

# Local Governance: The Case of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown

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- 1) Local Governance: The Case of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown
- 2) Review of Public Participation in the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan 2004–2010
- 3) Putting Communities at the Heart of Community Infrastructure
- 4) SPAN Picture Booklet

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## **Local Governance the Case of Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown.**

This case study looks at structures, processes and experiences of local governance in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown (Ireland). It outlines the policy and institutional contexts in which governance arrangements in the county have emerged, and it tracks how these contexts have changed in response to bottom-up and top-down factors. The case study considers various theoretical and other perspectives on the concept of local governance, and it draws on international literature in order to identify good practice. This literature identifies good governance as an essential element of participative democracy, and by extension, a fundamental building block of any democratic society.

Having established the key principles of good governance, the case study profiles the relevant agencies and stakeholders in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown, who are involved in governance arrangements. It looks at the processes and structures they have put in place to enable collaborative local governance, and it assesses the varying extents to which such arrangements reflect best practice. The case study presents the results of extensive fieldwork and surveys, which capture stakeholders' perspectives on the operation of governance within the county. These findings point to how specific aspects of local governance, particularly mechanisms for promoting citizen participation in local decision-making and local development need to be further fostered and developed. The findings show how a number of agencies, including local government have led innovations in the promotion of good governance. They reveal the importance of the role played by the area partnership in promoting endogenous approaches, which underpin participative democracy, and which enable flexible, responsive and targeted inter-agency approaches.

Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown's experience and innovation in promoting local governance has generally been positive. The county has established a number of fora, which give effect to participative democracy. These include a broadly-based Community Forum, and a Community Platform, with a strong emphasis on social inclusion and community development. There is increased recognition both within the county and externally that, despite its cumulative affluence, Dún Laoghaire - Rathdown has areas of severe disadvantage and deprivation. There is a clear need for on-going support for social inclusion and anti-poverty measures, and for targeted investment in deprived communities, to redress past legacies of underdevelopment, and to foster sustainable communities, in which citizens are empowered and enabled to participate in shaping the decisions that affect their lives and their futures. Southside Partnership plays a key role in this respect, and it co-ordinates the inputs of various agencies at local and county level. A number of agencies have taken very positive steps towards promoting social inclusion and enabling citizens to be more active in decision-making. Agencies have engaged, through the County Development Board in a number of information-sharing, networking and collaborative initiatives. These collaborative developments represent an important step towards multi-sectoral, integrated and joined-up approaches to the formulation of policy and the delivery of public services. The capacity of the County Development Board to lead, facilitate and ensure further and on-going collaborative approaches deserves renewed vigour and support at all levels.

The concept of governance is relatively new in the Irish context, and its roll-out, in what has traditionally been a very centralised state has been slow, particularly at local level. The ‘newness’ of governance, and the lack of a clear roadmap for agencies has obliged actors at state level and at local government and sub-county levels to engage in a considerable degree of experimentation and innovation. Consequently, structures have emerged which are relatively complex, and which some commentators have described as overlapping. While, in reality there is little evidence of any overlap in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown, there emerges a need to improve communication channels and feedback mechanisms between a number of organisations. In terms of citizen participation, the emergence of new structures has allowed citizens to become more involved in participatory democracy. However, the responsibility for leading, co-ordinating and linking such structures has tended to fall to a relatively small number of individuals. Thus, there is a need to provide greater supports to such persons, particularly those who serve in a voluntary capacity. In the longer term however, the objective must be to grow the capacity of a greater number of persons to assume co-ordinating and leadership roles.

Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown is a relatively new entity, the county having been created in 1994, as a result of legislation, which sub-divided the then County Dublin into three local authority areas, Fingal, South Dublin and Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown. Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown has a population of 193,688 (2006 Census of Population), and it includes the southern suburbs of Dublin City, traditional urban neighbourhoods, fashionable coastal districts and rapidly expanding newer communities extending into its rural countryside. The county exhibits a high degree of diversity on most social, economic and demographic scales. This diversity, the geographical scale of the county in terms of travel distances and the absence of a clear and agreed central or focal point, together with the lack of a traditional ‘county identity’ in heritage or sporting terms represent significant challenges for bodies in seeking to promote collective approaches to the governance of Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown.

Overcoming these challenges requires the promotion of area-based, multi-sectoral and collaborative approaches, so as to foster networking and clustering between the various endogenous and partnership approaches to development. It requires an on-going commitment to, and investment in social inclusion, the development of intra-county transport and other infrastructural connections, the fostering of a county identity in cultural spheres and greater efforts to involve newcomers and transient populations in all aspects of decision-making, policy formulation, service delivery and development. Inter-agency communication and collaboration need to be further promoted, encouraged and incentivised. The timing of SPAN and the publication of this case study are opportune. The county is about to commence a new round of initiatives under the National Development Plan and the EU Programmes. By reflecting the learnings from SPAN, and the recommendations from this case study in the multi-annual plans, which are currently being formulated, agencies in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown will ensure that positive and tangible steps are taken, thereby positioning the county as a leader in terms of good governance and sustainable development.

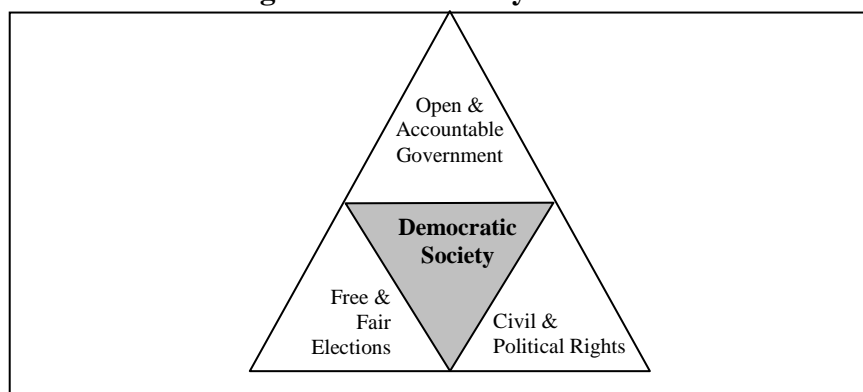
## 1. The Evolution of Governance –

### Consequences for Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown

At the opening of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, 120 out of the world's 192 countries, containing some 60% of the world's population were ruled by representative democratic systems. Political commentary and actions over the past two decades have been largely concerned with extending West-European and North American notions of parliamentary or representative democracy to perceived 'undemocratic' nations. The decline of socialism in Central and Eastern Europe since the late 1980s has seen states there adopting western parliamentary models and systems, with the support and encouragement of western states and the EU.

Systems of democracy vary among states, but the representative democracy that has come to dominate throughout Europe, much of The Americas, Oceania and parts of Africa and Asia is based on a system whereby citizens elect representatives who make decisions, govern and organise society on everybody's behalf. Burton and Duncan (1996) cite Beetham (1993) in identifying the basic elements of democracy. These are represented in the 'democratic pyramid.'

**Fig. 1: Democratic Pyramid**



Source: Burton and Duncan (1996), taken from Beetham (1993)

Democratic societies may be defined as those which embrace all three of the above dimensions, though they may do so in varying degrees, and with varying emphases. Giving effect to all three dimensions differentiates democratic societies from totalitarian or absolutist ones. The Council of Europe (1993) has noted how the period of peace and affluence that has prevailed in Western Europe since the 1950s has been paralleled by the consolidation of democracy.

While Western governments and agencies may be extolling the virtues of representative democracy internationally, there is a growing concern internally in democratic societies about the limitations of representative democracy. As Gallagher et al. (2001) have demonstrated, voter turn-out at referenda, European, national and local elections has been steadily declining across European democracies. They are critical of the fact that those who have promoted systems of representative democracy have tended to view local decision-making and politics as microcosms of national politics, such that the only method of involving citizens in local decision-making was by holding periodic local elections. Their analysis of declining voter participation, and general public dissatisfaction with the performance of representative systems, is that citizens are becoming "increasingly alienated from politics" (2001: 164).

Governments and the EU have responded to the challenges facing representative democracy. Models of social partnership, through which governments engage with and consult the productive sector (employers, farmers and unions) on economic policies, have gained increased currency throughout Europe. National Social Partnership has operated effectively in Ireland since the late 1980s, and is largely credited with bringing about increased productivity, economic growth as well as wage and price stability. The state has benefited from entering into governance and power-sharing arrangements with other actors. By ensuring buy-in among relevant stakeholders in formulating policies and programmes, it has secured greater co-operation and support for the implementation of such policies/ programmes. This has been valuable to the state in implementing measures, which might otherwise have appeared unpopular or unpalatable.

The community and voluntary sector has been a strong advocate of collaborative governance, and has sought to redefine its relationship with the state. It has endeavoured to move away from a position of dependence on the state, and has sought to create a relationship characterised by greater parity of esteem. Area partnerships provide a vehicle through which the community and voluntary sector interfaces directly with the state, and through which agreed cross-sectoral programmes are delivered, in a way that responds with flexibility to meeting local needs and fostering opportunities. Thus, partnership is central to governance arrangements and processes.

Traditional government and democracy that is based exclusively on representative processes is characterised by:

- The dominance of state power;
- Organisation through formal public sector agencies and bureaucratic procedures;
- Neat and usually simple dividing lines between formal government relations and agents.

Governance, operating in the context of representative democracy, but which is supported by strong participative democracy is characterised by:

- A proliferation of agencies, service deliverers and regulatory systems in decision-making processes;
- Horizontal self-organisation among mutually independent actors;
- Increased emphasis on territorial, rather than sectoral approaches to policy making, service delivery and economic competitiveness.

The transition from sectoral to territorial or area-based approaches can be defined in terms of a metamorphosis of how power is structured, distributed, managed and legitimised. It may be viewed in terms of a transition from systems of government to systems of governance, where government embodies top-down or hierarchical power structures, and where agents operate without specific reference to others or to the spatial context within which they operate. Such systems are generally characterized by a lack of flexibility and spatial differentiation, or a 'one-size fits all approach.' On the other hand, territorial systems of governance prioritise the spatial over the sectoral, and seek to encourage and enable collaboration and joint-actions between agents.

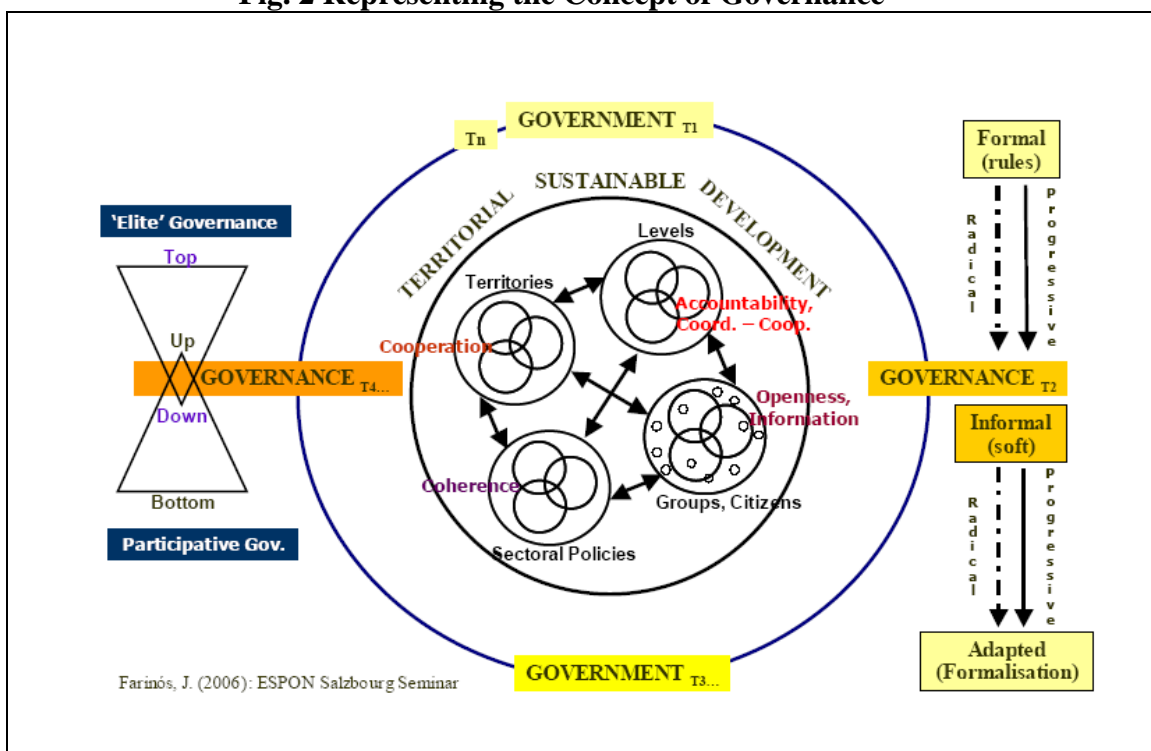
Governance arrangements and the ensuing actions will invariably vary from one location to the next, but are often characterised by

- high levels of participation by local citizenry;
- a degree of flexibility in decision-making and resource allocation processes;
- the capacity to respond to local needs and opportunities;
- the embodiment of top-down and bottom-up approaches to development.

As the following diagrammatic presentation of governance concepts illustrates, governance structures occupy a space between elected or representative government and participative government, where participative government refers to citizens collectively organizing and undertaking specific projects and/or initiatives. Thus, governance involves combining elements of the top-down and bottom-up, and it provides a forum where representatives of both can come together to promote agreed strategies, based on formal or prescribed rules that generally emanate from the top down (as determined by the policy and institutional contexts) and informal or more flexible bottom-up approaches that allow for variations within and between locales to be taken into account.

One of the more significant challenges for governance structures is the attainment of information-sharing and subsequent collaboration between agents, particularly those in the public sector, who as a consequence of experiencing the transition from government to governance, find themselves interfacing horizontally with and referring more to locally-based coalitions or partnerships rather than relating vertically to government bureaucracy. Governance structures are also challenged to ensure co-ordination between sectors, so that agencies operate as partners, pool resources and contribute to the attainment of territorial competitiveness.

**Fig. 2 Representing the Concept of Governance**



Source: ESPON, 2006

The progression from top-down, sectoral approaches to development towards area-based, partnership and multi-sectoral approaches has accentuated the need for greater inter-agency linkages and co-operation. As Westholm puts it,

*“All systems must be open for co-operation, for negotiation, and for the discussion of a wide range of approaches for the resolution of problems... Political and economic changes make it necessary for organisations to continually reconsider their work and their mission, and to adapt to external changes. In order to sustain their importance they may have to redistribute tasks and missions amongst other organisations”* (1999: 23-24).

Davoudi (2005) argues that the shift from government to governance has expanded the policy-making space, broadened the range of actors involved in decision-making and has diffused the locus of power downwards. This has led to complex webs of relationships, institutional fragmentation, disparities of powers and responsibilities, and an increasing role for market forces in shaping development. As this case study shows, all of these elements associated with emerging governance structures are strongly present in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown. As the organogram elaborated in section five of the case study shows, the relationships between new and emerging organisations are intricate and may appear overly-complex. Thus, while there is a need to enable organisations to communicate and collaborate more effectively with one another, the complexity currently experienced in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown is not unique. The challenges that arise in the county relate to the creation of coherent and consistent approaches to inter-agency and inter-organisational information-sharing, alignment, collaboration and collective action, which promote the sustainable development and competitiveness of the entire county.

Governance arrangements imply a genuine effort to include the citizenry in decision-making on an on-going basis, and as the case study insights from Dún Laoghaire - Rathdown illustrate, a number of platforms have been created at the sub-regional level, which seek to enable citizens to feed into decision-making. The following images from the work of Renaissance artist Lorenzetti depict ‘bad governance’ and ‘good governance.’ The first, showing ‘bad governance’ emphasises hierarchy, anonymity and elitism, while the representation of ‘good governance’ emphasises a more participative and inclusive forum, which is open, and which gives prominence to citizens.



**Fig 3: Allegoria del Malgoverno**



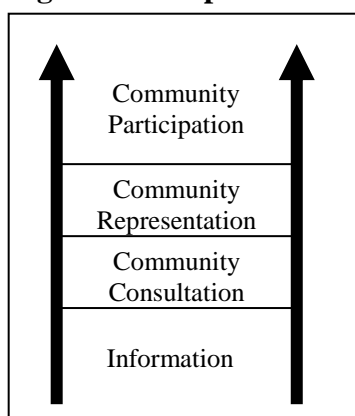
**Fig 4: Allegoria del Buongoverno**



Images courtesy of Prof Simin Davoudi, Leeds Metropolitan University.

The Irish Government White Paper on a Framework for supporting Voluntary Activity represents a positive policy statement of state support for collaborative local governance, and citizen participation. The White Paper represents an important policy framework, and its targets and indicators represent criteria against which community groups, partnerships, local government and the state sector can appraise progress and challenges. The White Paper and subsequent publications by the Task Force on Active Citizenship put citizen participation and participative democracy at the heart of good governance. The Ladder of Citizen Participation presented by the Community Workers' Co-Operative (1997), which is an adaptation of Arnstein's Ladder of Participation (1969), captures the distinctions between meaningful and tokenistic participation.

**Fig. 5: Participation Ladder**



*Information* is the most basic level of interaction with communities. It is essentially a one-way process, where the agency informs the citizens of its actions, intentions or policies. The level of citizen engagement is low.

*Community Consultation* involves seeking feedback from a community on an action or proposal. The agency retains the power to either accept or reject the views of the citizens. In these instances, marginalized or socially-excluded groups are less likely to participate.

*Community Representation* gives local communities a more formal input into decision-making through membership of structures such as community fora, working groups or management committees. However, the ability of the community sector to participate may be limited due to inequalities in the skills, resources, knowledge and power relationships between the community representatives and the other members of the partnership. There may also be inequalities within the community sector itself, with more articulate and resourced individuals / groups claiming to represent the entire sector.

*Community Participation* is the most desirable level of citizen engagement. It assumes that all partners are equal, and have equal responsibility around decision-making. Communities are continuously engaged in all stages of the development process. Participation structures are constantly refined and improved so as to maximise involvement, and to support participation by disadvantaged groupings and individuals.

## **2. Key Research Questions**

The overview of governance presented here recognises that the concept of participative democracy is relatively new in the Irish context. Thus, there has been a need to establish new structures that allow citizens to come together to address common concerns and to implement projects that promote economic, social and cultural development and environmental sustainability. Governance brings complexities to policy making, public service delivery and local development. It behoves the state sector and local government to share information and pursue initiatives on an inter-agency and multi-sectoral basis, where the territorial is emphasised.

Governance processes require community leaders, local government, local development and state sector representatives to work collaboratively through partnership structures. Local development has a key role to play in co-ordinating the efforts of exogenous and endogenous agencies in promoting territorial cohesion and global competitiveness. The realisation of these, challenges partnerships to position themselves to deliver local services in a way, which optimises flexibility and responsiveness to local conditions, while simultaneously piloting new initiatives and co-ordinating the efforts of mainstream agencies and the productive sector. Local government is challenged to consult with citizens, not just through enhancing the role of elected councillors, but also by engaging with citizens via sectoral and territorial platforms, that are linked to council structures, and which have a real and tangible input into the affairs of local government. Citizens and voluntary groups are expected to respond to the opportunities for engagement in decision-making that have emerged. They are required to develop the skills and capacity to enter into the policy-making domain, and to overcome the challenges associated with bureaucracy and specialisations, while maintaining a focus on social inclusion.

Over the past fifteen years, government (central and local), state agencies, the local development sector and community and voluntary organisations have been individually and collectively involved in the promotion of new approaches to governance in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown. The key research questions for this case study on governance, centre on appraising the structures and processes that have emerged, and suggesting how they may be reformed and optimised, so as to reflect the principles of good governance. Thus, this case study considers:

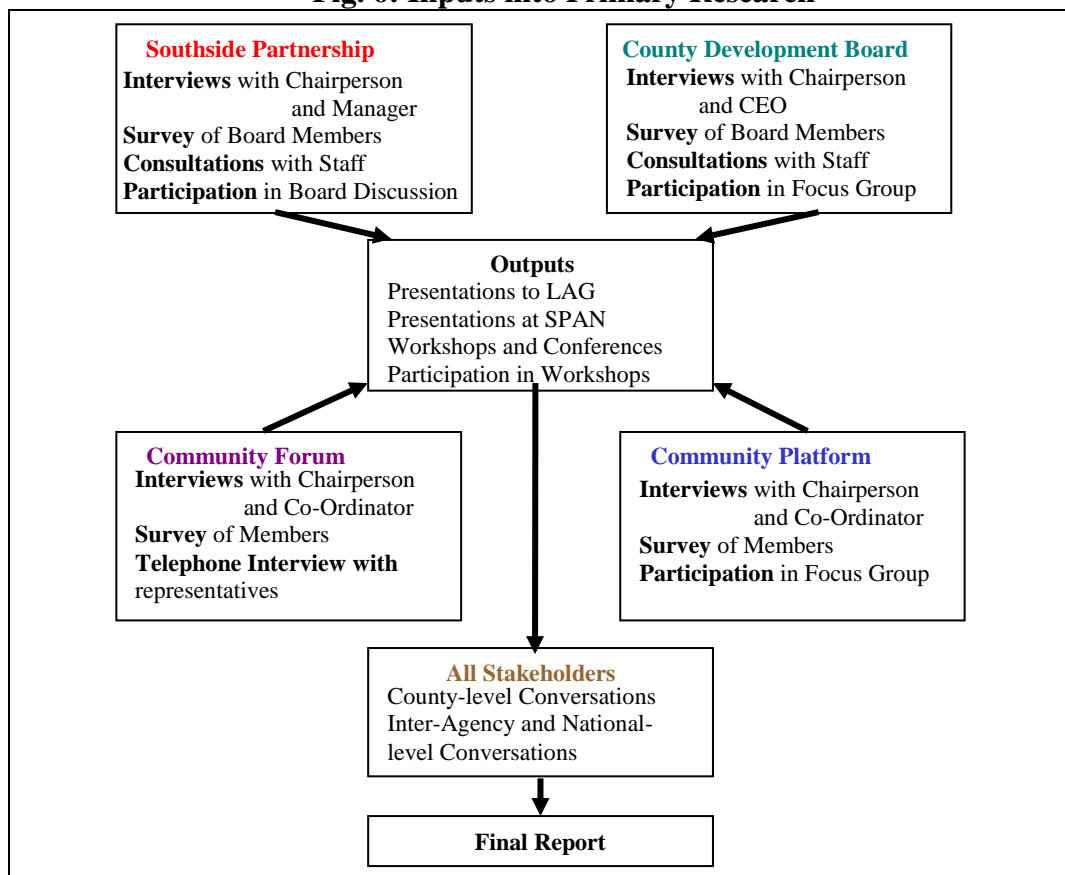
- The challenges of promoting good governance in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown;
- The main structures involved in governance processes (Southside Partnership, The Community Forum, The Community Platform and The County Development Board), and the roles they play in decision-making and in fostering participative democracy;
- The interfaces between agencies;
- Evidence of inter-agency collaboration;
- The main achievements and obstacles in terms of promoting good governance.

The case study concludes by considering the lessons emerging from Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown, and it puts forward recommendations as to how these lessons might translate into policy and organisational development and reform.

### 3. Research Methodology

The fieldwork for this case study was undertaken during 2006 and the first quarter of 2007. Secondary research had identified the main governance agents in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown as the Southside Partnership, County Development Board, Community Forum and Community Platform. Thus, these four agencies were centrally involved in the research. Through their representatives on the SPAN Local Advisory Group, they were facilitated to input directly into the formulation of the research methodology, while not compromising the researcher's independence. As the following diagram illustrates, each of the four agents inputted directly into the case study, through a variety of data collection techniques.

**Fig. 6: Inputs into Primary Research**



Following the collection of primary data through four parallel strands, as presented above, the researcher shared the preliminary findings with the Local Advisory Group, whose members provided valuable feedback. In addition, the preliminary findings were presented at two specially convened 'conversations.' The first set of conversations was held in November 2006, and it involved organisations that are based within Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown. Participants were facilitated to comment on the research findings and to put forward suggestions for further work or exploration. They were also invited to question any of the main tenets of the research findings. A second set of 'conversations' was convened in January 2007. This involved national level agencies and government bodies. Again, the research findings were presented, and participants were invited to comment on them, and in particular on the implications for public policy. This case study was undertaken in conjunction with a case study on planning in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown, and the researcher worked throughout in close collaboration with those involved in the planning case study.



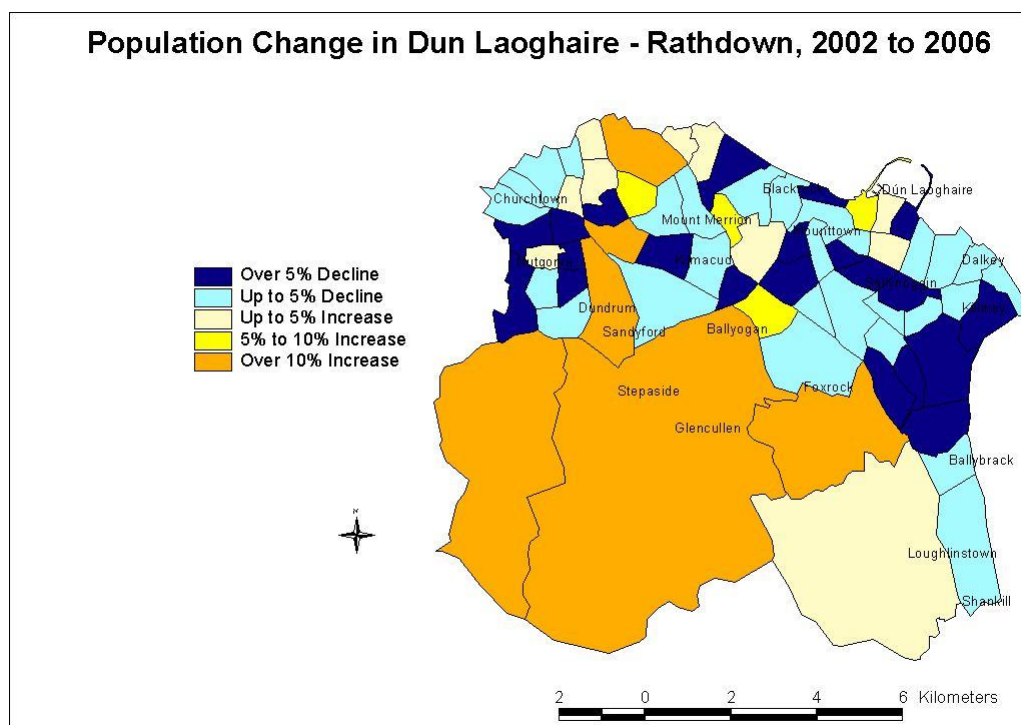
#### 4. Case Study Context

##### i. County Context

Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown represents a challenging context in which to promote governance and participative democracy. As noted earlier, the county is a relatively new administrative unit, and it lacks a common identity in cultural terms. These factors can militate against inter-community collaboration, as most organisations tend to identify with Dublin, rather than with Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown. The county lacks a dominant urban centre, and while Dún Laoghaire is a long established town, with a rich maritime heritage, an international ferry terminal and connectivity to Dublin City, its position on the eastern fringe of the county, its ageing population and commercial competition from other nodes such as Blackrock and Dundrum / Sandyford delimit its role as a county-wide functional centre.

Demographic indicators provide insights into the challenges facing governance in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown. Returns from the most recent census of population, show that between 2002 and 2006 the county’s population increased by 1.0%, while that of the state increased by 8.1%. Maps produced as part of this case study research, identified pronounced spatial patterns in terms of population change in the county. As the map presented below shows, more established urban areas such as Sallynoggin, Killiney, Ballybrack, Mounttown and Monkstown have all experienced population decline in excess of 5% between 2002 and 2006. These areas are all experiencing an ageing of the population, and in most of them the proportion of persons aged 65 years and over exceeds 15%, while it exceeds 20% in parts of Dalkey and Killiney. This ageing of the population is being experienced in both affluent and deprived areas, and there is a need to encourage and enable older people to participate in decision-making and local development.

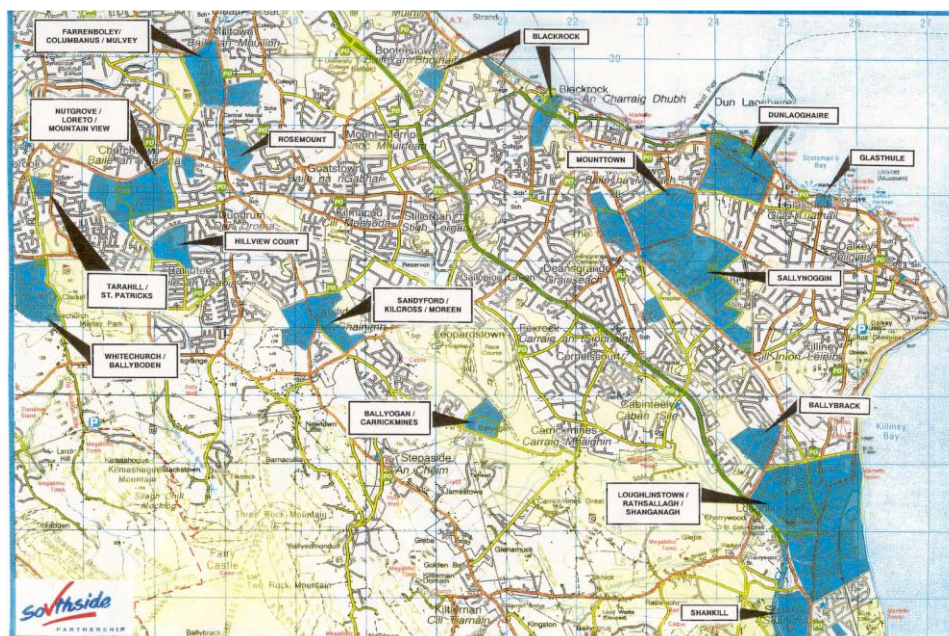
**Fig. 7: Population Change in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown, at ED-level (Electoral Division), 2002 – 2006.**



In contrast, areas in the south of the county, which were previously viewed as rural and peri-urban have been experiencing considerable population growth. These include Leopardstown, Stepside, Glencullen, Ballineer and Dundrum, with the latter experiencing a 10% population increase within four years. Population growth has been fuelled by in-migration from other parts of Ireland and from overseas. The south of the county is characterised by the presence of new communities, with many incomers having little affinity with their locality, and a limited knowledge of Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown, and / or the opportunities for citizen participation in decision-making. Thus, there is a strong need for information dissemination actions that target these communities, and inform citizens about local development issues.

Southside Partnership has consistently highlighted the presence in the county of areas of considerable poverty and disadvantage. Many are located beside areas of considerable affluence, such that the extent of deprivation in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown is often masked, even where ED-level (Electoral District) data sets are used. The neighbourhood effect (Haase and Pratschke, 2005) is an important determinant of affluence or deprivation in the county, and there is a need to continue to promote investment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Poverty-proofing of governance structures requires an on-going commitment to specific targeting of disadvantaged neighbourhoods / estates, so that citizens who live in such communities are equipped with the skills and capacity to articulate local needs and to implement appropriate and sustainable responses in partnership with agencies. The following map identifies the more deprived neighbourhoods in the county, as identified by Southside Partnership<sup>1</sup>.

**Fig. 8: Neighbourhoods with High Levels of Deprivation in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown.**



<sup>1</sup> The neighbourhoods of Whitechurch, Ballyboden and Tara Hill / St Patrick's in Rathfarnham are in South Dublin, and due to cohesion, they will not be part of Southside Partnership's catchment area post 2007.

## **ii. Institutional Context**

The shape, nature, remit and functioning of governance arrangements in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown are influenced and, are in many ways determined by national-level policies and institutional reforms, notably:

- The evolution of local development partnerships, the expansion of their functions, and their current re-positioning through the ‘cohesion’ process;
- Reforms of local government, and particularly the establishment of County Development Boards, charged with formulating and overseeing a 10-20 year inter-agency development strategy at county level;
- The growing capacity of the community and voluntary sector to promote development initiatives, coupled with the challenge of fostering volunteerism and community development; and
- Increased institutional interfacing between local government and local development.

Through the Local Development Programme (1995-1999), the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (2000-2006), and through brokering resources, Ireland’s Area Partnerships have been hugely successful in promoting community development and in enabling citizens, especially those in disadvantaged areas to collectively promote sustainable development. They have supported, led and facilitated the formation of community associations and networks, and have provided individuals and groups with the skills to initiate, lead and co-ordinate economic, social, cultural and environmental projects. Community Development actions and initiatives have brought community volunteers into increased contact with the state sector. Community groups deal with the state sector in the provision of local services and the delivery of projects. They interface with one another through their participation on the boards and sub-committees of Partnerships, including Southside Partnership. Thus, Southside Partnership is an enabler of citizen participation and community governance on many fronts.

In 2005 the Irish Government decided that post-2007 Area Partnerships would be responsible for a single suite of integrated local development programmes, including the successor to the LDSIP (Local Development Social Inclusion Programme) and LEADER (in rural areas), thereby reducing the number of local partnerships in the state. This ‘cohesion’ process also involves aligning the geographical boundaries of most Partnerships with those of local authorities. For Southside Partnership this has meant that it transfers to another Partnership those communities in South Dublin, which were in its catchment area. As Southside Partnership already operated several programmes and initiatives in an integrated manner, it already satisfied the main cohesion criteria, stipulated by the Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. However, the stalling of the cohesion process nationally during 2007, and its protracted nature up to then, have detracted Partnerships to some extent from actively promoting local governance, while the experience of the cohesion process in some counties has induced tensions in the relations between local government and local development.

County Development Boards were established in 2000, as part of the reform process ‘Better Local Government’ (Department of The Environment, 1996). The Boards represent a significant development in terms of the promotion of governance and participative democracy. Together with Strategic Policy Committees in each local authority area, they provide a platform through which state bodies, community and

voluntary representatives, local development partnerships and the social partners come together with local government – elected members and executives to agree and promote joint actions and strategic initiatives at county-level. The CDB is specifically charged with co-ordinating the inputs of all actors into the long-term and sustainable development of the county. In terms of the promotion of governance, the strengths of the CDB lie in that it expands the range of actors involved in decision-making at county-level; it involves non-governmental actors in a range of functions previously assumed by the state; it enables the emergence of new forms of bilateral and multi-agency linkages and co-operation; and it has the capacity to bring coherence and integration to a situation, which would otherwise be fragmented.

The Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown County Development Board has formulated a very comprehensive ‘Integrated Strategy for Social, Economic and Cultural Development’ (2002-2012) for the county. The process through which this strategy was formulated represents best practice in local governance, as the Board undertook very detailed and extensive consultations with several stakeholders at community, county, regional and agency levels. Members of the Board and local government representatives were facilitated, through a series of meetings, workshops and seminars to input into the strategy. The Board has facilitated the implementation of the strategy by sub-dividing it into a series of 2-3 year implementation plans, each with agreed targets and indicators. Implementation Committees have been established, with specific responsibility for advancing ‘cultural development,’ ‘economic development’ and ‘social development,’ and each committee has been assigned an area of strategic focus. Thus, in formulating its strategy, and in establishing processes for multi-agency implementation, review, monitoring and citizen consultation, the CDB is providing a valuable level of co-ordination in the governance of Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown.

In addition, to its co-ordination role, the CDB has been active in promoting citizen participation in decision-making and in local development. It has established a broadly-based Community Forum, to which over 200 community and voluntary groups are affiliated. The Forum, which is one of the largest in the state, provides a mechanism through which local government interfaces with citizens, and through which citizens can input into the work of the local authority. Thus, it represents a significant part of the governance infrastructure in the county.

In recent years, public policy in Ireland has given increased recognition to the role of volunteers and voluntary organisations in promoting economic and social development. Speaking at the launch of the Task Force on Active Citizenship the Taoiseach stated, “I believe the quality of life in society and the ultimate health of our communities depends on the willingness of people to become involved and active” (14<sup>th</sup> April 2005). These sentiments are also expressed in the Government White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity, which reflects principles of good governance, by advocating partnership approaches, and parity of esteem between statutory and community representatives in decision-making and in the implementation of development initiatives. Census 2006 provides the first official, national enumeration of level of volunteerism, and its returns show that in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown 18.7% of adults participate in at least one voluntary organisation, compared with 14.1% in Dublin City and 15.6% in Leinster.



Many community volunteers welcome the state's increased commitment to fostering volunteerism, and they laud initiatives such as the Dormant Account Programme and Community Services Programme, operated through Pobal, which provide communities with resources to undertake development projects and provide local services. However, other volunteers worry that the increased responsibility, which the state is conferring on community groups is putting undue pressure on volunteers. Community leaders are under increased time pressure and are often obliged to sit on a number of networks, including CDB-established Community Fora, County Childcare Committees, Sports' Partnerships (in some counties), RAPID Area Implementation Teams and Drugs' Task Forces among others. Consequently, they have less time to devote to their own local communities. Thus, while there have been some positive moves towards promoting volunteerism and citizen participation in development initiatives, the complexities that have emerged represent serious challenges for community groups and for the sustainability of local governance. These are very real and pressing issues in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, and there is an onus on all agencies to promote volunteerism and to provide support for volunteers. Unless collective action is taken, volunteers will experience increased burnout, and will become disengaged from participative democracy.

Independent international evaluations of area partnerships in Ireland (OECD, 1996 and 2000) provide very positive assessments of partnerships' contributions to economic and social development. Partnerships are credited with having introduced innovations in economic development, enterprise creation, preventative education and local governance. Area partnerships have encouraged and facilitated local authorities to engage in community and enterprise projects, thereby increasing the level of interfacing between local government and local development. Partnerships and local authorities have worked collaboratively to address social inclusion issues, such as housing, estate management and local service provision. Local government representatives have for several years, held positions on the boards and sub-committees of area partnerships. The establishment of SPCs (Strategic Policy Committees) and CDBs has allowed for reciprocal arrangements, with partnership representatives now sitting on local authority fora.

This increased interfacing between local government and local development, as part of the emerging governance process is clearly evident in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown. Local development and community sector representatives have been among the most proactive contributors to the County Development Board and its sub-committees. The Partnership's chairperson has effectively chaired the CDB's Social Inclusions Measures (SIM) Working Group, and has skilfully brought agencies together to address issues of social deprivation. Southside Partnership has had its annual work programmes endorsed by the CDB, and has assisted the CDB in undertaking a study on 'vulnerable groups' in the county. This study in turn, allowed the Partnership to continue to put social inclusion issues on the agenda of state agencies and local government. While increased interfacing has allowed local government and local development to advance their respective agenda, and to discover common ground, perceptions have arisen that there is overlap between both organisations in terms of their role in co-ordinating the development inputs of other agencies.

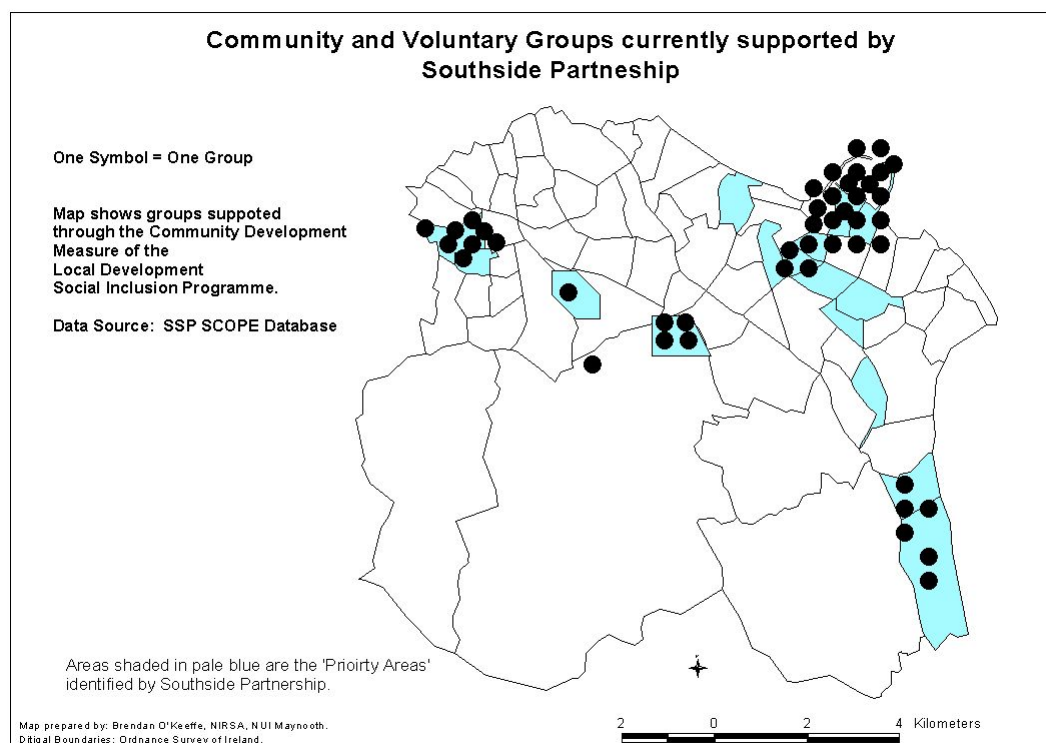
## 5. Governance in Practice in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown

### i. Promoting Citizen Participation

Prior to the establishment of Southside Partnership in the mid 1990s, there was very little governance activity in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown. Community and voluntary associations tended to operate within their own neighbourhoods, and citizens in more deprived neighbourhoods had few opportunities for collective / community action. Some neighbourhood associations had emerged during the 1980s and early 1990s to advocate and lobby for improved housing conditions, and there were also a number of community-led initiatives aimed at tackling substance abuse and crime. There was little connectivity between community groups, and interfacing with the state sector was generally limited to occasional meetings with officials. The advent of Community Development Programmes and Family Resource Centres enabled particular ‘target groups’ in deprived communities to become more involved in community development. The establishment of the Partnership consolidated these endogenous efforts, and greatly facilitated inter-project networking and co-operation.

Today, the community and voluntary sector in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown is much more vibrant and active. As the following map shows, Southside Partnership is involved in the direct provision of supports – technical, financial and developmental, to several groups, particularly those in disadvantaged areas.

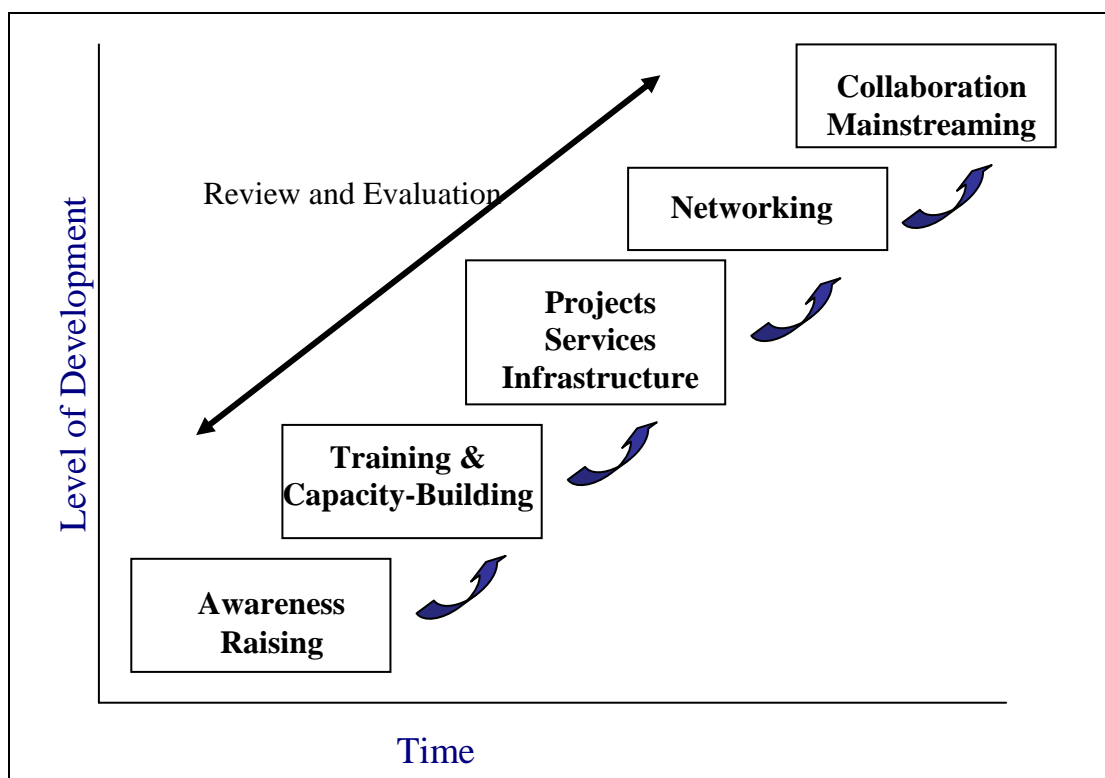
**Fig. 8: Southside Partnership – Supporting Governance from the Bottom-Up**



The Partnership is the leading animator of endogenous development in the county. It generates social capital at community level, and provides community associations with the skills and capacity to generate development and to enter into governance arrangements, whereby state bodies engage in local development, and respond to the needs articulated at local level.

The following diagram, seeks to represent the strategic approach pursued by Southside Partnership in enabling the development of social capital.

**Fig. 9: Southside Partnership’s Development Approach to Social Capital**



As the diagram shows, Southside Partnership initiates awareness-raising and information dissemination actions at community level. Its directors, committee members and staff provide volunteers and communities with information on development opportunities. They work at local level to identify needs and potential. The second step in the development process, as represented in the diagram, involves the delivery of formal and non-formal training to volunteers and community leaders. This training, together with the technical back-up provided by the partnership enables communities to develop local projects, provide community services and improve local infrastructure. In so-doing communities interface with and collaborate with the state sector, and in this regard, the Partnership plays a role in facilitating contacts, brokering resources and monitoring developments. Project implementation serves to animate citizen participation, as citizens see the fruits of endogenous development, and they become more motivated to participate in organisations. The Partnership also facilitates inter-community networking, the sharing of experiences and the transfer of knowledge between communities. The Partnership’s board and sub-committees further advance inter-community networking and provide a vehicle through which the community groups can address structural, institutional and policy issues. Thus, while Southside Partnership’s main focus is on areas of deprivation, its contribution to governance extends much wider, as it involves actors from across the county and beyond.

The final step in the diagram (above) relates to mainstreaming. Mainstreaming represents a strategic approach on the part of partnership organisations that seeks to bring about the durability and sustainability of actions, which it has piloted. It represents an approach to brokerage that seeks to ensure a permanent distribution of

resources and systems of collaboration and administration, so that these are brought to reflect and embrace principles of collaborative governance. The attainment of mainstreaming has proven to be a significant challenge for the local development sector, as there has been a tendency with some partnerships and agencies in other counties to allow successful initiatives to be subsumed by traditional exogenous agents or statutory bodies, rather than furthered through new governance and partnership arrangements. In order to prevent initiatives from being subsumed, rather than mainstreamed, it is necessary that central government adequately resource partnerships, so that collaborative arrangements and stakeholder participation, benefit from the back-up of access to technical support and organisational connectivity.

Developing social capital and encouraging agencies to share resources and transfer powers and responsibilities to citizens and local associations require that Southside Partnership continue to preserve its institutional autonomy. The Partnership must continue to be independent of local government and the statutory sector, so that it can articulate on behalf of communities and retain its endogenous focus and composition.

In Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown, several state agencies have demonstrated a high degree of buy-in to governance. They have supported and co-funded projects in collaboration with Southside Partnership and with community groups. While most agencies have progressively engaged in collaborative ventures, and have come to share power in partnership arrangements, some are more proactive than others. Consultations with agencies suggest that the role played by lead government departments shapes and influences the responses of agencies at local level. The current variations among agencies in responding to governance dynamics, suggests the need for agencies to be given greater exogenous direction, competencies and resources, in the interest of promoting their participation in collaborative governance. Until the promotion of governance becomes more explicit in state policy, and until funding allocations to agencies are linked to their demonstrated participation in collaborative governance, Southside Partnership is likely to continue to face challenges in promoting horizontal linkages, and will be required to constantly innovate in creating space for itself as an enabler of linkages between the bottom-up and top-down. As Edwards et al observe,

*“Partnerships have disrupted the relatively simple traditional division of labour between a uniform system of elected local councils and non-elected development agencies, and the attendant culture of ‘working in partnership’ has forced changes in attitude and working practice within both sets of institutions, as well as in other sectors... The distinctive contribution of partnerships to the advanced liberal form of government in general... lies in part with their uneven geography, and their power to disrupt and transgress existing scalar and spatial patterns”* (2001: 306-7).

Drawing on extensive reviews of partnership between community / voluntary groups and the state, especially in the health sector, O’Ferrall (2000) argues that while there is a compelling onus on the state to support and develop the voluntary sector, the latter needs to be wary of arrangements that compromise its principles, and limit its contribution to development. He identifies contrasting types of partnership arrangements with the state. On the one hand, there are ‘dependent

partnership’ arrangements. In such cases, various elements from within the voluntary sector compete with each other to secure state-controlled resources. The resultant contractual arrangements tend to emphasise cost reduction over quality service, erode trust, and compromise the advocacy and lobbying role of the community sector. On the other hand, O’Ferrall identifies what he terms ‘active partnerships.’ These he defines as arrangements, which are built “through ongoing processes of negotiation, debate, occasional conflict and learning through trial and error. Risks are taken, and although roles and purposes are clear, they may change according to need and circumstance” (2000: 71). The following table summarises the contrasting features of dependent and active partnerships.

**Table 2: Contrasting features of Active and Dependent Partnerships**

<b>Active Partnerships</b>	<b>Dependent Partnerships</b>
Process oriented	Blueprint, fixed term
Negotiated, changing roles	Rigid roles based on static assumption about comparative advantage
Clear purposes, roles and linkages but an openness to change as appropriate	Unclear purposes, roles and linkages
Shared risks	Individual interests
Debate and dissent	Consensus
Learning and information exchange	Poor communication flows
Activity-based origins –emerging from practice	Resource-based origins – primarily to gain access to funds.

Source: O’Ferrall, 2000: 72

Southside Partnership exhibits the characteristics of an active partnership. It has a clear endogenous focus, and it has developed valuable linkages with other partnerships and with the state sector.

In several European countries partnerships have emerged as the leading platforms of participative democracy and citizen engagement in local decision-making (Schmitter, 2004). This has had positive implications for representative democracy, but has also challenged the state to enter into new power-sharing and resource-allocation arrangements. In Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown, Southside Partnership has facilitated the emergence, development and strengthening of a Community Platform. The Platform is a body of 24 groups, with a strong commitment to tackling poverty and social exclusion. It brings groups together to share information. It facilitates groups in lobbying and advocating for equality, social change and improvements in community services and facilities. Those involved in the Platform are at the coalface of economic and social disadvantage, and they have first hand knowledge and experience of conditions and challenges in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Many of the projects they operate are reliant on short-term funding, and members’ energies are frequently devoted to fundraising, preparing submissions and lobbying. Therefore, the Platform has faced challenges in maintaining members’ commitment to networking and joint-actions.

The Platform is an important element in the governance infrastructure of Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown. It ensures a focus on social inclusion, and it provides a conduit through which disadvantaged communities and sectors of society can actively engage in local development and can influence and shape the decisions that affect them. Thus, it gives effect to the principles of equality-proofing and poverty-proofing.

The Platform has developed linkages with a number of bodies. It is contributing to the downward diffusion of power and the creation of new policy-making spaces. The Community Platform has linkages with the Local Drugs' Task Force and the RAPID<sup>2</sup> Implementation Team. In addition, it is directly represented on the Board of Southside Partnership, and its members also sit on Partnership sub-committees, representing the interests of travellers, the unemployed, migrants and people with disabilities. These representatives work to ensure that the Partnership continues to respond to the needs of specific groups and communities. Moreover, by working together, they can report back collectively and individually to the groups that are affiliated to the Platform. Thus, the Platform enables a two-way flow of information, which is essential for good governance.

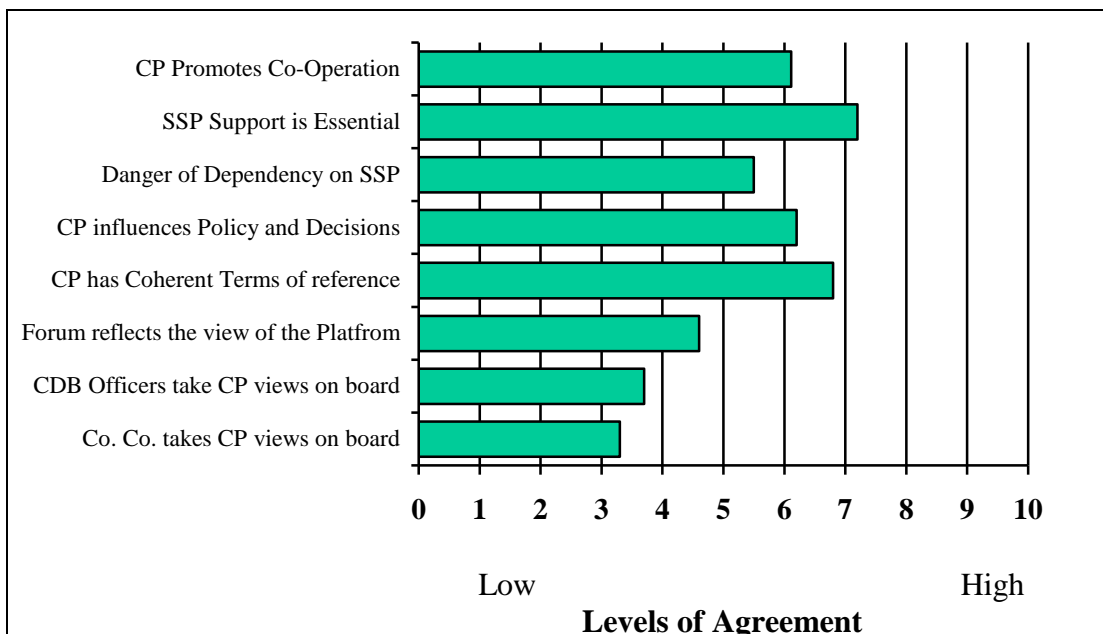
One of the more innovative aspects of local governance in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown relates to the way in which the Platform engages with the County Development Board. Like its equivalents in other counties and cities, Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown County Development Board has established a Community Forum. The Forum acts as a network of community and voluntary groups across the county, and it elects two representatives to the CDB. In most Irish counties, each group/ association, belonging to a Community Forum has one vote when it comes to electing the forum's nominees to the CDB. However, in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown, the CDB has weighted the selection procedure, so as to give additional voting strength to the Platform, thereby ensuring that disadvantaged communities are more likely to be represented on the CDB. This is an important and positive arrangement, as it seeks to redress the under-representation of such communities in traditional parliamentary and local government elections. As well as having a representative on the CDB (via the Community Forum), the Platform is represented on bodies that come under the aegis of the CDB, such as the County Childcare Committee, Social Inclusion Measures Committee and Social Economy Working Group.

The following graph presents results from survey work among Community Platform members. The survey asked the members to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements relating to the Platform's operation, and its participation in collaborative governance. High levels of agreement are indicated by high scores on the graph. As the graph shows, members are generally in agreement that the support and back-up provided by Southside Partnership are essential in ensuring that the Platform operates effectively. There is some concern, however, that the Platform may become too dependent on the Partnership. This is unlikely, as consultations with the Partnership, and a review of its track-record in development, show a commitment to group empowerment. Members of the Platform are generally satisfied that they have collectively formulated a coherent terms of reference, and that they have been successful in influencing policy and decision-making in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown and nationally.

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<sup>2</sup> RAPID: Revitalising Areas through Planning Investment and Development - an area-based, inter-agency initiative focusing on Loughlinstown and Shanganagh.

**Fig. 10: Perceptions of the Community Platform Members in respect of their role in Collaborative Governance<sup>3</sup>.**



The survey results show that Platform members are less satisfied with its interfacing with the Community Forum and with local government. Discussions with Platform members reveal a perception that the Council’s approaches to housing, estate management and the provision of local services do not reflect the joined-up thinking and inter-agency collaboration associated with good governance. Thus, there emerges a need for some reform of local government approaches to these issues, and in particular the way in which local communities are informed about proposals, and are consulted on area developments.

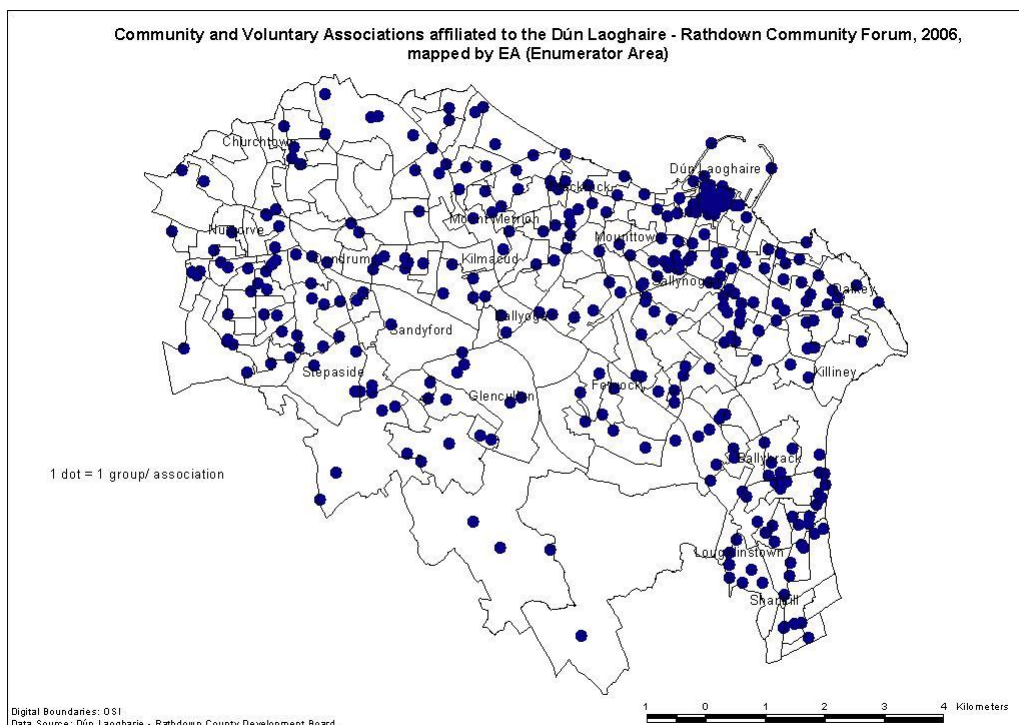
The future development of good governance in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown requires that the Platform continue to play a prominent role in decision-making fora. The Platform ensures a focus on poverty- and equality-proofing, and its members effectively articulate social exclusion issues, which might not otherwise receive due attention from mainstream bodies. The Platform’s own dynamism and coherence are contingent on continuity of funding arrangements, maintaining formal linkages with Southside Partnership, securing adequate administrative back-up and the support, guidance and facilitation of a dedicated development officer, with empathy for social inclusion and a commitment to organisational leadership and development.

The Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown Community Forum represents a relatively new governance interface between citizens and local government. As the following map shows, the Forum brings together a large number of community and voluntary groups throughout the county. The map shows high numbers of groups affiliated to the Forum in Dún Laoghaire, Mounttown, Shanganagh, Nutgrove, Churchtown and Sallynoggin. It suggests that the Forum is well represented in working class areas. Regression analysis of the spatial distribution of Forum affiliations shows a positive correlation ( $R=0.3$ , sig.  $<.05$ ) between ‘the number of groups affiliated to the Forum’ and ‘Persons in Social Classes 4, 5 and 6’ at EA-level

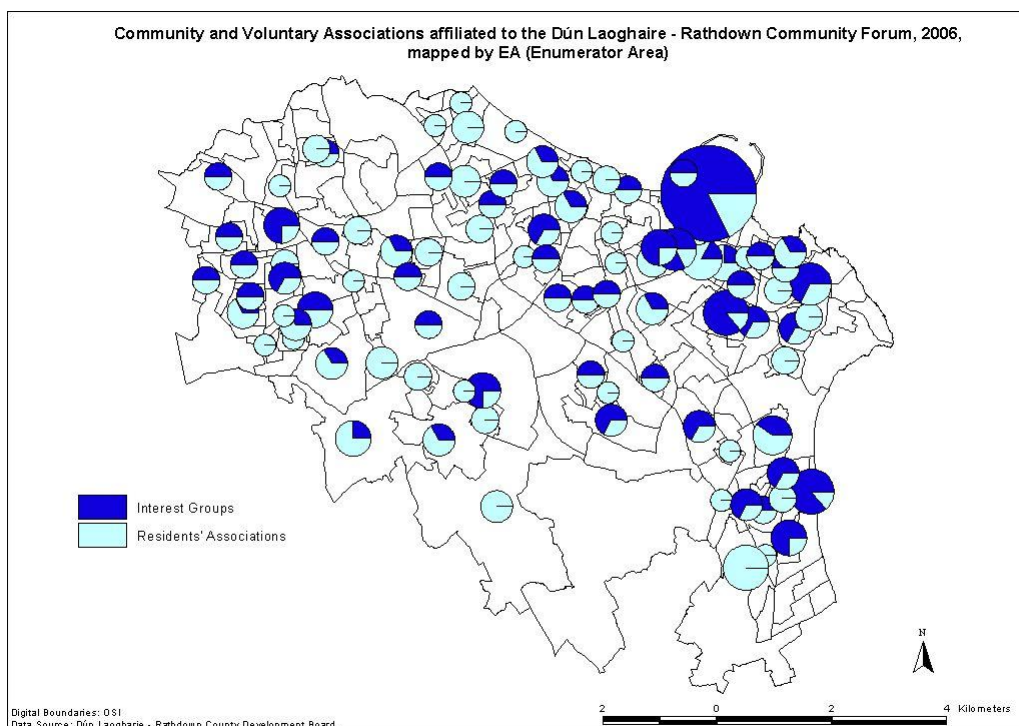
<sup>3</sup> CP = Community Platform. SSP = Southside Partnership.



**Fig. 11: Spatial Distribution of Groups affiliated to the Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown Community Forum, shown at EA-level (Enumerator Areas)**



**Fig. 12: Groups affiliated to the Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown Community Forum, classified as ‘residential’ (area based) or ‘interest’ groups, shown at EA-level (Enumerator Areas)**

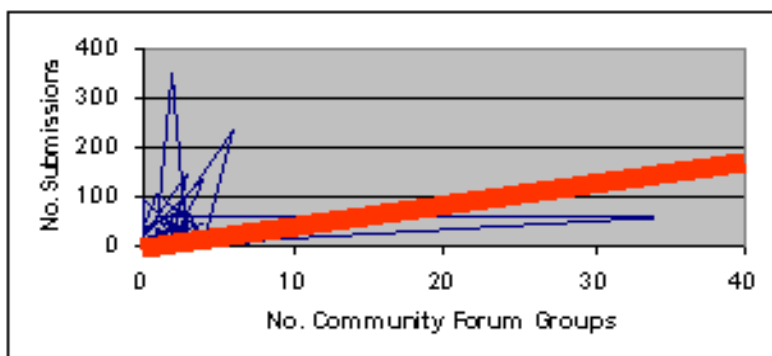




Since its inception, the Forum has been active in promoting inter-group and inter-community networking. Through its newsletter, information seminars, public meetings, workshops and publicity actions, it has raised public awareness of the County Development Board, and has sensitised citizens in respect of development issues, challenges and opportunities. The Community Forum has provided a vehicle through which communities can articulate ideas, concerns, views and difficulties to the Board, and by extension to the local authority and state bodies. As the previous map has shown, a large proportion of the groups affiliated to the Forum are issue-based, and they include groups concerned with environmental conservation, youth development, community education, equality for people with disabilities, women’s issues, heritage and the arts. The presence of groups with a thematic focus ensures that neither localised issues nor the perceptions of a particular neighbourhood / area dominate the Forum’s agenda. Successive chairs of the Forum, and its sub-committees have demonstrated considerable skill and leadership in ensuring that the Forum has not become sidetracked, despite potential pressures from groups or individuals, who disagree with the policies of Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown County Council. By the same token, affiliated groups report that while they value and appreciate the ways in which the CDB facilitates and supports the Forum, they are satisfied that it is not Council-led, and that it maintains a bottom-up approach.

The impact of the Forum in providing communities with a conduit through which they can interface with the local authority can be observed in respect of the formulation of the current County Development Plan. Forum meetings discussed the pending plan, and affiliated groups were encouraged to make submissions. As the following graph illustrates, there is a positive association between the number of groups affiliated to the Forum in each ED, and the number of submissions received by Dún Laoghaire County Council from that ED ( $R=0.28$ ).

**Fig. 13: Association between Number of Community Forum Groups and Number of Submissions to County Council in each Electoral Division.**

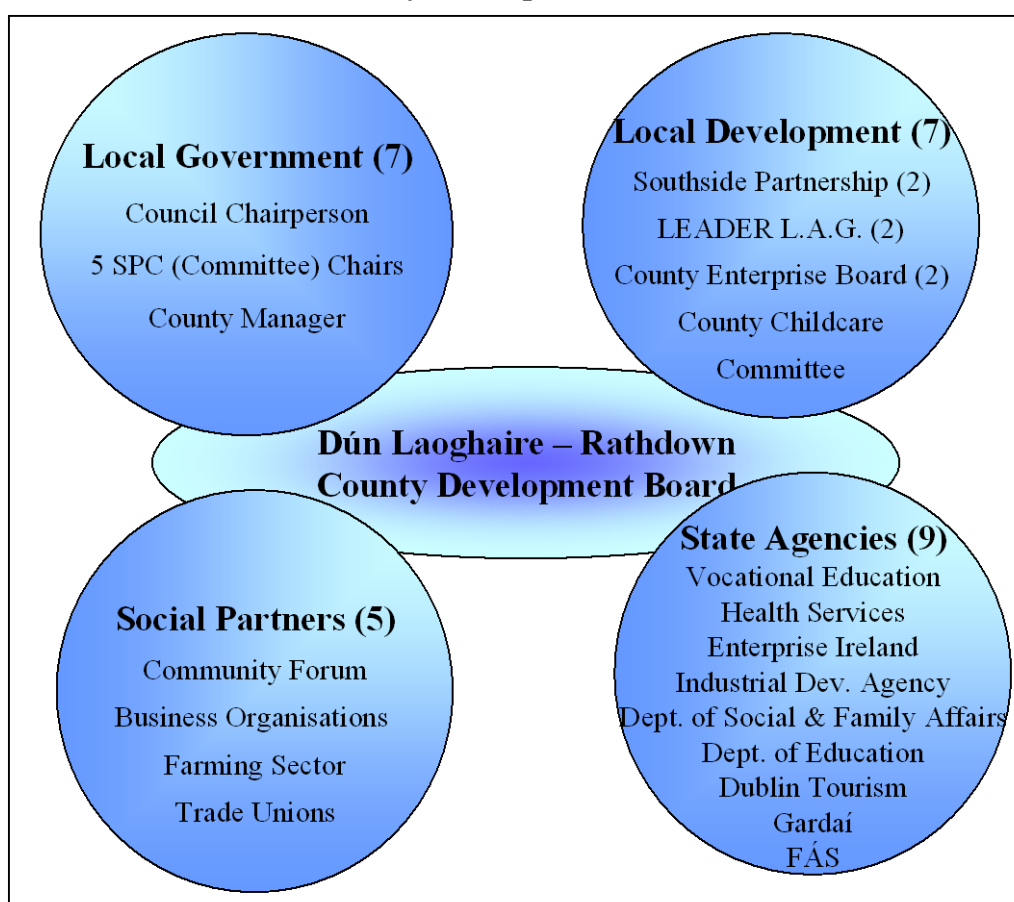


Much of the Forum’s success can be attributed to its Development Officer, and to the staff in the Department of Community and Enterprise (CDB), who have provided it with guidance, facilitation and administrative back-up. To date, the Development Officer has been employed on a part-time basis, while he works several additional hours each week in a voluntary capacity. This situation is not sustainable in the long-term, and the Forum should be resourced to employ a full-time officer.

Up to 2007, the Community Forum tended to view Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown as a single geographical entity, although it convened events at several locations throughout the county in order to facilitate citizen participation in its deliberations. As a result of participation in SPAN, the Forum has now begun organising itself in sub-county districts. It is hoped that this re-organisation of the Forum will facilitate more inter-community contacts and networking.

The following diagram (fig. 14) shows how the Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown County Development Board provides a decision-making space in which top-down and bottom-up agents come together, and through which horizontal and vertical linkages can be forged.

**Fig. 14: Membership of the Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown County Development Board.**



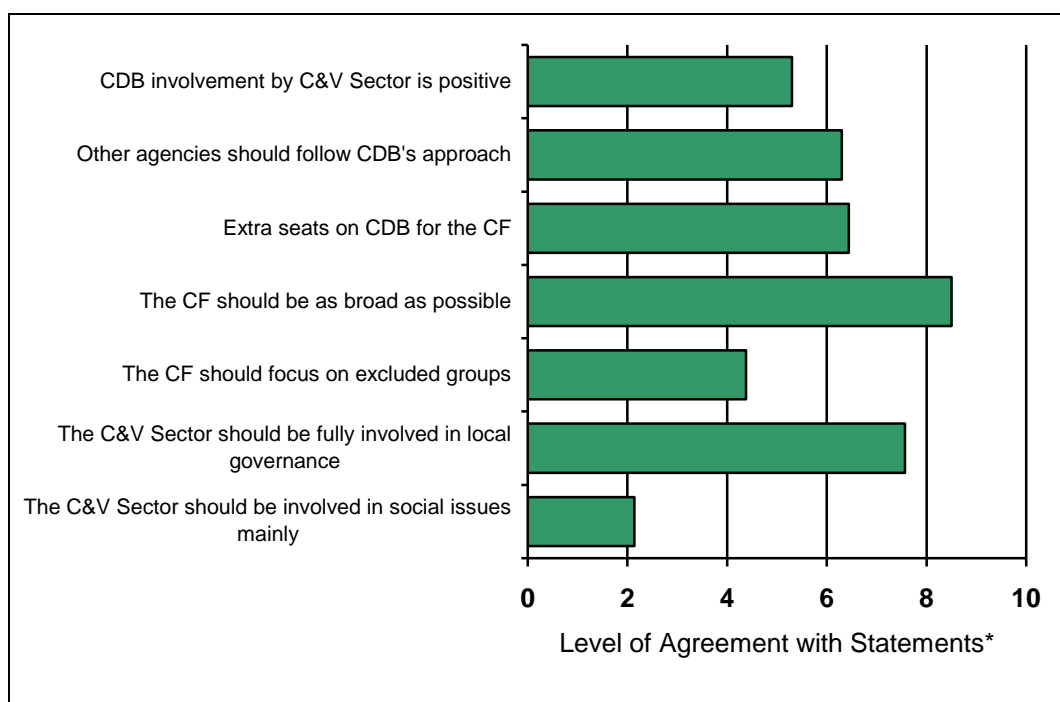
The establishment of the County Development Board represents the single most significant step in terms of bringing local authorities into the arena of multi-level governance. It ensures structured interaction between local government and other actors, including development agencies, community groups and the statutory sector. Moreover, by facilitating its membership to implement an agreed strategy, the County Development Board brings a degree of integration and coherence to complex governance arrangements. To date, the Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown County Development Board has succeeded in promoting bilateral and inter-agency collaborations in education, community services, rural development, access to services, housing, social inclusion, policing, tourism and heritage development.

Meetings of the Board tend to be structured and formalised, and they focus on monitoring the overall implementation of the ten-year strategy. Sub-committee meetings and periodic workshops, which are organised through the office of the Director of Community and Enterprise enable agencies to come together to promote joint-projects. This office has had to instigate the coming together of the relevant agencies for particular projects, and has had to be proactive in encouraging and cajoling agencies to share information with others, and to take part in projects. While all organisations are affiliated to the CDB, and all have contributed to its agreed strategy, the Board does not have any means to oblige an agency to follow through on its commitments, or to provide / share information. Members of the Board report that sub-committee meetings provide a more useful forum than do the main board meeting, for reporting progress and for providing feedback on various initiatives. They point out however, that many of their own (nominating) organisations lack a mechanism through which they can feedback on CDB issues, or garner information that may be relevant to the CDB.

The Board's relationship with the local development sector is somewhat different to its relationship with the state sector. Under a 2004 directive, jointly issued by The (government) Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, The Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, local development agencies are required to submit their annual work programmes to the CDB for endorsement. The CDB is required to ensure that the work programme contributes towards the attainment of the objectives set out in its county strategy. Where the Board perceives any variance, it may refuse to endorse the work of a Partnership. While this endorsement arrangement is in the spirit of co-ordination, and serves to ensure the effectiveness of local governance, the fact that it applies to the local development sector only, represents a gross inequality that undermines collaborative governance. Governance principles require parity of esteem between stakeholders. Moreover, the current arrangements for endorsement do not appear to recognise that most of the agencies around the CDB table have access to financial resources that are much larger than that of Southside Partnership, and that the co-ordination of their inputs is essential in order to create contextual and institutional conditions that are necessary to promote territorial competitiveness and sustainable development. Thus, the CDB ought to have a role in endorsing all plans on an equitable and transparent basis.

The following bar chart synthesises the views of CDB members in respect of a number of governance issues. The chart suggests that members of the Board are satisfied with current arrangements for promoting bottom-up participation in local governance. However, survey results, and subsequent discussions with members reveal a need for clarity in respect of top-down contributions to collaborative governance. While the Office of the Director of Community Enterprise and many CDB members have clear commitments to ensuring top-down buy in to collaborative governance, some Board members report that they are uncertain about the extent to which their parent department or central office actually supports power-sharing, collaborative decision-making and other aspects of collaborative governance. Thus, there is an onus on central government and on the senior management to encourage, incentivise and reward participation in collaborative governance at all levels. Until strong supportive signals are communicated and re-enforced from the top-down CDBs will be in a difficult position in respect of fully realising their co-ordinating role.

**Fig. 15: CDB Members' Perceptions of Governance Processes and Arrangements at Board Level<sup>4</sup>.**



As the graph illustrates, members of the CDB have a generally positive perception of the Community Forum. This perception holds through across all sectors, and it is significant, considering that, prior to the establishment of the CDB most state agencies would not have dealt with community groups in a structured, collaborative, multi-agency setting. The survey findings show majority support on the CDB for increasing Community Forum representation, while there is very strong backing for the view that the Forum ought to have a broad remit that extends beyond social inclusion issues.

The survey findings indicate that CDB members agree with the CDB's efforts to promote collaborative and multi-agency approaches. As the graph shows, the mean level of agreement (on a scale from zero to ten) with the statement that 'other agencies should follow the CDB's approach' was 6.3.

Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown County Development Board represents a highly innovative aspect of local governance, and a significant contribution to the attainment of collaborative governance at county level. In creating a new space for multi-agency and multi-sectoral decision-making, the Board is required to emphasise its autonomy, flexibility and capacity to emphasise the territorial over the sectoral. At the same time, the CDB is positioned within the ambit of local government, thereby giving it the potential to lever County Council support for a wide range of initiatives. Thus, the Board needs to continue to project its independence, while not diluting its influence within the local authority.

<sup>4</sup> \* Levels of Agreement: High levels of agreement with the statements on the left axis are indicated by high scores, where the maximum score = 10. Low levels of agreement are indicated by low scores. CF = Community Forum. C & V = Community and Voluntary.

**ii. Collaborative Governance Arrangements – Institutional Interfacing**

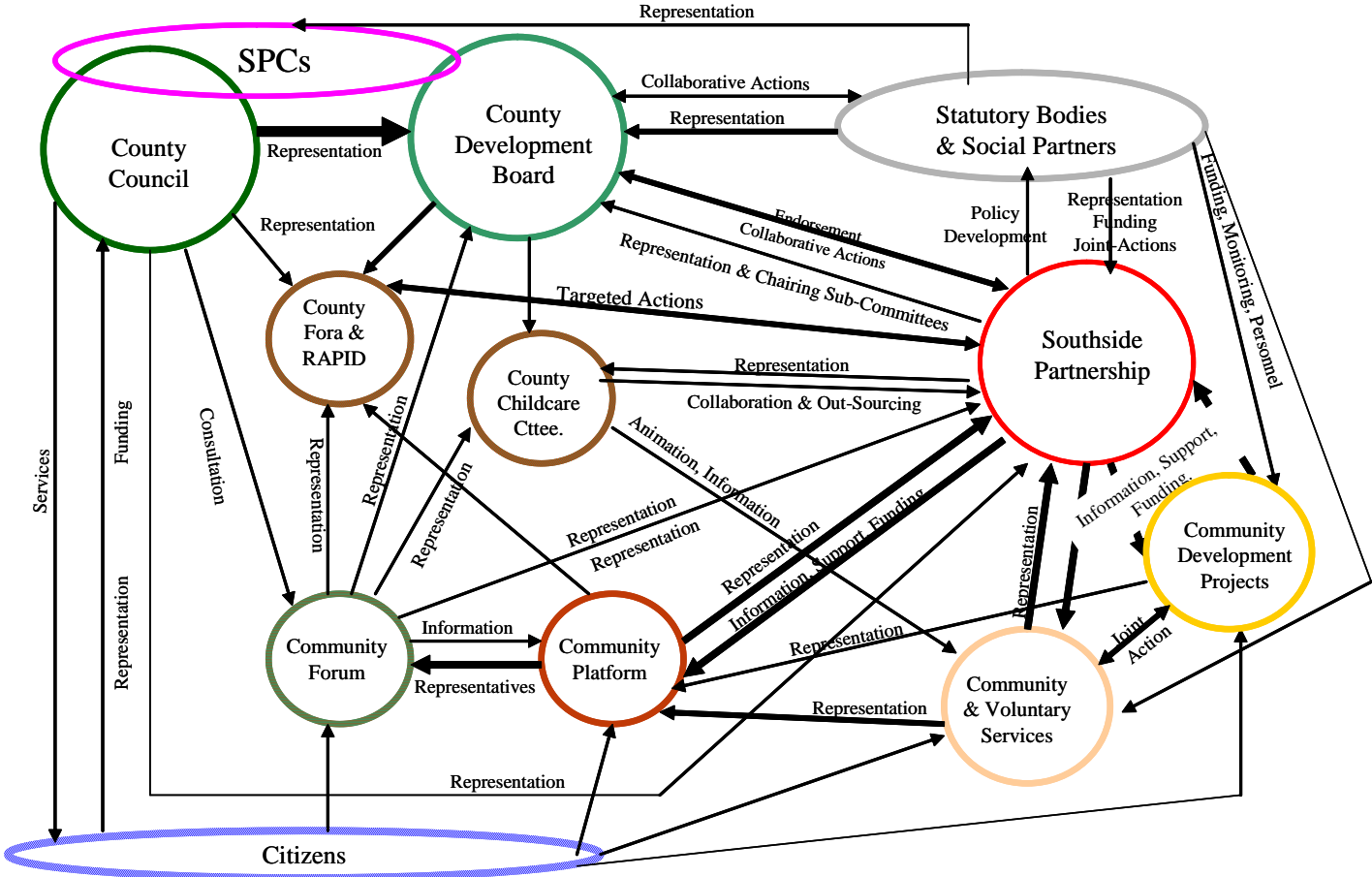
The following matrix presents the inter-agency linkages, reporting and feedback mechanisms that exist in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown. As the matrix shows, there is a high degree of complexity in current arrangements. While inter-agency representation is comprehensive, there are gaps in the feedback mechanisms, which organisations / agencies need to address in the interest of promoting good governance.

**Fig. 16: Inter-Institutional Linkages and Feedback Mechanisms among Governance Agents in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown.**

	Representative Fora/ Bodies									
	County Council	County Development Board	Southside Partnership	Strategic Policy Committees	Community Forum	Community Platform	County Childcare Committee	Drugs Task Force	RAPID AIT	Community Development Projects
<b>Nominating Bodies</b>										
County Council	x									
County Development Board		x								
Southside Partnership			x							
Strategic Policy Committees				x						
Community Forum					x					
Community Platform						x				
County Childcare Committee							x			
Drugs Task Force								x		
RAPID AIT									x	
Community Development Projects										x
<b>LEGEND</b>										
No representation / No feedback										
has representation and receives feedback										
Some elements have representation.										
has representation, but feedback mechanism needs attention										
exclusive categories	x									

The following diagram (overleaf) provides a visual summary / overview of governance interfaces and linkages in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown. It shows how citizens have access to ‘participative democracy structures,’ and it maps how spaces have been created to enable partnership approaches. Experiences to date suggest the need to maintain and broaden the conduits through which citizens can participate in decision-making on a continuous basis. The case study reveals support for current steps towards ensuring poverty- and equality-proofing of participatory approaches. These need to be enhanced and further resourced. Southside Partnership and the County Development Board both provide arenas for inter-agency collaboration and territorial approaches to development. Each plays a valuable role. The Partnership’s contributions are enhanced by its capacity to target and deliver local initiatives and stimulate innovations, while the CDB’s role is optimised by enabling it to further animate, incentivise and co-ordinate top-down inputs and inter-agency strategic spatial planning.

Fig. 17: Governance Organogram for Dún Laoghaire - Rathdown



## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Multi-level governance is emerging and evolving in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown. Opportunities for citizen participation in decision-making in the county have increased considerably over the past decade, and most agencies have responded positively to bottom-up inputs. A number of consultative and participative fora and structures have been convened, and these provide worthwhile vehicles through which citizens can engage in local democracy. Over the coming years, it will be necessary to invest in enabling these structures to continuously innovate, expand and reach out to all sections of the community.

The transition from government to governance has brought many complexities to decision-making and development in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown. These complexities are manifest in the extensive inter-agency interfacing that exists. While such interfacing is generally positive, as it contributes to inter-agency networking and collaboration, this case study has pointed up a need to ensure clearer communication channels between agencies, and mechanisms to ensure that those who represent an agency / organisation / interest group on another body have the means and ‘space’ to provide regular and comprehensive feedback. The democratic legitimacy of inter-agency fora needs to be underpinned by ensuring that representatives are mandated by ‘sending organisations’ and are informed and empowered by ‘receiving organisations.’

Vehicles for citizen participation in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown exist sectorally and geographically. Both forms (sectoral and area-based) are required in order to maximise endogenous participation. The growing ethnic and demographic diversity in the county requires that new structures be established to encourage and enable participation by those who remain under represented. The geographical scale of the county exceeds OECD and NESC recommendations on the optimum size for local development initiatives. Thus, the optimisation of territorial approaches requires degrees of spatial sub-division, particularly in respect of local development, inter-community networking and the delivery of local services.

Collaborative governance presents particular challenges for statutory agencies. Traditional systems of government, based on hierarchical structures had clear operational division lines. The advent of governance has caused a blurring of such lines, and has challenged agencies to share information, power and resources, with other bodies – vertically and horizontally. In Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown, the County Development Board is to the fore in enabling agencies to adapt and respond to the requirements and expectations of collaborative governance. Central government departments (ministries) and local government management have a key role to play in furthering the position of the CDB as an inter-agency co-ordinating body, and need to be more visible and vocal in supporting collaboration, and advocating territorial over sectoral approaches.

The Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown County Development Board has pursued a very strategic and transparent approach towards the attainment of multi-level governance, and has levered considerable goodwill from agencies and from within local government. Its capacity to promote additional upward co-ordination merits further support.

The Community and Voluntary Sector has responded enthusiastically to evolving governance arrangements, and volunteers have assumed considerable responsibilities in the co-ordination of multi-sectoral initiatives. As a result, a number of agencies have engaged more fully in local development, and have entered into more extensive partnership processes with community groups. However, agency responses have not been uniform, and the role of the CDB in enforcing poverty- and equality-proofing needs to be strengthened. The volunteer base, on which much of collaborative governance rests, needs on-going mentoring, facilitation, support and technical assistance. Such supports ought to be provided on a multi-annual basis, with community groups having the flexibility to innovate and to respond to new and emerging opportunities, while also retaining their autonomy, and achieving greater parity of esteem with other governance actors. Multi-annual strategic planning needs to be more explicit in community development and inter-community networking. Bottom-up and top-down actions to promote volunteerism, neighbourliness and civic spirit are essential in fostering good governance, and Southside Partnership is well positioned to promote these.

The Partnership is a key enabler of participatory approaches to decision-making. Its contributions towards empowering deprived communities and building the capacity of groups and individuals are essential in optimising good governance in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown. It is essential that the Partnership is enabled and further resourced to continue this work, and to reach out to responding to the needs of new communities and target groups in the county.

Social inclusion and community development have featured strongly in the approaches to governance that have been pursued in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown. This builds on the achievements of Southside Partnership, and it reflects good practice, that ought to be continued and further developed.

The current ‘cohesion’ process has caused a re-examining of organisational roles and responsibilities in Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown. At times, this process has been difficult for organisations. Fortunately, SPAN has assisted organisations in working through some of the questions presented by cohesion, and, through transnational collaboration and partnership between academics and practitioners, SPAN has re-affirmed and has demonstrated the value of partnership process and of top-down and bottom-up collaboration. It is hoped that by reflecting on the lessons from SPAN, organisations will have greater clarity regarding their own roles, potential and contributions in respect of multi-level governance, and a greater understanding of the roles of other organisations, and that this clarity will be effectively communicated, thereby leading to a more conducive collaborative environment for all.



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