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Climate - Water - Sustainability
Identifying pressures • Informing policy • Developing solutions

Identifying "What Matters" for Community Wellbeing with the Irish Public Participation Networks

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Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

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- large scale industrial activities (*e.g. pharmaceutical, cement manufacturing, power plants)*;
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- Office of Environmental Sustainability
- Office of Environmental Enforcement
- Office of Evidence and Assessment
- Office of Radiation Protection and Environmental Monitoring
- Office of Communications and Corporate Services

The EPA is assisted by an Advisory Committee of twelve members who meet regularly to discuss issues of concern and provide advice to the Board.

EPA RESEARCH PROGRAMME 2014–2020

Identifying "What Matters" for Community Wellbeing with the Irish Public Participation Networks

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EPA Research Report

Prepared for the Environmental Protection Agency

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DISCLAIMER

This report is based on research carried out/data from October 2017 to September 2018. More recent data may have become available since the research was completed.

The EPA Research Programme addresses the need for research in Ireland to inform policymakers and other stakeholders on a range of questions in relation to environmental protection. These reports are intended as contributions to the necessary debate on the protection of the environment.

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Executive Summary

> When we understand what makes people's lives go well, see the positive things people bring to situations, and understand people's emotional and social needs, projects and services can be better designed to respond to the many aspects that make up people's lives. (NEF, 2012)

The Public Participation Networks (PPNs) were established through the 2014 Local Government Reform Act in order to "provide a mechanism by which citizens can have a greater say in local government decisions which affect their own communities" (DRCD, 2017). There is a PPN in each of the 31 local authority areas in Ireland and together they have a membership of approximately 12,800 Irish organisations and groups across the community and voluntary, environment and social inclusion sectors.

Alongside building the capacity of community organisations and electing community representatives to sit on local government policy committees, one of the functions of the PPNs is to develop municipal district-level "visions" of community wellbeing. These visions of community wellbeing are to be set out in a "wellbeing statement" that is used by the PPNs to inform their participatory and advocacy work with local government and their local policy committees.

By understanding which determinants of community wellbeing matter to people at a municipal district level, the PPNs can more legitimately present and represent the views and wishes of communities across Ireland. The PPN wellbeing statement can provide local government, national statutory and non-statutory bodies and elected representatives with insights that can inform the design of local policies, services, programmes and engagement strategies.

This report presents the initial findings from an action research project in which a toolkit was co-designed that helps PPNs develop their visions of community wellbeing. The action research and co-design project was funded by the Irish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and delivered on a part-time basis between October 2017 and September 2018.

An EPA research fellow worked alongside four PPNs, the Irish Environmental Network and Social Justice Ireland to co-design a toolkit for identifying "bottom-up" community wellbeing indicators. This toolkit was then tested through workshops with PPN members in Wicklow, Cork City, Longford and Roscommon. It is planned that, following this, the co-designed toolkit will be rolled out to the 31 PPNs across Ireland.

From these workshops, 2203 separate suggestions on "what matters" to communities across six wellbeing domains were collected. Using inductive thematic analysis, these 2203 suggestions were synthesised into "visions" for community wellbeing for each of the municipal district areas of the PPNs.

These "visions for community wellbeing" were structured around the six wellbeing domains of social and community development; environment and sustainability; work, economy and resources; health; values, culture and meaning; and participation, democracy and good governance.

Following the co-design process, additional analysis was undertaken by the research fellow in order to develop a framework of community wellbeing indicators and a proposed methodology that could be delivered at a later stage by the PPNs.

For this project, community wellbeing was situated within a sustainability and environmental policy frame and used as a conceptual framework to consider how wellbeing interventions for sustainable communities in Ireland could be designed. The project builds on existing work by the EPA on the "environment, health and wellbeing nexus", sustainable communities, behaviour change and citizen science projects.

1 Project Context

A fundamental role of public policy is the protection and enhancement of the wellbeing of citizens. From a policy perspective, wellbeing is central to the measurement of welfare trends and "genuine progress" at national and local levels. Wellbeing accounts for the emotional and behavioural dimensions of citizens and places value on the non-monetary benefits of a range of socio-economic and environmental conditions.

Therefore, wellbeing can be used in the economic appraisal of policies as well as in the strategic design of various policy interventions (Dolan *et al*., 2011; Dolan and Metcalfe, 2012; Luhmann *et al*., 2012; OECD, 2013). The focus is typically on the policy outcomes or policy end point in terms of the perception that "life is going well" or the factors that constitute a "good life".

There is now little argument on what are the key determinants of wellbeing, for example income and employment, health status, exposure to environmental risks, education and skills, social connections, economic vulnerability and a sense of purpose and meaning in life.

Although there is broad, but not universal, agreement on the interrelated nature of wellbeing determinants, they are traditionally the focus of separate policy interventions. This is partly because of knowledge, data and evidence gaps but also partly because of governance structures and institutional designs.

This multidimensional nature of wellbeing has also resulted in decades of debate on how wellbeing is appropriately conceptualised, measured and enhanced through public policy and service design.

The more recent interest in wellbeing at a policy level has been driven by a desire for flexible measures of social progress and an increased understanding of environmental challenges and other contextual drivers of wellbeing (Bache and Reardon, 2016).

One dominant aspect of this has been a critical debate on the traditional measures of welfare, wellbeing and social progress used by governments. In some instances gross domestic product (GDP) has been used as a proxy for wellbeing, although it is not a welfare measure and lacks the capacity to describe social progress beyond what is produced and consumed within an economy. There is not always a positive correlation between GDP growth and improving household incomes or there are bounded correlations between GDP growth and levels of subjective wellbeing among citizens.

If used as a measure of social progress, GDP can also mask socio-economic inequalities across societies or within sub-populations, insufficiently account for the decline in ecological systems and mask "diseases of affluence" (e.g. hypertension, diabetes, certain mental health problems). It also does not account for the quality of governance and of public institutions in terms of providing equal opportunities for all (Boarini *et al*., 2014).

Policymakers and researchers have also explored whether wellbeing can function as a mechanism for negotiating and reconciling the tensions between the design of policies for environmental sustainability and the design of those for economic growth and prosperity (Marks *et al*., 2006; Lamb and Steinberger, 2017).

In terms of the environmental, health and wellbeing nexus, the evidence on the relationship between exposure to environmental hazards and health and wellbeing is improving. For example, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that between 15% and 20% of total deaths and 18–20% of disability-adjusted life-years can be attributed to environmental factors, such as exposure to particulate matter, radon and environmental tobacco smoke (Prüss-Ustün *et al*., 2006).

Although this debate has existed in different policy circles for many decades, the 2009 *Report by the Commission on Measuring Economic Performance and Social Progress* (Stiglitz *et al*., 2009) has accelerated interest in wellbeing as a measure of social progress.

One of the arguments from this report was that the development of comprehensive and comparable wellbeing indicators can mobilise action across traditionally disparate policy silos and bring a greater

degree of policy coherence. The assumption is that wellbeing is a more sound measure of social progress than GDP because it combines measures on the dynamic relationships between ecological, social and economic systems.

Since publication of the report by Stiglitz *et al*. (2009), a large number of new transnational, national and sub-regional wellbeing initiatives have been launched. Allin and Hand (2017) estimated that by 2014 there were more than 160 wellbeing measurement frameworks and initiatives, for example the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Better Life Index and the European Union's (EU) Beyond GDP initiative, as well as national initiatives across most European and OECD countries, and in Ecuador, Morocco, the Philippines and Bhutan.

Regional initiatives and national legislation have also been developed, for example the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, as well as sub-regional initiatives such as the Santa Monica Wellbeing Project, Guangdong Wellbeing Index and Scottish National Performance Framework.

A number of initiatives are led by or combine "bottom-up" insights from communities themselves, for example the Australian "six-by-six" community wellbeing model, Community Wellbeing San Diego, San Antonio 2020 and the Yawuru wellbeing survey of indigenous people of the Western Australian region of Rubibi.

Diverse epistemological and ontological perspectives inform the design of these frameworks, although, having said that, some of their common characteristics are that they are concerned with the material conditions, perceived quality of life and issues of relationality that determine an individual's wellbeing.

The material conditions include those objective factors that influence wellbeing, such as a healthy environment, secure and affordable housing, accessible infrastructure and transport. The factors that influence quality of life tend to be subjective and objective factors such as health, social connections, a sense of empowerment and education. The relational aspects deal with the interactions that people have within the social, political, cultural and environmental contexts.

2 What Is Wellbeing?

There is no single or commonly agreed definition of wellbeing, although, in the context of this project, it is probably best understood as a measure of social progress that encompasses the subjective experiences and objective conditions that allow individuals to "thrive" and communities to be more sustainable (Parfit, 1984; Dolan *et al.*, 2011).

Although it is often discussed in the context of health or social policy, wellbeing is a multidimensional concept that encompasses a range of factors such as, but not limited to, physical and mental health, quality of life, quality of the natural environment, social relations, economic prosperity and inclusive sustainable communities (Lepper and McAndrew, 2008; Stiglitz *et al*., 2009; OECD, 2013; Stone and Mackie, 2013).

Wellbeing is not just about the absence of problems or a state of happiness; it emphasises the combined personal and social experiences of the multiple factors that make life "go well" for all people, regardless of circumstance.

Depending on how wellbeing is conceptualised, these broad factors, which themselves contain a number of components, can be seen as dimensions, domains or determinants of wellbeing. For example, a healthy environment can have a positive effect on individual wellbeing, and individual behaviours that contribute to wellbeing, such as "active travel", may lead to a healthier environment (Martin *et al*., 2014).

The wellbeing literature discusses a range of other, often binary, relationships between individual dimensions of wellbeing, for example the relationships between the built environment and physical activity, between economic inequality and mental health, and between technology use and mental health.

Some of the wellbeing literature explores the systemic or longitudinal interactions between a range of factors, as well as exploring critical perspectives on the socio-economic factors or the political economy of wellbeing (Bache and Reardon, 2016). Some wellbeing measures and frameworks consider these factors simultaneously and systematically consider their relationships, mediations and interactions, as well as the tensions and trade-offs between them.

For example, in the context of environmental policy, wellbeing may be understood in terms of the objective conditions (e.g. air pollution levels) and the subjective experiences or perceptions of these conditions (e.g. concerns about and behavioural responses to air pollution).

From that perspective, the measurement of wellbeing can involve both quantitative (e.g. air quality data) and qualitative data sources. Social scientists may assess the impact of socio-economic factors, such as income and unemployment, on subjective wellbeing, or the impact of environmental factors, such as air pollution, climate change or green spaces, and the perceived effects that these have on subjective wellbeing.

2.1 Key Distinctions of Wellbeing

In the wellbeing literature, a set of distinctions is typically drawn between different forms of individual wellbeing. In the first instance a distinction is drawn between "hedonic" wellbeing, which describes the experience of "pleasure" or "happiness", and "eudaimonic" wellbeing, which describes the notion of life satisfaction over time and a sense of purpose and meaning (Annas, 1998; Rabbås *et al*., 2015).

These perspectives primarily differ in terms of understanding how wellbeing is achieved and the potential conflicts or tensions within the subjective understanding of this. For example, hedonic wellbeing may be achieved through "dysfunctional" or injurious behaviours or while living within sub-optimal structural conditions, such as in relative poverty.

The eudaimonic perspective aims to overcome the limitations of the hedonic perspective in the sense that a person can report high levels of wellbeing even though they may be experiencing hardships or inequality because they are able to view their hardship through a "broader framework of interpretive horizons" (Conradson, 2012).

Another key distinction is between the objective and subjective dimensions of wellbeing. Objective wellbeing tends to include those measures of wellbeing that are externally acquired and validated

through direct measurement, whereas subjective wellbeing involves self-reported measures.

The objective measures can, for example, include socio-economic data for a population, such as employment status or educational attainment; health data, such as stress levels, cortisol levels or body mass index; or environmental data, such as air pollution and water quality.

The last few decades have seen a growth in interest in subjective individual wellbeing measures that are used either on their own or in combination with objective data (Diener *et al*., 1985; Kahneman *et al*., 1999; OECD, 2013). This has led to a growth of studies validating subjective measures of wellbeing and demonstrating their correlations with objective measures, such as medical or health measures (Kahneman and Krueger, 2006).

This focus on subjective individual wellbeing is partly driven by the recognition or assumption that individuals themselves are best positioned to assess, through subjective assessments, how they feel their lives are going. It is also driven by the fact that there are more robust methods of measurement for subjective wellbeing than for community wellbeing. In this case, community wellbeing can be either aggregated individual wellbeing or intersubjective understandings of wellbeing.

3 Community Wellbeing

Given the nature of this project, it is important to clarify some of the definitions of community wellbeing, the reasons why community wellbeing may be important for policy (e.g. desired policy end points), the assumptions underpinning different conceptualisations of community wellbeing and the power structures around defining and measuring wellbeing.

One of the common characteristics of the conceptual and analytical frameworks of wellbeing has been a focus on the measurement and enhancement of individual wellbeing. This is typically measured through population surveys or existing statutory data sets that can inform aggregated assessments of wellbeing at the national level.

There are other perspectives and frameworks that emphasise collective or community wellbeing or focus on sub-regional and municipal-level wellbeing that sometimes incorporate "bottom-up" perspectives on "what matters" to communities. These approaches to community wellbeing are the focus of this report. There are at least four reasons for this.

First, the role that communities can potentially play in determining the socio-material conditions within which individuals live may have an important role in wellbeing more generally. This perspective is central to a number of influential reports on the social determinants of health and wellbeing and the role of empowerment, such as the Marmot review of health inequalities in England (Marmot *et al*., 2010) and the WHO Commission on the Social Determinants of Health report (WHO CSDH, 2008).

Second, the participation of citizens, either as individuals or as members of community groups, in local policymaking and their right to inform and influence the policy decisions that affect their individual and community wellbeing is at the centre of a viable and healthy democracy. Because wellbeing combines economic, social, environmental and democratic outcomes, it can potentially engage citizens and policymakers in meaningful deliberations about what a better society may look like.

Third, although the evidence still remains patchy, community wellbeing may be a useful conceptual framework for guiding the design of policy interventions to support the development of sustainable communities and community initiatives. A key reason is that it connects the objective factors that determine wellbeing with the subjective and intersubjective lived experiences of people, particularly in the context of community development policy and practice (Lee and Kim, 2015).

Fourth, the governance of local policy delivery in Ireland is organised through the urban and rural territorial units of local politics (e.g. municipal districts, electoral areas) and so attention tends to focus on these levels.

One challenge with this last point is that these levels may not constitute what might be thought of as a "community", even though the people living in these administrative areas have a shared experience of the local authority policies, services and infrastructure delivered at that level. This does not discount the importance of recognising that the residential context of a person's community intersects with multiple other community contexts, such as virtual and online contexts, employment and support networks (e.g. carers, emergency accommodation).

The wellbeing literature to date has shown a primary interest in individual wellbeing and, because of that, the measures for intersubjective and relational aspects of community wellbeing are much less well developed than those for individual wellbeing.

For this reason, researchers who situate their interest at the individual and cognitive end of wellbeing may see community wellbeing as less important or less desirable from a research perspective. Having said that, numerous insights, such as those from social theory, offer alternative conceptualisations of the individual within the social context and these relational perspectives can offer different ways of looking at wellbeing.

Within that there may be a number of possible policy end points, such as "nudging" normative individual behaviours, increasing "social capital", reducing inequalities between and within communities or across generations, and improving the efficacy of

expenditure on a range of factors such as health and climate adaptation.

The focus may also be on evaluating existing aspects of the community and understanding how this impacts on individual wellbeing, and this in turn can be aggregated so that decisions, for example on investment in infrastructure, can be taken with greater legitimacy.

The focus may also be on improving the quality of collective life by combining the relational and subjective aspects of community alongside the objectively measurable determinants of community wellbeing.

Another focus is on using assessments of "what matters" to communities as a focusing device for community advocacy and developing a shared understanding of what is important for local active citizenship. This measurement may be undertaken using a framework of wellbeing domains that are seen to be meaningful and important at a local level. In this way, the selection of wellbeing indicators is less a technical process than a political process of deliberation that explores the different ways in which wellbeing and "living well" are defined and what type of intervention designs may be most acceptable to a community.

3.1 Defining Community Wellbeing

Wellbeing scholars and practitioners differ on the measures of, impact of and purpose of defining community wellbeing.

Some suggest that the purpose of community wellbeing is to improve individual wellbeing at a local scale. As such, community wellbeing will depend on the specific context and demands an integration of "bottom-up" and "top-down" perspectives on what constitutes collective wellbeing at the local level.

Others suggest that the purpose of community wellbeing is to support the development of collective wellbeing (e.g. living well together). These perspectives tend to emphasise the relationships between individual subjective wellbeing and collective resources at a community level. They suggest that community wellbeing may involve intersubjectivity or social relationality alongside objective measures of contextual factors (Helliwell and Wang, 2010).

This would suggest that community wellbeing is more than the simple aggregation of individual wellbeing measures, as seen in population or sub-population surveys on wellbeing. It would therefore include measuring shared intersubjective understandings of wellbeing within a community, defined spatially or as a community of interest, as well as deliberation on the objective factors that are important for the wellbeing of the whole community.

There are a number of definitions of community wellbeing presented in the literature. Prilleltensky and Prilleltensky (2007) define community wellbeing as the meeting of community needs through the physical, geographic, cultural, economic, political and psychosocial contexts within which communities exist.

McHardy and O'Sullivan (2004) and Allensworth and Rochin (1996) discuss community wellbeing from the perspective of the socio-economic determinants of wellbeing. Similarly, Brasher and Wiseman (2008) and Kusel and Fortmann (1991) identify the various economic, social, cultural and political components and conditions identified by individuals and the community as community wellbeing.

Cuthill (2007) takes the view that community wellbeing is defined through the perspectives of people living within a community and that the "description or measurement of these perceptions takes into consideration both qualitative and/or quantitative data of natural, physical, financial, social and human capital which influence both citizen's and community wellbeing".

Similarly to Kusel and Fortmann (1991), Ribova (2000) suggests that community wellbeing is defined by the psychological, cultural and social needs of communities and of the individuals within those communities. She suggests that these domains should be the basis of a measurement or analytical framework for community wellbeing.

The Rural Assistance Information Network (as per Lee and Kim, 2015) defines community wellbeing as the "optimal quality of healthy community life … that encapsulates the ideals of people living together harmoniously in vibrant and sustainable communities, where community dynamics are clearly underpinned by 'social justice' considerations".

Chanan (2002) builds on these multidimensional perspectives of community wellbeing in the following:

> Quality of community life is intimately connected with: how well that locality is functioning; how well that locality is governed; how the services in that locality are operating; and how safe, pleasant and rewarding it feels to live in that locality.

More recently, definitions of community wellbeing combine the above alongside explicit recognition of the environmental dimensions, as opposed to a sole focus on the built environment. Building on sustainability perspectives, Cox *et al*. (2010) include economic, social, environmental, cultural and governance goals and priorities.

Similarly, Kagan and Kilroy (2007) identified a series of both objective and subjective indicators, including:

> those environmental factors that contribute to good standards of living, such as clean water, clean air and so on; demographic issues such as population decline, or changes in divorce rates, economic issues such as poverty, loss of employment or income, or rapid social change leading to the development of new jobs; the provision of and/or retrenchment of public services; educational opportunities and achievements; levels of crime and fear of crime; alcohol and drug use; significant life events; diet, food poverty and level of obesity; perceived happiness, depression, stress, and sense of fun.

Wiseman and Brasher (2008) also define community wellbeing as the combination of social, economic, environmental, cultural and political conditions identified by individuals and their communities as essential for them to flourish and fulfil their potential.

Some conceptualisations of community wellbeing also consider issues such as social capital and social cohesion, social inclusion, community resilience and the social relations within a community (Elliot *et al*., 2012). According to Matthews *et al*. (2012), community wellbeing considers factors such as social inclusion and emphasises the perspectives of marginalised or hidden groups, as well as intergenerational issues. This can involve measuring the relative determining factors, such as trust and a "sense of belonging" or a "sense of place".

3.2 Community Wellbeing As a Contested Concept

Community wellbeing is a contested concept in the sense that there are different definitions of and rationales for community wellbeing, as outlined in the previous section. A key theoretical difference lies in whether wellbeing is a matter for the individual or whether it is something that emerges through interactions between people, institutions, place and culture. In other words, there are challenges in clarifying the complex relationships between the individual "interior life", the relational aspects of social life and the external environment (Allin and Hand, 2017).

One of the features of the dominant approaches to wellbeing is that they are focused on individual wellbeing and frame people as independent and autonomous individuals.

A number of contemporary social theories situate the individual within a broader context of systems of relationships that impact on a number of aspects, such as behaviour and decision-making, values and wellbeing. There is a growing literature exploring different aspects such as relationality and intersubjectivity that help to frame the relational aspects of community wellbeing.

Many existing wellbeing frameworks, both individual and community, underline the importance of social relationships in, potentially, improving wellbeing. This is particularly evident in those frameworks that advocate place-based approaches to community and collective wellbeing (Fleuret and Atkinson, 2007; Winterton *et al*., 2014).

Where relationality is addressed in existing frameworks it is typically through the self-reporting of personal networks, involvement in and associations with local organisations or the sense of "close support".

Similarly, individuals can be asked to rate collective and relational entities or relational factors such as trust, sense of belonging, community cohesion, social inclusion, and integration and reciprocity. These are then aggregated to a measure of the social and relational aspects of a community or place (Helliwell and Wang, 2010; Uphoff *et al*., 2013).

Intersubjectivity tends to describe how an assessment of individual wellbeing needs to include the interactions and relationships with other people within a particular time or in a particular place. The measurement of intersubjectivity is very challenging but the principle is informed at least by the literature on various social processes, such as culture, collective identity, group formation, language and the interfaces between the individual interior and the exterior worlds.

The debates on intersubjectivity tend to revolve around aspects such as the relationships between structure and agency, nature and culture and the multi-scalar processes of social change.

Although practical examples of assessing intersubjectivity are rare, Lee and Kim (2015) include it within their framework for community wellbeing as a means to distinguish between measurements of satisfaction (individual wellbeing) and evaluation of community life.

There are other theoretical perspectives, such as "assemblage" and "performativity", that help to critically examine the underlying assumptions around how wellbeing is conceived and framed within policy. Assemblage builds on the theoretical work of Deleuze and Guattari (2013) and DeLanda (2016) in that it suggests that identity, social and personal change, and individual and community wellbeing are affected by "multiple relationalities". These multiple relationalities are mediated through other people, hard and soft infrastructures, materials and materiality, places and so forth.

3.3 Critical Perspectives

Although these above perspectives tend to dominate the debates within the wellbeing literature, there are other, often critical, perspectives that provide alternative views on wellbeing.

Some of these critical perspectives have emerged from feminist and postcolonial theorists, among others. Some of the criticism generally reflects the questioning of the dominance of Western philosophy in academic discourses but also the recognition that a number of societal transitions under way are leading to an increasingly complex and diverse politics of wellbeing (Stuurman, 2000).

For example, the functionalist account of wellbeing of Aristotle worked well for the political elite in society but not so well for women, slaves and immigrants, who were politically disenfranchised. On that basis a key argument would be that asking people to "be happy" while not recognising the power structures that sustain their marginalisation is not sufficient as a process of political emancipation.

Stemming from this, Okin (1979) questioned whether dominant perspectives on "happiness" and wellbeing maintain and reproduce a discriminatory political status quo while limiting the inclusion of marginalised and politically disenfranchised groups in society.

Some of the critical discussions also note that, in a rapidly globalising world, the political, cultural and social norms around wellbeing are shifting and the philosophical traditions are possibly not sufficient in giving a contemporary account of wellbeing.

For example, Ahmed (2010) argued that the component approach of wellbeing and the "pursuit of happiness" could perpetuate social norms that may discriminate against and disadvantage people along lines of gender, sexuality and race. These critical perspectives also suggest that wellbeing is often promoted as an "unproblematic gender and culture neutral idea" that does not engage with the power relations and power structures that oppress marginalised groups.

There are also traces of Sen's perspectives in more recent criticisms of policy agendas for wellbeing that predominantly focus on individual responsibility for, rather than structural determinants of, wellbeing or the instrumentalisation of wellbeing to promote other policy agendas (Scott and Bell, 2013; Tomlinson and Kelly, 2013).

For example, there are a number of critics of functionalist or individual perspectives of wellbeing who claim that in current wellbeing measurement discourses and practice "far too little attention has been devoted to theorizing about how socio-political conditions determine quality of life' (Flavin *et al*., 2011).

Some critics also suggest that the dominant framing of wellbeing is "reductionist" and suggests that individuals are responsible for their own wellbeing, without giving due regard to the relationship between wellbeing and the wider economic and political context.

Edwards and Imrie (2008) provided a critique of the policy agendas around wellbeing from the perspective of disability and suggested that a wellbeing framework should not "propagate the idealist ways in which we see the world but, rather, addresses the way that it is". They drew on the work of disability rights groups that sought to situate the issue away from individualised conceptualisation of disability to situating it within "the socio-structural relations of an ablist society".

Other, similar criticisms have been raised in relation to how the framing of wellbeing has evolved away from the collective (e.g. social indicators) towards an individualist and subjective framing (Conradson, 2012). Some have suggested that this reflects an evolving political landscape, with the expansion of neoliberalism and related forms of governance (Sointu, 2005; Rose and Miller, 2008).

4 Sustainability, Environment, Health and Wellbeing

Many recent activities in relation to wellbeing have been driven by a desire to measure social progress in the context of a healthy future environment and a sustainable society. In the same manner that criticisms suggested that GDP is a poor measure of social progress and wellbeing, GDP was also criticised for failing to sufficiently capture the state of the environment and the sustainability of economic development.

It is broadly accepted that wellbeing and health are intrinsically linked to the quality of the environment in which people live. There is a significant body of evidence establishing causal links between environmental stressors (toxic pollutants in air, water, soil and food) and human health and wellbeing, although some knowledge gaps and data shortages remain and this has reduced the capacity of governments to fully understand the complex interactions between the environment, health, wellbeing, socio-economic conditions and socio-demographics.

This growing understanding of the relationships between environment and health has given rise to a range of policy frameworks and interventions that mitigate the key environmental determinants of health and wellbeing. The initial policy interventions are characterised by risk- or hazard-based assessments that focused on individual stressors.

Although these debates have been in motion for many decades (Nordhaus and Tobin, 1972), a number of key publications, such as the Brundtland Commission report (Brundtland, 1987), Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2003) and 7th Environment Action Programme (EC, 2014), outline the goal of sustaining the capacity of "ecosystem services" to support human society and improve environmental quality in order to protect health and wellbeing.

Alongside this drive towards sustainable development, many liberal democracies saw a growing public discontent with the social and environmental effect of globalisation and consumerism and the social impacts of economic inequalities and concentration of wealth (Stiglitz, 2012; Piketty and Goldhammer, 2014).

This led to a wider set of international organisations such as the OECD and EU working with international networks of researchers and activists to explore the connections between wellbeing and sustainable development. For example, in their strategic response to the United Nations Sustainable Development goals, the OECD (2016) stated that:

> The OECD has a long history of engagement with major UN processes on human development and well-being. … We must continue to look beyond narrow economic measures of progress to consider all aspects of well-being and sustainable development. Deep reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions must be achieved in order to safeguard the planet for future generations.

Around this work by these organisations, a number of measurement mechanisms, national and transnational indicator dashboards and composite indices were developed. These include the Human Development Index, the Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare, the Index of Economic Well-Being and the Genuine Progress Indicator.

Although these composite indices addressed different aspects of sustainable development, they typically addressed issues such as prosperity and wealth accumulation (e.g. measures of consumption), sustainable environment (e.g. costs of CO_2 emissions per capita) and social topics (reduction in inequalities). Some of these indices were evaluated according to a national accounts methodology, with each dimension being normalised through linear scaling and aggregated using an equal weighting (Stiglitz *et al*., 2009).

Some indices had a more explicit environmental dimension. For example, the Environmental Sustainability Index includes 76 ecological, health and governance variables across the following five domains:

1. environmental systems (their global health status);
2. environmental stress (anthropogenic pressure on the environmental systems);

3. human vulnerability (exposure of inhabitants to environmental disturbances);
4. social and institutional capacity (their capacity to foster effective responses to environmental challenges);
5. global stewardship (co-operation with other countries in the management of common environmental problems).

The Environmental Performance Index was developed in collaboration between Yale University (Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy), Columbia University (Center for International Earth Science Information Network), the World Economic Forum and the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission. It includes 24 indicators (previously 16 indicators) across 10 issue categories.

Although there have been many advancements in the application of wellbeing measures as a counterpoint to GDP in the context of sustainable development, there are still a number of differing perspectives at play. For example, in the academic literature some have focused on the need to promote mental wellbeing and societal happiness, some focus on environmental sustainability and others see wellbeing as a mechanism to advance social justice (Layard, 2005; Jackson, 2011).

The Stiglitz report suggested that sustainability and wellbeing should be measured separately (Stiglitz and Sen, 2011). The report suggested that a "unidimensional view of sustainability certainly remains out of reach". The key argument was that wellbeing is a function of economic performance and that sustainability and wellbeing should be measured separately in order to reduce confusion (Scott, 2012; Michalos, 2017).

Having said that, some of the contemporary frameworks for wellbeing give explicit attention to sustainability. For example, the OECD framework for measuring wellbeing (OECD, 2013) places a strong emphasis on the relationship between individual wellbeing and the broader context of sustainability. In this case, sustainability is framed as the sustained availability of key forms of social, human, natural and economic capital, which in turn support individual wellbeing through a continuous feedback loop.

This framing in the OECD framework also aligns with the wellbeing measurement programme of the UK Office for National Statistics. This programme is seeking to frame the measurement of national wellbeing around the primary natural, human and social capitals and use these to link specific wellbeing domains to the broader "three pillars" of sustainable development that were set out in the 1987 Brundtland report.

5 Measuring Wellbeing

In broad terms, wellbeing is typically measured by analysing existing data sets, such as statutory statistics, that provide some indication of how well people are doing in respect of dimensions and domains of wellbeing, or by carrying out original research to generate new data. This original research is typically either qualitative (e.g. interviews, focus groups) or quantitative (e.g. surveys), and sometimes uses other data sources.

For example, the OECD Better Life Index uses a mix of data from a range of national and international sources (OECD, 2011). This includes statutory data drawn from national statistics, state agencies and individual government departments, as well as from global market research and consulting firms.

Concerns may be raised about using disparate data sets in terms of comparability and quality, but the general argument is that national statistical systems are often limited with regard to some dimensions of wellbeing (e.g. subjective wellbeing, governance, participation, civic engagement and social connections).

Because of these limitations in national statistics, some wellbeing frameworks also use “proxy” or “circumstantial” data. For example, the quality of health is included in both the OECD Better Life Index and the Human Development Index and in both cases it is indicated using the proxy of life expectancy.

A challenge of proxy indicators is that they may have been designed without direct consideration of human wellbeing. Because of this there may be conceptual and analytical limitations, particularly if policy recommendations are being derived from them.

Another challenge is that they are often aggregated measures that give little insight into the wellbeing conditions of sub-populations, the quality of the indicator or how it is changing over time.

Circumstantial data refers to the types of data that describe the conditions that contribute to wellbeing. A challenge is that these types of data do not provide a measurable indication of whether these conditions contribute to or are detrimental to wellbeing.

A commonly used indicator for individual subjective wellbeing is the level of “satisfaction” that a person reports. This approach is discussed extensively in the *OECD Guidelines on Measuring Subjective Wellbeing* (OECD, 2013). This reporting of life satisfaction can be in relation to time (e.g. yesterday, last month) or in relation to a particular domain. Two examples of this approach include those of the UK Office for National Statistics and Ruut Veenhoven’s World Database of Happiness, which apply variants of Likert and self-anchored scales such as Cantril’s ladder.

A key methodological challenge of these life satisfaction approaches is that the self-reported sense of satisfaction could be influenced by adaptation (Nussbaum, 2001a; Qizilbash, 2006a,b). Adaptation describes how a person’s goals and perceived expectations adapt in relation to changing external circumstances. For example, if a person is made unemployed they may “adapt down” their expectation in order to cope with their changing circumstances.

Although not explored much in the literature, it is worth reflecting on the different adaptations that people may experience in relation to different policy interventions. For example, interventions to increase social inclusion or tackle poverty are aimed at improving circumstances and so should bring about “upward adaptation”, whereas it is less clear what some environmental interventions, such as encouraging sustainable consumption, might achieve in terms of changed circumstances. What this underlines is the importance of considering the relationships between objective and subjective wellbeing.

For example, it would be sensible to have triangulated reports on subjective and objective indicators. In this situation, quantitative methods can be applied to assess the effects on subjective wellbeing resulting from an intervention but qualitative methods can assess their validity in terms of perceived effects on wellbeing. A practical example may be an intervention to limit emissions affecting the objective conditions but this not having any measurable effect on the subjective wellbeing of individuals.

5.1 Validity

As there are many different conceptualisations and definitions of wellbeing across policy domains and academic disciplines, there are ongoing debates around the appropriate sets of wellbeing indicators and evidence that can be legitimately used to inform policy.

These debates revolve around issues such as the reliability and validity of different forms of subjective and objective data, the use of single or composite indicators, the use of indicators or multidimensional frameworks and the weighting of indicators within these.

To explore this, the most simplistic binary distinction is between wellbeing as happiness (hedonic) and wellbeing as flourishing (eudaimonia). From this starting point there are different approaches to assessing, interpreting and measuring wellbeing with different sets of indicators.

Typically, those working through the hedonic perspective tend towards emphasising indicators of subjective wellbeing, such as an individual's perception of their own levels of happiness and life satisfaction, as well as anxieties and fears (Layard, 2005; O'Donnell *et al*., 2014). In contrast, those working through the eudaimonic perspective typically work with a broader range of objective and subjective indicators (Anand *et al*., 2009). For example, Atkinson (2013) is critical of what he describes as the "components approach" to wellbeing portrayed in the Stiglitz report (2009) and instead argues for an approach that encompasses the contextual and relational aspects of wellbeing (Scott, 2012; White and Blackmore, 2016).

This would suggest that there needs to be consideration of the complex and dynamic ways in which wellbeing is negotiated by people in relation to each other and the physical contexts in which they live.

Even this simple distinction begins to illustrate the potential tensions between different ontological and epistemological assumptions about wellbeing and the appropriateness of wellbeing indicators in the context of policy design and policy delivery.

5.2 Wellbeing Domains

"Wellbeing domains" is a term that is used across the wellbeing literature and can be best described as clusters or categories of wellbeing indicators that are both objective and subjective. This is often referred to as the components perspective of wellbeing.

One of the ongoing challenges with assessment of wellbeing is that, although many of the key frameworks are broadly consistent in terms of the determinants or components of wellbeing, they often use the terms "dimensions" and "domains" interchangeably. Although this may appear to be a simple issue of semantics, the blended use of the terms can lead to confusion around the conceptual and analytical basis of the framework.

The term "dimension" has been commonly applied across the "quality of life" literature (e.g. health, social psychology) to distinguish between objective and subjective aspects of life. These dimensions may include multiple domains of wellbeing that contain interrelated or independent sub-domains, which in turn have different sets of indicators.

In other areas of the literature, particularly in relation to international development, the term "multidimensional" is often used to describe sets of wellbeing components that may be interrelated across different domains, for example how the relationship between poverty and wellbeing has multiple determinants across individuals and contextual factors.

Table 5.1 presents a small selection of wellbeing frameworks and their domains. As they typically include a range of interrelated and sometimes composite indicators grouped under common themes, domains can be relatively easy concepts to communicate and understand but complex to operationalise from a policy or service design perspective.

The selection of domains can be a political act in the sense that they frame conceptualisations of what wellbeing is and how it should be applied in the context of policy or service design.

Domains may be framed in terms of contextual factors or thematic area. For example, the following domains are based around the context of:

- *people*: social networks/relationships (friends, neighbours, local organisations); support through statutory and non-statutory services; community facilities;
- *place*: local employment opportunities; healthy local environment (e.g. air and water quality); access to education, transport, housing;

Table 5.1. A sample of wellbeing frameworks and their domains

Perspective	Source	Domains
Psychological, subjective, eudaimonic components	ONS national consultation framework (ONS, 2011)	Relationships; health; what we do – work, leisure and balance; where we live; personal finance; education and skills; contextual domains – governance, economy, natural environment
	Ryff (1989)	Self-acceptance; autonomy; personal growth; environmental mastery; purpose in life; positive relationships with others
	Ziegler and Schwanen (2011) (empirically derived)	In relation to ageing – physical health; independence; mental health and emotional wellbeing; social relations; continuity of self and self-identity
Psychological, subjective, hedonic components	Layard (2005), Steuer *et al*. (2008)	Single-item life satisfaction – "All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole?"
	Veenhoven (2000)	Liveability of environment; life-ability of individual; inner appreciation of life
	Seligman (2012)	positive emotion; engagement, interest; relationships; mentoring; accomplishments
Economic and developmental, objective and subjective and eudaimonic components	Clarke *et al*. (2006) (based on Maslow's categories of needs)	Basic – calorie intake per day, access to safe water; safety – infant mortality, life expectancy; belonging – telephone mainline, fertility rates; self-esteem – adult literacy, unemployment
	Nussbaum (2001b)	Life; bodily health; bodily integrity; senses/imagination/thought; emotions; practical reason; affiliation; other species; place; control over one's environment
	Stiglitz *et al*. (2009)	Material living standards; health; education; personal activities; political violence and governance; social connectedness and relationships; environment; security

community safety, personal safety; a sense of belonging; green/blue spaces; cultural heritage; place-making and public realm;

- *participation*: inclusion, representation and equality; participation (volunteering, politics, etc.); equal access to local services and resources and opportunities; collective agency (a feeling of influence over local issues).

Domains can be treated separately, combined into a single index or explored through their various intersections. Although some of the individual indicators or factors within typical wellbeing domains are well understood, the relationships between these are often less well understood.

This poses a number of challenges when developing a wellbeing index around the domains, particularly in relation to community wellbeing. For example, the interrelationships and interactions between domain indicators are often poorly understood and lack empirical evidence or strong theoretical foundations.

5.3 Measuring Subjective and Objective Individual Wellbeing

As subjective wellbeing is the perception that an individual has about their quality of life or level of happiness, the measurement of this is often undertaken by a nationally representative survey or sub-population survey in which people provide retrospective evaluations of their life and experiences. This subjective view (e.g. feelings about life) can be combined with objective data (e.g. employment status, level of education).

For example, the UK Office for National Statistics has a programme on measuring national wellbeing through which people report on their satisfaction with and feelings around certain life domains (e.g. work, health, relationships) and retrospectively evaluate their life overall and their previous day.

Other surveys have focused on life satisfaction as well as general happiness (Donovan *et al*., 2002; Waldron, 2010). In some cases, life satisfaction is used as a proxy for quality of life and studies assess how an individual's capacity to self-determine and social empowerment affect subjective wellbeing.

Some wellbeing surveys, such as the European Quality of Life Survey by Eurofound, include community-scale domains (e.g. trust, safety, aesthetics). When these are aggregated they provide some indication of community wellbeing beyond the individual.

A key attribute of these surveys is that they can help evaluate the degree to which people feel that they have satisfied their preferences (Akay *et al*., 2015).

They may also provide insights into future preferences and choices (Kahneman *et al*., 1997).

As with all surveys there is a risk of bias in that responses can be shaped by the context of the survey and what immediate recent events may have occurred. This means that people may respond in terms of what is currently salient in their memory (Schwarz *et al*., 1987; Wilson *et al*., 2000).

Another bias is related to how individuals self-evaluate their experiences and the duration of the experiences they are expected to evaluate (Kahneman *et al*., 1993; Morewedge *et al*., 2005; Miron-Shatz *et al*., 2009).

One of the assumptions within some of the assessments of subjective wellbeing is that collective or global wellbeing does not shift rapidly unless there are significant systemic shocks (e.g. financial crisis, natural disaster), whereas, for many, subjective wellbeing fluctuates depending on a number of contextual factors and this may not be sufficiently captured in a one-off or annual survey.

Social sciences, economics and design research has developed a range of methods and methodologies that can be best described as "experience-based measures" of subjective wellbeing. As the name suggests, these approaches differ from the survey-based evaluative methods in that they aim to more systematically record experiences and the relationship between these and subjective wellbeing. Some methods include:

- in an experimental setting, present people with a set of tasks and ask them to continually report on their feelings;
- the Day Reconstruction Method, which combines "time-budget measurement" and experience sampling (Kahneman *et al*., 2004);
- "quantified self", which is a set of technology-enabled methodologies for collecting data on aspects of a person's daily life (Swan, 2013);
- design probes, which is a set of qualitative methods for collecting data that capture self-reported user experiences (Gaver *et al*., 1999);
- ecological momentary assessment, which is a naturalistic method of repeated sampling of behaviours and experiences in real time (Moskowitz and Young, 2006).

Both the evaluative and experience-based measures of subjective wellbeing have benefits and limitations depending on the purpose of the research, particularly in terms of policy and service design. The evaluative approaches can provide an interesting snapshot of wellbeing at a national or sub-population level, but they typically do not account for the duration of feelings associated with experiences (Haybron, 2008). They may also not account for the valence and intensity of feelings that may be useful from a policy perspective.

On the other hand, experienced-based measures can reveal insights into subjective wellbeing that are missed in evaluative approaches, but they can be challenging to deliver at scale. A more pragmatic approach would be to combine both approaches so that longer term self-evaluations and time-limited snapshots of experienced subjective wellbeing can be used to inform policy and service design.

5.4 Measuring Community Wellbeing

As mentioned, there are differing perspectives on what community wellbeing is and how it should be measured. Dronvelli and Thompson (2015) undertook a systematic review of measurement tools for community health and wellbeing and identified 27 different measurement tools. They ranked the quality of these in terms of validity, reliability, responsiveness, use in cross-cultural settings, global scale assessment, inclusion of subjective measures, clarity and cost. Five of the highest-ranking scales in their study were the:

1. Community Wellbeing Index (Forjaz *et al*., 2011);
2. WHO Quality of Life – brief version (WHOQOL-BREF) (Skevington *et al*., 2004);
3. health-related quality of life instrument from the Dartmouth Cooperative Information Project (Martín-Díaz *et al*., 2006);
4. Quality of Life Scale (QOLS) (Burckhardt and Anderson, 2003);
5. Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI) (Cummins, 2013).

One of the common assumptions is that to measure community wellbeing an aggregation of individual-scale assessments of individuals within a community is undertaken. Although this would be the standard practice within a range of population and sub-population surveys, particularly in relation to health, it may reflect community wellbeing only indirectly as understood by a particular community.

For example, proxy indicators may need to be used that have different social interpretations and possible biases may also exist within survey questions that do not fully reflect perspectives on wellbeing. For example, direct measurement of social networks typically would not measure the quality of those networks or the capacity for an individual to manage engagement with the network.

A benefit of population and sub-population surveys is that they typically collect panel data on age, ethnicity, gender, income, employment status and similar factors.

Existing national and transnational wellbeing surveys, such as the EU Social Survey and the Eurofound survey, are not easily disaggregated to sub-territorial levels and may have limited contact with marginalised groups in society.

Some approaches argue that community wellbeing differs from individual wellbeing in that it is a combination of community assets, community capacity, a sense of collective agency or efficacy and, more generally, what it means to live collectively. Therefore, other approaches aim to apply a more relationally inflected conceptualisation of community and community wellbeing.

Although they typically involve some level of aggregation of individual assessment of wellbeing, they also value other forms of evidence that are qualitative, intersubjective and narrative based. Because of this, there are often underlying concerns regarding representation and inclusion, i.e. ensuring that multiple voices are heard.

5.4.1 Community wellbeing measurement methods

There are a number of possible methods or approaches for assessing and measuring community wellbeing. The following sections present a selection of key potential methods.

Aggregating individual subjective and/or objective assessments of wellbeing and subjective and/or objective assessments of community conditions

Individual assessments of community conditions can include assessments of community-scale factors (e.g. local government services, available green space) that can be reasonably aggregated.

If the community is understood through relational or intersubjective perspectives or as a collective of individuals that has a social structure and shared experiences of community conditions, group data collection may be suitable.

Qualitative assessment through ethnography or participatory research

Qualitative approaches take a different approach to assessment in that they typically aim to provide a richer or "thick data" assessment of wellbeing rather than quantifying indicators in terms of scale, valence, intensity and duration. Methods typically include contextual interviews, storytelling, participant observation, participatory asset mapping exercises, life histories and user journey maps.

Qualitative approaches can provide richer insights into important determinants of wellbeing that are not typically collected through surveys (e.g. community pride, sense of place). They can also be used in conjunction with quantitative methods. For example, census data may suggest that low transition to higher education may be prevalent within an area. Follow-up interviews may then engage with people to better understand why they are not transitioning to higher education, their experiences of the education system and those of their peer networks, the resources that they have access to and the perceptions among the community in relation to the issue.

Qualitative approaches, particularly participatory approaches, can focus attention on measuring what matters to communities as opposed to measuring what is convenient or easy to measure. In doing so, it may make indicators more understandable and meaningful to communities.

Collecting multiple individual narratives/stories about community conditions

Narrative approaches include the collection of individual stories, narratives or case studies of particular institutions in the community or of interventions, providing more nuanced and detailed information on local processes and pathways to community wellbeing.

A number of different narrative-based approaches are applied across a spectrum of community wellbeing approaches. These include narrative-based evaluation that uses community-located "scribes" and narrative-based medicine.

The value of stories to research in health and wellbeing has been recognised recently by the WHO, through the Health Evidence Network; it commissioned a synthesis report on using narrative research in health and wellbeing (Greenhalgh, 2016).

Storytelling for community wellbeing has also been applied in the context of sustainable communities. One of the values it brings is presenting a conceptualisation of community wellbeing that is "comprehensive, relational, multi-scalar and sensitive to diversity, inequalities, power and sustainability" (Atkinson *et al*., 2017).

Using deliberative methods (e.g. forums, co-creation workshops)

Group discussions allow for deliberation around what constitutes community wellbeing. In some cases, deliberative methods have been used to define, assess and benchmark community conditions and then prioritise community wellbeing domains. Additionally, deliberative methods can aim to find consensus or identify tensions and points of disagreement around community wellbeing.

Deliberative methods can be designed so that they are inclusive and representative of the whole community, for example ensuring that different constituencies in the community are represented, such as different ages, genders and cultural groups.

Wider engagement

Some approaches consider different forms of cultural expression, for example through local and national media, social media or creative outputs. In some ways these can inform and reflect local values, but they also represent a data source that presents stories and narratives around local life within a community.

5.4.2 Bottom-up approaches

A number of community wellbeing initiatives have taken a "bottom-up" approach to indicator development and assessment (Dluhy and Swartz, 2006). The initiatives have different ideological and political reasons for taking this approach but they appear to share some common goals. These include:

- encouraging democratic participation in the process of establishing a wellbeing vision for a community;
- establishing meaningful priorities and indicators that reflect local contexts;
- advocating for measures that enable progress towards achievement of their wellbeing goals;
- enabling transparency and accountability in local government decision-making;
- articulating shared values and goals and fostering community involvement;
- increasing awareness of and engagement with determinants of wellbeing within and between communities;
- providing monitoring, evaluation and feedback on desired outcomes.

The bottom-up approaches typically aim to set out a "vision" for community wellbeing in order to either assess the current state of wellbeing or define desired future states. Either of these approaches can be applied through rapid analysis of one or more wellbeing domains, a rigorous analysis across several domains or any other combination of these approaches that reflects that community's capacity, values and needs.

Some groups that have taken a "bottom-up" approach to community wellbeing have suggested that the indicators that a community chooses provide insight into the collective values of that community while not always being dissimilar from indicators in existing "top-down" frameworks.

Given the context of this report it is important to note some of the arguments for developing bottom-up indicators. For example, the Sustainable Seattle project developed a range of indicators and the community can choose which indicators they wish to report on. This frames the development of community wellbeing as a highly engaged democratic process that places value on public participation.

6 Public Participation Networks and Community Wellbeing

There has been a gradual expansion of participatory and deliberative processes within Ireland. The main focus has been on combining direct, discursive and deliberative forms of participation, such as referenda, citizen assemblies (a form of mini-public) and "national dialogues", across different policy domains.

Although the rationale and "triggers" for these mechanisms have differed greatly, the common goal is to, by involving citizens, increase the democratic quality, legitimacy and, ultimately, the effectiveness of policymaking in Ireland.

These mechanisms can be defined as democratic innovations in the sense that they, at least superficially, widen the opportunities for participation and deliberation while potentially increasing the influence that citizens have on certain aspects of policymaking. More importantly, they allow for a reimagining of the various roles that citizens can play in national and local governance processes in Ireland.

The Local Government Reform Act 2014, Section 46 (Government of Ireland, 2014) sought to develop a new "framework" for public participation and to deepen civic participation in local government in Ireland. The Act aimed to move towards more open and inclusive policymaking while building civic capacity for participation. As such, the Act has become the dominant statutory structure for public participation in Ireland. This framework includes a number of aspects: supporting community organisations to participate in local authority decision-making processes, mechanisms for accountability and transparency, and mechanisms to monitor and evaluate participation by members of the local community.

A key characteristic of this is that it frames public participation as being an "active formal role in relevant policy making and oversight committees" across each local authority (DRCD, 2017). These committees include the strategic policy committees and local community development committees.

One of the structures to emerge from this process of reform was the Public Participation Networks (PPNs). These were established to be the "main link through which the Local Authority connects with the community and voluntary, social inclusion and environmental sectors" in Ireland (DRCD, 2017).

The forming of the PPNs followed a process of local government reform in Ireland that was initiated from at least the mid-1990s. This process was set against a background of reforms that included significant restructuring of and divestment from community development, social inclusion and anti-poverty activities that had been under way for many years.

The process of reform was extensive and some of the key documents that frame and mediate the functions of the PPN include:

- *Putting People First: Action Programme for Effective Local Government* (DHPLG, 2012), which emphasised the need for innovation around citizen engagement;
- *Working Group Report on Citizen Engagement with Local Government* (Government of Ireland, 2013), which set out the proposal for the PPNs;
- the Local Government Reform Act 2014 (Government of Ireland, 2014), which in broad terms requires the development of a "Public Participation Framework" in each local authority and the development of new structures, such as strategic policy committees;
- the PPN user guide (DRCD, 2017), which sets out the operational processes of the PPNs;
- the input by PPN members into the annual workplan and ongoing oversight from the PPN secretariat;
- ultimately, the delivery capacity of the PPN resource worker (dependent on factors such as positioning in relation to their local authority).

The PPNs are networks of community organisations in Ireland across the predefined sectors of community and voluntary, social inclusion and environment. There are currently approximately 12,000 members across Ireland. The PPN members are designated to one of the 31 PPNs across all local authority areas, with

sub-classification by the municipal district or city region in which they operate. This is largely an administrative requirement as member organisations often operate across many municipal districts and counties.

A voluntary secretariat and a single member of staff manage the day-to-day running of the PPN. In some PPNs the employed individual is an existing employee of the local authority and in other cases they are independent of the local authority and based in a host organisation or are an employee of an independent company.

A PPN is intended to allow for more active engagement with the local policy system but it also frames the mechanisms by which citizen organisations and communities will be encouraged and supported to engage.

For example, the PPN elects representatives from the member organisations to sit on local government strategic policy committees and local community development committees. These representatives are expected to reflect the views of PPN member organisations rather than just the views of their own organisation.

The PPNs also develop linkage groups, which allow member organisations to collaborate around issues of shared interest but are not necessarily defined by the category of their sector.

The development of the PPNs has, at the local level, brought about a mechanism and structure for direct and deliberative forms of participation among stakeholder groups, as opposed to the wider public.

The PPNs currently lack strong institutional support and have very limited resources; however, they present a new model that combines aspects of participatory process design and interactions with local policy structures.

Although the PPNs are an advancement in terms of participation, they are still framed in terms of engagement with existing policymaking processes, e.g. local authority committees, rather than new mechanisms for influencing policy processes. In the government's commitment to establishing the PPNs, it emphasised that the elected council remains the primary responsible and accountable body for decision-making within the local policy system. It also made clear that the processes and mechanisms employed by the PPNs cannot "diminish, compete with, or substitute" local representative democracy or prejudice any consultation processes (Government of Ireland, 2013).

Although this may be a strength in terms of perceived legitimacy at a community level, there is a low but growing level of continuous interaction with the broader policy and social system, structures and institutions that the processes ultimately seek to influence (Parkinson and Mansbridge, 2012; Font *et al*., 2014).

As such, the PPNs largely reflect the institutionalist perspectives on democratic reform. As Fung (2003) argues, enhancing participation can be best achieved through "better institutional designs: in rules and decision-making processes that encourage actors to participate". The PPN is designed with a particular approach to the participatory–deliberative processes because who takes part and how participation is organised is defined by a system of membership.

6.1 Rationale for Developing Community Wellbeing Statements

One of the functions of the PPN that was established though the PPN User Guide was the development of a community wellbeing statement (WBS) by each of the 31 PPNs.

The rationale and process for creating a WBS are not well defined in the User Guide but it suggests that the WBS should set out a statement or vision on "what is required for the wellbeing of individuals and communities, now and for the generations to come".

This framing of wellbeing in the User Guide and the *Working Group Report on Citizen Engagement with Local Government* is informed by research undertaken on wellbeing in Ireland by the National Economic and Social Council (NESC, 2009). Because of this there is a focus on economic, political, environmental, cultural and social dimensions of wellbeing, with a view to improving intergenerational justice and the wellbeing of future generations.

This development of a WBS does not have a statutory basis but it is true to the spirit of the Local Government Reform Act. For example, section 66B of the Act discusses the role of and process for developing local economic and community plans. It suggests that the process for developing these plans should involve "identifying the needs and priorities of

local communities to enhance their well-being, and developing sustainable solutions that make the best use of local assets, strengths and opportunities to address those needs and priorities".

The call for the development of a WBS across each PPN is a significant undertaking in that it will be a national approach to developing "bottom-up" indicators for community wellbeing within the context of a statutory mechanism for public participation. This is also a challenging undertaking given the lack of a policy framework for community wellbeing in Ireland.

The WBS has the potential to more richly reflect the democratic intent and values of the PPNs. This potential lies in forming a wide-reaching mechanism for local panels to discuss and deliberate over the framing and scrutiny of local policy proposals. This also aligns with the ad hoc role of the PPNs in extending the reach and impact of policy consultations.

As it is currently framed, the PPN WBS process, in principle, constitutes a "bottom-up" approach to identifying the "needs and priorities" of local communities, and the development of the WBS to inform both the process and the advocacy work of the PPNs aligns with the spirit of the founding legislation.

It should be noted that, although it may be framed as "bottom-up", it may be more accurately defined as bottom-up stakeholder participation, as the PPNs are networks of organisations as opposed to networks of individual citizens.

The richness of the deliberation and quality of WBS outputs will be dependent on the diversity of input and level of inclusion, as well as on having mechanisms for scrutiny and reciprocity between PPN members, the wider community and, where appropriate, experts and authorities.

7 Developing Public Participation Network Community Wellbeing Statements

An important first step in designing any framework for assessing community wellbeing is to consider the rationale, process, indicators and means of assessment. This can include identifying the domains and indicators that it will address or assess and the actions that should be undertaken once an assessment is made.

This last point relates to whether the framework is aimed at improving current individual or collective wellbeing, improving intergenerational wellbeing (future generations), reducing wellbeing inequalities within and between communities or simply being an open-ended advocacy tool.

As mentioned previously, community wellbeing is understood by some to include more than a simple aggregation of the subjective individual wellbeing of community members.

Therefore, in developing a WBS, it may be important to include factors such as:

- a collective or intersubjective reflection of what is important to the community;
- an assessment of existing assets (such as physical, institutional or intangible resources) and relationships (such as trust and belonging) within a community;
- the existing objective data in relation to domains;
- the identification of hidden or marginalised groups within a community, and intergenerational relations.

7.1 PPN Community Wellbeing Domains

One of the foundational characteristics of the WBS process as it was framed by the Irish Environmental Network and Social Justice Ireland was that it is to be designed around a set of six wellbeing domains and the process is about creating a “bottom-up” vision of wellbeing, as opposed to applying pre-existing indicators.

These community wellbeing domains for the WBS process were developed through a stakeholder reference group and two national workshops. This reference group had representatives from national and local government departments, PPNs, academic institutes, economic and social policy think tanks, community development organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

One of the views of the reference group that emerged from this process was that the existing frameworks for wellbeing were predominantly “top-down” and potentially too complex to operationalise in the context of PPNs.

Following this, the framework of six domains was developed. This framework does not differ significantly from other existing frameworks but carefully aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, with three of the domains aligning with national indicators for sustainable development. This initial framework was also reviewed by what is now the Department of Rural and Community Development and by the National PPN Advisory Group (Figure 7.1).

7.2 WBS Pilot Project: Co-design of a Community Wellbeing Toolkit

Although the PPN User Guide suggests that a WBS is developed by each PPN, only three of the PPNs have developed a WBS to date. There are a number of reasons for this, including the lack of resources available to PPNs to undertake any additional activities and the perceived lack of clarity on the purpose and value of producing a WBS.

This led the National PPN Advisory Group, the Irish Environmental Network and Social Justice Ireland to seek funding to develop a WBS “toolkit”. The toolkit was intended to provide a common but flexible methodology through which every PPN could develop a WBS.

Under its commitments to developing sustainable communities, the Irish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provided funding for the development and testing of a toolkit that would be co-designed with and trialled with four PPNs.

Figure 7.1. Proposed PPN wellbeing domains.

In the context of this project, co-design can be best defined as the design of a methodology and subsequent toolkit with the PPNs, rather than designing for the PPNs. The key rationale was that the toolkit would be designed around the capacities and resources of the PPNs, while developing a sense of ownership across the participant PPNs.

In order to deliver on this project, a strategic oversight team was formed with individuals from the Irish Environmental Network and Social Justice Ireland and a research fellow working with the EPA. An experienced facilitator was hired to co-ordinate and deliver on the process of co-design and toolkit development.

In order to identify the four pilot PPNs, an invitation to participate was distributed to all PPNs. In this invitation to participate an initial set of minimum criteria for participation and a baseline time commitment were established. This allowed the PPNs themselves to decide whether or not they were in a position to meaningfully participate.

7.3 Co-design Workshops

Two co-design workshops were conducted with the four pilot PPNs, the Irish Environmental Network, Social Justice Ireland, the EPA research fellow and the contracted facilitator. These workshops were structured around a process of:

- exploring the different aspects of community wellbeing;
- developing a shared baseline understanding of what wellbeing means;
- clarifying the rationale for developing a WBS;
- reviewing existing wellbeing toolkits in terms of their features, processes, data/indicators and governance;
- identifying features of existing toolkits that are interesting and implementable;
- developing initial ideas on how a WBS process could be delivered.

Some of the key outputs from the first workshop were initial guidelines and principles that should inform the design of the toolkit (Table 7.1).

The second workshop brought more clarity to the process, with the PPNs starting to develop ownership of the process among the PPNs. This meant that the process more accurately reflected the capacity of the PPNs and the resource worker to deliver the process. The overall number of steps was reduced, with an emphasis on time constraints.

The workshops also developed a prototype toolkit (Figure 7.2). This brought more clarity around the pre and post stages of the WBS development in terms of awareness raising and adoption of the WBS by the PPN membership at the plenary meetings. The initial toolkit blueprint included an overview of the process,

Table 7.1. Toolkit design guidelines and principles from co-design workshop 1

Design guidelines	Design principles
• A revised process or sequence of activities that lead towards developing the WBS • There is limited time to deliver the deliberative workshops, e.g. a 3-hour time frame • PPN members need more than one opportunity to input into the process • The process of reviewing and analysing the existing and generated data needs to be as time efficient as possible and deliverable by people from a range of backgrounds • There is a need for clarification on how the WBS relates to other national wellbeing strategies	• The WBS should be community and PPN member led and owned and use lived experiences to assess the community's wellbeing • Reflects on the county/municipal district across all of the six wellbeing headings • Develops an understanding of "what matters" to communities • Identifies shared aspirations for the community's wellbeing (intersubjectivity) • Is developed inclusively and supports the development of a sense of place/community • Increases the potential to influence decision-making in local authorities and other agencies

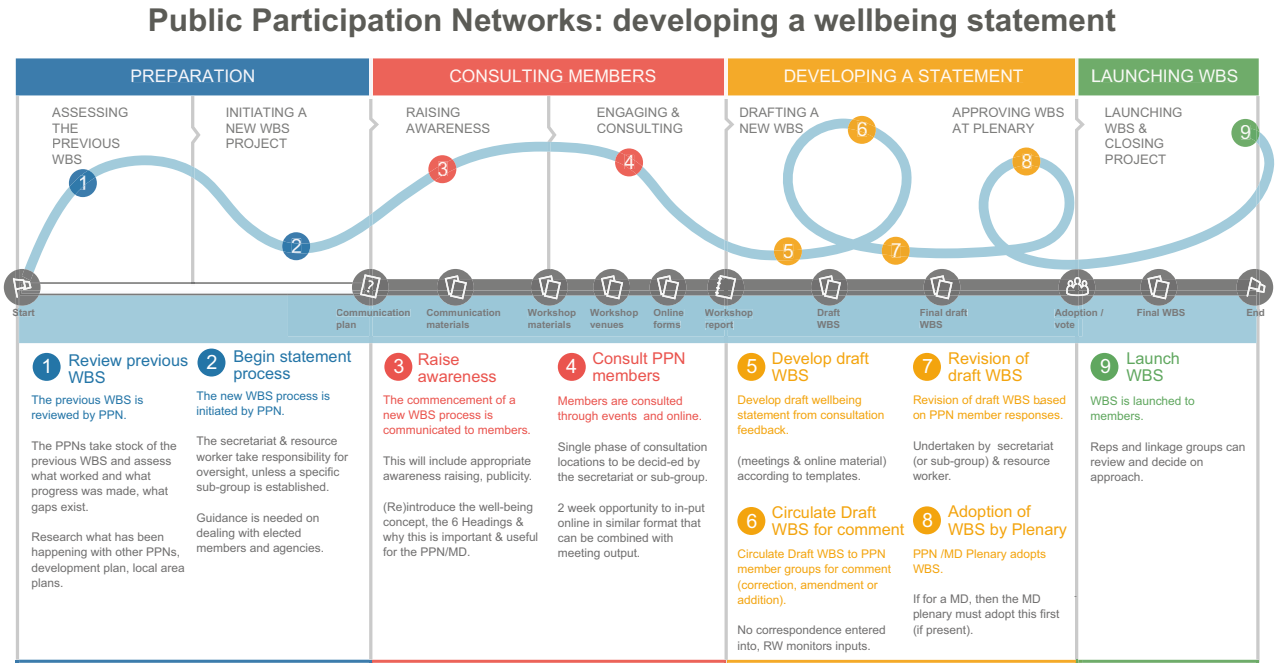

Figure 7.2. Overview of the draft process. MD, municipal district; RW, resource worker.

the resources required to deliver each stage of the process and guidance materials to inform the delivery by the PPNs.

7.4 Testing the Draft Toolkit Pilot WBS Process

Following the two co-design workshops, the four PPNs scheduled the live testing of the WBS process and toolkit elements. This was delivered through a series of public consultation and deliberation events, online consultation and the process of two-stage WBS drafting. Figure 7.3 presents an overview of the community workshop process.

Following a scene-setting presentation, participants undertook an "asset mapping" exercise in which they mapped the existing community assets that are considered to be important for community wellbeing (Figure 7.4). No strict definition of assets was provided by facilitators but typically what emerged were assets such as local public services and buildings, institutions, formal structures, physical spaces, community organisations, social networks and neighbourly relationships.

What the asset mapping begins to elicit is an intersubjective conceptualisation of place, community and community wellbeing. Although it was not intended

Figure 7.3. Overview of the proposed community workshop process.

Figure 7.4. Community wellbeing workshops.

to develop wellbeing indicators, the asset maps can form a locally oriented evidence base on what is important to a community.

After the asset mapping exercise groups of participants underwent facilitated discussions on the important factors, as they see them, in relation to each community wellbeing domain. Each group moved to a stand or poster on the wall that included the title of the domain, with initial questions below that would help initiate discussions among the group:

- *Social and community development*: How can we be an inclusive community, where we support each other and ensure no one is left out? What are the important social services and facilities we need to live well from childhood to old age?
- *Environment and sustainability*: How do we value our natural environment and built heritage? What

can be done to conserve, protect and restore these? How can we interact with the environment in a sustainable way, and hand it on to the next generation in a better state?
- *Work, economy and resources*: How can our communities thrive economically, with good jobs, and supports for enterprise, business and people not in work? What resources do we have and are they used effectively and sustainably without causing harm to social and environmental sustainability?
- *Health*: How can all members of our community enjoy the best possible physical and mental health? What about people with special needs, older people and carers?
- *Values, culture and meaning*: What is needed to ensure that everyone both feels, and actually is, included and valued, and that our different values and cultures are respected and nurtured? What are the important parts of our culture that we want to hand on to future generations?
- *Participation, democracy and good governance*: What is necessary to ensure that our local authority supports the wellbeing of our community for this and future generations? What is necessary to ensure that we have a voice in the decisions that affect us and that all voices are being heard?

Participants were provided with Post-it notes to write down factors of importance. They were then invited to place their notes on the wall and discuss with the group why these factors were important to them. As participants added Post-it notes to the domains, they were invited to briefly explain the rationale behind the different factors being added. This allowed for an informal process of deliberation with the rest of the group.

There was no initial moderation of the types of factors that could be presented, although participants were asked to identify a "high level" framing of the issue.

7.5 Online Consultation

In the weeks following the community workshops, an online consultation was distributed to PPN members. This provided the same questions asked during the workshops, although there was no scope for deliberation.

7.6 Synthesising Data from the Workshops

The method chosen to synthesise, interpret and aggregate the data into a WBS was inductive thematic analysis. This method identifies, analyses and reports patterns (themes) within data and is a foundational method of qualitative analysis. In the context of this project it presented a number of key benefits.

The primary benefit was that the synthesis and interpretation would be undertaken by the PPN worker and members of the secretariat, as opposed to a team of professional researchers. As a qualitative method, thematic analysis is intuitive and relatively quick to apply, either with software or manually, and as such it is accessible to non-researchers with little or no experience of qualitative research.

Thematic analysis aligns well with the participatory research paradigm in that it can be undertaken by participants or a collective of individuals. As such, thematic analysis is well positioned in terms of essentialist and constructionist paradigms and it aligns well with realist methods.

Thematic analysis can assist in synthesising relatively large sets of data and, through interpretation, provides rich "thick descriptions" of the data. Additionally, the insights and outputs tend to be broadly accessible to the workshop participants in as far as they can, at least conceptually, trace back their inputs to the outputs.

In terms of a broader justification for the approach, thematic analysis also has the benefit that it tends to be "theoretically independent" compared with a number of other qualitative research methods. For example, related methods that could be used in this context, such as discourse analysis, narrative analysis or interpretative phenomenological analysis, are undertaken through particular theoretical or epistemological frames.

To remain within the spirit of having a consistent methodology that could be applied by the PPNs in conjunction with a facilitator, a set of guidelines was established. The overarching goal was to search for certain themes or patterns and aggregate these within the existing frame set by the wellbeing domains.

In this context, a theme or pattern is something important within the data that relates to the overarching research question and the conceptual

frame established by the wellbeing domain. In that sense, the wellbeing domains broadly enforced a process of deductive analysis in which the themes that were developed were linked to the domains rather than inductively linked to the data that were collected. Having said that, a number of intermediary themes were developed inductively from the data by the PPNs and the facilitator.

7.6.1 Description of the synthesis process

- *Data familiarisation*: This involves transcribing data, repeated readings of the data, group discussions and deliberations on the data and the development of initial ideas around themes.
- *Preliminary codes (using PPN domains)*: This involves systematically coding interesting features of the data, aggregating or collating data relevant to each of these codes.
- *Identifying themes*: Through collation of the data (as well as group deliberation), initial themes are identified and all data relevant to those themes are aggregated.
- *Defining and naming themes*: Further analysis allows for refinement of each theme (e.g. merging, deleting, augmenting), as well as development of clearer definitions and names for each theme.
- *Producing the WBS*: Once all data have been collated under appropriate themes, the development of concise and compelling extracts of the data can be produced. This stage involves iteratively relating back to the research question, the data and wider information in order to produce a concise report of the analysis (e.g. WBS).

Although the process was intended to be "non-academic", it is designed around many aspects or features of good quality thematic analysis. For example, the data are transcribed "as is" without any moderation, all data are given equal attention without prejudice, the coding is thorough and comprehensive, and the data have been interpreted rather than merely paraphrased (but not ranked).

Although the thematic analysis was being undertaken by different PPN workers, the use of wellbeing domains as overarching codes helped to improve internal coherence and consistency.

7.7 Creating the Draft Wellbeing Statement

Following the community workshops and online consultation, the PPNs and the facilitator developed the draft WBS. To do this, the facilitator worked with the PPNs to "harvest" and transcribe the data from the Post-it notes, asset maps, "best thing about our community" worksheets and post-workshop feedback forms.

From eight community workshops, 2203 individual suggestions were made on "what matters" across the six domains.

Figure 7.5 indicates that there was no significant variation in the proportions of suggestions under each domain. Environment and sustainability, health (physical and mental), and social and community development had the largest proportions of suggestions.

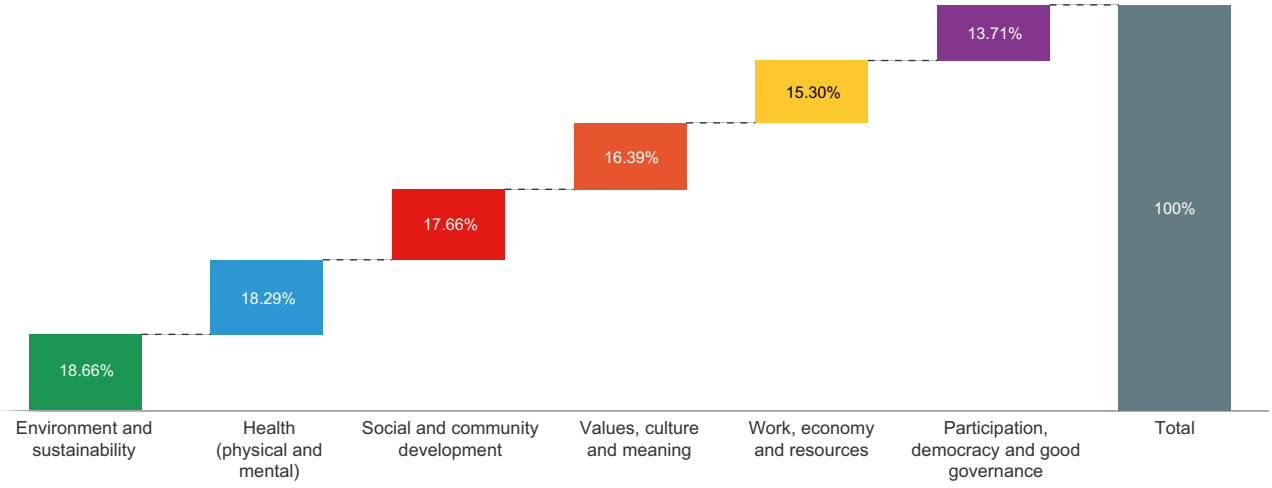

Figure 7.5. Suggestions on what matters from eight community workshops.

When analysed according to the seven municipal districts in Roscommon, Wicklow and Longford, and Cork city, there were some variations in the quantity of suggestions across the different domains (Figure 7.6). For example, 18.39% of all of the responses from the Boyle municipal district and only 8.95% of those from the Longford municipal district related to work, economy and resources.

7.8 Draft Community Wellbeing Statement

Following this synthesis of data, the PPNs developed their draft community WBS. These combined the data from the workshops and the online consultation.

The draft community WBSs were then submitted for peer review and consultation. Through this, PPN members were given the opportunity to confirm that their statement reflected their input and organisation's interests, their understanding of the outputs from the workshops and whether or not they needed any further clarification of the process. Once this process was completed, the PPNs developed their final community WBS.

The WBS was presented as a designed document that included contextual information about the municipal district and a graphical representation of the "vision for community wellbeing". By way of example, Table 7.2 outlines the content of the WBS that was developed by the Cork city PPN.

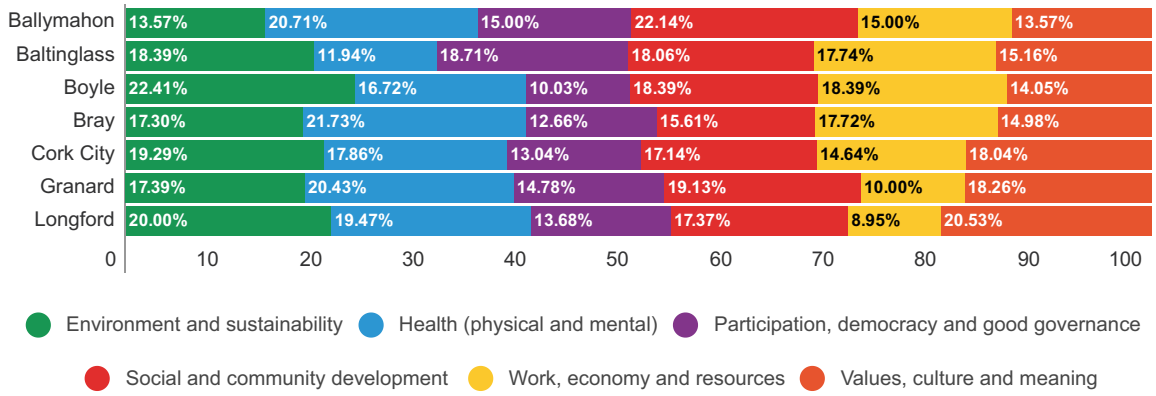

Figure 7.6. Suggestions under each wellbeing domain by municipal district.

Table 7.2. Cork city municipal district WBS

Domain	Vision	Specific thematic areas
Environment and sustainability	Cork city is a safe and clean environment, and a rich variety of green spaces and bodies of water contributes to a healthy environment for people and wildlife. Development in the city delivers improvements in public space, tree planting and community amenities. We have a well-connected, sustainable and health-promoting transport network throughout the city. The city practises truly sustainable development, which preserves our historical built heritage while ensuring that new infrastructure is future-proof, and provides amenities for Cork people. The River Lee is a unique asset and is carefully developed as an amenity for recreation, sport and tourism, energy generation and flood adaptation	• The city is home to diverse and valued species and habitats, and their ongoing preservation and protection are priorities • The city utilises innovative renewable and sustainable energy networks • Cork practises the waste hierarchy – "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle" – and excellent local services and facilities are in place to facilitate composting and recycling • Intelligent, creative design and development marries the needs and desires of people while maximising the potential of the built environment • Awareness of environmental issues is high in Cork and programmes that encourage and enable socially and environmentally responsible behaviours are supported • Cork respects and welcomes migrants • Carefully designed and well-supported green initiatives are widespread and integrated throughout the city, supporting food production, biodiversity, waste reduction, energy efficiency and health • Neighbourliness, inclusivity and social awareness are facilitated through the provision of green public and community spaces

Table 7.2. Continued

Domain	Vision	Specific thematic areas
Values, culture and meaning	The city is proud and sure of what makes Cork "Cork": history, built heritage, food, environment, language, sport, music and the arts. New and diverse cultures are included, integrated and celebrated here. Traditional sport is flourishing and we have a thriving, dynamic, inclusive and sustainable arts and music scene. People benefit from active learning between generations, cultures and identities. Cork's historical and cultural heritage is protected and conserved as part of the sustainable development of our city and the evolution of our community values	• Cultural appreciation features strongly across the spectrum of education • The unique features of language and expression in Cork are recognised and retained • The challenges that face a multicultural city are recognised and tackled, including by provision of appropriate infrastructure that supports community development • Cork is home to world class venues, festivals and events, which makes the city a renowned hub for the arts • The significance of the arts and culture is underpinned by supportive policy
Work, employment and resources	Cork's thriving economy is characterised by many unique, indigenous small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which in turn benefit the community. City and state policies support local employment generation within the SME sector. Workplaces in Cork are inclusive, accessible places that offer flexible conditions and a fair wage to all. Targeted initiatives, training and support build the confidence of those who are out of work, and facilitate transitions from unemployment to suitable jobs. Our economic model is based on the principle of sustainability in which environmental, social and economic priorities are given equal importance. This is borne out in progressive development, taxation, employment and other regulations and policies affecting businesses. There is a high standard of affordable housing for different household types in the city. The contribution to society of all kinds of work is valued and appropriately rewarded	• Employers and workplaces actively support a good standard of living and family life • Well-planned infrastructure and services enable workers to engage successfully both at work and in their wider lives • The welfare of carers and parents is safeguarded • Commuters benefit from well-developed and multimodal transport networks, which removes congestion and minimises the carbon footprint and greenhouse gas emissions • Young people in Cork can avail of a range of alternative learning opportunities, which support access to further education and employment • Businesses actively engage with and support the communities in the areas where they are located • All workers in Cork receive at least a living wage
Participation, democracy and good governance	Cork people are educated and equipped to participate actively in local government and communities are encouraged to participate in a meaningful way in decision-making structures. There is a high turnout for elections, with automatic registration from 16 years and voting rights for all EU citizens. Elected representatives are the true and accountable voice of their constituents and engage frequently and regularly to respond to local issues. Local government is transparent, accountable and open to input from citizens. Development in Cork is genuinely sustainable, with local government initiating meaningful engagement with citizens from the inception of projects. Local democracy is representative across cultures, ages and genders, and information on local government is easily accessible. Community and voluntary groups serve their members well and are resourced to comply with governance requirements	• There is a directly elected mayor • Elected councillors serve for a term of 7 years • Citizens are encouraged to be active participants in budgeting and design processes • The remit of local government encompasses local administration and authority for local decision-making • Intelligent budgeting to support strategic plans is informed by real community engagement • Measures are in place to address barriers to participation in the community and local democracy • The balance of representation favours citizen interests over those of business

Table 7.2. Continued

Domain	Vision	Specific thematic areas
Health	Cork has a high standard of locally available healthcare (physical and mental) that is universally accessible as people's needs arise. Awareness and understanding of emotional and mental health is developed through education from the early years. The importance of the natural environment for good health is recognised and green and public spaces throughout the city promote an outdoor and active culture. Healthcare practitioners and patients approach health and wellbeing in its broadest terms, considering medical and non-medical interventions. Everyone in Cork has a suitable home within safe and integrated communities. Health promotion is embedded across the spectrum of education and everyone is supported to have a good diet and healthy lifestyle. Cork city's health benefits from active and sustainable travel networks, which reduce environmental impacts and improve quality of life. Strategies and policies are in place that prevent isolation and underpin inclusive and supportive communities	• The provision of healthcare in Cork is locally informed and evidence based • Children are not required to take responsibility for caring roles • Carers are valued and supported to maintain their own quality of life • People with special needs are provided with appropriate services • Cork city is designed so that people living with disability can fully participate in society • Illicit drugs and tobacco are not a feature of life in Cork and alcohol consumption does not impact negatively on the health or wellbeing of our citizens
Social and community development	In Cork, community and voluntary groups are valued and resourced for their work in creating and maintaining inclusive communities. There is good provision for safe, accessible, well-serviced public spaces. Citizens are valued throughout their lives and robust, local structures are in place to provide supports when needed. The city offers diverse housing that allows all people to create homes in well-connected communities	• Communities are empowered to determine their own needs and there are clear mechanisms in place to secure resources and support to meet these needs • The voices and contributions of all groups within the community are sought, heard and valued (including youth, the elderly, migrants, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, persons living with disabilities and others) • Diverse spaces – outdoor, green, weather-proofed and indoor – are accessible to all citizens for interaction, recreation, socialising and play • Both new and "traditional" cultures are respected and celebrated • The city is opened up to all through safe and affordable transport options • Education, lifelong learning and educational spaces support community development • Everyone can access information on community groups, events and programmes across the city • The city's economic model supports the vision that Cork has for social and community development • Where homelessness does occur, emergency provision, in "normal housing", will be made, with supports available to reintegrate people into communities and suitable housing as fast as possible • Community development initiatives are in place to support parents, families and communities to reach their full potential around access to education, parenting skills and capacity building

8 Reflection on the Public Participation Network Wellbeing Statement Process

One of the defining attributes of the WBS process is that, although it is bottom-up, it shares common characteristics with the components approach of other wellbeing frameworks. This is because it is framed around a set of pre-existing domains, which contain sets of sub-domains or components.

The process of developing a WBS involves the synthesis of a long list of factors proposed by members during the workshops and online consultations. This process needs to be manageable for the PPN while clarifying the potential practical applications of the WBS and allowing for open communication with PPN members and the wider local government system.

The process of establishing "what matters" and then instituting a system for assessing community wellbeing will be shaped and limited by the available data and practicalities of PPN resources, including cost and time.

The limitations of statutory statistics in wellbeing assessments are well understood but it is important to stress how different domains and selected sub-domains will have different qualities of data through which assessment can be made. Some domains, such as the physical environment, already have a number of data and a growing body of evidence on the relationships between sub-domains and wellbeing. For example, there is some evidence on the benefits to wellbeing of green space and the "blue space" of water bodies (Völker and Kistemann, 2011).

Other sub-domains, particularly in relation to aspects such as social relations, are problematic in terms of data but they may be the most important in terms of assessing the sense of connectedness that underpins the notion of community.

The relative importance of any factor identified by PPN members can be understood in a number of ways. One way is the relative salience of an issue to the members that attended the community workshops, for example a recent incident that may have triggered community concern or a topic that was already subject to advocacy work by PPN members.

8.1 Domains and Indicators

One of the goals of the PPN process was to develop a "bottom-up" perspective on what matters to community groups in terms of wellbeing. This has a number of challenges, such as how to operationalise, value and evaluate community wellbeing. For example, there is a lack of a commonly agreed framework for applying subjective individual wellbeing in policy design appraisal and evaluation.

What the "bottom-up" perspective implies is that, rather than starting with a predefined set of indicators, the process may involve understanding how wellbeing is conceptualised by communities and mobilised by community organisations. These insights can be used to design a policy-relevant framework of indicators.

Bagnall *et al*. (2018) noted that different groups developed and applied wellbeing indicators in different ways. For example:

- UK government agencies tended towards applying wellbeing indicator sets based on pragmatic options;
- academics tended towards indicators that had been previously tested and validated;
- NGOs and wellbeing activists tended towards indicator sets that build on conceptual frameworks of wellbeing.

This highlights how different biases and assumptions in thinking can inform indicators and measurements and the scales to which these are applied. Although using validated indicators may seem to be a more rigorous approach, there needs to be clarification around the assumptions underpinning the indicator frameworks. For example, although it may be useful to develop wellbeing frameworks based on pragmatically accessible data, such as existing national population surveys, if they do not reflect the wellbeing "desires" of the population their efficacy may be undermined.

8.2 Practical Applications of the Wellbeing Statement

As the rationale for developing a WBS was not strictly defined in the legislation, the practical benefits and strategic implications of developing a WBS emerged over the course of the co-design workshops and pilot workshops with PPN members. At the outset, each of the stakeholders involved in the process had different conceptualisations of what the WBS could look like and what it could achieve. This ranged from using the WBS as a tool for advocacy, to informing programme or project design or supporting the development of sustainable communities.

The co-design workshops moved from an undefined exploration of possibilities towards a structured process of identifying a pragmatic approach that the PPNs could deliver. This pragmatism was driven by issues such as existing resources within each PPN, the different positioning of PPNs in relation to local authorities, ambitions of the pilot PPNs and the need to produce a process that was meaningful to PPN members.

Through the co-design workshops, a number of concrete categories of practical application of the WBS were identified. These included:

- *Informing the PPN annual workplan*: The PPN annual workplan is the overall project plan that each PPN needs to produce on an annual basis. The workplan needs to be approved by the PPN members at the plenary meeting. The WBS may act as a guide to the development of the PPN annual workplan. In this sense, the WBS can act as a strategic vision for what the PPN should aim to achieve, based on the perceived wellbeing wishes of members.
- *Informing the strategic planning of the PPN*: Some PPNs are developing longer term strategic plans and the WBS can also act as a guide for this. It is understood that wellbeing indicators do not change significantly in the short term. This means that the WBS has some stability in terms of guiding more strategic decisions by the PPN.
- *Informing the advocacy work of the PPN representatives*: One of the functions of the PPN is to elect representatives to sit on local government strategic policy committees and other decision-making and policymaking committees. These representatives are expected to bring the views of PPN members to the committees and provide feedback to members on activities undertaken through these committees. One of the initial mechanisms for this was through linkage groups, which are small networks of PPN members who come together around an issue of shared interest. The WBS provides additional and deeper insight into the wellbeing wishes of the members, with a view towards more effectively advocating on behalf of the members.
- *Support informal scrutiny by PPNs of local government policy*: Although the policy scrutiny role of the PPNs is informal, they have an important role in improving the reach and scale of local government consultations.
- *Raising ideas on local proposals*: Although the development of the WBS was focused on developing wellbeing indicators under each domain, the process resulted in the identification of some specific local projects that were of interest to member groups. These specific project ideas were not included in the final WBS, but the PPNs identified the potential to direct members towards existing funding and support for developing community projects, such as LEADER, the Village Renewal Scheme and similar schemes.
- *Succession planning*: The need for succession planning to deal with the turnover of PPN representatives, the secretariat and resource workers was identified. This is to ensure that commitment to the vision set out in the WBS remains for the intended duration. The PPNs suggested that this could be achieved through "scheduled reviews" of the WBS, creating links between the vision and ongoing local government strategies, plans and consultations, and undertaking performance reviews, with developments considered against the measures of the vision.

8.3 Risks to Legitimacy

It is reasonable to argue that a purpose of the WBS is not to directly influence decisions at a local level but to increase member "input legitimacy" across a range of PPN functions. Having said that, in terms of the WBS being used by PPN representatives sitting on local authority committees, there are a number of possible risks.

One of the significant risks is that, if the WBS is poorly integrated within local government or national government policies (e.g. the local economic and community plan), it, i.e. the WBS, may be easily side-lined by the wider local policy system. This may limit the impact of the WBS on local policy agendas, as well as on resource allocation or implementation.

As Bua (2017) noted, in the process of deliberating around options, policymakers and other government actors may tend to favour those policy proposals that already align with policies in development or in place. A number of factors contribute to this lock-in, such as a belief that new options go "against the grain of government priorities", a lack of clarity around delivery infrastructure or a lack of clarity on policy ownership.

Additionally, the ongoing debates around the perceived legitimacy of subjective or self-reported measures of wellbeing in the context of policymaking may impact on the level of engagement. A potential risk is that local authority committees engage with proposals emerging from the WBS only in a tokenistic way. This may lead to the generation of speculative proposals for projects related to the WBS that are poorly resourced.

Alternatively, if local authorities engage with the WBS, and more participatory approaches in general, they may find themselves unable to act on the issues that arise from the process. The broad nature of the PPN wellbeing domains means that many actions that may be required are beyond the scope of local government.

Another possible risk relates to the instrumentalisation of the WBS process, and the wellbeing concept more generally, by different groups within a PPN, for example if the process is co-opted by stronger groups within a PPN in order to "lobby" for changes in local government policy. The process of facilitating focus away from "specific issues" during the consultation and deliberation workshops would go some way to preventing this. Deliberative engagement should assist in sifting these "illegitimate proposals" out.

The PPNs aimed to limit the specificity of issues raised so that the process could not be accused of being a questionable form of participation without reasonable deliberative scrutiny. This is particularly important as the WBS will be used to advocate through local policy committees.

It could be argued that, in terms of policy development, the process of developing the WBS was soft on "consultation requirements" in terms of representation because it was developed by "those who turned up" at the events. This risk is tempered by the fact that the WBS has a range of functions, most of which are operational for the PPN.

One of the aspects that is missing from the WBS process design is what Dryzek (2012) refers to as a "transmission mechanism". This is the mechanism by which the WBS is processed and fed into local government policymaking. Although the WBS does not make specific proposals, it demands particular framings of policies.

In the longer term, to increase the impact and legitimacy of the WBS, particularly among local policymakers, there may be a need to ensure that statements are at least moderated through best available evidence, open scrutiny, engaged dialogue among all stakeholders and clarity of the role of local organisations for operationalising the "vision".

8.4 Democratisation of Local Policy Agenda Setting

By providing a space for community organisations to identify and define wellbeing indicators and channel these into local government and local policymaking, it could be argued that the WBS is an experiment in the democratisation of agenda setting in Irish local government policy.

As it is a participatory, consultative and deliberative process, it is focused on the "local context" of wellbeing, but it is spread across different spatial contexts, for example multiple municipal districts within a county boundary and cities.

This presents challenges in terms of scalability of the WBS process. For example, given the very limited resources, equal and inclusive participation and deeper considerations around representation will become necessary.

There may be scope for the WBS to be complemented by other forms of representation and participation at higher tiers as the process begins to interact more directly with policymaking at the local authority level.

In the spirit of enhancing governance through citizen engagement and traditional subsidiarity perspectives, it may be possible to abstract the results from the WBS process in order to connect this to national policymaking around wellbeing.

9 Refining Community Wellbeing Sub-domains

This chapter presents a possible framework of sub-domains that may provide more clarity and a finer degree of classification and simplification of messaging around community wellbeing. The sub-domains were developed through a reflection on existing frameworks but were structured based on the suggestions made during the workshops.

This proposed framework also aligns with other international frameworks, such as the OECD's How's Life? framework, because it incorporates universally understood wellbeing dimensions (material conditions, quality of life and sustainability). The framework considers the material aspects of wellbeing, individual assessments of perceived quality of life and the relationships set within the broader relational context of sustainable development.

9.1 Reviewing Sub-domains

One of the challenges in interpreting the findings from the community workshops is that the PPN domains are at a very high level of generalisation and there is limited scope for comparative assessments across municipal districts. This is partly because each of the PPNs developed its own set of sub-domains in synthesising the data from the community workshops and online consultation.

As they were working independently of each other and there were no predefined sub-domains, the four PPN workers and facilitator developed a set of 271 separate sub-domains, many of which overlapped but were framed differently.

In other frameworks the synthesis and clustering process is carried out through statistical clustering (e.g. factor analysis) while referencing the existing theory and empirical evidence on possibly universal wellbeing domains. This approach was not practical in this context given the approach of PPNs themselves leading the process, without technical or expert support.

There is a tension within this in terms of having a process that is emergent and genuinely reflective of bottom-up perspectives while providing a degree of comparability between PPNs.

One rationale for developing a refined set of sub-domains that draws on theory and empirical evidence is that synthesis and clustering relying on subjective "self-generated" criteria may potentially lead to the unintentional exclusion of important aspects of wellbeing.

This exclusion can be caused by various factors, such as issues being "taken for granted" or being excluded through the selection of people or organisations that participate in the workshop and consultation process.

There are various ways in which issues may be "taken for granted". For example, the importance of clean air may be recognised as an essential wellbeing factor in urban contexts, but may be taken for granted and thus not be mentioned in rural contexts. Additionally, factors such as "material deprivation" or wellbeing inequality may be excluded if they are not salient issues for participants.

Given the context of the project and the desire to have a bottom-up process that provides a richer insight into "what matters", it may not be appropriate to use the refined list of sub-domains at the consultation stage. Having said that, it may be appropriate to use the sub-domains to sensitively prompt participants to reflect and comment on possible "taken for granted" sub-domains.

In order to produce a more "manageable" and "comparable" set of sub-domains, a review of existing community wellbeing frameworks was undertaken. In this review, possible sub-domains were shortlisted using the following selection criteria:

- representativeness of PPN domains, PPN sub-domains and workshop suggestions;
- relevance of the sub-domain based on "what matters" suggestions;
- potential to make the process of developing a vision statement more efficient, with comparable sub-domains across PPNs;
- potential for qualitative or quantitative indicator assignment (e.g. profile indicators) incorporating "material conditions", "quality of life" and "relationality" indicators;

- directionality, usability and comparability, e.g. monitoring progress and identifying fluctuations, growth or decline over time;
- consistency and reliability – providing useful insights if measured over time (depending on associated indicators);
- capacity to highlight interrelationships, disparities and domains where wellbeing may be weak;
- potential to profile the perceived initial state of wellbeing for a community.

From this review, an initial set of 33 potential sub-domains was developed. Using this initial list of 33 sub-domains, a long list of 2203 factors was recoded. Following this recoding of the factors, this new sub-domain list was expanded to 42 sub-domains to allow for more clarity within the environment and sustainability, and values, culture and meaning domains.

Table 9.1 provides an overview of the proposed sub-domains. Those in bold were added after the first pass recoding of "what matters" suggestions.

The next sections briefly highlight the differing perspectives on the domains and sub-domains across each municipal district when recoded using the framework presented in Table 9.1. This recoding was undertaken by the EPA research fellow and serves to illustrate the potential for comparative analysis between municipal districts if the framework was to be applied across the 31 PPNs.

9.2 Environment and Sustainability

The suggestions on "what matters" within the environment and sustainability domain were broadly consistent with the framing of the initial PPN domain framework. As such, the domain was framed as broadly encompassing:

- the range of ecosystem and public services, such as water, green space, waste and flood management, that are considered to contribute to community wellbeing;
- the social and behavioural dimension in terms of conservation, recycling, water efficiency and other pro-environmental behaviours more generally;
- environmental exposure pathways, such as air pollution.

In this sense, the environment was seen as both a determinant and constituent factor in community wellbeing. Because of this, the proposed sub-domains include general local environment issues (e.g. biodiversity, pro-environmental behaviour), green spaces, place (built environment), air quality, water, energy and waste.

There is a potential bias within the allocation of suggestions that would warrant further debate with the

Table 9.1. Revised community wellbeing sub-domains

Environment and sustainability	Health (physical and mental)	Participation, democracy and good governance	Social and community development	Values, culture and meaning	Work, economy and resources
Local environment	Access to services	Democracy	Adult learning	Culture	Employment
Air quality	Anxiety	Governance	Child learning	**Recreation and sport**	Income inequality
Energy	Children's wellbeing		Close support	**Arts and music**	Job quality
Local food	Happiness		Community cohesion		Local economy
Green space	Health behaviours		Control		Material deprivation
Place	Health inequality		Crime and security		Transport
Waste	Informal care		Flourishing		Unemployment
Water	Life satisfaction		Generalised trust		
	Mental health		Personal relationships		
	Purpose/meaning		Volunteering		
			Wellbeing inequality		
			Housing		

PPNs. For example, those suggestions that relate to place (e.g. built environment, vacant buildings, urban space) are included under environment. In addition, a number of the factors included within the "local environment" sub-domain relate to biodiversity and this could warrant a separate sub-domain (Table 9.2).

When viewed at a municipal district level, the dominant sub-domains related to place, green spaces and general environment and waste (Figure 9.1). The sub-domains with the lowest number of suggestions were water and air quality. This may reflect the relatively good air quality in rural areas. Cork city had the highest number of responses with regard to air quality.

An issue that may warrant further investigation is how local environmental issues are perceived when framed through a community wellbeing lens. For example, although there was interest in renewable energy and energy efficiency across a number of the municipal districts, there were no mentions of "climate" or "climate change". This may be interpreted as an assumption that investment in renewable energy is addressing these issues or it may be because of the proximal nature of environmental issues.

9.3 Health

The suggestions on "what matters" within the health (physical and mental) domain were broadly focused on institutional and behavioural aspects of health, such as access to healthcare services and the formal and informal supports needed to lead a healthy and active life, as well as specific issues around health inequality (Table 9.3).

In this sense, there was an emphasis on the institutional and social determinants of health in the context of community wellbeing.

The allocation of the "purpose/meaning" sub-domain may warrant further debate but it has been interpreted to mean the potential sense of "life satisfaction" that may be determined by the cognitive and contextual factors that give a sense of meaning and purpose.

Access to services was the sub-domain with the highest level of interest, but again this depended on the context. Cork city was the only fully urban PPN involved in the pilot and presented the lowest number of suggestions related to access to services (Figure 9.2).

Table 9.2. Environment and sustainability sub-domains

Sub-domain	Common factors across responses
Local environment	Biodiversity; general environmental issues
Local environment – air	Air quality; traffic
Local environment – energy	Local energy production; renewable energy
Local environment – food	Local food production; community gardens; food cultures
Local environment – green space	Use of natural environment; distance to nearest green space; access to green space
Local environment – place	Built environment quality; vacant properties
Local environment – waste	Access to waste services; waste volumes; littering
Local environment – water	Local water quality; water services

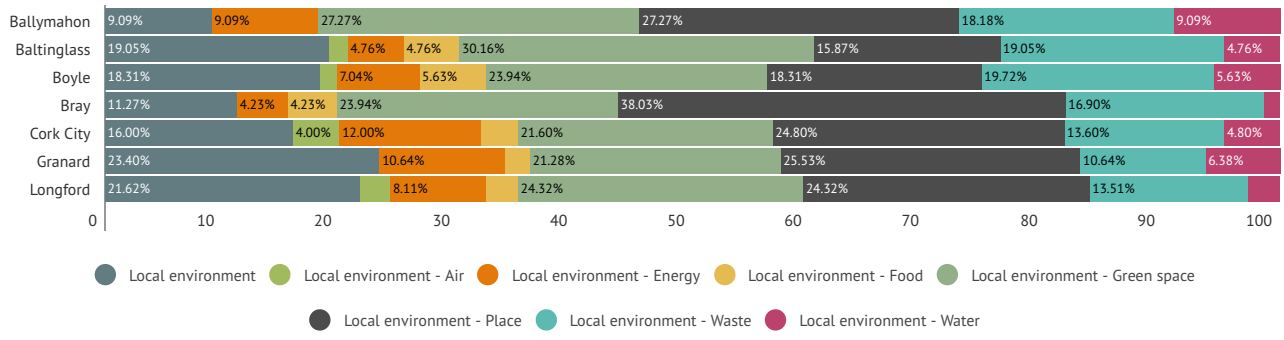

Figure 9.1. Environment and sustainability sub-domains at a municipal district level.

Table 9.3. Health (physical and mental) sub-domains

Sub-domain	Common factors across responses
Access to services	Households with good access to key health/social care services
Anxiety	Prevalence of anxiety
Children's wellbeing	Child subjective wellbeing
Happiness	Happiness
Healthy behaviours	Healthy eating; active travel; sleep
Health inequality	Health inequality; subjective health; healthy life expectancy; life expectancy at birth; physical activity; long-term disability; preventable deaths
Informal care	Percentage providing informal care
Life satisfaction	Life satisfaction
Mental health	Mood and anxiety disorders index; estimated prevalence of mental health disorders; Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale
Purpose/meaning	Sense of purpose; sense of place; sense of belonging; sense of identity

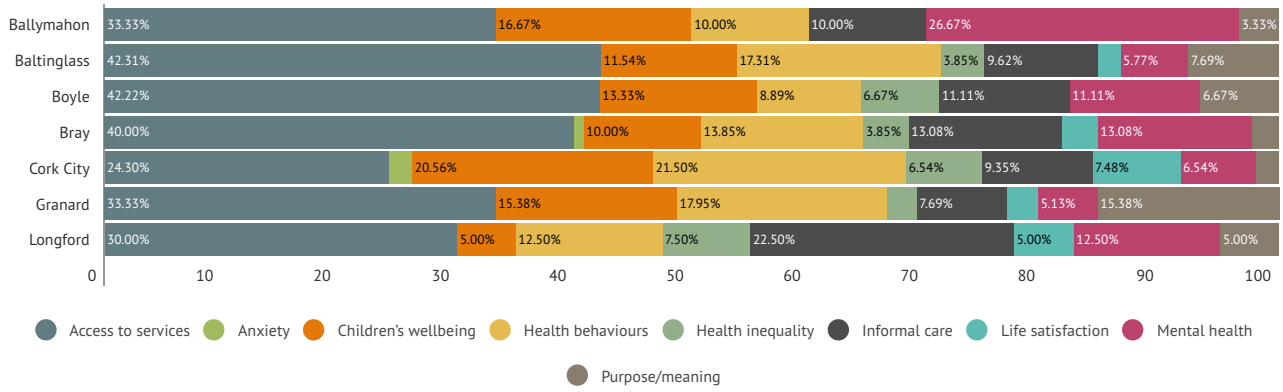

Figure 9.2. Health sub-domains at a municipal district level.

9.4 Participation, Democracy and Good Governance

The suggestions on "what matters" within the participation, democracy and good governance domain were broadly around institutional and bureaucratic aspects of local democracy and public participation, such as the sense of being able to influence local politics, the process of applying for funding, running community organisations and the visibility of local representatives.

In this sense, the building of capacity (e.g. access to finance), open government, collective efficacy and active citizenship were framed as constituent factors of community wellbeing.

Because of this, the proposed sub-domains were democracy (e.g. civic engagement, voter turnout, political activities) and governance (capacity building, bureaucratic processes, accessing finance, communications) (Table 9.4).

The only outlier of note across these sub-domains was the comparatively low level of interest in governance issues in Ballymahon (Figure 9.3).

9.5 Social and Community Development

The suggestions on "what matters" within the social and community development domain were broadly consistent with the framing of the initial PPN domain framework. The domain was framed as broadly encompassing:

- social and "soft" infrastructures, such as learning, trust-based relationships, community safety and a "welcoming context";

Table 9.4. Participation, democracy and good governance sub-domains

Sub-domain	Common factors across responses
Democracy	Sense of local influence; total voter turnout
Governance	Trust in local government; procedures; bureaucracy; communications

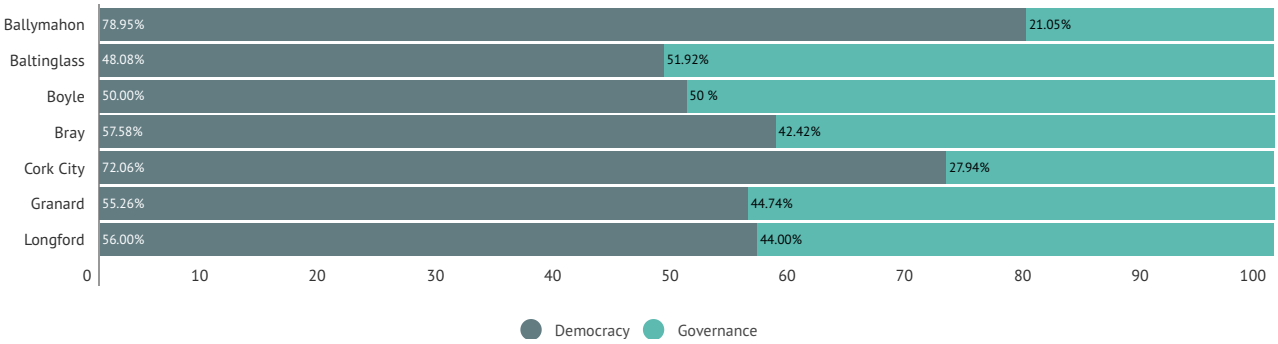

Figure 9.3. Participation, democracy and good governance sub-domains at a municipal district level.

- relational aspects, such as social networks, neighbourliness and social interactions;
- ensuring equality of participation in and access to all aspects of community life.

In this sense, the strengthening of trust-based social relationships, collaborative support and long-life learning were framed as constituent factors in community wellbeing.

Because of this, the proposed sub-domains included housing, adult and child learning, community cohesion and close support, personal relationships, crime and security, wellbeing inequality and volunteering (Table 9.5).

The allocation of housing as a sub-domain within the social and community development domain may be seen as problematic given that the other sub-domains related to the social and "soft" infrastructures required for community wellbeing.

In terms of social and community development, the three most dominant sub-domains were community cohesion, personal relationships and housing (Figure 9.4). Housing was the most dominant sub-domain in Cork city, followed by Boyle, Granard and Longford. Volunteering was most dominant in Ballymahon and least dominant in Cork city.

9.6 Values, Culture and Meaning

The suggestions on "what matters" within the values, culture and meaning domain expanded the original framing of the initial PPN domain framework. As such, the domain was initially framed as broadly encompassing the representation and embodiment of culture through arts and sport, as well as engendering a culture of inclusion (Table 9.6). The suggestions included specific examples of cultural inclusion but also direct engagement and participation in the arts, language, recreation and sport (Figure 9.5).

In this sense, the classification of culture was expanded to include practices and institutions of arts and sport that can play a role in forming multiple cultural identities, as well as providing the means for engagement across different cultural identities. Because of this, the proposed sub-domains included culture, arts and music, recreation and sport.

9.7 Work, Economy and Resources

The suggestions on "what matters" within the work, economy and resources domain expanded on the framing of the initial PPN domain framework. As such, the domain was framed as broadly encompassing:

- local economic development, including enterprise supports;
- income growth and equality;

Table 9.5. Social and community development sub-domains

Sub-domain	Common factors across responses
Adult learning	Participation in adult education; equality of access
Child learning	Percentage of population with junior/leaving certificate; school readiness
Close support	Support when needed; social contact among social care users
Community cohesion	Neighbourhood belonging; social network diversity; multicultural; social fragmentation index
Control	Self-agency; self-efficacy; ability to make own decisions
Crime and security	Perceived safety; violent crime; domestic violence; other crime categories
Flourishing	Optimism; worth; peace of mind; resilience; autonomy; competence
Generalised trust	Generalised trust
Housing	Housing affordability; noise complaints; housing overcrowding; housing satisfaction; housing in poor condition; other measures of housing problems
Personal relationships	Social networks; loneliness; interaction with neighbours
Volunteering	Volunteering; opportunity to volunteer; number of volunteer organisations
Wellbeing inequality	Social exclusion; inaccessible places and services; life satisfaction inequality

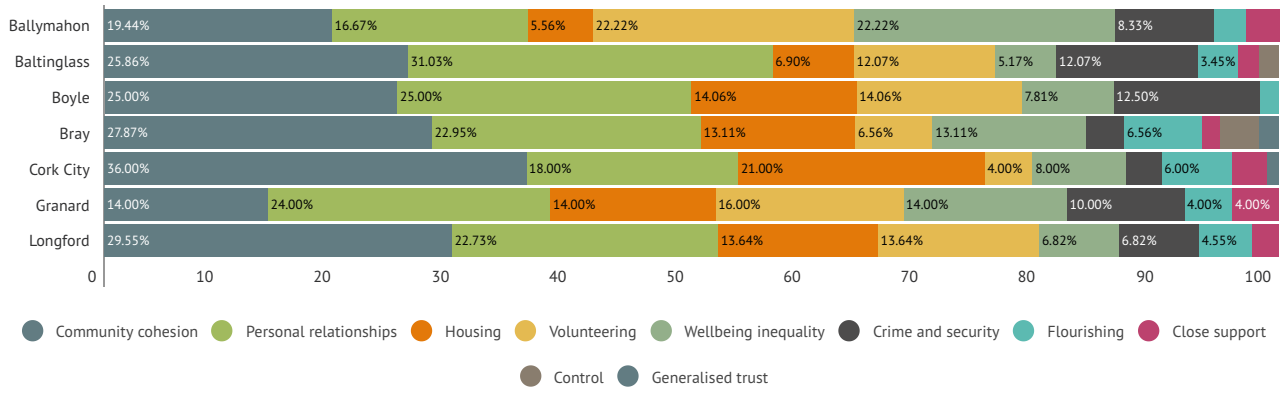

Figure 9.4. Social and community development sub-domains at a municipal district level.

Table 9.6. Values, culture and meaning sub-domains

Sub-domain	Common factors across responses
Arts and music	Participation in arts and music; access to venues
Culture	Participation in cultural/heritage activities
Recreation and sport	Participation in sport; active lifestyles; access to sports and recreation facilities; playable spaces

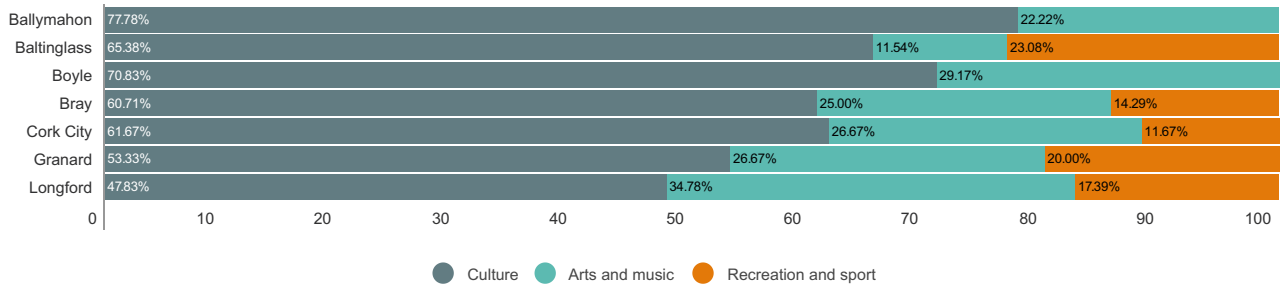

Figure 9.5. Values, culture and meaning sub-domains at a municipal district level.

- employment, quality of employment and work–life balance;
- transport.

In this sense, the work, economy and resources domain was seen as both a determinant factor and a constituent factor of community wellbeing. Because of this, the proposed sub-domains include general local economy development (e.g. non-regulatory enterprise supports), employment, material deprivation and transport (Table 9.7).

The allocation of transport to the economic sub-domain may warrant further debate. Some of the framing of suggestions included transport as a means to support social connectivity and economic development. It was decided to include transport as a sub-domain here because there are capital and transaction costs in developing transport infrastructure and accessing transport services.

Across all of the municipal districts, the most dominant domains were local economy, transport and employment (Figure 9.6). In Ballymahon, employment was the second most dominant issue, whereas there were no references to income inequality.

9.8 Analysis across Sub-domains

When the 2203 suggestions from the community workshops were recoded through this new framework of sub-domains, a more nuanced insight into what matters in terms of community wellbeing was seen. Figure 9.7 provides an overview of the sub-domains in terms of frequency of responses. This more nuanced perspective allows for a more granular insight into "what matters" across each sub-domain.

Table 9.7. Work, economy and resources sub-domains

Sub-domain	Common factors across responses
Employment	Employment rate
Income inequality	Income inequality
Job quality	Good jobs; job satisfaction; good pay; work–life balance; overwork; underwork; job security
Local economy	Local economic development; economic diversity
Material deprivation	Percentage of people with low incomes; material deprivation rate; income deprivation affecting families; older people; young people; debt liabilities
Transport	Public transport; transport links; transport services; traffic congestion
Unemployment	Unemployment rate; number of NEETs (not in education, employment or training)

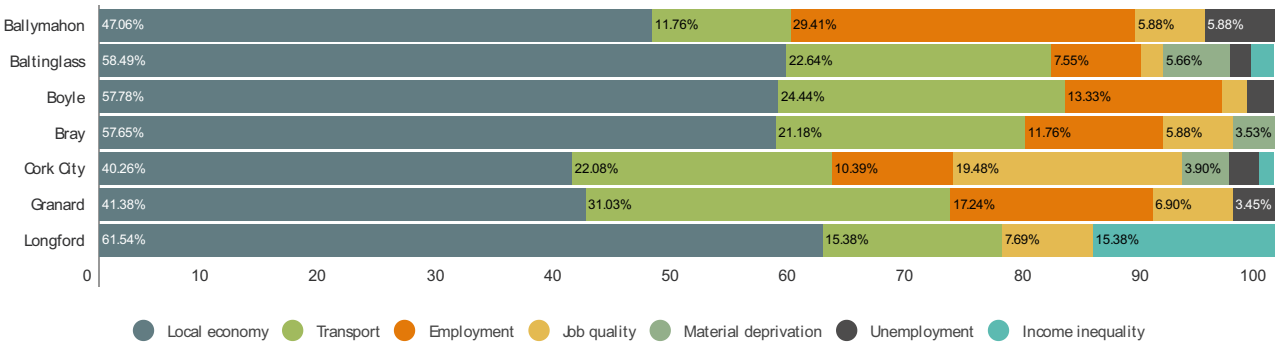

Figure 9.6. Work, economy and resources sub-domains at a municipal district level.

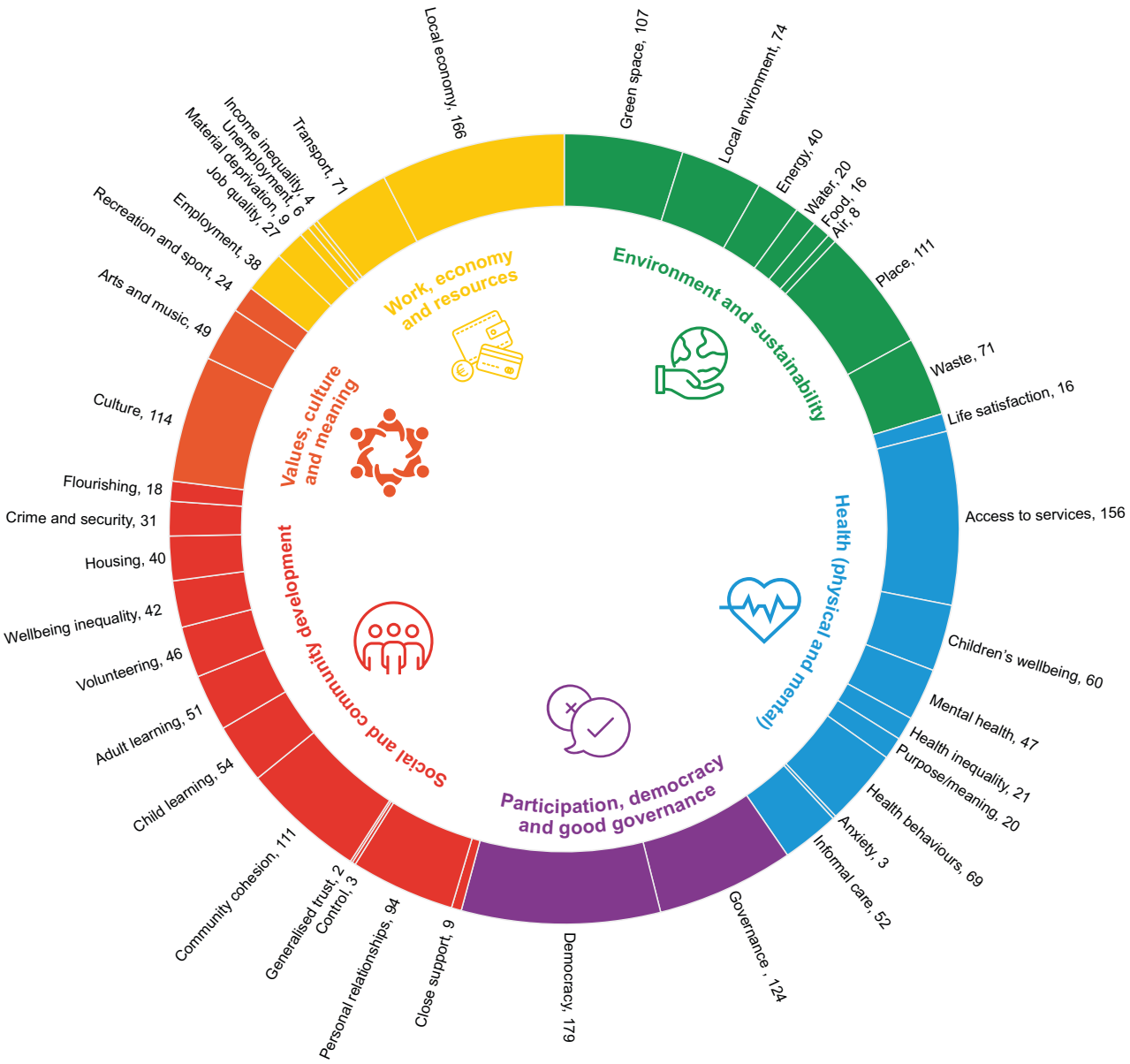

Figure 9.7. Analysis of the revised community wellbeing sub-domains.

10 Additional Methodological Considerations

As outlined in the previous chapters of this report, the indicators and methodologies for assessing community wellbeing are less developed than those for individual wellbeing.

Although some frameworks rely on aggregation of individual assessments of wellbeing, others have used participatory and group-based methods to elicit relevant wellbeing domains and indicators. These utilise either individual interviews or collective deliberations, such as community meetings or structured focus groups.

The assumed benefit of community meetings and focus group discussions is that they can produce a richer debate on “what matters” within a particular community. Depending on how they are designed and delivered they can also provide insights into “why” certain issues matter.

As underlined by the PPN process, if the method is sufficiently open it has the potential to provide richer insights into what matters at a sub-regional level. The PPN process also suggests that there are limitations in using statutory statistics or aggregated wellbeing measures that use a limited number of proxy indicators.

Taking these issues on board, and given the desire of the PPNs and wider PPN advisory network to develop a framework for community wellbeing and a practical process for integrating this into the PPN functions, this chapter will make preliminary suggestions on how the methodology can be further developed.

10.1 Clarifying “Community” and the Rationale for Community Wellbeing

It is important to further define “community” in the context of PPN community wellbeing and the objective of defining or measuring community wellbeing.

Wellbeing frameworks that combine statutory national statistics or territorial data with aggregated individual data are a reasonable approach if the goal is to infer that community wellbeing is a determinant of individual wellbeing. If the interest is intersubjective wellbeing that recognises the relational aspects of community wellbeing, there is a need for deliberative methods.

As the focus of the PPNs is on the municipal district level, the most reasonable approach would be the use of the deliberative methods developed through the pilot projects, alongside the national statistics that can be disaggregated to a sufficient level.

10.2 Prioritisation of Sub-domains

The process of developing the WBS was primarily about identifying “what matters” and it intentionally did not involve a process of assessment, weighting or prioritisation of factors.

As discussed previously in this report, one potential threat to the legitimacy of the WBS within the wider local policy system is the degree to which the document can guide or inform decision-making.

There is also a validity threat in terms of defining whose preferences are being applied and who is being prioritised through the actions being taken at a community, local authority or national policy level.

Even with the revised framework, there is still a great deal of complexity in terms of individual sub-domains and how they relate to and interact with each other.

If the WBS is going to guide or inform decision-making, this implies a potential need to make choices between priorities within and between the sub-domains. This would involve understanding potential trade-offs, relative weighting and resource allocation towards actions to improve community wellbeing.

From this perspective, the listing of dimensions or sub-domains of wellbeing is important but the next step could be assigning weights to particular sub-domains so that there is a degree of guidance on where limited resources could be placed.

For example, there is a need to better understand how a community or a subset of that community constructs their sense of wellbeing across different contexts and at different times.

It is therefore important to understand how the community and individuals within that community prioritise "what matters" and what trade-offs they are willing or able to make between different aspects of community wellbeing.

This is important for the PPNs in terms of the practical application and integration of the WBS into their operational procedures and strategic planning. It is also important from the local policymaking perspective in terms of allocating resources to actions that are representative and meaningful to the community from a wellbeing perspective.

Weighting items using people's preferences may also increase the validity and acceptability of the actions that may be taken in response to the vision. This could be achieved in a number of ways, such as:

- weighting items according to importance (considering risks associated with groupthink, elite capture, exclusion of groups);
- participatory ranking, which uses accessible and transparent methods for eliciting people's priorities – this might include pairwise ranking, matrix scoring and linear ranking;
- priority elicitation using deliberative methods.

The process of sending out the draft WBS to peer consultation could be a point at which the initial weighting is scoped out. This consultation could include a set of open-ended questions on respondents' own satisfaction with aspects of their life within their community, alongside scoring of the sub-domains or factors included in the vision document.

The benefit of including this is that it increases the methodological rigour and allows for triangulation to identify groupthink or elite capture, or reduce the potential withholding of information in the community workshops as a result of social status effects or embarrassment.

Whatever weighting and prioritisation approach is taken, it should be selected on the basis of practicality (i.e. acceptability to respondents), reliability and empirical and theoretical validity.

10.3 Indicators

Conceptual frameworks, such as that including the PPN wellbeing domains, are very useful tools for depicting relationships in systems. If they are to help PPNs and the wider community understand the current situation with regard to wellbeing, define possible future scenarios, or track and communicate trends over time, the sub-domains should be associated with concrete evidence.

Indicators are one method of organising data on interactions in systems, and tracking and communicating trends over time.

Table 10.1 presents a set of suggested indictors related to the refined set of sub-domains. These are existing indicators used in different contexts and can be measured using existing data sets, disaggregation challenges aside, proxy indicators from existing sources or through original research being undertaken by the PPN network and PPN stakeholders.

10.4 Methodology

In order to implement the proposed indicators in Table 10.1, a revised methodology is proposed (Figure 10.1). This methodology augments the methodology developed by the PPNs with some additional qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection, analysis and triangulation using statutory data sets.

This is not something that the PPNs would necessarily have the capacity to deliver directly and would require additional support from PPN stakeholders, such as the sponsoring government department.

Table 10.1. Proposed community wellbeing indicators

Sub-domain	Example indicators	Possible sources
Local environment	Status of local habitats designated under EU law; prevalence of invasive alien species; ecological footprint (total environmental burden) of municipal district	CSO Environmental Indicators Ireland; CSO Environmental Accounts; EPA Maps (https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/); National Biodiversity Data Centre; EPA data; DCCAE data; local authorities; Biodiversity Ireland Maps

Table 10.1. Continued

Sub-domain	Example indicators	Possible sources
Local environment – air	Annual average levels of PM_{10}, nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) and other measured pollution exposures	EPA National Ambient Air Quality Network; EPA Maps (https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/); Transport Infrastructure Ireland Data Portal; local authorities
Local environment – energy	Capacity (in MW) of renewable energy equipment installed; percentage of households on a green energy tariff; percentage of dwellings with an energy rating of B or higher	SEAI statistics; DCCAE; European Social Survey
Local environment – food	No. of community gardens per 1000 population	Local authority EAO; PPN original research
Local environment – green space	Proportion of accessible green space per 1000 population; percentage using green space for exercise, leisure, health or relaxation	AIRO Data Store; CSO QNHS Module on Sport and Physical Exercise – SPQ36; local authority EAO; PPN original research
Local environment – place	Perceived quality of local built environment; no. of vacant buildings per 1000 population; graffiti incidents	Local authority vacant site register; local authority EAO; PPN original research
Local environment – waste	No. of civic amenity sites per 1000 population; no. of households with formal waste collection service; no. of reports of fly-tipping; litter survey	EPA waste statistics; EPA Maps (https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/); CSO Environmental Indicators Ireland; DCCAE National Litter Pollution Monitoring System (http://www.litter.ie)
Local environment – water	Percentage of surface water bodies and groundwater bodies achieving a good or high overall status under the Water Framework Directive	EPA water quality data; EPA Maps (https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/); DCCAE; https://www.beaches.ie/
Access to services	Percentage of households with good access to key health/social care services; hospital bed waiting times; GP appointment waiting times; accessibility of services	Healthy Ireland Survey; HSE monthly Management Data Reports; Department of Health; CSO
Anxiety	"Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?", 0–10 scale, where 10 is completely anxious	European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS); Labour Force Survey (workplace related)
Children's wellbeing	Percentage of children reporting low life satisfaction	European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS)
Happiness	"Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?", 0–10 scale, where 10 is completely happy	European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS)
Health behaviours	Percentage eating five portions of fruit and vegetables a day; percentage of adults doing 150+ minutes of physical activity per week; percentage of adults getting the recommended number of hours of sleep a night; percentage of respondents who use active travel	Healthy Ireland Survey
Health inequality	Healthy life expectancy at birth for men and women, plus the gap between the most and the least deprived areas; percentage of adults (aged 16+ years) who have fewer than two healthy lifestyle behaviours (not smoking, healthy body mass index, eating five portions of fruit and vegetables a day, not drinking above guideline levels, meeting guidelines on the recommended weekly minutes of physical activity)	Healthy Ireland Survey
Informal care	Percentage of people receiving home help; no. of registered carers; how often are you involved in caring for elderly or disabled relatives?; percentage of people who support family members, friends, neighbours or others because of long-term physical or mental ill health or disability, or problems related to old age	Healthy Ireland Survey
Life satisfaction	"Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?", 0–10 scale, where 10 is completely satisfied	European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS)
Mental health	Estimated prevalence of common mental health disorders; mood and anxiety disorders index	Healthy Ireland Survey; European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS)
Purpose/meaning	"To what extent do you feel satisfied with where you live?", 0–10 scale, where 10 is completely satisfied; "Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?", 0–10 scale, where 10 is completely worthwhile	European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS)

Table 10.1. Continued

Sub-domain	Example indicators	Possible sources
Democracy	Percentage who feel able to influence local decisions; total voter turnout for local elections; PPN members per 1000 population	QNHS Module on Voter Participation and Abstention; CSO Voter Registration and Participation Module; European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS)
Governance	Percentage who say that they trust local government	European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS)
Adult learning	Percentage participating in adult education; percentage with a disability participating in adult education; percentage from low-income households participating in adult education; percentage in education, employment or training at the end of each calendar year, measured for different age groups	CSO Adult Education Survey; CSO Wellbeing of the Nation 2017; Educational Research Centre
Child learning	Percentage of children achieving a good level of development by the end of reception; percentage aged 25–64 years with third level of education; percentage aged 25–64 years who have at most lower secondary level of education; mean mathematical score in PISA; percentage who have basic or above basic digital skills	Educational Research Centre; CSO Wellbeing of the Nation 2017
Close support	Percentage who agree with the statement, "If I needed help, there are people who would be there for me"	European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS)
Community cohesion	Percentage who agree with the statement, "I feel like I belong to this neighbourhood"; Social Fragmentation Index; "What proportion of your friends are of the same (ethnic, religious, age) group as you?"	European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS)
Control	"In general, how do you feel you are able to make decisions about your life?"	European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS)
Crime and security	Count non-violent crime; count violent crime; hospital admissions for violence per 1000 people	CSO QNHS Module on Crime and Victimisation; CSO Wellbeing of the Nation 2017
Flourishing	"I've been feeling optimistic about the future"; "To what extent do you feel the things you/your community do are worthwhile"; "I've been dealing with problems well"	European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS)
Generalised trust	Percentage who say that most people can be trusted in their community	European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS)
Housing	Number of households threatened with homelessness; difficulty of access to owner-occupation – proportion of households aged under 35 years whose income means that they are unable to afford to own a house; housing in poor condition; average satisfaction with housing; rate of complaints about noise per 1000 population	CSO housing data; Dublin Housing Observatory; AIRO Maps
Personal relationships	Percentage who meet socially with friends, relatives or work colleagues at least once a week	European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS)
Volunteering	Percentage (aged 16+ years) who volunteer (formally or informally) once a month	Volunteer Ireland statistics; QNHS Module on Volunteering and Wellbeing
Wellbeing inequality	Percentage (aged 16+ years) who feel satisfied with their ability to get to/access the facilities and services they need	Healthy Ireland Survey
Arts and music	Percentage who say they have attended or participated in arts, culture or heritage activity three or more times in the previous 12 months; no. of visits to heritage/historical sites; no. of visits to/use of libraries, museums and archives; no. of arts and music venues per 1000 population; arts participation (music, drama or theatrical activity, dance, film and video, visual arts and crafts, creative writing, digital arts, circus skills, street arts or other physical theatre activity, other cultural or heritage activity)	Arts Council annual reports, research and policy documents; arts audiences
Culture	Percentage participating in meaningful cultural/social activities; percentage who reported in the census that they can speak Irish or a second language	Heritage Council heritage maps
Recreation and sport	Percentage taking part in any outdoor or indoor sporting activity; frequency of participation in any outdoor or indoor sporting activity	Irish Sports Monitor Annual Report
Employment	Percentage (aged 16+ years) in employment; employment rate of those with a disability	Labour Force Survey; Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC); QNHS Module on Households and Family Units

Table 10.1. Continued

Sub-domain	Example indicators	Possible sources
Income inequality	Gross disposable income per head; income deprivation affecting older people; difference in average (median) full-time hourly earnings between men and women; 80:20 ratio of earnings	QNHS Module on Equality; Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC); Household Finance and Consumption Survey; CSO Statistical Releases – Earnings; QNHS Module on Pension Provision
Job quality	Percentage (aged 16+ years) in employment who report a satisfactory or higher level of job satisfaction; percentage who are on a permanent contract (or a temporary contract and not seeking permanent employment), who earn more than two-thirds of the Irish median wage, and who are not overworked (i.e. <49 hours a week) or underworked (unwillingly working part-time)	Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC); QNHS Households and Family Units; QNHS Module on Childcare; Live Register
Local economy	No. of innovation-active businesses; ratio of enterprises to local units	Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC)
Material deprivation	Percentage of full-time employees with a low relative income (less than 60% of the Irish median wage); percentage living in households below 60% of the median Irish income – measured for children, those of working age and those of pension age	Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC); CSO Household Budget Survey; Household Finance and Consumption Survey
Transport	Percentage with access to public transport (400 m walk to a bus stop); car vehicle traffic, vehicle miles travelled per capita	Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC)
Unemployment	Seasonally adjusted unemployment rate; percentage who have been dismissed from their job	Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC)

AIRO, All-Island Research Observatory; CSO, Central Statistics Office; DCCAE, Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment; EAO, Environmental Awareness Officer; HSE, Health Service Executive; PISA, Programme for International Student Assessment; PM_{10}, particulate matter ≤10 µm; QNHS, Quarterly National Household Survey; SEAI, Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland.

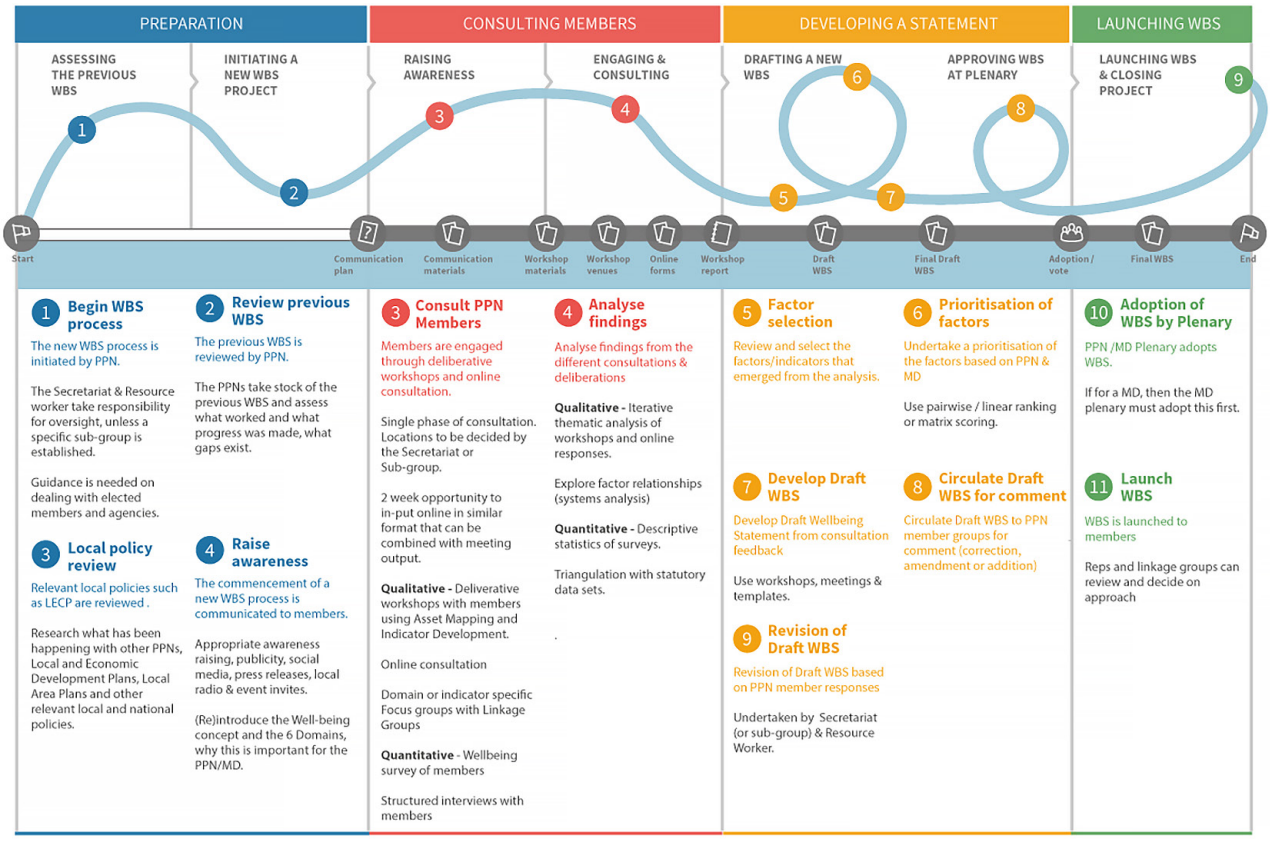

Figure 10.1. Proposed community wellbeing methodology. LECP, local economic and community plan; MD, municipal district.

11 Conclusion

This report briefly reviewed the field of community wellbeing as a measure of social progress, as well as the potential role of the PPNs in helping to define "what matters" to communities. This mediating role of the PPNs is borne out of their role as the main link between communities and local government in Ireland.

Although most efforts at assessing wellbeing could be considered to be "top-down", expert-led activities focused at the individual level and typically aggregated to the national or sub-regional scale, this report focused on the process of defining indicators from the "bottom up". In this context, "bottom-up" can be understood as a process by which grassroots community organisations define what matters to communities.

The approach developed is novel in the Irish context. The overarching process consists of the following key stages:

- development of a framework of community wellbeing domains though a process of expert deliberation;
- co-designing a method by which the PPNs can consult members on community wellbeing;
- designing pragmatic processes by which members can identify the important factors at municipal district and city levels;
- development of a consultative process and format for an aggregated "vision" document (WBS) that combines the intersubjective perspectives on community wellbeing among PPN members;
- application of this vision document within PPN procedures (e.g. work planning, advocacy at strategic policy committees, identification of funding for specific community needs).

The report highlights the relationships between community wellbeing and sustainable development while noting other policy, political, conceptual, philosophical and ideological positions. Although there is still debate on the definitions of community wellbeing, existing frameworks typically focus on the material, quality of life and relational aspects of wellbeing.

The report also highlights the emerging consensus that wellbeing must be understood as multidimensional and assessed using both objective and subjective indicators.

The rationale for helping to define "what matters" to communities is that there may be a disconnect between what policymakers and sustainable community practitioners think is important for the wellbeing of communities and what communities themselves think is important. This is reflected in intervention designs but also in the mismatch between national statutory statistics that are used to measure social progress and the progress that is perceived at a community level.

From that perspective, it could be argued that some frameworks and measurements of wellbeing do not in fact reflect wellbeing per se, but rather reflect the statutory statistical systems, policymaking processes and types of evidence that are preferred by decision-makers.

Having said that, it is important to acknowledge the complexity involved in measuring wellbeing for policy and developing appropriate but pragmatically manageable indicators. The different policy actors that may be responsible for measuring wellbeing, translating this into policy-relevant evidence and then designing services, regulations and policies are often working under considerable constraints.

This underlines some of the ongoing tensions in debates on how to address wellbeing in public policy, for example how to design appropriate mechanisms for promoting wellbeing, the politics of deciding legitimate indicators, and clarifying the role of and relationships between the state (top-down), intermediary (middle-out) and grassroots (bottom-up) actors.

Although there is contradictory evidence on the relationship between participation and wellbeing, the notion of the participatory development of wellbeing indicators has been discussed for many years, primarily through community wellbeing initiatives. There are only a handful of examples of systematic attempts to co-design a framework for understanding

wellbeing at the local level, but some literature suggests that participation in the development of indicators increases commitment to them.

This report highlights that the gap between "top-down" and "bottom-up" frameworks may be narrower than expected. Many of the indicators developed through this process align well, conceptually at least, with existing wellbeing frameworks. There is a greater degree of richness in the bottom-up indicators, but the top-down frameworks tend to be designed with a pragmatic view of what can reasonably be measured.

The approach to identifying "what matters" to communities was co-designed with the PPNs, with an overarching goal of producing a methodology that is implementable by the PPNs.

Although the PPNs are well placed to undertake community wellbeing measurement, it is demanding in terms of their skills and resources. In addition, the mediation and analysis by the PPNs needs to have increased legitimacy through its advocacy and committee functions in order to effectively build the "what matters" responses into local government decision-making. If resourced appropriately, local governments may start to systematically and transparently consult and deliberate on community wellbeing.

The report set out a number of benefits of this approach but also suggested a number of steps through which a new measurement regime could work more effectively.

Primarily, this relates to advancing the methodology to allow for the systematic identification of what is important to people for them to live their lives well, by producing a smaller set of sub-domains, developing a methodology for assessing how well communities are doing in relation to the factors that matter to them, establishing some level of understanding of how the different factors that are important for wellbeing relate to each other, and establishing how to prioritise and make trade-offs between them.

There is also a need to further develop conceptual consistency between the applications of the wellbeing framework and WBS at different levels of the local government system. There are now a number of defined purposes for the WBS and these may change over time.

11.1 Options for Future Development of the Methodology

Using either the co-designed or proposed methodology or the community wellbeing frame more generally, there are a number of options for future development and applications. These include:

- *Strategic service design framework*. Because the WBS can provide some additional and more granular insight into "what matters" to communities and highlights how this differs between communities, it can be used to inform local service design and delivery, as well as focused campaign designs.
- *Community–council–state agency problem solving*. The development of the WBS lends itself to the co-creation of ideas and proposals to be decided on by local politicians, council officers and the PPNs. As the ideas for projects and interventions are framed around "what matters" to communities, the PPN can play a mediating role in filtering the projects for community legitimacy and the council can filter for viability. The shortlist of possible projects or interventions could be voted on at PPN plenary meetings.
- *Refined consultation*. As PPNs expressed a desire to use the WBS as a means to interrogate local policy, the process could be integrated into other non-deliberative forms of engagement, such as consultations. Panels of PPN members (e.g. linkage groups) can be developed to work alongside the strategic policy committees and local community development committees to help prioritise the ideas that result from consultations. These panels would need to be broadly representative of the local community or sub-population.
- *Deliberation–analysis process*. The development of the WBS was entirely independent of the council and elected officials. Following the development of the vision, there could be a further process of collaboration with council officials, experts and PPN members, to further develop and prioritise indicators that could be advanced by the council. This could involve alignment of "what matters" to communities with local economic and community plans.

This process could be extended to other state agencies and departments across each of the PPN wellbeing domains. For example, there could be a process of mediation on how to engage with communities on particular policy issues, such as air and water quality, mediated by the PPNs and the WBS.

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Abbreviations

EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross domestic product
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PPN	Public Participation Network
WBS	Wellbeing statement
WHO	World Health Organization

AN GHNÍOMHAIREACHT UM CHAOMHNÚ COMHSHAOIL
Tá an Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil (GCC) freagrach as an gcomhshaol a chaomhnú agus a fheabhsú mar shócmhainn luachmhar do mhuintir na hÉireann. Táimid tiomanta do dhaoine agus don chomhshaol a chosaint ó éifeachtaí díobhálacha na radaíochta agus an truaillithe.

Is féidir obair na Gníomhaireachta a roinnt ina trí phríomhréimse:

Rialú: *Déanaimid córais éifeachtacha rialaithe agus comhlíonta comhshaoil a chur i bhfeidhm chun torthaí maithe comhshaoil a sholáthar agus chun díriú orthu siúd nach gcloíonn leis na córais sin.*

Eolas: *Soláthraímid sonraí, faisnéis agus measúnú comhshaoil atá ar ardchaighdeán, spriocdhírithe agus tráthúil chun bonn eolais a chur faoin gcinnteoireacht ar gach leibhéal.*

Tacaíocht: *Bímid ag saothrú i gcomhar le grúpaí eile chun tacú le comhshaol atá glan, táirgiúil agus cosanta go maith, agus le hiompar a chuirfidh le comhshaol inbhuanaithe.*

Ár bhFreagrachtaí

Ceadúnú
Déanaimid na gníomhaíochtaí seo a leanas a rialú ionas nach ndéanann siad dochar do shláinte an phobail ná don chomhshaol:
- saoráidí dramhaíola *(m.sh. láithreáin líonta talún, loisceoirí, stáisiúin aistrithe dramhaíola)*;
- gníomhaíochtaí tionsclaíocha ar scála mór *(m.sh. déantúsaíocht cógaisíochta, déantúsaíocht stroighne, stáisiúin chumhachta)*;
- an diantalmhaíocht *(m.sh. muca, éanlaith)*;
- úsáid shrianta agus scaoileadh rialaithe Orgánach Géinmhodhnaithe *(OGM)*;
- foinsí radaíochta ianúcháin *(m.sh. trealamh x-gha agus radaiteiripe, foinsí tionsclaíocha)*;
- áiseanna móra stórála peitril;
- scardadh dramhuisce;
- gníomhaíochtaí dumpála ar farraige.

Forfheidhmiú Náisiúnta i leith Cúrsaí Comhshaoil
- Clár náisiúnta iniúchtaí agus cigireachtaí a dhéanamh gach bliain ar shaoráidí a bhfuil ceadúnas ón nGníomhaireacht acu.
- Maoirseacht a dhéanamh ar fhreagrachtaí cosanta comhshaoil na n-údarás áitiúil.
- Caighdeán an uisce óil, arna sholáthar ag soláthraithe uisce phoiblí, a mhaoirsiú.
- Obair le húdaráis áitiúla agus le gníomhaireachtaí eile chun dul i ngleic le coireanna comhshaoil trí chomhordú a dhéanamh ar líonra forfheidhmiúcháin náisiúnta, trí dhíriú ar chiontóirí, agus trí mhaoirsiú a dhéanamh ar leasúchán.
- Cur i bhfeidhm rialachán ar nós na Rialachán um Dhramhthrealamh Leictreach agus Leictreonach (DTLL), um Shrian ar Shubstaintí Guaiseacha agus na Rialachán um rialú ar shubstaintí a ídíonn an ciseal ózóin.
- An dlí a chur orthu siúd a bhriseann dlí an chomhshaoil agus a dhéanann dochar don chomhshaol.

Bainistíocht Uisce
- Monatóireacht agus tuairisciú a dhéanamh ar cháilíocht aibhneacha, lochanna, uiscí idirchriosacha agus cósta na hÉireann, agus screamhuiscí; leibhéil uisce agus sruthanna aibhneacha a thomhas.
- Comhordú náisiúnta agus maoirsiú a dhéanamh ar an gCreat-Treoir Uisce.
- Monatóireacht agus tuairisciú a dhéanamh ar Cháilíocht an Uisce Snámha.

Monatóireacht, Anailís agus Tuairisciú ar an gComhshaol
- Monatóireacht a dhéanamh ar cháilíocht an aeir agus Treoir an AE maidir le hAer Glan don Eoraip (CAFÉ) a chur chun feidhme.
- Tuairisciú neamhspleách le cabhrú le cinnteoireacht an rialtais náisiúnta agus na n-údarás áitiúil *(m.sh. tuairisciú tréimhsiúil ar staid Chomhshaol na hÉireann agus Tuarascálacha ar Thascairí)*.

Rialú Astaíochtaí na nGás Ceaptha Teasa in Éirinn
- Fardail agus réamh-mheastacháin na hÉireann maidir le gáis cheaptha teasa a ullmhú.
- An Treoir maidir le Trádáil Astaíochtaí a chur chun feidhme i gcomhair breis agus 100 de na táirgeoirí dé-ocsaíde carbóin is mó in Éirinn.

Taighde agus Forbairt Comhshaoil
- Taighde comhshaoil a chistiú chun brúnna a shainaithint, bonn eolais a chur faoi bheartais, agus réitigh a sholáthar i réimsí na haeráide, an uisce agus na hinbhuanaitheachta.

Measúnacht Straitéiseach Timpeallachta
- Measúnacht a dhéanamh ar thionchar pleananna agus clár beartaithe ar an gcomhshaol in Éirinn *(m.sh. mórphleananna forbartha)*.

Cosaint Raideolaíoch
- Monatóireacht a dhéanamh ar leibhéil radaíochta, measúnacht a dhéanamh ar nochtadh mhuintir na hÉireann don radaíocht ianúcháin.
- Cabhrú le pleananna náisiúnta a fhorbairt le haghaidh éigeandálaí ag eascairt as taismí núicléacha.
- Monatóireacht a dhéanamh ar fhorbairtí thar lear a bhaineann le saoráidí núicléacha agus leis an tsábháilteacht raideolaíochta.
- Sainseirbhísí cosanta ar an radaíocht a sholáthar, nó maoirsiú a dhéanamh ar sholáthar na seirbhísí sin.

Treoir, Faisnéis Inrochtana agus Oideachas
- Comhairle agus treoir a chur ar fáil d'earnáil na tionsclaíochta agus don phobal maidir le hábhair a bhaineann le caomhnú an chomhshaoil agus leis an gcosaint raideolaíoch.
- Faisnéis thráthúil ar an gcomhshaol ar a bhfuil fáil éasca a chur ar fáil chun rannpháirtíocht an phobail a spreagadh sa chinnteoireacht i ndáil leis an gcomhshaol *(m.sh. Timpeall an Tí, léarscáileanna radóin)*.
- Comhairle a chur ar fáil don Rialtas maidir le hábhair a bhaineann leis an tsábháilteacht raideolaíoch agus le cúrsaí práinnfhreagartha.
- Plean Náisiúnta Bainistíochta Dramhaíola Guaisí a fhorbairt chun dramhaíl ghuaiseach a chosc agus a bhainistiú.

Múscailt Feasachta agus Athrú Iompraíochta
- Feasacht chomhshaoil níos fearr a ghiniúint agus dul i bhfeidhm ar athrú iompraíochta dearfach trí thacú le gnóthais, le pobail agus le teaghlaigh a bheith níos éifeachtúla ar acmhainní.
- Tástáil le haghaidh radóin a chur chun cinn i dtithe agus in ionaid oibre, agus gníomhartha leasúcháin a spreagadh nuair is gá.

Bainistíocht agus struchtúr na Gníomhaireachta um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil
Tá an ghníomhaíocht á bainistiú ag Bord lánaimseartha, ar a bhfuil Ard-Stiúrthóir agus cúigear Stiúrthóirí. Déantar an obair ar fud cúig cinn d'Oifigí:
- An Oifig um Inmharthanacht Comhshaoil
- An Oifig Forfheidhmithe i leith cúrsaí Comhshaoil
- An Oifig um Fianaise is Measúnú
- Oifig um Chosaint Radaíochta agus Monatóireachta Comhshaoil
- An Oifig Cumarsáide agus Seirbhísí Corparáideacha

Tá Coiste Comhairleach ag an nGníomhaireacht le cabhrú léi. Tá dáréag comhaltaí air agus tagann siad le chéile go rialta le plé a dhéanamh ar ábhair imní agus le comhairle a chur ar an mBord.

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Identifying "What Matters" for Community Wellbeing with the Irish Public Participation Networks

Author: Simon O'Rafferty

The Public Participation Networks (PPNs) were established through the 2014 Local Government Reform Act in order to "provide a mechanism by which citizens can have a greater say in local government decisions which affect their own communities". One of the functions of the PPNs is to develop municipal district-level "visions" of community wellbeing. This report presents the findings from an action research project in which a toolkit to develop visions of community wellbeing was co-designed with four PPNs.

Identifying Pressures

A fundamental role of public policy is the protection and enhancement of the wellbeing of citizens. Wellbeing is central to the measurement of welfare trends and "genuine progress" at national and local levels. Wellbeing accounts for the emotional and behavioural dimensions of citizens and places value on the non-monetary benefits of a range of socio-economic and environmental conditions. Therefore, wellbeing can be used in the economic appraisal of policies as well as in the strategic design of various policy interventions, but the potential for this has not been fully realised at a national or local policy level in Ireland.

Informing Policy

Through a series of community workshops in Cork, Longford, Roscommon and Wicklow, 2203 separate suggestions on "what matters" to communities across six wellbeing domains were collected for this research study. The 2203 suggestions were synthesised into "visions" for community wellbeing that were structured around the six wellbeing domains of social and community development; environment and sustainability; work, economy and resources; health; values, culture and meaning; and participation, democracy and good governance. The research project aimed to inform policy by highlighting how bottom-up measures of community wellbeing can be adopted and how this can be used to design both local and national policies.

Developing Solutions

The findings from this research informed the design of a community wellbeing toolkit, which is being rolled out across the 33 PPNs across Ireland. The research also made recommendations around using measures of community wellbeing to (1) inform the PPN annual workplan, by designing this around "what matters" to communities, (2) inform the advocacy work of the PPN representatives who sit on local authority strategic policy committees, (3) support informal scrutiny of local government policy by PPNs from a wellbeing perspective and (4) generate ideas for local proposals for community initiatives that can improve subjective and objective wellbeing.

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