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# Doughiska Neighbourhood Report

Findings from the 3-Cities Project

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# Doughiska Neighbourhood Report

## Introduction

This report documents research on the participation of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities in Doughiska, in Galway city. The research focuses on different experiences and transitions in people's lives, described as their life course, and holistic forms of participation. Doughiska is part of the broader Ardaun, Roscam and Doughiska (ARD) area, and is one of six urban sites featured in the 3-Cities Project (see Box 1). Undertaken in collaboration with local residents and stakeholders, the Project represents the first time that this topic has been investigated from the shared perspectives of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities. Findings presented here offer insight into: shared experiences of individuals from across these groups; the ways in which they take part in the locality; and how Doughiska, as a placed-based community of people and as a service site, facilitates or impedes participation. In Doughiska, two central research questions, developed in conjunction with community stakeholders and local children and youth, older people and people with disabilities, guided the research process. These questions were:

1. How does Doughiska harness population diversity in the creation of a cohesive neighbourhood and enhance the community participation of the three groups?
2. To what extent is participation in the neighbourhood underpinned by social support for the three groups in Doughiska?

### Box 1: The 3-Cities Project

The 3-Cities Project aims to engage in a collaborative process to re-imagine services and communities to maximise participation for children and youth, older people, and people with disabilities in their localities and cities.

Focusing on Dublin, Limerick and Galway the 3-Cities Project has five main objectives:

1. Capture the diverse life-course perspectives of these three groups, and integrate their voices into policy and practice innovation;
2. Explore the role of community and city contexts in shaping the participatory experiences of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities;
3. Critically review existing service infrastructure for supporting participation amongst these three groups in city life;
4. Underpinned by a commitment to citizen engagement, develop a shared understanding of the assets and opportunities of community living across the life course, with these groups, and local and regional stakeholders;
5. Inform the development of integrative models for participation that support and enable these three groups in their neighbourhoods and cities.

### Key messages arising from this research include:

1. The potential role of the neighbourhood to enable participation for children and youth, older people and people with disabilities;
2. The significant transitions in participants' lives, and in the Doughiska neighbourhood;
3. The ways in which the needs of people in each group are dynamic and arise from both personal changes and the dynamic social context of Doughiska;
4. How the diversity of the Doughiska population poses challenges and presents opportunities for the participation of people belonging to each group;
5. The need to build on existing relationships to enhance reciprocity and trust in Doughiska;
6. How structural forms of disadvantage can hamper participation.

### Why focus on the neighbourhood level

The research presented here is informed by the first phase of the 3-Cities Project. This work focused on the city-wide level and explored participation in Dublin, Limerick and Galway from the perspectives of service managers, service providers, and children and youth, older people and people with disabilities. The findings from this work (available from: <http://www.nuigalway.ie/ilas/project-lifecourse/the-threecitiesproject/outputs/>) pointed to the need to understand participation for children and youth, older people, and people with disabilities not only in the context of the local urban neighbourhoods that they reside in, but also in the context of their diverse and individual life experiences.

The importance of neighbourhood emerged as a key message. It was reflected in how service stakeholders described the complexities of service provision to enhance participation. It also featured in local residents' understandings of participation and in their perceptions of barriers to greater engagement. Additionally, the findings suggested that greater consideration should be given to the diversity of neighbourhoods (in social, economic, cultural and demographic terms) within each city. Participation, and service need/provision to enhance participation, was seen to vary from one neighbourhood to the next. It is also important to recognise that these neighbourhoods do not exist in isolation; they are interconnected in various ways with surrounding neighbourhoods and the broader city. It is only by exploring in depth the different kinds of urban neighbourhoods across the three cities that we can hope to understand the role of the city in shaping the lives of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities. Addressing themes within existing scientific literature on urbanisation, ageing, youth and disability, and to reflect differing social, economic, demographic and residential perspectives, two neighbourhoods in each city were chosen for the research. Each neighbourhood site fulfils one or more of the following criteria:

1. Represents neighbourhoods of different socio-economic status;
2. Represents new urban/suburban developments;
3. Represents new residential communities: e.g. ethnic minority and migrant communities;
4. Represents significant population and neighbourhood change;

5. Represents an inner-city location.

The first phase of work also illustrated the need to consider community participation as a holistic idea. Informants spoke about participation as involving elements of choice, control, independence and meaningful engagement across multiple areas of life (e.g. personal development; social relations; economic roles; cultural activities; civic participation).

### Why did we choose Doughiska?

Doughiska was selected as one of the 3-Cities Project neighbourhood sites as it met a number of our key criteria, including: being a new suburban development, having a strong representation of new migrant/ethnic minority communities, and having a lower neighbourhood-level socio-economic status. Doughiska was also selected as it represents one locale within the greater Ardaun, Roscam and Doughiska (ARD) community area<sup>1</sup>. The neighbourhood is involved in a process, led by community stakeholders, that sets out to integrate and build capacity for the future within the greater ARD structure. While the scope and scale of this project prevents a focus on all of the areas in ARD, the interdependency between these neighbourhoods with respect to service infrastructure and resources is recognised.

With reference to Figure 1, Doughiska, originally a rural community on the fringe of Galway city, is a newly built, developing and exceptionally diverse neighbourhood situated on the most eastern part of Galway city. To the north, Doughiska is bounded by Ballybrit and the N6 dual carriageway and to the south runs to the R446 road and Roscam. Merlin Woods is located to the west of Doughiska and is the largest urban wooded area in Galway city. The urban landscape has experienced rapid change over that last 10-15 years, with housing and recreational amenities replacing agricultural land. Much of this transition has been driven by urban pressures related to demographic and economic growth which has seen a high influx of people moving to Doughiska since its development. The area has been transformed from a quiet rural community to an energetic neighbourhood with numerous residential estates, shops and other local amenities.

With significant housing development, the population of Doughiska has risen dramatically, with current residential numbers in the region of 4,000 residents. In terms of population characteristics, Doughiska is noteworthy for two reasons. First, the population encompasses substantial

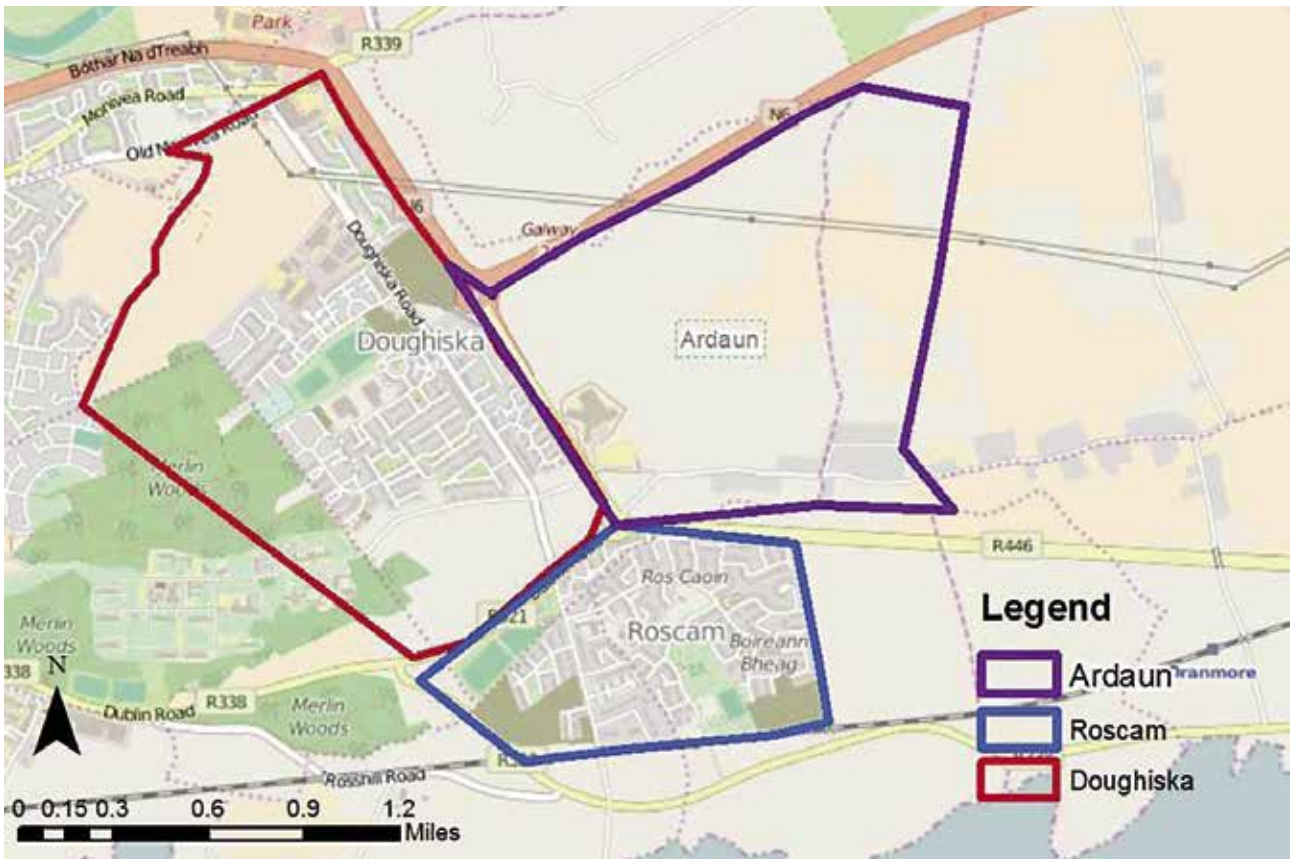


Figure 1 Map of Doughiska.

Source: OpenStreetMap Basemap.

diversity of nationalities and cultures; 47% of residents are foreign nationals (CSO, 2011<sup>2</sup>). This contrasts starkly with Galway city as a whole, where the average foreign national population is 17%. The Polish community is the largest of the foreign national communities, with other European Union (EU) citizens and individuals from outside of the EU (including a large African community) also resident within the community (CSO, 2011<sup>2</sup>). Second, the area is relatively young; 35% of the population are aged less than 25 years and 92% are below retirement age (CSO, 2011<sup>3</sup>). According to CSO Small Area Population Statistics, there were 180 children and youth aged between 12 and 18 years and 180 inhabitants aged 50 years and over, including 30 residents aged 65 years and over living in Doughiska in 2011. These figures are considered to be an underestimation of the numbers of both children and youth and older people based on anecdotal evidence. Based on Census data, 293

people in Doughiska are considered to have some form of disability (CSO, 2011<sup>3</sup>).

Housing in Doughiska is a mix of social housing, private rented and owner-occupied dwellings, but the majority of the population (70%) reside in rental accommodation (CSO, 2011<sup>4</sup>). Doughiska is also home to a settled Traveller community, a Brothers of Charity residential home and participants of an Ability West independent living programme for people with intellectual disabilities. The unemployment rate in Doughiska was just under 16% in 2011, in comparison to a city-wide average of just over 11% (CSO, 2011<sup>5</sup>).

The ARD Family Resource Centre which is only open for four years and the DRA Inter Agency Network are significant resources in Doughiska. Both organisations aim to serve the needs of the residents and provide supports

1 Frecklington, P. (2013). Capacity Building through ARD Family Resource Centre: Ardaun, Roscam and Doughiska. ARD Family Resource Centre.  
 2 CSO (2011) Census Small Area Population Statistics: usually resident by population by place of birth and nationality. Dublin: Central Statistics Office  
 3 CSO (2011) Census Small Area Population Statistics: population aged 0-19 by sex and year of age, person aged 20+ by sex and age group. Dublin: Central Statistics Office  
 4 CSO-(2011) Census Small Area Population Statistics: permanent private households and type of occupancy. Dublin: Central Statistics Office.  
 5 CSO-(2011) Census Small Area Population Statistics: unemployed having lost or given up previous job. Dublin: Central Statistics Office.

## Project Lifecourse

to the neighbourhood in terms of education, information sharing and support groups for a variety of different sections of the population. Along with other community groups, the two organisations have worked to ensure that the neighbourhood has grown and developed with its residents in mind, and have developed educational facilities (primary and post-primary schools), local amenities and leisure facilities. Despite local efforts, Doughiska has not received RAPID status (as part of the Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development programme) nor has its schools been designated DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) schools.

## What we did

It is helpful to first situate this report within the wider methodology of the 3-Cities Project. The Project adopted an explorative and participatory qualitative approach. Each phase of work, and each strand of research within these phases, sought to inform subsequent research activities. This helped to refine the research questions as the project progressed. This innovative approach also focused on developing a collaborative participatory process with all participants, with a view to equalising power differentials between different groups.

City-wide data collection in the three cities took place between January and October 2014 and involved:

interviews with 20 public-service managers (e.g. health and social care service managers; local authority representatives and managers); nine focus groups with 78 public, private and voluntary and community service providers (in the areas of health and social care; social inclusion; housing; transport and mobility; and education, training and employment); and 12 focus groups with children and youth (12-18 years), older people (65 years and over), people with intellectual disabilities and people with physical and sensory disabilities (one discussion per group) from across each city.

Neighbourhood-level data collection focused on two neighbourhoods in each city, and took place between April 2015 and January 2016. Neighbourhoods included Doughiska (as a part of the broader ARD region) and Claddagh in Galway, East Wall and the Liberties in Dublin, and Garryowen and South Circular Road in Limerick. These neighbourhoods were identified through a consultative process in each city with a Service Provider Advisory Forum (involving a sample of providers from the first phase), and a target group Advisory Forum (involving a sample of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities from the first phase). In Doughiska, and in each of the other neighbourhoods, a series of linked research activities were conducted with children and youth, older people, people with disabilities and community stakeholders. While these activities were limited in the



number of participants that could be included in each strand, the focus was on securing a representative sample of each group across gender, ethnicity, and residential tenure.

Given the younger demographic age structure within Doughiska, the age criterion for recruiting older adult participants was lowered to 55 years and over. Generally reflective of the experience in all six neighbourhood sites, and despite a range of recruitment strategies (e.g. stakeholders acting as gatekeepers; snowball sampling; contact through related community and support groups), people with disabilities are not represented in the study samples to the same extent as the other two groups. This is acknowledged as a limitation of the research.

The neighbourhood-level research included:

### **Local Focus Groups:**

Two local focus groups were organised in each neighbourhood to gather insight into challenges and opportunities with respect to the participation of the three participant groups in each neighbourhood. A resident focus group was conducted with a purposive sample of children and youth, older people, and people with disabilities in each site. In Doughiska, this discussion involved four children and youth, two older people and four people with disabilities (n=10). A community stakeholder focus group was conducted with key leaders and local champions, service providers from youth, ageing and disability sectors, and representatives from community development organisations, and national organisations with local remits. In Doughiska, 12 people took part in this discussion. Adapted versions of Participatory Learning Action (PLA) techniques were used to structure how participants took part in the discussion, helping to ensure equal contributions.

### **Collaborative Forum 1:**

This Forum drew together community stakeholders and residents from the local focus groups. The purpose of the Collaborative Forum was to agree and prioritise issues with respect to the three groups and to establish the central questions (as presented in the Introduction of this report) that needed to be researched in their neighbourhood. In Doughiska, 10 community stakeholders, children and youth, older people and people with disabilities participated in the Collaborative Forum.

### **Life-Course Narrative Interviews:**

These interviews were used to explore personal experiences of participation and living in the

neighbourhood from the perspective of the three groups. Using a variation of the Biographical Interpretative Narrative Method, the interviews provided an opportunity for participants to tell their own story of engagement with the local neighbourhood. In addition, through the use of semi-structured questions, the interviews allowed the research team to probe on topics related to the central research questions identified in the Collaborative Forum. In Doughiska, five children and youth, five older people and three people with intellectual disabilities participated in these interviews (n=13).

### **Go-Along Interviews:**

Go-Along Interviews were used to capture insight into how individuals from the three groups accessed and used services and amenities, or participated in activities, in their local urban environment. These interviews involved the participant bringing the researcher to venues of significance for their participation in the neighbourhood. This approach allowed participants greater control over the interview process, while permitting the research team to contextualise individual experiences of participation. In Doughiska, one person from each of the three groups took part in the Go-Along interviews (n=3).

### **Citizen Researcher Training Programme:**

Children and youth, older people and people with disabilities from each neighbourhood were trained as researchers. The Programme involved the co-development of a project to be conducted by participants within their neighbourhood to address the questions identified in the Collaborative Forum. Harnessing research techniques such as photo elicitation and focus group facilitation, this process helped to ensure the relevance and validity of the 3-Cities Project to people's lives and to support residents to communicate their priorities. In Doughiska, five children and youth and three older people took part in this training (n=8).

### **Collaborative Forum 2:**

The findings emerging from these research strands were then presented back to the Collaborative Forums in each site and used as a basis to agree key recommendations for enhancing participation for children and youth, older people and people with disabilities in the neighbourhood (n=4).

For the purposes of this report, we draw primarily on the findings from the life-course narrative and go-along interviews.

### What we found

A variety of distinctive experiences emerged from the accounts of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities in Doughiska, offering unique insights into the barriers to and facilitators of community participation. The demographic composition of the neighbourhood would have suggested that children and youth related themes dominate our findings. However, the perspectives of older people, particularly as longer-term residents, and people with disabilities (notwithstanding the limited numbers of participants) very much informed the research findings. In addition, Doughiska's multicultural population brought to the research distinct cultural ideas on what it means to take part in the neighbourhood. The main findings largely reflected these demographic dynamics within the neighbourhood, and the transformation of the older, predominantly rural area of Doughiska, into an urban suburb.

### Neighbourhood Change

Patterns of community change in Doughiska emerged as a significant theme for all participant groups. These transitions were evident in various ways in the data, shaping how participants took part in the neighbourhood and how they experienced neighbourhood life. With its development from a small rural settlement on the outskirts of Galway city to a substantial suburban neighbourhood, there has been significant change in the area's demography and local social relationships. Older residents who lived in the neighbourhood prior to its development, foreign national residents from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds and Irish residents who have moved to the neighbourhood since its development are just some of the distinct groups present within the locality. This layered population points to two different timelines of change informing participants' perceptions around the structural, cultural and demographic transformations that have occurred: the first is a longer timeline relevant to residents who lived in Doughiska as a rural area; the second is a more recent period of change relevant to people who moved into Doughiska as a developing suburban neighbourhood.

Reflecting longer-term neighbourhood narratives, experiences of change were most clearly articulated and acutely felt by older long-term residents. As a neighbourhood which is typically considered to represent a largely younger demographic structure, these perspectives are particularly useful for understanding the story of the

evolution of Doughiska. At a basic level, older residents spoke about the structural transformations that have occurred:

That time back, there was just a shop there at the corner. You had no Dunnes Stores, you had no Lidl, no Aldi, no Sean Bhaile, there was all green fields around it. The farmer sold it and then it was sold on again to Galway City Council where Sean Bhaile [housing estate] is now. (Male, Older Adult Group, SD LC1).

As a part of the development of what is now Doughiska's built-environment, older residents talked about neighbours selling property and land to developers and moving out of the neighbourhood. As one older resident describes, this altered the sense of neighbourhood for some residents, and directly impacted on interpersonal relationships and connections in the locality:

Well I mean I was in the country when I came in here. We have photographs with the kids down behind the field behind our house. We had them up on the cops of hay when we came... You know, we saw all the neighbours selling the land, 60 acres, up where Doughiska is now, up where the church is and all that area, they sold all that area. (Male, Older Adult Group, SD LC11).

However, and as illustrated by this older foreign national participant, the transformations have been rapid and significant even for more recent residents in the neighbourhood:

In this area here the population is... so diverse, 35 or 36 different nationalities... I first came to Doughiska in 2003. At the time, Doughiska was not as developed or built up the way it is now. Most of the estates you see around, they were not there when I moved here, there were just the first few houses, and I was fortunate to be one of those people living in the first few houses. So, I've been in Doughiska since 2003, and in my presence Doughiska turned to a big city, big community. (Male, Older Adult Group, DW LC3).

Changes impacting on children and youth emerged during the wider research process in group consultations with community stakeholders and local children and youth informants. In many cases, the focus on change here related to how the neighbourhood itself copes with the transition



of younger children and youth into older teenagers. Examples highlighted how there was an awareness that existing neighbourhood efforts may focus on younger age groups, with the needs of older children as they entered young adulthood being somewhat overlooked:

The thing is I really don't take part in the community... I feel like it's good for the youth and some of the elderly with all the activities happening. But I feel like people my age really don't connect into the community as well as other generations... It's not really cut off it's more like forgotten per say like. (Male, Children and Youth Group, DWLC13).



### Diversity

One of the strongest themes to emerge from the data was that of the cultural diversity in the local population. Diversity played a fundamental role in neighbourhood life and in local participation in Doughiska. At a fundamental level, participants, in this case an older foreign national resident, identified its significance in the composition of the neighbourhood:

It's full of diverse communities. Many ethnic groups live in Doughiska: Africans, Polish, Asians. (Male, Older Adult Group, DWLC3).

The culturally diverse nature of Doughiska was perceived by children and youth and older people to present opportunities and challenges. Positive aspects included opportunities to mix socially with different ethnic and cultural groups, to benefit from multiple cultural perspectives and to develop an appreciation of people's differences. Many participants suggested that diversity in the locality was something to be embraced, and uniquely positioned Doughiska as a multicultural Irish neighbourhood. For some participants, diversity was seen as a resource that could be harnessed and cultivated to enhance the neighbourhood of Doughiska itself. Value was placed on learning from other nationalities, cultures and traditions, and exploiting the wide variety of attributes and abilities that residents of Doughiska possess:

I think that there is a lot of different people from different countries living here and it's, and everybody sort of has different talents you could say. So whenever you meet someone – like I meet up with my friends sometimes, my friend he plays on the violin so we have all these really interesting things to talk about. And, it's really nice because there's a lot of different people living here and everybody is very interesting. (Female, Children and Youth Group, SD LC10).

Thus, as viewed by a number of participants both young and old, diversity was something tangible that could serve as a foundation for building positive relations between different groups of people in the neighbourhood. In this respect, participating in a diverse neighbourhood was thought to enhance understanding and appreciation for difference, whether someone is younger, older or living with a disability:

Yes, so that we can learn from each other cultural heritage. So if I get involved with the Polish people, I get to know what kind of food they eat, and they can get to know what kind of food we eat, our culture, or how we talk, you know. (Male, Older Adult Group, DW LC1).

Despite these positive experiences, participants also identified challenges relating to diversity that could impact on community participation. Generally, these challenges concerned the complex realities of bringing together in a single neighbourhood so many different cultural groups, with different expectations and preferences. Interviews with participants highlighted the perception that certain groups took part in very different ways. This then needed to be taken into consideration. Moreover, the degree of diversity in Doughiska meant that not everyone may have the opportunity to engage and participate in neighbourhood life in the way they would like. As this older foreign national participant suggests, it is necessary to create further opportunities to get to know people belonging to different groups:

Maybe the respect we give to others, there are kind of things you learn from being involved with other communities. Because there is one thing that is basic, we come from different ethnic backgrounds, therefore our behaviour our mode of talking, are different. It's just like that. So the need for us to learn from each other - I would have loved to see more of that. (Male, Older Adult Group, DW LC3).

### Integration

Concerns about neighbourhood integration stemmed directly from challenges with respect to cultural diversity and uniting different groups of people (Irish nationals and foreign nationals) in the Doughiska population. While some participants were able to provide concrete examples of ways in which the neighbourhood comes together, issues around integration were considered to pose a fundamental challenge to the existence of a sense of community. They were also viewed as constructing significant barriers to community participation, impacting on the ways that children and youth, older people and people with disabilities take part in Doughiska.

In many instances, and reflecting the fact that people belonging to a range of nationalities live in Doughiska, issues around integration were related to the lack of interaction between different foreign national groups. Some evidence pointed to low levels of interaction between different cultural and ethnic groups outside of specific structures (e.g. school) and community programmes. Some participants noted that groups may feel more comfortable socialising and mixing with cultures they are more familiar with. As one older foreign national male commented, despite the potential for the different groups to integrate, segregation and disconnection existed, creating sub-communities and acting as a barrier to community participation:

I still cannot see integration of the communities. I still cannot see that. I still can see Africans moving with Africans, Polish moving with Polish, just like that. I still cannot see integration. (Male, Older Adult Group, DW LC3)

Integration concerns raised by participants also addressed the seeming lack of interaction between foreign national and Irish residents. For example, when referring to such concerns, an older Irish woman reflected not only on the issue of who out of both groups had the responsibility for integration, but also on the role of cultural and national stereotypes in impeding integration and on the need for openness and tolerance:

There are challenges, you have to be very open and you have to be very accepting of people... some people wouldn't be talking to African people because they don't understand them, but that would be older people maybe. But there are challenges definitely to keeping the whole community integrated (Female, Older Adult Group, SD LC2).

Low levels of English language proficiency amongst some residents were highlighted by foreign national and Irish participants as compounding problems of integration and in turn community participation. The research findings demonstrated that language proficiency particularly impacted on some children and youth participants and, anecdotally, on older adult migrant individuals. As highlighted by one younger foreign born girl, language difficulties created significant obstacles around integration when she first arrived in Ireland and settled in Doughiska:

I was a year younger than the rest of my classmates so that was a bit awkward and also the fact that most of the things I had to ask through charades because I was really shy to speak for the first month or so. There was no Polish people in the class whatsoever for your first year so it was pretty strange but I was forced into English like going into deep water straightaway. The teachers were understandable and helped a lot but I was still scared. I couldn't understand them; I couldn't get along so I spent most of my time with a book in the back of the cafeteria. (Female, Children and Youth Group, SD LC12).

Interview findings and community stakeholder informants indicated that language proficiency could also become an intergenerational issue. The same younger participant reported how older generations of migrants were sometimes dependent on children and grandchildren to interpret and translate for them in their daily interactions. As she describes, such a role within a household can not only mean the responsibility for a family's communication in English rests with a younger family member, but so too do significant administrative and bureaucratic duties:

My parents well they don't have a word of English so all the translation comes down to me...Well when you have to go through all the offices in Galway and like social welfare, child benefit, everything, the whole stuff is like I have to know all the words and then if I don't know they get cranky because they don't know them and I'm like how is that fair. (Female, Children and Youth Group, SD LC12).

Issues around integration were not just manifested in terms of relationships between different foreign national groups, but also between Irish residents and foreign national residents. It was sometimes evident that integration issues were less to do with cultural or national difference and sometimes a function of different lengths of tenure and different layers of the local population that resided in Doughiska.

Overall, research participants questioned the general opportunities for integration both in terms of daily informal interactions and more planned and formal sets of activities. This was despite some notable exceptions within the neighbourhood led by the ARD family resource centre (e.g. The Connect Festival and The Pride Of Place Award).



## Project Lifecourse

Several neighbourhood members recalled how, in response to a perceived lack of opportunities for integration, people attended gatherings and neighbourhood interest groups that reached beyond their cultural backgrounds and that may not have been their initial chosen form of participation. One such illustrative and anecdotal example was the attendance of non-Catholic residents at Doughiska Catholic Church as a means of integrating with other neighbourhood members.

The influence of broader structural issues, in relation to how Doughiska is politically represented and positioned, was also evident as impacting on local integration. Interview participants and community stakeholders indicated how a high proportion of neighbourhood residents were not in a position to or did not exercise a political vote:

One of the things I would notice is getting foreign nationals involved in local activities is hard to do. And even elections and that now, trying to get them to vote, they will tell you that they have registered but very few of them are voting. (Male, Older Adult Group, SD LC11).

This in effect enforced a form of structural disadvantage, marginalising the neighbourhood from local and regional political processes and providing little opportunity for local residents to give voice to individual and neighbourhood issues.

### Neighbourhood Belonging

Neighbourhood belonging emerged as a significant theme within the research. Fundamentally connected to themes of change and integration, neighbourhood belonging, how it was constructed and the levels of belonging that people felt, differed slightly for children and youth, older people and people with disabilities. Some participants' narratives suggested that a sense of belonging influenced the extent to which they participated in their neighbourhood. For others, a sense of belonging was shaped by the relevance and appropriateness of opportunities to participate.

Conflicting opinions of belonging emerged from conversations with older long-term residents who had witnessed the dramatic social, cultural and physical transformations that had occurred in Doughiska. Some older participants viewed these changes as being part of the neighbourhood's evolution and development, and still

recognised the continuity in their own relationship with their locality. These individuals tended to link belonging to an individual's place of origin.

Other older long-term participants were less comfortable with the level and speed of change in their neighbourhood. For these individuals, such transformations appeared to alter their sense of belonging and, for some, resulted in feelings of dislocation from Doughiska. One Irish older male, who lived in the neighbourhood long before the area was developed, spoke about the disconnect between the old community he remembers and the new neighbourhood that exists today:

The whole system is changed but that's because we have so many different nationalities, so many different cultures. We are like the foreigners anymore and the foreigners are the locals... If you go down to the local shop, who is the foreigner and who is the local. You go down and you might meet Romanians, you could meet Spanish, you could meet Polish, you could meet Lithuanian, you could meet African, where is the Irish, maybe one, maybe two. (Male, Older Adult Group, SD LC1).

For children and youth participants in this research, the degree of complexity around feelings of belonging depended on a variety of factors including: whether informants were originally from Ireland; born in Ireland as second-generation members of migrant households; or were originally from another country. At a very broad level, and because Doughiska was in many people's minds a new neighbourhood, many children and youth participants, and it could be argued all residents, were attempting to negotiate pathways of belonging in Doughiska, regardless of whether they were Irish or not.

For some foreign born participants this negotiation process was effectively operational at two levels, where a sense of belonging to Ireland, and to the local neighbourhood, had to be developed simultaneously. Despite this, a number of foreign born participants talked about Doughiska as very much being home. In the case of the following individual, their sense of connection to Doughiska was in spite of much of their extended family networks still being resident in their home country. This quote also illustrates how belonging is a process which can unfold across experiences of multiple locations and countries of residence:

Yes, I do. I do feel at home and I remember my Mom she asks me a lot would I like to go back to Poland or how do I like it here and I always say that I would not like to go back to Poland. Because even though my family is there I would not know what to do because I know I am used to Doughiska now and I like it here better. (Female, Children and Youth Group, SD LC10).

For other foreign-born children and youth participants, the process of belonging was on-going. Complicated connections and multiple identities may need to be worked through when moving to a new country. As one younger person highlighted, this exercise can become more difficult depending on the dynamics of the interpersonal relationships between people of the same national background in the new neighbourhood:

Half of the people would refuse to speak Polish to you even though you know they are from Poland by looking at their surname... I am pretty confused because like, I want to be fully Irish but then I know I'm not and this is who I am and I can't change it. (Female, Children and Youth Group, SD LC12).

Some children and youth participants, particularly those aged between 12 and 15, described how Doughiska offered many opportunities to get to know different people and to feel like they belong. Conversations around the ways in which local amenities bring children and youths together and encourage participation in different neighbourhood events highlighted the relevance of such facilities and initiatives in fostering belonging. As highlighted by this Irish participant, the ARD resource centre, and its core personnel, provided an important mechanism for participation and fostering belonging:

...the soccer's really good in Doughiska, [The ARD Family Resource Centre Team] set up a soccer club. It's really good for us, to get young people out of trouble, keep them safe and stuff like that, out of drugs and stuff. [The ARD Family Resource Centre Project Co-ordinator] that, he's very nice and he's done loads of stuff for us....I sit in the house every single day, because there's nothing to do, there's really nothing to do, it's really boring, some days it's alright but it's really boring. But the kayaking and stuff that [The ARD Family Resource Centre Project Co-ordinator] does is really good, he gets us out and about, and he does a

load of work with us, he does a load of stuff with us, it's really good...I trust him, what he says I believe him. I trust him, I wouldn't listen to anybody else but I trust him, he wouldn't get you into danger or anything, I trust him. (Male, Children and Youth Group, SD LC9).

### Safety and Insecurity

Safety, and specifically a sense of safety, emerged as an important theme across all three groups. Accounts detailed the impact of such concerns on the participation of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities in Doughiska. Both explicitly and implicitly, Doughiska was acknowledged to be a safe neighbourhood. However, a number of actual and perceived factors could contribute to feelings of insecurity.

Lack of trust was one such factor. Again, neighbourhood change and concerns about integration influenced how people talked about the local neighbourhood and its sense of togetherness. One older person spoke about how lack of trust can derive from a lack of familiarity with the different groups of people living within the neighbourhood and the changes in how people socialise and mix with each other. While the mechanisms that can construct issues around trust are relatively simple and can stem from just not knowing your neighbour, the impact can be significant and profound:

It's a very mixed community now. There was a time you knew your neighbour; you don't know your neighbour anymore. You don't communicate, you don't bother each other. It's got more privatised if you like. Don't mix, nothing, you just do your own thing whatever you do whether it's right or wrong. You don't have that anymore, who is your neighbour? It could be Polish, it could be Lithuanian, it could be Nigerian, it could be anything, but that's all you know, end of story. Where is the trust? If you can't trust someone you have nothing. (Male, Older Adult Group, SD LC1).

These issues sometimes combined with age and cultural associations to construct perceived problems that impacted on a sense of safety. In general, these factors again reflected broader concerns around integration. In some cases, concerns focused on particular groups of the local population. For one older woman, who acknowledged her own role in creating her own concerns about safety, all of these factors combined to create a sense of insecurity

## Project Lifecourse

about what her neighbourhood might be like in years to come:

I find, I see a lot of young African youngsters around and I feel that maybe when they get bigger now there would be some problem with integrating. Sometimes now you meet them in groups of four or five kind of and they have the hoodies on and you are wondering kind of, in another few years now will this be trouble kind of, you know? But maybe that is just my own fear now, you know? (Female, Older Adult Group, SD LC2).

References were made to how the natural and built environment could sometimes be connected with feelings of safety or insecurity, helping or hindering community participation. Merlin Woods was particularly highlighted in this regard. On the one hand, the Woods were identified as an important local resource, with many efforts to harness its potential as a means to increase community participation. However, on the other hand, some participants felt insecure about making the most of the Woods due to associations with antisocial behaviour.

One older person illustrated both sets of perceptions of Merlin Woods, demonstrating again the role of group associations in reinforcing these perceptions:

A lot of people now use [the Woods]... school kids do their orienteering... [But] it's a huge challenge with the teenage population, you can already see gangs of teenagers walking around the area, which is not good... I would see 10 or 12 guys walking around. There would be a lot of drinking in the woods as well and you would see the cans... but that is a challenge down the road... (Male, Older Adult Group, SD LC11).

The role of the natural environment, and in particular the Woods, was also raised by children and youth. An account from a young person illustrates how this sense of insecurity, based on local rumours and associations, restricted the use of this neighbourhood space:

Like you hear about a horse who was burned alive and found in the woods and people going missing, so I try to stay away from the Woods. But like it's fun to play in there and go cycling so I just try not to go alone. The community should do something about that because, it's like, kids like to play over there too and it's pretty dangerous. (Female, Children and Youth Group, SD LC12).

The impact of environmental factors was also expressed by one participant with a disability, in this case illustrating how the built environment could contribute to a sense of vulnerability and fear, and decreased participation in the neighbourhood. Aspects of the built environment intertwined once again with associations of safety issues, rather than with direct experiences:

I wouldn't go on my own now. It's getting bad, I would never go at night time because people are getting attacked, you know. It's okay in the evening but at night time I never go anywhere. See down there they were supposed to fix the light and the light is not fixed down there. (Male, People with a Disability Group, SD GA2).



### Concluding Points

In focusing on Doughiska, the 3-Cities Project sought to investigate experiences of community participation for the three participant groups in a new suburban development, with a strong representation of new migrant/ethnic communities, and a lower neighbourhood-level socioeconomic status. Doughiska offered a rare opportunity to explore how participation might become more complex, more diverse or less evident in such settings for children and youth, older people and people with disabilities. It also offered an opportunity to see how the local neighbourhood is acting to facilitate community participation for the three groups.

This research did not set out to capture the views of all children and youth, older people and people with disabilities resident in Doughiska. Nor does the research offer a comprehensive needs-based analysis of these groups. The value of this research is that it offers in-depth insight into the lives of some of Doughiska's residents who are younger, older, or living with a disability. In doing so,

it explores the common experiences, opportunities and challenges with respect to participation, and provides a unique look at children and youth, older people and people with disabilities as residents sharing this neighbourhood space. The importance of this research is that it also has been led by the voices of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities, highlighting five key themes relevant to how they participate: neighbourhood change, diversity, integration, neighbourhood belonging, and safety and insecurity.

#### Neighbourhood change:

Descriptions of neighbourhood change highlighted the structural, cultural and demographic shifts that have taken place in Doughiska and how these changes could alter how people identified with the locality. This was particularly the case for older more established residents, but also applied to people who had recently moved to the neighbourhood. Change could impact on opportunities for participation through the loss of interpersonal relationships, more tenuous local connections and by rendering some services less relevant for some population groups.

### Box 2: Emerging findings from the 3-Cities Project Neighbourhoods

Across the six neighbourhoods in the 3-Cities Project, there is a clear set of emerging findings with respect to the participation of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities in Dublin, Galway and Limerick. The research in Doughiska, as with the other neighbourhoods, feeds into some of these findings more than others. We can say, broadly, that agency, belonging, dynamic community contexts, urban design, trust and reciprocity, service led-enablement, and community efforts all matter for the participation of these groups. We can also say that each of the groups is considered in a specific and very narrow way within the contexts of these neighbourhoods: children and youth in terms of youth engagement and youth-related social problems; older people in terms of social isolation and health service use; and people with disabilities in terms of access. The integrated approach taken in this work moves beyond these narrow group considerations to identify five emerging cross-group messages:

1. A holistic idea of participation and a fuller assessment of how people live their lives needs to be embraced for children and youth, older people and people with disabilities;
2. Neighbourhoods can enable holistic participation in a range of areas of life for children and youth, older people and people with disabilities;
3. Life-course experiences and transitions are embedded in, and influenced by, the neighbourhoods in which people live;
4. Neighbourhoods can determine the degree to which experiences/transitions impact on the lives of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities;
5. Changes in neighbourhoods, such as demographic, social and economic shifts, and changes in the lives of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities combine to shape group and cross-group needs.

Future reports and publications will address these cross-cutting findings in more detail.

Reports on each neighbourhood will be available from: [www.nuigalway.ie/ilas/project-lifecourse/](http://www.nuigalway.ie/ilas/project-lifecourse/)

## Project Lifecourse

### Diversity:

Both challenges and opportunities relating to population diversity in Doughiska came to the fore. Potential challenges to participation included how some ethnic and cultural groups took part in different ways, with different expectations and preferences around participation. Opportunities included mixing socially with different ethnic and cultural groups, benefiting from multiple cultural perspectives, developing an appreciation of people's differences and harnessing diversity as a local resource.

### Integration:

Integration issues challenged individual and collective participation, and stemmed from bringing the different population layers and groupings together within a single neighbourhood. Challenges with respect to the formation of sub-communities, English language proficiency, a lack of informal opportunities for social and cultural interaction and broader issues around political representation restricted the potential for greater integration and hindered participation in direct and indirect ways for the three groups.

### Neighbourhood belonging:

Neighbourhood belonging was particularly complex and linked to individual life-course experiences. For some members, belonging was influenced by the availability and relevance of opportunities to participate. For others, belonging was one of the factors that shaped participation. Largely, neighbourhood belonging was a function of how individuals reflected on change across their life course and within Doughiska, the channels available to create belonging, and for foreign national residents, the degree of connection to Ireland.

### Safety and insecurity:

Despite acknowledgement that Doughiska was a safe place to live, a series of factors were considered to reduce a sense of safety for the three participant groups. Issues around trust were interwoven with challenges of integration, contributing to perceived safety concerns. Lack of familiarity with some population groups, and age and cultural associations also combined to create a sense of insecurity for some. Examples of how the natural and built environment could sometimes reinforce feelings of safety or insecurity were also evident.

In addition, the research provided insight into how local neighbourhood actors facilitate neighbourhood participation. It is evident that the range of needs and

expectations, together with the varied sets of values that are embodied within Doughiska can complicate the delivery of effective services. The achievements of existing provisions and activities need to be acknowledged within this context. Positive examples of community efforts to address this evolving neighbourhood were evident throughout the research. The work of the ARD Family Resource Centre was especially highlighted in this regard. The Centre's role in coordinating a multidisciplinary community alliance certainly is valuable in terms of its potential impact.

A limitation of the research conducted in Doughiska is its failure to give adequate voice to people with disabilities within the research process. While six people with disabilities were included, and a range of efforts were made to involve other individuals from this group, we are restricted in what we can say about people with disabilities and their community participation in Doughiska. That said, and unlike many of the other neighbourhoods in the 3-Cities Project where people with disabilities had to leave their localities for services, Doughiska was host to both a residential facility and an Independent Living Programme. In acknowledging that many of these individuals are likely to originate from other places, a significant opportunity exists for the neighbourhood to develop Doughiska as a locality that facilitates the full integration and participation of people with different levels of disability.





In looking across the findings in this report, we can identify the main concluding points concerning participation for children and youth, older people and people with disabilities. While a number of emerging and preliminary patterns cut across the six neighbourhood sites of the 3-Cities Project (see Box 2), the work in Doughiska points to **six key messages** with respect to participation for the three groups. These are:

- 1. Potential role of the neighbourhood to enable participation** – reaching beyond group-specific needs, the research illustrates the emphasis that children and youth, older people and people with disabilities place on neighbourhood as a facilitator of participation and, potentially, as a fundamental unit of societal integration;
- 2. Significant transitions in participants' lives and in the Doughiska neighbourhood** – the research demonstrates the prevalence of transitions in participants' lives, such as coping with neighbourhood change, migration, and transitions within the local neighbourhood;
- 3. Needs of people belonging to the three participating groups are dynamic, and arise from both personal changes and the changing social context of Doughiska** – the research highlighted how the needs of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities are constantly changing, and are particularly tied to changes in Doughiska and in individuals' lives;
- 4. Diversity of the Doughiska population poses challenges and offers opportunities for participation** – the research demonstrates how population diversity introduces different understandings and values of participation, and acts as a potential resource and asset within the neighbourhood;
- 5. Need to build on existing relationships to enhance reciprocity and trust within Doughiska** – the research suggests that issues of integration, belonging and perceived safety can be addressed, in part, by building on existing community efforts and relations to enhance reciprocity and trust across and within various population groups;
- 6. Structural forms of disadvantage can hamper participation** – the research illustrates particular structural patterns that can impact either directly or indirectly on the opportunities within the neighbourhood for participation.

## Future Directions: Voice-led Social and Neighbourhood Innovation

Based upon the key messages, we identify three principles that can assist in enhancing participation for children and youth, older people and people with disabilities in Doughiska. A description of each principle, and some illustrative examples, are presented below;

### Voice-Led Service Development

The opportunity exists to incorporate the voice of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities into service design and development. Harnessing the insights of the three groups can identify critical areas of group-specific and cross-group need and can assist in establishing relevant, more integrated, local infrastructure that promotes holistic participation. Embedding such strategies within multi-stakeholder alliances would also help to account for evolving needs arising from the dynamic context of Doughiska. For example, there is the potential for a range of current and possible future demographic changes to alter neighbourhood needs, reducing the relevance of existing structures. These changes include: an increasing number of older teenagers and young adults; ageing minority ethnic populations; and growing rates of age-related disability. Examples of voice-led service development might include:

- Drawing on the perspectives of older members of the children and youth population to develop services that facilitate, support and engage older teenagers in Doughiska;
- Integrating the voices of older people into the development of programmes that foster the active engagement, and re-engagement, of older people in the neighbourhood.
- Utilising the input of the three groups to develop common interest initiatives, such as broadening existing music programmes for participation of people with disabilities to facilitate integrated participation of all three groups.

### Communication and Integration Enablement

There is a potential to capitalise on existing and latent knowledge within Doughiska in order to address barriers to community participation and enable members of the three groups within the neighbourhood. An example emerging from this research involves harnessing the 'insider' knowledge of older adults so as to combat issues around communication, integration and information access for new foreign-national residents (children and youth, their

families and older adult migrants). With a secondary purpose of helping to foster local connectedness for older longer-term residents, a relevant initiative might include establishing a service brokerage where older residents help newly arrived foreign-national community members to access information and negotiate public structures to obtain entitlements in such areas as health, housing and welfare.

### **Civic ‘Collision’ Spaces**

The value of informal and formal public spaces to bring together children and youth, older people and people with disabilities, and the wider neighbourhood population, is substantial within Doughiska. Building on the contribution and success of existing neighbourhood events, such as the Connect Intercultural Festival, there is merit in

creating sustained civic ‘collision’ spaces and programmes that provide inclusive, safe and flexible areas in the neighbourhood that foster informal contact and cultivate mixing across and within groups. Examples of such spaces and programmes might include:

- Regular informal get-togethers that encourage people to showcase their culture may encourage greater familiarity, trust and reciprocity;
- Social plazas embedded in Doughiska that host points of interest for different groups, e.g. sensory stimulation zones; oral history and local cultural exhibits;
- ‘Retrofitting’ existing civic spaces, such as Merlin Woods, to offer formal and informal activities targeted at the three groups.





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