Building Peace and Democracy in Ireland
North and South:

The Role of the Community and Voluntary Sector

A publication by the Community Workers’ Co-operative
2007
Building Peace and Democracy in Ireland North and South:  
*The Role of the Community and Voluntary Sector*

A North/South conference organised by the Community Workers’ Co-operative and held on June 15th 2006 in the Fairways Hotel, Dundalk, Co. Louth.

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About the Community Workers’ Co-operative
The Community Workers Co-operative (CWC) was founded in 1981 to promote community work as a means of bringing about sustainable positive social change. It seeks to ensure the inclusion of, and to bring about equality of outcome for, those currently experiencing inequality and social exclusion. It thereby contributes to the creation of a more just and equal society by promoting a policy agenda drawn from local action and experience. The CWC is committed to supporting partnership and co-operation within the community sector at all levels.
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Robin Wilson is Director of Democratic Dialogue.
Conference Outline

Welcome
Sheilann Monaghan
Chair, CWC

Session I: Chaired by Mary Davis

1. Dermot McCarthy
Secretary General, Department of the Taoiseach and Chair of Social Partnership

2. Alan Shannon
Permanent Secretary, Department for Social Development, Northern Ireland

3. Bernadette McAliskey
Co-ordinator, South Tyrone Empowerment Project Community Sector in Building Peace and Democracy

4. Anastasia Crickley
Department of Applied Social Studies, NUI Maynooth Community Work in Building Peace and Democracy

Open Forum

Session II : Chaired by James Magowan

Presentations of CWC Border and all-Island projects:

i. Mind The Gap
Seamas Devine, Project Development Worker

ii. Towards Achieving Social Change
Angela Holohan, Co-ordinator, Donegal CWC

iii. Community Work Standards
Seán Regan, National Co-ordinator, CWC

Parallel Workshops
The role, challenges and strategies for the community sector.

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The conference on the ‘Role of the Community and Voluntary Sector in Building Peace and Democracy’ held in Dundalk on the 15th June 2006 was the culmination of a series of meetings and workshops held by the CWC in 2005 with the community sector. These all expressed a growing concern about the way in which their role was being increasingly and erroneously defined by the state as a service delivery function. Participants at these events felt that this was being done to the exclusion of the empowering, participative, social change role that defines community work and the community sector. (The CWC understands the community sector as consisting of community groups and non-governmental organisations active at local, national or international level in tackling poverty and inequality). In response to this demand from the sector the CWC undertook to organise a major conference on the role of the sector and obtained funding from the Community Foundation of Northern Ireland ‘Social Justice Initiative Fund’ to hold such a conference.

The Dundalk Conference set out to look at the role of the community and voluntary sector in advancing justice, peace, equality and social inclusion; to examine the changing context in which that work takes place, and explore the role the sector needs to take into the future, particularly vis-à-vis the state. It provided an opportunity to reflect on the work of the community and voluntary sector north and south in promoting the inclusion of excluded communities and in spearheading work on developing an all-island set of values, principles and standards in community work. It was also an opportunity to discuss the changing context in which this work is taking place – within the context of both the advancing peace process and the changing nature of Irish society north and south as it becomes more diverse. At the same time the relationship between the state and the community and voluntary sector is changing and there is concern within the community sector about being pushed toward a service delivery role rather than a collective process for social change that includes advocacy, empowerment, and widening of democratic participation.

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1 CWC Campaign meeting 31st January 2005; CWC Roundtable ‘Building Solidarity – Developing Real Democracy’ 20th June 2005; and various CWC meetings and workshops.
This publication has three sections. The first includes the keynote papers presented at the Dundalk conference by a panel of senior policy makers north and south and activists who have developed an incisive analysis of the role of the community sector and the nature of its relationships with the state from years of experience on the ground, as well as in working partnership arrangements with various facets of the state in both jurisdictions. Dermot McCarthy, Secretary General at the Department of the Taoiseach, highlights the growing interest in the concept of ‘civil society’ at national and international level and the key issues arising for the state in its relationship with the community and voluntary sector i.e. probity, partnership, participation and performance. He points to a number of challenges facing the state and the community and voluntary sector, namely: dealing with the sector’s diversity; structuring relationships and partnership processes so as to facilitate both mutual learning and mutual challenge; and developing a culture that is supportive of partnership relationships. He makes the case for an agreed framework that clearly sets out the ‘terms of engagement’ and strikes a balance between the state’s responsibility for regulation and the community sector’s entitlement to independence and autonomy. ‘Public authorities can’t make up the rules as they go along’.

Alan Shannon, Permanent Secretary at the Department for Social Development, Northern Ireland, presents the changes that are being made to public policy and administration in Northern Ireland in this peace-building era. Central to the thinking behind this reform process is the government’s desire to step up the community and voluntary sector’s involvement in delivering public services. "We are moving towards a smaller central government – focusing more on developing policy and looking to others to deliver our functions and services’.

Bernadette McAliskey warns community workers of the dangers of neglecting ‘the core shared values which unite the community of social change’ in responding to the ‘push and pull factors of government needs and demands’. She argues that taking this route would minimise the sector’s capacity to challenge government and maximise the danger of the sector becoming a transitory conduit to privatisation of public services.

Anastasia Crickley appeals for a broader understanding of ‘peace and democracy’ in the Republic of Ireland which encompasses principles of equality, diversity, good governance and social justice. She warns against an understanding of social cohesion that favours conformity and sameness and is really a mask for social control. She asks why is the community and voluntary
sector asked to manage its diversity and have one voice when we can have different political voices, different trade unions voices, etc.

While Dermot McCarthy recognised the diversity of the community and voluntary sector, both Bernadette McAliskey and Anastasia Crickley highlighted the different roles between the community and voluntary sectors, and the importance of recognising and valuing these roles. This theme was taken up and strongly welcomed within the workshops held in the afternoon. Participants highlighted the way in which increased government funding being made available to the community and voluntary sector for service delivery is enticing the sector to move away from advocacy and social change. There is a major challenge for organisations like the CWC to take a lead in highlighting the negative consequences for society of such an approach.

Section Two of the publication presents ways in which these issues are being faced in the border region by CWC projects. Angela Holohan’s paper gives a flavour of the issues emerging for the community and voluntary sector from its work on the ground, building anti-poverty networks in divided communities and promoting the inclusion in decision-making arenas of groups such as ex-combatants, some of whom are experiencing marginalisation since the conflict ended. The work presented by Seamus Devine of the Mind the Gap Project further expands on the value of building the community sector on the ground.

Seán Regan presents a draft statement of community work values, principles and standards that are being developed in consultation with the sector north and south. They are particularly useful in the current context of significant societal and policy change and in laying down a marker of the core elements of community work and community development.

The Third Section of the publication contains a number of background papers that discuss aspects of this new context that led to the holding of this conference. Chris McInerney explores the transition from government to governance in Ireland by examining key aspects of national social partnership. He asks us to question who controls and who participates in governance processes, and whether they really matter to the community and voluntary sector who might well doubt the extent of the state’s commitment to social inclusion and equality. His paper concludes that substantial institutional and attitudinal change is required to advance the development of more progressive governance mechanisms in Ireland.
Seán Regan and Jennifer Lloyd-Hughes discuss the ‘Cohesion’ initiative by the Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs to streamline local and community development programmes under the County/City Development Board structure. They make the point that this process is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of community development and of how and why community development approaches work.

Siobhan O Donoghue points out that while the community and voluntary sector has made great progress in developing a focus and priority on certain disadvantaged groups, it must also respond to the challenge of diversity to ensure that future generations of new and emerging ethnic minorities in Ireland are fully included at local level.

Robin Wilson makes the link in his article between social capital and social equality pointing out that the development of social capital is highly dependent on the existence of trust, shared values and social networks while Seamie Lambe returns to the debate on streamlining local and community development programmes in Ireland. In the concluding paper in this section, Brian Harvey bemoans the lack of official recognition in Ireland for the community and voluntary sector and documents several failed or abandoned attempts to rectify the situation. We leave him with the final say; ‘Maybe, in the period of reflection leading up to 2016, the voluntary and community sector will be able to table its own agenda and emerge from the present dark valley into the sunlit uplands’.
SECTION I

NORTH-SOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR IN BUILDING PEACE AND DEMOCRACY
The Role of the Community and Voluntary Sector in Building Peace and Democracy
Dermot McCarthy

"How to sustain a common interest, how to represent that common interest across such a diverse category and to provide meaningful structures which are effective, not only in terms of accountability to constituents, but engagement with potential partners, be it the state or others, is a particular challenge which organisations like the CWC have long taken as core concerns".

There are lots of people here who know a lot more than I about the role of the community and voluntary sector in building peace and democracy, both on the panel and in the room. What I thought would be more useful was for me to talk generically about the role of the community and voluntary sector.

In other words, where in a modern democratic society do we position the community and voluntary sector and, in the light of the Irish experience, are there any particular issues, lessons or challenges to be identified? In taking that general approach hopefully I can help to situate some of the particular issues which I know are uppermost in many of your minds about the immediate, and not so immediate future, in a somewhat broader and hopefully strategic context by focussing on three issues in particular.

• First of all, the renewed interest in the concept of civil society. What is civil society and where, in a sense is it going – what is its health?
• Secondly what are the issues that arise, in broad principle, in terms of the relationship between the state and other public authorities, and the community and voluntary sector?
• And finally, what particular challenges exist in public policy in responding to that relationship and its potential for the future?

It is one of the more remarkable phenomena of recent years that right across
Europe and in the wider global community there is a renewed interest in the question of the nature of civil society and its health. There is a concern about the quality of community life, social life, the quality of life of families and individuals which goes beyond the material and the economic. It is striking for example that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which for many years was the driving force in growth strategies across the developed world, has established a new division – dealing with precisely this question of communities and governance. It is striking, too, that when one looks at the declarations coming from European summits, there is an acknowledgement of these issues of the health of communities and democracies, beyond the question of economic performance or even the achievement of social policy goals. Part of that is about concerns regarding identity and cohesion. We hear much of the effects of globalisation on the structure of the economy and the mobility of investment projects and the impacts on labour markets. But there is, within all of that, an underlying unease about whether, in the light of the impact of globalization we can truly talk about community and community bonds in the way that we could in the past.

Challenges to identity and cohesion can sometimes be extremely positive and bring about a greater pluralism and greater freedom of choice in terms of positions and lifestyles and so on. And yet we know that the basic requirements of stability and security for individuals, families and communities require a degree of confidence about who they are and where they are going. And it may well be that one of the reasons for this renewed focus on what constitutes civil society is a recognition that those more profound issues are beyond the scope of public policy alone. They represent the outcome of the quality of the relationships between people who happen to share a particular space.

A linked issue and a linked factor in this renewed, perhaps even new debate, is the question of the perceived challenges to the role and effectiveness of the state (and indeed other public authorities) in the face of forces such as globalisation. Traditional models of public administration and governance are no longer effective. Governments don’t have control of levers which deliver in the ways that they often did in the past, in terms of performance at economic or social level. So if those mechanisms and levers of public administration and governance are no longer effective how then are government or public authorities to be effective in responding to the needs of citizens who have reposed their trust in those institutions and indeed pay their taxes to support them? Part of the response to that that has been found
internationally, as well as here at home, is the need for public authority in the exercise of public power, to be seen to act more in terms of the orchestration and leadership of networks than the command and control of public institutions which in the past would have been seen as the nature of public policy. And if that is the case, then the nature of the network, and the quality of the network with which public authorities interact becomes an issue of concern, which brings us back to the question of the health of civil society.

I think the third issue arising from both of those is the remarkable growth in public debate about, and political concern with issues of social capital and social norms. We hear much of this. It’s a growing field of academic endeavour as well as public debate and some are questioning whether in fact we are dealing with sufficiently rigorous terms to be meaningful. But the reality is that social capital, as much as the quality and effectiveness of economic capital, is a legitimate area of public and political debate.

So, against that background of what I think is a renewed and profound concern with the nature of civil society, one can look at a number of dimensions to the relationship between the state and public authorities on the one hand, and community and voluntary organisations which constitute the organised face of civil society on the other. The state fulfils a number of roles, more traditional ones as well as the more contemporary ones, such as network co-ordination which I mentioned. As regulator, in terms of being fundamentally the guardian of the rules of the game so to speak, the state is naturally concerned with issues of probity: that organisations which exist, that have a formal identity, which have a legal personality, are proper in the conduct of their finances and in their contractual relations with funders and so on, and that there is a transparency built into the regulatory process which provides a minimum assurance about the nature and identity of groups which are recognised to express part of this life of civil society.

But beyond that sort of night watchman’s concern with probity, the state is increasingly interested in partnership with organisations in civil society. This is not solely because of the resources which organised civil society can mobilise, but because of the capacity for innovation and problem-solving that can come from intelligent engagement between separate parties with distinct interests and objectives, who nonetheless share concern for some of the big issues in contemporary social life. So that partnership relationship is increasingly one that public authorities are seeking to grapple with, to reconcile responsibilities of representative democracy with the challenges of participative democracy.
And participation indeed is the third dimension of that state concern on the basis that participation in civil society for citizens is made easier if there is a vital and dynamic community sector which provides opportunities for people to come together in response to shared objectives or shared concerns and that provides, not just an opportunity for participation, but for social learning. Participation in active civil society becomes in effect a school of democracy which enables people not only to assert their rights, but to learn more about the rights and responsibilities which come from engagement with matters of common concern.

I think the fourth dimension of the state’s concern with the community and voluntary sector relates to performance. There is, as a result of engagement with the sector, not just the possibility of problem solving, but there is the potential within community and voluntary organisations to be more effective than, for example public authorities as a result of their experience, expertise and particular insights, not only into problems, but into mechanisms which work and are effective from the consumer/citizen perspective.

So, if the state has those four dimensions of concern in its engagement with the community and voluntary sector, there are a number of issues which arise regarding the sector as an entity, as part of civil society.

The first and obvious issue which arises is the very diversity of the sector - from those which are mobilised around very particular, local, specific and perhaps transient issues to those which are broad in scope and enduring in ambition. There are obvious strengths in that diversity, but in terms of sectoral relationships there may be some weaknesses as well. How to sustain a common interest, how to represent that common interest across such a diverse category and to provide meaningful structures which are effective, not only in terms of accountability to constituents, but engagement with potential partners, be it the state or others, is a particular challenge which organisations like the CWC have long taken as core concerns.

The second and related issue which arises is how do we structure relationships, relationships hopefully of partnership, at national and local, and indeed at sectoral level with the public authorities? What are the best structures and processes to provide for that engagement, the mutual learning, as well as the opportunity for mutual challenge? I think that we are dealing here with forms of governance that are still in an early stage of development and experimentation and which require perhaps more reflection and analysis than we have so far given them.
My third point under this heading is that there is a need to have the right mix of structures and processes but also culture in terms of partnership relationships. They don’t sustain themselves; they need to be worked at. And we need to be clearer about what works and what are the problems under each of those headings and to recognise that the culture of partnership is in fact a seed bed from which structures and processes that are effective and acceptable can grow. So how do we nurture that culture in such a diverse and challenging environment?

Finally then, what about the challenges to public policy? Having identified those issues, where do we go in terms of the state’s responsibility and the naming of issues which require more attention within the system of public administration? I think the first issue is the tension that public authorities face between the responsibilities for regulation on the one hand and recognition on the other of the autonomy and the right to independence of organisations in civil society, especially the community and voluntary sector. Public authorities can’t make up the rules as they go along. There needs to be a clear sense of the rules of engagement and here this tension between participation and representation poses problems for policy makers and public authorities in all sorts of different contexts.

Secondly there is a challenge that comes from responding to the need for adequate resourcing from public funds of the community and voluntary sector in all its diversity versus securing the autonomy that the community and voluntary sector rightly espouses. Resourcing can’t be provided without strings attached in terms of expectations, transparency and accountability. So how do we get that balance right between providing adequate resources without compromising the autonomy and independence, which at the end of the day are at the heart of the legitimacy of the sector?

Thirdly, from a public policy point of view there is the question of active citizenship that Mary Davis referred to, which the new Task Force is seeking to engage with. Is active citizenship a cause or an effect? Is it something that we consciously propagate, support and nurture as a goal of policy or is it the basic value from which all of the vibrancy and vitality of the community and voluntary sector derives? So where do we position it as a goal of public policy?

And finally, we have to recognise that there is a continuing tension between civil society and the state. They are distinct, but they are not separate. The state cannot exist, cannot function without a vibrant civil society. But civil
society cannot be orderly, effective or achieve its goals without state institutions which are effective and accountable. And I think there is a tension which presents itself in a variety of different ways. Many of you will be familiar, I am sure, with particular manifestations of this problem as between democratic political institutions on the one hand and institutions of participation and partnership with civil society on the other. There is a particular dilemma for public servants engaged in both systems. On the one hand there is the opportunity to speak both languages, so to speak, to be able to engage, hopefully effectively, with both. But at the same time we need to avoid the problems of mis-translation which can occur when the rules of one system are seen to be, or are understood to be imported into the other, when in fact, by definition they can’t easily be.

So, whether it be on issues of resourcing, which I know are current and real, or whether it be about questions of engagement and participation, or whether it be ultimately about issues of control or freedom, these are real difficulties, real challenges. They arise almost irrespective of particular context. They are being grappled with in civil societies and systems of public administration right across the globe. Our own experience on this island, north and south, has a great richness to offer to that wider debate as well hopefully to our own decision making in the months and years ahead. The fact that we have the opportunity to reflect in a structured way on a continuing basis, but particularly on occasions such as this is entirely healthy and provides the opportunity to compare and contrast experiences under somewhat different rules of the game so to speak. So I think today is an important day and it’s an important discussion, and it’s happening in a very timely manner. I congratulate the CWC for the initiative in organising it, and I look forward to hearing a little of the debate directly. Thank you very much.
The Role of the Community and Voluntary Sector in Building Peace and Democracy

Alan Shannon

"During the Troubles the Sector provided services and supported communities where other agencies could not go. To a very significant degree, it also represented the interests of its communities to Government - bypassing the sectarian agendas and counter-balancing the reduction in local representation brought about by direct rule. It is a very different Northern Ireland today and the Sector itself has changed, but you continue to provide a vital bridge into and between communities, and you still link individuals with Government agencies and still represent their interests. The value of that role cannot be understated".

The theme for the day is the role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in building peace and democracy. That is quite a broad landscape, and I want to reflect on that theme while addressing the need for partnership between Government and the Sector, as well as mentioning some of the more significant changes that face the Sector, and the Government, in Northern Ireland today.

Today’s conference is very welcome, not least because it gives me the opportunity to very publicly acknowledge the crucial role played by the Voluntary and Community Sector in building bridges in Northern Ireland. You all know I’m not talking about constructions like the magnificent Boyne Bridge that stands a little to the south of us. The bridges that our Voluntary and Community Sector build are between the people and communities that make up Northern Ireland, not just Catholic and Protestant but Polish, Portuguese, Lithuanian, Chinese. They are bridges between the gay and lesbian community and heterosexuals. Between Travellers and the settled community. Between the various factions within loyalism. Between individuals, communities and the Government. Even more strands, links and cables in fact than hold-up that iconic Boyne Bridge!

Many of our communities in Northern Ireland have been very effective in bonding together. And bonding on the whole is a very positive thing, people
pulling together to benefit the whole community. However, as we all know, sometimes it can become a negative when it cuts out contact with others not like us, when it becomes "them and us" and the barriers go up. For some communities over the last forty years Government became a "them", in many places it was the Voluntary and Community Sector that stepped into the void that was left.

During the Troubles the Sector provided services and supported communities where other agencies could not go. To a very significant degree, it also represented the interests of its communities to Government. Bypassing the sectarian agendas and counter-balancing the reduction in local representation brought about by direct rule. It is a very different Northern Ireland today and the Sector itself has changed, but you continue to provide a vital bridge into and between communities, and you still link individuals with Government agencies and still represent their interests. The value of that role cannot be understated. I do not want to dwell on our troubled past in the North. We, as a society, have changed. But we should not forget the things that made those dark days survivable for many in our society. There are good lessons there for the present and for the future.

Perhaps one of the most important lessons is that Government and Sector can complement one another. We can and do work well together. We can deliver better for the society we serve when we recognise the value of the other, when we acknowledge our shared ethos, our values and our strengths - and build on them in partnership.

Now, someone said to me recently that we in Government are always talking about partnership. The trouble is that Government is always the partner that doesn’t deliver! Naturally I would dispute that statement. And I think it arises from a misunderstanding of what partnership is about. Each of us in a partnership brings our own priorities to the relationship; we each have our own issues that will limit our room for manoeuvre - and sometimes we have constraints on our ability to deliver what others want us to deliver. We need to understand each other better.

My Government recognises the immensely significant role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in society. We are committed to supporting, and building on, this contribution. To put it succinctly, we can't deliver our functions and public services to their full potential without you.

The Compact between Sector and Government sets out the values and
principles that should underpin our relationship. The shared vision of
Government and the voluntary and community sector is to work together as
social partners to build participative, peaceful, equitable and inclusive
communities in Northern Ireland. It is this engagement that will allow us to
better identify and develop approaches to the issues that concern our people.
It is this engagement that will help us to break down the barriers to inclusion
and make the services we offer accessible to all. Our colleagues in Great
Britain are equally committed. The new Department for Communities and
Local Government, headed by Minister Ruth Kelly, has a clear remit to
promote community cohesion and equality, as well as responsibility for
housing, urban regeneration, planning and local government. Cabinet
Minister Hilary Armstrong now has responsibility to co-ordinate the
Government's agenda to tackle social exclusion. As the environment around
us changes we need to build on this relationship between Government and the
Voluntary and Community Sector.

Let me turn to the economic challenges we face today and some of the work
Government is doing to help communities face those challenges. For the most
part because of the Troubles, but also reflecting the historically poor
economic status of Northern Ireland, we have received very large amounts of
EU money through the Peace and other EU programmes. This money, over
many years, led to a large growth in the number of community groups in
Northern Ireland. The Sector in Northern Ireland is per capita much larger
than in England, Scotland or Wales. It has proportionately more waged posts.
This trend has, to some degree, been supported by the sectarian and intra-
community divisions that run through many areas and by the consequent
heavy investment by the EU and Government in community relations work.

This overall picture is changing, we are living in a peaceful environment, EU
programmes are tailing off, we are no longer an Objective One area and our
economy is picking up more quickly that some other areas in the UK, though
still from a low base. Public Sector spending is at an all-time high in Northern
Ireland, with enormous real-terms increases in the Health, Education and
infrastructure budgets. Unemployment is low and the job-market is
competitive, with more and more inward economic migration.

There is growing concern about Northern Ireland’s economic dependence on
the Public Sector and about Public sector spending - we need to work towards
developing greater entrepreneurial activity. The role of Government too is
being challenged – principally driven from within. We are moving toward a
smaller Central Government - focussing more on developing policy and
looking to others to deliver our functions and services.

Many Voluntary and Community Sector organisations are already involved in delivering public services. We are keen to develop this relationship which we see as beneficial to all involved. Many organisations have been involved for a very considerable time in generating a income which they reinvest in pursuit of their social aims, organisations such as Credit Unions, Housing Associations and others providing support to individuals and communities, such as Praxis and Bryson House. While this model of activity is not for every organisation in the Voluntary and Community Sector, it does provide access to a stream of income that does not have the attendant conditions and bureaucracy of grant funding. This is a growing area and the Government is keen to help Sector organisations take full advantage of the opportunities it presents.

Much is improving in Northern Ireland and the way we are working with the Voluntary and Community Sector is changing. However there is no doubt that there is still social disadvantage in our communities, and we must continue to work with the Sector to reduce this.

It is clear that efforts to tackle disadvantage need to become more focussed. We need to develop strategies that are responsive to the particular needs of communities, while considering carefully whether current spending is being used to maximum effect. I will mention three.

Firstly, I am sure you will all know that the Government has been looking carefully at the problems that exist in Protestant working class communities. We have recently launched our Renewing Communities action plan which will complement existing measures aimed at tackling disadvantage across all communities, but which also recognises the particular needs of Protestant disadvantaged communities. We are committed to work with all disadvantaged communities. Resources must follow need, but be spent in ways that have the most significant impact. That is the focus of Renewing Communities.

Secondly, we have the A Shared Future strategy. We have some very segregated communities in Northern Ireland. It is important that we address the role of the Sector in changing the way we see and treat others not of our immediate community or outlook. A Shared Future has very rapidly become part of the new vocabulary of Northern Ireland. Government published this policy and strategic framework in March 2005 and the commitment to its
importance has been stressed by Secretary of State and Ministers on many occasions since. At the end of April the first Shared Future Action Plan was published. For the first time, in A Shared Future, we have in place arguably one of the most important elements of public policy. A policy that promotes sharing over separation; the elimination of sectarianism, racism and all forms of prejudice; and the development of shared communities where people of all backgrounds can live, work, learn and play together. That said, it is important to recognise the very positive work that continues to take place right across Northern Ireland in communities, aimed at improving relationships. There are many good examples of relationship-building led by voluntary groups, churches and other faith-based groups, district councils, trades unions and the private sector working collaboratively with public agencies and local communities. There is also much good work in removing aggressive sectarian and racist imagery and territorial marking; all of which damage relations and communities.

The Government acknowledges this work and will continue to support those very practical foundations of relationship building.

Let me be specific about what we mean by A Shared Future:

- All individuals are considered equal;
- Differences are resolved through dialogue in the public sphere;
- People are treated impartially;
- Equity, respect for diversity and recognition of our interdependence.

It is quite clear to me that these sit very comfortably with your own objectives. As we move towards a new construct of local government these are Shared Future standards that we will see built into the Review of Public Administration arrangements. Part of Shared Future’s objective is to challenge all in civic society, including local political parties, to take up this mantle and make the policy a reality – it is common sense; common sense that will help to create a society free of violence, from the threat of violence and from intimidation; common sense that embraces our common humanity.

There are many opportunities and challenges for local government. Central to the Review of Public Administration (RPA) is a drive for a new civic leadership and shared, inclusive governance. To ensure a new-found confidence in an inclusive society which embraces diversity, the Government has placed A Shared Future at the heart of the RPA.

In devolving very significant powers to a local level again, Government will
embed equality of access and opportunity, so that every citizen – of whatever background or belief – can have confidence in their council’s ability to deliver services even-handedly, whilst also providing a genuine forum for political debate and dialogue. To this end, a system of strong safeguards will form the centre-piece of the new model of local government. It will fundamentally differ from the current system by providing, for the first time, statutory checks and balances that will protect the rights of minority communities and individuals – on all sides.

My own department is supporting the work of Department of the Environment, and other departments to ensure that post-RPA structures on specific issues such as community planning, governance arrangements, shared services will have A Shared Future’s objectives at its heart. For these good intentions to have real meaning, however, it is essential that they are turned into actions. We need a step change in community relationships. We need to replace relationships based on enmity with ones based on trust. And that will take time and considerable effort.

I mentioned earlier that Northern Ireland has benefited from a period of economic growth and investment. However, it remains true that for some in our society disadvantage, poverty and poor employment prospects remain the order of the day. Government remains committed to tackling these problems. Economic prosperity, which will bring with it a more diverse workforce and equality of opportunity, will remain key drivers for this society. It is against that context of a more stable and promising economic outlook, coupled with a strong equality and human rights agenda, that the good relations policy and strategic framework for making Northern Ireland a shared society are set. Division and antagonism have a direct impact on investment and tourism, on personal and community safety and policing, on education, housing and health, on urban and rural regeneration, on community and economic development, on culture and the arts and on incoming minorities.

With A Shared Future, Government is setting its face firmly towards sharing and tolerance and against segregation and violence. From schools and libraries to local councils and town centres, and however long it takes, there is no alternative to a shared future if Northern Ireland is to become a successful part of the global economy.

Thirdly, the Government aims to publish its strategy for tackling poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland later this year. New Targeting Social Need (New TSN) is Government’s current high-level
approach to tackling poverty and disadvantage in Northern Ireland. It was launched in 1998 and aims to tackle social need and social exclusion by directing efforts and available resources within Government programmes, towards people, groups and areas in greatest objective need. It includes Promoting Social Inclusion, through which Departments work together and with partners outside Government to identify and tackle factors, which can contribute to social exclusion among vulnerable groups. An independent external evaluation of the policy was completed in 2003 and since then two periods of public consultation have been carried out in respect of proposals to develop an Anti-Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland.

The public consultations included meetings with organisations from the Voluntary and Community sector, and a number of workshops at venues across Northern Ireland. OFMDFM will shortly submit to Ministers, final proposals in respect of the Anti-Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland.

The way the work of front-line organisations is supported also needs to be looked at. The Taskforce on Resourcing the Sector acknowledged that there were gaps and overprovision in the support function and that more could be done to redirect resources to services. We have now begun work on a draft strategy for support services which we aim to have in place by the end of the year. As the major funder for the sector we can only support those activities that support the delivery of Government objectives. The funding is not the Government’s money - it is public money that comes from taxes, is approved for a specific use by Parliament and is subject to the scrutiny of Parliament.

I recognise that there is more we in Government can do to lessen the bureaucracy and sheer burden of administration laid on funded organisations - much more in some cases. We are engaged with the Sector to address these issues and our DSD Minister, David Hanson, has set us a deadline of March 2007 to deliver the commitments made in Positive Steps – the Government’s response to the Taskforce on Resourcing the Sector.

I’d like to finish by returning to the Review of Public Administration. Many people have been surprised at the extent of the changes that the RPA will bring. It would be a mistake to underestimate the shift that will be completed by 2009 – and it would be a mistake for the Sector not to become involved now, while changes can be influenced.

Perhaps the greatest change in this for the Sector will be in the relationship that exists between the seven new local councils, your organisations and the
Sector in general. The councils will have a responsibility for community planning – they will, to all intents and purposes, set the agenda for community development at a local level. It is important that the Sector, and all that hold to its social ethos and values, work to build into the new arrangements the common sense that I alluded to earlier. The common sense that embraces our common humanity and our Shared Future. You need to have your say in how this will be organised and achieved. The Sector needs to start building that partnership now. Thank you.
The term ‘community sector’ is loosely used to define that which is neither the public nor the private sector. It is also described as the non-governmental, voluntary, or community and voluntary sector and vice versa. The terminology is usually more enlightening about the speaker than the subject, placing them in the connecting chain of society.

It does no harm therefore to revisit the construction of community, because it remains in itself a contested concept. For want of a better place to start, let’s start with ‘population’ - which exists at any given time within a nation state. It will include persons with and without formal membership i.e. citizenship of that state; persons with ethnic and cultural ties which identify them with the dominant ‘nation’ embodied within that state, some of whom may or may not have citizenship, and others with different national, ethnic state, group and interest identity and status in relation to the state, the nation, the society and the myriad of competing, contested and shared interests within all of this. All of these collective entities have an entitlement to use of the collective noun ‘community’ in relation to their grouping of commonality.

So almost everybody is in some community, and not in another, and sadly almost every community is keeping somebody out on the basis of a prejudged ‘difference’ from the group. Some of the most vulnerable individual human beings are in nobody’s community of active inclusion.

I think, therefore, that we need to be very clear who we mean when we speak of the community underpinning ‘the community sector’ So to set a good example, let me explain what I mean when I speak of the community sector in the context of this conference. I mean those who consciously and actively work for social change through particular processes that can be identified as open, transparent, accountable, participative and are aimed at creating a more
equitable distribution of power, decision-making, resources, opportunities, and which recognise both the global and local context in which actions impact on other societies and communities. This is a small ‘p’- power and politics’ social definition. In setting it out, it is not my intention to exclude or prescribe, merely to set the parameters within which my remarks are applicable.

It is in this context that I pose a number of serious questions that I believe to be important to the community sector.

- What do we collectively believe the function, purpose, responsibilities and limitations of society to be?
- What do we believe the function, responsibilities and limitations of government to be?
- What do we believe the function, responsibilities and limitations of the individual citizen to be?

There is a core ideological question which is not within the parameters of this conference or discussion, but which nonetheless informs the perceptions, and constructions each of us bring to the discussion. That centres on the global large ‘P’ of how we politically, economically and socially construct the power and authority and ownership of resources and distribution. That is for another day.

It is society that creates government, and if society within the remit of the state had no collective function beyond that of ensuring the Government and its agencies fulfilled the duties delegated to them, we would have our work cut out for us. Our energies would be best expended, in this case, in making the government, agencies and key individuals do the work, and educating the citizenry to ensure that non-performers were more effectively and swiftly dispatched or removed. The discussion in relation to value for money, added value, effective linkage, monitoring, evaluation, and sustainability would be focussed on government performance in relation to our collective investment instead of the other way round.

But each of knows that the inequalities, the social problems, the poverty the alienation, isolation, and exclusion which is endemic in our society and others took a long time to get to where it is today. They will not be eradicated by total delegation of responsibility to elected national governments, even if we had a better quality of government.

In the development of the democracy we currently have, the evolution of the role of social transformation movements involved agitation, education and
independent organisation; replaced with conscience, education and corporal works of mercy; and these in turn replaced in turn, with advocacy, community development, and service provision. Sometimes we concentrate on the ideologies, sometimes on the philosophies, sometime on the pragmatics and over time we contribute to change in society. Yet there are core shared values which unite the community of social change and on which it is based.

We need to revisit and review our strategies in relation to these, rather than in relation to the push and pull factor of government needs and demands. We need to ask ourselves some hard questions. Are we agents of change or agents of Government?

If we are clear that social transformation is our function, then it is this and not what we do to economically survive as organisations which dictates the conditions under which we relate to delivery of government services, explanation of government policies, and the delivery of sections of the population to government, which it appears unable to reach itself.

What makes us imagine that Government will fund critical analysis and change of government policy?

The continued capacity for independence of community action should be what guides our deliberations. It is foolish in the extreme to delude ourselves that financial dependence on government largesse does not bring with it the threat of sudden financial loss, should the social agendas of the two sectors diverge.

I am not arguing for disengagement of the sector. On the contrary, I am firmly of the belief that we must engage, at every level from the immediate intervention at grassroots level to the development of national strategy; with elected representatives from town council to cabinet; and with the departments and boards to whom they in turn have delegated power and authority they initially derived from us.

The question is about a shared strategy for that engagement. I believe the architects of that strategy should be the sector not the government. I further believe that responsibility for that not being the case lies largely with the sector.

Resourcing the work of the sector is key to its survival. The governments (north and south) appear to hold the resource key and dictate the terms on
which resources will be provided. This distorts the discussion on sustainability within the sector to what the government will pay for. We have a right to our share of the collective purse of our society and should formulate our strategy around that. We also have the capacity to resource significant parts of our shared work independently of government. How else were the credit unions, co-operatives and friendly societies formed?

This raises the last of my key questions: What is the role of the citizen? I have a deep concern that the temporary and transitional financing of the sector, now coming to an end, is consciously creating a corporate identity for the community sector (the third way) that mimics private sector principles and methodologies in delivering the public agenda, where the profits are currently too low for private profit-taking. This route minimises our capacity to challenge government and deliver social change and maximises the danger that we become no more than a transitory conduit to privatisation of public services.

We need to have a discussion and debate on how the core values translate and survive in the new environment or an honest admission that they have been abandoned, and we are now part of the established order in which the survival of the fittest applies.
The Role of the Community and Voluntary Sector in Building Peace and Democracy
Anastasia Crickley

As we struggle to move forward in the community context we’ve got to think about community much more as an aspiration. So that it’s work in progress and it has to change over a period, because obviously the community itself is going to change.

I’d like to say a little bit about the context of this discussion and where we are today in terms of community and community work in Ireland. As Bernadette McAliskey was rightly saying there is a difference between the community sector and the voluntary sector and it’s a very useful distinction to make for those of us who are trying to engage in using community work as a way to make progress within that context.

I’d like to talk about the contribution I feel community work has made to peace and democracy at a whole variety of levels. In this island we’re very liable to talk about peace and democracy just as if it had to do with the Belfast Agreement and the conditions that have prevailed for many years in the north of Ireland and the ways in which we can move all of those processes forward. I feel we need to take a much broader look at peace and democracy in our localities, in the local context, in the diverse Ireland that we now have. We need also to look at the contribution that has been made by a variety of groups and organisations in Ireland to peace and democracy and to building governance and more just societies both in Europe and globally.

Ten or eleven years ago, in this hotel, we organised a meeting with a variety of organisations North and South. One of the things we were looking at then was the diversity in organisation of the community and voluntary sector, which was one of the questions that Dermot McCarthy raised this morning. We talked with the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) about what sort of model we should put in place. The idea at the time was that what was needed was a NICVA to cover North and South. However, the conclusion from that meeting was that the thing that was least needed was a NICVA to cover North and South. In effect, the reality was that the
instruments created in a certain era to gain recognition for the community and voluntary sector did a very useful job in that regard. However those instruments didn’t have the same capacity to deal with the diversity and differences and distinctions, which emerged later.

I feel that was a very fair conclusion at the time, and I feel is an important consideration now. There is more than one political party, there is more than one trade union, and so should there be more than one voice and more than one interest in the sectors that we come from. This challenges us, and means that we have to think about ways that go beyond conformity and beyond co-ordination, to ways to co-operate and to include different interests. We need to look at what we all stand for and not pretend that we all stand for the same thing all the time, which as Bernadette Mc Aliskey pointed out is just blatantly untrue and inaccurate.

We must respond to the challenge of 10 years ago, going beyond what can sometimes be the lowest common denominator - everybody getting together and thinking we believe in the same thing all the time - to the highest common factor, of the ways we can co-operate around the things that we do believe in. I’m also conscious that over the past period North-South, we have worked together and I think that we need to sometimes celebrate the things we’ve been able to do, e.g. through the Peace and Reconciliation programmes. There has been and continues to be substantial work North/South, e.g. the human rights project which was organised by a number of groups in Northern Ireland including the trade union movement and inner city projects in Dublin. Also, the very useful initiatives which are now developing to look at the issues of migration and the way that these are affecting communities North and South.

An interesting feature of our efforts is the way in which the mainstream of the work has been led by the edge. In fact the people who have been involved in the work with Travellers and the people now involved in the work with migrants are not the ones on the edges but they’re the people who are at the centre and who are creating the ideas, and the context, for the community sector and for the work that we are doing. The way we have managed to do that, on a North-South basis is worth celebrating.

Secondly, it seems to me today, as we acknowledge the passing of Charles J. Haughey, it’s interesting to look back. Dermot McCarthy has spoken of the way civil society has become a global issue for analysis over the past decade. Amatai Etzioni of the Communitarian Movement has played a lead role. He
believes in the free world, which happens to coincide with the USA. The Communitarian Movement has things to offer, but what it fails dismally to do is to address fully the difference and power differential of race, class and gender within and between communities. This focus which underpins much thinking about populist communities and their contribution today retracts even from the 1970’s acknowledgement of poverty and disadvantage which led to the first European Anti-Poverty Programme, and does not reflect today’s realities.

In the 1970’s as Minister for Health, Charles Haughey was the first to start institutionalising or providing ongoing state resources for community work, which he did through the Health Boards in 1977. That was a big break though, the first time this type of activity was actively acknowledged, but once it was acknowledged – in that institutional way, the next move was to control it. Within a short few years the people employed as community workers had been redesignated as social workers who could engage in community work tasks, depending on workloads. Activities to help people manage their realities and work together to do this, that focussed on essential local services were well supported, but these leading to criticism or campaigns against the Health Boards were not normally deemed appropriate.

Currently, both North and South cohesion and coordination are key State and other funder objectives for community sector support. Those who fund the work have the right to maintain clear links between good intentions and good practice, what people say they are going to do and what they actually do. However, processes labelled as cohesion often have long term control mechanisms embedded underneath. Regarding best practice clarity concerning the difference between outputs and outcomes is necessary. Recently, funders armed with managerial approaches borrowed heavily from frequently not the most suitable management training programmes and MBAs, have come to control definitions of best practice. Management training courses are very necessary but must be relevant. Here the difference between outputs – how many people come to the meeting – and outcomes – did it make any difference for their issues, is crucial. As well as the difference between output and outcome we also need to be careful about the difference between governance and government as Bernatette McAliskey has already said. We have a voice, but we are not politicians going to polls for election. On the other hand government – whether national or local – needs not to assume that total governance rests with it.
Community

When speaking of community I mean a sense of belonging to a geographic or interest based community. That sense of belonging also brings with it however, as all of us know, and in particular those of us who grew up in rural areas, a sense of control and conformity – maybe based on different things North and South. In the South traditionally it had to do with Mass on Sundays, who it was suitable to be seen with, where, and in what circumstances. Class divisions were starkly visible in the differences between the labourer’s cottage and the farmer’s house.

Community can also provide a positive sense of legitimation but we need to think about it also as aspiration. It’s not set in cement but work in progress changing over a period as members change. The migrants who come to Ireland now, no more than those of us who emigrated to the UK and elsewhere are not set in cement in the period when they left their own communities. They change over time, their understanding of themselves shaped by new experiences. The big problem as we know from our own experiences as emigrants, is the resistance to change in the host society, the lack of capacity to acknowledge its inevitability and the transformation that new influences bring.

This transformation is happening both demographically and culturally as is the kickback against it not just in Ireland but throughout Europe. Community projects and community workers need to engage much more openly with it. We have succeeded as I earlier said, in promoting an inclusive analysis of a diverse community but this needs to be reflected a lot more in day to day practice. Why are area based community initiatives still not universally inclusive of the diversity which is which is part of their area whether that’s Travellers, Migrant Workers and their families, Refugees or Asylum Seekers? Failure to be inclusive now, could in my view, push the Irish community sector to the same place as the poor white Southern US community sector pushed itself after World War II – into Alinsky’s backyard with nobody to talk to besides themselves while at the same time the Black Civil Rights Movement organised itself for the campaigns of the 1960’s. The choice is ours – not just a Government one.

Overall in Ireland, North and South, we have, I believe, developed over the past few decades a frame work for community work practice of which we can be proud. It is not the same as community work practice in England, Scotland, Wales or other parts of Europe. Nor is it dependent on either social
work or purely political traditions. Our tradition is born out of a spirit of solidarity and resistance and particularly out of a collective approach, trying to make change with and for groups as a whole rather than for an individual. Its not community work if it means success is a better education for me or for you, what is success is better education for the whole target group. Collective analysis, working collectively and collective outcomes are crucial.

The approach is not simple, just as the issues to be addressed are also complex. To illustrate I will look briefly at four key element issues, participation, partnership, protest and power. In contributing to peace, democratic participation is crucial. It is also key for the Partnership Agreement Towards 2016. Participation goes beyond volunteering, goes with and beyond empowerment and also beyond capacity building. Participation requires capacity building, adult education and sometimes empowerment and of course one can participate as a volunteer. However, participation (and active citizenship) cannot be reduced to volunteering to do things for people. It means involvement and is particularly relevant as we move forward in promoting active citizenship and more active roles in governance for civil society.

Secondly, Partnership processes, where perhaps we need to examine whether different structures are not needed in different eras. There is, I believe, a big power differential in National Partnership processes between participants from the community sector and those from other sectors. Having said that it seems to me that the differences in the Republic around the previous Partnership Agreement had more to do with the extent to which the structures for participation, and the agenda for negotiation, reflected the needs of groups in their daily work. That poses challenges for the future too. An immediate challenge is to determine the structures which are now needed for participation. Those that are most appropriate for the task are those that directly involve the key marginalised groups and those that represent them. It is a matter of concern therefore that many of those key groups haven’t been involved in negotiating "Towards 2016". They now urgently need to be actively engaged in deciding the structures to implement it.

Thirdly, Protest. Protest is very important if groups are to articulate their concerns and go beyond externally defined acceptable levels of dissent. The way a variety of groups protested over the past decade has contributed to change from Belfast to Belmullet. Protest at European Union level helped create the Directives on Racism and Discrimination. Protest at home helped build the conditions for the Community Development Programme.
has had considerable effects on local campaigns.

Lastly, I want to focus briefly on power. Community work is concerned with both task and process. What gets done and how it gets done. It provides a basis to look both at power over people, which is what governments have and power to do things together, which is what community work groups can have. For this to happen there is a need to look also at the power over people that often lurks within the community group as well, and the power to do things that may or may not exist there.

Finally, to challenges of which there are many, firstly to go beyond our traditional notion of bottom up and top down never meeting. One needs to be able to manage the dynamic between top and bottom and support people to engage directly from bottom to top, particularly a society as small as ours. Next we need to go beyond solutions that call for only better management and coordination – better management of deck chairs on the Titanic would not have stopped it from sinking. We need also to go beyond short term programmes which set impossible targets for limited periods and then disappear. As for the tyranny of best practice, which the optimists see as the way forward, it is a tyranny. There are principles which can be applied from other good work but trying to transfer methods and processes as is often demanded by funders to my mind defeats even the notion of "best practice".

We are I feel, now at a stage North and South, having secured changes in procedures and policy on paper, to be moving towards implementation. The challenge for the community sector is to ensure implementation in ways that guarantee continued participation by the most marginalised interests. In doing that differences between and among us still have to be recognised. There are also differences between us and the various arms of government, and of local and national authorities, with regard to how the problem is defined, what causes it, and where solutions should be sought.

As I said earlier if we pretend that we all share the same ideological perspective across the divides we may not get far. We need on the other hand, to acknowledge that a transformed society is required to ensure justice for the most marginalised. In effect to go back to Gramsci, I’m suggesting what we need is pessimism of intellect – conditions are not great – with optimism of will. In this way opportunities created by today’s complex and diverse society, and the complex and diverse methods and methodologies of Government which respond to them can be addressed.
Conference Summary and Concluding Remarks
Hugh Frazer

Introduction

It is not possible in this short paper to do justice to all that has been said, nor to synthesise the discussions in this very lively conference. What I will try and do is to highlight what for me were some of the key learning points from the day and to make a few comments about some of them. I will do this under four headings: the role of the community and voluntary sector, emerging challenges, actions and strategies for the future and challenges for the Community Workers’ Co-operative.

However, at the outset let me make two general observations. The first is that during the day I have heard more about the role of the community and voluntary sector in promoting the inclusion and rights of those who are excluded and vulnerable than specifically about building peace and democracy. This is not intended as a criticism. Issues of social inclusion and social justice are vital issues for both peace and democracy. In the famous words of Professor Peter Townsend nearly a quarter of a century ago "Possibly the ultimate test of a free, democratic and prosperous society is to be found in the standards of freedom, democracy and prosperity enjoyed by its weakest members".

My second general comment is to stress that a lot of the discussion has in effect been about deepening the quality and inclusiveness of our democracy not about the existence of a democratic system itself or the connection between a democratic system and peace building. My experience over the last five years, particularly working closely with several of the new Member States before they joined the European Union and more recently with countries in the Western Balkans, has reinforced for me the enormous importance of the basic standards of democracy and human rights enjoyed and promoted by the Union. These basic standards are not something to ever take for granted and for all the imperfections in our society we should never underestimate the value of what we have or how important that basic bedrock is for building peace and democracy. However, it is also true that these basic standards of democracy are a necessary but not sufficient condition for
ensuring a peaceful and just society. A democracy that does not address issues of deep inequalities or internal divisions and conflicts is not a very stable democracy.

**Role of the Community and Voluntary Sector**

Listening to the various contributions I was able to identify six particular ways the community sector has contributed to building peace and democracy and still does. These are:

- firstly, by building bridges. These are both bridges and dialogue within and between divided communities and people and between local communities and marginalised groups and state institutions;

- secondly, by promoting fundamental rights and values of fairness and justice. This involves identifying and highlighting gaps in existing rights frameworks and in particular promoting the interests of those groups and individuals who are facing barriers which curtail access to their fundamental rights. The sector also plays a key role in "policing" and monitoring the implementation of legislation in relation to rights and ensuring that basic rights are enforced, especially as concerns anti-discrimination and equality;

- thirdly, by combating poverty and social exclusion. This has involved both highlighting the issue and promoting policies and programmes to promote greater social inclusion;

- fourthly, by empowering and giving a voice to those experiencing exclusion. This involves: organising activities which help people to become empowered and to gain the skills and self confidence to challenge their exclusion; promoting collective action and solidarity between people who are excluded; and developing alliances and co-operation with other parts of civil society;

- fifthly, by promoting the participation of those who are excluded in policy making. This has involved the active involvement of the sector in social partnership at local and national levels. This has required the sector to both advocate why civil society and especially the voice of those on the margins should be heard in policy making; educate politicians, officials and other sectors on how best to enhance the sector’s involvement; and coordinate the sector in ways which promotes a strong collective voice on certain issues while respecting the diversity of the sector;
• lately, and more generally, by working to make democracy, that is existing systems of governance, more responsive and relevant to society as a whole and in particular to those who are most vulnerable and marginalised.

**Emerging Challenges**

During today’s discussions I identified three types of challenges facing the sector in the coming years: adapting to fundamental economic, social and demographic changes; working for change; and balancing the roles of service provider and advocate.

The first group of challenges facing the community sector as it works to deepen peace and democracy is about understanding and responding to key changes facing our society. These changes include:

- **Growing diversity.** As is very evident in Ireland migration within and into the European Union is increasing and, whether people wish it or not, will increase in the future. That is a reality that is leading to increasing cultural and social diversity within our society and creating new challenges in terms of social inclusion, particularly the growth of racism and extreme right-wing ideologies. That growing diversity is also leading to further diversity within the voluntary and community sector as new organisations emerge to respond to new needs and new forms of exclusion and discrimination. This poses the challenge of how best can a more diverse sector organise and, when appropriate, act collectively;

- **Securitisation:** There is a growing tendency, in the context of increased migration and international insecurity (i.e. 9/11, Afghanistan, Iraq), for governments to put more emphasis on security and in some cases this is leading to a curtailment of fundamental rights and freedoms. Countering such a tendency (though of course not entirely new in the context of the conflict within Northern Ireland) and arguing for a more inclusive approach will be a key role for the sector over the next few years.

- **Changing role of the state.** In an increasingly complex world states face growing challenges to their role and effectiveness. As Dermot McCarthy pointed out governments are increasingly redefining their role from one of controlling all levers to that of co-ordinator or leader of networks of different actors and of trying to ensure quality. Within this there is an increased recognition of the need for a strong role for civil society. Hence we see ever growing efforts to involve the community and voluntary sector
in partnership type arrangements at all levels. This creates new demands and raises new issues about consensus and compromise for the sector. Another aspect of this changing role of the state is the growing tendency, and this is very much a European trend, to emphasise the devolution of power and responsibility to the local level. In this context Alan Shannon stressed the significance of the restructuring of local government in Northern Ireland and the importance of the voluntary and community sector working to influence and develop an effective relationship with the new structures.

- **demographic change**: The ageing of our society and the changing nature of households (more lone parent families, more single person households) combined with greater mobility and increased participation of women in the labour force poses new and very real challenges for traditional networks of social solidarity and support and reinforces concerns about the impact of the growing individualisation of society and the decline in social capital. In such a scenario questions of collective action and collective solidarity, so much at the heart of the work of community development practitioners and activists, require new thinking and redefinition.

- **globalisation**: The combined impact of rapid economic change, the information society and globalisation has important implications for democracy and peace. It certainly contributes to the changing role of government I mentioned earlier. It undoubtedly breeds fear and unease as jobs become more mobile and people feel more economically insecure. This can contribute to the exploitation by political extremists of those who feel most vulnerable. They try and pit one group of the poor against another and endanger solidarity between all who are excluded. Another effect of globalisation is increased emphasis on open markets and competition, including in the social field, leading to a growing privatisation of services. All of these pose important challenges for all of us working to create more inclusive democracies.

- **sustainable development**: The growing impact of environmental change and the increasing evidence of the finite nature of natural resources is raising very important questions about sustainable development. How our society will respond and adapt to these critical challenges will raise important issues of collective solidarity and individual autonomy which will profoundly influence the future nature of our democracy. Influencing and defining the nature of this change will be a major preoccupation for civil society organisations as well as for governments in the coming years.
It is also likely to lead to closer interaction between social and environmental NGOs.

The second group of challenges is certainly not new for people in the community and voluntary sector. This is about working for change which will lead to a more inclusive, fair and peaceful society. The first part of this challenge is to find new ways to promote social solidarity at a time when many of the changes affecting society are going in the opposite direction. The challenge is also to understand changing power relations in our society and to find ways to promote a more equal distribution of power and decision making in our society.

The third group of challenges that emerged strongly from this event essentially are about how best to balance the role of the sector as a service provider and its advocacy role. While this was highlighted during the conference as a growing dilemma for the community sector it is important to note that this is not a new issue, though it takes different forms at different moments in time. Secondly, it rarely is a simple either-or situation. It is interesting to note that most people initially become involved in community organisations or NGOs to focus on often local concerns such as providing social services, giving support and advice to refugees, running a women’s shelter, preserving the local environment or whatever it may be. As the coordinator of the Civil Society Contact Group at EU level, Dr. Nicolas Beger, pointed out in a recent article "the move to political advocacy work in almost all those organisations can be historically traced as a secondary move once it became clear that the political circumstances relating to their work needed to be changed…..Advocacy and the provision of practical resources or services are two sides of the same coin." Certainly the most effective advocacy work is often based, as Dermot McCarthy pointed out, on the direct experience of organisations who are trying to meet a need.

There is a constant challenge for the sector at any given moment to decide whether it will have more impact working within the system and by putting on pressure from the outside. Clearly the issue becomes especially sensitive if the state is increasingly looking to the community and voluntary sector to provide services. There is no one right answer and the issue requires constant debate and reflection. However, it is also important to keep in mind that developing high quality services that are accessible to all is an absolutely key element in any strategy to both prevent and reduce poverty and social exclusion. Ensuring that such services are developed must be a priority concern for the sector. Of course the issue of advocacy is also a challenge for
government and its agencies, whether national or local, as they have to decide on what is a legitimate and healthy level of dissent and criticism, especially if an organisation is also seeking funding. Learning to adapt to more inclusive and participatory democratic processes can mean a culture change for some and be quite a steep learning curve.

**Actions and Strategies for the Future**

Listening to the discussion it seems to me that one can identify perhaps six key ways the community and voluntary sector can respond to the changing political, economic and social environment and continue to play a key role in building peace and democracy in the future. None of these are particularly new but that doesn’t make them any less valid.

First, the sector has a central role to play in the preservation and deepening of human rights and thus of human dignity. It needs to do this by acting as a watchdog on issues of fundamental rights, highlighting where abuses of rights or occur or where there are barriers to people accessing their rights. It needs to support the empowerment and organisation and self-expression of those whose rights are being denied. One particularly useful approach might be to develop work on the concept of minimum standards in key areas of social rights.

Secondly, the sector should work to improve and deepen existing systems and mechanisms that promote the voice of the community and voluntary sector in policy making. This means building consensus across the sector on the principles that should inform such participation and also working to ensure the development of common agendas. This needs to happen at national level but is also increasingly important at local level. Work that has been developed with local government on participation and involvement needs to be continued and there is a real process of education and dialogue necessary to ensure a process of continuous improvement.

Thirdly, the sector needs to actively promote the concept of access to quality services for all. This means promoting community development principles and values in the ways that services are developed to ensure that the sector is involved in the development, implementation and monitoring of services. This means awareness raising, training and promotion of good practice among those responsible.

A fourth and related issue is the question of accountability. There was concern expressed by several participants that the community sector is
constantly being expected to justify and prove itself. It is important not to become defensive about this. Perhaps what the sector should be doing is to turn this issue on its head. The sector could assert its role as the champion of openness and accountability, both through its own standards and good practice and then by constantly challenging public or private agencies on their good practice in this regard.

Fifthly, in a rapidly changing world where the factors affecting people’s day to day lives are going through some significant transformations, the sector should continue to play its classic role of identifying new and emerging problems before they have become a subject of public policy. It should then define and promote new solutions either to prevent or to tackle them.

Sixthly, there is a continuing need to play an active role in building peace that goes beyond promoting rights and social inclusion, important though these are. Thus there is a need to continue to build bridges, to challenge sectarianism, to address intercommunity divisions, to promote respect for and acceptance of difference and diversity and to address the hurt and damage caused by conflict.

**Future Roles for the CWC**

So what does all this mean for the future work of the CWC? Having heard about some of your current activities during the conference it seems clear that you are very well placed to respond to the new challenges that are emerging. Indeed there is so much that could usefully be done that the difficulty will be deciding on priorities. The following are a number of possibilities that struck me.

1. The CWC can play a continuing and key role in defining and promoting the values that inform the community sector, the sort of values that were articulated by Stasia Crickley and Bernadette McAliskey in their interventions. This means asserting the moral position of the sector based on values of equality, human rights and human dignity. It means asserting the importance of a community development approach and constantly helping the sector to reflect and look at itself and then to promote and advocate a community development approach. It is important to ensure that the moral basis and values informing the sector are right. After that one can better make pragmatic decisions about what is best to do in particular situations.
2. The CWC can help the sector and government agencies to strengthen and understand better the connections between the service provision, the promotion of rights and the empowerment agendas. In other words it can show how services can be developed and delivered in ways which promote people’s rights and reduce powerlessness and dependence.

3. The CWC could play a key role in helping to tease out and define more clearly the interconnections and appropriate balance to be struck between representative and participatory democracy. There is a need to give in depth consideration to how in practice participatory practices and partnership type ways of working can be deepened and reinforce the traditional democratic process. The exercise could start with a reflection on recent experience of what has worked well and what has been more problematic.

4. The CWC can draw on its on the ground membership to identify and document new and emerging issues and groups who are not prioritised in policy making and who need to be.

5. At present the connections between those working on promoting fundamental rights and those seeking to tackle poverty and social exclusion are rather haphazard and weak and often more in rhetoric than practice. The CWC is well placed to encourage greater synergies between these two agendas so that they are mutually reinforcing.

6. In the immediate future the CWC needs to make a strong input into the deliberations of the Taskforce on Active Citizenship. It is essential that the Taskforce recognises that promoting active citizenship and building social capital is closely linked to the promotion of rights and the eradication of poverty and social exclusion and the promotion of social inclusion, equality and fairness in society. It also needs to understand that making progress on these issues requires much more widespread recognition and promotion of community development principles and practices. The CWC is well placed to make these arguments.

Conclusion

In conclusion I would say two things. First I would summarise the challenge facing us all when working to increase peace and democracy by quoting from E. M. Forster when he used as the motto for one of his novels "Only connect the passion and the prose of life." The challenge we face is to connect the
passion for rights and justice with the prose of developing and delivering better policies and programmes. Secondly, I would echo what Bernadette McAliskey said when she reminded or warned us that we should never expect that working for justice and rights will be easy. It is a constant struggle to ensure that those on the margins of society are included and that power and resources are shared more equally and fairly. Working to make this happen will always involve difficult questions of principle and practice. There will always be hard choices to be made about when to embrace consensus and when to adopt a more confrontational way of working. It will always be necessary to reflect and debate on these issues, to engage in dialogue and to build alliances with others. However, it is clear from the energy and engagement at today’s conference that the community sector is in a healthy state to continue to meet this challenge.
SECTION II

THE EXPERIENCE OF CWC BORDER AND ALL ISLAND PROJECTS
The Donegal Community Workers’ Co-operative (DCWC) was set up to implement the national objectives of the CWC on a local level. Our office is located in Letterkenny and we work with individuals, groups and projects in Donegal and border counties North and South. There are 3 projects currently being delivered by the DCWC in Donegal:


2. EQUAL ‘Finding A Balance’ (FAB) Project. Our EQUAL Partners are: Donegal County Council, Donegal Vocational Education Committee and Health Service Executive North West. DCWC implements the project on behalf of the Gender Focus Group of the Donegal County Development Board. Through this project, we support the implementation of work-life balance practices within the NGO sector.

3. ‘Mind the Gap’, a cross-border Project funded by the INTERREG IIIA initiative. This is a project carried out in partnership with the Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network, looking at supporting better collective working on anti-poverty issues on a cross-border basis. The project involves working with local groups and activists to identify key issues and support collective work on these issues (to date issues include health, fuel poverty, low income, water taxes). New structures are evolving from this work - e.g. North West Anti-Poverty Group.

**Aim of TASC II Project**

The overall aims of the ‘Towards Achieving Social Change II’ (TASC II) project are:

- To take the opportunities afforded by peace to strengthen the capacity of the community sector in Donegal to engage with and influence the
processes and structures for community participation from which many have felt excluded or distanced by the conflict and

- To contribute to the creation of a more just, equal and inclusive society through promoting a policy agenda drawn from local action and experience and through promoting community work as a means of intervention for social change.

Objectives

- The promotion of equality, social inclusion, peace building and reconciliation within the community and voluntary sector in Donegal and the border counties.

- The promotion, support and advocacy for the inclusion of target groups, religious and minority ethnic groups and other excluded groups in social and governmental structures.

- Addressing weak organisational capacity of groups through the provision of information and support to the community/voluntary sector with a particular emphasis on working with target groups and those funded under the Peace II Programme.

- The promotion of sectoral and organisational sustainability in Donegal

Main areas of work

- Organisation of planning workshop and seminars with ex-prisoner organisations and minority groups. We are currently working in collaboration with a number of other organisations planning a seminar looking at peace building within the sector. Groups represented are Reconciliation Projects, Ex-Prisoners, Cross-Border project and DCWC

- Promotion/Support of social inclusion and the Local Anti-Poverty Strategy (LAPS) agenda on local structures such as County Development Board (CDB), Social Inclusion Measures (SIM), Gender Focus Group, local fora. Support inclusion of target groups. We recently were very actively involved in a welcoming event for foreign nationals living and working in Donegal. Held in Letterkenny Public Services Centre, it was a great example of statutory and voluntary sector collaboration and generated a huge response. Through the project, the Donegal CWC works closely with
the Community and Enterprise Unit in Donegal promoting local-anti
poverty and social inclusion work. We secured a seat on the SIM Group of
the CDB and also represented the sector on the County Council led Task
Force and INTERREG IIIA Partnership. We are founder members of the
Gender Focus group of the County Development Board and are actively
engaged in the local fora.

- Publication of a twice-monthly ‘CommunitE Bulletin’ and production of a
quarterly newsletter which is circulated in Donegal and the Border
Counties. As current chair of the Donegal Citizens Information Services
the DCWC is very involved in the Integrated Information Services of the
Donegal County Council which is a pilot project.

- We are also working closely with Social Economy Solutions on
sustainability issues for the CWC and the sector.

**Building Peace and Democracy - Emerging Issues**

To move on to the theme of today’s conference, I would like to raise the
following points for consideration.

- At this stage after 10 years of the Peace programme, we need all players to
take the issue of peace-building seriously; elected representatives, statutory
organisations, business organisations and the general public. Peace
building is an issue for everyone not just the ‘two communities’ or certain
target groups.

- The community and voluntary sector should embed peace-building as an
integral part of community development practice. The recent CWC
publication Tools for Change supports this view.

- Is the Equality/Human rights agenda missing from peace-building?

- There is a perception that there is a ‘political agenda’ which is impacting
on the participation of Protestant/Unionist communities. In a lot of
projects we work with, the Protestant community in particular feels that it’s
being led by political agendas rather than by the desire to construct a
lasting peace. There was a question of uneven allocation of Peace funding
but this has been disproved by research.

- How can we acknowledge and deal with the past? Do we need a Truth and
Reconciliation type forum where we can safely address these issues?
A positive leadership role is integral to peace-building.

Are ex-prisoners/ex-combatants being given a fair chance to equally participate? As many here present know, we were involved in the seminar and report ‘Addressing the needs of Ex-Prisoners – combatants’ in September 2000. Through our work with ex-prisoners we know that a lot of the issues raised at that seminar are still not being addressed. They are still finding it hard to secure credit from banking institutions and are treated with suspicion by the Revenue Commissioners. They still face difficulties in securing employment, housing and training. Many need counseling and psychological support as in many cases they lack family and community supports. Banks, legal institutions and employment agencies now need to actively engage in the peace building process. We have to ask ourselves - When is the war over?

Moving on towards a positive peace - should we be working together on common social and economic issues such as health, education, policing, the economy, etc instead of focusing purely on the ‘conflict’ itself?

Should we be looking at the bigger EU picture in regard to peace building, equality and human rights issues? There have been many excellent projects developed through the various EU Initiatives, Peace, EQUAL, etc.

The Peace Programme has flagged up a genuine social need and filled this gap.

We welcome the Peace III Programme and plan to be actively involved in the consultation exercise. We encourage further commitment from both governments to taking the learning from good projects forward through continued support and mainstreaming.

Finally, we have been funded through the Peace Programme since 1996 and acknowledge the support of the programme during this period.
Mind the Gap – Working with Cross-border communities to tackle poverty and social exclusion

Seamas Devine

Network (NIAPN) are implementing this cross-border project funded under Interreg III A. The project builds on the work of the NIAPN and the CWC in addressing poverty and supporting community work. From the CWC perspective the project builds in particular on the ‘Essentials of Community Work’ programme carried out over the past two years and on work of the Donegal CWC ‘Towards Achieving Social Change Project’.

The project aims to support the work of local anti-poverty activists and community workers in strengthening their collective analysis and understanding of the local context and support them to better network and co-operate to promote an anti-poverty, social inclusion agenda in the locality. The work tries to build on and support whatever community work is already being done in an area. By bringing local activists and groups together in this way the project hopes to support three cross-border anti-poverty platforms to work collectively to advance a strong anti-poverty, community work agenda in their areas, and to promote better participation of disadvantaged communities in local and national decision-making.

To date cross-border anti-poverty conferences have been held in Letterkenny and Monaghan, and one is planned for later in 2006 in Limavady. Work is already taking place supporting a North-West Anti-Poverty Group and a Central Border Area Group. One of the biggest challenges facing collective working in the border region is ensuring participation of both the catholic/nationalist and protestent/loyalist communities. For the latter in particular engagement in ‘cross-border’ work is problematic.

Experience from previous cross-border projects is that the lessons are often not mainstreamed into the thinking and analysis of many national bodies on both sides of the border. The ‘Mind the Gap’ project will try to overcome this by bringing together local anti-poverty groups into a Cross-border Anti-Poverty Forum. This forum will then try to feed its analysis into policy-making arenas on both sides of the border.
The projects head office is based in NIAPN, Belfast, with staff based in Letterkenny and in Derry. If you require further information please contact the CWC (091 779030, or NIAPN (028 90244555).
Standards for Quality Community Work: A Draft Statement of Values and Principles

Seán Regan

Introduction

In recent years there has been an increasing emphasis on quality and standards relating to a range of occupations including in the social professions such as social work, social care and youth work. These standards are concerned with practice, and education and training for that practice. While these developments are relatively new in the Republic they are well established across the UK including Northern Ireland where Life Long Learning UK (LLUK) Sector Skill Council has been given responsibility for maintaining standards developed by the occupations included within the ‘Community Development and learning’ fields of Youth Work, Community Development and other social professions. In the Republic the establishment of the National Qualifications Framework and the all Ireland joint North South Endorsement body for professional youth work education and training evidence of this increasing emphasis on standards.

Against this backdrop, The Community Work Education and Training Network (CWETN) in Northern Ireland and the Combat Poverty Agency (CPA) funded research, which was carried out in 2004/05. This research explored the potential links to be made between community work education and training interests across the island. The research findings highlighted practitioners’ concerns about practice standards and the need to develop an all island approach to professional endorsement of education and training at a range of levels. Following the research, CPA funded the Community Workers Co-operative (CWC) to carry out some consultation with community work practitioners to begin the standards development process, the results of which are contained in this document. Parallel to the standards process an all island, ad hoc group was established which held a seminar on professional endorsement of community work education and training in National University of Ireland Maynooth (NUIM) in October 2005. The seminar
participants received and considered an initial report on the standards consultation from the CWC and are keenly aware of the inter-relationships between standards and endorsement.

This draft standards document has been developed following this consultation process, during which core elements of standards, which flow from the values and principles of community work were identified. In the process of developing this document, standards within other professions such as social work and youth work were researched. While these standards reflect the uniqueness of community work, they are also consistent with other social professions. It is hoped that they will be useful in naming and recognising the experience, values and skills which community workers bring to their work. They are designed to be useful for all community workers, regardless of their professional functions, the settings in which they work, the community with which they work, or whether they are working in a voluntary or paid capacity. However, implementing the standards poses different challenges for workers, depending on the specific work context.

**Community Work**

Community work, or community development involves an analysis of social and economic situations and collective action for change based on that analysis. It is centred on a series of principles, which seek to go beyond consultation to participation and beyond capacity building to consciousness raising and empowerment. It recognises the changing and often hidden nature of the structural inequalities based on ‘race’, class, gender, disability to name but a few and seeks to be transformative rather than conforming, and emancipative rather than domesticating. In this context, the Community Development Support Programme of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs defines community development as being "about promoting positive social change in society in favour of those who benefit least from national and global social and economic developments…(it) seeks to challenge the causes of poverty/ disadvantage and to offer new opportunities for those lacking choice, power and resources." Pobal, previously ADM, is a not-for-profit company that manages programmes on behalf of the Irish Government and The EU. It takes a community development approach to it’s work overall and in particular supports community development through measures such as the Local Development

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1 Community Refers to both geographical communities and communities of interest.
and Social Inclusion Programme, RAPID, etc. Pobal defines community work as "a developmental activity composed of both a task and a process. The task is the achievement of social change linked to equality and social justice, and the process is the application of the principles of participation, empowerment and collective decision making in a structured and coordinated way".

**Purpose of Standards for Quality Community Work**

The primary objective of these standards is to express values and principles which are integral to community work and which outline how the community worker should act in the role of practitioner with certain types of responsibility and accountability. Community workers have obligations to themselves, the community, their employers, funders, one another and to society. The standards provide a tool of value for all community work stakeholders: employers, communities, funders, education and training providers and practitioners.

**Values and Practice Principles**

Community work is rooted in a set of core values. These core values are the foundation of community work’s unique purpose and perspective. This document identifies these core values and summarises broad practice principles, which suggest how community workers should apply these values. It is not intended to be exhaustive. The core values are collectivity, empowerment, social justice, equality, participation, integrity and competence. While each value is outlined separately below, they all work together as a unit.

**Value 1. Collectivity**

Community work is based on working with and supporting groups of people, enabling them to develop knowledge, skills and confidence so that they can develop a collective analysis, identify collective issues and address these collectively.

**Practice principles**

Community workers have a responsibility to:

- be informed about the reality experienced by the community with which they work and should seek to involve community representatives in a collective analysis of issues
• identify common and priority community issues
• work towards collective outcomes for the community as a whole rather than the individual
• collaborate and build alliances with other groups, organisations and agencies
• enhance conditions for collective action through celebrating the work, learning from success and failure and sharing information about emerging models of good practice.
• develop innovative and creative approaches to working with communities and learn from other models of work in Ireland and throughout the world.

Value 2. Empowerment
Community work is about promoting the empowerment of individuals and communities, and addressing the unequal distribution of power. It provides opportunities for people to become critical, creative, free, active human beings allowing and enabling them to take more control of the direction of their lives, their community and their environment. It aims to effect a sharing of power to create structures that provide genuine participation and involvement. It is a process based on mutual respect and equal and genuine partnership between all those involved to enable a sharing of talents, experience and expertise.

Practice principles
Community workers have a responsibility to:
• start where people are at and work with people to build an understanding and analysis of their reality through consciousness raising in order to create the conditions for collective analysis and outcomes
• have an analysis of power and how it is acquired, sustained and used. Recognise power inequalities and seek to address them.
• be clear about one’s own power and perceptions of it. Strive to use it appropriately.
• identify and deal appropriately with conflict when it arises and supporting individuals, groups and communities to deal with conflict.

Value 3. Social justice
The active pursuit of social justice is an essential element of community work, which has an important contribution to make towards a socially cohesive society. Community work believes that every person and every community can play an active role in creating conditions for a just and equal society. The
pursuit of social justice involves identifying, seeking to alleviate and advocating strategies for overcoming structural disadvantage. It entails the promotion of policies and practices that are just and challenging those that are not.

**Practice principles**
Community workers have a responsibility to:

- develop a clear social analysis, making connections between local issues and global issues.
- challenge and bring to the attention of those in power and the general public, ways in which the policies and activities of government, organisations and society create or contribute to structural disadvantage
- use knowledge and experience to appropriately contribute to the development of social policy
- promote social fairness and the equitable distribution of resources within their work
- work in solidarity with marginalised communities towards gaining concrete improvements in their quality of life.

**Value 4. Equality and anti-discrimination**
Community workers have a responsibility to challenge the oppression and exclusion of individuals, institutions and society which discriminate against people based on ability, age, culture, gender, marital status, socio-economic status, nationality, skin colour, racial or ethnic group, sexual orientation, political or religious beliefs.

**Practice principles**
Community workers have a responsibility to:

- acknowledge the diverse nature of Irish society and seek to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression with respect to disadvantaged communities
- respect, value, support and promote difference and diversity
- reject and challenge any form of discrimination and oppression
- support and develop anti-oppressive policies and practices
- keep up to date with equality and anti-discrimination legislation

**Value 5. Participation**
Participation within community work is about the ability of groups who experience social exclusion to take part in decision-making, planning and
action at different levels and providing a sense of belonging. It can be viewed as a continuum of activity ranging from information sharing through to active engagement and empowerment. It recognises that people have the right to participate in decisions and structures that affect their lives, that participation needs to be connected to issues of power and social change.

**Practice principles**

Community workers have a responsibility to:

- recognise that there are different levels of participation and work towards meaningful participation\(^2\)
- ensure one’s work is based on the needs of the community
- support and promote the development of decision-making structures that are open and accessible to those groups who experience social exclusion and ensure that work to build effective participation is at the core of community work practice.
- recognise and address barriers (including structural barriers) to meaningful and effective participation across all levels
- Formulate strategies to go beyond consultation in their work to create a policy context for full participation by people in governance and democracy.

**Value 6. Integrity**

Community workers should act with integrity according to one’s responsibilities and duties. They should work towards the maintenance and promotion of high standards of practice and uphold and advance the values, ethics and mission of community work.

**Practice principles**

Community workers have a responsibility to:

- acknowledge and understand their accountabilities to the community, their colleagues, their employers, funders and the law.
- abide by best employment practice
- promote proper financial accountability and good financial practice within their organisation.
- maintain high levels of honesty and integrity.

\(^2\) Meaningful participation is about participation linked to power.
• recognise the boundaries between personal and professional life and be aware of the need to balance a supportive relationship with the community with appropriate professional distance.
• ensure that their professional relationships with others are based solely on furthering the interests of the communities with which they work and are not distorted by their religious, political or business interests.

Value 7. Competence
Community workers should continually strive to increase their professional knowledge and skills and to apply them in practice.

Practice principles
Community workers have a responsibility to:
• develop and maintain the required skills and competence to do their job by undertaking further training and education, and attending seminars, conferences etc.
• be self aware and regularly reflect on oneself and one’s work, using the analysis, action, reflection spiral
• think and work strategically and develop a plan of work with community needs and community work methods and values informing plan, which should be evaluated regularly.
• seek to develop and maintain support systems through contact with other community workers, community groups and key community work organisations.

Conclusion
This document outlines standards to support professional practice in community work. The question of how these standards are ensured is a challenging one. As community workers we have a collective responsibility to work for conditions where standards for community work are discussed, evaluated and upheld and to determine how this happens for the future.
SECTION III

BACKGROUND PAPERS
Governance in Ireland – New Clothes for the Emperor?

Chris McInerney

"Clearly it is desirable for the architects of governance processes that an impression of widespread participation is conveyed. However the veneer of participation, at both national and local level, to a large extent masks the degree of elite capture of participation opportunities that is taking place".

Introduction

Much of this publication is concerned with the nature of relations between the state and the community and voluntary sectors. Inevitably a variety of views abound on this issue. There are those who see the nature of this relationship as one in which non governmental organisations serve as effective extensions of the state, increasingly adopting the role of service designers and deliverers, for whom advocacy is a luxury that may threaten funding sources. At a different point on the spectrum lie perspectives that see the role of non governmental organisations as being concerned with social justice and equality, and operating in a way that sees advocacy and scrutiny of the state as being essential, and where the need to question the misplaced complacency that accompanies the newly "wealthy" Ireland cannot be abandoned. In between are multiple other forms of relationships, varying in the degree of independence exercised, issues addressed, tactics used, access facilitated and favours bestowed.

This article is concerned to locate these relationships within a broader discussion on governance. It tries to extract just what the term governance means, particularly in an Irish context. It highlights some of the issues that governance, Irish style has thrown up and questions some of the fundamental pillars that it is built upon. Finally it explores some of the challenges that a more progressive view of governance might throw up.
What is Governance?

Understanding the term governance is complicated by the fact that many different definitions and understandings of the term exist – both within academic and practitioner circles. Inevitably, these definitions and understandings are underpinned by different value sets, some explicitly stated, others more implicit. It quickly becomes evident that a casual use of the term governance and a corresponding assumption that all will understand and agree with the user’s assumptions, definitions and interpretations is ill advised. To illustrate it is worth looking at two, contrasting definitions from international organisations. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), an influential organisation that frequently comments on economic and social development in Ireland, defines governance as:

“the use of political authority and exercise of control in a society in relation to the management of its resources for social and economic development”.

In comparison with this the Institute of Governance in Ottawa\(^1\) sees governance as comprising

“the institutions, processes and conventions in a society which determine how power is exercised, how important decisions affecting society are made and how various interests are accorded a place in such decisions”.

Clearly one definition emphasises issues of control and resource management, the other demonstrates a more active recognition of and concern with the exercise of power, how decisions are made and how various interests are accorded a place in decision making. Put in another way, the OECD definition describes something that in reality may not be too much different from how we understand the traditional role of government, where the state dominates decision making and resource allocation and where it exercises strong control over the involvement of non state organisations in decision making. The Institute of Governance by contrast requires that we look at governance in a more challenging and expansive fashion, seeing a reality that is informed more by shared decision making, more open discussion on resource allocation and participation by right rather than by favour.

In 2002, the then Irish Government in the White Paper, *Supporting Voluntary Activity*, at least displayed some awareness of the growing importance of governance but missed a valuable opportunity to articulate in any serious way what its view of governance might be. According to the White Paper:

\(^1\) The Institute On Governance (IOG) is a non-profit organization with charitable status founded in 1990 in Canada to promote effective governance
"At national and at international level, there is a major shift taking place in the way in which decisions are made and influenced (the term ‘governance’ is often used in this context)."

It further concedes that

"The way this transition is managed will have major implications for the ability of communities and countries to meet the challenges of economic competitiveness, social cohesion and sustainable development."

Unfortunately, as highlighted in the article by Brian Harvey, the opportunity to develop a better understanding or vision of how this transition might be supported to take place in Ireland has been undermined by the abandonment of the commitment to provide a substantial research fund to research the nature of the contribution of the community and voluntary sectors.

The Transition to Governance in Ireland

So, where might we look to find evidence of a transition from government to governance in Ireland? Bearing in mind the fact that governance in Ireland is an ill or undefined concept it is still possible, albeit briefly, to identity some of the key arenas in which the move from traditional government towards governance can begin to be sought out. The first and most obvious place to look is the arena of national social partnership. Here, as we are frequently told by the media, the social partners discuss key aspects of social and economic policy. While the aim of the process is to develop an agreement amongst social partners on a wide range of policy concerns, strictly speaking, the state retains the decision making control. Equally the state retains control over who it deals with, issuing invitations to participate to those organisations it wishes to talk to, excluding others. In some cases it might be argued that the state has cleverly moulded some of the "partner" organisations so as to minimise any potential challenge to the dominant policy agenda or at least bring it within manageable boundaries. A variety of other modes of governance exist at national level though these have increasingly been drawn under the framework provided by national social partnership, to the point where membership of any governance mechanism is almost totally dictated by access to the social partnership club.²

² One of the few exceptions to this was the Community Platform, an alliance of almost 30 of the most prominent anti poverty organisations in the country. While the Platform was a participant in the national social partnership process, a route was always open to anti poverty organisations to get involved if they so wished. This changed when the Platform found itself unable to support the Sustaining Progress agreement on the grounds that it produced weak social inclusion outcomes.
At local level there has perhaps been a greater degree of experimentation with governance mechanisms over the years. The area based partnerships introduced under the Programme of Economic and Social Prosperity in the early 1990s, developed a form of governance to address social and economic disadvantage at local level. Under the influence of the EU, which partially funded these partnerships, a greater role for non governmental organisations was facilitated. Crucially, by contrast, in this governance model the state at national level chose to bypass and exclude representation from local government though in more recent times these gaps have been bridged, leading some to suggest that the ultimate trajectory is to bring all local governance processes under the stronger influence of local government. The foundations for this new trajectory were laid with the publication of the *Better Local Government* White Paper in 1996 arising from which parallel, though relatively powerless, governance processes were devised to operate at local level, most notably in the form the County/City Development Boards and Strategic Policy Committees.

**Some Issues About Governance**

This very brief and incomplete foray into the world of governance raises a number of pertinent issues.

*Who controls participation in governance models in Ireland?*

Clearly the answer to this is that the state, to a greater or lesser degree controls participation in the various governance processes. There are few if any independent routes to be found into governance mechanisms and where these existed they have been largely shut off. Increasingly, a monoculture of governance has been created, deviation from which is clearly not welcomed. In the same way there has been little innovation in understanding how democracy might be made more meaningful, despite the evident pressures that confront democratic systems in Ireland as throughout Europe. This view is echoed by Phillips who fears that democracy is being "stripped of much of its radicalism" and is becoming simply a mechanism for choosing governments rather than maintaining its original ethos of struggle against privilege and domination. In recent time, thinking on democracy has seen advocates of participatory democracy propose that it alone is capable of addressing the need for more open decision making. However, participatory democracy too is subject to criticism. It is suggested that inadequate attention has been paid to issues of power and as a result there are no mechanisms in place to address issues of resource inequality, access to information or elite capture of participation opportunities. The central issue remains that the state
has been and continues to be the sole arbiter of who participates in governance processes and in this way exerts continued control over governance agendas.

**Who participates or is allowed to participate?**

Clearly it is desirable for the architects of governance processes that an impression of widespread participation is conveyed. However the veneer of participation, at both national and local level to a large extent masks the degree of elite capture of participation opportunities that is taking place. At local level there has been little enhanced participation by those who experience disadvantage and efforts to articulate a social inclusion agenda still encounter considerable opposition and often hostility. Just as the middle classes have traditionally been better served by the representative democratic system so too the middle classes have in most cases now captured additional opportunities to express their voices with governance arenas. Unfortunately, elite capture is also visible within elements of the community and voluntary sectors, where traditionally powerful institutions acting in the name of the poor speak the language of inclusion but for territorial, ego or other reasons frequently act in a fashion that oppresses and excludes.

**Does governance matter in any case?**

Having raised the issue of who controls and who participates in governance processes a fundamental question that must also be asked is the degree to which governance and efforts to access governance mechanisms matter. An Australian writer, John Dryzek, has suggested that in considering the merits of governance "gain can only be secured when the defining interest of the entering group can be connected quite directly to an existing or emerging state imperative". In other words if the state does not to a significant degree share the social and economic priorities of those seeking participation then there is little to be gained. Hence, for those seeking to promote social inclusion, an assessment of the degree to which there is a core commitment to address inclusion concerns must be made. For less well resourced, non-state actors with a focus on social inclusion, invitations to participate within governance arrangements present a tempting opportunity, even if a ‘faces of power’ based analysis might suggest that there is:

a) scant chance to impact on decision making (face one);

b) that agendas are largely set (face two) by the state or by powerful economic actors;

c) there is a need to repress genuine preferences (face three) due to the nature of the governance environment and the frameworks it sustains (Shapiro, I., 2004).
Pulling in the horns

An important element in assessing the gain potential from engaging in governance processes, particularly for groups advocating for social change, must also be to understand the impact on voice and the willingness to use it. Inclusiveness, and the opportunity in theory at least, to be involved in decision-making is generally presented as a progressive governance indicator. However it can also have negative consequences and can, as described by Papadopoulos lead to the deradicalisation of grassroots movements ‘that are asked to behave ‘responsibly’ in governance bodies’ (Papadopoulos, Y., 2003) As a result, such movements, fearful of losing access to what they see as important decision making arenas, may engage in varying degrees of self censorship.

The importance of voice and exit

Finally, crucial issues relating to what has been called the rights of voice and exit need to be given greater attention. Both of these have been described as key components in the building of progressive democratic systems, notably that the equal opportunity to voice views and opinions is seen as an important element in assessing the maturity of a democracy and equally and that the right to exit from democratic processes is respected. This is equally true in discussing governance mechanisms. Clearly, within the experiences of governance processes in Ireland different groups enjoy preferential rights of voice and exit. There is little doubt that the voices of the more powerful economic actors, i.e. employers and trade unions, are more keenly listened to, while most of those advocating a more just and equal society must continually struggle to have their concerns heard, the exception being those linked to traditionally powerful institutions. Differential treatment can also be expected when the attempts are made to exercise the right of exit. In the case of the powerful, persuasion is used to prevent exit. For the relatively powerless the exercise of the right to exit from an individual governance arena may be, and has been, accompanied by threat, punishment and forced expulsion from all other governance arenas.

Future Directions

To conclude it could be argued that while governance mechanisms do exist in the Irish context they exhibit features that would locate them closer to traditional forms of state dominated government and further away from the more progressive forms of governance than have developed in other countries. Achieving the transition to these more progressive forms of decision making will require substantial institutional and attitudinal change.
In the short term though three important directions need to be pursued:

In the first place, it would be welcome if a more intensive and challenging discussion about social partnership were to take place, one that would go beyond merely tweaking the contents of the agenda to one where the very nature of governance could be reviewed and, more importantly, renewed.

Secondly, in order to preserve and protect the basic democratic rights of expression of voice and the exercise of the right of exit, there is need for a clear separation of two important functions i.e. managing governance relationships and managing the provision of funding to enable participation in governance. Where these two functions overlap the temptation to use funding as an instrument of control and punishment is often too strong to be resisted. For this reason and for reasons of transparency funding processes should be removed from the administrative and political control of government departments and returned to quasi state or non state control.

Finally, and again in relation to funding, there is a challenge to the various independent funding sources, particularly the many private trusts in operation in Ireland today, to use their resources to advance the development of more progressive governance mechanisms.

References

Changing Approaches to Social Inclusion Delivery – for Better or Worse?
Seán Regan and Jennifer Lloyd-Hughes

"The explanation put forward by Government bemoaning the ‘number and complexity of structures involved’ in the delivery of local services and the ‘confusion and difficulties’ this presents for the communities they serve appears on the face of it to amount to little more than a spin to justify greater control of activity that sits somewhat outside of the direct control of the state”.

Introduction

In February 2003, the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Éamon Ó Cuiv initiated a review of community and local development structures to bring greater cohesion across local and community development programmes. An interdepartmental steering group was established, chaired by his Department and including the Departments of Environment, Heritage and Local Government and Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The review would complement the Task Force on the Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems1, already overseeing the County/City Development Board (CDB) process and aimed at bringing about a more coherent delivery of public and local development services at local level.

The three basic elements of this review consisted of:
1. A comprehensive consultation process with the providers of schemes and programmes and the social partners on improving local delivery structures.
2. An independent review of existing arrangements between ADM (now Pobal, the independent intermediary organisation that manages many of the aforementioned programmes), Government Departments and other stakeholders.
3. A requirement that various local agencies submit their business plans to CDBs for endorsement, in order to support greater coherence at local level.

1 Preparing the Ground: Guidelines for the Progress from Strategy Groups to County/City Development Boards. DOE&LG 1999
In February 2004, Minister Ó Cuiv informed the Dáil that Government had agreed a series of measures designed to improve supports for local and community services. The services referred to encompass the work of local drugs task forces, partnership companies and community development projects, amongst others. The key actions outlined in the Minister’s announcement were:

- A move towards integration in service provision, with a key role for City/County Development Boards in considering and endorsing work plans prepared by community and local development agencies.
- The provision of funding to support specific measures aimed at achieving greater integration.
- A directive that no new structures would be set up to accommodate new schemes, save in exceptional circumstances.
- A restructuring of Area Development Management (ADM, now Pobal) to reflect its changing role since it was founded by Government and the European Commission in 1993.

Subsequent to this a number of circulars and memos were issued to implement the process, which called for an extension of coverage co-terminous with county boundaries, the establishment of a unified delivery structure in each county and measures to strengthen volunteerism.

So, what does it all mean? And, most importantly, will it result in improved social inclusion provision at local level?

**The City/County Development Boards**

In order to fully understand and contextualise the events outlined above it is necessary to go back to the 1996 policy document *Better Local Government – a policy for change* and the reports of the *Task Force on the Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems*. These documents chart the assignment to local authorities of a greater role and responsibility for the coordinated delivery of local government, state agency and local development agency services. The key mechanism to achieve this objective was the City/County Development Boards. They were charged with the development and implementation of an economic, social and cultural strategy for the City or County. The Office of the Community and Enterprise Director was created to facilitate and resource the development of the process.

The City/County Development Board concept is an interesting one, based as it is on a Nordic model designed to co-ordinate the activity of regional
statutory agencies. In Sweden, for instance, the County Board has a statutory responsibility to ensure that there is a coherent delivery of state services, that efficiencies and synergies are maximised and that overlap and duplication is minimised. The County Board structure works very well in these countries. However, its effectiveness can only be assessed within the context of the forms of governance and divisions of administration that prevail in Northern Europe. In those countries statutory provision is divided between those parts that are appropriate for local delivery – schools, childcare, transport, primary healthcare etc – and those elements that require a regional deployment or application – specialist healthcare, social welfare, economic development etc. Locally appropriate services are therefore allocated to the local authority, the kommun, where its strong democratic base, local expertise and close links with community organisations ensure effective, co-ordinated and sustainable services. The County Board achieves the same co-ordination and efficiency among the statutory agencies providing services at regional level.

The context for the development of CDBs in Ireland is entirely different. Local democracy in Ireland is poorly developed and local authorities are not allotted a wide range of duties and are restricted in their right to generate income or to be autonomous and flexible in their spend. In addition, local authorities have no tradition or long-standing expertise in delivering a range of social services, including anti-poverty or social inclusion measures. In terms of local statutory service delivery there is even less comparison. Ireland is renowned as the most centralised state in Europe. Priorities are decided nationally and there is no meaningful and coherent regionalisation, save that concocted to satisfy EU structural funds’ requirements. Many of the current difficulties within the health system (though not all, there are also fundamental resource issues) illustrate quite clearly the inefficiencies and wastefulness arising from this over-centralisation.

So, how has this Northern European concept been applied in the development of the CDB process? Firstly, rather than focusing on a regional or sub-regional co-ordination of the statutory providers the CDB initiative has also attempted to cover the locale-specific remit i.e. the bit allocated to local authorities in most other European countries. Given that the whole CDB process is located in the local authority system this was an almost inevitable consequence, but it undermines the potential of the initiative as a mechanism to promote a more integrated and coordinated service delivery among statutory agency providers.

Secondly, the CDBs appears to be overly concerned with co-ordinating the
community development and local development sectors, while the statutory sector, apart from customising national strategies to the CDB 10 year plan, has to a large degree stood off the process. So, it appears that local authorities have been left focusing on the minuscule budgets of community development projects, partnerships and LEADER companies, thus reinforcing the central state’s lack of belief in or commitment to local governance and local democracy. All in all, the process seems to have resulted in a lot of fuss and bother for no substantial gain other than a considerable disruption of social inclusion activity.

This is not to deny that there are huge problems relating to the delivery of services and the implementation of social inclusion measures at regional and local level (whatever these terms mean in the Irish context). Undoubtedly, there are deep structural problems affecting the implementation of measures and the delivery of many services, as witnessed in the areas of health, balanced development and social inclusion. Even if there were no other critique of the public administration system, the fact that the same issues keep arising time after time points towards deep-rooted problems in how the administrative state is structured.

Accountability and Trust

If the hue and cry around greater co-ordination of statutory services and the strengthening of local government has not amounted to much, was there another, more realisable, objective behind the review and cohesion process?

The third and fourth objectives of the review process give some indication of this:

- Bringing transparency, co-ordination and improved control to the funding and operation of local/community development measures, and;
- Strengthening the democratic accountability of agencies and service providers in this area

In layperson’s language the opening premise suggests that organisations are exclusive or not open, that financial monitoring is weak and that accountability is less than satisfactory. Yet there is no evidence to suggest that this is the case. Indeed the record of community and local development organisations in promoting participation and prudent management of public monies has been exemplary, especially when set against recent examples of widespread waste and forced disclosure in the public and private sectors.
So, the assertion behind this objective appears to be based on perception rather than substance. It seems to be concerned with orderliness and regulation rather than objective and outcome. It fails to appreciate the connection between the conditions and processes required at local level to produce a social inclusion outcome - namely, voluntary participation and collective engagement - and in that sense it may very well dampen innovation and commitment. In general, it conveys a lack of trust in citizens and displays an administrative culture fixated with directing matters beyond the boundaries of its competence.

The Impact on Social Inclusion

So, what is the likely impact of these changes? From a community development point of interest the underlying question is: will it be good or bad for the community and local development sectors and for the future implementation of social inclusion? Already there are indications of a negative impact in terms of its effect on the assembly of the critical mass of expertise necessary for social change. In addition, it is self-evident that the CDB process, directed as it is through the office of the Community and Enterprise Director, is struggling to fulfil its co-ordination role. Having supported the City/County Development Boards to put together a city/county strategy Community and Enterprise Directors are now left pondering what to do next. They have neither budgets nor power to force the implementation of the prioritised actions and are too deeply embedded in the local authority system to assume an independent role in leading out the social inclusion agenda.

A further inhibiting factor is that the CDB process has framed activity within a delivery of services concept. Forcing the community sector into a delivery of services function demonstrates a basic misunderstanding of how and why community development approaches work, as well as indicating the fundamental confusion behind the CDB process. Were the CDB focused and organised in a similar manner to the European model then delivering services would be a perfectly legitimate description of the role. However, the community sector is not primarily involved in service delivery. It is focused on social change and it is focused particularly on activity that forces social change in statutory provision, something that statutory providers cannot do for themselves and a task that the CDB process struggles to accommodate. What the community sector brings is that element of creative tension that the Taoiseach himself identified as necessary to help resolve deeply embedded
social problems.²

All of this points towards the need to pose some fundamental questions. What are the implications of CDBs being given the role, at least nominally, of co-ordinating activity and possibly disbursing monies to community development and local development organisations? How does this square with the low capacity of local government and the almost complete absence of experience in many fields of activity now being assigned to them?

What of the long-term implications of restructuring local development structures along mainstream lines? Taking a macro perspective, in the context of the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) framework for a developmental welfare state and the importance of ‘democratic experimentalism’ in focusing mainstream services, the wisdom of organising the NESC proposed ‘activist measures’ along mainstream lines is questionable and is unlikely to deliver on its potential to enhance or add value to state provision.

Conclusion

The explanation put forward by Government bemoaning the ‘number and complexity of structures involved’ in the delivery of local services and the ‘confusion and difficulties’ this presents for the communities they serve appears on the face of it to amount to little more than a spin to justify greater control of activity that sits somewhat outside of the direct control of the state. The path embarked upon by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs to review local and community development structures has caused considerable disruption and confusion within the very sectors whose participation and contribution are vital to social inclusion. Moreover, in attempting to consolidate the further development of the CDB process it has invested in a model that is fundamentally flawed in its conceptualisation and in its expectations.

In addition, whether intentionally or not, the review indicates a priming of the landscape for a Blairite corporatisation of community and voluntary activity. This reflects and parallels similar interventions at national level including the promotion of the conservative concept of social capital, attempts to reduce the concept of active citizenship to beneficent volunteering and the development of civil society structures capable of obfuscating the different aims of the social inclusion community sector to those of the state, business, church and

² Launch of Threshold Strategic Plan 25th Feb 2002
other mainstream interests. This has already resulted in the virtual exclusion of the Community Platform from national social partnership arrangements and the elevation of other more compliant bodies to represent the needs of the marginalised. Indeed, it is somewhat alarming that institutions that have shown an historical disregard for the weakest communities, and in some cases visited grave injustice upon them, are now leading out the social inclusion agenda, while organisations whose mandate is firmly rooted in community activity are diminished or sidelined.

The events that have been triggered by the developments and processes outlined above will play out over the coming months and years. Despite the direction set by Government it is by no means certain that this will continue in its indicative form. Too many of the fundamentals are ill informed or downright wrong. Accountability, value for money and greater cohesion in the implementation of social inclusion strategies are good and useful things. Social inclusion could have been strengthened and made more coherent through a consultative process that would have facilitated a reinvigoration of local commitments and capacities. It must be profoundly disheartening for the community and local development sectors to have moved a social inclusion agenda to a stage where some structural adjustments to achieve a more equal society were within sight only for a patchwork of ill-informed visions and half understood concepts to be unleashed upon it. In a process that has been almost exclusively top down, hopefully, some sense may filter up.
Integration and Equality for Migrant Workers and Families: the Challenge for Local and Community Development

Siobhán O Donoghue

"If the conditions for integration of migrant workers and their families are not generated within an intercultural framework there is a real danger that the divisions and tensions evident within countries with a longer migration experience will come to pass here. All this is avoidable and manageable by careful facilitation, strong leadership and strategic allocation of resources".

Introduction

Over the past decade Ireland has undergone a remarkable process of social change. As a result of inward migration our communities have been transformed into obviously diverse and multicultural settings. However our history as a society in responding to diversity and the reality of diverse and multicultural communities has always been problematic as is evidenced in the experience of the Traveller community. There is therefore an urgent impetus to focus on creating the conditions for meaningful integration and equality focused action at a structural and policy level through to local community infrastructures i.e. local development agencies and community development projects.

Restructuring of county and local based structures in the cohesion process currently underway is a matter of concern to those working for the inclusion and integration of migrant workers and their families, principally because of the danger that the focus on social inclusion and equality will be diluted as a result. There is also a danger that the valuable lessons learnt over the past 15 years or so, through the process of building and conceptualising local development strategies will be lost in the rush for greater efficiency in service provision, coherence and co-ordination across various programmes and ‘tidied up’ structures at local level.
Why a Focus on Migrant Workers and Their Families?

Inward migration is without doubt a permanent reality for Ireland. While the prevailing view is that the presence of migrant workers is directly related to gaps in the labour market, this is only part of the reality. Ireland was late in joining the global market place but is now firmly there. Migration is a core aspect of that global process and is largely irreversible. Once the migration cycle becomes established networks form, roots are put down and for many, settlement becomes inevitable. Alongside this reality is also the fact that where the conditions and supports are not in place, some migrant families are highly vulnerable to becoming marginalised, excluded and in effect forced into an underclass status. Where the conditions for inclusion, participation and integration are created migrant workers and their communities become active participants in all aspects of community life and are enabled to maximise their contributions and talents. This as we know is vital for the improvement of social status and the situation of future generations.

Without doubt local and community development organisations have succeeded in developing a focus and priority on particular groups experiencing high levels of poverty inequality and disadvantage i.e. lone parents, educationally disadvantaged, long term unemployed, Travellers. It is now accepted that Irish society has become significantly transformed as a result of globalisation and consequently inward migration and there is a growing challenge to local structures to reflect this changed reality in their own priorities and targets. This is particularly important for future cohesion and solidarity at local community level and to avoid the danger that community and local development structures become reflective only of indigenous community members thereby fuelling racial tension and exclusion.

The Role of Community Development and Local Development

Traditionally community development has been concerned with the restructuring of unequal decision making structures and the achievement of a sustainable, cohesive and socially just and equal society. This has involved supporting local communities to focus on the root causes of poverty, inequality and exclusion and in particular on the manner in which policy and decisions are made which impact on disadvantaged communities. Local development has played an important role in supporting community development and in itself has targeted those groups and areas experiencing highest levels of disadvantage and exclusion. Such targeting has been instrumental in supporting powerless interest groups to become visible and to
name their concerns in a way that has helped focus state services and decision makers’ attention to their particular needs. At its core, a community development approach has enabled disadvantaged communities, both geographical and interest based, to look beyond the boundaries of their communities for both the reasons and the solutions to their experiences of powerlessness, marginalisation and discrimination. Rather than blaming the so called ‘victims’ and placing responsibility on the shoulders of those who bear the burden of being in a powerless situation, community development has provided the conditions for collective action, questioning of power relations and a concern for how decisions are made and implemented.

For migrant workers involved in a community development process they are enabled to make a connection between their own individual experiences and a collective analysis and understanding of migration from a political, social, cultural and economic perspective. Migrant workers are supported to acknowledge and take action on challenging issues such as gender inequality, class and racism. Finally community development allows and emphasises the importance of solidarity and co-operation with others in society who also experience unacceptable levels of exclusion and discrimination.

**A New Focus on Citizenship**

The topic of citizenship has gained popularity over the past while. It has largely centered on two key concepts. The first is concerned it promoting volunteerism and what the citizen has to offer to his/her local community. The second concept is more linked to the formal acquisition of citizenship to the nation state. Both these concepts are narrow in their focus and neglect to question the more challenging and relevant question of what it means to be an equal, valued and participating member (citizen) of society.

The issue of citizenship is entirely relevant to the current debate on local structures. What it means to be a citizen throws up many notions that are traditionally founded on a view of society that is unquestioning of power imbalances, patriarchal, monocultural, middle class etc. Many of the target groups of local development and community development activity have been denied access to the rights that are considered the norm for the citizens of a democratic state i.e. adequate income, protection from exploitation, access to appropriate housing and accommodation, access to and benefit from the education system, adequate care during a person’s lifecycle, access to independent living supports, inclusion in decisions that impact on their lives etc.
Reforming and restructuring local structures in themselves will have little impact on the lives of those who are excluded from democratic structures without an explicit focus on the barriers they face and support for their active participation. At a time in Ireland where there are growing divisions between those who have and those who do not, local structures that have as a core function to support the development of local communities and fall within the gamut of local participatory democratic processes, must maintain a priority focus on those groups who continue to be denied full and meaningful citizenship including migrant workers and their families.

**Delivering Government – Service Delivery**

A second trend in recent times has been the shift towards more effective delivery of state services into local disadvantaged communities. Statements from state and political representatives indicate that the role of community and local development is to prepare and as such align those sections of society most difficult to reach, with the services necessary for an adequate standard of life i.e. health, education, social services, housing services. This approach seriously neglects a core aspect of a properly functioning democracy i.e. a critically engaged and questioning constituency. Viewing members of society as the mere end users of state service provision will only serve to further disenfranchise and distance those communities including migrant workers and their families from the structures and decision making processes that form an essential part of a modern effective democracy. Forcing community and local development structures to be part of this process could have the effect of undermining decades of development work and while in the short term may have the effect of squeezing critical and oppositional voices, in the long run will fuel the ‘democratic deficit’ and undermine the democratic process. This is particularly relevant for migrant workers and their families who are also in need of quality and accessible service provision. However from experience we know that a focus simple on service provision will not generate more inclusive, equal or integrated local communities.

**Multiculturalism and Migrant Workers**

A third trend is to focus attention on multiculturalism in response to our growing multicultural communities. Many local development and community development organisations are increasingly concerned with promoting multiculturalism and developing multicultural policies without paying much attention to the underpinning values and meanings.
We are a multicultural society and that’s a fact. A multicultural society is a mere statement that there are different cultures within society. It simply refers to the presence of many ethnic minority communities. Multiculturalism policy has been pursued in a number of EU countries (without much success) in an attempt to generate racial harmony and address racial disadvantage i.e. social segregation, exclusion from labour market, community tensions. It has often involved activities such as providing supports for cultural expression and training events.

Multiculturalism says little about either the situation or status of the members of different cultures. It only implies their presence. For example ‘multicultural workplace’ does not tell you what status migrant workers have within any particular workplace. In fact it often disguises the reality that ethnic minorities and migrant workers are generally concentrated in the ‘3D’ jobs – Dirty, Dangerous and Difficult!

Neither have traditional multicultural approaches ever sought to address racism, in particular institutional racism and the direct and indirect discrimination that flows from that. Rather it has been more concerned with tensions between cultures and enabling different cultures exist side by side. If a group or communities position in society is only addressed at the level of their ‘cultural fit’ they are often then blamed for their own exclusion i.e. the belief that some members of certain cultures are harder to work with or are more aggressive than others. There is also an inherent danger that when initiatives or programmes fail to live up to expectations that participants are blamed for not adjusting or living up to expectations.

Multiculturalism also tends to focus on the more traditional values and expressions of culture. Traditional leaders, including religious leaders are seen as more credible representatives and there can be little space for diversity that exists within each culture to emerge or be expressed. This was very evident in the type of structures that emerged to represent Irish emigrants in places such as UK and USA. They generally reflected the more traditional and mainstream interests of Irish society i.e. class, political interest and gender and in effect mirrored the dominant politics and structures of Irish society at home. In such arrangements it can be very difficult to reflect the interests of the less powerful in society i.e. women, sexual minorities, lower social class.

Local structures are challenged to develop strategies and actions that are
focused on promoting interculturalism.\footnote{An intercultural society is one where all people live free of racism and where the rich diversity of our multicultural make up is respected, reflected in structures and policies, and resourced at all levels. Interculturalism also implies equality across diverse cultures while multiculturalism is rooted in concepts of tolerance and acceptance as opposed to respect and rights associated with cultural expression. Finally, interculturalism is concerned with integration and the creation of a society where all its members benefit mutually from its diverse make up. Migrant Rights Centre Ireland Strategic Plan 2005} There is a need to accept that learning about other people’s culture does not make racist people less racist and that greater results are possible when we focus on tackling racism in particular the institutional nature of racism i.e. in service provision, who is making and the way decisions are made. While there is a lot of value in using culture in promoting a positive sense of identity, there is a need to name explicitly how this fits into a broader anti racist intercultural framework. Community and local development is ideally placed to lead on such action and create the conditions where the challenging issues facing multicultural societies are identified and those same communities directly involved in tackling these issues.

**Conclusion**

The changes within society and the restructuring taking place at county level present significant challenges and some dangers. One important danger is the dilution in focus and priority on addressing social exclusion and inequality. There is also a danger that the lessons learnt and expertise developed over the past 15 years will be lost in the process i.e. in the rush for co-ordination the emphasis on process and ways of working will be neglected. Local communities are changing at a pace that presents many challenges for all stakeholders. If the conditions for integration for migrant workers and their families are not generated within an intercultural framework there is a real danger that the divisions and tensions evident within countries with a longer migration experience will come to pass here. All this is avoidable and manageable by careful facilitation, strong leadership and strategic allocation of resources.

Finally history tells us that for the opportunities to be realized and the structures of the state to be sufficiently challenged to adjust, reform and become more open and relevant to those most distanced from them, that a
strong vibrant, autonomous and critically engaged community sector is vital. We in the community sector are challenged to hold onto our core strength and use it effectively and the state is challenged to recognize that an independent questioning community sector al is for democracy and effective governance.
Social Capital and Social Equality
Robin Wilson

"Robert Putnam's own data indicates that social capital is highly dependent on social equality. The regions and states which are the most trusting and civic-minded are also the most equal"
epidemiology at Nottingham University.

Professor Wilkinson shows how the ‘dominance hierarchies’ found in some animal and human groups have adverse physiological effects on those in subordinate positions, manifested in stress and faster aging. Conversely, he shows how in the primate and human worlds there are examples of the ordering of social life on more co-operative and egalitarian principles, symbolised by the ritual exchange of gifts.

Professor Wilkinson conclusively shows that Putnam’s own data indicates that social capital is highly dependent on social equality. The regions and states which are the most trusting and civic-minded are also the most equal.

Translated on to the international arena, Professor Putnam’s social-capital scale places egalitarian Sweden at the top and hugely unequal Brazil at the bottom. And this, Professor Wilkinson argues, is common sense: we are most likely to show solidarity with our fellow citizen if we do not feel socially removed from them.

But Mr. Ahern appears to believe that the warm cuddly embrace of social capital can be married to the cold shower of an unregulated capitalist economy. And so he recently reiterated his preference for the Progressive Democrats as a coalition partner after the election in 2007. That’s the party one of whose ministers, Michael McDowell, has argued that inequality is necessary in a capitalist society. It provides an essential incentive, he claims. This provides the case against high and redistributive taxation to correct the inequalities in market incomes—inequalities which have been rising in Ireland in recent years.

Mr McDowell is wrong, as Professor Putnam’s and other data show. A society with deep inequalities undervalues the human capital of huge numbers of its population and its lack of an accepted moral compass encourages free-riding and anti-social behaviour. The horrors of deprivation and looting in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina perfectly encapsulated what kind of society this is.

Conversely, high taxation has benefits for firms as well as disadvantaged citizens. As Philip Whyte of the Economist Intelligence Unit has pointed out, companies’ investment decisions are affected by issues such as high rates of innovation, the skills of the labour force, the quality of the infrastructure, and so on. Thus he points to how Sweden—whose combined tax and non-tax
revenues amount to 58 per cent of gross domestic product—has attracted more foreign direct investment (as a share of Gross Domestic Product) than the EU average in eight out of the last ten years.

But the point is that Mr. McDowell believes it, and so do his colleagues. Mary Harney, then party leader, famously endorsed the Anglo-American social model over the European when she said that Ireland should position itself closer to Boston than to Berlin. She chose an American city with a positive Irish connotation, but she might as well have said Washington—or indeed pointed out that, in these terms, London was closer still. Yet research by Paul Sweeney for the Irish Congress of Trade Unions has demonstrated that tax cuts represented an economic dividend from the Celtic Tiger, not the forerunner of it. Indeed, in many ways those cuts represent a missed opportunity—and not just because of the regressive and inflationary effects of the diversion to indirect taxation.

Other recent research by the National Economic and Social Council has shown that the improvement in Ireland’s economic performance has been overestimated. While Ireland’s gross domestic product per capita is up there with Luxembourg, its gross national product per head at purchasing power parities—a statistic which remove the two distorting comparative effects of multinational profit repatriation, stimulated by low corporation tax, and domestic inflation—is now around the same as the UK’s and the same as the average for the 15 pre-accession EU states.

That is still huge progress. But it has not been matched in social expenditure. What the NESC study also shows is that as western European states have become more affluent they have pooled more collective resources for the common weal. The best performers, notably the Nordic countries, have thus avoided the mixture of private affluence and public squalor the great American economist J K Galbraith famously diagnosed there. Ireland has failed to do so. While in absolute terms social spending has grown considerably, as a proportion of GNP per head it is lower than before the boom. This has unavoidable consequences. Ireland still allocates to social expenditure (at purchasing power parities) only about as many Euro per head per year as Greece, Spain and Portugal, the impoverished ‘cohesion four’ it used to be part of before the mid-1990s economic take-off. That means it spends only 60 per cent of the EU-15 average. This may not be as visible as the tax take on a pay slip but its effects are much more stark: according to UNICEF, 16 per cent of Irish children live in poverty, as against 2 or 3 per cent in Denmark, Finland and Norway. This is based on children living in
households below half the median income.

Of course, it is said that such relative poverty doesn’t matter: only absolute or ‘consistent’ poverty does. But Professor Wilkinson’s work shows that what matters in terms of our wellbeing is our status vis-à-vis others—whether our society is characterised by hierarchy or by equality. Hence the paradox that the healthiest societies, it turns out, are not the wealthiest, but the most equal.

Childcare has become a touchstone issue in Irish politics. Sweden, one of the top welfare performers, has for years provided universal, high-quality public childcare: every child from one to five is entitled to it, and parents contribute just 11 per cent of the gross cost in fees. In Ireland, by contrast, availability is patchy, the cost is often prohibitive, access is rationed by ability to pay—and we have a meaningless argument, rooted in the constitution’s fealty to the family, about whether as much money shouldn’t be paid to women to stay at home.

A former Financial Times correspondent in Sweden, who recently returned to the country, came away with this assessment:

*Sweden has succeeded in creating a grand narrative for a process of modernisation in response to the complex challenges of our times. It is based primarily on an idealistic and attractive focus on the meaning of freedom in a democratic society. This is not a selfish, individualistic egoism concerned with the mere satisfaction of material wants and appetites through the acquisition of evermore consumer durables. Nor is it based on a stifling conformity of outlook imposed on a reluctant people by an excessively intrusive and paternalistic state. It is a social freedom that while it balances rights and responsibilities in the interests of the wider society also affirms a genuine emancipation for men and women of all classes, races and creeds from the rapacious power of an unregulated market economy.*

Mr. Ahern has taken recently to describing himself as a ‘socialist’, to burnish Fianna Fáil’s ‘caring’ image. The trouble for him is that modern social democracy, as in Scandinavia, is not just about everyone being able to go to the botanical gardens. It is about countering through democratic politics the inherent tendency of unregulated capitalism toward ever-wider inequalities.
Some Thoughts on Cohesion
Seanie Lambe

Cohesion: noun: the action of holding together or forming a united whole
“Compact Oxford English Dictionary”

That there are a very large number of organisations and agencies delivering state sponsored local development programmes is self-evident. For those outside these mechanisms, indeed often for those within them, the whole plethora of programmes and delivery agencies can appear as a labyrinth. It would seem logical to the casual observer that some attempt should be made to rationalise and simplify these delivery mechanisms. However while rational change can clearly bring benefits, it is important to remember that there were good reasons for some of the structures created, while it was the addition of new programmes funded by different agencies and departments which complicated the situation and led to such apparent dispersal of effort. Furthermore, it can be reasonably argued that a wide variety of voluntary and partnership based organisations is a measure of social capital and a significant contribution to government policy on active citizenship.

In the general fight against poverty and social exclusion it must be recognised that poverty is cumulative. It is not just about the incomes of individual families. It is also about the quality of the schools, the quality of housing, access to services, emotional and psychological stability and many other environmental factors. It is a well-proven fact that most poverty is concentrated in clearly defined geographical areas and housing types. These areas have consistently delivered the same results in terms of disadvantage as measured by Gamma, a mechanism fully accepted by the state and all the other agencies. It had been accepted since the original Programme for Economic and Social Progress (PESP) agreement, that efforts must be concentrated in the most needy areas. Of course it can be argued that people can be poor anywhere and should get the exact same supports as anyone else.

This is the Minister’s main argument for "total coverage" and I believe, a sensible one particularly in areas, which have RAPID designation, since such designation prioritises investment anyway. However expansion of coverage will involve increased costs and therefore increased resources. But really, this issue should not be about money. It should be about the most

\footnote{Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development}

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effective way to deliver support to those who need it.

If that means rethinking the structures, then that should be done. But it must be done with respect and sensitivity and it should be informed by the knowledge that there is a difference between representative democracy and participative democracy; between local government and local development; and between state agencies and voluntary and community organisations and partnerships.

The suggestion by some that all such organisations should be under the control of the County or City Development Boards (subsets of the local authority) smacks off a desire to somehow clip the wings of the independent voice on behalf of the poor. While a cursory glance at the PESP agreement will show that the area-based local partnerships were designed to be community led. It was a model which respected everybody’s input and contribution. When local councillors were added some years later, despite initial fears, it produced no tension or difficulty that I am aware of. However to even dream that the community sector would tamely agree to be taken over by the local authorities is to underestimate the effect of what they are supposed to deliver i.e. community empowerment. You don’t strengthen alliances by eating your allies.

We’re supposed to be in this together for the good of the poor. Squabbling over control of what are, let’s face it, meagre resources, hardly becomes us at this stage of our country’s development. It is important to recognise however that there will be no going back to passive communities accepting what their betters deign to allow them. The increasing level of sophistication in community education and awareness has led to better co-operation with the state agencies, and community organisations are a very important and cost effective part of the delivery mechanism for state programmes. To deliver these programmes directly by civil servants would be a financial and logistical nightmare.

Let’s be clear there’s nothing wrong with saving the taxpayer money. And thanks in part to partnerships and community education programmes a lot more of us are taxpayers now. But given the strength of our economy, if anyone was trying to save money at the expense of the poor it would be shameful. However I don’t believe that to be the case. I believe that Minister Ó Cuiv is committed to maintaining and increasing investment. I accept that change may create savings and economies of scale but if so, such monies should be left at the disposal of the local structures created.
Solutions to the structural issues should be negotiated locally, being aware of local sensitivities and recognising voluntary commitment and encouraging more of it – and finally, I would say that the concept of cohesion, the projected benefits and the thinking behind it should be explained clearly in an atmosphere where there is no real or perceived threat to those who have little enough already.
"The bright period up to the publication of the White Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity had persuaded voluntary and community organisations to believe that Ireland was at last on the road to a more mature relationship between the state and the voluntary sector".

A hundred years ago, Ireland was full of voluntary and community activity – from urban housing charities to the feminist movements, from rural co-operatives to popular movements for the revival of traditional culture. Sadly, the leaders of the new Free State failed to define a role for voluntary and community activity, which sank out of sight in the new nation-building project. Most visibly, there was little sympathy for independent voluntary health providers, who were starved of funds and subsumed into the state system.

Today, the Irish voluntary and community sector compares badly against its European counterparts on virtually all indices, such as investment, size, volunteering, density, funding, information, level of organisation, legislative framework, knowledge and infrastructure. Ireland even contrasts poorly with the countries of eastern and central Europe, which, emerging from the revolutions of 1989, constructed a voluntary and community sector that achieved more for civil society development in the decade that followed than this country managed to do in the longer period of its independence.

The construction of a mature relationship between its voluntary and community sector and the state is a challenge, which has so far proven too difficult for the Irish state to meet. The first commitment to put this relationship on a structured footing was given by the then Tánaiste, Brendan Corish, on 29th April 1976. It took the Irish state a full 34 years to issue the resulting White Paper Supporting Voluntary Activity, which must be some form of record for deliberation in governmental decision-taking. The White Paper received a deserved welcome from the voluntary and community sector at the time, promising as it did:

- Recognition of the role of the voluntary and community sector, especially its work in promoting social inclusion and equality;
• Affirmation of the independence of the sector;
• A commitment to a structured, multi-annual funding relationship;
• Structured dialogue, especially through voluntary activity units.

Seven years after the White Paper was published, these eloquent commitments lie in ruins. The principle of funding core non-governmental organisation (NGO) national networks, as a means of linking social inclusion work to policy formulation and National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPs) implementation, was diminished by funding cuts and uncertainties about future funding. Organisations not subscribing to the last national agreement *Sustaining Progress* ceased to be invited to participate in unrelated social partnership bodies. Government deputies clamoured for the troublesome An Taisce to be disbanded, presumably because it attempted to impose some sort of curb on the excesses of clientalist planning processes. When the Centre for Public Inquiry was established as a civil society organisation to campaign for transparency, not only government but some opposition members of the Oireachtas took the view we should give no space to such an unwelcome intruder on our public life and the Minister for Justice successfully undermined it. Presumably, civil society organisations against corruption are things that should happen only in places like in Italy, eastern Europe or Africa. Changes in the legislation turned the Dormant Accounts Fund into a ministerial fiefdom. Ministers told the Dáil that if they didn’t feel like setting up voluntary activity units promised in the White Paper, they needn’t and indeed, they didn’t. Only half the White Paper funding was delivered in the original period promised. Even though our voluntary and community sector suffers from data deficits greater than any other European country, the small, promised research budget was abolished as unnecessary. A north-south consultative civic forum announced in 1998 – indeed, approved by the people in referendum – was never set up.

Europe added to our misery through the stalling of the constitutional treaty, with its important commitments to social justice, equality and a role for civil society. Worse, the European Commission’s impressionable Directorate General for ‘Justice, Freedom and Security’ threw its weight behind the Bush-Blair imperial project to declare that charities were potential nests of terrorism, spurring member states to put them under police surveillance.

The bright period up to *Supporting Voluntary Activity* had persuaded voluntary and community organisations to believe that Ireland was at last on the road to a more mature relationship between the state and the voluntary sector. This unhappy situation that emerged deserves explanation. Even
though Irish public administration has, in recent years, begun to come to
terms with the problems of policy implementation, this extraordinary reversal
went far beyond the normal parameters explicable by implementation theory
alone. They probably went beyond the unhappy confluence of a change of
administration in 2002 and the strange and unexpected reorganisation of
departmental boundaries.

The hostility extended to the voluntary and community sector is perhaps the
most visible example of the failure to resolve or agree this relationship. More
mundane ones abound. These are perhaps most evident when enlightened
members of the Oireachtas try to amend legislation to provide representation
for voluntary and community interests within state decision-making bodies,
boards and procedures. These are routinely refused - as they have been
refused by previous Governments. During the Senate debate on the Health
Bill, 2004, which reorganised and centralised the health services, the minister
responsible made it clear that there was to be no role for the voluntary and
community sector in contributing to policy-making.

The under-development of the voluntary and community sector in the
Republic is perhaps the easy part to explain, especially if one makes a
comparison with Northern Ireland, rather than far-away countries about which
we know little. Looking back to the partition settlement in 1925 when the
whole island started from the same baseline, the welfare state project in the
UK required a strong, service-delivering voluntary and community sector and
in Northern Ireland that sector benefited from the huge investment that poured
into the welfare state from 1945. In the Republic, the Social Security White
Paper presented by Tánaiste William Norton in 1949 failed and this state
never again tried to develop a comprehensive welfare state, to the point that
we now spend less on social protection than any other country in the European
Union. Northern Ireland had a welfare state and needed a voluntary and
community sector to help the state to deliver it. The Republic had no welfare
state, nor the aspiration to have one, so the voluntary and community sector
was superfluous to its aims.

A second and deeper explanation for the current difficulty may lie in the
concept of civil society. Joe Lee’s masterful analysis of Irish state-building,
Ireland 1912-85 (Cork University Press) drew our attention to the limited
intellectual infrastructure underpinning the new state. A lack of commitment
to or understanding of the concept of civil society was just one of its many
shortcomings. Ireland contrasted poorly with continental Europe where one
of the main factors driving social development has been a developed concept
of civil society. This term, once chic but now well embedded in the European public discourse, is posited on the notion that there is a sphere of public action where citizens work together for the common good in free associations and in mutually respectful partnership with state. Whilst the original concept may be traced to the European enlightenment of the 18th century, it was a prominent feature of the continental and Scandinavian social democratic ideal in the 19th century, being dramatically refreshed in the 20th century in the period leading up to the revolutions of 1989 (Vaclav Havel being its principal articulator). To this day, terms like ‘civic platform’ and ‘civil forum’ still survive in the politics of eastern and central Europe. The involvement of civil society was a central theme of the model for European governance mapped out by President Delors in the 1990s. The draft European constitution, article 47, has a commitment to participatory democracy in general and ‘open, sustained and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society’ in particular.

Sheltered from this backdrop, emerging from a state whose pre-occupations were around ‘the national struggle’ and whose values were subsumed in an unusually deferential model of social thinking, the Irish voluntary and community sector has been slow to develop a comparable concept for civil society and associative development. Had this been done, it might have been possible to map out a model for voluntary and community sector trajectories that addressed such issues as under-development, poor mobilisation, insufficient knowledge, primitive organisation, an Elizabethan legal environment and, above all, the lack of effective and productive interaction with the state.

Despite the clauses in the draft European constitution, despite the White Paper of 2000, it seems that recognition of the role of civil society in this state remains unfulfilled. Academically, one may take comfort in the interpretation that we may be going through one of the periodic reconfigurations of the role of the voluntary and community sector and the state, reconfigurations that happen from time to time in many other jurisdictions. They have happened before and they will happen again. In his narrative of the history of the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland, one of Sam McCready’s chapters referring to the period of political vetting was called The state strikes back! Future historians, reviewing the difficult years from 2002, may give this dark chapter a similar title. But chapter titles will be of little comfort to voluntary and community organizations that must face the lash of government displeasure.
Ultimately, change may be possible. Ireland’s isolation from the European norm of social protection is not pre-ordained to last forever. Eventually, the Irish state may come to value a voluntary and community sector that can contribute to active citizenship and communal wellbeing. Notions of civic society, little represented in the cluster of ideals that have gone into the state-building project to date, may yet take root. A hundred years ago, the Irish colony was awash in the ferment of ideas that led to the formation of the new state. Maybe, in the period of reflection leading up to 2016, the voluntary and community sector will be able to table its own agenda and emerge from the present dark valley into the sunlit uplands.