



Thematic Event

New Opportunities for Active Citizenship through Multi-Level Governance & Strategic Territorial Planning

**Boardroom
John Hume Building, NUI Maynooth**

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Section 1: Introduction

A thematic event on *New Opportunities for Active Citizenship through Multi-Level Governance & Strategic Territorial Planning* took place in NUI Maynooth on Wednesday, 29th November 2006. It was organised under the auspices of the EU-funded INTERREG initiative by 'SPAN' (Strategic Planning Action Network). Operating in four regions within North West Europe, the work of SPAN is focused on the themes of strategic territorial planning and multi-level governance in both urban and rural areas (see www.span-eu.org). These overarching themes were central in the development and delivery of the thematic event, the aim of which was to: (a) flag the multi-level governance and strategic territorial planning issues being faced both in the Irish SPAN pilot territories and in urban and rural Ireland generally; and (b) examine the extent to which these issues are likely to be similar in the other SPAN pilot territories.

Strategic Planning Action Network

The Strategic Planning Action Network (SPAN) is firmly rooted in the policy options of the *European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP)*, the *Spatial Vision for North West Europe*, and the *Guiding Principles for Sustainable Spatial Development of the European Continent* and, during its roll-out, consideration has also been given to the objectives of the Lisbon and Gothenburg Agendas, as well as the Third Report on Economic and Social Cohesion. With member states now obliged to meet the objectives of such European policies, increasing emphasis is being placed on regions and places to be innovative and creative whilst also being cooperative and collaborative.

SPAN involves practitioner and academic partners from Ireland, Northern Ireland, France and Belgium. Within each partner region, a number of territories have been selected in which to carry out research on strategic territorial planning and multi-level governance issues. The end objective is to enhance the level of integration between their economic, social and environmental activities (i.e. achieve territorial cohesion) and to ensure greater participation in the decision-making processes associated with these activities.



Debating the Issues

In the context of Ireland, the project is operating in two pilot territories: Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown and County Meath (see www.iclrd.org/pages/span.html). Against the backdrop of the governance and spatial planning issues facing both of these counties, the purpose of this thematic event was to raise and debate the issues surrounding:

- the role of community development and local government agencies in building good governance,
- the various types and levels of participation that exist and the need to move towards real consultation and partnership, and
- the benefits of higher levels of participation in the planning process for developers, local authorities and communities.

This event also examined some of the new approaches emerging to address these issues (i.e. e-consultation, visual aids, etc.) and discuss their effectiveness in assisting stakeholders, particularly community groups, in overcoming the barriers they face in engaging with governance and the planning system. Given the presence at this event of representatives from each of the other SPAN pilot territories in North West Europe, this occasion also provided scope for cross-learning and exchange of experiences.

And Then...

This 1-day event is 'part 1' of two sessions. The second event will take place on 28th March 2007 and will again be hosted by National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA), NUI Maynooth in association with Southside Partnership and the Meath County Development Board (CDB). This second event will be more practical in its focus. It will examine the various approaches to citizen participation and, through case studies and action learning, will consider how communities can best engage with decision-makers and the planning process so that their concerns and interests are more effectively represented and reflected in decision outcomes. It will also examine how state agencies can best engage with the more disadvantaged communities and citizens so that they are encouraged and empowered to more actively participate in planning and governance matters.

Section 2: Active Citizenship, Multi-Level Governance & Strategic Territorial Planning

In parallel with the launch of the SPAN project in 2004, the term ‘territorial cohesion’ became a much promoted concept within the EU. In effect, it means the balanced distribution of human activities (i.e. citizenship, governance) throughout the EU and, through its close association with economic and social cohesion, it includes the principle of fair access to services, including planning and the decision-making processes, for all citizens. The use of the words ‘balanced’ and ‘fair’ implies that all citizens should have equal access to the decision-making processes.

Territorial Cohesion and SPAN

The concept of territorial cohesion and its implications for governance and planning has been previously discussed at SPAN-sponsored events. For example, throughout the course of the SPAN conference *Managing Space - Making Place: Strategic Planning for Cohesion and Diversity* (Dublin, 27-28 October 2005), the role of the multi-tiered, multi-perspective, multi-level concept of territorial cohesion, and its associated power structures and relationships, was discussed and debated. Speaking at this event, Prof. Andreas Faludi noted that European territorial cohesion was guided by a number of common principles such as equity, competitiveness, sustainability, an appreciation that the market was not everything, and a commitment to good governance. Speaking at the same event, Prof. Vincent Nadin noted that territorial cohesion must work against a fluid background of (sometimes) rapid demographic changes including population movements, ageing and changing household formation (Harvey, 2005). In having to operate within such a complex environment, concerns were raised that in the roll-out of territorial cohesion policy at European, national, regional and local level, the principles of sustainability and social equity could potentially be sidelined or residualised.

Territorial cohesion applies at all spatial scales, all tiers of governance have a responsibility in promoting it, and it has implications for all sectoral policies (Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs, 2004). Achieving territorial cohesion, therefore, is dependent on collaborative governance and greater coherence and integration between policies. This will only be possible through increased emphasis being placed on the role of vertical and horizontal partnerships in the decision-making processes leading to balanced development i.e. through participatory governance.



It is envisaged that through this two-part thematic event, hosted by NIRSA in association with Southside Partnership and Meath CDB will highlight the potential contribution of approaches, initiatives and

measures which facilitate open governance. It is also anticipated that it will emphasise the importance of both social capital and vertical and horizontal partnerships in creating and sustaining good governance.

SPAN – A New Form of Partnership

In welcoming delegates to the first thematic event focusing on *New Opportunities for Active Citizenship through Multi-Level Governance & Strategic Territorial Planning*, Prof. Jim Walsh of NUI Maynooth noted that the challenges facing society today are very different from those of a few decades ago: democracy is at risk from voter apathy and the increasing alienation of some sections of society, and government at its various levels is unable to tackle the myriad of cross-cutting problems facing society by itself. In this changing context, the importance of programmes with an emphasis on citizenship, planning and governance, should not be underestimated. Initiatives, such as SPAN, are going some way towards addressing these challenges and breaking down barriers to active participation in decision-making. It has even been argued that the SPAN initiative, through focusing on the themes of multi-level governance and strategic territorial planning and their interrelationship, is a test-bed for new models of territorial cohesion. As well as examining these merging complex issues, the project has further challenged itself by using a model of partnership that involves close collaboration and joint decision-making between practitioner agencies and academic institutions.

In using such a model, each member of the partnership has had to reconsider its traditional ways of working and move outside of its 'comfort zone'. As noted by Prof. Walsh, in rising to this challenge, all partners involved in this initiative have engaged in a "shared processes of reflection", and this in turn has led to an emphasis being placed on the value of integration, joined-up government, and the stimulation of "a more potent atmosphere for economic, social, cultural and environmental development that will be sustainable".

SPAN has also explored various measures that can be employed in the break down of vertical and horizontal barriers between sectors and actors. Through the various research studies carried out by the partners, the project has highlighted the importance of capacity building, not only of the community sector but for all stakeholders involved in the decision-making process. A further recurring theme is the need to move away from merely 'imparting knowledge' in favour of 'real consultation and partnership'.

Recognising that there are still many challenges to be overcome, Prof. Walsh highlighted a number of these outstanding issues – instigating a culture-change within stakeholder organisations, achieving agency buy-in at the higher levels, securing funding, preventing burn-out, rolling out of projects to schedule and to budget, etc. And the key to addressing these challenges, according to Prof. Walsh, is the necessity of developing new approaches to decision-making and participation, and the continued roll out of initiatives such as SPAN over the forthcoming programming phase, 2007-2013.

Section 3: Good Governance and Participation in Planning – An Overview of Proceedings

Brendan Bartley, Acting Director of the National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA), NUI Maynooth and Marie Carroll, Director of Southside Partnership, welcomed delegates to the event, *New Opportunities for Active Citizenship through Multi-Level Governance and Strategic Territorial Planning*. Attended by approximately 40 delegates representing local development agencies, area partnerships, locally elected representatives, regional authorities, and local government, the event was delivered through three theme-based sessions:

- a) review of the governance issues and planning pressures faced by Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown and County Meath (SPAN pilot territories) respectively,
- b) a workshop examining the building blocks to good governance and new approaches to participation in governance structures, and
- c) a workshop examining the types and value of participation in planning as well as emerging new tools for participatory planning.

Each workshop session was followed by a panel discussion, convened by John Driscoll of the International Institute for Urban Design, Cambridge (Mass.), and which allowed delegates to delve more deeply into the issues surrounding good governance and participatory planning.

This chapter provides a brief overview of each of the presentations. It also provides a synopsis of the panel discussions held at the end of the workshop sessions.

A – Governance & Planning in Counties Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown & Meath

Dr. Brendan O’Keeffe: Governance and Citizen Participation in the Urban and Sub-urban Context - The Case of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown

As noted by Prof. Jim Walsh in his opening remarks, there has been a decline in public participation levels in civic activities in recent years and this trend is not confined to Ireland – it applies equally to Western Europe. While other countries have devised methods of addressing this problem – e.g. compulsory voting in Belgium – Ireland is still struggling with this issue. Despite the existence of social partnerships covering a broad range of issues, low levels of participation are the ‘norm’. Some argue this trend is worsened by the ‘thinness’ of local government in Ireland (i.e. decision-making remains a very centralised process). As such, progression up the ‘ladder of participation’ has been very slow. Using the example of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, participatory levels have been hampered by a number of factors. These include changing demographics and the sheer size and complexity of the county (given its make-up of urban, peri-urban and rural areas – each with its own issues). This is despite a wide range of participatory vehicles being available to the local population. While there are a number of umbrella organisations within the county which are well organised and have high affiliation, these too face many challenges; such as, for example, how to service the various needs of each of the affiliates. There are also issues of providing suitable and effective participatory routes for both the disadvantaged communities and the newer communities – both of whom have felt largely neglected to date by local government.

While O’Keeffe’s presentation raised many issues around the governance landscape and its effectiveness in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, it also brought some answers to the table. There are clear recommendations around the need for increasing the role of the County Development Board (CDB). For example, while it currently has a role in endorsing the plans of the local development agencies, it has yet to receive enforcement powers. While it could be argued that the governance landscape is overcrowded at present, there is a need for greater networking (both cross-sectoral and cross-stakeholder) and scope for

mainstreaming of good practice. There is also a need for on-going capacity building of all stakeholders in the decision-making process – community and business representatives, councillors, planners, etc.

Kevin Stewart: Meath under Pressure - Just Another Dublin Suburb?

County Meath has experienced huge population growth over the past decade (48% increase between 1996-2006). This is largely attributed to the encroachment of the Dublin commuter belt into the neighbouring south Meath countryside. This phenomenal growth over such a short timeframe has brought with it many challenges. For example, land values and house prices are increasing rapidly (albeit both are still considered cheap by Dublin standards). Current national planning policy is failing to address this unsustainable growth – primarily because for the purposes of planning, Meath is considered part of the Greater Dublin Area! Local councillors face many difficult choices in their planning function - preparation of development plans and local area plans, lobbying on planning applications - and, in particular, balancing local needs with regional and national policy. With the current review of the Meath County Development Plan nearing completion (i.e. deadline of March 2007), the councillors must decide whether its agreed 6-year policies will be plan-led or developer-driven. The new draft plan has zoned an additional 2500 hectares for redevelopment but there is already enough land zoned under the old plan to cover growth up to 2020. In light of this, it could be argued that the councillors have already chosen the route they wish to follow! In the interest of the 'common good', planners propose to introduce a 'local needs only' policy for new developments in the smaller towns and villages.

There is no doubt that Meath is facing huge pressures from Dublin at present and this trend is likely to continue for the foreseeable future unless planning policy is adapted to support Meath in the challenges it faces. In the meantime, Meath is implementing its own solutions. The Council is implementing an economic development campaign which is aiming to attract inward investment. It is hoped that this in turn will reduce the number of commuters travelling to and from Dublin daily (currently estimated at 30,000). In the current development plan review, the planners are pushing for the adoption of plan-led policies and objectives (rather than developer-led) which favour local needs (over local greed).

An advertising campaign promoting public participation in the plan review process was undertaken. Despite all known community groups, resident associations, etc. being targeted, very few submissions were received from the 'ordinary citizen'. This raises many questions: why did the public not participate? what went wrong in terms of the campaign employed? are there other methods of engagement that could have been pursued?



B – Building Good Governance & New Approaches to Participation

Joe Allen: Community Development and Local Government - A Partnership Approach

Community development has long been an integral part of the work of local government but it has tended to focus on the more traditional elements of community development: planning, housing, libraries, roads, etc. It is only in recent years that priority has been given to building social capital. This includes developing and promoting civic leadership, engaging and participating with the community, adopting and rolling-out social inclusion measures, etc. In line with this changing approach to community development and following the publication of *Better Local Government* (1996), additional structures have been created within local government to facilitate the transition from government to governance and to ensure more open and transparent methods of participation for civil society. Newly established structures include: Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs), County/City Development Boards (CDBs), Community Fora, Community & Enterprise Sections, and Social Inclusion Units. Each new body has a role to play in developing, coordinating or implementing local policies. They each have adopted a partnership approach in terms of working with communities but also in terms of supporting each other in their various roles (the emphasis is on cooperation rather than competition).

These new structures, however, have not been an overnight success. Because of issues around clarity of function and interrelationships, tensions did exist around the introduction of new ‘players’ in strategic local development. For example, it is widely acknowledged that it was with great courage and a ‘leap of faith’ that the elected councillors accepted the establishment of the Strategic Planning Committees (SPCs) which broadened the representative advisory input to local authorities on strategic matters including housing and transport. It has also proven to be a learning curve for the ‘civil servants in their ivory tower’ – there is an awareness now that an information campaign is needed around such structural reforms and that there are principles of good governance to which, as well as promoting, they too should be adhering (two-way communication flows, trust, flexibility, etc.).

Dr. G. Honor Fagan: E-Governance in Ireland – E-Consultation as a Public Participation Tool

In the context of the globalised network society, and the role of digital technology in that network, NUI Maynooth has been involved in a research initiative on the role of technologies at various levels in e-governance and e-consultation. This cross-border research initiative primarily addressed two questions: (1) Can we have a digitally renewed democracy? and (2) Can we solve political problems with technologies? Providing that the answer to both these questions was yes, the research also explored what, and how, ICTs could support, develop and deepen the participation of citizens in policy development.

Methods of decentralised dialogue already exist and are widely used (e.g. email) and given the increasing emphasised being put on the ‘digital age’, it could be argued that electronically mediated discourses can no longer be ignored. Rather, they must be considered in terms of how they can be used to increase participation and improve processes of consultation. This research project was carried out electronically (e-consultation) and involved representatives from local and central government, NGOs, and local community groups. At local and central government level, e-consultation was viewed as a valuable tool in participatory planning and decision-making but it is yet to be used to its full extent; many government bodies still rely heavily on



traditional means of consultation i.e. circulation of documents for comment, flyers, public meetings, surveys, etc. The NGOs and community sector, on the other hand, were dissatisfied with the main consultation methods open to them. Serious concerns were raised regarding the ‘marginalisation’ aspects of many of the processes used, and also the lack of feedback received on submissions made. With regards to e-consultation, it was recognised within the community & NGO sector that it had many benefits over the traditional participatory approaches but there were also concerns that it too could be exclusionary, particularly in terms of access and literacy.

Despite this, there is wide support across the board for participation and developing new modes of participation; but as regards e-consultation, it is felt that, for the present time, this should be used to support the traditional means of consultation rather than be a replacement tool for existing mechanisms.

C – The Types & Benefits of Participation in Planning

Alison Harvey: Public Participation – “Key Stakeholders Rule Okay!”

Within any planning-related project or exercise, whether it is the preparation of a development plan or the construction of a large-scale housing project, the public as key stakeholders have a central role to play in the process from conception to completion. It is argued that there are 5 stages to a project life cycle: conception, design and development, procurement, implementation, and completion and evaluation; and that the process employed is as important as the output. Of all five stages, the conception phase is of most importance to the public because it is at this stage that the ‘stakeholders’ are identified (i.e. those people considered to have an interest in the success or failure of the project). It is at this stage that developers will analyse the identified ‘stakeholders’ in terms of their interest and power, and select the ‘key players’ with which they will engage. It is also at this stage that synergies and leverage are created.

To be truly participative, any events held with stakeholders must be well advertised in advance, be participative rather than informative in their focus and roll-out, and be held in a neutral and accessible venue at a time that suits all (or the majority). Expert facilitators should be used to ensure balanced discussion and maximum involvement of the stakeholders present. A feedback mechanism should be inbuilt to all events. Through providing scope for stakeholders to make further comment or inputs, a working relationship – often leading to partnership – will be established.

Facilitating participation at such an early stage in the project life cycle is key to the success of any initiative. A ringing endorsement of such collaboration is evident in the Planning and Development Act 2000 – under this legislation, the public can now input to the pre-draft stage of the development plan review process. This is regarded as a significant step forward in recognising the importance of tacit knowledge and public involvement in planning policy – and it is only fitting that this now be transferred to the implementation phase.

Sharon Cosgrove: Participation in Planning – Moving from Information Exchange to Consultation to Partnership

While it is often argued that there are many opportunities to participate in the planning process, it is clear that these various mediums are not all readily accessible to socially excluded or disadvantaged communities. From the Combat Poverty Agency’s (CPA) perspective, local government participatory structures continue to remain weak on promoting and supporting participation of excluded groups; the emphasis tends to be on information exchange with some consultation rather than partnership.

There are clear links between community development, the availability of capacity building training and public participation. The first step is to determine why a person or grouping should become involved in the decision-making process. It is only when they are clear that they have a role to play that questions

arise about how (i.e. making submissions, attending meetings, planning for real exercises, etc.) and at what level (information exchange, consultation and feedback, real partnership, etc.) they are to become involved. Deciding to become involved in the participatory process has cost implications – money (e.g. submission fees, transport costs, etc.), time (e.g. away from family, time off work to attend meetings, etc.). It also presumes an existing knowledge of the planning process, its legislation, and the pre-set opportunities for public involvement (i.e. well-educated).

There are many models, levels, and techniques associated with participation. In terms of their application, there appears to be an in-built reluctance to moving away from the ‘old, tried and tested’ ways of doing things. The more progressive local government agencies are, however, starting to adopt and resource more innovative models and techniques in support of community participation, particularly around local plans. These include visioning exercises, planning for real, planning appraisals, and citizen juries. The challenge now is to encourage a wider range of agencies at local and regional level to employ such exercises – either in their own right or in support of the more traditional input avenues - in their consultative and participative processes.

Richard Kingston: Visualisation Tools, ICT and Participatory Planning

Being spatial in nature, it is now recognised that most planning policies can be well portrayed or visualised using a combination of 3-D and GIS (Geographic Information Systems) models. Through recent developments, it has become possible to provide interactive on-line access to these types of visualisation tools and, with relevant training, community organisations should have no difficulties in using these tools. Being on-line, such tools are particularly beneficial to shift workers, the elderly, and those who live in rural and remote communities. These groups often find it difficult to attend public meetings in local libraries, churches, community halls, etc. (as ‘local’ does not always equate with being ‘accessible’, ‘timely’, or ‘close by’). The use of visualisation tools in public participation is only a recent phenomenon in Ireland. In the late 1990s, the more progressive local planning authorities provided on-line access to planning applications. However, these early attempts were very static and did not facilitate the visualisation of policy; rather, they were descriptive and text heavy.

Progress in the roll-out of Public Participation GIS visualisation tools remains slow. Unlike the situation that prevails in Scotland, it is still not always possible to review the draft or adopted county development plan on-line in Ireland. Nor are there opportunities to query the data used or make comments on policy proposals. In Manchester, they have gone a step further again – the City Council promotes e-consultations through use of a spatially enabled deliberative participation tool. Such a tool covers a wide range of topics, it allows the user to overlay policies and make informed decisions and it facilitates deliberative discussions between on-line users (i.e. users can engage in debate and respond to comments made by other on-line users). There is huge scope for improvement in Ireland in terms of the use of visualisation tools in decision-making. It is also clear that the roll-out of such technologies must also be accompanied by suitable and adequate training in their use. The key to their success is their accessibility to all who wish to be involved in the planning process and their deliberative capacity.



The overall aim of Public Participation GIS tools is to achieve citizen-led active participation. However, given that these tools are expensive – both to create and maintain – and given their low usage to date (this is attributed to internet access issues and the existence of a digital divide), it is argued that for the

present time (at least) such tools should only be used as a complement to traditional means of participation.

D - Panel Discussion

Participation in Action – A Synopsis of the Issues Raised

- ***E-Consultation & E-inclusion***

There are many positive benefits to using e-consultation over traditional methods. The cross-border research on which Dr. Fagan's presentation was based demonstrated that for some communities, it is easier to communicate electronically rather than face-to-face.

Literacy and access to digital technologies are key issues that must be taken into consideration when proposing to use e-consultation tools as part of any consultation process. It is felt that these key factors are often not taken into account when planning a consultative process. For example, e-literacy in Ireland is estimated at 28% in Ireland and growing – and much of this can be accounted for by young people now receiving training in digital technologies in school. Given the age profile of those who tend to be actively involved in resident associations, farming groups, etc., it is important that e-consultation is not the only means used in policy development and decision-making.

- ***Participation in Planning***

Traditionally, there was little or no involvement from the general public in the county development plan review process. People tended to be more concerned with what was happening in their towns or villages rather than at county level. As a result, inputs to the county development plan review process tended to come from those who, many would argue, had the most to gain i.e. developers, land owners, etc.

However, that trend is slowly changing – as is the way people participate and the focus of their submissions (no longer all negative in their emphasis!). Not only are 'ordinary citizens' beginning to think strategically about the development of their counties, they are now getting actively involved in the process and making detailed, well-thought out submissions. And interestingly, with an ever increasingly number of households owning computers, the quantity of submissions being received electronically is continuously rising!

- ***Capacity Building for Changing Skills Needs***

The challenges facing communities today are very different from those of two decades ago. And the face of volunteerism is changing – there is a move away from sporting / church bodies and local clientelism towards strategic policy and decision-making. Both factors have implications for the type of person who now becomes involved in community development – who must now be able to engage with decision-makers at many different levels and they need a wide knowledge-base including technical skills, etc. Continuous capacity building must become an integral part of community development so that all 'sides' are on an equal footing.



- ***Achieving Balanced & Sustainable Development***

While not everyone would agree with the introduction of ‘local needs only’ policies to the planning process, there is a case to be made for them. Given the scale and pace of development in certain parts of Ireland over the past decade, many towns and villages are no longer recognisable and any sense of community spirit or identity that existed pre-Celtic Tiger has now been lost. Neither government official, nor community representatives should fear such policies – their key role is to rebalance settlements and channel development to areas that can cope with future growth.

- ***Community Development & Local Government – Still Building***



It is important that any new structure introduced to the decision-making process is flexible to adapt to changing circumstances. Its operations should be under constant review (monitoring and evaluation). Furthermore, the voices of its membership should be taken into consideration – and feedback provided. For example, the SPCs have already undergone a review and plans are currently being put in place for a second review.

Some of the newer structures are still regarded as ‘exclusive clubs’ and as such, have low levels of affiliation or support from the wider community. It is important that such perceptions, or where this is actually the case, the culprits, are removed. More emphasis must be put on social inclusion and poverty/equality proofing.

- ***Consultation Fatigue***

Throughout Europe, the process of consultation can be taken “too far” and such excesses can lead to consultation fatigue. Not everyone is able, or wishes, to participate in every decision. But what happens when those who have not participated become unhappy with the end result of the consultative process? How do you reconcile non-participation with the perceived (or otherwise) excesses of elected representatives?

Section 4: Key Issues & Challenges

The presentations and subsequent discussions arising from the first thematic event, *New Opportunities for Active Citizenship through Multi-Level Governance & Strategic Territorial Planning*, raised a number of issues and challenges facing communities as they attempt to engage in the decision-making processes. These range from geographical scale to demographics, literacy levels to timing and location of public meetings, and combining new and old participatory approaches to consultation fatigue.

It is intended that the follow-on event, scheduled for 28th March 2007, will address some of these issues and challenges and propose new ways of engagement for communities, thus maximising the impact of their involvement. This second thematic event, *Local Communities as Agents of Change: The Significance of Participation in Governance & Planning*, will be facilitated by Prof. Simin Davoudi and Professor Ali Madanipour of the University of Newcastle. Both are highly esteemed experts in the fields of governance, spatial planning, and social exclusion.

Some of the key issues and associated questions which this second thematic event will address are outlined below.

Why Participate?

- There are a number of key questions which communities must ask themselves before they become actively involved in community development and/or planning policy reviews.
 - Are we getting involved?
 - What do we hope to achieve by getting involved?
 - Given the resources available to us, what can we realistically achieve?
 - Who are the key stakeholders involved in this process, and how best can we engage with them?
- Often the community may find that it is a key stakeholder (through stakeholder mapping and analysis).
 - How best can they prepare themselves for this situation?
 - How can they ensure they have a 'strong voice' when this situation arises?

Participation in Planning

- The relationship between some communities, particularly those that are disadvantaged, and the local planning authorities can often be poor. This often stems from years of perceived and, in many cases, real neglect. This has implications for those communities level of engagement with local government, and in the planning process. It is vital that the community, and the knowledge they bring with them to the table, is recognised as an important component of the decision-making process.
 - How can the more disadvantaged communities be encouraged to participate in the planning process and in governance issues in general?
- Often, the legal framework surrounding the planning system has negative impacts on participation levels (the language is complicated and 'unfriendly'; the inter-relationship between the various level of plan is considered complex; there are very few community planners whose role it is to explain policy or planning applications and their implications to the communities in question; etc.). There is a need for local planning authorities to 'demystify' this legal framework and make the system more open and transparent.

- What are the key issues facing communities when a planning application is posted for a large-scale development in their area?
 - Where can they go for information?
 - Who should take responsibility for explaining the planning process to local community groups and interested parties, including their opportunities for active participation?
- Given the changing population cohorts being experienced by some neighbourhoods, there is a need for innovation around the timing and location of meetings. Such organisational details must take into account, and relate to, the demographics of the population within specific neighbourhoods.
 - What is the best time at which to host a meeting to ensure maximum participation?
 - How far should a member of the public be expected to travel to attend a public meeting?
 - Are there certain types of venues which should / should not be used?
 - Are there certain tools which should be used with certain cohorts?
 - What scope exists for introducing creative approaches to participation?

Participatory Approaches

- According to the planning legislation, it is for the local authority to take “what steps it considers necessary to consult with the general public and other interested bodies” (Section 11, Planning & Development Act 2000). The Irish Planning Institute and the Royal Town Planning Institute (Irish Branch, Southern Section) in a joint communiqué argue that planning could sustain a more mature form of debate with people by enabling them to participate purposefully in the planning process (2002). This would involve transparency and responsibility on all sides.
 - Can local authorities be encouraged to ‘step outside’ the boundaries of the legislation when determining the participatory approaches to be employed in developing a plan?



- It is clear that, despite the best intentions of local council officials, the current methodologies employed to secure high levels of participation in the planning process are not working as satisfactorily as expected. These include newspaper and radio advertisements announcing the review of a plan is about to commence and/or is going on public display (incl. timing and location of these displays), door-to-door mail shots announcing time and location of public meetings, etc.
 - What other methods should be employed?
 - How can the ‘ordinary’ individual be persuaded that the plan is of relevance to them and therefore that they should get involved?

Feedback

- It is impossible for planning authorities to reply to every submission they receive regarding a plan review or a planning application. This lack of feedback and interaction around submissions make it a contentious issue within communities, and can lead to decisions not to become involved in the planning process at a later stage.

- How can the input of individuals or community groups be acknowledged without putting further resource pressures on the planning authority?
- Under the current governance arrangements, the membership of Boards of Management tends to be varied and cross-sectoral. Despite this, there is still a strong sense among community organisations that they are ‘out of the loop’. This can largely be attributed to there being little or no scope for representatives to feed back to their nominating bodies. This is not a space issue; rather, it is considered a structural issue.
 - How can meetings be better structured to facilitate feedback from those representatives sitting on other boards?

Third Party Appeals

- The Third Party Appeals system is unique to the Republic of Ireland. It is the final opportunity for community and other agents to make a submission on a proposed development (albeit under the new legislation, they must also have commented in the initial planning application stage to avail of this ‘second chance’).
 - How can communities maximise this opportunity to their benefit – and do so at low cost to themselves (i.e. without having to hire lawyers, planning consultations, etc. to make representations for them)?

Capacity Building

- Community representatives sometimes feel they have to be highly educated and have a wide range of skills, ranging from communication to negotiation, to effectively participate in the planning process, and in decision-making processes generally. Without having these skills or access to these skills, communities tend to feel at a disadvantage before the consultative process even begins. It is argued, therefore, that continuous capacity building must become an integral part of community development.
 - Who should be responsible for funding and rolling-out such training programmes for the community development sector?
 - How can burn-out be avoided and work-life balance achieved?
 - How can community groups hold onto their trained members of staff?
- Councillors have a key role to play in the development and implementation of planning policy. They face many challenges in meeting this obligation: recognising and supporting the common good, keeping up to date with legislative changes and directives, balancing local needs with national and regional directives, coping with pressure from developers to vote a particular way on a zoning or planning application, etc. Undertaking capacity building training and courses on planning policy developments should be an integral part of any councillor’s term of office.
 - Should councillors have to meet certain criteria to make them eligible to run for re-election?
 - If so, from the communities perspective, what criteria should a councillor have to meet (e.g. undertaking ‘refresher course’ on planning system on annual basis)?
- It is essential that Councillors, who have a key decision-making role in the adoption of development plans, are held accountable for their actions.
 - There is much reference to the ‘common good’ in planning policy documents. Should this be more clearly defined so that Councillors can be held accountable against more concrete indicators?

Consultation Guidelines

- The Department for the Environment, Heritage & Local Government are currently finalising consultation guidelines on the development plan. They emphasise the importance of planning for the wider community, achieving greater balance in regional development, creating a vision for an area, and promoting sustainability. Their forthcoming publication is regarded as a positive step by planners, communities and civil servants alike.
 - The planning process seeks to be responsive to the planning issues resulting from increasing cultural diversity. How can the system be improved to ensure new communities engage in the planning process?
 - How can the communities 'ownership' of the development plan be enhanced?
 - The Guidelines will clearly call for different participatory methods and techniques to be used for different sections of the community. How should these methods and techniques be determined and best matched to their potential users?
 - The Guidelines also call for the community to be involved in the monitoring process? How can this be instigated? What tools should be used?

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Appendix 1

Programme: New Opportunities for Active Citizenship through Multi-Level Governance & Strategic Territorial Planning

10.00 – 10.05	Welcome – <i>Brendan Bartley, NUI Maynooth & Marie Carroll, Southside Partnership</i>
10.05 – 10.15	Introductory Comments – <i>Prof. Jim Walsh, Vice President for Innovation & Strategic Initiatives, NUI Maynooth</i>
10.20 - 10.50	SPAN Presentations # Governance and Citizen Participation in the Urban and Sub-urban Context: The case of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown – <i>Dr. Brendan O’Keeffe, National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA), NUI Maynooth</i> # Meath under Pressure: Just Another Dublin Suburb? – <i>Kevin Stewart, Director of Planning & Economic Development, Meath County Council</i>
10.50 – 11.15	Tea/Coffee <i>Convenor: John Driscoll, International Institute for Urban Design, Cambridge, Mass.</i>
11.15 – 12.00	Workshop 1: Good Governance – Policy & Practice # Community Development & Local Government in Partnership: Building Blocks to Good Governance – <i>Joe Allen, Local Government Policy Section, Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government</i> # E-Governance in Ireland: E-Consultation as a Public Participation Tool – <i>Dr. G. Honor Fagan, Department of Sociology, NUI Maynooth</i>
12.00 – 12.50	Panel Discussion
12.50	Lunch
14.00 – 15.00	Workshop 2: Planning for Active Citizenship & Social Inclusion # Public Participation: Key Stakeholders Rule O.K.! – <i>Alison Harvey, Planning & Development Officer, The Heritage Council</i> # Participation in Planning: Moving from Information Exchange to Consultation to Partnership – <i>Sharon Cosgrove, Head of Projects, Combat Poverty Agency</i> # Visualisation tools, ICT and Participatory Planning – <i>Richard Kingston, School of Environment & Development, University of Manchester</i>
15.00 – 15.40	Panel Discussion
15.40 – 16.00	Conclusion & Wrap-up – <i>Brendan Bartley, NUI Maynooth</i>
16.00	Close

This event will be followed by a Wine & Cheese Reception

Appendix 2

Workshop Participants

Alain	Colard	INTERREG IIIB Contact Point	Belgium
Alison	Harvey	Planning & Development Officer	The Heritage Council
Brendan	O’Keeffe	Dept. of Geography	Mary Immaculate College
Brendan	Bartley	NIRSA	NUI Maynooth
Caroline	Creamer	NIRSA	NUI Maynooth
Carrie	Smyth	Cllr.	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown
Catherine	LeRoy	General Secretary	Fondation Rurale de Wallonie
Catherine	Niarchos	Transnational Co-ordinator, SPAN	ULB-IGEAT
Dave	Lawless	RAPID Co-ordinator	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown
Dominic	Halligan	Cllr.	Meath
Dominique	Decoster	Director	ULB-IGEAT
Etienne	Timmermans	Project Officer - SPAN	Fondation Rurale de Wallonie
Eugene	Vesey	Senior Executive Officer	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council
Fabrice	Thuriot	Researcher	Universite de Reims - CRDT
Gareth	Harper	Programmes Manager	Rural Community Network
Gavan	Rafferty	Research Officer	Queens University Belfast
Helena	Cruz	Visiting PhD Student	NUI Maynooth
Honor	Fagan	Dept. of Sociology	NUI Maynooth
Isabelle	Fraipont	Interpreter Vice President for Innovation & Strategic Initiatives	NUI Maynooth
James	Walsh	Finances & Admin - SPAN	Universite de Reims - CRDT
Jean-Michel	Bricault	NIRSA	NUI Maynooth
Jeanne	Meldon	Local Gov. Policy Section	Dept. of Environment, Heritage & Local Government
Joe	Allen	International Institute of Urban Design	Cambridge, Mass.
John	Driscoll	Interpreter	
Karine	Baudet	Development Worker Director of Planning & Economic Development	Community Platform, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown
Kevin	Smyth	Project coordinator, SPAN	Meath County Council
Kevin	Stewart		Southside Partnership Mountwood Fitzgerald Park Community Development Project (CDP)
Lorraine	Stewart		Fondation Rurale de Wallonie
Marian	White	Project Coordinator	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown
Marie	Bourgeois	Cllr.	Southside Partnership
Marie	Baker	Manager	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council
Marie	Carroll	Director of Community & Enterprise	Southside Partnership
Mary	Mallon	Chairperson	ULB-IGEAT
Mary	Cullen	Finance & Admin, Research	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council
Michele	Menin	Administrative Officer	Southside Partnership
Neil	Healy	Community Worker	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown
Niall	Sexton	Cllr.	
Niamh	Bhreathnach		

Richard	Kingston	School of Environment & Development	University of Manchester
Ronan	Gingles	NWE Interreg Unit	Southern & Eastern Regional Assembly
Sarah-Jane	McCann	Project coordinator, SPAN	Queens University Belfast
Sharon	Cosgrove	Head of Projects	Combat Poverty Agency
Tom	Mowlds	Senior Community Officer	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council
Una	Crowley	Dept. of Geography	NUI Maynooth
Valery	Michaux	Département Stratégie, Ressources Humaines et Organisation	Reims Management School
William	Norton	Development Officer	Community Forum, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown