

**Ballymun Partnership
Community Development Programme Research Initiative**

Summary Report on
Community Participation in Local Development Structures
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(The details of this study and appendices, including questionnaire and workshop responses, are contained within the Supporting Documentation which is available from Ballymun Partnership).

Note to the Reader

While reading this document, it is important to keep in mind the local development scene in Ballymun is ever changing, and so the structures that operate locally are also changing in response.

Therefore the analysis is based on information gathered at the time of the study. The make up of organisations, their representation and relationships nationally, with each other, and with the community will by default have developed subsequently.

Rationale

This piece of work follows on from previous, general research findings on community participation and a combination of documentary deficits and events locally, in particular:

- The Ballymun Partnership Area Profile 2003 includes the findings of a 1 in 10 household survey on a range of topics including community participation. In it, it states that nearly 9 out of every 10 people want to be more involved in decisions, and over half would be interested in taking part in a neighbourhood council of some sort.
- There is no documentary evidence of the different models of engagement in local development structures, statutory and non-statutory-led in Ballymun, and no information on existing models that could be used as good practice cases.
- There is no up to date document that adequately describes the local development scene itself in Ballymun and how it relates upwards to the National programming and policy.
- Government and funding agencies are continuously challenging local development structures about their levels of local and or target group representation.
- There is a general climate of disquiet among community interests in trying to be effective on local development structures, and in decisions generally impacting on people and programming in area.

And so 3 primary aims of this research are to provide the following:

- **A profile of the local development scene in Ballymun going into 2005.**
- **An analysis of the levels and effectiveness of community participation in local development structures.**
- **A model and/or recommendations for effective community participation and representation in local development in Ballymun.**

Some of the underlying objectives of the research are to discover the following:

- Levels of community participation in structures

- Notions of community participation
- Current practice regarding nomination and election of community representatives
- Expectations and experiences of community representatives
- Reporting structures, to both community and funders
- Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats of current methods

As presented in the brief for this study, an expectation of this research is that:

- All participating agencies both statutory and non-statutory would review their community representation structures and will implement the recommendations for an effective participation and representation model.
- In doing this, there would be greater transparency and accountability on the part of statutory and non-statutory agencies.

Limitations of the Study

At the end of 2004, the Ballymun Partnership Community Development Working Group invited tenders to complete an analysis of community participation and representation in local development structures in Ballymun.

With the resources available at the time it was felt that this study could, in the first instance, begin to present a picture of the local development scene in Ballymun in 2005, while at the same time explore the levels of meaningful engagement experienced by representatives currently participating on these structures and by other organised community and voluntary groups..

The resources available at the time limited the study in terms of exploring the broader resident engagement in local development in Ballymun, and so this is not dealt with in this piece of research.

The findings themselves should however help to initiate further debate on how to achieve a broader and more meaningful engagement with the residents proper in Ballymun, who for the most part are unattached to these structures. They may not want to sit at committee tables, but may have and want to offer their unique perspective on the issues affecting them in their daily lives, particularly during this time of tremendous renewal in Ballymun.

Ultimately, this research should be seen as a first step in setting out of the lay of the land in terms of the structures that exist, and their strengths and weaknesses in terms of offering opportunities for meaningful community participation. The recommendations in this document acknowledge and or consolidate these structures, on the understanding that the weaknesses that exist should be seen as challenges to be addressed and overcome.

Methodology

Overall Approach

The methodology applied in this research project included a variety of techniques. It did not rely on just one type. The overall approach was exploratory and attempted to include as many as possible of the local development structures identified for inclusion in this research, community participants and voluntary groups in the study. Environments were created to include an *action research* element where the participants engaged in a process that provided them with the opportunity to understand the often difficult concepts of community participation and local development, to become more informed of the local development scene in Ballymun, to explore for themselves the strengths and weaknesses of the participatory structures that exist, and for them to offer constructive ideas for more meaningful engagement between the structures and the community representatives.

The decision to use this type of approach was to ensure that the debate began, and could continue on from this study, with these important stakeholders better informed of the issues involved. Often the knowledge gained from research is preserved in the mind and writings of the researcher. The hope in using this approach is that the participants gain and preserve the knowledge also, and in this, are much better equipped to engage in the work that often needs to be done as a result of the findings and recommendations that come from research projects.

(Details of the methodology can be found in the Supporting Documentation to this report, available from Ballymun Partnership).

Defining the Language of the Brief

To be specific about the focus of this research, the language in the brief was deconstructed and a common understanding provided a clearer description of the targets.

Local: Is understood to mean the geographical area closest to the people and or the problem, in this case Ballymun.

Development: Is understood to mean an event or events that positively advance the people, problem or area.

There is an acknowledgement that, in the broadest sense, these words would suggest that anyone carrying out actions to advance the lives of people in Ballymun is involved in the development of the local area.

Local Development: However, together, the words 'Local Development' provide a term that has been used by EU and National policy makers to describe:

Strategies and actions designed to advance areas of disadvantage at the sub-national level.

These strategies and actions support an understanding that local problems can be resolved locally, and specifically through the dynamic co-operation of 'partnership type arrangements' between public, private and social interests.

Local Development Structures: Are entities that organise themselves to devise and carry out these strategies and actions. Their actions also clearly relate to National or EU Development policies and programmes, and the structures set up to directly influence those policies and programmes from the local upwards and vice-versa.

These entities also deal with area-based problems and solutions, rather than issue-based, for the greater advancement of the locality in which they operate.

The Area-Based Partnerships (i.e. Ballymun Partnership) were the first agencies in Ireland to be identified as local development structures, when they were set up in 1991. Subsequently the Local Drugs Task Forces were also considered within this term. Almost 15 years later, the concept of social partnership and area-based planning has been adapted by many different stakeholders as a way to resolve a range of local challenges together.

As part of the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltheacht Affairs review of Local Development in 2002, Government funded Community development Programmes were included as significant contributors to the scene.

In this knowledge, it is not so easy to identify the local development structures that have emerged over this time in Ballymun. However, the following characteristics, or combinations of characteristics, provided a guide for the purpose of this research:

- Operates by social partnership arrangements
- Is area-based, holding the interests of all of the people in the area
- Deals with multiple/broader issues
- Relate upwards to National Development Policies and Programmes and is responsible to Intermediary structures
- Government mandated
- Has significant programming budgets
- Has Social Inclusion Brief and targets disadvantaged
- Concerned with local governance

Taking these into account, the following entities were identified as having a significant role, influence or impact on the broader development of the area:

- Ballymun Partnership (P'Ship)
- Ballymun Local Drugs Task Force (LDTF)
- Ballymun Youth Development Group (BYDG)
- Ballymun Regional Youth Resource (BRYR)
- RAPID Area Implementation Team (AIT)
- Community Development Programmes i.e.
 - Community Action Programme (CAP),
 - Community & Family Training Agency (CAFTA)
 - ST. Magaret's Travellers Group
 - The Mens Centre
- Ballymun Regeneration Limited (BRL)
- Ballymun Neighbourhood Council (BNC)
- Dublin City Council (DCC)
- Dublin City Development Board Social Inclusion Task Forces (SITFs)

St. Maragarets and The Mens Centre were considered less so because of their specific target groups and are primarily included in this list because of their CDP status. Section 1 in this study gives a more accurate account of all of the structures above, but for the purpose of this research, the Ballymun Partnership Community Development Working Group has included these particular entities as the local development structures in Ballymun.

Participation: It was important to define what was meant by participation. Is it involvement in activities, events, training or the local youth club for example? Or is it something more specific and purposeful like making a difference through policy and decision-making?

The White Paper on Community & Voluntary Sector provides the interpretation for the purpose of this research:

“Participation ... can be defined as an exchange between citizens and government, between those who make policy and people affected by policy choices. Participation and dialogue allow greater public involvement in governmental action.

To be meaningful, participation should lead to more successful outcomes. Its precise form is shaped by the problem at hand.

[While elected representatives retain ultimate responsibility for decision-making], participation is essential in the achievement of a wider consensus. It is essential in ensuring that the interests and experiences emanating directly from communities and interests across society are heard when decisions that affect the social and economic development of our society are being made.”

Participation then, for the purpose of this research, is where individuals and groups are involved in vehicles that pursue local governance and are primarily concerned with the influence that they can have on policies and decisions that affect the lives of people in the area.

Community: A vibrant, established community has many elements contributing to its well-being. For example the local authority or town council, shop keepers, businesses, churches, community groups and clubs, peace keepers, health services, educational providers and employers, residents and other colourful contributors such as activists and artists etc. For the most part, a vibrant community requires state services, but is not dependent on them for its survival, and has the means to be enterprising.

But in the context of local development, where these important elements are either not present or underdeveloped or dysfunctional, and where there is a high dependency on the state to look out for the welfare of the majority of the population, the community is for the most part, the residents, the activists, the self-help groups and other organised voluntary structures that *provide a unique perspective* on what it is like for local people to continuously live in a disadvantaged state, complex and challenging in a multiplicity of ways.

This is evidenced in the list of community representatives on local development structures in Ballymun, where there would appear to be 3 classifications of community representation, as described below. For the purpose of this research, community representatives are those individuals that are acting as representatives of the community according to the local development structures themselves.

- *Community means residents*, the people who live in Ballymun.
- *Community also means voluntary groups* that are primarily considered grass roots or self-help in nature. This includes networks and collaborations acting voluntarily to address common interest issues. Community activists and community professionals who, from time to time, lead out local initiatives in the pursuit of cross cutting themes such as fairness, equality, etc are also included in this.
- In the context of Ballymun, many of the *local development structures are representing community*. The reality is that these organisations play a dual role, acting as a deliberately constructed interface between people and government.

Thus the notion of what constitutes a community representative in Ballymun is not simple and is more than likely a consequence of the history of activism that paved the way for the organisation of local development in Ballymun. As stated above, participation is shaped by the problem at hand. And Ballymun, having many challenges, has called for many different types of responses and partnerships, some being led out solely by residents, others being let out by a combination of residents and other people, groups and agencies that they have called on to support them in their actions and to carry the interests of the community.

Summary of Findings

Summary of Findings

Under Aim 1: Profiling the Local Development Scene

1.1 Ballymun is well linked to National policies and programmes, and its local structures are adequately shaped to address the problems at hand.

- 1.1.1 The local development scene in Ballymun is rich and sufficient in terms of the numbers and types of structures and programmes set up to address the many and complex issues for the people and the area.
- 1.1.2 Ballymun, as a Government designated area of disadvantage, has also successfully managed to organise itself so that the structures that exist, clearly relate upwards to current National Development structures, policies and programmes.
- 1.1.3 The range of local development structures in Ballymun, in terms of their purpose, their mandate and their make-up is indicative of the definition of participation set out in the Community & Voluntary Sector White Paper, which is: *Participation is shaped by the problem at hand.*
- 1.1.4 For the most part, the local development structures in Ballymun are shaped to address the particular issues they were set up to address, and operate through social partnership arrangement with others immediately concerned with these issues. The community interest is promoted and reserved in the make up of these structures at this time and the participation rate, in terms of attendance, is high.

1.2. However, Ballymun needs to remain responsive to the unforeseen needs of the people and not become constrained by the neat links to Government policies and programmes it has created over the years. There is a concern among the participants in this research that local organisations can get caught up doing their thing, that they are not responsive enough to the unexpected events and emerging needs of the community.

- 1.2.1 As a matter of caution, it is important to state that while community and Government at this time are well structured to address each others development objectives, the nature of local development is always going to demand adaptability. As organisations become more systematic in their planning and programming, it is imperative that they do not constrain themselves. They should be seen as open and flexible in their day to day work so that the community recognises them as being responsive to the issues and unplanned events that can impact on residents, and at this time of renewal particularly. Certain issues and events may not be 'scheduled' into the year's programme of work for local development structures, but common sense should prevail in responding to the community for reasonable calls for help.

The main advantage for local development is that it is organised to respond more quickly at the local level than Government and its agents can, and it is wise to keep this attribute to the fore.

1.2.2 Additionally, Ballymun is being fast-tracked in terms of the provision of societal infrastructure 'norms', as a result of a decade and a half of Local Development and the Regeneration Programme itself. This is already bringing with it needs and wants more general to other communities in the rest of Ireland, in terms of programming support for arts centres, youth centres, sports and leisure facilities, maintenance of landscaped parks and playgrounds etc, all of which will beg their own resources and calls locally for support from Government. It is important not to lose sight of the socially excluded target groups and their particular needs going into this new phase.

1.2.3 The most pertinent discussions and statements by the participants during the course of this study were in relation to the overall social regeneration of the area. Additionally, there was a recognition that the achievement of this mammoth task was in the hands of the community; the range of community groups, local development organisations and agencies TOGETHER. And if participation is shaped by the problem at hand, then Ballymun has a new problem in the manifestation of the variety of plans for local development and regeneration. The impact of the regeneration programme itself is only becoming a reality for Ballymun, and Ballymun lives, and this brings with it 'things never anticipated'. The sentiment expressed in this statement by one participant encapsulates the sentiment expressed in a variety of ways by participants in this research:

"We, together, need to find ways of capturing and informing the regeneration of the new, emerging and unforeseen social impact for Ballymun people. That's where the real participation needs to happen now."

Summary of Findings

Under Aim 2: Levels and effectiveness of community participation

2.1 Community representation, in particular resident engagement, needs to be defined more and promoted more by local development structures in Ballymun.

2.1.1 The structures identified as having a key role in local development define their community representation in a number of ways and there is no one common definition. The reality is that these structures are using combinations of residents, community workers and representatives from other local development structures to fill the role of community participant. This is not unusual and it is not necessarily a bad thing. However, it would be much better if local development structures were clearer about the type of community representation they seek. The unique perspective of the local resident, particularly the people that the various programmes are set up to target, can be supported by but cannot be replaced by others who experience disadvantage or exclusion second hand.

2.1.2. Representation also needs to be spread out among a greater number of individuals, to avoid the perception that the same faces are participating on all of these structures. At April 2005, there were 76 places for community representatives across 10 of the local development structures in Ballymun. However, 12 individuals are taking up about a third of the 66 places available to community representatives in 9 of the 10 structures because they are representing the community on more than one structure. (BNC is excluded here as it has 10 places for residents specifically).

2.1.3 The good news is that despite the confusion presented by the lack of a clear definition for a community participant in Ballymun, resident participation across all of the structures involved in local development in Ballymun is the dominant type of community representation within the current places available (60 out of 76). A complexity in Ballymun is that 13 of these places are taken up by workers in the community who are also residents. However, local development structures are open to finding new and better ways to increase resident participation even more, as evidenced by their perceptions and attitudes to community participation documented in this report.

2.1.4 Structures like the Partnership and the Local Drugs Task Force in particular demonstrate greater ability, at present, to engage larger numbers of local people/community interests and in more creative ways in planning and decision-making around issues under their remit. Contributing factors to this ability include: the adaptable nature of their programming; designated suitable staff; deliberate use of a variety of sub-structures for increased participation; sub-structures directly relate and input to the boards of management.

2.2 The experience of individuals representing the community on local development structures is generally good, but, their communication back out to the community is sporadic and weak.

- 2.2.1 Generally, individual community participants currently involved in these structures believe that they are proactive in bringing forward the issues that are relevant to the community and that their contribution is valued. Generally, they say that they can co-operate with the policies and decisions made by the organisation in which they are involved. None of the community participants say that they are disillusioned at this time. Generally they have a good understanding of the aims and objectives of the local development structure they are involved in, and they have a good sense of their legal responsibilities and obligations.
- 2.2.2 However, for between a third to half of these community participants, they would like to build up a sense of their ability to influence policies and decisions a bit more, in order for the actions carried out by the local development structure to be more meaningful for them. This is interesting considering the overall experience in 2.2.1 above. There is somewhat of a contradiction in the different expressions of how meaningful the participants think their experience is on these structures. But what it does suggest is that more effort needs to be made to engage community participants in shared decision making, acting together and supporting independent community initiative that often reaches for the same goals but just uses a different approach.
- 2.2.3 Most of the community participants said that they were either co-opted or invited on to their local development structure without any formal process. And most of them said that they were not sure precisely how their representation is renewed, most have just continued to participate. You are also much more likely to become a community representative on local development structures if you belong to a residents forum, a community group or other local development organisation. To correct this, local development structures need to be much more transparent on how community representatives are nominated and/or elected into these positions and how their representation on these structures gets renewed. This process needs to be as transparent and simple as possible, and communicated regularly to the broader community.
- 2.2.4 Only half of the community representatives currently have a structure or mechanism for feeding back their progress. This is mainly through their forum, group or other local development organisation that they represent on local development structures. Thus as a resident in Ballymun, you are more likely to get feedback from these community participants if you are a member of a group or organisation in Ballymun, than you are as an unaffiliated resident in Ballymun. Or, if these groups and organisations have an efficient and regular communication strategy with the broader community in place.

2.3 The experience of the ‘little groups’ is very different from individuals participating on local development structures. These groups feel isolated from the ‘bigger players’ and excluded from decisions concerning the bigger picture.

2.3.1 For the community & voluntary groups, their sense of engagement with the local development structures, and the broader decisions that impact on real lives in Ballymun, is very different to community representatives actually involved in these structures. Overall the community and voluntary groups participating in this study felt that, as a group, you fell into two distinct categories, a. you were in on the decisions because you were represented on local development structures or b. you weren't. For the most part, the ‘little groups’ resided more in the lower levels of meaningful engagement with the structures involved in the broader local development of Ballymun.

2.3.2 The relationships between community groups, particularly grass roots, and both local development and local government are many and varied. However, systematically, the participating groups said that there was no real understanding of how community groups and representative networks, like BCON for example, formally part-take and influence decisions made by the ‘bigger players’ in local development and local government.

2.4 The integration of Local Development and Local Government, particularly at the decision making and planning levels is still weak.

2.4.1 The relationship between the community and voluntary groups and local government in terms of activities are many and varied. But there is very little shared decision making between these two parts.

2.4.2 The relationship between local development and local government themselves may be better, but is also varied. The relationship is still weak particularly when it comes to acting comprehensively on the needs of the local people and the groups representing the interests of the community.

2.4.3 There is very little understanding locally of the role of the Dublin City Development Board, the SIM and SITFs, which are an attempt to bring local government and local development plans and activities closer together. Considerable work is required here if Government wants to realise its strategic focus on the integration of local development and local government, at the area level.

Summary of Findings

Under Aim 3: Models of Participation/Representation

3.1 Three models for community participation on the broader issues already exist in Ballymun. There are strengths and weaknesses in each which need to be acknowledged and addressed if they are to offer more meaningful models of engagement for local people. If they are accepted, there is no need for another all encompassing model of community participation at this time.

3.1.1 As we understand, and have adopted in this study, participation is shaped by the problem at hand. And so it is apt that we look to the structures that already exist in Ballymun and shaped for community participation around the key issues for the area.

3.1.2 In Ballymun, there already exists 3 potentially effective models for community participation. These manifest themselves through the Local Development Organisations (social partnership model), the Ballymun Neighbourhood Council (neighbourhood council model) and Ballymun Community Organisations Network (network model).

3.1.3 However there is significant work to be done, with all 3 models, if they are to be seen as effective. For example, the organisations using these models will need to develop their capacities and abilities to be more engaging of the local people, more respectful of the years and experience built up within the community and local development scene and more coherent in terms of speaking TOGETHER and achieving successful outcomes on the primary concerns for people in Ballymun during this time of renewal.

3.1.4 Despite their weaknesses, the many active players in Ballymun have created/adopted these models because they believe that they can assist them in responding to the needs first and foremost of the community. Therefore, they are evidence of a willingness for the range of interests to go that step further in organising themselves into a variety of shapes, fit for community participation in the broader concerns for Ballymun. There is no need for another all-encompassing model for community participation in Ballymun at this time, if the weaknesses outlined for the 3 that exist are looked upon more as challenges to be overcome and therefore are addressed, and supported, accordingly.

3.1.5 Participants state that there have been so many attempts and fads and fashions that have come and gone in terms of organising community participation in Ballymun over the years, and often good ideas get dropped because individuals and organisations can't get seem to get over the necessary humps for clashes in personalities, policies and practices. After 40 odd years, the Local Development scene in Ballymun has developed to the stage where it is not going to grow much further in terms of structures but the maturity and experience

among the main organisations and agencies that do exist is quite powerful. There's a real opportunity to channel this synergy and to bring Ballymun over that point, whereby, both local people and Government can actually design and live out a consistent, fair and sustainable process for a more successful local governance of the area. Therefore, these models and their related organisations should be embraced as an existing challenge for Ballymun and seen as a welcome variety of participation models, credible and evolving. And in this, they must remain open to learning, and flexible enough to adapt in the ever-changing environment that is Ballymun.

3.2 The social partnership model provided by local development organisations (LDOs) is tried and tested and is purposeful in bringing both the community and statutory agents together. But the individual organisations are not maximising the potential of the model for increased resident engagement.

3.2.1 The LDOs such as Ballymun Partnership, the Local Drugs Task Force, Ballymun Regeneration Ltd., Ballymun Regional Youth Resource, RAPID AIT, use a similar social partnership model of participation. Most of these are relatively strong in terms of resources and capacities that they lend to the broader development of the area. As a collective, they provide a necessary interface between the community and the state in their make up. The model of participation used by these is described much more fully in section 4 of the supporting documentation. But to summarise, the main weakness for LDOs themselves is that they are not maximising their resources to facilitate a deliberate enough programme of community stakeholder engagement at the planning and decision-making levels to influence their day-to-day work. The whole point of LDOs is that they are supposed to be closer to and so can respond to and involve disadvantaged or socially excluded individuals in particular in the local governance of their area, alongside the statutory agencies. If they are not doing this to the best of their ability, then their suitability for this role is questionable. The ball is squarely in their court for improving the numbers and range of interests in their representative structures.

1.3.3 While St. Margarets Travellers Group is constituted to operate within a similar model as the LDOs above, the other 3 Community Development Programmes, CAFTA, CAP and The Mens Centre, each adapt very different approaches, which are primarily indicative of their grass roots origins and so cannot be described under the same model.

3.3 The model of a neighbourhood council that the Ballymun Neighbourhood Council (BNC) is attempting to aspire to is recognised by the participants in this research as having the greatest potential to offer a more significant local governance model for the area. However its potential is clouded by difficulties experienced by the BNC in trying to develop the model over the last few years.

3.3.1 Since its formation in 2002, the BNC has attempted to model itself partly on a social partnership arrangement, similar to the LDOs but with the addition of a more deliberate and democratic engagement of local residents than any of the other models and related organisations in this research. However, as described by the participants in this research, the model is still highly underdeveloped by the BNC. A fuller description can be found in section 4 of the supporting documentation. To summarise, the main weakness to be overcome is that the BNC (and not the model) is seen as a top-down approach to organising the community during this time of regeneration. The model itself is the only one of the 3 presented here that actually encourages a genuine democratic process to bring forward local leadership from the bottom up, (via neighbourhood forum elections). But, the top decision making structure is seen as limiting as a consequence of the particulars in the joint constitution between the BNC and the Forums which is considered constraining. In terms of the numbers of residents that can be involved at this level, the BNC is seen as closed and inflexible, unlike the LDOs above where the structures can be ever flexible and expansive. Another weakness, or rather perception, that is damaging to the potentially good model for a neighbourhood council, is that the autonomy of the BNC as a positive, constructive and critical vehicle for the regeneration of Ballymun is questionable among the range of participants informing this study, because it is resourced by the regeneration company itself.

3.4 The Network Model that manifests itself through the Ballymun Community Organisations Network (BCON) is much more fluid and open to the participation of greater numbers of community and voluntary groups than the other 2 models. However, as a model it is not obvious how it ‘checks in’ with local residents.

3.4.1 The model on which BCON stands is strong in terms of the numbers of community & voluntary groups that can affiliate to it (33 at present). It is also fluid in terms of the numbers of groups that can casually join in its relatively open and unrestricted shape, which provides for a very responsive environment for dialogue amongst the diversity of interests involved. As a Network, It can also draw on community workers skills to service it. A fuller description can be found in section 4 of the supporting documentation. To summarise, while BCON is quite clear about its purpose and who it represents i.e. it is a network of community and voluntary organisations, its main weakness as perceived by the participants in this study is its lack of visible connectivity to the residents. Participants expressed the potential conflict for BCON in pursuing issues that may not have the obvious backing of the residents. BCON is seen primarily by both residents and workers involved in this study as a resource for community development workers. But this perception is actually fine as the model was set up to provide for that. However, the lack of connectivity to the residents and the fact that currently it doesn't have any relationship

with local councillors and TDs, raises questions among a variety of participants in this study about BCON's power to influence.

Conclusions & Recommendations

Conclusions & Recommendations

1. For Further Attention

Before going into some very practical recommendations on how community participation might be improved in existing local development structures in Ballymun, it is perhaps apt at this point to reflect on a more salient point coming through this research. While it goes beyond the limitations of this research, it is important to acknowledge that it emerged and to flag it for further attention by the relevant stakeholders.

Point 1.2.3 under Summary of Findings contains an expression that is a striking realisation for participants in this research: In recognising that participation is shaped by the problem at hand, the participants believe that there is a new problem for Ballymun. Significant plans in both local development and regeneration are being realised, the likes of which have not been experienced before, locally or nationally. The physical and social impacts in particular are only beginning to be understood for Ballymun people, organisations and agencies alike.

In this new light, participants in this research state that while they didn't feel they wanted another all encompassing structure in the area, a greater '*coalescing*' of the residents, the community groups, local development organisations, the Area Committee and the local TDs is required to provide even greater coherence and synergy in relation to the overall well-being of the community during this time. Ballymun as an area undergoing rapid and intense change, calls out for closer attention by all involved in capturing the emerging issues for a unique community expressing a feeling of being 'swept up' by such intense progress.

This research shows that there are a variety of models for participation on a range of key issues for Ballymun. While some evolving, each model and its related organisations should be seen as credible references in their own right, shaped locally for both residents and Government alike to tackle the problems at hand. However, as also presented by the participants in this research, there is an obvious lack of co-operation between the relevant local organisations and agencies themselves and there are very few signs that they are using their experience and resources, together, to purposefully take on the concerns of broader residents at this unusual time.

It is somewhat apparent from this research that the neighbourhood council model aspired to by Ballymun Neighbourhood Council is underdeveloped, which ideally could be the vehicle through which this coalescing of stakeholders might happen. But in the realisation that it is not, all of the structures in the meantime, with their resident representatives, might consider coming together a couple of times during the year to purposefully bring the perspective of a local community going through change to the Area Committee (as the local authority), and to the TDs (as the Government representatives concerned with the broader socio-economic development of the area). Through demonstration and support in time, the BNC may be able

to fulfil its role as the Government nominated community liaison for the regeneration and facilitate these summit-type events locally itself.

In relation to the finding that the integration of local government and local development planning and activities is still poor, the Minister of State for both Housing and Community is in a key role to provide particular leadership, and to promote sufficient co-operation and integration of activity among both local government and local development around the regeneration of Ballymun. The Department of Community Rural & Gaelteacht Affairs, also governs National funding programmes that support autonomous community action, which could also resource a more strategic and focused consultative strategy with the residents during this time of tremendous transition.

2. Practical recommendations on how community participation might be improved in existing local development structures in Ballymun.

- Local development structures, particularly the Partnership, LDTF, RAPID, BRYR, BRL and the 4 CDPs, must develop clear statements that define community representation and they need to communicate this to the broader community.
- These structures must review and expand their representative structures and the numbers of community participation places on these structures, to encourage new faces and to rely less on the same people, particularly easy to reach community professionals, to fill these places.
- It is further recommended that these structures also conduct a workshop with their existing community representatives to discuss their 'term in office', so to speak, and to chart the renewal process for community representation. This renewal process should be communicated to the rest of the community in a much more open and consistent manner so that other interests in the community can see these structures as accessible.
- All of the Local development structures identified for inclusion in this research must look at the training and development needs of their community participants. Particularly in the areas of policy formation and influence; communication and negotiation skills; and technical assistance around tasks that they take on. They must provide opportunities for a lot more exposure to practical discussions that give them greater insight into how local development structures organise and decide on their programmes of work.
- If local development is to have a lasting legacy in Ballymun, then these structures must become more purposeful in their attempts at community stakeholder engagement in their planning and decision-making processes. This will require a serious look at the allocation of staff time and directing funds into programming more meaningful participation as part of the working week. This would mean adopting a

slower, and more conscious community development approach to achieving outcomes, and therefore indicators for success for local development structures might need to be reviewed to reflect more meaningful engagement with the local people, and indeed, with other structures sharing the same goals.

- All of the structures in the local development scene in Ballymun should take the opportunity to consider, TOGETHER, how they might develop a better and more effective communication strategy with the broader community on local development issues, particularly in this time of renewal. Their combined resources could provide a much more effective platform that could, for the first time, utilise popular information and communication technologies much more purposefully and for a more coherent effect. For example, Community Radio/TV, mobile text polls, creative street advertising, vox pops, existing community-focussed newspapers and publications etc.
- If Government is to realise its vision for the integration of local development and local government planning and actions for the socially excluded, then Dublin City Development Board and Dublin City Council need to be able to articulate their new role in this much more simply and to encourage more meaningful engagement between the two sectors. It is important that City Officials are given the time to become more purposeful in their day-to-day work, in encouraging the range of community and local development groups and organisations into the decision-making fora that the City Council has already created for this exact purpose. For example, the Community Development Section of the City Council in Ballymun could find a more explicit role for itself in facilitating the community in its representation via the Area Committee, to the Social Inclusion Task Forces, to the Community Platform, to the Strategic Policy Committees, etc.
- While this study did not include an exploration of broader community and voluntary groups in Ballymun, it is recommended that resources are sought to conduct a further piece of research on the levels and effectiveness of community participation in 'the little groups' in order to get a fuller and more complete picture of the variety and depth of resident activity going on in the Ballymun Local & Community Development Scene.
- In the meantime, resources may be more readily available from within the larger local development organisations to realise the potential of their participatory model, by taking on the recommendations in this report. However, resources may not be readily available to further the development of the other models of participation aspired to by the BNC and BCON. These organisations need to be supported through the relevant funding streams to take on the challenges presented in this research.