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East Wall Neighbourhood Report

Findings from the 3-Cities Project

Alexandra Revez and Kieran Walsh



Institute for
Lifecourse and Society



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East Wall Neighbourhood Report

Introduction

This report documents research on the participation of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities in East Wall, in Dublin city. The research focuses on different experiences and transitions in people's lives, described as their life course, and holistic forms of participation. East Wall is one of six urban sites featured in the 3-Cities Project (see Box 1). The neighbourhood is a well-defined inner-city area, situated in Dublin Docklands, with strong traditional links to port activities. 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 East Wall, as a place-based community of people and as a service site, facilitates or impedes participation. In East Wall, 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. What are the differences in perceptions of participation in the East Wall neighbourhood, and its relational community, across generations?
2. In what ways have macro-structural changes impacted on East Wall and the participation channels available to children and youth, older people and people with disabilities?

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 relational aspects of East Wall serve as a 'neighbourhood family', positively influencing well-being and participation of the three participant groups;
3. The influence of macro structural processes on life-course experiences and relationships in East Wall;
4. The potential role of services as local assets and opportunities to facilitate multifaceted forms of participation for children and youth, older people and people with disabilities;
5. The cumulative impact of neighbourhood assets in East Wall on an individual's capacity to thrive.

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 East Wall

East Wall was selected as one of the 3-Cities Project's neighbourhood sites as it met a number of key criteria, including: representing an established, inner-city neighbourhood, with a strong working-class tradition and, relative to other proximal neighbourhoods, little development from its original residential urban environment. East Wall is located on the north-west side of the River Liffey in Dublin city centre (see figure 1), and

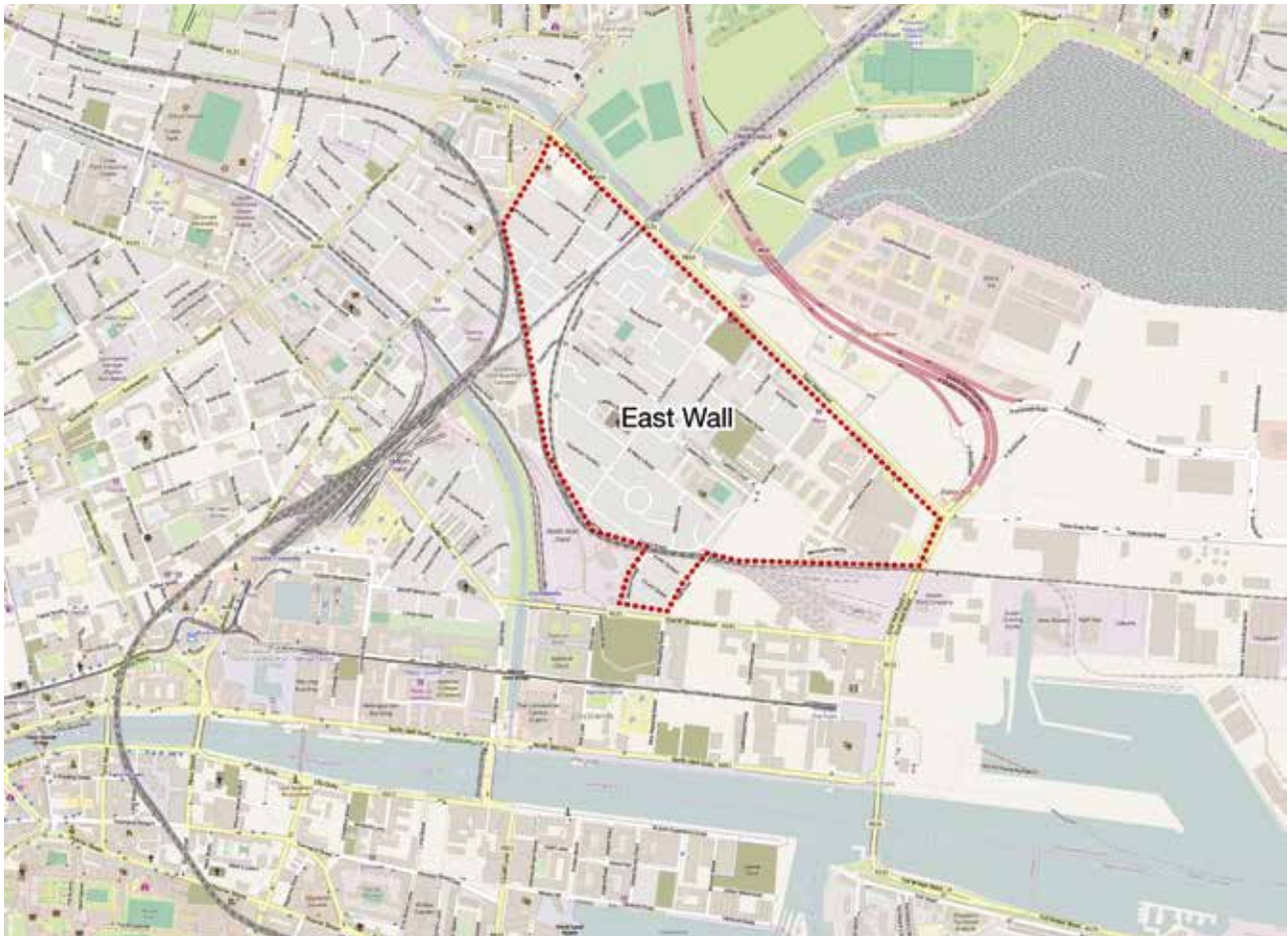


Figure 1 Boundaries of East Wall.

Source: OpenStreetMaps.

is often categorised as one of the five Docklands residential communities (DDDA, 2003)¹, with the wider area home to Dublin Port. The adjacent railway line and infrastructure was built to facilitate transport of goods to and from the Port. These developments, and the associated demand for labour, led to the emergence of East Wall in the 18th Century as a residential area built on reclaimed land (Moore, 2008)². Neighbourhood identity and traditions linked to port activities remain strong in the area (Wonneberger, 2011)³.

There has been a series of social and economic transitions common to all the dockland communities. This includes the sharp reduction in employment and port-related industry activity, from the 1960s onwards (ibid). The wider Docklands area, as a result, experienced a range of well-documented social problems in the 1970s and 1980s, such as population decline and unemployment.

In the mid 1990s, a series of business and residential redevelopment initiatives reversed the declining population (Moore, 2008). The rise of enterprise and financial services in these areas has fuelled on-going redevelopment and rejuvenation efforts in the Docklands district. Nevertheless, the neighbourhoods still possess their own distinct individual identity (Moore, 2008; Wonneberger, 2011). Further, these more recent developments are most evident in the neighbourhoods next to East Wall. Apart from a small-number of stand-alone apartment complexes, the local traditional, low-rise dwellings are in sharp contrast to the office blocks and large-scale housing apartment complexes in the adjacent communities (Moore, 2008).

As a result of its historic industrial origins and these more recent developments, the neighbourhood is readily identifiable in the urban landscape. High-rise buildings, the railway line, port infrastructure, freight yards and brown-field sites are located around East Wall's periphery. The geographical boundaries of the neighbourhood include

1 DDDA (2003). Dublin Docklands Area Master Plan, Dublin: DDDA, Custom House Quay.

2 Moore, N. (2008). Dublin docklands reinvented: the post-industrial regeneration of a European city quarter, Four Courts Pr Ltd.

3 Wonneberger, A. (2011). "Dockland Regeneration, Community, and Social Organization in Dublin." *Transforming Urban Waterfronts*. Fixity and Flow: 54-73.

the Tolka River to the north, Dublin bay to the west and the East Wall road and railway line delimiting the remaining area. The neighbourhood also has a relatively balanced social profile, which again makes it stand out amongst some adjacent neighbourhoods with higher crime and unemployment rates (Moore, 2008). For example, the unemployment rate in East Wall is estimated to be 13%, in comparison to a figure of 18% in North Wall and an average of 23% for Dublin city as a whole. East Wall, like its neighbouring communities, has seen a shift from being a peripheral area to having a greater and more central role within Dublin City. As such, it has become an increasingly desirable residential location for families and young professionals. This has to some extent restricted access to affordable housing for local residents.

On the basis of the most recent official statistics for the Parish of East Wall, the neighbourhood has an approximate population of 5,147 (CSO, 2011). The area is comprised primarily of Irish nationals, while 20% of inhabitants are members of a foreign national population. People aged 65 years and over comprise just over 10% of the population, which is lower than the national average (12%). Children and youth (between the ages of 12 to 18 years) comprise just under 6% of the population, which is also lower than the current national average (9%). In contrast, people with a disability comprise 16% of the local population, which is higher than the national average (13%).

The area is served by a series of small retail stores, larger supermarkets (e.g. Lidl), the East Wall Health Centre (run by the Health Service Executive – HSE) and one primary school. Post primary schools are situated outside East Wall in neighbouring districts, with green areas, such as the large Fairview Park, located within walking distance. The Seán O’Casey Community Centre serves as the primary hub of social care and recreational and leisure services for children and youth, older people and people with disabilities. Named after the celebrated playwright who was from the neighbourhood, the Centre’s services and amenities include a theatre, a gym, a multi-purpose sports hall, a playschool and crèche, and older adult day care services.

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 East Wall and the Liberties in Dublin, Claddagh and Doughiska (as a part of the broader ARD region) in Galway, 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 East Wall, 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), 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 East Wall, this discussion involved two children and youth, seven older people and three people living with a disability (n=12). 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 remit. In East Wall, seven 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 East Wall, eight 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 East Wall, six children and youth, four older people (two of whom possessed an age-related disability) and two people with disabilities participated in these interviews (n=12).



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 East Wall, two children and youth, one older person and one person with a disability participated in these interviews (n=4).

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 East Wall, two children and youth participants, one older person and one person with a disability took part in this training (n=4).

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 East Wall, five community stakeholders, children and youth, older people and people with disabilities participated in the second Collaborative Forum (n=5).

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

What we found

The findings are presented as four interrelated themes. These themes identify a number of factors which are seen to either promote or restrict community participation for children and youth, older people and people with disabilities. In some instances we found contrasting experiences for the three participant groups, while in others the findings illustrated how experiences were very much shared.

Relational Aspects of East Wall

People from each of the three participant groups emphasised relational aspects of the East Wall neighbourhood as important components of participation. Many participants spoke about the solidarity and stability that they experienced through relational aspects of the locality, and expressed this in the idea that the neighbourhood was like a 'family'. This encompassed both the literal meaning of family, as a household unit and a network of relatives, and family as a metaphorical descriptor of the close-knit, neighbourly structures in East Wall. Many of the research informants spoke about how family ties and neighbourliness operate as facilitators, in relational terms, of participation.

The values associated with family appeared to function as aspirational neighbourhood ideals informing neighbourhood-level supportive practices. A number of children and youth participants used family roots as a means of articulating why a sense of community within the East Wall neighbourhood was particularly strong. In some cases, the idea of the neighbourhood as a family was most evident for those participants who did not have large, extended, family connections locally. This is illustrated by one research participant, who grew up with a disability in East Wall, and who became reliant on the local neighbourhood to provide family-like relations and support:

[East Wall is] very much like a community where a lot of people have very strong roots. And there was a lot of families and extended families in the community... I just had the one sister and... she moved away... So, my brothers and sisters became the youth club. (Male, People with Disabilities Group, AR IN7).

For older people, these values were visibly linked in terms of forging and sustaining intergenerational interactions and relationships within the neighbourhood. In circumstances, where personal mobility was becoming increasingly an issue, and where as a result connections with the neighbourhood and with the local population could weaken, intergenerational relational aspects of the neighbourhood could become critical. This older person, who had an age-related disability, speaks about the relational networks in East Wall that are important to her, highlighting the role of such relationships as an enabler of independent living:

Well I only know the immediate neighbours across the road. There is one young couple and they are the best neighbours you could ever have. They look after me. They will knock and ask do I need any shopping or anything like that... My immediate neighbourhood [is important] and maybe the family of the people that I go to dinner with [at the community centre]. (Female, Older Adult Group, AR IN2).

Due to the value placed on intergenerational ties as an important aspect of the local relational community, older people were concerned that such relations may weaken in the future, and expressed a desire to promote stronger intergenerational connections in the neighbourhood. A range of activities promoted by local stakeholders in the area were described as strengthening community relationships across different generations. The following quote from a younger participant, who takes part in weekly intergenerational activities in the community centre, expresses the value and worth she sees in interacting with older generations in the locality:

We do intergenerational games most of the time with the old folks here, so we go there and we play games. Yesterday we did a quiz with them. Then last month I think we did bingo... I just really like it because you get to see what people live here. And if I was older and their age I'd like to do that with my community if I lived around here. (Female, Children and Youth Group, AR IN5).

Despite the acknowledged role of relational aspects of the East Wall neighbourhood, and how family-like ideals promote and sustain community ties in the area, a number of barriers to future community interactions were also evident. In the main, these related to changing lifestyles, family arrangements and the range of demands that were considered to impact on daily life. This was particularly emphasised for younger families where people have less time to engage at a neighbourhood level, due to work and family responsibilities:

Well all you can do is advertise things but you can't pull people out of their houses or anything, you know... I mean you have a young mother who has to get children ready, bring them to a childminder, go to work, collect the children, bring them home and get them to bed and get everything ready for the next morning and they just haven't the time or the stamina to be out, you know. I have seen it where my married children live and you don't see anybody in those areas. You see people coming home from work with children in the car where they have been collected from childminders or something and the young couple will say hello and that, then you don't see them until you see the car going off the next morning with the children, you know. (Female, Older Adult Group, AR IN2).

New residents in the neighbourhood, such as members of the migrant community and inhabitants of the high-rise apartment complexes, were also highlighted as groups who may not have access to the relational resources of the neighbourhood. As this older man describes in relation to the local migrant Muslim population, there can be challenges on both sides to fostering relationships with some new resident groups:

...you know the immigrants or say whatever religion they are they are trying to live their own life... there is Muslims that come here... They would be religious; I don't think that we understand their side of the story. It's like they could be the nicest people you can get but we don't sort of gel like that, you know. We don't gel with them... If you are on the bus now hello and all that but what I find is if I'm on the [bus] and the locals will [say] "hello, how're you keeping?" whatever but the immigrants won't, they won't interact with people. (Male, Older Adult Group, EL IN4).

Barriers to interactions between different generations and different social groupings were also expressed, with references to specific personal experiences of inappropriate behaviours. The following excerpt from a person with a disability provides an illustrative example of such experiences and points to the difficulties that can be encountered when difference and diversity is not accepted or appreciated within neighbourhoods:

I think there is a generation divide but I don't think that [it] is an issue for just East Wall... I think the problem of age is kind of, because they see so much on telly and their behaviour can be fashioned by what they see on telly. But yet they don't have the emotional maturity to be able to judge the appropriateness of certain behaviours within the most, the immaturity for young people come through... The only time say, that a remark might have been made 'Oh look at him!' would be from that age group... but I think that is a societal thing, not just about here. (Male, People with Disabilities Group, AR IN7).

Structural Influences in East Wall

The research demonstrated the influence of structural forces on the life-course experiences of the three participant groups in East Wall. These forces had a direct role in shaping individual and community trajectories, most notably in relation to social and economic aspects of life. Such forces, involving industrial sectors and macro-economic and social policies, impacted directly on patterns of participation within the neighbourhood. So too, were the expectations of participation that people grew up with. In some cases this theme illustrates how macro change produced consequences for life in East Wall. Structural influences were evident in historical terms, reflecting the industrial origins of the neighbourhood and older adult experiences of life in the neighbourhood, but are also still evident in East Wall today.

The long-standing relationship between the East Wall neighbourhood and Dublin Port was perhaps of most significance. The Port and its related industries, such as the freight rail system, offered a defined employment pathway for many of the local young people in East Wall, and thereby reinforced local community ties through the provision of localised employment. One older woman speaks about how when she was growing

up this effectively meant that there was a relatively set life-course trajectory:

At the time there was lots of little businesses and factories down here and there was work for teenagers and for young boys, there was sawmills. You see everything came in from England. The boats came up the river and unloaded timber and coal and there was horses and carts would collect the timber and coal and everything else from the boats and bring them through the city then to whatever factory or wherever people had bought them and got them delivered... We all just wanted to be 14 and go to work. There was only very few wanted to go to college or go to the tech [technical college] even. (Female, Older Adult Group, AR IN2)

The influence of the Port and the other Docklands industries strengthened a sense of continuity in East Wall and supported the sustained development of the residential neighbourhood.

However, the advancement of new technologies such as containerization and the growth of other industries in Ireland, such as finance, information technologies and construction, led to a substantial shift in local employment opportunities. This subsequently resulted in the reduction of embedded social networks and threatened the sustainability of the neighbourhood. These changes were very much reflected in the life narratives of older participants within the neighbourhood, as this man describes:

Then the imports came in and replaced the stuff we were doing and I ended up on the railway... We were loading trains in the freight end of it... They privatised the freight end of the Irish Rail right and so I got an offer I couldn't refuse and I got my redundancy and disappeared. (Male, Older Adult Group, EL IN4)

Nevertheless, while there is a weakened relationship between the Docklands and the East Wall neighbourhood with little evidence of enduring employment ties, the link with the Docklands is still evident and continues to influence the lives of some children and youth, older people and people with disabilities in the area. The Docklands remains a key focus of development in Dublin city centre. As a consequence local industries and institutions continue to be significant in terms of providing access to resources and opportunities. As this younger participant highlights, such a relationship can provide a resource to be harnessed for local community projects and the development of amenities:

Last year we got our playground built for the children [with resources from the local businesses]. For our school we got four people out of our class last year... we went and walked around to Docklands businesses and we gave letters with... little junior infants' writing on the front [requesting funds for a playground]. And we came around going looking for funds for our playground because it cost a lot of money... (Female, Children and Youth Group, AR IN5)

Another distinctive structural development in East Wall, reflecting its relative repositioning as a central neighbourhood in Dublin city, relates to issues around housing and the lack of affordable homes for local residents. Participants described two different sets of implications arising from difficulties in accessing housing. First, there is a sense of displacement of local families due to housing demands in the neighbourhood. This was acutely felt by older people who lamented how children and grandchildren had to move elsewhere to avail of housing, as illustrated by the following quote:

There is only one granddaughter in East Wall... The rest, when mine were getting married there was no houses available in this area. Everybody, all the houses were full, there was never a house came for sale. (Female, Older Adult Group, AR IN2)

More recent trends have seen an influx of new families coming into the area, with issues evident around securing housing and forging connections with the neighbourhood. While the community of East Wall is largely associated with low-rise, traditional one- and two-storey houses, in recent times the neighbourhood has seen the development of high-rise apartment complexes. While all participants, recognised that such developments, and their occupants, were a part of the wider network of social relationships in East Wall, it was acknowledged that these complexes signified in physical, social and cultural ways a departure in terms of residential lifestyle and community interactions.

The two quotes below show how apartment complexes tend to have their own particular set of amenities and community arrangements. Additionally, these quotes suggest how these complexes are faced with specific social issues, which may lead to more inward-looking interactions, and detract from establishing stronger connections with the wider neighbourhood in East Wall.



I think that apartments will probably end up having their own committee. And that'll be wrapped up with any meetings going on in relation to East Wall; they'll have a spokesperson there. To let them know what's going on. You know, if they can get one going in the apartments. Because they're, again, 60 families thrown together, thrown in here because they can't get a house, they can't buy a house, or whatever. So they're thrown in at the deep end as well, like.”(Male, Older Adult Group, AR IN1)

In terms of overall participation and potential barriers to inclusion, one of the participants suggests that the design of these apartments may have a bearing on participation:

I know a couple of parents of my own age, I know some up there, that have got apartments, in the social flats... and my impression is that is where the breakdown is, is more in the private. Because they have gates, you don't see gates on the social houses. (Male, People with Disabilities Group, AR IN7)

Service Provision in East Wall

The role of service provision in determining participation for children and youth, older people, and people with disabilities was evident in East Wall. There were a number of strengths with respect to local service infrastructure within the neighbourhood. For some groups, services catered for specific needs, while also serving to facilitate different forms of participation and reinforce local community ties. In contrast, a number of challenges and gaps in service delivery were also identifiable, both for certain kinds of services and for particular groups within the local population. Ultimately, the extent to which services in the neighbourhood supported participation varied across groups and with each service domain.

Social care and social inclusion related service provision for older people was a substantial resource within the neighbourhood for ageing East Wall residents. Local stakeholder organisations, and in particular the Sean O'Casey Community Centre, were credited with creating a supportive and inclusive infrastructure for these individuals. This was recognised by the majority of participants and was often identified as an asset of the

neighbourhood itself. Many descriptions focused on how these services were multifaceted in their impact and dealt with specific forms of need, such as meal provision, but also worked to maintain social connections with peers and with the wider local neighbourhood. Although, some male participants did highlight that many of the services appeared to be of most interest to older women. As exemplified by a quote from one older woman, services in some cases provided a structured routine of participation and helped preserve the life-course continuity of people's local relationships:

We have an absolutely fabulous day care centre [at the Sean O'Casey Community Centre]... I would be lost now only for the Community Centre. So that is a great part of my life now, you know, getting out for the few hours every day with all the people I have known all my life. (Female, Older Adult Group, AR IN2).

Members of the three participant groups identified the Sean O'Casey Community Centre as the central hub for community social care within the East Wall neighbourhood. In addition to services for older adults, the Community Centre was considered to be particularly of value with respect to services for small children. Despite this, there were a number of challenges faced by participants in relation to remaining engaged with the current service infrastructure. People with age-related disabilities expressed concerns over their future participation in the local neighbourhood services:

My health is not so good and I'm not able to partake in a lot of the things now. They have, our Monday Club... Well they arrange outings and holidays but I can't go on any of them for health reasons. Like that has made a great change in my life. I go to all the things I can go to that's arranged. Any of the plays that are on at night time I go, but I can't go away with them. (Female, Older Adult Group, AR IN2).

For children and youth, aged 12 to 18 years, service provision in the neighbourhood was considered to be a challenge. The availability of services and their relevance to this age group was a concern for a number of children and youth participants, and was raised during both interviews with individuals and emerged from the wider research process during focus group discussions. In these instances, while the Community Centre, and some sports clubs and facilities were generally praised, the lack of services and amenities that catered specifically for the

interests of teenage groups was considered a barrier to more involved participation. This excerpt, taken from a focus group discussion conducted with four younger people as a part of a citizen researcher project, illustrates this perspective:

Mostly it is kids and elderly there is nothing really for teenage age groups. (Female, Children and Youth Group, CRY1).

For young people in the locality, school services were also signalled as an issue. As East Wall does not have a local secondary school, children of this age group are largely dispersed into a number of different secondary schools in the wider vicinity of the neighbourhood, with consequences highlighted for peer and intergenerational relations within East Wall. This was considered to denote a significant transition for younger residents, and was highlighted by children and youth participants, individuals from the other participant groups and community stakeholders. As noted by one younger person, the initial period of adaptation to this transition could be challenging, as was the loss of contact with peers from the locality:

How would I describe the school, it's a great school. I really, honestly as much as you get tormented coming in all the time I couldn't see myself in any other school. Like in first year I absolutely hated it, I'm not going to lie to you, for the first six months I absolutely hated it because a couple of people that I used to be with in [primary school] weren't in the school, they were [somewhere else] and it was just, it was complete resent[ment] to stay here like. (Male, Children and Youth Group, EL IN3).

Service provision in relation to issues of safety also emerged during the research, with a focus on community policing. Overall, participants have expressed a growing concern with regards to personal security and safety in the neighbourhood, with the perception of an increased number of robberies in the area. This matter was particularly salient for older people living in the area:

There had been a few burglaries and stuff and all that, you know. And you have to sort of barricade your fucking house, you know. You have to sort of lock the doors and all this, you know. (Male, Older Adult Group, EL IN4).



This concern was made more acute by changes in the way community policing was delivered locally, and the perceived reduction in the engagement of an Garda Síochána with the neighbourhood. Participants highlighted the closure of the Garda station in Fitzgibbon Street in 2011 and the subsequent transferral of responsibilities for the East Wall neighbourhood to a Garda station located closer to the city centre. As this participant described, such changes in service delivery can in some cases undermine a sense of security and reinforce a sense of being forgotten about for local residents:

When I rang up the Garda Station, I said to your man, “I’m down here on Church Road in East Wall.” “Where’s East Wall?” That’s what he said to me, couldn’t believe it. It’s a sore point! (Male, Older Adult Group, ARIN1)

The notion that East Wall was sometimes overlooked due to larger and often more problematic neighbourhoods in the Docklands area was commented on by the three participant groups. This children and youth participant, who was originally from a neighbouring area with higher

rates of crime, highlighted how this relative comparison meant that East Wall was for him a very safe and secure locality.

East Wall doesn’t need to improve, Sheriff Street does. The streets need to be evaluated more... East Wall is clean enough. I don’t think they should be putting too much on East Wall. (Male, Children and Youth Group, EL EI2).

Enabling Interactions in Place

This theme focuses on narratives of how interactions with place can be enabling. Particularly strong for participants who were living with a disability, these findings illustrate how that for some individuals it was the cumulative impact of East Wall’s assets that combined to support participation. This is not to detract from the variety of challenges regarding the participation of the three participant groups in East Wall identified in this research. Nonetheless, enabling interactions with place were significant in some people’s accounts and were derived from tangible attributes such as local, stakeholder-led

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service provision and relational aspects of the community, as well as subjective feelings based on participants' relationship with East Wall over their life course. For a number of participants, it was the sense of place and of being at home in the neighbourhood of East Wall that served as a significant resource. This was manifest for the different participant groups in contrasting ways; for people with disabilities it reinforced a sense of inclusion; for older people it strengthened feelings of local connectedness; for children and youth participants, it supported the integration of new and younger residents.

A number of people with disabilities talked about their lives in East Wall and highlighted the importance of not just living independently and autonomously, but being able to remain in a community where they grew up and lived most of their lives. The following two quotes illustrate the significance of feeling attached to the neighbourhood of East Wall.

I love the place, I love it... I like staying here. Staying local. (Male, People with Disabilities Group, AR EI1)

I do hold it very strongly that living in the community, it is important. I am not alone even though I live alone. I am on my own, [but] I have never been alone. I always have people around me. (Male, People with Disabilities Group, AR IN7)



The findings also indicated that local initiatives worked to include and support the personal development of some individuals with disabilities. Participation and personal development were reported as challenges due to preconceived ideas about disability and individual capacities to partake in local initiatives. The following quote demonstrates the range of challenges faced and how local supports helped counter these challenges:

I also was very unhappy in the school where I was. I felt that I was, you know I had difficulties, but the expectations that I had for myself were so much different from the expectations that others had of me. And my expectations were higher that I could achieve much more, my parents... they never pushed me either way. They left it up to me all the time. So, my joining the youth club, gave me a greater measure of how I can cope in an environment that is not set up for someone with my needs... so two years after I joined the youth club I joined the Tech. And it was, I realised the youth club had developed my social skills [and] helped me to progress academically. And I stayed and did my leaving cert. I met some great mentors on my way. Didn't push, but encouraged, was enthusiastic about building my... [they] didn't set limits. (Male, People with Disabilities Group, AR IN7)

In the narratives of many of the research participants, it was apparent that East Wall provided a supportive environment impacting on their lives in multiple different ways, but which all contributed to a capacity to thrive as individuals and as members of the East Wall neighbourhood. For some children and young participants, their relationship with East Wall emerged over time and over the course of a number of residential and life-course transitions. The following quote shows how a strong sense of place has provided and nourished feelings of belonging in this younger resident:

Yeah because, I lived in Poland and then we came to Ireland when I was three. I lived here until I moved [to another neighbourhood] for four months, then I came back and I lived here. Then I moved to Lucan. But I just, it wasn't, it was nice and all the children were nice but it's just something wasn't right for me. So we moved back. I kept getting sick, it was probably home sick, I don't know what it's called, I missed this place. I just really liked it." (Female, Children and Youth Group, AR IN5)

Concluding Points

In focusing on East Wall, the 3-Cities Project sought to investigate experiences of participation for the three participant groups in an established inner-city neighbourhood, with historically strong industrial links, that has experienced little urban development relative to the broader Docklands district. East Wall is a very defined neighbourhood, with a distinct identity, within a larger urban context that is often considered to be in flux. However, East Wall is also subject to structural and macro-economic changes as a result of its long-standing relationship with the Port and its related industries. In combination, these characteristics establish an interesting local setting, with contrasting forces of stability and change, from which to explore the multifaceted participation of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities.

This research did not set out to capture the views of all children and youth, older people and people with disabilities resident in East Wall. 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 East Wall'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 seven 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 East Wall. 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: relational aspects of community in East Wall; structural influences in East Wall; service provision in East Wall; and enabling interactions in place.

Relational aspects of East Wall:

The culture of supportive relationships in East Wall was found to enhance participation for the three participant groups, and was compared to that of a 'family'. Family ties, neighbourliness and intergenerational relationships were

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 East Wall, 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/

all important components of the relational community in East Wall for children and youth, older people and people with disabilities. While challenges with respect to the relational aspects of East Wall were identified, values of solidarity and support were evident in how members of the three groups talked about the ways in which the neighbourhood facilitated their participation.

Structural influences in East Wall:

The life-course experiences of the three participant groups in East Wall were shaped by structural forces. Key industrial sectors and macro-economic and social policies directly influenced patterns of social and economic participation within the neighbourhood. East Wall's changing relationship with Dublin Port and the Docklands' industries, and issues around the availability of affordable housing, impacted on the lives of the three participant groups and challenged expectations concerning life-course pathways of participation within the neighbourhood.

Service Provision in East Wall:

The extent to which services supported participation varied across groups and in accordance with different areas of service provision. Social care and social inclusion services for older people, which facilitated need, different forms of participation and peer relationships represented significant local assets. The availability and relevance of services for children and youth participants were identified as a challenge, as were the changes to community policing in the neighbourhood. In these ways, service provision



served as a determinant of different levels and forms of participation for participant groups.

Enabling Interactions in Place:

Participation was, for some participants, enabled by the nature of East Wall itself, and by the cumulative impact of the neighbourhood's assets. This involved dimensions of the local neighbourhood, such as local stakeholder-led service provision, relational aspects of the community, and subjective feelings reflecting participants' relationship with East Wall. Enabling interactions in place impacted on people's lives by: fostering feelings of belonging and a sense of being at home; providing autonomy within a supportive and safe environment; and enhancing personal capacity to thrive.

The research demonstrates the ways in which macro-economic and structural changes can produce micro-level consequences for the participation and neighbourhood ties of some children and youth, older people and people with disabilities in local settings. This is in a neighbourhood context that has arguably undergone less social, economic and development transformations than some of its Docklands' neighbours. East Wall and its relationship with Dublin Port can be seen to encapsulate the link between national-level industries and local neighbourhoods, but within a small geographic area. As a result, the susceptibility of the neighbourhood to structural shifts and the ways in which this can impact on the life course of the three participant groups, and create challenges for participation, is that more evident. The research also illustrates how participation in such settings can be, in part, a function of people's relationships with different dimensions of place over their life course in East Wall.

Furthermore, as evidenced in this research, while there are challenges that can impede participation within the East Wall neighbourhood for the participant groups, there are assets that help the neighbourhood and individual residents adapt to transitions and change. These assets, for the most part, include the strength of participants' attachment to East Wall, the culture of 'family-like' neighbourhood relationships and the efforts of local community stakeholders and service infrastructure.

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 East Wall 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. **‘Neighbourhood family’ positively influences well-being and participation** – the research shows how relational aspects of the East Wall community, and its close-knit neighbourly structure, reflects family-like values to foster relational well-being and to support participation amongst members of the participant groups;
3. **Structural processes affect life-course experiences and relationships** – the research highlights how macro-economic and macro-social forces can impact on different forms of participation, and social relationships within the East Wall neighbourhood;
4. **Services as local assets and opportunities** – the research demonstrates the potential of local stakeholder-led service provision to facilitate multifaceted forms of participation, and highlights the need to consider service relevance, appropriateness and means of engagement for each of the three participant groups.
5. **Cumulative neighbourhood effects on individual capacity to thrive** – the research illustrates how the combined impact of East Wall’s assets, and the sense of being in place in the neighbourhood, enables a capacity for participation and to thrive.

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 East Wall. A description of each principle and some illustrative examples, are presented as follows:

Life-Course Asset Planning

Mapping who lives in East Wall, and charting current and future population trends (ageing; inward and outward

migration, etc.), will facilitate life-course asset planning. This will build neighbourhood readiness to be able to anticipate the suitability of physical infrastructure, and adapt (or develop new) amenities and facilities and other tangible assets, and thus respond to shifts in community composition and life-course stages and transitions of the three participant groups. This process needs to be in consultation with local children and youth, older people and people with disabilities, and as part of a multi-stakeholder planning approach. Examples of life-course asset planning might include:

- Reviewing existing brown-field sites on the periphery of East Wall, assessing their feasibility to host flexible assets for the neighbourhood (e.g. informal social collision spaces, service sites and green zones) that can be adapted over time;
- Developing co-housing projects within the neighbourhood that promote inter-group and interdependent residential environments to reflect life-course housing needs.

Relational Neighbourhood Identity

Building on East Wall’s relational community, and its identity as a close-knit neighbourhood, will help to enhance the participation of members of the three participant groups from different backgrounds within the locality. There is a need to nurture the relational aspects of East Wall, while extending their influence and impact to other sections of the local population. In addition to participants identifying the strength of the relational neighbourhood, the research highlighted challenges to community interactions (e.g. demands on time; declining intergenerational connectivity) and how different groups within East Wall may have poor social networks with little capacity to connect to the wider neighbourhood (e.g. migrant population groups; new residents of apartment complexes). Formal programmes focused on building solidarity and communicating the identity of a close-knit neighbourhood will help to build new channels of participation and integration. They will also help to cultivate a greater sense of ownership over the neighbourhood. Practical examples of these programmes might include:

- Developing mentorship programmes to foster social and civic leadership within East Wall and to facilitate legacy planning for local grass-roots organisations;
- Inter- and multi-generational art and culture initiatives between new and longer-term residents to explore the development of East Wall, and its changing urban

landscape from two-storey to multi-level apartment complexes;

- Integrating values and ideas of close-knit neighbourhood identity into new housing and amenity developments through multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Service Relevance Innovation

There is significant potential to establish voice-led service innovation programmes that will harness the perspectives of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities in enhancing the relevance of services to people's lives and interests. The innovation programmes will respond to group-specific and cross-group need within the local neighbourhood, and will provide a structure through which existing services, new services and changes to service delivery can be critically assessed from the perspectives of members of the three participant groups. These structures are likely to capitalise on existing

efforts by local, stakeholder-led service providers and benefit external service organisations catering for these groups in East Wall. To serve as meaningful mechanisms of service co-production, these voice-led service innovation programmes should be employed at key stages during service design and service transformation. Examples of voice-led service innovation programmes might include:

- Drawing on the perspectives of the children and youth population to develop services that facilitate, support and meaningfully engage older teenagers in East Wall;
- Establishing integrative service collaborations across the disability, youth and ageing sectors in East Wall to enhance life-course orientated service delivery;
- Harnessing the insights of the three participant groups to develop common interest initiatives, such as expanding on existing intergenerational activities, to facilitate integrated participation of all three groups.



Project Lifecourse
Institute for Lifecourse and Society
National University of Ireland Galway

Tel: 091-494308/492934

e-mail: lifecourse@nuigalway.ie

<http://www.nuigalway.ie/ilas/project-lifecourse/>

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