Crossing Boundaries, Spanning Sectors:

An Examination of Community Representation & Participation on Sub-National Collaborative Governance Structures in Ireland.

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I, Marianne O’Shea, certify that this thesis is my own work and I have not previously obtained a Degree, in this University or elsewhere, on the basis of this Doctoral Thesis.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents ... 4

Acknowledgements ... 6

List of Tables ... 7

List of Figures ... 7

Glossary of Abbreviations ... 8

Abstract ... 9

Chapter 1: Introduction ... 10

Overview ... 10

Research Aims and Rationale ... 13

Outline of the Study ... 14

Chapter 2: Literature Review ... 16

Introduction ... 16

Democracy: Representation or Participation? ... 16

Civil Society Spaces and Organisations ... 21

Governance ... 26

Collaborative Governance ... 31

Boundary Spanning: Building Links between People and Institutions ... 39

Conclusions ... 46

Chapter 3: Irish Governance Context ... 48

Introduction ... 48

Local Government in Ireland ... 48

National Level Context: Social Partnership ... 49

The Era of Better Local Government ... 52

A Shift in Focus: Putting People First ... 54

The Local Participatory Governance Landscape in Ireland ... 55

Policy and Legal Frameworks of Selected Governance Structures ... 56

Civil Society and the State in Ireland ... 62

Chapter 4 Methodology ... 68

Introduction ... 68

Ontological and Epistemological Positioning ... 69

Operational Framework ... 70

Situating the Researcher ... 73

Research Design ... 74

Data Generation Strategy 75
Conclusion 87
Chapter 5 Findings 88
Introduction 88
Starting Conditions and System Context 89
The Collaborative Governance Regime: A Collaborative Space? 95
Boundary Spanning: Experiences and Challenges 110
Outcomes and Results of Collaboration 115
Conclusion 119
Chapter 6: Discussion 120
Introduction 120
Starting Conditions and System Context 121
The Collaborative Governance Regime: A collaborative space? 125
Boundary Spanning: Experiences and Challenges 128
Outcomes and Results of Collaboration 133
Conclusion 134
Chapter 7: Conclusion 137
Introduction 137
Summary of the Thesis 137
Responding to the Research Question 138
Contribution of the Research 139
Further Research Possibilities 141
Conclusion 143
Bibliography 146
Appendices 156
Appendix 1 156
Appendix 2 162
Appendix 3 165

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List of Tables

Table 1: Tasks, traits, skills and strategies of boundary spanners. 44
Table 2: Key Features of Selected Collaborative Governance Structures. 57
Table 3: Integrated Operational Framework (drawing from Ansel and Gash, Emerson et al., Williams and Rugkasa et al.). 73
Table 4: Overview of Selected Local Governance Structures (Compiled by Researcher). 77
Table 5: Overview of Research Sites. 79
Table 6: Profile of Research Participants. 80
Table 7: Nvivo Codes Developed by Researcher. 84
Table 8 Tasks, traits, skills and strategies of boundary spanners (Rugkasa et al. 2007). 131

List of Figures

Figure 1: A Model of Collaborative Governance (Ansell & Gash, 2008). 34
Figure 2: The Integrative Framework for Collaborative Governance (Emerson et al., 2012). 36

Glossary of Abbreviations

AITHS	All Ireland Traveller Health Survey
ADM	Area Development Management
BLG	Better Local Government
CDB	County Development Board
CPA	Combat Poverty Agency
CWI	Community Work Ireland
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
LCDC	Local Community Development Committee
LDATF	Local Drug and Alcohol Task Force
LDTF	Local Drugs Task Force
LTACC	Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee
LTHU	Local Traveller Heath Unit
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NTACC	National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee
PNR	Programme for National Recovery
RAPID	Revitalising Areas through Planning Investment and Development
NOC	National Oversight Committee
NTACC	National Traveller Accommodation Committee

Abstract

Since the late 1990s Ireland has seen a significant expansion in the number and range of formalised processes and mechanisms to enable engagement between the local state and its citizens / residents. Many community-based organisations with a focus on social inclusion nominate representatives to participate in these structures in the hope that they can influence policy-making and/or policy implementation. In doing so these representatives take on a 'boundary spanning' role, inhabiting the often-challenging collaborative space between the state and civil society.

This thesis explores the experiences of these community organisation representatives within collaborative local government spaces. Using a qualitative research design and focusing on three different case types, the thesis reviewed in-depth the experience of 12 community representatives who have participated in a range of institutionally distinct and thematically divergent collaborative structures. The thesis concludes that, by and large, despite high levels of commitment from community representatives who have amassed a considerable amount of expertise and experience in working collaboratively, the extent of real collaborative actions and impacts remains limited. In particular, where complex problems are the focus of the collaborative governance structure, even less progress has been made, as political and administrative preoccupations trump any commitment towards collaborative engagement and problem solving.

The research also highlights the impact of institutional design and management of collaborative governance mechanisms. In particular, it demonstrates the impact of externally designed formal rules of collaboration and the control exercised by local authorities over many mechanisms. This was seen to shape the nature of participation and interactions between key stakeholders, especially in the management of deliberation and agendas, in the process, restricting voice and influence and undermining trust.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the ongoing turmoil globally, there is currently a renewed sense that "Democracy is in retreat" (Schenkkan & Repucci, 2019: 100). Freedom House data gathered in 2018 illustrates that this is not just the case in 'other' parts of the world, but is evidenced across every region. In some countries, this 'retreat' has been a dramatic process, as "democratic façades" have fallen away, with the removal of term limits, the suppression of independent media and the active restriction of civil society (Abramowitz, 2018). In others, even in long-standing democracies, formal democratic institutions are currently under significant pressure and populist leaders are gaining ground (Schenkkan & Repucci, 2019: 101). Within this global and regional maelstrom of democratic discontent, Ireland has been identified as a model of good democratic practice (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2019: 46). Recent experiments in deliberative democracy such as the Citizens' Assembly are viewed as a model of good practice (Farrell et al., 2018) and attempts at participatory democracy over the last three decades judged as successful (Regan, 2012).

We might legitimately ask then, in a country such as Ireland, ranked as one of the most democratic countries in the world, what do these democratic practices look like? How do citizens engage with the state and shape the society that they live in? Moving beyond the global perspective to national and sub-national levels reveals that democracy plays out in a variety of ways at the local level. One example of an attempt to engage citizens is the practice of collaborative governance, bringing together the state and civil society to address assorted policy concerns. This research, situated within the conceptual boundaries of participatory democracy and framed by collaborative governance discourse, seeks to explore one dimension of this practice, examining how elements of civil society, the representatives of community-based organisations with focus on social inclusion, hereafter known as 'community representatives', experience participation within collaborative local governance structures.

The notion of civil society participation holds a valued position across Irish society and, since the 1990s in particular, civil society organisations have played an important role in national and local governance structures (Daly, 2008). However, these structures and the nature of civil society participation have changed significantly over the last decade. Choices made in the run up to, and since, the 2008 financial crisis, and subsequent shifts in public and social policy, have altered the civil society landscape to a significant degree. While some aspects of civil society have been strengthened and benefited from increased regulation during these years, other elements, such as the community development, equality and social inclusion sectors have been significantly altered in less positive ways (Crowley, 2012). In conjunction with these changes, the local government and governance sector in Ireland has also been reorganised over the last decade. Alongside some enduring structures, which are discussed in more detail later, new spaces for stakeholder engagement have been created and resourced (Harvey, 2012). At a political level, there remains a national discourse about, and commitment to, the idea of citizen participation and civil society engagement. However at a policy and practice level, the rules of engagement have shifted dramatically, as have the players on 'the pitch'.

Within the context of a broader neo-liberal paradigm shift in international political and economic relations, there has been a shift from the language of government to that of governance (Jang et al., 2016:2). Commentators contend that governments have become less hierarchical and more reliant upon other systems and structures for the delivery of public services (Frederickson and Smith, 2003; Hooghe & Marks, 2003). More than ever before, there appear to be a multiplicity of actors at different levels, engaging in the design, development and operationalisation of policies that impact upon communities locally, nationally and internationally and, alongside this, there has been a "renewed attention to a broader array of values, especially to values associated with democracy" (Bryson et al., 2014: 445).

Within this shifting context, a conversation about the idea of collaborative governance has emerged over the last two decades (Morse, 2011: 953). Silva frames this emerging work as an attempt to consolidate descriptions of new forms of governance that have gained

prominence in academic research, policy development and democratic practices during this time (2011: 66). As we will see elsewhere in this text, this shift towards collaborative models of governance and a concern regarding democratic values is of particular interest in the Irish context, where significant changes to local governance structures have occurred during the same period.

Successful collaborative governance processes, it is suggested in the literature, requires the existence of 'boundary spanners', individuals within both state and non-state organisations who have the capacity to navigate between and engage across different sectors (Lewis, 2008; Williams, 2012). By being able to traverse the space between those on the margins of society and the governance structures that have an impact on their lives, boundary spanners are identified, in an emerging body of literature, as playing a crucial role within and across organisations and institutions (Sandmann et al., 2014: 85). There are, of course risks associated with occupying this space, both in terms of acting as representatives for a given group and in successfully doing this in diverse spaces. By examining the experiences of those who are spanning the boundaries between the state and civil society, this study seeks to gain a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities that present themselves at this interface.

To date, substantial consideration has been given to the challenges and opportunities facing boundary spanners in the public and private spheres but little attention has been given to the civil society dimension. In an attempt to redress this imbalance, this research project, using examples from local governance structures in Ireland, seeks to explore and document the experiences of community representatives who have engaged in collaborative governance processes at local government level. Their experiences, in the Irish context, suggest that the scale of the boundary-spanning challenge taken on by community representatives can be seen to be different to and, in many ways, more considerable than for other stakeholders in these processes. Differences in power, resources and potential to control outcomes compared to statutory stakeholders, alongside pressures to demonstrate mandate and

accountability to the communities they represent, combine to complicate the role played by boundary-spanning community representatives.

Research Aims and Rationale

The central research question that informs this project seeks to examine the realm of participation by community representatives with an interest in social inclusion in collaborative governance spaces, asking what their experiences in these spaces are. In doing so, the study seeks to apply the lens of collaborative governance processes to local level governance structures in Ireland.

Engagement between the state and other stakeholders to address, in some way, public policy puzzles have been a central tenet of Irish governance since the foundation of the state. The national social partnership processes institutionalised during the 1980s had a significant impact on the approaches adopted over the last three decades at national level and have led to subsequent attempts to replicate or adapt these processes to local-government-level functions and structures. These practical developments sit alongside a discourse of community participation and engagement that has long been idealised in the Irish context and later institutionalised in the White Paper of 2000 (Geoghegan & Powell, 2006: 137) as well as an articulated commitment, at a global level at least, to the importance of a healthy civil society.

This context has led to a multiplicity of structures, at both national and local levels, with an express purpose to engage 'community' participation in planning, budgetary, legislative and other processes. There is little consensus on the effectiveness of any of these structures and, while there has been much critique at a national level, there has been little empirical research on how these processes play out at the local level. This leads to the current area for research: an examination of the experiences of participants in these structures at a local level.

While the overall desirability or efficacy of structures that seek to enhance collaborative governances processes remains under consideration (McIvor, 2019: 7), discussions of collaborative governance indicate that such processes require that 'boundary spanners' exist within both state and non-state organisations; i.e., those who are tasked to engage with others, in other sectors. Williams (2002, 2012, 2013) has carried out extensive research on the experience of boundary spanners operating within the public service but little has been written from the perspective of the 'community' representatives. This research shifts the focus to this set of stakeholders, seeking to explore and give voice to their experiences of participating in local governance structures.

Neither communities, nor their representatives are homogenous groups. While acknowledging this, this study sought to focus on a group of community representatives with a shared, articulated, commitment to addressing social inclusion concerns. The scale of the challenge taken on by boundary spanners from community organisations appears different and, in many ways, more considerable than for others involved in collaborative governance processes. Differences in power, resources and potential to control outcomes, alongside pressures to demonstrate mandate and accountability to their community combine to complicate the role played by boundary-spanning community representatives.

Outline of the Study

This study is presented over seven chapters. Following this introduction to the research topic and questions, in Chapter 2, the literature review, I examine and present a selection of literature on governance, focusing in particular on collaborative governance. The chapter draws upon discussions about civil society and its relationship with the state. This is followed by a review of the literature on boundary spanners, setting out the dimensions of this concept that relate to the research participants. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the Irish context for collaborative governance, looking at local government arrangements and relevant policy developments.

In Chapter 4, I describe the study's research design and methodology, which follows a qualitative research design. By speaking to community representatives with a social inclusion lens, I examine their experiences of participating in a range of local governance structures and, using the operational framework developed to guide this research, examine how this relates to Emerson et al.'s (2012) proposed framework. Chapters 5 and 6 present and discuss the findings before Chapter 7 brings together the results of this analysis and, covering the limitations of this study, charts a course for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This thesis sets out to explore whether collaborative governance spaces can operate in a way that meets the ambitions of those, particularly community representatives, who seek to address social exclusion. To do so, this chapter reviews relevant literature on governance, collaborative governance and on the nature of boundary spanning. Situating the discussion within the context of participatory democracy and setting out the role of civil society, the review moves onto providing some background to and discussion of literature on governance, exploring some of the definitions that have informed this research and examining some of the debates on 'good' and 'good enough' governance.

It then seeks to expand upon the concept of collaborative governance that has emerged in recent decades, considering two significant efforts to chart the various dimensions of such an approach. Finally, this literature review turns its attention to the concept of boundary spanners, shifting our focus on to the roles that individuals can, and do, play in broader institutional processes and drawing greater attention towards the actors involved in collaborative governance assesses than heretofore.

Democracy: Representation or Participation?

It is important to establish the broader context within which this study is situated. As stated in the introduction, while democracy is now the predominant mode of governing around the world (Pieterse, 2001), many countries are currently enveloped in a wave of democratic discontent. Countries that are considered to be established electoral democracies, as well as others that emerged more recently during the third wave of democratisation in the early 1990s, equally face challenges to existing democratic values and institutions and a rise in populist politics (Schenkkan & Repucci, 2019: 100). Commentators have suggested also that the public have abandoned their interest in, and commitment to, conventional electoral politics (Pattie et al., 2003: 443).

Democracy is described as "a political system in which the opportunity to participate in decisions is widely shared among all adult citizens" (Dahl, 1961: 8). However, representative democracy has long been recognised as failing to meet the demands of all its citizens. The nature of the state, as it exists currently, means that it may include or exclude some citizens or groups of citizens (Dryzek, 1996: 482). While this is by no means a new phenomenon, research shows that in recent decades, people have "become more and more disenchanted with the traditional institutions of representative government, detached from political parties, and disillusioned with old forms of civic engagement and participation" (Harris et al., 2013: 201). Cohorts such as women, young people, people with disabilities and migrants have often been, and remain, the groups that are most marginalised by this exclusion (Van der Plaat & Barrett, 2006: 28).

Savoia et al. (2010), in a broad sweep of debates on the topic of participation in democratic processes, focus in particular on the link between inequality, democracy and institutions. They contend, "The relationship between political systems and economic institutions cannot be fully appreciated without considering levels of inequality" (Savoia et al., 2010: 143). The implication of this, they suggest, is that when distribution of resources is biased in favour of a given social group, "political and economic institutions can be subverted and grant opportunity only to the dominant classes" (Savoia et al., 2010: 142). It is in this chasm that conversations about other forms of democratic participation and citizen engagement have emerged.

Participatory democracy is one example of an alternative democratic form proposed to address the shortcomings of traditional representative democracy. According to MacPherson, a distinguishing goal of participatory democracy is the aim to enable individuals to self-develop, while working for "a more equitable and humane society." (1977: 94). The classical ideas that inform participatory democracy, as it emerged through the work of Rousseau and others, sought to locate the citizen in relation only to the state (Sorenson & Torfing, 2019: 27). However, modern conceptualisations, emerging during the era of strong welfare states and social democratic norms across Western Europe contend, "The notion of a participatory

society requires that the scope of the term 'political' should be/must be extended to cover spheres outside the national government." (Pateman, 2012: 106) or, as Hilmer observes, "participatory democratic theorists envisioned political participation in a much more expansive sense" (2010: 48).

Citizen Participation

Participatory democracy, as it emerged, is distinguishable from liberal representative democracy, or the pluralist view of democracy, by its underlying premise, which is that "participatory democratic politics encompasses self-exploration and self-development by the citizenry" (Bachrach & Botwinick, 1992: 11). Such exploration and development, they suggest, allows for those who become involved in political processes to build capacity and, in turn, to generate further participation towards consciousness-raising. This facilitates what participatory democratic theory envisions as the maximum participation of citizens in their self-governance, "especially in sectors of society beyond those that are traditionally understood to be political" (Hilmer, 2010: 43).

This participatory conception of democracy requires, at its centre, a politically active citizenry, where, "in a system of full participation the citizens are members of some other organisation for control over decision-making" (Baker, 1997: 3). This realm of "intermediate associations", or civil society, brings people together in spaces such as neighbourhood associations, voluntary bodies, campaign groups and trade unions (Baker, 1997: 3). Civil society has been highlighted as "a vital instrument for containing the power of democratic governments, checking their potential abuses and violations of the law, and subjecting them to public scrutiny" (Diamond, 1994: 15). Civil society provides a voice for democratic inclusion and a space for interaction between the civic association and political association promotes democratic dialogue (Powell and Geoghegan, 2005: 132), while civil society organisations are a legitimate and authentic expression of democratic citizenship (O'Connor & Ketola, 2018).

Pateman argues that, unlike other minimalist versions of democracy that have emerged, "the conception of citizenship embodied in participatory democratic theory is that citizens are not

at all like consumers. Citizens have the right to public provision, the right to participate in decision-making about their collective life and to live within authority structures that make such participation possible" (Pateman, 2012: 15). Baker (1997) notes a key concern of those who identify as 'participatory democrats' is the argument that power should be equally shared among all citizens, so that everyone has an equal say in collective affairs. This means that, in effect, the idea of participatory democracy represents one side of a debate about power and is as much about democratic principles, as it is about particular procedures and institutions. It is, Baker suggests, about "how to achieve, to the greatest degree possible, the most equal distribution of power in society" (1997: 2).

Participatory democracy allows for the development of strengthened communities, where people feel accepted and have their voices heard and the self-development of those who participated is encouraged, as citizens learn new skills, extend their knowledge and develop relationships with others. Participatory democratic theorists argue that democratic participation, conceived of in this broader sense, can produce myriad benefits that are unrealisable by conventional pluralist modes of democratic participation. Hilmer (2010) identifies some of these benefits as:

- psychological: human beings would be able to realize their full potential;
- political: citizens would experience a kind of empowerment that would enable them to break out of apathy;
- social: the "private sphere" of society, namely home and family life, which was considered outside of political, would be democratized;
- economic: the dangers economic inequalities have on democracy are acknowledged and addressed, and workers would have direct control over the aspects of their lives that were once considered largely outside of their control.

This reflects the potential benefits of participatory democracy presented by Baker (1997), including the potential to contribute to greater equality, in terms of an equal distribution of power over collective decision-making and a high degree of quality outcomes of decision-making. A further proposed benefit was a greater possibility for self-determination, allowing communities to ensure that collective decisions respect individual freedom – as individuals or as members of groups. Frequent participation in self-government, it is suggested, increases

citizens' sense of political efficacy and empowerment and produces a more politically astute citizenry. This allows for the expansion of democratic participation into traditionally non-participatory sectors of society and, potentially, breaks the monopoly of state power and engender a more equitable and humane society (Hilmer, 2010: 56).

Challenges for Participatory Democracy

Critics have raised a number of concerns about the potential of participatory democracy. These range from practical problems such as the time required for citizens to become actively involved with policy-making, to concerns regarding self-interest, questioning whether it is possible to expect participants to engage on the basis of a 'public good', rather than the basis of their own interests. Others raise, on a broader level, the "prohibitive effects that social and economic inequalities" (Hilmer, 2010: 47) have on the realisation of participatory democracy; questioning the whether there is the capacity of a broad range of society to take part. This posits that, while everyone has the right to participate, some people are better resourced for participation than others in terms of education, knowledge, skills or free time (Baker, 1997).

Another challenge, Pieterse points out, is that while previously participatory democracy was a catchword for genuine, popular or progressive democratisation, it is now only one out of many ways of conceiving progressive democracy (2001: 410). In recent years, deliberative democracy, broadly defined 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" (Bohman, 1998: 401) has taken on the mantle of participatory democracy. As the term "ascended to preeminent status within democratic theory" (Jackson, 2015: 64), theorists and practitioners from a range of traditions have applied the deliberative label to everything from radical democracy in the public sphere, to consultative forums engaged with the state, to representative assemblies, to the determination of public reason by small groups of jurists (Chappell, 2012: 15). Deliberative democracy propounds that deliberator's should argue for their various policy positions in terms of reasons that others can be reasonably expected to endorse, and that the outcome of deliberations should be determined simply by

the most convincing such arguments within the deliberative forum, leading to policies that could be reasonably accepted by all (Jackson, 2015).

This rationalistic approach to deliberative democracy has, however, been criticized for ignoring unequal social conditions (Jackson, 2015: 67) and for excluding the voices of weak, poor and inarticulate actors (Young, 2000). Mouffe, challenging the turn to deliberative democracy, builds on the spirit of participatory democracy, advocating for what she calls "agnostic pluralism", an approach to democracy that does not seek to "eliminate passions or relegate them to the private sphere in order to render rational consensus possible" (2000: 756). She suggests that the agnostic approach recognises that there is never "a free and unconstrained public deliberation of all matters of public concern" (Mouffe, 2000: 756) and suggest that a modern democratic society must make room for dissent, and for the institutions through which it can be manifested. Public participation is perceived increasingly as a 'right' of citizenship, both locally and at national/international levels (Cornwall, 2002: 2), with communities of interest effectively demanding the right to be included in the decision-making process (Gilchrist, 2004: 17). Our efforts to achieve democracy must centre on enacting broad plans for overcoming the undemocratic aspects of current society, including the provision of space or, at the very least, not excluding those voices that dissent from democratic processes and the spaces which underpin these.

Civil Society Spaces and Organisations

As Identified in the preceding section, the relationship between civil society and the state is of central importance to this research project. A vibrant and robust civil society has been identified as one of the characteristics of a well-functioning and stable democracy (Crotty & Schmitt, 1998; Gaventa, 2004; McInerney, 2013; Finn, 2017).

Civil society describes the space where people come together beyond their identities as individuals, as workers or as citizens, to articulate their needs and generate demands, traditionally seen "an intermediary entity, standing between the private sphere and the state (Diamond, 1994: 5). Van der Plaat and Barrett describe this space as "the realm within which

people can participate collectively and work toward a common interest" (2006: 25). It should, Diamond proposes, be "voluntary, self-generating, (largely) self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules" and civil society actors should be protected by an institutionalized legal order to guard their autonomy and freedom of action (1994: 5).

Cohen and Arato (1992) propose a broader definition of civil society, including the 'intimate sphere' of the family and forms of public communication in addition to the usual dimensions of associations and social movements. Geoghegan and Powell (2006) differentiate between this private sphere and the public sphere, where they link civil society directly to the practice of participatory democracy. They argue that a focus on private association reinforces the status quo, comfortably co-existing with thin conceptions of democracy, based upon a limited form of participation that precedes the election of power elites and the rule of law. Instead of this, they suggest that associating the sphere of civil society "envisages a deepening of democracy, through the creation of counter-publics – 'oppositional' organisations or discursive spaces outside of the dominant actors in the public sphere – in the political realm." (2006: 132). Core to the purpose of civil society, then, is its status as an alternative site for the pursuit of democracy. According to Dryzek (1996), power can be exercised from, and within, civil society in several ways:

1. Political action can change the terms of political discourse and so affect the content of public policy.
2. Social movements can produce lasting effects in political culture by legitimating particular forms of collective action.
3. Policy-oriented fora can be constituted within civil society.
4. Protest can create fear of political instability and draw forth a government response.

Civil society can also be a crucial arena for the development of other democratic attributes, such as tolerance, moderation, a willingness to compromise, and a respect for opposing viewpoints. These values and norms become most stable when they emerge through experience, and organisational participation in civil society provides important practice in political advocacy and contestation (Diamond, 1994: 8).

Participation in Civil Society

Dryzek asserts that deepening democracy must happen via the progressive inclusion of various groups and categories of people in political life (1996: 475). Reflecting this, citizen participation in governance has become a major concern throughout the modern world (Van der Plaat and Barrett, 2006: 27). Mendiburu (2003: 101) identifies two key drivers for fostering participation:

- a sense of ownership among all stakeholders, as government officials “come and go”
- promotion of the transparency and accountability of public authorities

Governments are ever more frequently trying to solve technically complex social problems, which require collaboration with NGOs, businesses and individual and collective action by citizens (O’Connor and Ketola, 2018: 28). However, in order for citizen–government co-operation to happen, there needs to be a shift in perspective and “citizens need to be considered not as a problem but as a resource for effective policy making” (Mendiburu, 2003: 101).

Participation can be viewed as either a developmental process (undertaken as an end in itself), or an instrumental process (aiming to affect the outcome and quality of decisions made) (Oakley, 1995). Adopting an instrumental, utilitarian model, means an agency may promote public participation to achieve its stated aims more efficiently, effectively or cheaply, whereas an empowerment model allows communities to promote public participation as an end in itself, using it as a tool to diagnose their needs and control their own development (Moran, 2001: 221). Cornwall distinguishes between ‘induced’ or ‘invited’ participation and a form of citizen participation through which “people come to create their own spaces and enact their own strategies for change” (2002: 77).

The question of participation and, in particular, how the voices of marginalised groups included in any democratic processes that emerge or evolve, is an important one. Research carried out in Scotland has shown that, left to their own devices, people are not particularly

likely to become active citizens but when they are asked to participate (especially by those close to them), they are very likely to do so (Pattie & Whiteley, 2003: 466). There is no substitute for mobilisation. In this context, Van der Plaat and Barrett (2006) highlight the importance of informal governance processes for facilitating the involvement of marginalized groups in the public sphere. One important element of any of these processes is that of empowerment. Sorenson suggests that empowerment should allow for the emergence of both equal influence and individual autonomy:

- ensuring individuals an equal share of influence in the processes of collective decision-making and;
- maintaining the largest possible sphere of individual autonomy (Sorenson, 1997: 556).

Civil Society Organisations

Civil society organisations are key mechanism in facilitating citizen participation in state structures. O'Connor and Ketola suggest that civil society organisations are "ambiguous, ever-changing and hybrid in character" (2018: 15) and while they recognise that these organisations are 'wildly diverse', they identify a number shared features:

1. They are a legitimate expression of people exercising their fundamental human rights;
2. Organisations express interests and values;
3. They are independent and autonomous and typically involve, and facilitate, voluntary as well as collective action (O'Connor and Ketola, 2018: 4).

Diamond (1994: 6) offers a more comprehensive breakdown of the nature of the organisations included in civil society, comprising formal and informal groupings. He includes groups that are:

1. Economic (productive and commercial associations and networks);
2. Cultural (religious, ethnic, communal, and other institutions and associations that defend collective rights, values, faiths, beliefs, and symbols);
3. Informational and educational (devoted to the production and dissemination – whether for profit or not – of public knowledge, ideas, news, and information);
4. Interest-based (designed to advance or defend the common functional or material interests of their members, whether workers, veterans, pensioners, professionals, or the like);

5. Developmental (organisations that combine individual resources to improve the infrastructure, institutions, and quality of life of the community); Issue-oriented (movements for environmental protection, women's rights, land reform, or consumer protection);
6. Civic (seeking in nonpartisan fashion to improve the political system and make it more democratic through human rights monitoring, voter education and mobilisation, poll-watching, anticorruption efforts, and so on).

Engaging with the state poses risks for community organisations and their members. At an individual level, people who confront traditional power structures may put themselves at risk and need the support of their peers (Barnes, 1999). At the collective level, engagement with the state can mean that community organisations leave the oppositional sphere, meaning then the dominant classes and public officials have less to fear by way of public protest. These departures can lead to “a less vital civil society”, less likely to achieve further democratisation into the future (Dryzek, 1996).

Organisations representing historically marginalised groups face additional challenges in attempting to engage with the state. Dryzek suggests that democratic gains can only be secured when the defining interest of the entering group connects to an existing or emerging state imperative (1996: 476). If the group’s interest cannot be assimilated, then the group in question receives only symbolic rewards and is at risk of co-option, which is “the process of absorbing new elements into the leadership or policy-determining structure of an organisation as a means of averting threats to its stability or existence” (Selznick, 1966: 13). Usually, this absorption comes without any real power sharing.

A key question for civil society organisations concerned with social inclusion and seeking to address existing inequalities is whether to prioritise engagement with the state, to focus within civil society, or to give attention to both. Despite the risks, many commentators encourage a dualistic strategy and see it as the role of civil society to encourage debate within civil society, while seek the development of a supportive constitutional, legal, and policy context from the state. McArdle (2014) addressed some of these tensions in a recent study

on radical community work in Ireland, concluding that in a developed democracy, community organisations should be working in and against, with and for the state. It is essential that civil society groups are supported and sustained to engage with the state in constructive ways.

Creating, sustaining or, where necessary, defending the creative ‘spaces’ in which people can assert, celebrate or contest their ‘place’ in the world is essential to develop empowered citizens who can effectively participate. Doing this means that the state must engage with community organisations in ways that offer them the possibility of talking back to power rather than simply delivering depoliticized and demeaning versions of empowerment. This includes addressing concerns about access to resources, the technical capacity of civil society participants, the power imbalances between and among groups and the role of all stakeholders in agenda setting.

Governance

The purpose of this section is twofold. It firstly aims to provide some background to and discussion on the concept of governance, a term that has become, in recent decades, ubiquitous at the macro, meso and micro level (Kooiman, 2003). Conversations at the global level regarding the nature and purpose of the state and its role in an increasingly globalised world continue, with traditional categories of ‘the rulers and ruled’ no longer clearly defined (Gaventa, 2004). At the meso level, the role of governments in governance, and the inclusion of civil society, has become an important conversation across the European Union and other regional organisations (Kohler-Koch & Rittberger, 2006: 27). At the micro level, an organisational governance discourse has played a central role in the shifting obligations of civil society organisations internally and externally, as well as with regard to the relationships of these organisations with the state (Meade et al., 2016).

The following section will consider some of the current definitions of governance and frame some current debates. Following from this, a second aim of this section is to provide some insight into the concept of collaborative governance, describing and discussing features of

two comprehensive frameworks developed in recent years as an attempt to draw together the disparate themes and disciplines the governance debate spans.

Governance Definitions

The concept of governance has long been discussed in academia and beyond. While its definition remains nebulous, its significance as a framework for societies and/or states to manage their citizens and resources, has shifted over time (Bevir, 2012; Farazmand, 2012; Gaventa, 2004). Modern governance theory, it is argued, starts from the proposition that "we are witnessing a shift from government (through direct control) to governance (through steering, influencing, and collaborating with multiple actors in a dispersed system)" (Newman, 2004:71). As far back as the 1960's, Dahl posed a question of the modern political system, asking "who actually governs?" (1961: 1). Sorenson suggested, over two decades ago, that the borders were unclear and that a "radical transformation of the political system" (1997: 553) was underway. This transformation led to an increasing role for policy networks, the contracting out of public institutions and simultaneous processes of internationalisation and decentralisation, leading to a multi-centred system of governance (1997: 554). Marinetto concurs, suggesting, "a distinct shift has taken place in government, from a hierarchical bureaucratic organisation to a fragmented and decentralised entity" (2003: 593).

Across policy domains, from health to climate, there is a proliferation of public and private actors engaged in core governance functions and, in many cases; these actors are operating under less severe regulatory constraints than those required of by the state or state-funded actors. In such a context, the state can no longer assume "a monopoly of expertise or resources necessary to govern, and must look to a plurality of interdependent institutions drawn from the public, private and voluntary sectors" (Davies, 2011: 13). This often generates much more uncertainty over patterns of behaviour than during previous periods, when the state held greater control of decision-making (Coen & Pegram, 2015: 418).

Within academic literature, there have been differing approaches to the concept of governance (Kooiman, 1999: 70). Some authors propose that the concept best be "used with

regard to government or the public sector, to refer to the institutional underpinnings of public authority and decision making". Stoker (2000: 93) views governance as a "concern with governing, achieving collective action in the realm of public affairs, in conditions where it is not possible to rest on recourse to the authority of the state". Hooghe and Marks contend, "modern governance is—and, according to many, should be—dispersed across multiple centres of authority" (2003: 233). Kooiman (1999: 70), stresses the role of non-state actors and describes governance as "arrangements in which public as well as private actors aim at solving societal problems or create societal opportunities and aim at the care for the societal institutions within which these governing activities take place".

Chibba highlights the cultural and ideological dimensions of the governance debate, noting that governance is "perceived and shaped by values, culture, traditions and ideology" (2009: 79). More than ever before, commentators argue, there are numerous actors at different levels engaging in the design, development and operationalisation of policies that impact upon communities locally, nationally and internationally and alongside this there has been a "renewed attention to a broader array of values, especially to values associated with democracy" (Bryson et al., 2014: 445).

The concept of governance refers also to "The formation and stewardship of the formal and informal rules that regulate the public realm, the arena in which state as well as economic and societal actors interact to make decisions" (Hyden et al., 2004: 16). As such, governance encompasses the "institutions, systems, "rules of the game" and other factors that determine how political and economic interactions are structured and how decisions are made and resources allocated" (Grindle, 2010: 2).

It must be noted that, while it is often presented as a neutral concept, the discourse around governance has been significantly influenced by ideological shift over the last forty years ((Cammack, 2007). Lewis casts a critical lens on what he describes as the "orthodoxy of the post-traditional worldview" which holds that a transformation is taking place, shifting power

from traditional hierarchies, into a new, networked society (2011:2). Observing that networks are "proselytised as the way to conduct governance, intergovernmental relations, management and relations between government and civil society – and indeed as the best way to organise resistance" (2011:1), Lewis challenges the normative nature of much research on the topic. Instead, he contends that "there is nothing new about networking and that there is no real evidence of more governance through networks than in 1900 or 1945" (2011:3).

Good Governance

There are also a number of 'practitioner' definitions of governance, which shape the programmatic work of a number of supranational organisations, where the pursuit of 'good governance' has become one of the primary goals of international development co-operation (Chibba, 2009: 83). The chief proponents of this good governance agenda are the large global development institutions (Chibba, 2009: 83), who, some commentators argue, are using it as a mechanism to exert control over weaker states and their economies (Ife, 2010: 18).

The World Bank defines governance as "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's political, economic and social resources for development" (1992: 1). This includes (i) the process by which those in authority are selected, monitored and replaced (ii) the capacity of the government to effectively manage its resources and implement sound policies and (iii) the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them. By asserting that, "good governance is synonymous with sound development management" (1992: 1), they led out on a renewed focus on governance during the 1990s. Prior to this, the World Bank had focused on stabilisation and state reforms that overwhelmingly focused on privatisation, however this change of focus meant the Bank came to attribute most of crises in developing countries to governance concerns. This shift in perspective led to contemporary 'adjustment packages' emphasising governance issues such as transparency, accountability and judicial reform.

Local, regional and global institutions have adopted this language of governance. For example, another key player in global governance discourse, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in a seminal policy paper 'Governance for Sustainable Human Development', defined governance as

> The system of values, policies and institutions by which as 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 (UNDP, 1997).

There has been, since then, a sustained focus on the language and role of governance within the United Nations system and associated institutions. The UNDP focuses on delivery of good governance through localisation of its 2030 Agenda. The UNDP has placed a significant focus on the promotion of good governance across the world, with over 30% of its budget directed to support inclusive governance and development at a local level (Khandakar, 2018: 1168). This work is informed by a set of 'Governance Principles' outlining core values and principles of democratic governance. They single out characteristics like participation, transparency, accountability, effectiveness, and equity as its most important characteristics (Grindle, 2010:2).

There has been a suggestion that, a rush to centre governance as a strategy to develop and address the complex issues facing diverse states in the global North and South has, led to a great deal of conceptual conflation. Grindle notes that the idea of good governance became useful as an umbrella concept to describe a wide variety of "good things" (2010: 7). Good governance came to be identified as a precondition for development and this led to an array of stakeholders claiming their space under the 'umbrella' of good governance. This meant that

> The human rights community claimed, with considerable force and reason, that countries with good governance respected human rights.

> Environmentalists argued that good governance meant effective stewardship of the environment and sustainability of development practices. Empowerment of women, community management of forests, selective affirmative action, land use planning, legal aid for the poor, anti-corruption measures, and a variety of other conditions came to be associated with good governance (2010: 7).

This means that, as Coen and Pegram suggest, "If governance scholarship is to take global public policy delivery seriously, a more forensic understanding of multilevel governance structures is required" (2015: 417).

Collaborative Governance

Having situated the move from government to governance within the participatory democracy debate and outlined the key features of governance, as well as some the ongoing debates about the concept, this review will now shift its focus to look in greater detail at the definitions of and debates on collaborative governance. A burgeoning literature on the notion of collaborative governance has emerged over the last two decades (Morse, 2011: 953). Silva frames this emerging work as an attempt to describe new forms of governance that have gained prominence in academic, policy and practice discourse during this time (2011: 66). As we will see elsewhere in this text, this shift towards collaborative models of governance and a concern regarding democratic values is of particular interest in the Irish context, where significant changes to local governance structures have occurred over recent decades.

Ansell and Gash (2008), in carrying out a meta-analysis of an array of studies across different disciplines, attempted to generate a model within which to discuss and compare the various types of collaborative governance processes and to understand what elements, if any, lead to different policy outcomes. The definition they adopt to limit their study articulates collaborative governance as

> A governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal,

> consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets (2008: 544).

This definition encompasses a form of governance in which “public and private actors work collectively in distinctive ways, using particular processes, to establish laws and rules for the provision of public goods” (*ibid*). Having carried out an extensive review of literature on collaborative governance, they developed a tentative model describing the key variables within a collaborative governance process, which was accompanied by a call to utilise ‘natural experiments’ to further examine their findings and to test whether or not collaborative governance produces a ‘sweet reward’ in terms of policy and governance (2008: 561). This ‘sweet reward’ suggests that, perhaps, if we govern collaboratively, we may avoid the high costs of adversarial policy-making and expand democratic participation, though they do not suggest that this is always the desired outcome of collaboration, not the most effective manner to provide public goods (2008: 562).

There have been, in the interceding years, multiple responses to this call and studies have examined many different elements of the framework they developed (Johnston et al., 2011; Gerlak & Heikkila, 2011). Armed with this emergent empirical evidence and supported by further analyses, Emerson et al. (2012) built upon the earlier model and proposed an integrative framework for collaborative governance, encompassing many of Ansell and Gash’s dimensions of collaborative governance and expounding upon them. The following section will briefly outline the key features of both of these models.

A Model of Collaborative Governance

Without seeking to classify collaborative governance as ‘good’ or ‘bad’, Ansell and Gash set out to develop a contingency approach to collaboration that aimed to highlight the conditions under which collaborative governance could facilitate or discourage the desired outcomes of policymaking and public management (2008: 562). In order to do this, they used a sample of existing literature to develop a common language for analysing collaborative governance which provided a basic vocabulary with which to examine additional cases, refining and

elaborating on their terminology where needed. Through this, Ansell and Gash (2008) identify six key features of collaborative governance spaces:

1. the forum is initiated by public agencies or institutions;
2. participants in the forum include non-state actors;
3. participants engage directly in decision making and are not merely ‘‘consulted’’ by public agencies;
4. the forum is formally organized and meets collectively;
5. the forum aims to make decisions by consensus (even if consensus is not achieved in practice);
6. the focus of collaboration is on public policy or public management

Having established what they define as the key features of collaborative governance structures, outlined above, Ansell and Gash employed a strategy of “successive approximation” (2008: 549) drawing on a wide range of case studies from across the literature. They adopted this approach, using sample subsets of the cases, in order to “refine” and “test” their model of collaborative governance. Working in this way, they were able to propose a model of collaborative governance that identified four broad variables that captured the key stages and relationships that emerged as significant in collaborative governance processes across issues and institutions. The variables are:

1. starting conditions
2. institutional design
3. leadership
4. collaborative processes

The broad nature of these variables and the attempt to present them as a simplified cycle, leads to a necessarily broad sweep of concepts, with the starting conditions, institutional design and leadership approaches, positioned as “critical contributions to” or a “context for” the collaborative process to emerge from (2008: 550).

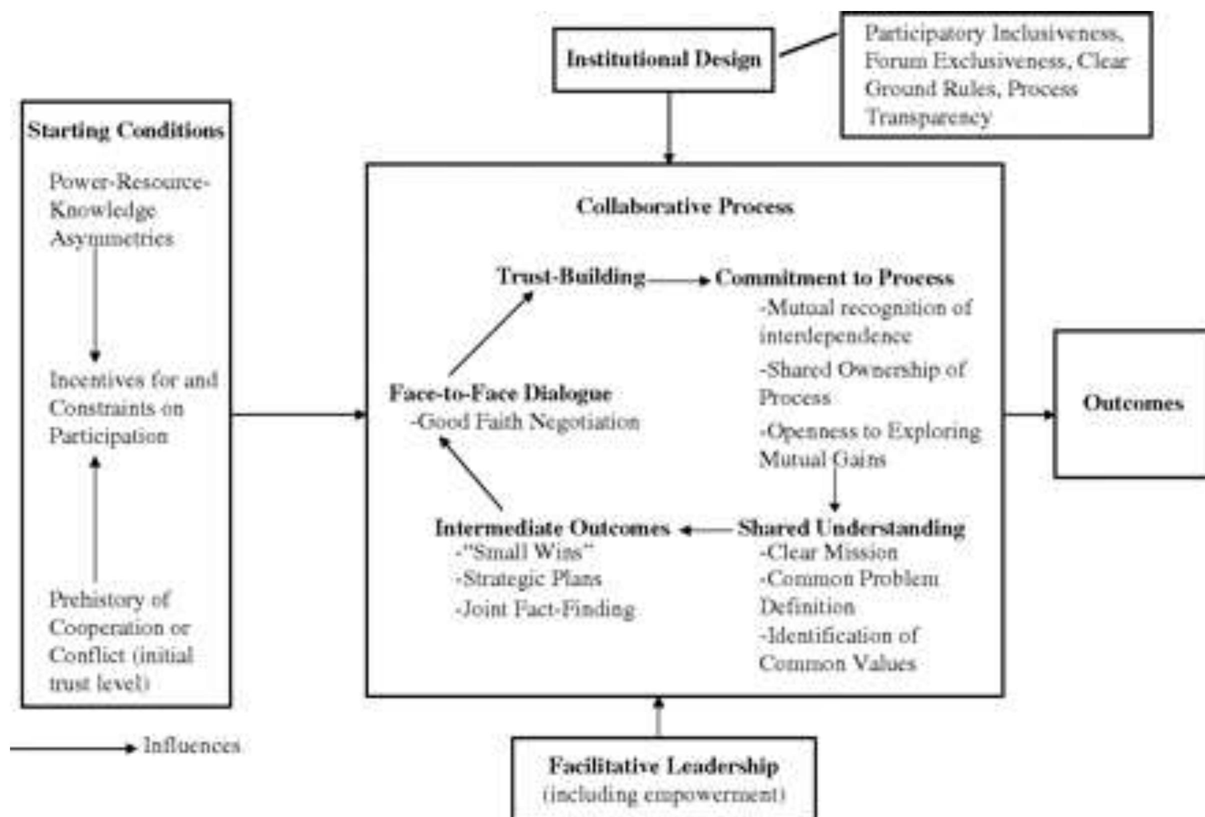

Figure 1: A Model of Collaborative Governance (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

The four broad variables encompass a number of more detailed dimensions, each of which can be examined as having an impact on the context for collaboration, the processes that develop and, finally, the outcomes that occur as a result of the collaborative governance process. In expounding upon these dimensions, Ansell and Gash advanced a set of propositions setting out how these various dimensions may impact upon a given collaborative governance process. As will be seen in the next section, the model developed by Ansell and Gash and the propositions that emerged from it, provided a clear basis for emergent empirical studies and the subsequent work of Emerson et al. (2012) to build upon.

Integrative Framework for Collaborative Governance

Building upon the work by Ansell and Gash (2008) to identify a model, Emerson et al. (2012) embed their integrative framework for collaborative governance more firmly in broader notions of public administration and democracy, particularly the movement towards new forms of public involvement and civic engagement, referred to by many as the deliberative

democracy movement. Deliberative democracy, they suggest, “promises citizens opportunities to exercise voice and a more responsive, citizen-centred government by embedding governance systems and institutions with greater levels of transparency, accountability and legitimacy” (2012: 3). This focus on enhanced democratic engagement is central to the concerns of this study with its focus on participation and engagement with structural processes. They highlight also that, at its core, the “collaboration imperative” is cross-boundary, concerned with shared administration and horizontal management (2012: 2). This study seeks to examine this dimension by exploring the experiences of those who are crossing the boundaries, as they currently exist.

In their attempt to build on Ansell and Gash’s (2008) model and set out an integrative framework for collaborative governance, Emerson at al. (2012) present a definition of collaborative governance that includes, more prominently, actions and initiatives that originate beyond the realm of the state. They describe collaborative governance as “the processes and structures of public policy decision making and management that engage people constructively across the boundaries of public agencies, levels of government, and/or the public, private and civic spheres in order to carry out a public purpose that could not otherwise be accomplished” (2012: 2). Both a challenge and an advantage of this description could be the non-prescriptive nature of the framework. Participation, purpose and efficacy are defined by the stakeholders of a given process, allowing for the possibility of the exclusion of dissenting or marginalised voices.

Emerson et al. claim that their definition, in addition to providing a space to examine participatory governance and civic engagement processes, allows attention to focus on initiatives that emerge from community-based settings (2012: 3). Beyond this, the integrative framework operationalised by Emerson et al. places greater focus on what they call the ‘collaborative governance regime’ (CGR). They view this regime as encompassing the prevailing patterns of behaviour and activity that allows for cross boundary collaboration to take place (2012: 6).

Within this context, Emerson et al. propose what they call an integrative framework for collaborative governance, which, they suggest, allows policy makers, researchers and practitioners to illuminate the drivers, engagement processes, motivational attributes, and joint capacities that enable shared decision-making, management, implementation, and other activities across organisations, jurisdictions, and sectors engaged in a collaborative governance process (2012: 3). This framework comprises three nested dimensions, representing

1. a general system context
2. the collaborative governance regime (CGR)
3. collaborative dynamics and actions.

Building on earlier models of collaborative governance, their integrative framework introduces the concept of a collaborative governance regime (CGR), which they define as "the particular mode of, or system for, public decision making in which cross-boundary collaboration represents the prevailing pattern of behaviour and activity" (Emerson et al., 2012: 6; *see also* Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015).

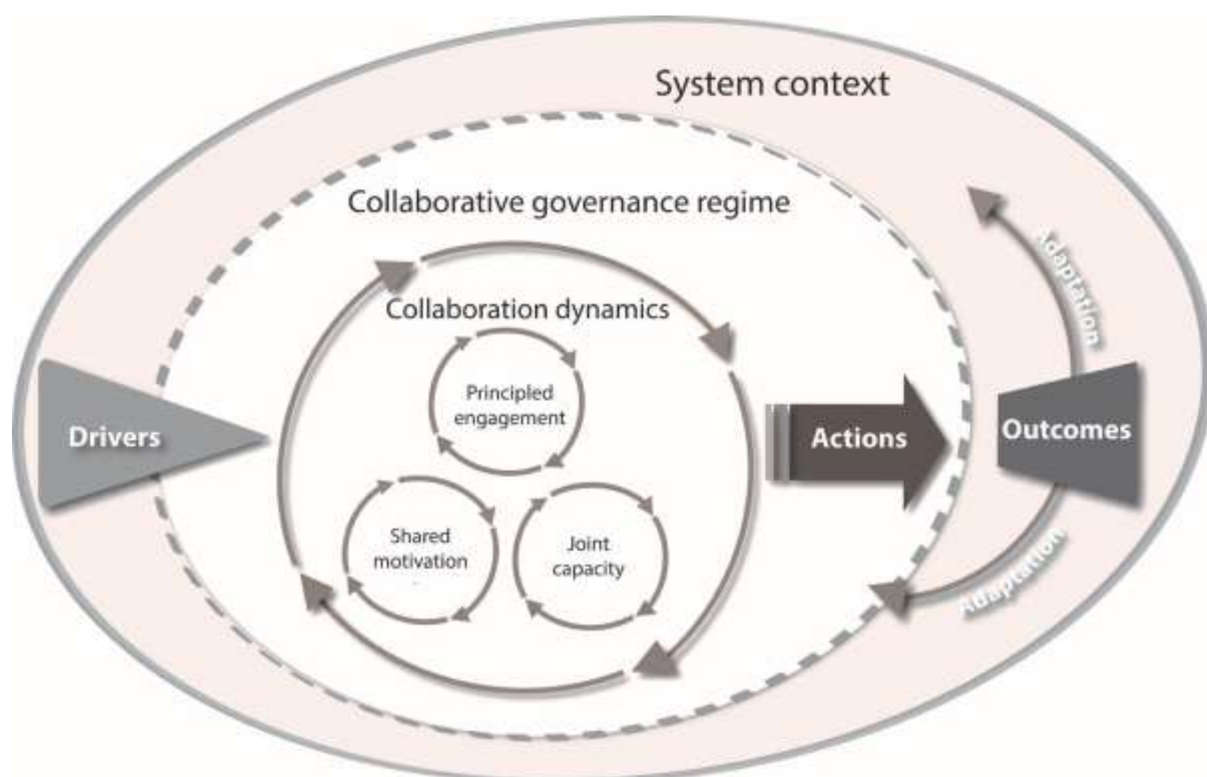

Figure 2: The Integrative Framework for Collaborative Governance (Emerson et al., 2012).

As demonstrated in the diagram above, the outermost dimension of the framework represents the surrounding system context or the host of political, legal, socioeconomic, environmental and other influences that affect and are affected by the CGR. This system context generates opportunities and constraints and influences the dynamics of the collaboration at the outset and over time. From this system context emerge drivers, including leadership, consequential incentives, interdependence, and uncertainty, which help initiate and set the direction for a CGR.

The CGR itself is depicted by the middle section with the dashed lines. The CGR may take on a variety of forms and functions and may include a variety of participants. The CGR incorporates the iterative cycling of collaboration dynamics, as well as the collaborative actions generated through those dynamics. Of particular interest to the current study are the collaboration dynamics of the CGR, represented by the innermost section with dotted lines, consisting of three interactive components, each with its own set of elements. The first, principled engagement, or the basic process component of collaboration dynamics, encompasses the interaction of discovery, definition, deliberation, and determinations. During principled engagement, the participants in a CGR develop a shared theory of change, which is, in essence, a strategy for accomplishing the collective purpose and target goals of the CGR. The second, shared motivation, or the relational component of collaboration dynamics, consists of trust, mutual understanding, internal legitimacy, and shared commitment. Finally, capacity for joint action, or the functional component of collaboration dynamics, consists of procedural and institutional arrangements, leadership, knowledge, and resources. The elements within each component work together to generate and sustain that component, and the components themselves work interactively and iteratively to reinforce one another and propel collaborative actions.

In terms of shared features, both models highlight the importance of Leadership within any collaborative process, acknowledging that leadership in such a process demand a particular set of skills, to demonstrate what Ansell & Gash identify as ‘facilitative leadership (2008: 554).

Emerson et al., deem leadership essential both as a driver of any project and at key moments in both setting the tone of the process and in cultivating opportunities for others to adopt leadership at junctures throughout (2012: 15). Similarly, both models place a focus on the action or output element of the process. In each case, the focus is on the development of shared goals, within an environment where trusting relationships and shared commitment to agreed-upon goals is fostered (Ansell & Gash, 2008: 561; Emerson et al., 2012: 23).

While the models outlined above present immense possibilities for renewed understanding of, and participation in, the various dimensions of collaborative governance processes, providing rich opportunities for all stakeholders to influence favourable policy outcomes, the authors point to a number of limitations that are evident in their propositions. Emerson et al. (2012) observe that participants in collaborative governance process may represent themselves, clients, constituencies, public agencies, civil society organisations businesses or the public. To this end, some of stakeholders "do not have the capacity, organization, status, or resources to participate, or to participate on an equal footing with other stakeholders", leaving processes vulnerable to manipulation by stronger actors (Ansell & Gash, 2008). A lack of skills, expertise or time can often significantly influence ongoing participation in collaborative processes. Even for powerful actors, the effort required to participate effectively and satisfactorily influence agendas and outcomes may prove too high and they may either 'go it alone' or shift their efforts to other spheres, by venue shopping (2008: 551/552). Indeed, even where there is the dispersion of additional resources to under resourced stakeholders, it may be the case that powerful actors dominate a given structure.

Concerns regarding Collaborative Governance

Despite these, and other, potential pitfalls to collaborative governance processes, there remains much within the potential elements outlined in the models, as well as in terms of empirical examples of successful outcomes to spur hope. This, both in the potential of the approach for fostering cross-boundary approaches to solving complex public problems, and in the research opportunities generated by nature of the breakdown provided by either model. As Doberstein notes, in such contexts, "advantage is not simply through diverse policy

actors working together to better manage a policy issue, but is primarily driven from the transformative possibilities of policy debate and problem-solving in collaborative governance" (2016: 822)

The frameworks of collaborative governance outlined in the preceding sections provide rich ground for the examination of the governance structures that have emerged in the Irish context. By deconstructing and analysing the various dimensions of collaborative governance processes it becomes possible to explore the both the challenges to and opportunities for collaborative governance in the Irish context. Indeed, Ansell and Gash (2008) note the value of developing case studies exploring the various aspects of the framework and Emerson et al. (2012) speak to the value of their framework as both a guideline for researchers and for practitioners who may use the concepts outlined to deconstruct and negotiate complex processes. In the Irish context, there is fertile ground for exploration, as existing and emerging collaborative processes take on new dimensions and responsibilities.

Emerson et al. raise a note of caution, remarking, "a questionable hegemony about this form of working which needs to be exposed" this, they suggest, comes partly from competing roots which emphasises a process that is driven by "self-interested motivations and bargaining" in tension with "a vision that transcends the individual in an integrative search for the common good" (2012: 2). Williams echoes this concern, observing that collaboration may lead to confusion and lack of clarity about who is responsible for what and noting that demands for collaboration can be motivated by a desire to break down autonomy or undermine professional roles (Williams, 2013).

Boundary Spanning: Building Links between People and Institutions

The preceding sections have situated collaborative governance processes within the framework of participatory democracy and this review will now turn its attention to the concept of boundary spanners. By drawing greater attention to the actors involved in collaborative governance processes, we can examine the roles that individuals can, and do, play in broader institutional processes. By looking at the role of boundary spanners, the

approaches that they adopt and the skills they demonstrate, this section creates a framework within which to consider the experiences of the research participants, in their roles as community representatives on local governance structures, as they engage in collaborative governance processes. As Lewis notes, the experiences of boundary-crossing individuals provides insight into the way in which ideas about state and civil society operate within this era of flexible governance and 'partnership' (Lewis, 2008).

The Emergence of Boundary Spanning

Since its conceptualisation, the notion of boundary spanners has appeared peppered across disciplines. Preceding the current emphasis on their role in facilitating policy implementation through partnerships, the concept was originally applied to the way in which working across boundaries could benefit organisations (Rugkasa et al., 2007). This literature first emerged in the 1960s, emanating from the realm of organisational psychology. There, researchers were attempting to understand the workings of growing organisations and corporations and, in doing so, focused attention on the workers who crossed between the various units within these settings. Viewed as "lynchpins", "brokers" and "gatekeepers", these 'boundary spanners' were valued for their contribution to managing the interface, not just within organisations, but also between them and their environments (Katz and Kahn, 1966).

Since then, the role of boundary spanners has been examined across different sectors and issues, including multi-sectoral nutrition (Pelletier et al., 2017); global engineering systems (Di Marco & Taylor, 2010) universities and the higher education sector (Champenois & Etzkowitz, 2018), within, and beyond borders with ex-pat employees (Doerr, 2017). In each of these realms, boundary spanners are seen to bridge different areas and to "create a dialogue between disciplines, and combine different approaches and instruments to propose solutions" (Mangematin et al., 2014: 3). It is generally acknowledged that this type of knowledge sharing between separate professional and organisational areas can produce the possibility of innovations (Champenois & Etzkowitz, 2018).

In an intra-organisational context, Champenois and Etzkowitz note, boundary spanners were identified as facilitating the sharing of expertise by "linking groups of people separated by location, occupation, hierarchy or function" (2018: 30). The 'boundary spanners' generated a flow of knowledge between spaces, and assisted in the successful implementation of projects that needed multi-unit participation in order to be successful (Edelenbos & Van Meerkeek, 2014). In addition, boundary spanners were seen to connect organisations with their environment by "performing the functions of information processing (selecting, transmitting and interpreting information originating in the environment) and external representation (resource acquisition and disposal, political legitimacy, social legitimacy and organizational image" (Champenois and Etzkowitz, 2018: 30).

Boundaries in Governance Processes

For the purpose of this research however, our attention focuses on boundary spanners as a concept in public administration and governance processes. Lewis contends that boundary spanners have, for better or worse, long played a role in "oiling the relationship between government and third sector behind the scenes" (Lewis, 2008: 570). However, growing interdependencies among state and non-state actors, the complex nature of public issues, and issues of fragmentation and coordination mean that there is a renewed motivation to cast attention towards those that work across different spaces and organisations and their work (Edelenbos & Van Meerkeek, 2018:2).

With the advent of new forms of governance and public management arrangements, "new theatres of collaboration" have emerged (Williams, 2012: 7). These settings often involve agencies uniting to design and deliver public services both within and between sectors. While "hierarchy and control certainly remain salient for public administration", it is suggested that it is "work on the boundaries of organizations where more attention is being focused" (Morse, 2010: 953). Within these contexts, existing practices of engagement and policy development are challenged and responding to this demands different skill-sets and capacities than heretofore.

There has been proliferation of "initiatives of co-production and delivery of public services, in which public servants are increasingly expected to work with citizens in ways that cut across vertical service demarcations and organizational boundaries" (Edelenbos & Van Meerkeek, 2018: 1). Collaborative governance, as outlined above, is an example of one of these emergent systems, viewed as "a new kind of regime for cross-boundary governance" (Emerson et al., 2012: 21). The literature suggest that boundary spanners can play a key role when partnerships bring together a wide range of agencies to tackle complex problems in policy-making or programme planning (Rugkasa et al., 2007).

As long as collaboration remains in vogue, cross-sector, multidisciplinary, inter-professional, approaches to breaking down silos and working in partnership are all being encouraged (Tilbury, 2014: 605). Successfully negotiating this way of working, Champenois and Etzkowitz (2018) suggest, requires that boundaries be spanned different levels, including physical, social and mental levels. Physical boundaries include the infrastructure and role structures of the setting. The social boundaries pertain to the individual sense of belonging within a group and mental boundaries are seen to be connected to personal and professional identities. These boundaries can be crossed to various degrees of success and following different configurations depending on the context.

Boundary Spanning and Boundary Spanners

Boundary spanning is identified as "collective action catalysed by a specific type of individual" (Champenois & Etzkowitz 2018: 30). Identified as "individuals with a strong commitment to change, who act as entrepreneurs of power" (Rugkasa et al., 2007: 224), the individual catalyst is identified as a boundary spanner because they link separate institutional spheres, in many cases, "systems whose goals and expectations are at least partially conflicting" (Rugkasa et al., 2007: 226). Viewed as "a competence in practice" (Champenois & Etzkowitz 2018: 30), boundary spanning is characterized by negotiating the interactions between organisation and environment in order to realise a better fit, which often also means that the practices of the organisations or the systems involved are also transformed.

Boundary spanners are considered to have the ability to see how an issue looks from a number of viewpoints, and can relate to people in different circumstances who are from different cultures and have different value bases. They display skills such as diplomacy, negotiation, brokerage and facilitation, which are often essential to catalyse collaboration or new ways of working and they “combine a broad strategic vision of what their partnership should be trying to achieve, with flexible and pragmatic tactics in dynamic situations” (Sullivan & Skelcher 2002). Williams (2013) identifies similar qualities or skills for boundary spanners, claiming that they must be competent to address the challenges of collaboration, which involves the capacity to respond to multiple accountabilities, an ability to understand and appreciate the values and intentions of different actors, and the skills required to manufacture the incentives to mobilise collaboration. Van Meerkeek and Edelenbos (2014: 8) suggest that boundary spanners engage in unique behaviours that occur at the periphery of groups, organisations, and institutions and contend that this involves three main, interrelated, activities:

1. connecting or linking different people and processes at both sides of the boundary
2. selecting relevant information on both sides of the boundary
3. translating this information to the other side of the boundary

In order to address the challenges of collaboration, boundary spanners must be equipped and experienced with the skills and competencies to manage, weave, and bridge the myriad of boundaries that constitute modern public management and governance structures and processes.

1. proactively scan the organisational environment
2. employ activities to cross organisational or institutional boundaries
3. generate and mediate the information flow and coordinate between their “home” organisation or organisational unit and its environment
4. connect processes and actors across these boundaries
   (Edelenbos & Van Meerkerk, 2018: 3)

The table below demonstrates the tasks, traits and skills, and strategies of boundary spanners as identified by Rugkasa et al. (2007):

Tasks	Traits and skills	Strategies
✓ building and maintaining relationships ✓ ability to find solutions ✓ sharing information ✓ facilitating o communication o commitment o involvement o activity	✓ positive attitude ✓ enthusiasm ✓ interest in people ✓ energy ✓ mediation skills ✓ ability to build trust ✓ ability to cajole ✓ leadership ability ✓ nonintrusive, yet persuasive communication	✓ Keeping everyone working to the same agenda ✓ ensuring benefits for all ✓ linking the project to other processes (macro or micro)

Table 1: Tasks, traits, skills and strategies of boundary spanners.

Community Representatives as Boundary Spanners

As noted above, much of the literature and empirical attention to date has been focused on the public or private aspects of boundary spanning. Rugkasa et al. (2007) remind us of the other boundaries that need to be spanned in order for a partnership to effect change. This study focuses on crossing the boundaries between the public and civil society sphere, shifting attention to community representatives who cross boundaries into other spaces and considering the particular challenges, they face in progressing their aims within collaborative governance structures.

Williams (2011) highlights that service users and citizens should be the major beneficiaries of boundary-spanning approaches, particularly if they are used as the foundation of service planning and delivery. Structures that are tasked with making changes must equally overcome the distance between their initiatives or projects, and the communities that they serve. In order to be meaningful, attention must also be given to practical project implementation on the ground, including the ways in which members of the community (i.e., project recipients as opposed to community representatives) are approached (Rugkasa et al., 2007).

In order to address this additional obligation of community representatives, Rugkasa et al. (2007) introduce the notion of 'downwards' boundary spanning. They argue that this understanding is missing from the concept of boundary spanners as it is currently articulated in the literature, with little consideration given to how the role relates to other boundaries

that need to be spanned for a partnership to effect change. Structures tasked with making changes must equally overcome the distance between their initiatives or projects, and the communities that they serve. For the 'spanning across and upwards' to be meaningful, attention must also be given to practical project implementation on the ground, including the ways in which members of the community (i.e. project recipients as opposed to community representatives) are approached (2007: 223).

Sandmann et al. (2014) view 'community engagement professionals' as central both to doing this work, studying the work and in building the capacity of other boundary spanners. Community representatives carry with them experience of this type of work, including face-to-face work and emotional labour. They recognise that in order to participate effectively in governance structures, representatives need support from workers on the ground and highlight that this role is not described as part of the concept of boundary spanner as it stands.

Challenges of Boundary Spanning

Boundary spanning, commentators suggest, is highly complex, particularly when multiple and overlapping boundaries created by different agencies, sectors and professions are involved, not to mention that these often shift over time and space. Working across boundaries is often marked by interprofessional barriers that may serve as mechanisms for the establishment of protective boundaries rather than crossing them. The role of the boundary spanner is, then, clearly a multifaceted one. Williams points out that "negotiating and enacting common purpose among multiple and diverse agencies with different cultures, management systems, accountabilities and purposes is complex, and understanding the structural and agential determinants of success is difficult to unravel" (2012: 2). Issues such as imbalance of power, lack of meaningful community engagement, lack of ability to think 'outside the box' and lack of trust have been pointed out as barriers to successful outcomes (Rugkasa et al., 2007).

Much has been written about the role of boundary spanners in both the private and public sphere but very little attention has been given to the role as it is played out in the realm of civil society. While there are in some cases shared motivations, Williams contends, that the

spheres can be “viewed as fundamentally different in terms of purposes, value base and accountabilities, the motivations to collaborate are often similar, and the consequent governance and management challenges faced stemming from differences in culture, style and strategic purpose are common to both sectors” (2012: 3). They highlight the ability to span boundaries is increasingly critical in what they deem to be a highly networked, transdisciplinary, global society (Sandmann et al., 2014).

Rugkasa et al. (2007), highlight an additional dimension, which is of particular relevance for this study. This is the dual task of boundary crossing required of boundary spanners, who emerge as community representatives. On the one hand, this involves linking ‘up and across’, facilitating cooperation between organisations that traditionally find it hard to engage with the state and its institutions and, on the other hand linking ‘downwards’, creating links across and within the communities they seek to represent, as members or otherwise. While both processes are equally challenging, they argue that the valuable connections and relationships that derive from linking up and across can only make a real impact on people’s lives if mechanisms are also there for linking ‘downwards’. (Rugkasa et al., 2007: 228)

Much of the literature on the role of boundary spanners focuses on the technical aspects of the role. However, there are other dimensions to be considered, including different interests and different ideological perspectives. The complexity of context and process, encompassing diverse belief systems; cultures, language and ways of working – all framed against a background of confusion over roles, accountabilities and responsibilities creates a unique set of challenges for civil society boundary spanners leading, Williams contends, to a working life “charged with paradox, ambiguity and tension” (Williams, 2012).

Conclusions

This literature review set out to provide a theoretical context within which to locate this study. By situating the discussion within the context of participatory democracy, this review firmly established its concern with the full participation of all citizens in policy decisions that affect their lives and attempts to achieve the most equal distribution of power possible within a

society. It argued that enhanced democratic participation for groups, and not just individual citizens, is the most feasible way to achieve greater equality in the distribution of power resources than any society and the possibilities of civil society to support the voices of the most marginalised group in supporting this was identified.

The literature review then went on to establish the primacy of the shift in discourse from one of government to one of governance. Despite the ubiquity of the term, the review sought to critically examine the underpinning rationale of this shift to the language of governance, highlighting concerns about neoliberalism, co-option and control, before delving in to the debates on good governance that prevail at a global level. Following on from this, the review sharpened its focus and set out expand upon the concept of collaborative governance that has emerged in recent decades, establishing it as a framework within which to achieve improved outcomes for citizens, through multi-stakeholder collaboration processes. Collaborative governance has been vaunted as a panacea to issues of participation across sectors, issues and groups but much of the research to date has been framed within the prospective of the statutory, rather than civil society stakeholders. The review identified the set of conditions that ought to be in place in order to achieve successful collaborative governance outcomes. The review observed that there has been examination of the CG concept at the macro and meso level but there needs to be more enquiry at the micro level.

Finally, this literature review turned its attention to the concept of boundary spanners, shifting the focus onto the roles that individuals can, and do, play in broader institutional processes and drawing greater attention to the actors involved in collaborative governance assesses than heretofore. The theoretical understandings that have been set out in this chapter will be informed by the particular historical and contextual features specific to Ireland, outlined in Chapter 3, in order to operationalise this study. Chapter 4 will then elaborate on the theoretical framework that has been developed in order to inform the operationalisation of the research strategy.

Chapter 3: Irish Governance Context

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the broader national context within which this research on community participation in collaborative governance structures is situated. In order to do this, it is necessary to briefly establish some background understanding of local government structures in Ireland. The chapter will then focus on the emergence and subsequent deepening of social partnership structures at a national level. Emerging in the 1980s and spanning almost two decades, this process had a significant impact upon the landscape within which, and potential for, collaborative governance processes emerged in Ireland.

Following from this, this chapter will discuss outline the changes that came with the introduction of the Better Local Government Programme (1998), before setting out the shifting governance context that emerged at the outset of the new millennium, in the face of a significant period of economic crisis, post-2008. It will then set out the implications of further local government reforms in 2012. Finally, the chapter will briefly discuss the establishment and characteristics of each of the structures that have been chosen as research sites for this project.

Local Government in Ireland

Ireland is characterised as having weak structures of subnational government, which, by and large, are answerable to and financially dependent on central government (Connaughton, 2009). In terms of its functional capacity and autonomy, local government in Ireland is widely characterised as weak (Quinn, 2003). Unlike many other European countries, local government has a limited role in areas of education and health. In addition, the absence of a system of local taxation beyond local property tax, has rendered it heavily dependent on central government for funding. The two traditional functions of local government in Ireland centre on providing various services and administering national policies. In contrast to many other European states, with the exception of housing, local government in Ireland had little

involvement in the provision of social services with the main areas of responsibility focusing on housing, roads, water, environment and recreation and amenities (Finn, 2017).

Boyle et al. (2003) provide useful background analysis of the historical context from which the current local government system in Ireland has developed. They acknowledge the tensions that existed as a result of the legacy of colonial rule and suggesting that the model of city and county management that emerged was, in its time, an innovative response to some of these tensions (Boyle et al., 2003: 26). This system, with its distinction between reserved and executive functions, and the resultant balance of power sitting with the county or city manager, is one of the distinguishing features of Irish local government distinguishing it from the systems in place in other European countries. Ensuing decades, so little change at local government level. Overarching state policies of protectionism, a focus on agriculture and an over reliance on the UK as a trading partner meant that by the time Ireland attempted to join the EEC, the country was stagnant and experiencing high outward migration (Larragy, 2014).

While Ireland was not successful during the initial application period during 1961, the change in approach and in associated policies that were implemented from that point onwards, led to a successful bid to join the EEC in 1974. Accession to the EEC was a watershed moment in Irish history in many ways but it had a particular impact on issues of governance and social policy (Murphy, 2014). During the period from the mid-1980s until late 1990, two European initiatives played an important part in the development of the governance context in Ireland. The Poverty 2 (1985 to 1989) and Poverty 3 (1989 to 1994) programs provided a framework and funding for a period of growth and critical engagement with the state Irish NGOs (Murphy, 2014).

National Level Context: Social Partnership

The social partnership process in Ireland began in 1987 and has been identified as a powerful force in shaping Irish social policy (Meade & O'Donovan, 2002).At that time employment was low, migration was high, the national debt was exorbitant and, in the face of high levels of taxation, social spending was highly constrained. It has been suggested that, in a politically

fragile climate, preceded by a string of elections, a structure to bring together key stakeholders in an attempt to address some of these issues, could be viewed as a last resort of the political elite (Larragy, 2006: 380). Others reflect on the process as having managed to extend the ‘reach’ of central government, through its broadening networks of influence (O’Malley & MacCharthaigh, 2011: 7).

The process of social partnership involved the negotiation of multi-annual agreements between the state and key civil society actors and resulted in seven national agreements focusing on traditional pay and labour market concerns, as well as conclusions on a range of other social and economic issues (McInerney, 2008). It has been claimed, by some commentators, that social partnership marks a turning point from the state “dispensing resources to a process of engagement which is more critical of what is actually being achieved and, hopefully, more responsive to the views of those who are on the receiving end” (McCarthy, 1998: 44).

The Irish model of social partnership was deemed comparatively unusual ‘because of the involvement of community and voluntary organisations in a tripartite corporatist framework built around centralised wage bargaining’ (Larragy, 2014: 1). The significant role of community and voluntary organisations in influencing policy was noted in a government policy paper which stated: ‘Anti-poverty networks and other national level Community and Voluntary sector organisations have had a significant input into national social partnership agreements. Ó Cinnéide (1999) argues that social partnership in Ireland shifted policymaking away from elected representatives to senior civil servants and representatives of the social partners, offering structured opportunities to engage with the state in decision making about its future policy direction. There has also been widespread critique of social partnership and its benefits or otherwise for the social partners and their representative groups. Some commentators have described use of the term ‘partnership’ as a misnomer given its tendency to mask the unequal power relationships that prevail within the structures (Community Workers' Co-operative, 1989).

Crowley (1998) argues that a major challenge to the community sector engaging in national social partnership was to demonstrate by its practice that social partnership is just one means available to pursue its goals, requiring a, rejection of the language of consensus primarily used to describe social partnership processes.

> These arenas produce agreement and co-operation between competing and often conflicting interests. Their output does not reflect consensus but negotiation … it also requires a continued commitment of resources to campaigning … planning of resources, and organisation of personnel and participation mechanisms, must ensure a critical and angry voice continues to be heard from the sector outside the arenas of social partnership (1998: 76).

Hardiman and Whelan (1998) suggest that despite partnership processes that may be instituted, policy priorities in democratic states remain shaped to a large extent by the demands and pressures from the electorate and that “systematic bias … may favour the preferences of groups that are already advantaged” (1998: 13). In the Irish context, privileged groups maintain a strong advantage in the policymaking process, with “local community and activist organisations operating in the interests of the poor and unemployed” lacking resources available to others (1998: 133).

The concept of social partnership was also mirrored to an extent at the local level but with a primary focus on local interventions rather than policy-making power. The Area Based Partnership Companies were established as a model of engagement between state agencies and social partners to implement local development plans focusing on education, training, enterprise, employment and community development. Area Development Management (ADM), later renamed Pobal, was established as an intermediary organisation to manage social inclusion and equality programmes on behalf of the Irish Government and the EU. These programmes sought to promote a range of activities including ‘community development actions to enable marginalised groups (to) organise and develop their capacity to become

involved' and 'funding to support local community organisations that are working to address the needs of the most marginalised’ (Government of Ireland, 2000: 179).

The Era of Better Local Government

While social partnership was creating a culture of consultation and, to some degree participation, by stakeholders beyond government, at national and local level, by the 1990s, there was limited engagement by local government with the proliferation of organisations that had emerged at local level. This was addressed throughout the decade, by a number of new structures emerging. Some of these structures, such as the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees (LTACC) or the Local Drug Task Forces (LDTF) were issue-specific. Others, such as the Revitalising Areas through Planning Investment and Development (RAPID) programme, were area based. Commentators suggest that the participatory governance structures that emerged during that period can be classified into different zones. These ‘zones’ position the various mechanisms according to the level of control exerted by local government, moving from invited spaces located within the local government to increasingly independent spaces located in civil society (McInerney & Adshead, 2010: 63).

Better Local Government: A Programme for Change (BLG) was published in 1996, as part of a wider government agenda for modernisation within the public service. In reviewing BLG, Boyle et al. (2003) suggested that with the establishment of the County Development Boards, a Director of, and Office for, Community and Enterprise, “the building blocks have been put in place to develop collaborative arrangements between local authorities and other public service providers so as to enhance local development” (2003: 10).

The programme was based on four principles:

- enhancing local democracy and widening participation
- serving the customer better
- developing efficiency in local government, and
- providing proper resources to allow local government fulfil the role assigned to it.

Much of the focus of BLG was internal to local government, with significant attention given to the reconfiguration of local government from within and to shaping the financial and human resources required to achieve the aims set out by the new policy commitments (Boyle et al., 2003). Of most significance to the current consideration of the governance context, was the establishment of the Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) and the County Development Boards (CDBs). Both of these mechanisms provided for the participation of stakeholders beyond elected members and local authority staff to engage with the planning and implementation of local level policies.

SPCs were envisaged as a mechanism by which to "enhance the electoral mandate and broaden involvement in local authorities" (Boyle at al. 2003: 34). Reflecting, in principle the key service areas of the local authority, and each being resourced by senior management official, the SPCs included elected representatives, local authority staff and, significantly, relevant civil society interest groups, reflecting the type of arrangement that had been put in place at a national level during social partnership (McInerney & Adshead, 2010: 66). Two thirds of the membership is made up of elected representatives with the other third being drawn from a variety of civil society organisations including community and voluntary sector, business organisations, environmental groups, trade unions, farming organisations etc. The committees were firmly located inside local authority structures and, indeed, only play an advisory role, with decision-making responsibility resting with the local council, comprising of elected representatives only.

CDBs were established to include representation from the local government, state agencies, local development sectors and social partners in order coordinate economic, social, and cultural development in the counties. (DoELG, 2001). The CDBs operated in a slightly more autonomous manner tasked, as they were, to bridge the gap between local government and emerging local development processes and structures. However, in practice, CDBs, administratively serviced as they were by the local authority, operated in close alignment with local authority actors.

Both of these emerging structures are of particular interest in terms of civil society engagement in governance processes because of the formal space for participation that they created. For the first time, reflecting the national picture, democratic participation was deemed to be beyond simply voting and/or advocating directly to elected representatives or relevant local authority staff (Finn, 2017). Once such participation opportunities were created, the challenge of how to select civil society representative to participate on them had to be confronted. To address this, a new mechanism, a community and voluntary forum, was established in each local authority area. This was open to a wide range of community based organisations and led some to express concern that social inclusion issues would become side-lined within these structures, in the same way as they did in wider society. As a result, in some areas, such as South Dublin County Council and Wicklow, parallel, social inclusion focused mechanisms known as Community Platforms emerged to champion a social inclusion agenda (Finn, 2017). However, structures such as these were not widespread.

A number of core features of BLG were incorporated into law through the Local Government Act 2001, which formalised the enhanced role of elected members, supported the involvement of local interests in policy-making and helped to modernise local government through national legislation. Crucially, for the future of community organisations, it also encouraged a move away from local government as solely a deliverer of services to a facilitator and coordinator of local governance (McInerney & Adshead, 2010). In the Irish context, with the creation of Strategic Policy Committees and the inclusion of civil society actors, the act signalled a shift toward a more participatory culture within local governance (McInerney & Adshead, 2010).

A Shift in Focus: Putting People First

The next significant effort at local government reform came with the publication of the Putting People First White Paper (Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2012) and the subsequent 2014 Local Government Act. Boyle (2016), in a review of local government reform internationally, identifies the aims of Putting People First as envisaging a new role for local government. This new role aimed to include increased

alignment of community and enterprise functions within the local government system; greater involvement and influence in local economic and community development processes and government to be the primary hub for governance and public service at the local level (2016: 3).

Despite this focus on drawing power and resources back towards the local authority, the policy maintained an articulation of a commitment to generating increased citizen engagement

> There is significant potential for stronger community influence and input into the decision-making processes of local government. As part of a revitalisation of local government, it is clear that the approaches used to ensure engagement by citizens in local authority policy formulation and service design must go beyond the range of conventional communication, public consultation and citizen participation mechanisms used in the past.. (Putting People First, 2012: 158)

Boyle (2016) identifies two strategies for reform across the cases he examines. The first of these, he identifies as a merger and amalgamation strategy. This typically involves reducing the number of local authorities and increasing the proportion of the population that each of these represents. The other strategy Boyle identifies is that of greater cooperation and strategic collaboration across authorities (2016: 9). This strategy, he notes, is based on informal and voluntary cooperation and coordination, often facilitated through central government frameworks (2016: 14).

The Local Participatory Governance Landscape in Ireland

Having explored some dimensions of the shift from government to governance in Ireland and outlined the broad functions of local government, this section of the chapter will discuss the creation and characteristics of the local collaborative governance processes that were selected for study. Following the publication of the BLG document, a number of locally-based

governance processes emerged, creating, to some degree spaces for community engagement. Beyond the Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) and City/County Development Boards (CDBs), a number of other structures emerged. Some, such as the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees (LTACC) or the Local Drug Task Forces (LDTF) were issue-specific. Others, such as the Revitalising Areas through Planning Investment and Development (RAPID) programme, the County Childcare Committees (CCCs) and the LEADER Initiative, which were not selected as cases for this study but do also exhibit some of the features identified by the collaborative governance frameworks and merit a brief mention at this juncture.

Policy and Legal Frameworks of Selected Governance Structures

This study sought to engage with structures that would, by their positioning within the collaborative governance landscape and, in terms of their contrasting origins and focus, offer a broad snapshot of both issue- and area- based concerns. The Local Drug and Alcohol Task Force (LADTFs) emerged from a unique grassroots process, which brought together a number of key stakeholders for the first time and provides insight to a longer-term example of how local structures may evolve and transfer nationally. The Local Traveller Accommodation Committees (LTACCs) represent an issue specific process, which involves the participation of a marginalised group underrepresented in traditional democratic arenas. The issue of Traveller accommodation is viewed as a persistent, intractable problem in Irish policy. The Local and Community Development Committees (LCDCs) provide insight into area based governance processes.

As can be seen in the table below, each of the committees has a clear policy framework within which it functions. This legal and policy framework is a significant incentive for participation from civil society and, more significantly, the designation of civil society representatives as essential for the membership of these committees appears to be a key incentive for local authorities and other statutory agencies to seek out civil society participation that might otherwise be ignored.

Collaborative Governance Structure	Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)	Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC)	Local Drug and Alcohol Task Force(LDATF)
Year Established	2014	1998	1997
Establishing Mechanism	Local Government Reform Act 2014	Housing (Traveller) Accommodation Act 1998	Report of the Ministerial Task Force on Measures to Reduce the Demand for Drugs 1996
Policy Focus	Local and Community Development	Traveller Accommodation	Drug & Alcohol Misuse
Policy Context	Putting People First – Action Programme for Effective Local Government 2012	Local Authority Traveller Accommodation Programmes 2019-2024	Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery 2017-2025
Monitoring/Review	Weak-No formal oversight	Weak-NTACC	Strong-NOC
Membership	Local Authority Members; Local Authority Officials; State Agencies; Local and Community Development Bodies; Community and Voluntary; Social Inclusion and Environmental Interests	Local Authority Members; Local Authority Officials; State Agencies; Traveller Representatives	Local Authority Members; Local Authority Officials; State Agencies; Local and Community Development Bodies; Community and Voluntary; Social Inclusion
Support / Servicing	Specialised staff Community and Enterprise section of Local Authority	Housing Section Local Authority	Senior Officials across Local Authority

Table 2: Key Features of Selected Collaborative Governance Structures.

Local Community Development Committees

In 2014 the Local Government Reform Act was passed. Crucially, as well as consolidating and restructuring a number of local authorities, this Act allowed for the abolishment of the City and County Development Boards and, of particular interest in the context of the current study, the establishment of Local Community Development Committees in their place. In addition to this, it provided the basis for changes to the functions of local authorities, potentially including the devolution of functions from government departments. A significant change here was the removal of the power of elected members of the local authority to give directions to the manager on planning matters.

The aim of the LCDC is to "develop, coordinate and implement a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development" (Relate, 2014: 5). In doing this, the LCDCS have been tasked with bringing a more joined up approach to the implementation of local and community development programs and interventions. They set out to drive meaningful citizen and community engagement in the scoping, planning and evaluation of local and community development programs and they should pursue more cost efficient administration of programs and the targeting of resources to priority areas, ensuring improved value for money in the management and delivery programs (DRCD, 2014).

The LCDCs were to carry out this task through the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the community elements of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) and their key function is to prepare the community elements of the LECP and to work with partners to implement this plan. This is, as Lee points out, "a commissioning but not programme delivery role" (2016: 37). Membership of the LCDCs includes members of the local authority, local authority staff, representatives of relevant public bodies and statutory agencies, local community representatives and representatives of local development bodies.

In 2019, DRCD published a review of the LCDCs in order to inform ongoing development of the structures. The review had taken place over the preceding years and, in its publication, focused on four particular themes including I) governance and structure; II) strategic effectiveness; III) participation and engagement; IV) administrative support and development. In responding to the guidelines for the review, Community Work Ireland (CWI) highlighted a number of concerns raised by their members in light of reports of limits to the functioning of a number of the LCDCs (CWI, 2017: 2).

Findings suggested that the LCDCs had developed a base from which to progress their work but also noted a number of areas for concern. These included a lack of clarity around, and awareness of, the role of the committee and of its members, the need to improve participation and engagement, particularly with marginalised communities and the

importance of highlighting good examples of coordination and collaboration and seeking to embed them as minimum standards for all LCDCs (DRCD, 2019: 4).

Public Participation Networks

Another significant structure related to the LCDC emerged as a result of the Local Government Reform Act (2014) is the Public Participation Network (PPN). Initially suggested in the report of a Working Group on Citizen Engagement with Local Government, which included members of civil society, among others, this was a response to the task of making recommendations providing for improved input by citizens into the decision-making processes at local government level.

The report of the working group was based on the premise that "the participation of citizens in public life and their right to influence the decisions that affect their lives and communities are at the centre of democracy" (DLEG WG Report, 2014: 5). However, language throughout the report reveals a lack of clarity on levels of participation and, more importantly, levels of influence on policy outcomes. For example, they suggest that "For public participation to add value to the decision-making, public participation itself must be valued by those entrusted with making the final-decisions" (2014: 12), implying that public participants will not be making the final decisions.

The PPNs replaced the existing Community and Voluntary Fora, without any particular clarity being given about why they needed to be developed (Finn, 2017). Reflecting on their experience as part of the working group, members noted the irony of structures being created to organise the participation of local civil society in a context where the state was the key architect of their construction and local civil society had no role in their design (Finn, 2017:57)

Local Drug and Alcohol Task Force

Maycock et al, note that Ireland introduced a range of harm reduction initiatives from the mid-1980s onwards, adopting an "unusually surreptitious style of policy change" (2018:22).

In the main, harm reduction practices in Ireland were implemented quietly, with minimal public debate. The idea that service provision should be centralised had been challenged by research on heroin use in inner-city Dublin (Dean et al., 1983) which reported its findings in public health terms, identifying environmental (poverty, poor housing, educational disadvantage, family dysfunction and early involvement in crime) rather than individual risk factors as primary causal factors in serious drug problems. This research established the notion, that preventive and treatment initiatives might be more usefully deployed at localised or community level in these high-risk neighbourhoods.

The 1990s had seen an explosion in drug misuse and the effects of addiction had ravaged communities, particularly poorer communities, across Dublin. These local communities, bearing the brunt of disjoined and ineffectual policy responses, eventually established anti-drug campaigns and mobilised against the sale of drugs on their estates. Under growing pressure, the Government established the Ministerial Task Force on Measures to Reduce the Demand for Drugs in 1996. The aim was to develop initiatives that would address issues relating to the supply of drugs, education, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation (Haase & Pratschke, 2017: 7). These structures were intended to target resources at identified high-risk neighbourhoods and would facilitate collaboration between local community/voluntary bodies and statutory health services. (Maycock et al, 2018:24)

The establishment of the LDTF's was viewed as one of the main achievements of the Ministerial Task Force. Operating as a partnership between the statutory, voluntary and community sectors, they comprise representatives from a range of relevant agencies, such as the HSE, the Gardaí, education and training boards, and local authorities, as well as elected public representatives and voluntary and community sector representatives. The LDTF's were established to prepare and oversee the implementation of action plans to co-ordinate all relevant drug programs in their areas (EMCDDA, 2013: 17). In addition, they would address gaps in service provision to facilitate a more effective response to the drug problem in the areas experiencing the highest levels of drug misuse (Citywide Info Sheet, 2012). This was to be achieved through improved co-ordination in services and by utilizing the knowledge and

experience of local communities in designing and delivering those services. The Task Force membership included representatives from statutory agencies, the voluntary sector, local communities and public representatives (Department of Health LDTF Review, 2012). The Task Forces represented "a health-led approach to drug policy" (Dillon, 2017: 2).

Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee

Travellers are an indigenous ethnic minority in Irish society, formally recognised by the state as such since 2017. According to the 2016 Census, over thirty thousand Travellers are resident in Ireland. This represents approximately 0.7 per cent of the overall population, a figure that was an increase of 5.1 per cent on the 2011 figure (Central Statistics Office, 2017). According to CSO figures, Traveller households had a lower home ownership rate than the general population with 1 in 5 (20.0%) households owning their home compared to over two-thirds (67.6%) for the general population. (Central Statistics Office, 2017). The issue of Traveller accommodation has long been a contentious one and the Traveller accommodation crisis has been highlighted repeatedly in Government and other reports over the years (AITHS, 2010: 11).

The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees (LTACCs) were established as part of a response to address what has been, since at least the 1960's, viewed as an intractable problem in Irish society, that of Traveller accommodation (Commission on Itinerancy, 1963). The LTACC's were established under Sections 21 and 22 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998. The local authorities appoint these local committees to advise on the provision and management of accommodation for Travellers. The LTACC's are made up of elected representatives, officials of the local authority, representatives of local Travellers and Traveller bodies and one member from each relevant housing authority within the administrative county council, where LTACC has been appointed by the council of a county. Key to the purpose of the LTACC is the provision of culturally appropriate accommodation by local authorities for Travellers in their administrative areas. One aspect of this culture is that of nomadism. This tradition has been central to Travellers identity and, while many members of the community no longer travel as much as previous generations, nomadism represents an understanding of accommodation, of work and of life in general that

remains important to Travellers (Hayes, 2006). A limited understanding of the importance of nomadism is widely held in local government and often evidenced in the actions proposed to address Traveller accommodation concerns.

The establishment of the LTACCs represented an introduction of a collaborative governance dimension into the provision of Traveller accommodation at the local level in Ireland with the participation of Travellers, representatives of Traveller organisations, local authority officials and local elected representatives (McInerney and Adshead, 2010). By introducing a shared space to discuss the contentious issue of Traveller accommodation in communities, as well as, advise on the preparation and subsequent implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Plan at a local level, it was hoped that there would be outcomes that are more successful for Travellers. While there are concerns broadly about the efficacy of the space, the LTACC also provides an important mechanism for the engagement of Travellers with local government and, more broadly, for participation in Irish politics and policymaking.

Civil Society and the State in Ireland

Ireland has consistently been difficult to categorise in terms of the relationship between the state and, what Donnelly-Cox et al term, “non-profits”, a cohort of organisations and associations that includes the community development sector (2012: 1). Highlighting the fact that Irish political culture is, at the same time both highly localised and centralised, they note that this paradox means that national policy decisions can be constructed at a national level, based on localised concerns but within a formal decision-making structure that is highly centralised (2012: 9). They propose that this presents a unique challenge to the non-profit sector, meaning they must be able to both influence politicians and their constituents at a local level, as well as develop the capacity to influence national decision-making processes (Donnelly-Cox et al., 2012). Nowhere is this challenge more evident that in the work of community development organisations, who must, in addition, be accountable to and representative of their community constituency.

Hardiman (2005) traces the process that led to the inclusion of community and voluntary sector interests into policy development processes, starting with Partnership 2000. Under the auspices of the rainbow coalition, a multi-party government, the community and voluntary pillar (CVP) became involved in the negotiation of the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF, 2000 - 2003), an agreement that addressed abroad policy scope within the context of five frameworks. She posits that while social partnership contributed to shaping state priorities and building capacity within civil society, it did not displace or replace government authority in areas deemed as "central to electoral priorities" (2005: 2). Regardless of the overall success, or lack thereof, of the social partnership process, Larragy concludes, in his examination of the role of the community and voluntary pillar in social partnership, that participation in the pillar was of value. This is both in terms of the contribution they made to the substance of the agreements they were involved in andt he impact participation had on the organisations that participated in it and despite the constraints and challenges they experienced (Larragy, 2006: 395).

Harvey (2016: 9) draws attention to the fact that it took 24 years to agree and publish a White Paper on the relationship between the state and the voluntary and community sector/civil society. When it arrived, in 2000, 'Supporting Voluntary Activity' affirmed the independence and the critical role of the voluntary and community sector, it provided for a programme of multi-annual funding and set out that the state, via government departments, must have the capacity to respond to voluntary activity. Despite all that has happened subsequently, this paper remains policy of the state with regard to the community and voluntary sector.

By the late 1990s the Irish landscape was speckled with an array of initiatives and organisations that were concerned with various aspects of local and community development and which adopted different approaches to addressing these elements. Boyle et al. (2003) note that by this time, government policy was to promote the local authority as the primary coordinator of local and community development activities. Harvey heralds this period, shortly after the 2002 election, as the beginning of "the strategic turn", a period during which the vast majority of institutions and organisations established to address poverty, inequality

and social exclusion and support the development of social policy were dissolved, dismantled or disempowered (2016:9).

While it began before the economic crisis of 2008, much of this deconstruction of community development and social inclusion infrastructure was facilitated by the austerity programme adhered to during the period 2008 to 2015. The figures are striking. From 2008 to 2014 government spending fell by -7.1%. During the same period voluntary and community spending was reduced by between 35% and 45% (Harvey, 2016: 10).

This cull of the community and voluntary sector amounted to decimation by a thousand cuts or, as one commentator suggests, “by neglect” (2016: 38). Funding for research and training was first to go, followed by cuts to antipoverty networks and other policy support infrastructure. Despite growing demands, programmatic funding for social issues was incrementally reduced, with financial support for voluntary social housing, drug prevention, rural disadvantage and funding of migrant organisations all reduced by 40% or more (Harvey, 2016: 11). Organisations attempted to reduce spending and maintain their activities where possible. However, temporary and contract staff were phased out and full-time employees experienced salary freezes, a reduction in working hours and, in many cases, redundancies.

By 2014, it became clear that the state commitment to “an active community and voluntary sector [which] contributes to a democratic, pluralist society, provides opportunities for the development of decentralised institutional administrative structures and fosters a climate in which innovative solutions to complex social problems and enhancement of quality of life can be pursued and realised” (DSCFA, 1997), was no longer in place.

Alongside this shift in the purpose of, control over and funding for the community based organisations, the statutory anti-poverty and equality infrastructure that had evolved in previous decade was deconstructed and reconfigured. The Combat Poverty Agency was subsumed by the Department of Social and Family Affairs, relinquishing over two decades of

freedom to criticise government policy where necessary and to shine a light into forgotten corners of deprivation. The Equality Authority was considerably reduced in size as it was merged with the Human Rights Commission to form Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission. These changes had a significant impact on the nature of community engagement in Ireland as opportunities for bringing together workers from disparate parts of the country, working in different contexts on different issues waned. Previously, community workers combined the generation of services at a local level, catalysing and developing advocacy for and within communities and networking among and across communities. Networking was important for access to information, to people and power structures further up the line.

Commentators suggest that there has been a monumental shift in the landscape between the state and civil society, with Lee suggesting that the state has disengaged from integrated action with the community and voluntary sector (2016:39) and Harvey identifying a "redrawing of the lines between the state and the voluntary and community sector" (2016:11). He suggests that there are potentially three lenses with which to examine the rationale that underpinned this shift. One lens views the process as the emergent primacy of the market project, evidenced in the global shift to neoliberalism and the privatisation of all possible aspects of the state. A second lens is that of dissent. Research into the experience of community development organisations revealed many examples of excessive engagement and conditionality emanating from the state, in their role as funders. Many felt that this was targeted towards organisations that sought to critique existing policies and advocate for new approaches.

Finally, and most relevance for this research, Harvey analyses the trajectory of change in support for civil society using the lens of representative and participative democracy. He suggests that differing understandings of these two forms of democracy and their potential interplay was key in informing policies adopted by key ministerial figures and enacted by their departments. He considers the experience of the Irish government in negotiating social partnership and the evolving role of the community and voluntary sector in that process as significant in shaping subsequent events. He posits that this disconnect between national and

European understandings of governance and the important role civil society performs in terms of advocating for improved policies, as a watch-dog the implementation of existing policies and in ensuring that public policy assumes perspective beyond the electoral cycle has had a significant impact on the experience of Irish community and voluntary organisations. Harvey suggests that there may also have been concerns, in some quarters, about the potential for enhanced political engagement among those who are involved in community development (2016: 12).

It could however be argued that a new stage of community participation is emerging in Ireland. In the wake of the strategic dismantling of the sector, there have been green shoots of development once more. Issues such as climate justice, migration and sustainable development have brought to the fore once again the global nature of many of the issues that are of concern to community representatives and their communities. Alongside this, there have been, in recent years, a number of successful social movements, combining top-down and grassroots agendas for significant social change. Campaigns leading to yes votes in referenda to legislate for same sex marriage and the repeal of the eight amendment to allow for the development of relevant legislation have brought together large swathes of people campaigning for change. Other, earlier, successes such as the Water Charges campaigns mobilised communities, particularly in working class areas, in a manner that had not been seen in many years. The recognition by the state of Traveller ethnicity and the ongoing process regarding mother and baby homes are also examples of collective action leading to state recognition of past wrongs.

In June 2017, the Irish government established a new Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) with a mission to 'promote rural and community development and to support vibrant, inclusive and sustainable communities throughout Ireland' (DRCD: 2017: 5). Its recently published five year strategy sets out an ambition for, and commitment to working collaboratively with "relevant Government Departments and agencies to develop participatory structures… and to secure meaningful engagement of marginalised communities in decision-making" (DRCD: 2017: 34).

Chapter 4 Methodology

Introduction

At the core of any doctoral thesis is the design, execution and description of an operable research project. This generation of data provides the 'grist for the mill' of analysis, as well as the material with which to explore the theoretical and operational frameworks selected by the researcher. It provides also the raw materials with which the author constructs their argument. Bonnett suggests that an argument is "a form of involvement; a willingness to participate actively in the pursuit of intellectual insight and knowledge" and contends, "Good arguments emerge from a profusion of ideas, a clutter of thoughts" (2008: 6). This contention reflects the shape of the research process, where a willingness to ask questions of oneself, of others and of the ideas that permeate our practice, allows us to work through a 'clutter of thoughts' and to arrive, or at least pause, at a moment of insight, where some new knowledge, like a 'good argument', emerges. The following chapter sets out to sort through some of the 'clutter' and to describe the methodological approach adopted by this study.

Grix advises against method-led research, suggesting that choosing a method before settling on a question goes against the "logic of interconnectedness" (2010: 154) that he deems to be the building blocks of research. Bearing this advice in mind, this section of the thesis approximately follows his recommended directional approach, beginning with a discussion of the ontological positioning of the study and, from there, setting out the epistemological approach that guided the research project (Grix, 2010: 68). Having discussed these foundational elements, the chapter will go on to sketch out the methodology of the study, explaining the research strategy adopted and the research methods used both in gathering and in analysing the data collected. There will also be a discussion of the ethical considerations that underpinned the study, as well as a discussion of the limitations of this particular piece of research.

Ontological and Epistemological Positioning

A clearly articulated ontological positon is an essential starting point for all social research. According to Grix, if we cannot articulate "what it is that we can know about this social and political reality that is thought to exist" (2010: 177), then we are unable to engage in a critical conversation about how we might come to know it. Social research does not exist in a bubble. On the contrary, all research is tied to visions of how social reality should be studied (Bryman, 2008: 19). Neither are methods are neutral tools. Given its purpose of "exploring, describing, understanding, explaining, predicting, changing or evaluating some aspect of the social world" (Blaikie, 1993: 4), social research must consider what exactly research produces and for whom.

Positioning on the spectrum of ontological positions has significant implications for the type of knowledge that may emerge from any research process. The spectrum moves from objectivism, asserting that reality is 'out there', existing beyond our awareness and, as a result, can be discovered and measured, to constructionism, allowing for no objective reality and meanings are not fixed, but are generated by people's interaction with the world (Morgan & Smirch, 1980: 495). This study locates itself on the constructionist end of this spectrum. In highlighting the role of social actors, it suggests "social phenomena and categories are not only produced through social interaction but that they are in a constant state of revision" (Bryman, 2008: 20). As a result, "both language and knowledge are seen as socially constructed, rather than as an unmediated reflection or 'mirror' of an objectively knowable reality" (Nightingale & Cromby, 2002: 703). Constructionism provides an ontological foundation for approaches to knowledge generation such as interpretivism, critical theory, structuration theory and feminism, which are, according to Blaikie, concerned with processes, constructs, practices and perspectives (1993: 100) and, as such, provides an appropriate framework within which to generate answers to the questions posed in this study.

At the core of epistemologies in the constructivist tradition, is the interpretivist approach, where knowledge derives from the everyday, and where a social researcher is recognised as having a key role to play in the interpretations, or construction of what is recognised as

knowledge (Mason, 2017: 21). Chambers argues for "a self-critical epistemological awareness – being critically aware of how knowledge is formed by the interplay of what is outside, and what is inside, ourselves" (2005: 84). This awareness, he argues, can lead to modifying how we seek to generate knowledge by challenging the approaches and methodologies we use, it helps to offset our mind-sets and orientations and allows us to be more sensitive to and aware of the realities of others. More importantly, it can help to "make real the rhetoric of partnership, empowerment, ownership, participation, accountability and transparency" (2005: 84).

Operational Framework

The central research question that informs this project seeks to examine the realm of participation by community representatives with an interest in social inclusion in collaborative governance spaces, asking what their experiences in these spaces are. In doing so, the study seeks to apply the lens of collaborative governance processes to local level governance structures in Ireland.

This section outlines the operational framework that shapes the data generation strategy and analytical approach taken by this research. Earlier chapters have outlined the evolution of, and context for, collaborative governance processes and it is clear that the concept has emerged from, and is utilised across, a wide range of contexts. As stated previously, this research project seeks to explore and document the experiences of community representatives who have engaged in collaborative governance processes in Irish settings. The research questions are highly interpretivist, seeking to explore both the structures and the experiences of a subset of participants.

In developing this operational framework, attention has focused on two key contributions to the discussion on collaborative governance, the collaborative governance model, incorporating the key features of collaborative governance structures, developed by Ansell and Gash (2008) and, having built upon the earlier model and subsequent empirical research, a later integrative framework for collaborative governance presented by Emerson et al.

(2012). Those two key contributions provide a basis for the ‘where’ and the ‘what’ of the study, providing criteria for the type of structure that can be considered a collaborative governance structure and, further, by following the multi-dimensional framework constructed by Emerson et al. (2012), shaping a thematic guide for the data collection. The ‘who’ of the study is also identified in the framework outlined in the table below, with Williams’ (2012) and Rugkasa et al.’s (2007) work on boundary spanners providing a guide to identifying the targeted interviewees.

As has been demonstrated in the literature review, collaborative governance processes require that ‘boundary spanners’ exist within both state and non-state organisations; i.e., those who are tasked to engage with others in other sectors. However, the scale of the challenge taken on by boundary spanners from community organisations is different, and in many ways more considerable than for others. Differences in power, resources and potential to control outcomes alongside pressures to demonstrate mandate and accountability combine to complicate the role played by boundary-spanning community representatives.

To develop the operational framework outlined below, this study developed a series of indicators linked to the three dimensions of collaborative governance processes outlined by Emerson et al. (2012). Looking first at broader system context, the framework sought to establish information about the antecedent structures which led to the collaborative governance contacts, explored the incentives that encouraged community representatives to engage structures and sought to examine the power dimensions at the outset. It then sought to examine the collaborative governance regime itself, selecting to examine a number of key dimensions of the regime in order to gain a better understanding of how the structures operated and how the community representatives experienced their involvement in the various structures.

An additional element that was integrated into the framework was that of the boundary spanner. The literature review in Chapter 2 explored the idea of boundary spanners and

sought to establish the important role that such individuals, those who moved between different institutional spaces, played within collaborative governance structures. The framework below integrates an enquiry of the boundary-spanning role of community representatives into this study, exploring further the experiences of community representatives and eliciting their views on their own skills and the challenges of participation within the broader collaborative structures. By focusing in more depth on the experience, skills and strategies of the community representatives through the lens of the boundary spanner, it is hoped to better understand the role played by them and to examine their knowledge, skills and experiences using existing classifications. Finally, the operational framework seeks to guide our exploration on the outcomes or changes catalysed by the collaborative governance structures that we are examining. This is allows us to ascertain whether there are, in fact, outcomes that achieve the social inclusion targets articulated by the community representatives, and the organisations they represent, interviewed in this study.

Key Conceptual elements	**Indicators**	**Indicative interview questions / data from documentary sources**
System context / Starting conditions		
▪ Power / resources	- Level of resources available / provided to support participation	▪ Institutional arrangements for the Collaborative Governance mechanism (CG)
▪ Incentives to participate	- Clarity of purpose in participating	▪ Why did you get involved in the CG structure?
▪ Antecedent structures / history	- Impact of historical context	▪ Documentary sources
The collaborative space / Collaborative Governance Regime		
▪ The nature of engagement	- Assessment of engagement experience - Location of power / agenda setting	▪ Who holds a leadership role in the CG structure? ▪ How are the priorities of the structure decided upon?
▪ Trust	- Perceptions of level of trust in existence - Changes (+ and -) in trust over time	How do you rate the level of trust?
▪ Dialogue process / experience	- Opportunities to speak and be heard - Nature and style of dialogues	▪ Can all members can participate equally?
▪ Shared commitment / Shared motivation	- Level of shared commitment / motivation	▪ Is there a shared commitment / motivation to the CG?

		▪ What are the main opportunities of the CG structure?
▪ Shared understanding	- Level of shared understanding - Technical expertise required	▪ Do all members of the CG structures understand issues / problems in the same way?
▪ Capacity	- Assessment own capacity and the capacity of others	▪ Do you have the capacity to participate fully in the CG process?
▪ Boundary-spanning experiences / challenges	- Ability to build relationships and find solutions - Capacity to manage conflict - Communication style / experience - Capacity to link collaboration with larger agenda - Dangers of boundary spanning	▪ When/if conflicts emerge, how are they addressed?
Outcomes / Results		
▪ Change achieved	Evidence of social change as a result of collaboration.	▪ What do you think the successes of the CG structure have been? ▪ What do you think the failures of the CG structure have been? ▪ What have the main challenges of the CG structure been?

Table 3: Integrated Operational Framework (drawing from Ansel and Gash, Emerson et al., Williams and Rugkasa et al.).

Situating the Researcher

While my current role is located within a university setting, my own professional background is in community work. I hold a professional qualification in community work and almost two decades of experience within the field. Some of this experience was gained while working in jobs with a title of 'community worker'. However, other experience was gained in different settings, some of it crossing the boundaries from community development spaces into intergovernmental and other types of organisation. In these cases, my job title may not have been that of 'community worker', however the approach I applied to my professional practice was guided and informed by community work principles and values. Where possible, in carrying out my roles, I integrated an analysis that sought to be collective, actions that were inclusive and worked towards outcomes that went beyond the individual and resonated at a structural, as well as an individual level. Much of my own work had focus on social inclusion outcomes and was often in spaces where other stakeholders held different analyses and sought to achieve different outcomes. The experience of working in these diverse settings

piqued my interest in the experiences of other boundary spanners and, ultimately informed the direction of this enquiry.

Research Design

Bonnett notes that, "Without a framework with which to interpret them, facts do not constitute an argument… They need to be analysed, explained and provided with context. Otherwise they are, quite literally, meaningless." (2008:7). A good research design should allow for the development of a context within which to situate the data gathered and knowledge generated by any study. In an attempt to do this, this section will address the decisions made in developing this study, in carrying out the research and in presenting and analysing the findings that are outlined in later chapters.

This study is grounded ontologically in constructionism and embedded in the interpretivist tradition and adopts a qualitative approach to answering these guiding questions. This approach views knowledge as derived from "the everyday" and recognises the research participants as experts, valuing the information and insight they share. However, it recognises also the role, and influence, of the researcher in constructing and interpreting, what is ultimately recognised and reported as knowledge (Coy, 2006: 422). Qualitative methods allow the researcher to examine in more depth the actual experience of individuals who have lived experience in the area of inquiry. In this case, doing so provides a voice to the social inclusion representatives and community workers who were involved in collaborative governance processes.

This study adopts a generic qualitative approach. While there are critics of this term, pointing to potential issues of congruence in the research design, Kahlke notes that, as is provided above, a clear articulation of the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning a study can mediate this (2014: 48). She argues that "By borrowing "textures" or "overtones" at epistemological and theoretical levels or techniques and procedures at the method-level, generic qualitative studies can draw on the strengths of established methodologies while

maintaining flexibility" (2014: 39) Such flexibility is of particular usefulness in the context of this study which is engaging with concepts and literature across a number of areas.

Data Generation Strategy

This section will provide an overview of the data generation strategy adopted by this study and describe the steps taken to collect and analyse the empirical material that was used to generate findings and to develop the conclusions of this study. Following Mason, the term data generation is used rather than data collection. The idea of generating data, rather than collecting it, allows the researcher to be seen as engaged in constructing knowledge about the world (2018: 21).

Sample

An oft-cited challenge of qualitative research is the capacity to make comparisons across samples (King et al., 2019; Mason, 2017; Bryman, 2008). However, as Bonnett points out, comparative approaches are nonetheless concerned with "the examination of how things that are held in common vary in form within different contexts. They are concerned with both similarity and difference" (2008: 35). In the context of this study, there is a focus on both similarity and difference. The collaborative governance structures that have been selected have emerged in different contexts, are situated within different spaces and are tasked with addressing different complex problems. Nonetheless, stakeholders across the structures have similar profiles and the processes that have emerged in attempting to address share patterns as well as differ.

Bearing this in mind, this research adopted a purposive sampling methodology. Spicker (2006) suggests that purposive samples are often the best way to generate the type of data that can lead to the development of theory grounded in practice, or practice grounded in reflection. He defends the deliberate selection of "key groups (people selected because they perform a particular role in a process), structural samples (people who occupy defined positions and so have a distinct perspective to offer) and stakeholder research (work with people who are directly affected by a policy or engaged with it)" (2006: 9). This, he suggests, allows the

researcher to develop a more nuanced picture of the object of analysis, informed by those who engaged closely with it. Following this perspective, data generation for this project was based on semi-structured, in-depth interviews community representatives who have engaged in collaborative governance processes in Ireland. As will be seen below, three collaborative governance structures, drawn from different institutional, geographical and issue-based contexts were selected for study. Examples from two geographical locations of each structure were selected and, from these, interviewees were drawn community representatives who were participating in these structures.

Criteria for Selection: Structures

The collaborative governance landscape in Ireland, the origins of the various structures and the relevance of these development processes has been dealt with in earlier chapters. This section discusses the rationale for the case selection for this study in further detail. Following Ansell and Gash, the focus is on collaborative governance structures, which “bring multiple stakeholders together in common forums with public agencies to engage in consensus-oriented decision making” (2008: 543). A defining feature of these structures is that “the focus of collaboration is on public policy or public management” (*Ibid.*). Ansell and Gash (2008) identify six key features of these spaces:

1. the forum is initiated by public agencies or institutions;
2. participants in the forum include non-state actors;
3. participants engage directly in decision making (*or in substantial advisory roles*);
4. the forum is formally organized and meets collectively;
5. the focus of collaboration is on public policy or public management.;
6. the forum aims to make decisions by consensus (even if consensus is not achieved in practice).

There are a number of structures in in Irish governance that meet most of these criteria and the research sites were selected from among these. This list was compiled after a review of national government department websites to identify existing local collaborative governance structures across government policy areas. It does not seek to be an exhaustive list but is rather an attempt to present structures that are addressing public policy issues that are of particular relevance community representatives concerned with social inclusion.

Governance Structure	Forum Initiator	Non State Actors	Beyond Consultation	Meets Collectively	Decisions by consensus	Public policy	Social Inclusion Focus
Children and Young People's Services Committee	Department of Children and Youth Affairs	x	x	x	x	x	
City/County Childcare Committee	Department of Children and Youth Affairs	X	x	x	x	x	
Joint Policing Committees	Department of Justice and Equality	X	x	x	x	x	
Local Community Development Committee	Department of Rural and Community Development	X	x	x	x	x	x
Local Drugs & Alcohol Task Force	Department of Health	X	x	x	x	x	x
Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee	Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government	X	x		x	x	x
Local Traveller Health Unit	Department of Health	X	x	x	x	x	x
Special Policy Committee	Local Authority	X	x	x	x	x	x

Table 4: Overview of Selected Local Governance Structures (Compiled by Researcher).

Final selection of the structures took into account the need to represent as wide a range of institutional, geographical and issue-based concerns as is possible in a small-scale study such as this one. While the majority of these structures were initiated at a national level, via central government departments, each operates at a local or regional level. Gaventa and Valderrama note that, in calling for increased participation of civil society in activities that traditionally formed part of the public sphere, a focus on local governance can "improve the efficiency of public services, that will make local government more accountable, and that will deepen democracy – complementing representative forms with more participatory forms"(1999: 4).

As the primary body co-ordinating and implementing local and community development in each local authority area, the LCDC is the primary structure tasked with bringing together a range of stakeholders to address a range of issues and is therefore an obvious choice for study. It is more recently established than many of the other structures, but nonetheless an important site for research.

While their terms of reference does not explicitly name social inclusion, their focus on Traveller-specific issues and the centrality of social inclusion to that work, the LTACC and the LTHU were both deemed to meet these criteria. However, given the particular, and current, challenges faced by Travellers in accessing culturally appropriate accommodation, the LTACC, rather than the LTHU, was selected as one of the research sites.

The LDATF was also selected as site for study. While the structure is embedded in the Department of Health, the intractable problem it engages with is of great interest to a number of different stakeholders from distinctly different disciplinary backgrounds, including health, housing, justice and others. This provided an opportunity to explore how diverse stakeholders might generate a collaborative process.

While this research is qualitative, seeking to provide an in-depth snapshot of a particular setting, it is acknowledged that features such as the geographic and demographic setting, existing dynamics in a particular area and the capacity of stakeholders can impact upon any given structure It is hoped that, by providing more than one example of each structure, these impacts can be mitigated and that some generalisations can be drawn from the data generated. To this end, an attempt was made to provide as broad a geographical range as possible within the limited number of cases. The table below provides an overview of the geographical and urban/rural spread of the selected cases:

Collaborative Governance Structure	***Area 1***	***Area 2***
Local Community Development Committee	• Urban • Eastern Region	• Rural • Western Region

Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee	• Urban • Western Region	• Rural • Northern Region
Local Drug and Alcohol Task Force	• Urban • Eastern Region	• Urban • Southern Region

Table 5: Overview of Research Sites.

Criteria for Selection: Interviewees

This research is concerned with the experiences of the 'non-state' actors, specifically individuals occupying the role of community representatives in the collaborative structures described above. Six research sites were selected and, from each of these, two community representatives were selected for interview. The aim was to interview twelve research participants in total. It was hoped that this would generate sufficient data, with interviewees range of responses beginning to echo each other, thus reaching "saturation point" (King et al., 2019: 56) and no further interviews would be necessary. As a precaution, should this not be the case, an alternate research site for each structure was identified and suitable interviewees were contacted about potentially taking part in the research. This was in place, should the initial interviews not have yielded sufficient data for analysis. It was not necessary to utilise this contingency.

Members of each of the governance structures selected for study are listed publicly. Following a review of the membership, community representatives on each were identified. Around the country, there were some structures which did not have the full cohort of representatives listed. Acknowledging this, and in an attempt to access participants who had relvant experience within the structures, the interviewee selection process adopted a snowball sampling methodology (Mason, 2018, 107). Using existing networks, potential research participants were contacted and provided with information about the intention and purpose of the research. Contacts were invited to participate or to refer onwards any other potential interviewees or potential research sites. Through this approach, nine potential research sites were identified, of which six were selected. Using the snowball sampling strategy, community representatives, who fulfilled the criteria set out above, were contacted by telephone, with follow-up email communications inviting individuals to participate and providing them with

an overview of the research project, a participant information sheet, and a consent form. In total, twelve 'boundary spanners' were interviewed. With saturation point achieved at this number, it was not deemed necessary to contact additional sites in order to generate further data. The table below outlines the profiles of the interviewees who participated in the research:

Collaborative Governance Structure	***Interviewee 1***	***Interviewee 2***
Local Community Development Committee Area 1	• Male • Community Work Qualification	• Male • Community Work Understanding
Local Community Development Committee Area 2	• Female • Community Work Qualification	• Male • Community Work Understanding
Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee Area 1	• Female • Community Work Qualification	• Male • Community Work Understanding
Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee Area 2	• Female • Community Work Qualification	• Female • Community Work Understanding
Local Drug and Alcohol Task Force Area 1	• Female • Community Work Qualification	• Male • Community Work Understanding
Local Drug and Alcohol Task Force Area 2	• Male • Community Work Qualification	• Male • Community Work Understanding

Table 6: Profile of Research Participants.

Method for Data Collection and Analysis

In discussing qualitative research, Grix asserts "no one method is better than any other" (2010: 125). However, it is important to adopt the method that is most suitable to answer the question that has been posed. For this piece of research, following Mason's assertion that "knowledge is situated and contextual and therefore the job of the interview is to ensure that the relevant contexts are brought into focus so that situated knowledge can be produced" (2017: 110), data was generated through the use of semi-structured, in-depth interviews. This approach allowed participants to provide detailed and nuanced descriptions of their experiences of participating in the collaborative government structures.

Following the operational framework presented earlier in this chapter, a topic guide was developed to provide some shape to the interview (Appendix 2). Four key themes were explored:

- Theme 1: General System Context
- Theme 2: Collaborative Governance Regime
- Theme 3: Collaborative Actions & Impacts
- Theme 4: Boundary Spanners

In addition, the interviews opened with a section exploring interviewees understanding of community development processes and principles. While there were questions identified under each of the themes, some flexibility was included in the design to allow, where appropriate, an organic conversation to emerge.

Interviews were carried out at a time and location (in a private area to safeguard confidentiality) convenient to participants. The interviews lasted approximately one hour and ninety minutes. Each interview was recorded using an audio recording program on the researcher's telephone and immediately saved to a secure Dropbox Folder. Each interview was transcribed in full and each participant received a copy of the transcript, with an invitation to review and sign off on their transcript, adding any clarifications that may have been required. Upon receipt of sign-off from the interviewees, the data was anonymised and assigned relevant nomenclature.

The research integrated an inductive approach, attempting to build theory through observation and analysis of the data with deductive elements, such as the application of overarching themes to the interview guide and subsequent thematic analysis of the data generated. This approach, suggest Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, allows for both the recognition of '"an important moment" (2006: 83) in the data, as well as following a coding guide that was developed based on the research question and the theoretical framework outlined above. Throughout the process, attention was given to reflexivity, bearing in mind the role of the researcher and acknowledging, as Garnham notes, that

> To generate data from a sampled data source, researchers interact with the data source using qualitative research methods within an overall strategy of inquiry. Many qualitative researchers recognize that by interacting with the data source, they cannot remain external to what is being studied and will have an effect on the data generated. The effect that researchers have on the data generated extends from the decisions that they make regarding the theoretical influences and design of the study as well as the beliefs, attitudes, values, and orientations of the researchers (Garnham, in Given, Ed, 2008: 192).

Evidence of the influence of the research can be seen throughout the research process. However, contrary to some traditional approaches to research, it is suggested that an awareness of the theoretical assumptions that inform these choices and an acknowledgement that the researcher can “never entirely step outside of their own position in producing their analysis” (King et al., 2019:259) is a strength rather than a weakness of reflexive qualitative research approaches.

The process of data analysis was embedded in the practice of thematic analysis. King et al. define themes as “recurrent and distinctive features of participants’ accounts, characterising particular perceptions and/or experiences, which the researcher see as relevant to the research question” (2019: 200). Validity can be viewed as a significant challenge of thematic analysis (Mason, 2018:240), one which can be addressed by being able to set out the approach taken to the assignment and interpretation of themes, demonstrating where decisions were made by researcher along the way, providing evidence of repetition of examples across cases and highlighting distinctive aspects to the data.

In this study, a three-stage process of data analysis was adopted (King et al., 2019: 204). As stated above, the study integrated both inductive and deductive approaches to the analysis of the data. Following Mason the analysis was informed by literal, interpretive and reflexive readings of the data (Mason, 2017: 191). The first stage of analysis was inductive, with the interview data read in full, in order to identify and assign descriptive codes to interviewee’s

accounts of their experiences. Initial engagement with the transcripts sought to examine the language used, with further attention given to meaning. The second stage of coding added a deductive dimension to the analysis. At this point, where codes appeared to have some common meaning, codes were grouped together. Emergent themes were also grouped alongside the four themes that shaped the interview guide, developed in line with the operational framework. This stage of coding focused more on the interpretation of meaning from the data. Finally, stage three of coding allowed the data to be coded under a number overarching themes, including and beyond the themes identified in the interview guide and relating to the concepts introduced in the literature review.

The researcher utilised NVivo qualitative analysis software to assist in the organising, documenting and coding of the data generated. This approach assisted in the development of a systematic approach to data analysis. Table 7 shows a number of the codes that were developed by the researcher during the analysis process. These codes were used to interpret and classify the data for presentation and discussion under a number of core themes.

Name		Files	References	Modified By
Civil Society		6	56	MOS
Boundary Spanners		8	41	MOS
Collaborative Governance		4	31	MOS
Policy partnerships		8	25	MOS
Community Development		4	23	MOS
Governance theory		5	20	MOS
Community		2	18	MOS
Rationale for research		8	17	MOS
Participation		4	14	MOS
Davies & Chorianopoulos 2018		1	14	MOS
Participatory Democracy		2	12	MOS
Democratic renewal		5	11	MOS
the state		7	9	MOS
Fraser 2005 Community		1	9	MOS
Critique govt		4	8	MOS
Complex problems		3	8	MOS
core executive		2	7	MOS
Political Dimensions		4	7	MOS
Democracy		3	7	MOS

Misc	2	5	MOS
Community Led Development	2	4	MOS
Managerialism	3	4	MOS
Global Governance	3	4	MOS
Central Govt	2	3	MOS
Power	1	3	MOS
Corporatism	1	2	MOS
Citizenship	2	2	MOS
Multi-Level Governance	1	1	MOS
Transformational Participation	1	1	MOS

Table 7: Nvivo Codes Developed by Researcher.

Ethics

Denscombe (2002) describes ethics as what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. This, he suggests, "calls for a moral perspective on things, rather than a practical perspective" (2002: 142). As King et al. note, "We have ethical responsibilities not only to those who participate but also those for whom the knowledge is produced" (2019: 29). This study has generated knowledge that hopes to be useful to the participants in contextualising their own experience, to current practitioners by providing insight into collaborative governance structures and to future participants in collaborative governance processes by providing a snapshot of the current situation.

Given that, ''research does involve collecting data from people about people" (Creswell, 2007: 87) it is important to put in place a process that can be referred to in the event of concerns emerging at any time during the research process. To this end, following the presentation of a detailed ethical approval application, this research was granted approval by the DAPPSS Ethic Committee. The section below briefly outlines some of the key areas covered by that approval.

Power Dynamics

When considering the ethical dimensions of any piece of research, a useful starting point, as advised by Guzman et al., following Carr and Kemmis, is to ask whose interests are being served. In other words, for whom, by whom and about whom is the research proposed (2016:

29). In every engagement, there is a multiplicity of power imbalances with factors such as gender, age, race, culture and perceived expertise coming into play. If, as Guzman et al. suggest, "Every time we write things down it becomes a 'truth'" (2016: 27), then it is essential to ensure that those whose truth is being documented, are given due respect and, regardless of the intentions of the researcher, it is essential to engage with participants perceptions. This may or may not include the challenge of negotiating, as Guzman et al. identify it, the "high table of the academy".

Rubin notes that, "In creating a relationship with interviewees, researchers often have to cross the boundary from being an outsider to being an insider" (2005: 86). I am a professionally qualified community work practitioner and still engage in a number of community organisations as a participant and, therefore to some extent, 'an insider' but am inevitably, given my current role within the university system, 'an outsider'. In seeking to engage with community representatives, often with longer periods of professional experience than my own, there may have been complex power-dynamics to be negotiated. This was addressed through reflexive processes and an analysis of power structures and their implications that is central to good research practice. It was proposed that this research project should engage with these power dynamics in a reflexive manner throughout the research.

Informed consent, Confidentiality and Data Management

All issues regarding informed consent, confidentiality and data management were managed in accordance with Maynooth University policies and practices. While every attempt has been made to ensure participants anonymity, in recognising the public listing of members of the various collaborative structures that are being explored, it cannot be guaranteed that informed readers may reconstruct their identity. However, participants are aware of this risk and have had the opportunity to review and sign off on transcripts of their own interviews and, to this end, all are confident that they have shared relevant and appropriate information.

Limitations

All research necessarily has limitations. The limitations on an individual researcher, working on a time-bound project mean that the capacity to generate large amounts of data is limited. Attempts to mitigate this were integrated into the research design by developing a focused operational framework and related interview guide, which led to the generation of rich data from research participants, as well as by the adoption of saturation point approach to data gathering.

The limitations to qualitative research generally, have been outlined elsewhere and, to that end, this research proposes to provide only a 'snapshot' of the broader collaborative governance landscape in Ireland and does not purport to offer definitive assertions. It provides rather view of a particular moment of time, from the perspective of a particular group of people. Hollander observes, "at their very core, community problems and the demands of scholarship have unique and distinct goals which are not easy to reconcile" (2011: 265). As observed by Oswald et al., there has long been a struggle to create knowledge that is "rigorous in its own right, and relevant and useful to those whose lives and futures are potentially affected" (2016: 1).

A further limitation of the research is the small sample selected for interview. On the one hand, this reflects the relatively small number of people that are engaged as community representatives. Another limitation is the impact of electoral cycles on local governance structures. A local election took place in May 2019. Because of this, the structures selected for enquiry were limited in their activities, due to canvassing activities in advance of the election and because of the reconfiguration of the membership in order to include newly elected local representatives afterwards. This had an impact upon the timeline for data gathering but this was resolved by tight scheduling of the interviews.

Authenticity

Authenticity is an important issue for qualitative research generally. In seeking to ensure that the research "is genuine and credible not only in terms of participants' lived experiences but

also with respect to the wider political and social implications of research" (James, *in Given*, Ed, 2008: 44), there should be a 'catalytic' aspect to a study. That is to say that some form of action should be stimulated on the part of participants. In the case of the current study, this action could be considered to be reflexive practice in the context of the community workers and other research participants involved.

Conclusion

This chapter sought to describe the methodological approach adopted by this study. To begin, it elaborates upon the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpinned the decisions made during the development and design of this research. It then examines the context in which the research evolved and, set out the operational framework for the study, establishing the concepts that informed the development of the data generation strategy and guidelines for interviewing research participants. The chapter also outlines the steps taken to identify appropriate research participants, as well as the strategy adopted to analyse the data that will fuel the findings and analysis. Finally, this chapter provided an overview of the ethical considerations associated with this study.

Chapter 5 Findings

Introduction

This research project set out to examine whether participation in collaborative governance spaces helps to advance the interests of representatives of community based organisations with a focus on social inclusion. In doing this, the study sought to address two sub-questions. The first of these aimed to examine the experiences of boundary spanners from community based organisations who engage in collaborative governance spaces and the second considered how the capacity of these boundary spanners to engage in the spaces might be enhanced.

This chapter seeks to report on the findings described by research participants, in an attempt to answer these questions. Integrating elements of Ansel and Gash's (2007) work on collaborative governance spaces with Emerson et al.'s (2012) integrative framework for collaborative governance as a guide against which to measure participant's experiences of engagement, created a framework within which to report and record their experiences within collaborative governance structures. Interviewees were asked to consider their experiences on the structures they participated in, as well as their own role, spanning boundaries between state and civil society, in representing a social inclusion voice on the various fora.

As described in the methodology chapter, an interview guide was developed through the construction of an operational framework that encompasses the proposed collaborative governance framework and an examination of the role of boundary spanners. This provided thematic areas for discussion during the interview. The interviewees initially discussed the system context within which the collaborative governance structure was framed. They went on to discuss how the systems and dynamics played out, considering the regime that emerged from this and finally, having reflected on the outcomes or outputs of the structures they have been involved with, interviewees considered their own role as 'boundary spanners', reflecting on the challenges and opportunities associated with their engagement across different spaces. This chapter considers and presents findings under each of these themes.

Starting Conditions and System Context

The research began by examining the starting conditions of the various governance structures that participants were involved with. The collaborative governance literature highlights that the system context within which these emerge is influenced by the political, legal, socioeconomic, environmental and other influences that were in play at the time of establishment and throughout the lifetime of the collaborative governance structure. This context, on the one hand, generates opportunities and on the other establishes the constraints of collaboration, at the outset, and over time.

Earlier chapters have set out the legislative, policy, and institutional contexts for the various committees and this section seeks to further illustrate pertinent aspects of the broader system context, in this case, from the perspective of research participants. As was established already, the starting context of each of the three structures under examination was quite different. The oldest of structures, the LDATF was established initially through a local level initiative, later replicated at national level. The LTACC was established as a result of national legislation, with local committees set up to replicate the national structure (the NTACC). Finally, the most recently established structure, the LCDC was set up under the auspices of local government reform and replaces an existing structure, the County Development Boards (CDBs).

Power and Resources

As noted above, each of the structures considered emerged from, and into, different system contexts, with differing social, economic and political influences at play during the establishment of the structure. This had significant implications for the level of resources available to participants and on the sorts of supports available to facilitate participation. In the case of the LDATF, participants recalled that, at the outset, there was an attempt to facilitate the building of relationships between the various stakeholders. This work was given budgetary support and representatives cited this as creating a basis for good working relationships into the future. They ascribed this support as emerging from the particular

political context of that time, which had seen a growth in support of local independent politicians and a sympathetic ear from, and shared analysis with, the government of the day. One noted "*had it been perhaps a different government, or somebody who didn't have that same analysis on it, it might have been very different*" (LDATF 1). All of the LDATF research participants had been involved in or alongside the task force structures since, or not long after, their establishment and they all shared the perspective that the system context had altered considerably during that period. One noted, "*What they are now is nothing like what they were when they started, and yet there are so many similar faces around the table*" (LDATF 1)

A similar process of investment in development work at the outset was identified at one of the LTACC sites, where additional funding was allocated from another programme that "*was investing quite a bit of money in building relationships, addressing conflict, restorative practice, looking developing frameworks around addressing conflict"* (LTACC 1). This, they suggested, allowed the structure to "*Up the ante*" (LTACC 1) and led to a more opportune system context within which to work from. This is in direct contrast to the experience of the other LTACC site where there was little focus on the broader context or, despite requests from the civil society participants to do so, any attempt to build understanding at the outset of each new round of the committee. This they felt was a significant factor in creating the conditions for a breakdown of the structure, as occurred during the last configuration of the committee, with civil society participants withdrawing from the structure.

Most commonly, participants identified limited access to power or to resources to encourage or support their participation. As one participant noted, the local structures generally sought to mirror national partnership arrangements, noting that, *"There was a social partnership idea around the task forces. It was that everybody was to get around the table together. The departments got more seats around the table, but there were sufficient seats around the table*" (LDADF 1). In terms of the institutional arrangements that were put in place, the research participants reported that, by now, power resided firmly in the hands of the state, with resources emanating from that sector and agenda setting being dominated by them. One

research participant noted, "*It's very much directed by the local authority. They have a chief officer who can act as a resource to promote, so kind of sets the direction, in conjunction with the chair*" (LCDC 1).

Participants observed that there had been a marked decline in the resources available for the various structures, despite, in each case, an increased demand on their function. This was ascribed to a variety of factors such as the financial crisis, the dismantling of broader social support, cuts to the community development and other sectors. This, alongside increased demands in terms of organisational capacity and governance, even for voluntary organisations. As one interviewee reflected,

> *Every so often there's a kind of a transformation based on variables that you don't control, whether it's economic as it has been with the downturn, that throws a variable into the equation that you have to respond. So the organizations that are trying to do that, including ourselves, are having to go out and fundraise money to try and do that when they're already stretched to keep projects going. So there's something about that that needs to be addressed in terms of the going forward across all the sectors in terms of what the local authorities look for, what the Health Service Executive looks for, what all the financial regulations, what the approved housing bodies etc. You need support to be able to make yourself compliant* (LDATF 3).

Interviewees reflected that the current situation with regard to resources had become the standard, with only those who have been involved over an extended period being able to recall the sort of conditions that had been in place previously. One noted that

> *We forget that 20 years ago we were actually sitting around the local table, and then even the project table together, and that that had an influence in the way things were emerging. And that has changed, and the excuse of, "No, you can't have travel allowance to go to those meetings," started that, and now it's gone to that actually at a governance level, you can't do that as an employee of this statutory body* (GB).

Incentives to Participate

While the research participants noted that the institutional arrangements of the various collaborative governance structures offered little in the way of access to power to the civil society representatives, there were nonetheless incentives for them to get involved. These incentives included access to financial resources, as one participant concisely put it "*Well money. Because that's why, money … So we can set priorities and then we can get them funded*" (LCDC 1). Other participants identified the importance of being able to shape emerging responses to old and emerging issues, noting that they felt that, "*okay, something is happening. Maybe we could do more. Of course, there could be more money thrown at it. But, it felt like there was something happening. People wanted to feel like they were doing something*" (LDATF 1). This desire to be engaged at a more strategic level was reflected in the words of other research participants, who felt that they "*needed to have a strategic response and it had to be a partnership response ... having a very overt objective of getting involved in social policy and social change, not just in providing the service*" (LDATF 3).

Participants expressed a strong sense that the issues they were concerned with were not being addressed elsewhere. Representatives felt they were taking up their roles on the structures on behalf of local communities who were responding to what they saw as a systemic failure to respond to their issues. As one participant described,

> *As part of my role as community development worker, I would have done a lot of accommodation work with the community and my experience is that, when it comes to halting site accommodations in particular, there is major reluctance within the local authority to provide Traveller specific accommodation, when it's actually their legal obligation to provide it* (LTACC 4).

Others communicated what, they felt, was a sense of abandonment by the state and a failure to address the issues of relevance to the most marginalised groups in society. This was strongly communicated in terms of the drugs issue in particular, with one participant reporting "*The incentives were very clear from the point of view of the community. Their community was being destroyed. It was being decimated and nobody cared. Their kids were using all sorts of drugs, being very ill, some dying*" (LDATF 2).

Given the context outlined above, the issues at hand were having a very real impact on the lives of communities, participants viewed the creation of a shared space for diverse stakeholders and, in particular, one that provided regular access to the key decision-makers as necessary invaluable. This meant that despite significant misgivings that they held regarding the potential to make change, participants felt that it was necessary for them to engage in the collaborative governance structures proposed by the state.

Antecedent Structures

While the LCDC has the most obvious link with its predecessor, the CDB, both the LTACC and the LDATF also built upon existing networks or structures. In the case of the LDATF, it emerged at a very particular moment time, as a response to a very particular set of challenges in one geographical area. One interviewee recalled that "*The inter-agency drug project was established in the [area], which was the pre-cursor to the Drugs Taskforce. That organization morphed into the Local Drugs Taskforce, which was the very first Local Drugs Taskforce.*" (LDATF 2). This inter-agency response was the culmination of a multidimensional push to address what were very complex issues in particular communities. Participants felt that this initial embedding within local communities and the development of action plans within these contexts meant that the proposals provided were responsive to local needs.

In the case of the LTACCs, they had been preceded by what became known as the Settlement Committees, established originally in 1969 (Crowley, 2005:139) and, in some counties, still operational into the 1990s. As noted by one interviewee "*there had been a resettlement committee in [the county] for Travellers that pre-dated the LTACC*" (LTACC 1). In this case, the shift to the LTACC meant a move away from individuals representing families and a model that was embedded in charity and assimilation approaches, to one underpinned by national legislation and a policy founded on culturally appropriate accommodation (Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998). This transition meant, one participant suggested, that for the initial years,

there was no common sense of purpose, there were struggles all the time … with huge challenges around a clash in ideologies because it all came from the old school of either being really charitable or being really critical or racist (LTACC 1).

The space created by the dissolution of the County Development Boards (CDBs) was filled by the LCDC structures, which were introduced as part of local government reforms set out in the 2012 action plan 'Putting People First' and legislated for through the Local Government Reform Act (2014). While its particular contribution to social inclusion was highlighted, 'Putting People First' suggested that the many of the other roles played by the CDB had, by that time, been fulfilled by the alignment of local development with local government and proposed that they be dissolved (Putting People First, 2012: 37). The 'Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Local Community Development Committees' (2014) indicated that one of the guiding principles for the establishment of the LCDC was a clear focus on social inclusion, with a commitment to provide "marginalised communities, and the marginalised within communities" with "the opportunity to participate in local decision-making and the power to influence and shape local decisions" (2014: 7).

Across the structures, research participants highlighted that one of the challenges of establishing new collaborative structures, whether building upon existing structures or even starting afresh, is the broader set of societal attitudes in place. As one noted about their region

I think it is a very conservative county … I mean that in terms of not socially progressive. Quite anti-Traveller and it was evident in a certain amount of the voting even in certain areas around marriage equality, even though it passed overall but in the rural areas, it didn't (LCDC 3).

It was clear across the sites that embedded attitudes such as these had implications for the broader system context and the possibilities for the collaborative governance regimes that emerged from them.

The Collaborative Governance Regime: A Collaborative Space?

The broader system context, the literature suggests, shapes the initial framework for collaboration or, what Emerson et al. (2012) call, the collaborative governance regime. This 'regime' describes the sort of system that emerges within cross-boundary governance spaces. In the context of these types of governance processes, collaboration should be the prevailing style of conduct, decision-making, and activity. The following section reports on the findings of research participants in relation to this. By describing their experiences of participation, considering a number of different dimensions, participants generated a sense of the type of regime that was in place in each of the structures examined.

The Nature of Engagement

Research participants relayed mixed feelings about their participation in the collaborative governance structures. There was a sense that the power to influence the arrangements was not really based at local level but was rather catalysed by top down instructions from national level, revealing a lack of autonomy at local level

> *Unfortunately some of the County Councils, the only way they'll ever change anything is if it comes down in a directive or a piece of paper, the memos from Government. So the understanding of what consultation, real participation, is not there at Council level* (LCDC 3).

At the local level, there was a sense that any power that was present resided firmly with the local authority, as the primary convener or funder of the various structures. As one interviewee observed, this meant that the committee was "*very task focused. The Chief Officer sets the agenda, and it's very much about tasks, and making sure that this was done and that was done*" (LCDC 2).

The terms of reference were marked as a key element of the institutional arrangements. Interviewees noted that they were often constituted at a very early stage of the life of the governance structure, when new members of the structures were still trying to find their feet. Some of the representatives who had experience of other committees flagged this, noting that, "*You had to challenge the terms of reference right at the get-go"* but acknowledging that they didn't always have the skillset to do this,

I didn't always know the right language to challenge it or to broaden it out. A lot of the time what happens now, I've noticed, is looking at how they're doing it elsewhere, we'll use their terms of reference. That's how things are being set up and people don't have the time always to think it through (LDATF 1).

There was a sense among community representatives that, because the perspectives they were presenting was often not representative of the broader consensus, it was important to be very well prepared and to be confident in asserting their roles. As one respondent reflected

We take it on our own authority. You have to, if you were shy and retiring, you'd be left there. You're constantly forcing the issue. You're trying that at the meetings. Because you quickly realize that you're facing a board of establishment figures and you're singing a different song. So, you have to be factually correct in everything you say, you have to be well-researched on the points you're going to make. You have to be familiar with the arguments that are going to come up, the counter arguments (LCDC 1).

However, some felt that, through participation, they had developed the skills to operate within the structures as they existed. One gave an example of how they used their participation in the formal structures to get issues of concern onto the broader agenda

But now you can put things on the agenda, like Public Sector Duty. We had a project on that. We had to fight to get it on the agenda but we did and we got the subgroup to set it up and we advanced the project in the end. They have committed, at corporate level now, to implementing that (LCDC 1).

The importance of the leadership style of key figures in shaping the work of the structures was noted. However, as one interviewee pointed out, for effective collaboration, they felt there needed to be a move beyond a reliance on personality:

We did have a progressive county manager in the first five years, and he did come and attend the LTACC on a number of occasions and he tried to create the conditions that we could work collaboratively. He met us separately as well. But you needed more than

> *that, a manager can't order people to change their thinking, change their ideology, leave their charitable approach outside the door* (LTACC 1).

Another interviewee succinctly observed, on the same theme, that there were "*Some nice, great people, nice people, nice, but nice doesn't cut it, in terms of when the resources are being issued out, really*" (LCDC 4).

In terms of the nature of the engagement within the structures, it was suggested that while formal power may reside in one place, those sitting around the table must also lead within their own organisations. As one interviewee noted

> *Decision makers around the table need to be people who can make decisions. But they also need to be people who have open minds and who are willing to listen to others and willing to adapt or change if their learning is part of that process. If they're not learning you won't change, but if you're learning and you're listening, even if you disagree with somethings you might be willing to take, and say, "Yeah, we'll take that risk, we'll walk with you on that path* (LDATF 3).

Other representatives reflected on the importance of leadership figures within the community and observed that this had a real impact on the nature of structures, the relationships and the outcomes "*So, I think the power was within the community, more so than anywhere else and they capitalized on it. They were all very astute, they were all very much political animals*" (LDATF 2).

One example, where the structure had deteriorated to the point of not functioning, demonstrates how control of the institutional arrangements was embedded in the statutory authority and the impact that this had on the community representatives. This interviewee provided an example of how they attempted to re-engage on the issue of terms of reference as part of a mediation process but this was not accepted at that time,

> *We felt the terms of reference would lend to building trust around working relationships. So, we felt having a defined terms of reference would work. We didn't walk out easily but we gave them a briefing paper as to why we were walking out.*

They weren't meeting their requirements of providing for the community and specifically Traveller accommodation, culturally appropriate. We said, 'Look there needs to be terms of reference, which builds relationships.' We agreed that maybe an independent chair wasn't required but that at least there should be joint chairing from the different representational sectors in the grouping (LTACC 3).

However, despite the constraints outlined, participants felt that, in some contexts, the structures do generate spaces within which to institutionalise improved processes which contribute to their broader goals. For this reason, interviewees, in spite of the many challenges identified, maintained that it is necessary to remain as participants within the structures. As one interviewee pointed out, membership of the structure they were on meant that they had access to additional information on funding

Increasingly the LCDC is being used as a vehicle by the Department and other departments. It's kind of a handy channel for funding, loose money they have, and now it's like, 'They have a funding line in 'Healthy Communities', can you spend it in such and such a time.' It's increasingly being used for that (LCDC 1).

This ongoing participation meant that, beyond simply accessing information for the constituency they represent, participants felt they could have a say and play, at least some, role in shaping the processes that allocated the funding that was channelled through the structure. For example one interviewee noted that

We've been able to affect the process that's around the allocation of funding, because the community section was just totally isolated from the LCDC, which seemed to set its own agenda and own terms of working … They decided who got money and who didn't and it was very judgmental decisions. It was, who was the 'right' type of community organization and who wasn't (LCDC 1).

Trust

A reported lack of trust generated a sense of insecurity among the representatives. Some pointed to the recurrent changes associated with election cycles. Another respondent, noting

the political aspect of the governance structures, reflected on the impact of the financial crisis on Ireland and made a link with the decisions made by the political parties that were in government during that period, suggesting that the choices made during that period were the ultimate betrayal of trust.

> *Then we had, of course, the crash and then we had the neo-liberal policies moving in and we had Fine Gael and Labour and we had one year after another, an erosion of everything. An erosion of civil rights, erosion of respect. Erosion of respect, certainly in the community. The just decimation of community. They eroded all of that and I think they felt ... it was a great excuse. The crash gave a great excuse and austerity and all that, it was handed on a plate to them. Maybe it wasn't but it certainly felt like that* (LDATF 2).

Respondents reported that past experience made them less trusting of the other stakeholders on the structure, noting that,

> *When it comes to the Traveller Accommodation Plan, then the local authority get really friendly and be nice to you. They want to consult with the members and they want the [organisation] to be involved ... to look, in the government's eyes, that there is a great process put in place. We've experienced this with them already, and they're all nice and promising you the sun, moon and stars and then when they get what they want, then they backtrack* (LTACC 4).

Other representatives echoed this sense of unease, with one pointing out that trust needed to be re-established during each new round of the committee and highlighting the impact of failure to do this would have on the work of the committee (LTACC 3). There was a sense that, rather than building actual trusting relationships, local authorities were responding to pressure to be seen to engage.

> *I think the council people would be kind of dependent, because it is their structure. They were given that structure, they're supposed to support it to make sure that it works. So they're anxious to ensure that ... there's modicum of involvement, and equality, shall we say, in the debates* (AL).

The lack of trust appears to have cut both ways, both from the direction of community representatives and on the side of the statutory bodies. Some respondents felt that there had been improvements during the term of engagement, with one noting, "*We built up a working relationship over the years, and I think that we've collaborated and we've negotiated ways of working throughout the years and I think that we're in a better space now than we've ever been*" (LTACC 2). Community representatives acknowledged that the other stakeholders did depend on them to a certain extent in order to access knowledge that would be otherwise be available to statutory and political representatives. "*We have a good synopsis on what's happening within the community. We're not out of touch. That's one thing that we have, we're on the sites and we're out on the ground and we're representing the people who needs represented*" (LTACC 2).

Dialogue Processes: Experiencing Participation

The representatives that participated in this research had mixed experiences of these interactive processes. There was a strong sense of being the outsiders and that the perspectives that they brought being a challenge to the prevailing opinions. As one interviewee noted "*We weren't welcome. We knew that. You felt the comfortable relationships between everybody ... They don't like targeting social exclusion, they pay lip-service to it. But they don't really like it*" (LCDC 1). Nonetheless, community representatives conveyed a sense of approaching the spaces in a constructive and solution focused manner. However, participants felt that because they were often viewed as the outsider in the structures, there was an onus on them to be especially well prepared. This preparation was part of their strategy for engagement. As one participant described,

> *Being strategic, also strategic in the way of thinking and of planning and also coming up with solutions, I think you have to be chief coming up with solutions and what's best, what needs to happen. Also, I think you need to be well prepared going into these meetings, you need to be mentally and physically focused going into these meetings because, to be honest with you, they can get you down* (LTACC 3).

This sense of being strategic permeated all of the responses. Interviewees communicated the need to develop and utilise a strong analysis in their engagements across the different spaces.

> *How you analyse, and how you put a strategic plan in your head and also good preparation and reflection does help, because it's not about going to a meeting, it's about preparing for that meeting and reflecting after that meeting. What have you achieved for those outside that room?* (LTACC 2).

This strategy sometimes involved accepting 'soft wins' and understanding that particular incidents could be viewed as learning moments for the broader group, even if it did not fulfil their immediate aims. The following example demonstrates how this might happen.

> *We sometimes help, where you get everyone to work to help and individual within a crisis. You do it, right. First of all, you can make others feel good. Then you can use it as an example of what happens when change can occur and then you bring that back to say why can't we do it for everyone. So, sometimes rather than knocking it on the head, we have to just go with it. So, I'm using an example of say a family who is homeless and you could go in and be all principled and very clear and say, 'We've to look after everyone and you can't forget about Travellers there, you can't forget about…'. But use it as a learning moment, use it as a relationship building moment. Use it along the way* (LCDC 3).

In other cases, even if the broader collaborative structures were not providing any positive outcomes, community representatives sought to take on key roles that provided opportunities to influence key elements of the process. As one interviewee explained about a project they had been seeking to progress within the main structure, "*Actually, it's an interesting one because it's going to be done by the community sub-group and I'm the chair of that. Get yourself into the role of chair. You have to do that and take it seriously then*" (LCDC 3). This level of participation was acknowledged to be a significant drain on the representatives, many of whom were volunteering their time to the various structures.

Interviewees noted the disadvantage that volunteers faced in being able to effectively generate and discuss the information relevant for successful participation in the structures.

> *The difficulty is, is that when stuff comes up and things have to be read and you have to discuss and debate stuff and you have to get a good knowledge about an input and be able to attend all the meetings, you're at a certain disadvantage when it comes to that, and that in itself feeds into a power imbalance in terms of stuff gets done anyways. The bureaucracy runs with it and that can run ahead, and I think that's one of the things we have to be very careful not to allow to happen. But it's a very difficult thing not to do because like I said, you're time poor because a lot of that stuff takes a long time, and when you're on sub-committees of these things, they actually take an awful long time and people don't see that at all* (LDATF 3).

A number of the research participants cited the use of formal procedure which, was viewed on one hand as restrictive, with some community representatives not being familiar with this style of communication. Others noted that their strategies of engagement being shaped by use of the procedures, such as working through the chair.

> *What I felt over the meetings that, rather than be shouting at people, you can ask questions and ask difficult questions and they can't shout back at you or kind of ignore you. So, you learn that skill and that's a skill in itself rather than be getting upset and uptight about things that you learn now that, 'Chairman, would you mind answering this question?* (LCDC 4).

As one research participant described, it was important to maintain a formal style in how they engaged in the spaces, explaining,

> *I mean if you want to get things done you have to be civil to people.. Okay, we can have passions, and not forget that which is very important, but the whole thing of being civil, your main reaction to the most awkward question, the most difficult questions, to remain civil and could ask the question, you know, like a good radio presenter ... Ask the very difficult question in a very easy way* (LCDC 2).

In the case of other research participants, this knowledge of the processes and procedures, and the failure of some stakeholders to adhere to them, led to a strategic withdrawal from the structure and, following negotiation of terms, a later re-entry. As one of the representatives recalled,

> *From the experience of the reps in the last five years and two years of it where we had to withdraw. We've learned enough to say it's flawed and we need to challenge the fact that it's flawed because we're not living up to our brief as good representatives for the Traveller Community. However, representation on these committees is key* (LTACC 3).

Shared Commitment and Shared Motivation

Another key aspect of a collaborative governance regime is a shared commitment to addressing the issues that the various structures were set up to address. The majority of participants in the governance structures occupied their seats as part of their professional role, whereas there was some expectation that community representatives, on the other hand, would be volunteers. As one interviewee noted

> *something we kept pointing out was that the five [community representatives] people were the only people who weren't being paid to be in the room. Everybody else was there either as part of their job or because they'd been told to go by their Department. The [community representatives] people were also the only people who were voluntarily there* (LCDC 2).

It is clear from the profile of the interviewees, that this was not always the case, with the majority of the community representatives interviewed holding their seats on behalf of a community organisation. The majority of the representatives interviewed had gained their seats through a formal process. In some cases, where a formal process did not exist, organisations put in place these structures themselves. There were however some examples of seats being inherited as structures evolved.(LTACC 2, LTADF 3). Nonetheless, the research

participants conveyed a sense they had a greater sense of commitment and some of the other stakeholders, pointing to non-regular attendance and limited engagement while present as issues on the side of some statutory representatives.

The commitment by the community representatives was evident in the level of learning that was necessary for them to begin to engage effectively in the space they found themselves in,

> *I think for the first few meetings, I didn't understand the policy content. It was a very daunting place to be, because you're against elected representatives, some of them had a negative view on Traveller's accommodation and because of political handshakes, I suppose, from their own community outside the door. They were there for reasons, not for the Traveller community, but for reasons of their own, to keep the Travellers out of their own backyard. But I didn't realize that* (LTACC 2).

The depth of commitment required by the community representatives was acknowledged by another interviewee, who described the level of intensity of engagement that was sometimes necessary for the community in order to be able to survive outside the structures and participate within it. They observed that it was not always necessary for all of the stakeholders to engage equally all of the time, noting "*That relationship can change, and that relationship for example, it can be more important with this agency at this time, depending on what it is, and can be less important with that agency when this happens.*" They went on to locate the particular challenge for community representatives, observing, *"The community does struggle, unfortunately with almost all of the vested interests"* (LDATF 2).

Within this context of mixed levels of commitment and motivation, participants highlighted that relationship building was key to their participation, noting that

> *It is a slow process and it's about building relationships … the core of any community work … you're also building relationships with the people who have power and people at statutory bodies, other community and voluntary reps* (LTACC 3).

They highlighted that this work of relationship building wasn't just with the statutory representatives but often with other community representatives, which whom there was not

always agreement, "*the community and voluntary reps … wouldn't all be pro-Traveller for example. However, through discussions we've brought people along*" (LCDC 3). This was echoed by other representatives who explained that their approach to engagement was grounded *"In creating a big tent, we've been able to work successfully across the pillars, it's quite cohesive. …you have to work with the people who are not convinced, or totally convinced about social inclusion, and we've successfully done that*" (LCDC 1).

Shared Understanding of the Issues

Interviewees reported a lack of mutual understanding of the issues at hand among the range of stakeholders. There was a sense that the possibilities to work effectively within the committees was a 'lucky dip' and depended on the skill set of the support workers and committee interlocutors, who in many cases had no relevant training or experience of collaborative processes. As one interviewee observed,

> *the staff, the officials within the local authority, are not community workers. Their focus and emphasis is on the task getting done, not on the process leading up to it. I won't generalise because some of the officials are good, but it also depends on their own background and training. If they come, it's not a requirement of their leadership or management that they work from facilitative joint sharing approaches, some of them are better than others, but I would think we have an expectation – which might be an unreal expectation that they work the way we have been trained to deliver and they don't. That has to be talked out loud and sometimes what I would feel is then if they haven't got that skill they should buy it in* (LTACC 3).

The absence of a shared understanding of the issues emerged particularly strongly when discussing the work of the LTACC looking at Traveller accommodation. Here, there was a sense that some members of the committees were participating on order to block rather than support the work of the structure. One example was given of a local elected representative who held an anti-Traveller stance during his election campaign taking a seat on the LTACC, "*There's a County Councillor that's just been elected, who got himself on the LTACC, who got in it and spent all of his campaign ringing me to complain about Travellers. So, he's obviously*

on it now for his own agenda" (LTACC 1). This lack of understanding, or desire to understand, was communicated by other representatives, who felt that the allocation of accommodation for Travellers was being used as a tool for assimilation

> *I do think that the council pick on certain families as well that are really culturally flamboyant families in a sense, that they're holding on to their culture. So that the more "Traveller" you are now, and I say that in inverted commas, the more punishment you get from the local authorities. The more "settled" that you are, and I say that in inverted commas as well, the more chance you have of getting a house. I think they discriminate against families who are more Traveller, specifically showing their culture, than they do with families who's sort of fitting into their perspective of being settled people* (LTACC 2).

The positive relationship that can exist was explained by one interviewee, who suggested that

> *one thing about what we're doing on the Task Force is that like, it is about partnership… a sense of collective buy-in. We have differences on different things and it's not to say everything is agreed all the time, it's not. But there is a huge respect for each other around the table. So, for example, if we're making a decision on the scarce resources, you have to be able to take that hat off and then step into the board seat and be able to make a decision on the broader thing, and then come up with a, "Well, okay, what are the options and choices at this particular decision making process? What can you do?* (LDATF 3).

Another respondent observed that despite the challenges that existed, they had a sense of being part of the structure as being part of a team,

> *I think the culture of the committee is good. I'm not saying we don't have challenges and we don't experience discrimination and racism as part of it sometimes and huge blockages. However, there's a team – no matter how difficult the challenge – there is definitely a team approach to addressing the challenge* (LTACC 1).

Capacity to Act

The capacity to act in unison, towards a shared set of goals is central to the purpose of collaborative governance structures and it is here that the real evidence of the dysfunctionality of the structures emerged. Interviewees provided multiple examples of how the structures failed to act in a collaborative manner. There was a sense that many of the procedural and institutional arrangements that had emerged were either not fit for purpose or were superseded by alternative agendas and mechanisms.

Another capacity issue raised was that of disconnect that was evident within the local authority structures. This disconnect and the knowledge deficit associated with it had a significant impact on the operationalisation of the collaborative regime. As one interviewee observed,

> *I think that there is a notion that local authorities are more connected than they are and I think local authorities actually are far less connected than they are perceived to be. And so you have the Strategic Policy Committees, you have the pillars, the LCDC and the PPN and you've the Traveller Accommodation Committee and then there's others, there's the LEOs, Local Enterprise Offices .There is a total need to try and create more meaningful connections across all of them, if they are going to create any change for anybody experiencing social exclusion, poverty or any of those issues in any of the areas* (LTACC 1).

Knowledge is viewed as the currency of collaboration and this certainly emerged from the findings of this research, as participants spoke about the challenge of both bringing knowledge to and gaining knowledge from the structures. Research participants spoke about the expectations that are placed upon them to be knowledgeable on the broad range of discussions that may take place within the context of the meetings. As one observed

> *Your rep has to represent all and there is a danger, for example, if you have somebody who comes from a single issue organisation and that is all they know and they don't have a wider community work understanding, all they will do is talk about that single issue and they'll build, relationships will be built around that single issue but not*

> *around the wider anti-poverty, social inclusion understanding right across the board be you a person with a disability or a woman experiencing violence, or if you are, you know, a lone parent or if you are an asylum seeker. So, to be able to talk about all of those issues is so crucial and we've been lucky so far that that can but it's a big ask* (LCDC 3).

Research participants all spoke about the importance of generating knowledge and building skills and capacity to participate. Many felt that it was an essential aspect of the ongoing collaborative process and that there was a real need for improved resources to support it. They noted that "*If you want people to be able to participate, you need a certain skill level. Nobody has it all and we feel that it's a learning process. When you're in it, it takes a while to be able to leave your stuff at the door, and be as objective as you can possibly be*" (LDATF 4). The same representative noted that this is a slow and time-consuming process, observing that

> *Sometimes, if somebody's not confident on a particular thing, then that can impact on how they engage. The idea of the capacity building is that people need to learn as they go, but they also need to be supported to learn around some of the stuff and what processes are and different things like that, and the difficulty with that is that that takes time. It also means that people have to give up time from something else to do that. Then the question is who organizes, who pays for it etc. We're saying that that is something that the [collaborative governance structure] actually has a responsibility to do because it is their members. They have the responsibility to make sure that the people around the table, are around the table on the basis that they have the support to do what they need to do* (LDATF 4).

All of the research participants recognised that gaining appropriate knowledge and developing suitable skills was essential, whether through experience and engagement in the structures or through targeted education and training was integral to their capacity to participate effectively. Almost all of the participants had been involved in other roles on a variety of committees, before taking up the positions on the structures under consideration, each of which, for various reasons, was deemed to be of significant importance. As one

interviewee observed, he was part of a team with high levels of formal education and this had a significant impact on the support he received in engaging in structures outside of his organisation "*Six of our team of 12 full-time, have Master's. We're quite clued in. Really highly qualified team. And they bring that energy*" (LDATF 1).

Another area of expertise that was deemed to be important was having a strong understanding of the functioning of the structures. As one interviewee pointed out, "*The County Council, they go by the book. It is one thing to turn up at meetings grand, right, get what you want into documents. That's important, because then you go in and say, 'Right, it's in the plan what are we doing?'*" (LCDC 3). This strategy of getting 'wins' in terms of the inclusion of key issues into relevant documents is of central importance to the representatives as it provides them with a basis from which to measure and challenge any future planning or outcomes. This focus on policy development and implementation was the focus of many of the boundary spanners but not often available to them in the context of the structures. As one interviewee noted, many of the community representatives were very familiar with and skilled in this particular area.

> *I know the importance of pressing politically for change in policy and resources and all the other bits and pieces as well. And particularly in terms of advocacy and then because we work all the time collaboratively with lots of people inter-agency work, whether it's through service level agreements or collaborating with community and voluntary sector* (LDATF 3).

A skillset that was alluded to by a number of interviewees, was that of organisational management. Within their roles, paid or voluntary, they had developed a varied skillset including financial, developmental and management skills. These skills were of significant benefit within the context of the structures they engaged in. "*The other stuff from that side as well is organization, managing organizations, running, setting up projects, development projects and all that kind of stuff*" (LDATF 4). Another important area of knowledge highlighted was that of internal organisational governance, noting that

Everything feeds into your own knowledge as well and you're bringing all that to the table. Experience, for example, of dealing with some of the stuff around employment and different things from that side of it .Also the governance and board and GDPR stuff. You pick up bits and pieces of all those all the time and you're aware of what you need to do on these type of things You're aware as well of the compliance issues that are now bearing down on everybody including Task Forces. So you're bringing all those separate kind of things to the table (LDATF 3).

Boundary Spanning: Experiences and Challenges

This research positions community representatives as boundary spanners, acknowledging their task of bridging the realms of civil society and the state. The literature suggests that examining the experiences of boundary-crossing individuals provides insight into the way in which ideas about state and community organisations operate within this era of flexible governance. In doing so, it is hope that we can determine how they might be improved upon.

Having already described the nature of the collaborative governance regime they were involved in, it was evident that the various research participants had adopted different strategies within the different structures and across different stages of their participation in the structures. These ranged from strategically building relationships with officials and other members in and outside of committee spaces, to orchestrating a strategic disengagement from one committee as a result of arrangements that were in place.

Noted as crucial by all respondents was the capacity to build relationships with a broad range of stakeholders. The interviewees saw themselves as conduits, bringing the voice and perspectives of the communities they represented to the tables they sat at. They were conscious of their difference and that their views were often not shared by others at the table but many approached the spaces with open attitudes and a willingness to learn from the other stakeholders. As one interviewee observed,

You have to engage back. It has been very educational for me in listening and hearing broader views from a cross-section of the community. Sometimes we get isolated. We are in our own silos as community workers. Suddenly you have to sit and you are

listening to the community reps or the person who is maybe representing another town, tidy towns or it could be a GAA group or anything else like that and you are hearing and listening and, I suppose, building relationships again (LCDC 3).

This relationship building was deemed useful at the individual level, allowing people to link with stakeholders they may otherwise not have relationships with,

> *I got to know people and I got to know who was going to do what and who was going to get what and where the money lies on the circuit. How you ring up and say by the way we're doing this. Is there funding there, can you help us? And we check them out, outside of the LCDC* (LCDC 4).

Others felt that spanning boundaries allowed for building knowledge and understanding of each other's perspectives.

> *When you're working together at that level, there is a lot of learning and everybody around the table has learnt from each other, and learnt to appreciate where other people are coming from and you can take stuff back to your respective organizations around issues that are really important for communities at this particular time* (LDATF 3).

By acknowledging the broader limitations, it was possible for the interviewees to justify their work as necessarily looking in multiple directions – both towards the structure and the regime that emerges from it, but also to the broader system context. The scale and nature of this challenge was acknowledged by most of the interviewees. These concerns are echoed in this comment by one respondent, who wonders,

> *Is it just power? See, it's to do with party politics, it's to do with competition, it's to do with nepotism, it's to do with gombeenism, it's to do with xenophobia, it's to do with not in my back yard, it's to do with capitalism. You're not going to change all that, do you know what I mean? But it's finding a way to turn, to get people to think differently about democracy and participation and decision-making and maybe making them aware of the value of it. A few making decisions isn't necessarily good for you. It's about change* (LTACC 1).

Many of the interviewees were extremely conscious of the collective dimensions of their role and the importance of giving voice to, and moving information back to, the communities they represented. Research participants identified these additional elements to their roles as integral but unrecognised and un-resourced within the collaborative governance structures that they were part of. As one interviewee pointed out, this was core to their status as representatives,

> *It's not a personal, individual strategy because you can't work from that perspective. You have to work off the collective. And if you haven't got the collective approach to the strategy that you're trying to represent the community at, it won't work* (LTACC 2).

Others viewed it through the prism of community work, stating that, regardless of the frustrations that might come along with it,

> *That's our job as community workers, that we inform the community this is what this is about, do you want to participate, you know and there will be a lot of, it's time commitment and you might get frustrated (LTACC 4*).

This challenge was observed at the other end of the cycle also, with one representative questioning the representative role

> *Is it up to the reps to bring it back? Is it to educate the community as well? Who has the responsibility to bring stuff back to the community or to foster relationships? And that's a hard one because reps don't necessarily have the time, or the skills, or the ability, or the physical proximity to actually do that* (LCDC 3).

The lack of support to feed back into their respective communities was acknowledged across the interviews. The significant changes, over the last decade in particular, to the equality, social inclusion and community infrastructure was cited as playing a particular role in this.

> *Community support structures are gone. Gone completely in every community. All of the processes in which brought people along with you, you got them involved in things, you sat down with people, you brought people together, you found out what was their*

needs, you looked at how you were going to get those resources to meet those needs. You planned things. The space to do that in communities is gone (LDATF 2).

Looking at the broader system context, many of the research participants mourned the loss of the infrastructure that may have previously supported them to better engage across the variety of spaces they needed to operate within, as well as provide resources for them to do so more effectively. As one of the respondents notes

> *I think that when we talk about civil society and community development, the CDP's closing down and the deconstruction of lots of community structures have made it more difficult for the whole discussions around broader civil society, around human rights, housing and accommodation, issues of discrimination and poverty. All of that actually affects everything, you know, and you can see that in the local authority or even in the conversations around housing and accommodation because lots of those elected representatives when there was nine CDPs in [the area], they were getting lobbied or advocated in relation to social issues. They were geographical and they may have a commonality with Traveller issues but now there's nobody left to be advocating* (LTACC 1).

This shift in infrastructure and the change in attitudes and lack of a collective voice has led to significant challenges for those who wish generate a collective approach participation. One respondent noted that

> *It's very, very frustrating and it's very demoralizing when you're in the systems we're in at the minute. When you're being dismissed all the time or you're not being listened to, maybe that's why I raise my voice because maybe my voice is getting louder as I'm getting older ... not getting older, because things are getting worse, because I'm trying to be listened to ... I can't sit and do nothing at a meeting, even though I promise myself I will. There's no point* (LDATF 2).

A sense of frustration with the structures, with the other stakeholders and with their own roles, and with the limitations of each of these, emanated from all of the interviewees. Some

of this frustration is directed at the bigger picture, with the representatives recognising that, in light of the broader system context, it is perhaps impossible to expect the sort of structural change that they aspire to. As one interviewee observes about her own region,

> *It is an exceptionally conservative county and that's reflected in its officials and all the others. So, as community workers we've to change what's on the ground to try as well. You can't just do one you have to try and do both* (LCDC3).

A significant concern of the boundary spanners was that of with becoming, or being seen as, colluders. As one participant observed, "*You can be made a colluder in the blink of an eye and you always have to watch out for that. There's occasions when it's necessary, I'm not being completely stupid*" (LDATF 2). Participants who were members of the community they represented raised this issue as a particular concern. As one participant explained

> *You could have all the best intentions in the world, but you could become part of the pack as well. You have to be very careful that you stand back and you reflect on your own actions and how you deliberate on that plan as well, and how you represent Travellers* (LTACC 2).

The same interviewee went on to highlight the importance of reflecting on your actions, on the structure, on the discourse and who defines the sort of complex problems that collaborative governance structures seek to challenge. They noted that

> *Sometimes it's about stepping back, and about reflecting on your own actions as well. Their language and their patronizing, tokenistic way of going on can bring you in very quickly and you can become part of them. You become part of the problem. They make it out that Travellers is a problem. But you become that people who are trying, do you know, to keep that problem in a sense. So that's the crossover. The very dangerous crossover, that you become part of the political societal views yourself as being Traveller* (LTACC 2).

There was particular frustration communicated by representatives who had, despite misgivings about and failures of the structure, made every effort to engage in a collaborative process, where ultimately, one group of stakeholders were able to block progress.

> T*here was no good outcome. We did the collaborative stuff … we worked alongside with the local authority … we went out, we engaged with the community with the local authority, arranged appointments for them to meet. We still need the Councillors to give permission on the land and this is where the block happened. They wouldn't agree on the land because, oh we could have so many million for that land, why would you want Traveller families in there, sure we can't have halting sites in this area* (LTACC 4).

Similar frustrations were noted in other regions, with concerns raised regarding the implications for failed promises and for a lack of successful outcomes.

> H*ow can we have true, meaningful, culturally appropriate accommodation when you've anti-Traveller representatives, and anti-Traveller community, talking to individuals and saying "I don't want it. You're in there, you make sure that there's no bloody sites goes in these areas", or "you make sure that no Travellers gets next into the estate." So how can we have any meaningful participation when the pack's already eaten the prey? I think we need a think tank around local authority initiatives and how we legislate for that and how we, to deliberate on real cultural Traveller accommodation within different areas* (LTACC 2).

Outcomes and Results of Collaboration

Interviewees were asked explore the impacts and outcomes, both positive and negative, of their involvement in the various collaborative structures. The literature suggests that, rather than a linear process, these actions can occur at different levels, depending on the context and purpose of the committees and may engage all or just some of the stakeholders.

Challenges and Opportunities

Throughout the interviews, respondents referred to challenges in participating and barriers to collaboratively setting, much less achieving, outcomes for the structures they were involved with. Therefore, it was not surprising that, in responding to the question about

positive outcomes, interviewees found it difficult to identify immediately any discernible outcomes, "*No, there wasn't. I didn't feel there was any clear outcomes*" (LCDC 4). Others were adamant that, by their own measure, there were no positive outcomes, "*we would say we failed targets in the last plans*" (LTACC 3).

However, some interviewees cautiously identified positives that emerged at different levels. As one pointed out, there were micro changes that took place, "*You will get smaller wins but you don't get the big stuff, and it's the bigger picture stuff that needs to change, to have a bigger impact for the community"* (LTACC 4). As another noted, being part of the structure generated the opportunity to raise localities and issues that may otherwise have been sidelined. "*We've been able to highlight the situation of [the area]. Yes, we've been able to bring the whole thing around Travellers and women or migrants and asylum seekers*" (LCDC 3).

Some positive outcomes at the level of procedure were also identified. One example of improved 'information flow' was cited and the way this flow can affect broader outcomes was highlighted.

> *If the Guards are saying, 'Well, we're seeing a trend of this and this'. That's good to get that from their perspective and the people working on the ground will say, 'We're seeing this, this, this and this'. And the whole idea about that is that the information flow is there* (LDATF 4).

In a similar vein, this type of information exchange was flagged as instrumental in channelling funding to locations that needed it.

> *They have taken that information and changed different things. So, for example when we were talking about young people and their opportunities, about high unemployment ... I would have raised the issue that there is no transport to training. There is no transport to jobs and the ETB has now introduced an apprenticeship programme [locally]. And we supported some of the RAPID money to come into [the area], because it came through the LCDC, we made a decision* (LCDC 3).

Beyond these local level outcomes, a number of examples of local–national policy engagements were highlighted. At one end of the scale, this was demonstrated by the integration of nationally mandated policies in to the local level, with the example given of how the representatives were able to generate an early engagement, at their local authority level, with the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty (2014).

> *I think one of them was the Public Sector Duty, that's been now adopted by the Corporate Policy Group. That was kind of getting the Director of Services on side and he pushed it then. That was a big success in moving that forward, it was a totally new concept to the council. So we were early on that* (LCDC 1).

At the other end of the scale, a number of interviewees cited the successful development of a national policy that was informed by local experiences and practices and supported and resourced to have an impact at both the national and local level.

> *I think the National Drug Strategy development was a phenomenal success. I think that was incredible, and I think the reasons it was a success were some of the things I said about what was underpinning it and the philosophy of the people involved but also the resources that were invested into it, because it was a priority* (LDATF 2).

While interviewees were able to provide some examples of positive outcomes, there was an overwhelming sense of frustration at the limited achievements of the structures. The frustration related not only to the lack of in progressing the work of the various structures, but also to the amount of energy that was required to achieve any outcomes. As one interviewee noted, "*That shows you that we didn't really achieve much, we did something … but no, participative democracy in [the county] is dead and buried. Everything is to do with representation. Even the participative democracy structures"* (LTACC 1).

There was evidence of a sense of frustration about what is deemed to be successful by the collaborative structure. One example was given looking at the nature of the accommodation provided, "*it's a big question in that we will see and there would be kind of a difference of*

opinion. The local authority feel providing standard social housing to the Traveller community as success" (LTACC 3). Another representative questioned the possibility to generate larger structural outcomes, noting: *Community development, which is a verse in itself, that's a very hard thing to satisfy. Very hard to have wins in that all the time, you know what I mean? You can't, there's no big wins on that. It's all incremental for the work you do* (LCDC 4).

This trust building led stakeholders to take risks that they otherwise may not have,

> *And there's been big successes in the city where you've had the sharps bins and stuff like that, and that was agreed under the radar at one stage, but ultimately with the key players, and that was asking key players to take a risk* (LDATF 3).

However, as another respondent pointed out, while there were positive aspects that emerged, even in the shadow of this, the issues were changing.

> *So what has worked has been that there has been a coming together, there has been very good projects created, there have been numerous people helped along the way. What we forget, I think, is that that has been happening while new problems emerge and new responses are needed* (LDATF 1).

One of the most notable successes of the collaborative governance regimes was the establishment of relationships between stakeholders, despite starting from a low base.

> *It's worked out better because, as I said, initially there was huge resistance. There was kind of an atmosphere almost. But, gradually, they knew we were good at how we bring things together. So there was a kind of grudging respect. They mightn't like you, but they can respect you, I think. So that's been kind of a positive outcome* (LCDC 1).

This shift in the perception of the representatives and attitudes towards their perspectives was echoed across other structures, with one interviewee observing,

> *I think an unintended positive would be that the local authority in the last five years and maybe seven years have taken Traveller reps, not me, 'The Manager', but Travellers themselves, seriously as Traveller reps. They see the value of community participation. They see the value of community expertise. I would say the skills,*

> *expertise, knowledge and traditions and values of Travellers has been represented really well by the two reps at the table and now it's taken seriously. Their wisdom is taken seriously* (SM).

Conclusion

This chapter sought to lay out the findings of this qualitative research project, in an attempt to answer the primary research question. In doing so, it faced the challenge of condensing the rich and thoughtful contributions of a range of committed representatives who were actively engaging in the structures that were available to them as citizens, as community members and as individuals committed to social inclusion, into manageable themes. By seeking to organise the extensive conversations that shaped the interviews that generated the data for this study into boxes, headings and sub-headings, it is thus inevitable that limitations emerge. In seeking to draw upon an illuminating soundbite, there is often a loss of the enriching nuance that respondents seek to communicate when they generously contribute their time to the research process. Every attempt has been made, in the preceding sections, to present both soundbite and nuance.

As described at the outset of this chapter, this section sought to group the data gathered under a number of thematic areas that, with community development being an overarching theme. The interviewees initially discussed the broader system context within which the collaborative governance structure and their participation in it was framed. They then went on to discuss how the systems and dynamics played out, considering the regime that emerged from this and the broader context. Finally, the interviewees considered the outcomes or outputs of the structures they have been involved with. Finally they considered their own role as 'boundary spanners', considering the challenges and opportunities associated with their engagement across different spaces.

Chapter 6: Discussion

Introduction

This chapter reviews the findings set out in Chapter 5, analysing them in light of the literature discussed in Chapter 2 and the broader Irish context established in Chapter3. In seeking to respond to the research question established at the outset, this chapter draws links with the theory, policy, and practice principles discussed in the literature review and the findings presented in the previous chapter.

The first section of the chapter focuses on the context of the collaborative governance regimes, situating them within broader conversations around participatory democracy before drawing links to literature considering collaborative governance processes and examining what the research found in terms of the starting context for the various structures. It concludes that collaborative governance processes, and particularly the experiences of boundary spanners, cannot hope to be positive unless there are appropriate starting conditions, including legal, institutional and political arrangements in place.

The research has shown that suitable conditions are often absent and in some cases, existing arrangements need to be adjusted. Some of the cases studied demonstrated that p**ower balancing and** trust building mechanisms are required to counter historical conditions or power imbalances. This confirms that, for some of the research participants, there remain questions about the **continuing merit** of being involved in powerless structures or processes. Alongside these questions, research participants highlighted a need for strategies to deal with non-functioning collaborative structures, while highlighting the ways that more highly functioning processes operate

The second section of the chapter discusses the experiences of the community representatives in participating in the structures, considering how their experiences reflect those outlined by the frameworks presented in the literature and examining what sort, if any,

collaborative governance regime is in place in each of the structures. Following this, the chapter considers the role of community representatives as boundary spanners, bridging the space between civil society and the state. It highlights the challenges inherent to the representative role, and the additional dimensions of challenge given the social inclusion focus of their roles. The impact of the breaking of up community development infrastructure at local levels emerges as a key issue. In addition, the risk of being seen as 'colluding' or collaborating, in a negative sense, with ineffectual structures or power-holders emerges as an issue of particular relevance to the boundary spanning community representatives.

Finally, this chapter explores the outcomes that have emerged as a result of the collaborative governance processes in place and considers how community representatives might better contribute to these processes.

Starting Conditions and System Context

This study is situated within the conceptual realm of participatory democracy, a key concern of which is that power should be equally shared among all citizens, so that everyone has an equal say in collective affairs. In doing so, participatory democracy seeks to bring about "a more equitable and humane society" (Macpherson, 1977: 94), with a focus on the right to public provision, the right for citizens to participate in decision-making about their collective lives and the demand for authority structures that make such participation possible. The idea underpinning this is that it allows for the development of strengthened communities, where people feel accepted, have their voices heard and are facilitated to self-develop through learning new skills, extending their knowledge and developing relationships with others. This approach provides a useful foundational framework for this consideration of governance processes at a local level.

Participatory democracy emerged as and remains an underpinning principle of current government policy in Ireland, appearing in multiple policy documents over the last two decades (White Paper, 2000; Putting People First, 2014; Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities, 2019). A shift in the nature of participatory democracy outlined

that is outlined in each of these documents, however, provides us with some insight into the experiences of community representatives on local government structures.

The White Paper frames participatory democracy as fostering active citizenship and flags the role of the Community and Voluntary sector in providing channels for the active involvement and participation of citizens (Government of Ireland, 2000b:63). Here, citizenship is viewed as "is 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, 2000b:64). In 'Putting People First' the need for local government to provide greater opportunities for citizen and civil society to participate in decisions that affect them and an increased role in policy formulation and public service delivery is noted (DoELG, 2012). However, this is embedded in a broader policy that reasserts the primacy of representative democracy and articulates participation as a means to complement the existing structure of decision-making in local government. The most recent strategy commits to working collaboratively with 'relevant Government Departments and agencies to develop participatory structures… and to secure meaningful engagement of marginalised communities in decision-making' (2019: 35) but is operationalised in more deliberative terms. This shift perhaps explains some of the deficits in participation experienced by the community representatives interviewed.

Power and Resources

The literature on collaborative governance suggests that in order to understand both the functioning and contribution of any collaborative structure, and the experience of participants within that, it is important to consider the context within which the structure was created and the conditions in place at that time. As was seen in previous chapters, the starting contexts of the various structures displayed some important distinctions. In particular, in the cases of the LTACC and the LCDC, there was a highly centralised impetus for the creation of the structures, with central government maintaining significant control over both the power and resources of the committee. Ansell & Gash (2008) propose that if, at the outset, there is a significant imbalance between stakeholders, in terms of either power or resources, meaning

that some stakeholders cannot participate effectively, then it is essential to adopt a strategy of empowerment that addresses this, supporting the stakeholders who are at a disadvantage. The findings demonstrate that community representatives experienced a substantial imbalance in terms of support for their participation within the various structures they were involved with. Where representatives felt vulnerable and unsupported in their roles, they felt less able to contribute to the shaping of structures and this appeared to have an impact on later outcomes, as well as a sense of satisfaction with the work of the committee.

Emerson et al. define collaborative governance as “the processes and structures of public policy decision making and management that engage people constructively across the boundaries of public agencies, levels of government, and/or the public, private and civic spheres in order to carry out a public purpose that could not otherwise be accomplished” (2012: 2). As such, this approach should provide the means to achieve enhanced participation by a broad range of stakeholders. In the case of this research, respondents reported mixed levels of commitment from stakeholders within public agencies and at different levels of government. Both attendance and participation by the statutory agencies was noted as being minimal. Civil society participants, on the other hand, felt that they needed to ensure that they were extremely well prepared in advance of meetings. This was not only in order to honour their representative roles, but also because they felt that, as ‘outsiders’, often holding different perspectives to other stakeholders, they needed to be better informed than other committee members in order to garner their respect.

Literature on collaborative governance points to interdependence, a recognition by stakeholders that they must come together in order to address the policy issue, as an important starting point for the development of any collaborative governance regime (Emerson et al., 2012). In the case of both the LTACC and the LDATF there was a sense that the issues addressed, Traveller accommodation, on one hand and the impacts of addiction and the associated issues surrounding drug use, were not understood or responded to within broader policy spaces. Therefore, it was necessary generate a space to bring key stakeholders together in order to respond to these issues in a more targeted manner. However, the

research revealed concerns, particularly in the case of Traveller accommodation, that the generation of this structure meant that other areas of the local authority and other governance structures could avoid the topic and resign it to consideration within the LTACC only.

With both of these sets of issues, the review of preceding policies and the experiences relayed by the research participants highlighted the contentious relationships that were in place prior to attempts to develop a shared response. Ansell and Gash proposed that when there exists such a prehistory of antagonism among the stakeholders, and unless there are positive steps taken to address this and to build trust among stakeholders, then collaborative governance approaches are unlikely to succeed. The findings noted that in the case of the LDATF, resources were allocated to this developmental work at the outset and, while participants expressed concerns at how structures have evolved, there was a sense that this early work provided a foundation that supported the development of some shared understanding among stakeholders with very diverse starting points. Community representatives on the LTACCs noted the absence of this type of relationship building and there was a sense that the possibility of blocking the work of the structure, rather than advancing it, incentivised some of the stakeholders to participate.

Incentives to Participate

Collaborative governance produces a 'sweet reward' in terms of policy and governance (2008: 561). This reward suggests that if we govern collaboratively, we may avoid the high costs of adversarial policy-making and expand democratic participation. The research participants highlighted a number of incentives that encourage their engagement with the various club governance structures. Things like access to resources, the possibility to network with statutory stakeholders and an aspiration to influence policy related to their areas of interest all played a role in a rational for participating in the various structures. Such reasons for participation can be ascribed to the rationale of the 'sweet reward', as participants engaged with structures in the hope that they could have an impact upon them.

There was however, an additional set of reasons to participate articulated. In the case of the LDATFs, interviewees noted the sense of abandonment within communities affected by drug use and in the case of the LTACCs, there had been very limited progress on addressing the issue of Traveller accommodation, over the preceding decade. Both of these examples demonstrate how the nature of state excludes certain groups of citizens (Dryzek, 1996: 482). Participants suggested that amid wider detachment from political processes, these collaborative structures provided, some degree, an opportunity for cohorts that are often the most marginalised groups to participate (Van der Plaat & Barrett, 2006: 28).

Antecedent Structures

The establishment of each of the structures examined built upon existing committees, policies, processes and relationships and the findings reinforced the importance of recognising, understanding and addressing this at the outset of any emergent collaborative process, in order to develop a strong basis for potential collaboration among stakeholders.

In the case of the LDATF, the structure emerged from a set of relationships established among key stakeholders, albeit with differing levels of power and commitment. Nonetheless, there was

Citizens have the right to public provision, the right to participate in decision-making about their collective life and to live within authority structures that make such participation possible (Pateman, 2012: 15).

The Collaborative Governance Regime: A collaborative space?

At the crux of this discussion about collaborative governance is the assertion that "public and private actors work collectively in distinctive ways, using particular processes, to establish laws and rules for the provision of public goods" (Ansell & Gash, 2007:544). Emerson et al. identify the structures and processes of this 'distinctive way' of making public policy decisions as a collaborative governance 'regime' (2012: 2). This is the 'how' of collaboration, considering the way the stakeholders work together, examining whether they share or acknowledge each other's understandings of the issues they are addressing and identifying

the cross-boundary collaborations that may not otherwise be accomplished. These interactive processes of defining, deliberating determining the scope of the structures should allow for the emergence of effective space for collaboration.

The Nature of Engagement

Emerson et al. (2012) contend that there are three interlinking elements that that together create conditions for real collaboration among stakeholders. They identify these elements as 1) Principled Engagement 2) Shared Motivation and 3) Capacity for Joint Action and suggest that it is the interplay between them that generates the potential for collaboration, success begets success and trust builds trust, in a virtuous cycle. It is here that the potential for real process-based work emerges. Functioning collaborative governance regimes allow the opportunity for interactive processes of discovery, deliberation and determination create space for diverse stakeholders with divergent perspectives on issues to reach consensus on how to approach the policy issues at hand. This, often slow, process-based work creates the conditions for real collaboration to take place.

The findings of this research provided a number of examples of where this took place. It is telling that both these examples were historical, with interviewees reflecting on the way things were rather than how they are currently. They did reflect however, that goodwill from initial process-based work generated a culture of collaboration among committee members and, while membership has shifted, the culture remained to some extent at least. Doberstein notes, that when this occurs "the advantage is not simply through diverse policy actors working together to better manage a policy issue but is primarily driven from the transformative possibilities of policy debate and problem-solving in collaborative governance (2016: 822).

Trust

Literature on collaborative governance proposes that repeated, quality interactions will help foster trust, mutual understanding, internal legitimacy, and shared commitment, thereby generating and sustaining shared motivation to engage and act collaboratively order to

address policy issues. The findings indicate that community representatives found it particularly challenging to foster those trusting relationships with other stakeholders, with the generation of mutual understanding of the issues at hand having proven to be particularly difficult. Understanding around the provision of culturally appropriate accommodation for Travellers illustrates this matter effectively. Representatives in neither LTACC case felt that other stakeholders shared their commitment to the provision of culturally appropriate accommodation, as legislated for in the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act (1997) but rather endorsed as a successful outcome of the LTACC, the provision of traditional housing.

Dialogue Processes: Experiencing Participation

The preceding chapter illustrated that, in the Irish context, from the perspective of community representatives, there were mixed experiences of these spaces. The structures selected for study exhibited many of the features of collaborative governance spaces identified by Ansell and Gash (2007), including nonstate actors and state initiated forums, meeting formally and a clear focus on public policy matters. However, the experiences of the community representatives suggest that the absence of a devolution of power and resources meant that there was little opportunity for real collaboration. Community representatives felt that they entered the collaborative governance spaces as outsiders, often holding views that were not shared by other stakeholders within the structures. As such, they were required to make a considerable effort to generate shared understandings of the policy problems they were seeking to address.

Shared Commitment, Shared Motivation and Shared Understanding of the Issues

Beyond these examples, there was little sense of shared motivation or of any capacity for joint action reported among the interviewees. In fact, respondents had overwhelmingly negative experiences of participation in the structures. This ranged from uncomfortable experiences for members of marginalised communities who were participating; to direct experiences of racism and spanned from frustration with the location and scheduling of meetings and sub-group meetings; to a sense of mistrust of statutory stakeholders and vulnerability in terms of challenging decisions or perspectives of organisations who may also

control funding. Interviewees provided multiple examples of how the structures failed to act in a collaborative manner. There was a sense that the procedural and institutional arrangements that emerged, were either not fit for purpose or were superseded by alternative agendas and mechanisms. At the most basic level, interviewees noted that meetings took place during the working day and took place in local authority settings, limiting, for many, the option of participating.

Capacity to Act

Hilmer (2010) suggests that participatory democracy processes allow citizens to 'learn by doing', meaning that by taking part in local government structures and learning about how they work, they can build their capacity and have an increasing impact on policy outcomes. Community representatives in this study felt that they had built their capacity through their participation in the various collaborative governance structures. The findings demonstrated that it took time for them to do this and, in most cases, it was necessary to provide supports in order to achieve this enhanced capacity. This support, in some cases, came via community organisations that supported the representatives. In other cases, there was some resourcing of this capacity building by the structures themselves. There was a strong sense that this resourcing should come from the collaborative governance structures. Community representatives acknowledged their own knowledge or skills deficits but they also flagged that other stakeholders also demonstrated strength and weaknesses in their participation in structures.

Boundary Spanning: Experiences and Challenges

The role of the boundary spanner has been flagged as a significant one across different domains. In the private sector, they have been viewed as key figures, moving between diverse spaces, allowing for a flow of knowledge and assisting in the successful implementation of cross unit projects (Van Meerkeek and Edelenbos, 2014). They have been identified as having a similar role within the silos of the public sector and, more recently, as new forms of governance and management arrangements have emerged, challenging existing practices, this analysis has shifted to the role spanners play between state and non-state actors. Boundary spanners seen to carry out three main, interrelated, activities: connecting or linking

different people and processes at both sides of a boundary, selecting relevant information on both sides of the boundary, and translating this information to the other side of the boundary. This reflects the roles played by community representatives in the collaborative governance processes examined. Indeed, research participants identified, as central to the role, task of bringing the voice and perspectives of the communities they represented to the spaces they occupied and, in addition utilising the knowledge gained within those spaces to engage more effectively at local level, within and beyond the communities they represent.

The role of the boundary spanner is, then, clearly a multifaceted one. Commentators recognise boundary spanning as a highly complex process, particularly when multiple and overlapping boundaries created by different agencies, sectors and professions are involved. This is reflected in the findings presented in Chapter 5, where boundary spanners noted their capacity to build relationship with diverse stakeholders including local authority representatives, other community representatives who may not have a social inclusion agenda and statutory agencies, in addition to working with and for the community they represent. Boundary spanners noted their role in bringing the voice of the community into the collaborative governance space in order to articulate their experience of the issues at hand and the role in bringing the work of the collaborative governance structure back to the community space. Williams points out that "negotiating and enacting common purpose among multiple and diverse agencies with different cultures, management systems, accountabilities and purposes is complex, and understanding the structural and agential determinants of success is difficult to unravel" (2012: 2).

Working across boundaries is often marked by interprofessional barriers that may serve as mechanisms for the establishment of protective boundaries rather than crossing them. Boundary spanners described the challenge of having their voices heard and, more importantly, their expertise recognised by other stakeholders on the very structures. While there are, in these contexts shared motivations, Williams contends, that the spheres can be "viewed as fundamentally different in terms of purposes, value base and accountabilities, the motivations to collaborate are often similar, and the consequent governance and

management challenges faced stemming from differences in culture, style and strategic purpose are common to both sectors" (2012: 3).

This challenge was particularly evident in the case of Travellers participating on the LTACCs. Both Traveller and non-Traveller representatives highlighted the particular challenges associated with seeking to represent a collective perspective. They also noted the challenge of sharing spaces, sometimes with other stakeholders who simply did not ascribe to the purpose of the committees. This was evidenced by the example given of one elected representative having campaigned against Traveller accommodation during the election and then taking a seat on the LTACC in order to block rather than support the work of the committee. While neither of the other two structures provided such divisive examples, there was nonetheless a sense that the role of the boundary spanners was to seek to encourage other stakeholders to give consideration to what was often a view that contrasted to that the larger group. Rather than the structures adapting their styles or the culture of the spaces, there was a sense that the boundary spanners were required to adopt and adapt to statutory approaches to working and addressing policy issues.

This research proposes that the research participants can be described as 'boundary spanners'. While this term has not previously been used in this manner, the findings laid out in Chapter 5 indicate that the term is useful in describing the approach and skills demonstrated by the research participants in their role as community representatives in decision-making structures. It is particularly relevant that the term 'boundary spanner' has, most recently, been used in relation to the role and necessary skills for individuals within the statutory sector. Recognising that these skills are also present among community representatives, allows for a shared conversation regarding the knowledge, skills and values that are required to effectively collaborate and contribute to the development of complex public policies and management.

The table below outlines some of the key capacities of boundary spanners and the following section will provide some examples of how the findings demonstrate that the community representative took part in the study exhibit many of these key capacities.

Tasks	Traits and skills	Strategies
✓ building and maintaining relationships ✓ ability to find solutions ✓ sharing information ✓ facilitating o communication o commitment o involvement o activity	✓ positive attitude ✓ enthusiasm ✓ interest in people ✓ energy ✓ mediation skills ✓ ability to build trust ✓ ability to cajole ✓ leadership ability ✓ nonintrusive, yet persuasive communication	✓ Keeping everyone working to the same agenda ✓ ensuring benefits for all ✓ linking the project to other processes (macro or micro)

Table 8 Tasks, traits, skills and strategies of boundary spanners (Rugkasa et al. 2007).

In the context of this research, the interviewees saw themselves as conduits, bringing the voice and perspectives of the communities they represented to the tables they sat at. They were conscious of their difference and that their views were often not shared by others at the table but many approached the spaces with open attitudes and a willingness to learn from the other stakeholders. The depth of knowledge and skills required by the participants was evidenced throughout the interviews and there was a sense among community representatives that, because the perspectives they were presenting was often not representative of the broader consensus, it was important to be at the top of their game and to be confident in asserting their knowledge and expertise.

Rugkasa et al. (2007) posit boundary spanners as "individuals with a strong commitment to change, who act as entrepreneurs of power"'. These actors, they suggest, have the ability to see how an issue looks from a number of viewpoints, and can relate to people in different circumstances who are from different cultures and have different value bases. This was evidenced by the findings, as the representatives highlighted the centrality of a strategic approach to their engagement within the various structures. This involved adopting different

approaches different times, both inside and outside of the structures and building alliances with others on shared point of interest, while also acknowledging points of divergence. Ledwith suggested that community workers must let go of “the cultural, theoretical and ideological parameters that enclose us and offer us the security of ‘home’; the familiar and the known” in order to understand different ways of engaging with the world (2011: 147) and this approach informed the practice of the research participants.

Rugkasa et al. (2007) also flag their notion of ‘downwards’ boundary spanning as having much in common with community development practice and suggest that the type of work carried out by boundary crossers, including emotional labour and face work, would be familiar to those involved in community development. They argue that this understanding is missing from the concept of boundary spanners as it is currently applied in the literature on partnerships. This was reflected in the experiences of these civil society boundary crossers who noted the additional pressures upon them in their role as representatives. They were conscious of the focus on collective analysis and outcomes, as well as the importance of giving voice to and moving information back to the communities they represented. Research participants identified these additional elements to their roles as integral but unrecognised and un-resourced within the collaborative governance structures.

Boundary spanners are documented to display skills such as diplomacy, negotiation, brokerage and facilitation, which are often essential to catalyse collaboration or new ways of working (Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002), and they “combine a broad strategic vision of what their partnership should be trying to achieve, with flexible and pragmatic tactics in dynamic situations”. One of the key frustrations of the research participants was the failure of other stakeholders to recognise and acknowledge the knowledge and skills that they brought to the structures. Indeed, another key issue was the lack of competence and collaborative competencies demonstrated by other stakeholders in the structures.

Outcomes and Results of Collaboration

People and organisations collaborate across boundaries in order to get something done that may not otherwise be achieved. Collaborative actions or outputs are taken in the hopes of producing desired outcomes, or results 'on the ground'. Issues such as imbalance of power, lack of meaningful community engagement, lack of ability to think 'outside the box' and lack of trust have been pointed out as barriers to successful outcomes (Lasker & Weiss 2003; Rugkasa et al., 2007). Many of the responses relating to the function and process of the various committees were quite critical, and the overarching message from the research participants was that the various structures were not functioning in a collaborative manner. Quite simply, there was a sense that not a lot of been done that would not otherwise have happened However, there was still an acknowledgement of positive impact and outcomes that had occurred as a result of their engagement with the various structures. These can be classified at the micro, meso and macro level.

At the micro level participants felt that being part of the structure generated an opportunity to raise areas and issues that may otherwise have been completely ignore. While these issues may not have been addressed in a collaborative manner, it is still saw it is beneficial to be in a position to ensure certain issues were on the agenda at least. The meso level, there was a highly positive response to the opportunity to engage, on a regular basis, with key figures from the statutory sphere. This opportunity to build relationships, to influence understandings of issues and to feed into decisions regarding the allocation of funding was deemed to be of great value to the participants.

One of the major concerns of participants, when considering the negative impact of their participation in the collaborative governance structures was a sense of frustration at the resources that were required to maintain the status quo or to ensure that there were no actively negative outcomes. This frustration was also reflected in concerns about what other stakeholders in the collaborative structures deemed as successes. This reflects the concern expressed regarding co-option. There are significant concerns that emerge for civil society in any attempt to engage with the state.

Barnes (1999) acknowledges the individual risks that can be incurred and notes how persons who confront traditional power structures may put themselves at risk and need the support of their peers. Co-option was defined by Selznick (1966: 13) as “the process of absorbing new elements into the leadership or policy-determining structure of an organisation as a means of averting threats to its stability or existence”, though in the normal pejorative sense in which co-option is understood, such absorption comes without any real power sharing (Dryzek, 1996: 476). In the case of Traveller accommodation, there were concerns expressed about the nature of accommodation provided and whether the committees were being used to ameliorate the issues and avoid filling the statutory responsibility to provide culturally appropriate accommodation. Similarly, participants in the LCDC structures were concerned that their membership of the PPN endorsed structures that they did not support.

This tension of choosing between participation and non-participation has been a long-standing issue for civil society. McArdle (2016) addressed some of these pressures in a recent study on radical community work in Ireland, concluding that in a developed democracy, community development (and perhaps other civil society organisations) should be working in and against, with and for the state. It becomes then a real question for civil society organisations, whether to choose state or civil society or to give attention to both. Many commentators encourage a dualistic strategy and see it as the role of civil society to encourage debate and evolution within civil society, seek the development of a supportive constitutional, legal, and policy context for continued movement activity in civil society – sustained by civil society support. However, it is essential that civil society groups are supported and sustained to make these decisions and that the state has the possibility to engage with them in constructive ways, allowing groups to choose on the basis of whether groups would be co-opted within the state or if their departure would diminish civil society.

Conclusion

Following a long focus on structural aspects of governance, the literature has, within recent years, come to focus on the micro rather than the macro level. There has been increased

consideration given to the experiences and capacities of the individuals who participate in the structures and the role that they may have in shaping them. Much of this attention has been directed towards people working in local authority and other statutory settings. However, this research casts a lens upon one subgroup of civil society representatives on the various structures, those concerned with social inclusion.

Civil society has been identified as an alternative site for the pursuit democracy, a space where people can come together and exercise power in a number of different ways, whether by engaging political discourse, constituting policy oriented fora or even articulating dissent through protest or other forms of collective action (Dryzek, 1996). Findings of this research have illustrated some of the challenges faced by community organisations in attempting to exercise their power in the collaborative settings under discussion. Participation of community representatives in participatory democracy structures such as collaborative governance processes allows for the inclusion of a greater range of perspectives and opinions, which ideally, leads to more informed policy-making. It follows then, that the participation of voices with a social inclusion focus, or whom represent the most marginalised communities, allows for the integration of perspectives beyond that of those who have traditionally held power, creating space for the voices of marginalised communities in the policy-making process.

As was seen in the case of the LDATF’s, there was a sense that the inclusion of communities at the outset and in shaping the multifaceted policy responses that were required led to a greater sense of legitimacy. Those who were involved felt a greater sense of ownership over the policy decisions. This experience was not replicated in the case of the LTACC, where the establishment of the local committees as a result of national level policy, led to the formation of structures made up of stakeholders with very different understandings of, and responses to, the issue of Traveller accommodation. In addition, the committees were established.

It could be considered that number of the issues raised as challenges by community representatives emanate from differing understandings of what the purpose and practices of participatory democracy are

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Introduction

This final chapter sets out to draw some conclusions from the research carried and documented in this thesis. In attempting to respond to a core research question looking at civil society participation in collaborative governance structures, this inquiry has provided an opportunity for community representatives to reflect on and discuss their experiences of participating in local governance structures. By analysing these experiences within the integrated framework for collaborative governance developed by Emerson et al. (2012), it has been possible to consider some of the challenges they faced within the broader context. In looking to a model that outlines how collaborative processes ought to work, it has been possible to identify where this has not happened in the context of the structures that were observed in this research and, further, to examine why this might been the case. In addition, engaging with the literature on boundary spanners and, identifying the work of community representatives as boundary spanners, provided useful new framework within which to consider the role, tasks, skills and values community representatives must embody in order to attempt to participate effectively in complex governance structures.

Summary of the Thesis

Chapter 1 of this thesis set out to provide an introduction to the study and to outline the purpose and rationale of the research question. Chapter 2 went on to provide an overview of participatory democracy and then to discuss in more detail turn, in recent decades, governance and to look in more detail at some of the frameworks that have been developed to analyse collaborative governance processes. Chapter 2 also engaged with literature on civil society and civil society organisations before turning its attention to boundary spanners, the individuals who traverse the space between different sectors.

Chapter 3 sought to set out the context for governance processes in Ireland. It provided an overview of some of the key features that created the conditions for the establishment of an

array of collaborative governance structures. It then provided some contextual information about the structures that were selected for study.

Chapter 4 described methodological considerations that were taken into account in developing this research project and set out the operational framework that guided the research design as well as the approach to analysing data generated. It also provided information about ethical and data management concerns.

Chapters 5 and 6 provide an overview of the findings of this research, presenting the data gathered through interviews with the research participants and utilising the operational framework presented in Chapter 4 to generate analysis of these findings drawing links where possible with the literature set out in Chapter 2.

Finally, this chapter draws some conclusions regarding the research, responds to the overarching research question and suggests potential areas for further research and consideration.

Responding to the Research Question

The central research question that informed this project asked whether participation in collaborative governance spaces by community representatives provided the possibility to advance the interests of community based organisations who seek to reduce social exclusion.

In responding to this question, this thesis concludes that, in the main, despite high levels of commitment from community representatives who have amassed a considerable amount of expertise and experience in working collaboratively, the extent of real collaborative actions and impacts remains limited. In particular, where complex problems which often underlie the complex causes of social exclusion, are the focus of the collaborative governance structure,

even less progress has been made, as political and administrative preoccupations often supersede any commitment towards collaborative engagement and problem solving.

These community representatives acted as boundary spanners and, in doing so, highlighted the impact of institutional design and management of collaborative governance mechanisms and their experiences. In particular, the research demonstrates the impact of externally designed formal rules of collaboration and the level control exercised by local authorities over many mechanisms. This is shown to shape the nature of participation and interactions between key stakeholders, especially in the management of deliberation and agendas, in the process, restricting voice and influence and undermining trust among boundary spanning community representatives.

Contribution of the Research

In cohesively setting out and contextualising the data generated through qualitative research processes, this research has made a useful contribution in a number of areas. Among these, there are four of particular relevance to my ongoing work. Firstly, it will inform my teaching, thus leading to a greater understanding of the purpose and practice of participation in collaborative spaces for newly qualified community and youth workers. Secondly, the work provides a platform from which to engage with practitioners who are already seeking to engage with, or perhaps avoiding, collaborative governance spaces. It is hoped that it will be possible to create spaces for practitioners to discuss and build upon the findings outlined in the preceding chapters. In doing this, it may be possible to share strategies and to develop toolkits that may inform other community representatives' engagement with local governance structures.

Thirdly, it is hoped that the research will influence and make a contribution to the development of policy in the area of community participation at a local level, in terms of local governance policy and practice and in the sphere if collaborative governance. In doing this, it is hoped to be able to work with other stakeholders in local governance processes in order to develop and inform their understanding of collaborative governance. Finally, it is hoped that

the wok will contribute to collaborative governance literature more broadly, by seeking to publish the Irish experience to add to other examples globally.

In terms of academic contribution, this research adds to the growing literature on collaborative governance. While there is no shortage of research and publications in this area, with output on the concept increases yearly, the focus of this particular research adds a much-needed additional dimension to existing work. By focusing on the perspective of social inclusion representatives, this research has generated additional knowledge about and from the perspective of the most marginalised groups in society, or at least the voices of those who seek to represent the interests of these groups. Given that collaborative governance is vaunted as a means to increase participation in the development of policy and enhance collective outcomes from these policies through its collaborative processes, an attempt to develop and include an enhanced understanding of the perspectives of those it seeks to include is invaluable.

In terms of contribution to policy, this research has made a valuable contribution to better understanding the practical implications of current policy development approaches within local governance structures in the Irish context. Again, by providing a cohesive report on the experiences of community representatives sampled across three different structures, this research has highlighted existing challenges, as well as, provided examples of good practice. The findings have demonstrated significant imbalances in the roles played by the various stakeholders and in their capacity to influence outcomes. By taking into account the issues raised as challenges by the research participants, it is possible for the conveners of future collaborative governance structures to adapt and adopt structures, policies, procedures and practices that can mitigate the challenges faced by civil society representatives, in particular those who are tasked with the responsibility of representing social inclusion voice within these spaces.

By situating the experiences of the community representatives within the context of literature on boundary spanners, this research has allowed for a focus on the 'practice' of collaborative governance. It has set out the rationale for, approach to, challenges of and possibilities for the participation of community representatives in collaborative governance structures. In doing so, this study has highlighted the complex set of knowledge, skills and values that is required by those who seek to participate in collaborative governance processes. The research participants of this current study were able to articulate their experiences, describe their practices and identify their own capacities and, in doing so, have made a valuable contribution to better understanding the practice of boundary spanning, including the unique challenges that emerge for those who come from within or seek to represent the perspective of groups who are traditionally excluded from local governance structures, among other spaces.

Further Research Possibilities

A number of possible avenues for future research focus emerge from this research. This study adopted a qualitative methodology and, given inevitable limitations in terms of time and resources, it was only possible to draw upon sample of the various structures studied. As described in the methodology chapter, this example was purposive, seeking to engage with community representatives with a focus on social inclusion. This sample provides useful snapshot, and baseline, from which to build a national level enquiry. It would be most useful to expand this qualitative research approach to engage with community representatives across each of the structures considered in this study. In doing so, it would be possible to explore what other lenses informed the participation of social inclusion representatives and, whether different lenses led to different approaches to, and experiences of participation, in collaborative governance processes. By creating fuller picture of the experiences of community representatives in particular and civil society participants more broadly, it may be possible to inform future collaborative governance processes and structures to allow for enhanced outcomes and more broadly collaborative experiences for all stakeholders.

Another possible strand of research emerging from this study could be engagement with other stakeholders from across the various collaborative governance structures. As noted at

the outset of this thesis, much attention has already been given to the experience of the statutory representatives, and this current study has sought to address the dearth of engagement with civil society representatives. There remains, however, a gap in research on the aims for, approaches to and understandings of collaborative governance from perspective of the elected representatives. As can be seen from the findings, these stakeholders maintain considerable power and influence within collaborative governance processes. Yet, while they are the embodiment of representative democracy, there has been limited attention given, in the Irish context at least, to how these elected representatives position themselves vis a vis the infrastructure of participatory democracy and within collaborative governance processes. An exploration of this could lead to better understanding of potential blockages as they may emerge from the side of the elected representatives but also provide some insight into how elected representatives may be supported to more effectively engage with participatory democracy within collaborative governance processes and other relevant infrastructure.

A final area of interest for further study is a further exploration of the role of community representatives as boundary spanners. As indicated in the literature review, much of the theoretical understandings of boundary spanners come from the realm of organisational psychology and public administration. The focus of this current study was on community representatives but, as a result of the sampling strategy adopted, there was particular focus on representatives who had knowledge of social inclusion. This yielded an interesting perspective on the competences shared by community representatives and boundary spanners, particularly within the context of state–civil society engagement. Such a study could examine the boundary-spanning rules that community representatives play in multiple spheres, linking individuals within communities, linking communities to each other, linking communities do organisations and organisations to each other, as well as spanning the boundaries between civil society and the state. It would be of interest, in the spirit of shaping the professional formation of community workers, to further explore these shared competences and to consider if and how they may be integrated in to the professional education and training of community workers.

Conclusion

This research project set out to explore and document the experiences of community representatives who participate in collaborative governance processes in Irish settings. This cohort has experienced a particular set of challenges over the last decade. On the one hand, a profusion of local governance structures emerged, mandated to include representation from across civil society, including a particular focus on social inclusion, in the development, implementation and monitoring of policy across a range of topics. While, on the other, the social inclusion, equality and community development infrastructure that emerged during the 1990s was strategically deconstructed. A staged process of cohesion and alignment over a number of years shifted governance, funding streams, and operational functions out of local communities and into the orbit of local development companies and local government, reducing the absolute number, and scope, of projects and professionals working in this area.

Within this context, the rhetoric of civil society participation has remained central to government policy. However, as this research has shown, the practice of participation, in the sample studied at least, does not meet the proposed policy. Utilising Emerson et. al.'s (2012) integrative framework for collaborative governance as a guide, this research examined the experiences of community representatives. It found that, by and large, despite considerable commitment from community representatives who had, through professional and personal experiences, amassed a considerable amount of expertise and experience in working collaboratively, there was a sense that there were only limited collaborative actions and impacts as a result of their participation. The complex problems that the collaborative governance structures set out to address remained, according to the findings of this study both complex and problematic.

While many of the findings of this study were less than optimistic, the research participants did indicate that there was some value in engaging in collaborative or 'networked' spaces. Unintended consequences such as building relationships across boundaries, becoming aware of and accessing funding that they otherwise may not have known about and the possibility to at least raise issues of concern in spaces where they might otherwise not be heard offered

some return on the participants investment of time and energy to the collaborative governance structures.

A further focus of the study was the role these community representatives held as boundary spanners, bridging the space between civil society and the communities and interests they represented there and the mechanisms of the state. It found that the work of community representatives and the role of boundary spanners shared a number of key features and skills. To this end, study found that the capacity to build and maintain relationships, the ability to find solutions and the skills of facilitating communication across boundaries as embodied by the community representatives was essential. These skills were deemed necessary in order to generate a context, a regime, and a process that may lead to real collaboration in terms of policy development implementation and outcomes, particularly policies that may improve social inclusion outcomes for the most marginalised communities in Irish society.

The research participants identified the decline in previously existing supports such as funding for process-based work, supports for comprehensive community engagement and resources to build the capacity of themselves as representatives and of other community members are concerned with influencing social inclusion outcomes on various structures. They also highlighted the need for more responsive and adaptive structures and the need for substantial and substantive training for other stakeholders who are participating in collaborative governance structures. As boundary spanners, the social inclusion representatives articulated a strong sense of the skills that they needed to participate in the collaborative governance structures however, they also indicated that these skills were not, in all cases, met by commensurate skills among other stakeholders and participants in the collaborative governance processes.

If collaborative governance processes are to be successful local level, it is essential to create conditions for a well-resourced and informed civil society. If community organisations are to participate effectively in local governance structures such as those under consideration in this

study and other local level structures across the state, then they must be resourced to engage with the community they are representing.

Similarly, if individuals from marginalised communities are expected to represent those communities, processes and structures to support them to do so must be put in place. If there is to be genuine participation policy-making, rather than simply a rhetoric of participation, must be a real devolution of decision-making powers and resources to the collaborative governance structures and local level. Effective participation enriches, challenges and strengthens representative democracy.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Research Project Information Sheet

Name of Department: Department of Applied Social Studies

Title of the Study:

Spanning Boundaries: An exploration of the role of community development workers and community representatives in collaborative governance processes.

Programme: Doctor of Social Science (DSocSci)

Researcher: Marianne O'Shea

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Introduction

I would like to invite you to participate in this research project which forms part of my doctoral programme. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being carried out and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of this study?

Collaborative governance requires that 'boundary spanners' exist within both state and non-state organisations i.e. those who are tasked to engage with others in other sectors (Williams, 2012). However, the scale of the challenge taken on by boundary spanners from community work organisations is different and in many ways more considerable than for others.

This research project seeks to explore and document the experiences of community workers and community representatives who have engaged in collaborative governance processes in Irish settings. In doing so, the research will examine the nature of the collaborative governance structures and explore community workers and community representatives experiences of taking part in these structures.

It is hoped that by doing this, the research will identify the challenges facing community work boundary spanners and provide insight into what is needed for them to operate to greatest effect within collaborative governance spaces.

Why have you been invited to take part?

I am inviting community workers and community representatives who have engaged in collaborative governance structures to take part in this research. I believe that the experience you have gained by working within these structures provides a unique perspective from which to identify the challenges and provide insight into what is required for community workers and community representatives to operate to greatest effect within collaborative governance spaces.

Do you have to take part?

You do not have to take part. Participation is voluntary. Please read this information sheet and, if you have any questions, please ask for further clarification. You should not agree to take part in this

research until you have had all your questions answered satisfactorily. If it is the case that you agree to take part in the research and, later, no longer wish to do so, please be aware that you can withdraw from the research at any time up to the point of anonymisation of your data for analysis.

What will you do in the project?

If you decide to take part, you will be asked to sign the consent form attached to this information sheet. We will each retain a copy for reference.

I will then contact you to discuss the interview procedure and set up an interview, to be carried out at a time and location (in a private area to ensure confidentiality) convenient to you. The interview will take at most 1.5 hours and will be based on a topic guide but is designed to be flexible to allow for an open discussion. The interview will be recorded and transcribed for analysis. You will be asked to review and sign off on this transcript and are welcome to add further clarifications at this point.

What are the possible risks of taking part?

This research presents minimal risk to participants. In speaking about your experience of engaging in collaborative governance structures, is possible that some topics under discussion may be challenging to discuss or evoke contentious views but in such an event, you may request to change topic or terminate the interview at any time. I approach this research as a researcher-practitioner, informed by values such as respect and solidarity and welcome and appreciate your participation to openly discuss your work and your professional experiences.

While every attempt will be made to ensure all participants anonymity, in recognising that members of the various collaborative structures that are being explored are listed publicly, it cannot be guaranteed that your identity may not be reconstructed by informed readers. However, you will have had the opportunity to review and sign off on transcripts of your interview and, to this end, you should be confident that you have shared only relevant information.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Reflection is recognised as an important concept in community work and it is hoped that by reflecting on your work and your professional experiences, you may inform your future practice. The opportunity to reflect on and learn from experiences of participation is also important for community

representatives, allowing individuals to share their lived experience and add their voice to the analysis that emerges from research. Overall, this study hopes to add to the literature about community work and about civil society participation in local governance structures in Ireland, on the one hand, adding the perspectives of a particular cohort of Irish community workers to other voices in the field and on the other, attempting to include the experiences of community representatives to these voices.

What happens to the information in the project?

Individual interviews will be recorded and transcribed in preparation for analysis that will be carried out using a qualitative software package called NVivo. This information will be anonymised with all identifiers removed in order to provide the best protection for you. While every attempt will be made to ensure your anonymity, in recognising the small sample group of community workers who have participated in collaborative governance structures and the public nature of the membership, it cannot be guaranteed that your identity may be reconstructed by informed readers.

In line with Maynooth University Research Integrity Policy, all records, including the audio files will be retained for a period of ten years from publication. They will then be destroyed in accordance with policy guidelines.

All records will be stored on a secure encrypted PC at Maynooth University. Hard copies, including information sheets and consent forms, will be stored in a locked cabinet on campus. Only I, the researcher and my supervisors will have access to the information gathered.

> *'It must be recognized that, in some circumstances, confidentiality of research data and records may be overridden by courts in the event of litigation or in the course of investigation by lawful authority. In such circumstances the University will take all reasonable steps within law to ensure that confidentiality is maintained to the greatest possible extent.'*

What will happen to the results of the study?

The data generated though this research will provide the basis for my doctoral thesis, due to be presented and defended at Maynooth University during 2020. Beyond this, I plan to disseminate the research findings in other selected settings such as conferences and workshops and may draw on some of the findings to inform further research.

What if something goes wrong?

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process, please contact Maurice Devlin, Head of Department of Applied Social Studies maurice.devlin@mu.ie +353 1 708 3781.

Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

Research Participant Consent Form

I, the undersigned, confirm that (please tick box as appropriate):

1.	I have read and understood the information about the project, as provided in the Information Sheet dated _________________	☐
2.	I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation.	☐
3.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.	☐
4.	I understand I can withdraw at any time, prior to the anonymisation of my responses, without giving reasons and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn.	☐
5.	The procedures regarding confidentiality and limits to confidentiality, including the possibility that it cannot be guaranteed that my identity may be reconstructed by informed readers, have been clearly explained (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymisation of data, etc.) to me.	☐
6. a.	The use of the data in research and publications has been explained to me and I consent to the use of my data to inform further studies by the researcher.	☐
b.	The use of the data in research and publications has been explained to me and I **DO NOT** consent to the use of my data to inform further studies by the researcher.	☐
7.	I consent to audio record the interview.	☐
8.	I consent to the use of anonymised quotes from my interview in the write up of the research and in subsequent associated presentations.	☐

Participant:

__________________________ ____________________________ _________________

Name of Participant Signature Date

Researcher:

__________________________ ____________________________ _________________

Name of Researcher Signature Date

Researcher Contact Details
Tel: +353 1 708 6794 **Email:** Marianne.oshea@mu.ie

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process, please contact Maurice Devlin, Head of Department of Applied Social Studies maurice.devlin@mu.ie +353 1 708 37819.

Please be assured that any concerns you might have will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

Appendix 2

Interview Background Guide & Questions

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Where the research will take place?</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">I. the forum is initiated by public agencies or institutions
II. participants in the forum include non-state actors
III. participants engage directly in decision making and are not merely ‘‘consulted’’ by public agencies
IV. the forum is formally organized and meets collectively
V. the forum aims to make decisions by consensus (even if consensus is not achieved in practice)
VI. the focus of collaboration is on public policy or public management
(Ansell & Gash, 2007)</td></tr>
<tr><th>Who will be interviewed?</th><th>What will be discussed?</th></tr>
<tr><td>Speaking to:
Civil Society (Social Inclusion Focus)
• Community Workers
• Community Representatives

The key agents managing within inter organisational theatres – the boundary spanners (Williams, 2002: 103)</td><td>Exploring :
System Context
• Drivers

Collaborative Governance Regime
• Principled Engagement
• Shared Motivation
• Capacity for Joint Action

Collaborative Actions
• Impacts
• Adaptation

Boundary Spanning
• Experiences & Approaches
• Challenges & Opportunities</td></tr>
</table>

Draft Interview Questions & Thematic Guide

Introductory Questions

Tell me about yourself:

1. What is your role with this organisation?
2. How long have you been involved?
3. What do you understand community development to be?

Theme 1: General System Context

Drivers (leadership, consequential incentives, interdependence, and uncertainty)

Tell me about the CG Structure you are involved with:

1. How did you get involved?
2. Why did you get involved?
3. Who else is involved?
4. What is your role in the CG structure?

Theme 2: Collaborative Governance Regime

Collaborative Dynamics

- Principled Engagement (basic process elements: discovery, definition, deliberation, and determination)
- Shared Motivation (elements: trust, mutual understanding, internal legitimacy, and shared commitment)
- Capacity for Joint Action(elements: procedural and institutional arrangements, leadership, knowledge, and resources)

Tell me about the work of the CG structure

1. Who holds a leadership role in the CG structure?
2. How are the priorities of the structure decided upon?
3. When/if conflicts emerge, how are they addressed?
4. How are members supported to participate in the CG structure?
5. Do you think that all members can participate equally?

Theme 3: Collaborative Actions & Impacts

Actions that ''could not have been attained by any of the organisations acting alone'' (impacts, effects, outputs, and/or outcomes of collaboration)

Tell me about the actions & Impacts of the CG structure:

1. What do you think the successes of the CG structure have been?
2. What do you think the failures of the CG structure have been?
3. What have the main challenges of the CG structure been?
4. What are the main opportunities of the CG structure?

Theme 4: Boundary Spanners

1. What are the skills or knowledge that allows you to work in this space?
2. Where did you gain this?
3. What skills of knowledge to you think you still need?
4. How could you gain this?

Closing:

1. Is there anything that you would like to have been asked?
2. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix 3

The table below provides an overview of the propositions about Collaborative Governance presented by Ansell & Gash (2007) and Emerson et al. (2012).

Ansell & Gash CG Model (2007)		Emerson et al. CG Integrative Framework (2012)		
	Proposition			Proposition
Starting Conditions	(1) If there are significant power/resource imbalances between stakeholders, such that important stakeholders cannot participate in a meaningful way, then effective collaborative governance requires a commitment to a positive strategy of empowerment and representation of weaker or disadvantaged stakeholders.	General System Context	Drivers *Leadership* *Consequential incentives* *Interdependence* *Uncertainty*	(1) One or more of the drivers of leadership, consequential incentives, interdependence, or uncertainty are necessary for a CGR to begin. The more drivers present and recognized by participants, the more likely a CGR will be initiated
	(2) If alternative venues exist where stakeholders can pursue their goals unilaterally, then collaborative governance will only work if stakeholders perceive themselves to be highly interdependent.	Collaborative Governance Regime *Collaborative Dynamics*	Principled Engagement: *Discovery* *Definition* *Deliberation* *Determination*	(2) Principled engagement is generated and sustained by the interactive processes of discovery, definition, deliberation, and determination. The effectiveness of principled engagement is determined, in part, by the quality of these interactive processes
	(3) If interdependence is conditional upon the collaborative forum being an exclusive venue, then sponsors must be willing to do the advance work of getting alternative forums (courts, legislators, and executives) to respect and honour the outcomes of collaborative processes		Shared Motivation: *Mutual trust* *Understanding* *Internal legitimacy* *Commitment*	(3) Repeated, quality interactions through principled engagement will help foster trust, mutual understanding, internal legitimacy, and shared commitment, thereby generating and sustaining shared motivation.
	(4) If there is a prehistory of antagonism among stakeholders, then collaborative governance is unlikely to succeed unless (a)			(4) Once generated, shared motivation will enhance and help sustain

	there is a high degree of interdependence among the stakeholders or (b) positive steps are taken to remediate the low levels of trust and social capital among the stakeholders.			principled engagement and vice versa in a "virtuous cycle."
Facilitative Leadership	(5) Where conflict is high and trust is low, but power distribution is relatively equal and stakeholders have an incentive to participate, then collaborative governance can successfully proceed by relying on the services of an honest broker that the respective stakeholders accept and trust. This honest broker might be a professional mediator.		Capacity for Joint Action: *Procedural & Institutional arrangements* *Leadership* *Knowledge* *Resources*	(5) Principled engagement and shared motivation will stimulate the development of institutional arrangements, leadership, knowledge, and resources, thereby generating and sustaining capacity for joint action.
	(6) Where power distribution is more asymmetric or incentives to participate are weak or asymmetric, then collaborative governance is more likely to succeed if there is a strong ''organic'' leader who commands the respect and trust of the various stakeholders at the outset of the process. ''Organic'' leaders are leaders who emerge from within the community of stakeholders. The availability of such leaders is likely to be highly contingent upon local circumstances.			(6) The necessary levels for the four elements of capacity for joint action are determined by the CGR's purpose, shared theory of action, and targeted outcomes.
Collaborative processes	(7) If the prehistory is highly antagonistic, then policy makers or stakeholders should budget time for effective remedial trust building. If they cannot justify the necessary time and cost, then they should not embark on a collaborative strategy.			(7) The quality and extent of collaborative dynamics depends on the productive and self-reinforcing interactions among principled engagement, shared motivation, and the capacity for joint action.

	(8) Even when collaborative governance is mandated, achieving ''buy in'' is still an essential aspect of the collaborative process	Collaborative Actions		(8) Collaborative actions are more likely to be implemented if 1) a shared theory of action is identified explicitly among the collaboration partners and 2) the collaborative dynamics function to generate the needed capacity for joint action
	(9) Collaborative governance strategies are particularly suited for situations that require ongoing cooperation.	Impacts		(9) The impacts resulting from collaborative action are likely to be closer to the targeted outcomes with fewer unintended negative consequences when they are specified and derived from a shared theory of action during collaborative dynamics
	(10) If prior antagonism is high and a long-term commitment to trust building is necessary, then intermediate outcomes that produce small wins are particularly crucial. If, under these circumstances, stakeholders or policy makers cannot anticipate these small wins, then they probably should not embark on a collaborative path.	Adaptation		(10) CGRs will be more sustainable over time when they adapt to the nature and level of impacts resulting from their joint actions