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Claddagh Neighbourhood Report

Findings from the 3-Cities Project

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Claddagh Neighbourhood Report

Introduction

This report documents research on the participation of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities in Claddagh, in Galway city. The research focuses on different experiences and transitions in people's lives, described as their life course, and on holistic forms of participation. Claddagh, an established inner-city neighbourhood, 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 Claddagh, as a place-based community of people and as a service site, facilitates or impedes participation. In Claddagh, 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 are changes in Claddagh community experienced by children and youth, older people and people with disabilities?
2. To what extent has the participation of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities been influenced by local customs and traditions?

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. Cultural heritage serves as a neighbourhood asset for enhancing participation for members of the three participant groups;
3. Neighbourhood belonging is shaped by residential location, and tenure, in Claddagh, impacting on how, and to what degree people participate;
4. Transformative changes can weaken connections within the neighbourhood and give rise to a sense of dislocation for the three participant groups;
5. Informal forms of social support embedded within Claddagh serve as a mechanism to enable 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/thethreecitiesproject/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 Claddagh?

Claddagh was selected as one of the 3-Cities Project neighbourhood sites as it met a number of key criteria, which included: being an established inner-city neighbourhood and a place that has experienced significant neighbourhood change. Originally located outside the walls of Galway city, Claddagh was a small fishing village, with its own King, and was traditionally Gaelic speaking. With reference to Figure 1, Claddagh today is nestled in the heart of the city, bound to the east by Wolfe Tone Bridge on the river Corrib and to the south by Galway Bay. To the west of Claddagh is Salthill and to the north lies Fr. Griffin Road.

The Claddagh neighbourhood has experienced a period of considerable transformation. This has included the shift away from being a dedicated fishing community and, in more recent times, the inflow of younger and more affluent families into the neighbourhood. Claddagh is now a much sought-after place to live due to its proximity to the city and the aesthetic appeal of the surrounding area. Although the urban landscape has remained the same, the neighbourhood boundary has become more blurred over the years due to these changes and has three subjective but distinct layers. First, Claddagh village or inner Claddagh marks the original fishing community and encapsulates the Claddagh Quay and the area surrounding the church to Fairhill Road. Second, the outer Claddagh encompasses the area as far as Fr. Bourke Road, and third the greater Claddagh area incorporates the estates as far as Salthill including Grattan Park and Beach Court. This greater area also represents the Parish boundary and the district electoral division.

The Claddagh neighbourhood has approximately 2,500 residents (CSO, 2011)¹. Of this figure, 109 people are aged 12-18 years and 404 are aged 65 years and over. Based on the Census data, 351 residents have some form of disability, and of these, 136 are over the age of 65 years (CSO, 2011)². Although Claddagh is not a Gaeltacht area today, just under half the inhabitants (1,193) speak the Irish language (CSO,



Figure 1 Boundaries of Claddagh.

Source: OpenStreetMaps.

2011)¹. The Claddagh population is largely Irish with just over four-fifths of the community (approximately 2,000 people) comprising native Irish residents.

Housing in Claddagh is a mixture of private, rented, owner occupied and social housing, with over half (1,385) of the inhabitants owning their own homes (CSO, 2011)³. The unemployment rate for Claddagh is just below 10%, which is just under the city-wide average of 11% (CSO, 2011)⁴. Despite significant changes, Claddagh remains a distinctive community that harbours strong historical links to cultural and economic traditions based in and around Galway Bay.

Claddagh's proximity to the city centre has meant that the majority of the services relevant to children and youth, older people and people with disabilities, including health and social care provisions, are located just outside the neighbourhood, with residents having to leave the community to avail of supports. However, a number of organisations provide an outreach service into the neighbourhood; this includes, for example, the community catering service delivered by COPE Galway to local older residents and other local people in need of the service. With no discernible central social or service hub, the majority of community interactions take place around the church. Other neighbourhood focal points include South Park, the Piscatorial school, Claddagh Basin and the Galway City Fire Brigade.

1 CSO (2011) Census Small Area Population Statistics: usually resident by population by place of birth and nationality. Dublin: Central Statistics Office

2 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

3 CSO (2011) Census Small Area Population Statistics: permanent private households and type of occupancy. Dublin: Central Statistics Office.

4 CSO (2011) Census Small Area Population Statistics: unemployed having lost or given up previous job. Dublin: Central Statistics Office.

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 Claddagh and Doughiska (as a part of the broader ARD region) in Galway, Garryowen and South Circular Road in Limerick, and the Liberties and East Wall in Dublin. 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 Claddagh, 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.

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), only two people with a disability are included in the research for Claddagh. Consequently, this group are not represented in the study samples to the same extent as the other two groups. This is acknowledged as a significant 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 Claddagh, this discussion involved one children and youth participant, seven older people and one person with a disability (n=9). 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 Claddagh, ten 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 Claddagh, nine 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 Narrative Interpretative 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 Claddagh, four children and youth and three older people participated in these interviews (n=7).

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 Claddagh, 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 Claddagh, five children and youth and four older people took part in this training (n=9).

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. In Claddagh, four community stakeholders, children and youth, older people and people with disabilities participated in the second Collaborative Forum.

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

What we found

Four distinct but interconnected themes emerged from the accounts of children and youth, older people and people with a disability in Claddagh, offering unique insights into the barriers and facilitators of community participation for the three groups. Broadly, these themes reflected the links between cultural heritage and community participation in the area, along with some significant transformations that have occurred in the neighbourhood. While it was clear from the findings that Claddagh possesses significant assets and resources, it was also apparent that there are a number of factors that could produce a sense of

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dislocation for members of the participant groups, and for the wider residential population. In this section, findings will be presented to illustrate both elements and how they intersect in the lives of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities.

Community Customs and Local Identity

It was evident that community customs played a role in shaping local community identity for many participants. These customs reflected traditional practices that continue to provide opportunities, or potential opportunities, for participation. Participants highlighted such practices as a rich and culturally-ingrained asset in the neighbourhood. Local customs and events, such as Claddagh Princess, Claddagh hooker boats, Claddagh Festival, King of the Claddagh and Blessing of the Bay, were identified as mechanisms of bringing the community together and as different means of expressing community identity.

Boats, and their cultural and economic significance within Claddagh, featured strongly in the research. This was in terms of current fishing and leisure practices within the neighbourhood, but also their role within local traditions, such as Galway Hooker boat-building and restoration. The craftsmanship and social connectedness embedded within this tradition, and as now maintained by a local group, *Bádóirí na Cladaig*, was described by some participants as highlighting the potential of such customs as a means of community integration. The positive impact of boating customs and their broader relevance to the every-day lives of the local residents is highlighted by one older participant:

They [Claddagh boats] are part of our history for a start, so what's happening with Bádóirí and the general community around the boats is very important to uphold that history and remember it. But it is still active life, my family and other families in the communities are still fishing, the skills are something that are possibly dying away and I wouldn't like to see them go. (Older Male, Community Focus Group).

Participants also identified how declining levels of participation in such local practices has had a negative impact on people's participation in general. This was articulated by participants from the three groups throughout the research process, particularly children and youth and older people. As highlighted by one younger participant, there is a sense that community cohesion

has been fractured due to the cessation of local traditions that are unique to Claddagh community:

Even now you can see a lot of the traditions that used to be in Claddagh are gone. We still have the King of the Claddagh... The King of Claddagh used to be so big and they would have all this power, but now, I suppose I don't think they have all that. There is still the Blessing of the Bay which is nice. But I'd love to bring back a lot of the old traditions... I'd say it was a lovely place to live way back [with these traditions]. (Female, Children and Youth Group, SD LC7).

In some instances, these customs were credited with having impacts on the wider neighbourhood, and the sense of togetherness and local pride. This is reflected in



the following quote from an older community resident, who spoke about local events that not only brought the neighbourhood together, but also served as a way of ensuring the upkeep of the area:

Claddagh Festival itself was a very good thing; it was almost like the Galway races. It was huge. You had a donkey derby and five-a-side soccer. The Claddagh Princess was part of it. It was a great community thing. It stopped. While it was there it was good fun. But that is gone. It is a shame in some ways; it meant the area got cleaned up. (Male, Older Adult Group, SD LC6).

For some participants, customs contributed to feelings of pride in Claddagh. Participants spoke about this sense of pride from a historical perspective, where they identified and reflected on times gone by, as opposed to current community practices. This younger participant speaks about this sense of pride, and its roots in the origins of the area as a fishing village:

Isn't there a bit of pride where anyone lives so like I'd say it is just as strong in the Claddagh. I'd say it has always been like that. Old fishermen used to live here and I'd say they had a great sense of pride in it and I'd say it has always been there. I'd say it was strong then because there was just more pride back in that day and there was more community in that day and it was much more tight knit. So I'd say it has come down a small bit but I think it is still there. (Female, Children and Youth Group, SD LC3).

Belonging and Neighbourhood Boundaries

A sense of belonging to the Claddagh neighbourhood emerged as an important determinant of participation for the three groups of interest within the research. For many individuals, feeling a part of the local area was integral to the ways in which they interacted with other residents and to their sense of integration. In effect, the degree to which people felt they belonged was strongly linked to how people participated in the neighbourhood. People's connection to Claddagh as a place was something that featured in the majority of participant narratives. Many individuals focused on the strength of their connections to the area and how this contributed to the closeness of the community and the solidarity between residents. People also spoke about how Claddagh was demarcated by

numerous landmarks. One younger participant describes how these landmarks helped orientate their sense of belonging:

Like it's nice to be able to say oh yeah I am from Claddagh... Like it is just like a nice name that you know that you are from there and then like there is just bits that signify Claddagh and you are like oh yeah that is basically me... I think the swamp and like around there... like oh Nimmos Pier... like that is what Claddagh is but then as well you have this bit of nice scenery which is nice to [behold]... (Female, Children and Youth Group, SD, LC3).

Despite this, it was evident that the different layers of neighbourhood boundaries within Claddagh impacted on perceptions of belonging and connection to the locality. Older residents, who had witnessed the neighbourhood evolve and spread from a small fishing village to a far larger area, were acutely aware of such a relationship. These participants talked about how residential location within the different boundaries could often indicate the length of people's connection with the neighbourhood, with more recent residents residing in the outer and greater Claddagh areas. Critically, they also spoke about how it could influence the extent to which people felt they belonged to the neighbourhood, and thereby the degree to which they could participate as a community member within Claddagh. One older man described the difficulty for some residents in feeling a part of the neighbourhood:

There is Claddagh and then there is Greater Claddagh. She is from Greater Claddagh, and that is only 10 yards outside Inner Claddagh. But she always said to me, their family were never regarded as from Claddagh, they just weren't... Essentially, they didn't feel as you say third-generation Claddagh... (Male, Older Adult Group, SD LC6).

The negotiation of neighbourhood boundaries was something that was perceived to hinder people's participation within the area. Feelings of disconnection were weaved into some participants' accounts and some narratives painted a picture of a community spread across the three layers of inner, outer and greater Claddagh areas. These three layers played a significant role in how the neighbourhood viewed itself and its inhabitants. One older male who lived in Claddagh for many years spoke about this

and reflected on how inner Claddagh and greater Claddagh have little or no connection:

There was no great association [between the areas]... again, back to the situation again, I don't want to knock it or I don't want to appear to... the Claddagh area is, old [inner] Claddagh, is a unit unto itself, it really is. Now the greater Claddagh area wouldn't encompass this particular area [area in inner Claddagh], and there's not much association between the two, is there... So, we're separate. (Male, Older Adult Group, SD LC5).

Outside of differential feelings of belonging arising from residential location, length of residence in the neighbourhood played a major role in how people negotiated their belonging and participated in the community. Some individuals described how they had lived in the neighbourhood for a number of decades, but still felt they were not part of the community. A number of participants reflected on the status of being a newcomer to the neighbourhood. One older woman described her experience of living within Claddagh, but still having to effectively negotiate her entitlement to belong to the community:

She actually said it to myself and [my friend] "You will never be Claddagh, you're only blow-ins". She said it to us at the gate, at our own two gates and the same woman she wasn't even Claddagh, she was from [Street Name]. But well obviously she was longer in Claddagh than we were. But there are still people in the area that would say that... They would, you know, I mean some of them would be saying it in a funny way and some of them would be very serious about it, you know?...they would mean it, yeah and I had a conversation with one girl that was born and reared in the area... She was saying, "You're never from the Claddagh" and I said, "You were born and reared here, I have done more in this area for Claddagh than you have ever done and you were born and reared here". So, I gave her a right telling. (Female, Older Adult Group, SD LC4).

Conversations with different focus groups within Claddagh echoed some of these difficulties and some of the challenges in uniting as one complete neighbourhood. The diminished opportunities to engage with one another

across all areas of Claddagh, was cited as reinforcing this challenge, with some participants highlighting a disjointed approach in community efforts to creating and running local activities relevant to the three participant groups. However, regardless of perceived or actual tensions in relation to belonging, participants spoke about their attachment to Claddagh as a place to live.

Neighbourhood Transitions and Transformations

Common across the three participant groups was the influence of transitions within the neighbourhood itself and how these impacted on participation for children and youth, older people and people with disabilities. Participant narratives illustrated how key neighbourhood changes influence a range of different areas of life. Local transformations, with respect to neighbourhood demographic structure, socio-economic conditions, housing distribution and development, and migration inflows were all noted to influence the context and the forms of the three groups disabilities.

Demographic change was highlighted by members of the children and youth group as impacting on their participation. In particular, the older age structure of the population, and the implications this had for local social and leisure infrastructure was considered to impact on engagement opportunities for children and youth.

The lack of opportunities for children and youth in Claddagh was highlighted by an older teenager, who compared Claddagh as a place to live to other neighbourhoods in the area:

There was a good group of us when I was younger... I see my friends who live in like Shantalla or Knocknacarra... they can just go across the road and go to their friends house or they just meet up... there is no one really there for her [younger sister], she has to go to Knocknacarra to meet her friends. If she is at home she has to stay there. There is nothing for her to do around the place. (Female, Children and Youth Group, SD LC7).

Evidence of how socio-economic changes impacted on participation were also outlined. Participants provided insights into how the area has evolved in social and economic terms, with this particular account from an older adult illustrating the deprivation experienced

by some residents in the past and the dramatic socio-economic transformations that have since occurred in the neighbourhood:

Well going back to the early 1950's, we used to go in a group down to Lydon House, and we'd get the bread and we'd deliver them to the poor people, particularly in Claddagh... some of the people would be standing on the door waiting for us to come and some of the ladies - they were in their bare feet. So it was a very poor area of Claddagh. Now it's the crème-de-la-crème of the city, but in those days it was very, very poor. (Male, Older Adult Group, SD LC5).

Reflecting how the community is now considered one of the most sought-after areas of Galway to live in, changes in the demand, distribution and value of housing were highlighted throughout the research. Patterns of gentrification were evident in participants' descriptions of how local homes were being bought and developed, in many

instances, with people from outside the neighbourhood moving into Claddagh:

The biggest change is people are looking to live here [Claddagh], they [property investors / potential home owners] are looking to go in here [Claddagh]. People coming from [other counties] and very well off could live anywhere in Galway; he [potential home owner] is living in the heart of Claddagh. You know. That is what I find, people want to live here [Claddagh]... that is a huge thing no. 1. Whereas one time they wouldn't, because it was a working-class area, dog rough. Male, Older Adult Group, SD LC6).

As a consequence of this process of redistribution and redevelopment of the local housing stock, clear differences between some recent residents and people native to the neighbourhood were apparent to some participants. These differences were considered to influence ideas of participation in the locality:



I suppose, the houses are so dear. Even now someone has just moved into a house across the road from me, but the house was so expensive when it went up. Like these people moved in but obviously they have money if they bought the house. The house is pure like secluded now... Like the people who are brought up in the Claddagh aren't like that at all and then you have people who come in and they are obviously loaded up with money to buy these houses so we are kind of like – wow!. (Female, Children and Youth Group, SD LC7).

Local long-term community residents could sometimes view such changes with a degree of apprehension. As illustrated by one older man, participants were concerned about the ways in which such change processes could dilute the sense of community within the neighbourhood and introduce new dynamics around integration and participation in the locality:

With the Claddagh, new people coming in, at the moment they don't have many demands because they are so caught up with their own lives, paying a mortgage or whatever. But I would say eventually they will impact on the area. (Male, Older Adult Group, SD LC6).

In a similar and connected way, a growing proportion of local housing being used as holiday homes and weekend properties were thought to create a sense of disconnect within the community. This was both in relation to knowing who lived in the area, but also in terms of the difficulty in developing relationships with such a temporary population group. In a community with a relatively low proportion of children and youth, the presence of holiday homes and temporary residents acted to fragment a sense of community and presented challenges to developing and maintaining relationships with new children and youth residents:

I know a lot moved in to some of the streets and even when you would see them they would be like oh 'Hi how are you' or whatever. But some people don't then as well. Some people kind of, a lot of people buy a house in the Claddagh and just use it as a holiday house or a weekend house, or something like that. (Female, Children and Youth Group, SD LC7).

Embedded Social Support

Despite some of the significant transformations that have occurred in the neighbourhood, and that cross-cut each of the other themes, participants highlighted how Claddagh has maintained a sense of togetherness. Featured throughout the narratives of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities, participants spoke about the abundance of neighbour and family support as a defining characteristic of Claddagh. Even with the questions that surround neighbourhood boundaries and belonging, the social support networks that people have carved out in the community were viewed as positive assets that residents harness daily, and which serve as foundations of what is described by participants as a tight-knit community. The majority of participants in this research highlighted the family, friend, and neighbour components of these networks and commented at length about the support that they garner from each and the ways in which this support enhances their participation.

Having family within close proximity played a significant role in how the residents of Claddagh experience day-to-day life in the neighbourhood. While a number of participants talked about family members who have left the neighbourhood, or had to move away due to lack of affordable housing, those with family in the area described in detail the ways in which family relationships and the instrumental and emotional support garnered from those relationships help them to remain connected and integrated with their community. The sense of security stemming from having good local neighbours was highlighted by several participants and was considered an additional community asset that augmented the more tangible forms of support and assistance provided by residents. In this respect, familiarity with neighbours and knowing who was around you was seen as crucial. One older participant speaks about the importance of family and neighbours within the neighbourhood:

But, like my family would mean an awful lot to me, they are great, great. I need them and they come, you know. And my neighbours as well, I mean I would be very friendly with them, I would know them all you know. (Female, Older Adults Group, SD LC4).

The role of reciprocity in building and sustaining these support networks, and the overall sense of togetherness

in the neighbourhood, was articulated by individual informants in the research interviews. Participants felt it was important, not only to receive support, but to offer support, forming the basis of informal exchanges and trust between members of the community. One older participant gave insights that illustrated the strong relationships he has built with immediate neighbours and the sort of interdependency that has developed over time:

Well it's sharing, really. That's what it's all about. And we have good neighbours here, we've good neighbours in Claddagh and we all get on very, very well. And to give is to receive, really. It's a simple as that... I suppose. Lookit... well if there's any bit of trouble... they all would come over. There's a good relationship, but a lot of independence... but [we] all know that if you're in trouble, you have neighbours. (Male, Older Adult Group, SD LC5).

For many older participants the sense of community is rooted in shared experiences of friendship and family,

underpinned by offering direct physical and emotional support to one another. This friendship and support provided some residents of the neighbourhood with peace of mind knowing that the neighbours would lend a helping hand in times of need. One younger participant provided illustrative insight into how the community looks out for older people, and in doing so, assists and supports the wider family, and how this reflects a broader neighbourhood ethos of support:

Even when my granny was there I remember like we would all be gone during the day because Mam and Dad were at work, and we would be at school and stuff. Especially when she started to get sick like, people would just come in just to make sure she was OK and stuff like that, which is really nice of them. Especially, just even just streets like you know, one street would look out for each other and then the next street would [and so on]. It is really nice. (Female, Children and Youth Group, SD LC3).



Concluding Points

In focusing on Claddagh, the 3-Cities Project sought to investigate experiences of participation for the three participant groups in an established inner-city neighbourhood that has experienced significant change. Claddagh is shaped by a distinctive cultural history, substantial socio-economic transformations, and by being a unique scenic and central location. Transformed from a fishing village and a lower-income area, to a neighbourhood of mixed socio-economic status and a desirable city-centre location, Claddagh offered a local micro-setting from which to explore impactful demographic, social, economic and cultural shifts, and the changing expectations of individual and collective neighbourhood community. Set against this back-drop, questions around the participation of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities, and the barriers to and facilitators of participation, became more intriguing.

This research did not set out to capture the views of all children and youth, older people and people with disabilities resident in Claddagh. 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 Claddagh'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. A limitation of the research is its failure to give adequate voice to people with disabilities within the research process. While two 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 Claddagh. Nevertheless, 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 four key themes relevant to how they participate: community customs and local identity; belonging and neighbourhood boundaries; neighbourhood transitions and transformations; and embedded social support.

Community customs and local identity:

Community customs were considered a significant asset in Claddagh for children and youth, older people and people with disabilities. Linked to ideas of local identity, and reinforcing a sense of neighbourhood togetherness and pride, such customs reflected traditional practices that continue to provide opportunities, or potential opportunities, for participation for the three groups. The possibility to harness such customs as a platform to achieve greater integration and participation for the three participant groups was highlighted throughout the various research strands.

Belonging and neighbourhood boundaries:

Neighbourhood belonging was found to be an important determinant of participation for the three participant groups. Claddagh inspired significant attachment to the area amongst all research participants. Despite this, length of residence, and whether people resided in inner, outer and greater Claddagh areas, impacted on perceptions of neighbourhood belonging and feelings of being a part of the locality. This in effect created the need for some participants to negotiate a sense of belonging, impeding how people participated in the neighbourhood and levels of integration.

Neighbourhood transitions and transformations:

For all three participant groups, transitions and transformations in Claddagh, altered participation dynamics within the area. Shifts in demographic structure, socio-economic conditions, housing distribution and development,



and migration inflows were some of the changes that shaped the context and forms of participation. Evidence of gentrification illustrated how such processes could influence informal social relationships, and neighbourhood expectations around participation and integration.

Embedded social support:

Social support embedded within the Claddagh neighbourhood had an enabling role in the participation of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities. Family, friends and neighbours resident within the area served as the primary sources of this support, which was both instrumental and emotional in form, and considered to underlie the close-knit nature of Claddagh. Reciprocity and interdependence were highlighted as core components of the culture of the neighbourhood, and helped to sustain local social support resources.

Given the wide-spread acknowledgment of the rich social and cultural fabric in Claddagh, it is not surprising that this emerged as a central feature of the neighbourhood — even within a research study focused on the participation of children and youth, older people and

people with disabilities. Similarly, distinct ideas around identity, neighbourhood belonging and the culture of neighbourhood support seem logical in the context of the characteristics of the neighbourhood. The significance of dynamic transformations within Claddagh, however, and how they intersect these other thematic areas, hint at the complexity of disentangling the combined influence of these various forces in shaping participation for the three groups. What is clear is that Claddagh possesses significant assets and resources with respect to neighbourhood customs, embedded social support and the sort of attachment that the neighbourhood fosters in its residents, including members of the three participant groups. What is also evident is that for some participants, there is the potential to experience a form of dislocation from the neighbourhood — whether, for example, this is a product of the changes that have occurred in the area that are perceived by longer-term residents to impact negatively on local participation dynamics, or whether this relates to residents, who are originally not from Claddagh, feeling slightly apart from the neighbourhood. It is by concentrating on and building upon the significant

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 Claddagh, 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/

assets of the neighbourhood that participation of the three participant groups can be enhanced.

In looking across the findings in this short 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 Claddagh points to five **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. Cultural heritage serves as a neighbourhood asset for participation** – the research highlights the potential of local customs to be harnessed as a mechanism to provide participation opportunities for members of the three groups;
- 3. Neighbourhood belonging shaped by residential location and tenure in Claddagh** – reflecting the different points in the life course that people moved into Claddagh, as well as; the expanding neighbourhood context and different local boundaries, the research shows that different levels of belonging can impact on how, and to what degree, people participated in the neighbourhood;
- 4. Transformative changes can weaken connections within the neighbourhood** – the research demonstrates how consideration needs to be given to the different ways in which changes in neighbourhood demographic structure, socio-economic conditions, housing distribution and development, and migration inflows can function to impact on values and practices of participation, and threaten sense of being ‘out-of-place’;
- 5. Informal forms of social support as a mechanism of participation enablement** – the research shows the positive role of social support from family, friends and neighbours in enhancing participation capacity in the neighbourhood and points to the potential role of social support as a means of integration.

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 Claddagh. A description of each principle and some illustrative examples, are presented below:

Participatory Customs and Practices

Harnessing and building upon the interest in neighbourhood customs could provide inter-group channels of participation within the neighbourhood. The research highlighted the local cultural significance given to such practices by many of the participants and ways in which such customs impacted and influenced different areas of life with the neighbourhood — whether intergenerational, social, cultural or economic. It also showed how existing initiatives built around these customs were considered to have a deeper potential to function as an integrative mechanism within the neighbourhood. Exploiting these unique community attributes, whether in relation to boat-building and restoration, or traditional events and communal activities, may provide a useful structure for practical interventions targeted at inclusion within the neighbourhood for children and youth, older people and people with disabilities.

Neighbourhood Collective Ownership

Creating ways of enhancing ownership over the neighbourhood would foster collective belonging for the three participant groups and the wider neighbourhood population. This is particularly in relation to developing a co-produced sense of community in the Claddagh neighbourhood that reflects the perspectives of new and longer-term residents, and those living across the inner, outer and greater Claddagh areas. The research demonstrated how individuals belonging to the participant groups can experience a sense of disconnection and dislocation depending on where in Claddagh they live and for how long they live in the area. It also points to the need for community efforts to focus on bringing together the different sections of the community to increase neighbourhood cohesion. Examples of building collective neighbourhood ownership might include involving children and youth, older people and people with disabilities in:

- The establishment of a neighbourhood forum with the aim of representing the views and perspectives of all population sub-groups within Claddagh with respect to participation.

- The co-development of community-based services to address changing needs and expectations as a result of neighbourhood expansion and changing residential composition.
- The reassessment and discussion of the use and management of local resources and amenities in the Claddagh neighbourhood.

Shared Neighbourhood Spaces

Given the significant change in the population composition of the Claddagh neighbourhood, there is the potential for an integrative and appropriate neighbourhood space to promote and enhance the participation of the three participant groups, from all areas of the community. The research illustrated that both new and established residents would welcome enhanced opportunities to participate in neighbourhood life in a more integrative way. The development of shared space could potentially act as a fulcrum where local residents could interact in an informal way. Practical examples of shared neighbourhood spaces might include:

- Retrofitting local green areas and/or harnessing existing buildings within and surrounding Claddagh to create periodic communal gatherings and to reflect the different social and cultural interests of the three participant groups.
- Urban design developed in conjunction with local residents to create new integrative civic spaces within the neighbourhood to promote neighbourhood processes around informal social contact, integration, safety and well-being.





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