

Local Communities as Agents of Change: The Significance of Participation in Governance & Planning, National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis, National University of Ireland, 28 March 2007, Maynooth, Co. Kildare

Public Participation

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- Policy context
- Forms of participation
- Newcastle: Going for Growth and Walker
- Birmingham: Castle Vale
- Tensions of participation

Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, 2001

- 'participation of citizens is at the very heart of the idea of democracy'
- 'local politics are changing form and that this requires more direct, flexible and *ad hoc* methods of participation'
- 'there is a need for state institutions to re-engage with and respond to the public in new ways to maintain the legitimacy of decision-making'
- 'the right of citizens to have their say in major decisions entailing long-term commitments or choices which are difficult to reverse'
- 'representative democracy is part of the common heritage of member states and is the basis of the participation of citizens in public life'

Recommendations:

1. frame a policy, involving local and - where applicable - regional authorities, designed to promote citizens' participation in local public life
2. adopt ... measures ... to improving the legal framework for participation

UK DCLG 2006: 'The promotion of localism and neighbourhood working is a government priority.'

Forms of participation

- Traditional participation (committees, public meetings and consultation documents)
- Consumerist participation (customer satisfaction surveys)
- Interactive participation (focus groups, web-based participation)
- Institutional participation (citizen panels, area committees)
- Participatory budgeting (Porto Alegre experience, now 140 cities in Brazil using it)
- Engaging in public space (Amsterdam's Moroccan fathers, Wuppertal's stairlights)



Newcastle: 'Going for Growth'



Going for Growth Targets

2020	
Population	275,000 > 290,500
New Jobs	30,000
New Houses	20,000
Demolition	6,600





East End, Walker regeneration

- Former shipyards
- A strong but declining community
- Large number of community activists, groups, and projects (resident associations, credit union, community centre, healthy food centre)



Good practice: 3 key principles

1. How can we be as **representative** as possible of the area?
2. How can the Network be as **accountable** as possible to the wider community?
3. How can the Network operate in a **democratic** way?

1. Representative

- By developing new groups where people presently don't meet
- Giving individuals ways to participate
- Developing structures for young people to participate
- Engaging with local ethnic minority communities
- Encouraging representatives from all groups across the area to join the Network

2. Accountable

- By holding regular open meetings and estate events
- By publishing regular newsletters and reports
- By listening and not pursuing personal agendas/issues
- Never making major decisions for the area without extensive consultation and participation from the wider community

3. Democratic

- All decisions are made within meetings
- The Network will make its own rules and be independent
- The groups who nominate representatives shall be supported to organise effectively. They should have management committees, be consulted and hold regular open meetings
- The membership of the Network should be local/unpaid representatives of community groups and projects
- The Network fully respects the individual rights of each participating group and project and cannot interfere with this.
- Representatives shall be elected at open meetings of the community groups and projects. A group has the right to replace its representatives at any time.



Showpiece urban village approved



DEVELOPMENT AREA: The Walker riverside neighbourhood improvement area, near Pottery Bank



Blueprint gets great reception



Newcastle: rise and fall of area committees



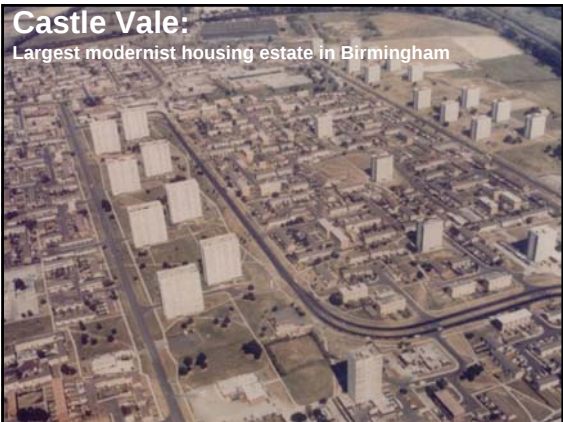
Local Development Framework

Statement of Community Involvement

Adopted on
6 September 2006



Harvey Ennis
Head of Planning and Transportation



- **Positive image** (removal of stigma, vibrant new image, attracting new residents & activities, creating new opportunities and higher hopes)
- **Shared experience** (participation in development process, emotional investment)
- **Confidence and trust** (real and substantial changes, being looked after, enabled to look after themselves, optimism and hope)



Tensions of participation

- Time (long term plans vs immediate problems)
- Level of detail (large scale abstract projects vs concrete everyday issues)
- Interest (balancing different interests vs local/personal interests)
- Speed/effectiveness (local authorities and private sector, without community participation)
- Impact (talking shops vs making a difference)
- Accountability (looking down on participation)
- Power (worry about losing it)