancies will be filled by the nominating body or the Government as appropriate; members so appointed will hold office until the expiry of the current term of office of all members. Retiring members will be eligible for re-appointment.

4. The Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the NESF will be appointed by the Government.

5. Membership of the NESF will comprise 15 representatives from each of the following four strands:
   - the Oireachtas;
   - employer, trade union and farm organisations;
   - the voluntary and community sector; and
   - central government, local government and independents.

6. The NESF will decide on its own internal structures and working arrangements.

Membership of the NESF

Independent Chairperson	Dr. Maureen Gaffney
Deputy Chairperson	Mary Doyle

Strand (i) Oireachtas

Fianna Fáil	Michael McGrath T.D. Cyprian Brady T.D. Seán Ardagh T.D. Senator Brian Ó Domhnaill Senator Geraldine Feeney Senator Marc McSharry Senator Maria Corrigan
Fine Gael	Dan Neville T.D. Terence Flanagan T.D. Senator Paul Coghlan Senator Jerry Buttimer
Labour	Seán Sherlock T.D. Willie Penrose T.D.
Green Party	Senator Dan Boyle
Independents	Senator Rónán Mullen

Strand (ii) Employer/Trade Union/Farming Organisations

Employer/Business Organisations

IBEC	Danny McCoy Tony Donohoe
Small Firms' Association	Patricia Callan
Construction Industry Federation	Dr Peter Stafford

Chambers of Commerce/ Tourist Industry/ Exporters' Association	Seán Murphy

Trade Unions

Technical Engineering & Electrical Union	Eamon Devoy
Civil & Public Service Union	Blair Horan
AMICUS	Jerry Shanahan
SIPTU	Manus O'Riordan
ICTU	Esther Lynch

Agricultural/Farming Organisations

Irish Farmers' Association	Michael Berkery
Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers' Association	Mike Doody
Irish Co-Operative Organisation Society	Emer Duffy
Macra na Feirme	Michael Gowing
Irish Countrywomen's Association	Carmel Dawson

Strand (iii) Community and Voluntary Sector

Gender

National Women's Council of Ireland	Órla O'Connor

Housing

Irish Council for Social Housing	Karen Murphy

Labour Market

Congress Centres Network	Sylvia Ryan

Social Analysis	
CORI	Sr Brigid Reynolds SM
Poverty	
Society of St Vincent de Paul	John Mark McCafferty
Youth/Children	
NYCI	Marie Claire McAleer
Children's Rights Alliance	Jillian van Turnhout
Older People	
Senior Citizens' Parliament/ Age Action	Maireád Hayes
Disability/Carers	
Disability Federation of Ireland	Joanne McCarthy
The Carers' Association	Frank Goodwin
Rural	
Irish Rural Link	Seámus Boland
Voluntary/Networks	
Community Platform	Frances Byrne
The Wheel	Ivan Cooper
Others	
National Traveller Women's Forum	Maria Joyce
Integrating Ireland	Vacant

Strand (iv) Central Government, Local Government and Independents

Central Government

Secretary-General, Department of Finance

Secretary-General, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

Secretary-General, Department of Social and Family Affairs

Secretary-General, Department of Community,

Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs	
Secretary-General, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government	

Local Government

Association of County & City Councils	Cllr Ger Barron Cllr Constance Hanniffy Cllr Mattie Ryan
Association of Municipal Authorities	Cllr Paddy O'Callaghan
Local Authority Members' Association	Cllr William Ireland

Independents

Institute for the Study of Social Change, UCD	Prof. Colm Harmon
NUI Maynooth	Prof. Mary P. Corcoran
Trinity College, Dublin	Prof. Rose Ann Kenny
Southside Partnership	Marie Carroll

Secretariat

Director	Seán Ó hÉigeartaigh
Policy Analysts	Dr Anne Marie McGauran Dr Jeanne Moore
Executive Secretary	Paula Hennelly

NESF Publications

(i) NESF Reports

Report No.	Title	Date
1.	Negotiations on a Successor Agreement to the PESP	Nov 1993
2.	National Development Plan 1994 – 1999	Nov 1993
3.	Commission on Social Welfare – Outstanding Recommendations	Jan 1994
4.	Ending Long-term Unemployment	June 1994
5.	Income Maintenance Strategies	July 1994
6.	Quality Delivery of Social Services	Feb 1995
7.	Jobs Potential of the Services Sector	April 1995
8.	First Periodic Report on the Work of the Forum	May 1995
9.	Jobs Potential of Work Sharing	Jan 1996
10.	Equality Proofing Issues	Feb 1996
11.	Early School Leavers and Youth Employment	Jan 1997
12.	Rural Renewal – Combating Social Exclusion	Mar 1997
13.	Unemployment Statistics	May 1997
14.	Self-Employment, Enterprise and Social Inclusion	Oct 1997
15.	Second Periodic Report on the Work of the Forum	Nov 1997
16.	A Framework for Partnership – Enriching Strategic Consensus through Participation	Dec 1997
17.	Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Local Employment Service	Mar 2000
18.	Social and Affordable Housing and Accommodation: Building the Future	Sept 2000
19.	Alleviating Labour Shortages	Nov 2000
20.	Lone Parents	July 2001
21.	Third Periodic Report on the Work of the Forum	Nov 2001
22.	Re-integration of Prisoners	Jan 2002
23.	A Strategic Policy Framework for Equality Issues	Mar 2002
24.	Early School Leavers	Mar 2002
25.	Equity of Access to Hospital Care	July 2002

26.	Labour Market Issues for Older Workers	Feb 2003
27.	Equality Policies for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People: Implementation Issues	April 2003
28.	The Policy Implications of Social Capital	June 2003
29.	Equality Policies for Older People: Implementation Issues	July 2003
30.	Fourth Periodic Report on the Work of the NESF	Nov 2004
31.	Early Childhood Care and Education	June 2005
32.	Care for Older People	Nov 2005
33.	Creating a More Inclusive Labour Market	Mar 2006
34.	Improving the Delivery of Quality Public Services	Feb 2007
35.	The Arts, Cultural Inclusion and Social Cohesion	Mar 2007
36.	Mental Health and Social Inclusion	Oct 2007
37.	Fifth Periodic Report on the Work of the NESF	June 2008
38.	Implementation of the Home Care Package Scheme	Oct 2009
39.	Child Literacy and Social Inclusion	Oct 2009

(ii) NESF Opinions

1.	Interim Report of the Task Force on Long-term Unemployment	Mar 1995
2.	National Anti-Poverty Strategy	Jan 1996
3.	Long-term Unemployment Initiatives	Apr 1996
4.	Post PCW Negotiations – A New Deal?	Aug 1996
5.	Employment Equality Bill	Dec 1996
6.	Pensions Policy Issues	Oct 1997
7.	Local Development Issues	Oct 1999
8.	The National Anti-Poverty Strategy	Aug 2000

(iii) NESF Opinions under the Monitoring Procedures of Partnership 2000

1.	Development of the Equality Provisions	Nov 1997
2.	Targeted Employment and Training Measures	Nov 1997

(iv) Social Inclusion Forum: Conference Reports

1.	Inaugural Meeting	Jan 2003
2.	Second Meeting of the Forum	Jan 2005
3.	Third Meeting of the Forum	Feb 2006
4.	Fourth Meeting of the Forum	Nov 2007
5.	Fifth Meeting of the Forum	Nov 2008

(v) NESF Research Series

1.	A Study of Labour Market Vulnerability and Responses to it in Donegal/Sligo and North Dublin	Jun 2005
2.	The Economics of Early Childhood Care and Education	Sept 2005
3.	Delivery of Quality Public Services	Sept 2006
4.	Mental Health in the Workplace: Research Findings	Oct 2007
5.	In The Frame or Out of the Picture? A Statistical Analysis of Public Involvement in the Arts	Feb 2008
6.	Child Literacy & Social Inclusion: Implementation Issues - Supplementary Report.	Nov 2009

(vi) NESF Occasional Series

1.	Evidence-based Policy Making: Getting the Evidence, Using the Evidence and Evaluating the Outcomes	Jan 2007

(vii) NESF Seminar Series

1.	In The Frame or Out of the Picture? Seminar Report	Feb 2008