Developing Resilience through Collaborative Planning:
A Case Study of Ferbane

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Abstract

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The reshaping of the Irish economy over recent decades has threatened the resilience of small Irish towns previously dependent on resource extraction. This thesis focuses on one such town, Ferbane in Co. Offaly, made vulnerable when the winding-down of peat-fired electricity generation was announced in the late 1990s. In seeking to address such issues of rural decline, a model of collaborative planning called Integrated Area Planning (IAP) was developed and applied in Ferbane over the period 2001-2019. IAP had a deliberatively normative agenda, proposing that collaborative planning has the potential to prepare communities for innovation and ultimately for transformation.

This thesis seeks to apply a resilience lens to the Integrated Area Planning framework, asking whether the process of IAP assisted in developing community resilience in Ferbane. Following a literature review, this question is operationalised by considering four key characteristics attributed to a resilient town. These are as follows: the town has implemented a development plan; the community has strong leadership; it displays a high degree of social capital; and it has the capacity to develop the local economy. In other words, the town possesses transformative capacity that allows it to invent new structure, enabling it to thrive in an unpredictable and changeable environment.

Data presented ranges over the period 2001-2019 from qualitative, quantitative and documentary sources and was collected in parallel with the IAP, giving a rare longitudinal insight into this process. The thesis concludes that collaborative planning can stimulate pathways towards achieving transformative resilience. However, resilience cannot be achieved without a sympathetic policy and political environment. While the concept of resilience-building through collaborative planning was accepted in principle by elected representatives and state agencies in this case, it cannot be said to have succeeded in significantly changing planning systems and practices, such that many structural and institutional barriers remain.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my dear husband, Tim Robinson. Without his constant support, flashes of genius and bottomless cups of coffee, this journey would have ended before it could begin.

I also dedicate this to my son, Richard, whose quips and wit has made it impossible for me not to finish.

Thank you both!

Acknowledgements

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BNM	Bord na Móna [https://www.bordnamona.ie/]
BRIC	Baseline Resilience Indicators for Communities
CAP	Community Action Plan
CART	Communities Advancing Resilience Toolkit (2017)
CC	Catherine Corcoran (this researcher)
CDP	County Development Plan
CED	Community Economic Development
CEDRA	Irish Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas
CM	Community Member
DfID	Department for International Development
ESB	Electricity Supply Board [https://www.esb.ie/]
FDG	Ferbane Development Group
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association [https://www.gaa.ie/]
IAP	Integrated area planning
LCDC	Local Community Development Committees
LDC	Local Development Company
NAMA	the (Irish) National Asset Management Agency
NEF	New Economics Foundation
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OLDC	Offaly Local Development Company
PMG	Programme Management Group
PPF	Putting People First
TANGO	Technical Assistance to Non-Governmental Organizations (TANGO) International, Inc. [http://www.tangointernational.com/]
TI	Tipperary Institute
USAID	United States Agency for International Development [https://www.usaid.gov/]
WOP	West Offaly Partnership

Chapter 1: Introduction – Developing Resilience through Community Planning

1.1   Background

Between 2000-2010, Tipperary Institute (TI), an educational, research and development organisation focused on rural development, was commissioned by a number of local authorities and community groups in various parts of Ireland to assist them in dealing with issues arising from the statutory planning process. These groups were interested in drawing up local development plans in ways that were less adversarial, more constructive and more likely to gain the support of the stakeholders involved. In my work as a Programme Specialist at the Institute, I was engaged as part of a team in the development and implementation of a framework of participatory local planning that later became known as Integrated Area Planning or IAP. This thesis explores the story of this process as it unfolded over the period from 2001 to the present in one particular rural area and interrogates the issue of resilience-building through these endeavours.

1.2   Introduction

During the period of rapid economic growth in the 1990s and early 2000s, the nature of planning and development in the rural areas of Ireland became increasingly fraught. Such economic growth and the demographic changes that ensued led to an increased demand for housing and infrastructure in many parts of the country, while other, usually more peripheral, areas were suffering from depopulation (Meredith 2006; Meredith and Gilmartin 2014). Issues relating to spatial planning caused major problems for many local authorities (Gkartzios and Scott 2005; Lynch *et al.* 2008; Ní Laoire 2007) and there was a clear breakdown of trust at many levels. This discord often arose because the planning objectives or visions held by planners, by politicians and by communities were often in conflict. This was seen by some commentators as due to a *lack of shared vision* regarding the role of 'the rural' and a desirable settlement pattern for areas outside of the main conurbations (Murray 2005; Lynch *et al.* 2008; Maclaren 2005). Decisions regarding the shape and grain of development in the rural were perceived by many communities as being imposed on them, without their participation and unreflective of their needs and aspirations.

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While there is scope within the Irish planning system for communities to input into development planning, this rarely happened except in a rather cursory fashion.

> While the planning process, as set out in the law, has many excellent characteristics, it lacks an effective process for the creation of the shared vision that must underlie any attempt to create a set of goals and policies that will have wide-spread consent.
>
> (Lynch *et al.* 2008, p. 12)

In Lynch's view, such difficulties are symptomatic of a more endemic problem in policy-making; whereby communities impacted by such policies are rarely invited properly to participate in the setting of visions or policies; if they are invited to participate in policy-making, it is at the implementation stage, when important decisions have already been taken without their input. Thus consent is perceived to be absent. Such participation is at best tokenistic (Arnstein 1969) and at worst, manipulative.

Influenced by the ideals of sustainable rural development and collaborative planning theory, Tipperary Institute held that communities could be, and indeed should be, invited to participate at all stages of the planning process, from the identification of needs up to the development of action plans and within the institutions or structures required to implement them. From its involvement with communities and local authorities in developing local area plans, the team at TI began to formulate the framework that became Integrated Area Planning or IAP. It was also envisaged that IAP could assist communities in becoming more sustainable through developing their capacity to be more socially inclusive and to develop the potential of the local economy in ways that were environmentally progressive.

1.3   Ferbane

Ferbane is a small town in County Offaly, Ireland – see figure 1 for details of its location within Ireland. In 2016, the population of the town was 1191, compared with 1165 in 2011 (CSO 2016). The name of the town is said to come from the white bog cotton which grows in the surrounding Bog of Allen. Ferbane's location in the peatlands, characteristic of so much of the Irish midlands, has been pivotal in the towns development over the years and Ireland's first milled-peat fired power station was commissioned by the Electricity Supply Board (ESB) at Ferbane in 1957. The station ceased operations in December 2001, due to technological change in the energy industry, increased regulation and a decrease in market demand.
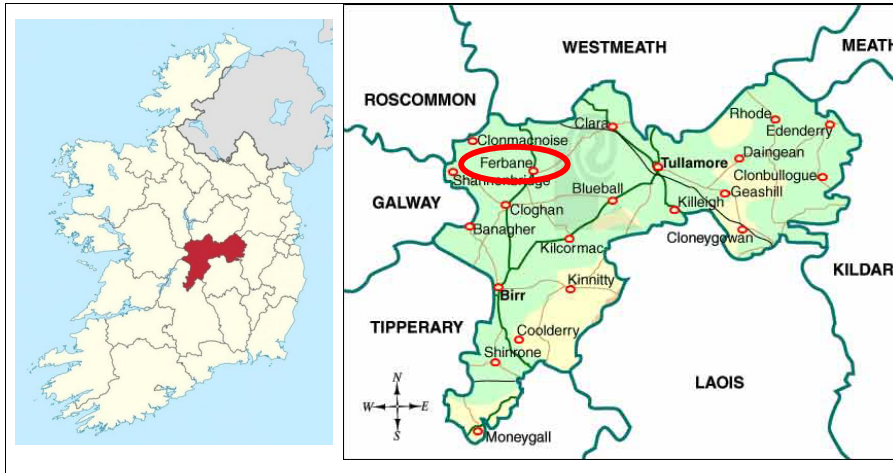
Figure 1:   Maps locating County Offaly and Ferbane, respectively [source: the Westmeath Independent]

In 2000, the Ferbane community, together with a number of state agencies became concerned at the stagnation and decline of the population of the town and its immediate hinterland, the reduction in employment associated with the local peatlands and power station and the restricted nature of other forms of economic activity in the area. In order to respond to these issues, it was decided that a plan should be prepared for the area and through that process to identify and implement several development initiatives. From this, the team at Tipperary Institute was commissioned to develop an Integrated Area Plan for Ferbane.

1.4   Development of the Thesis Question

In the Western world, traditional forms of political participation are in decline, and recent crises have further highlighted the distrust citizens have of state institutions (Judt 2010; Lee *et al.* 2015; Putnam 2000).

It is acknowledged that government in Ireland and in the UK is at a more distant remove from communities than in most western democracies, Local government in Ireland is weak, poorly funded and performs a limited range of functions. (CWC 2000; Lynch *et al.* 2008). Judt (2010) speaks of the dangers of the limited role of the State as regulator and enforcer and asks: how can citizens feel an affiliation to the state if the state performs only punitive or regulatory functions? This means that, in Ireland, more work needs to be done to mend the relationship between the citizen and the state than is the case elsewhere.

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For many areas in rural Ireland, there has been a significant level of disinvestment by the Irish state. The economies of small and medium sized towns and the open countryside are disproportionally reliant on sectors with falling employment in key sectors such as agriculture, construction and industry (O'Donohue 2016). Ferbane was faced with major challenges during the period under study. Its main source of employment and economic activity was threatened as peat-fired electricity production was wound down. As such, its identity as a resource town, largely dependent on peat production and electricity generation, was changing and an uncertain future lay ahead; leaving the area increasingly exposed to the cold gale of globalising forces. While historically a state-run monopoly, the ESB now operates as a commercial semi-state concern generating electricity in a liberalised and competitive market. What, then, was the role of the state to be in the future of Ferbane?

1.5   Social Partnership

In Ireland, the "democratic deficit" has been made up by a high degree of participation by Irish people in community and voluntary activity (CWC 2000, Walsh *et al.* 1998). The space for citizen participation in decision making was opened up through the various social partnership fora which developed during the 1990s. Social partnership was defined as the search for consensus on economic and social objectives between sectoral interests – farming organisations, trade unions, and later the community and voluntary sector – during the economic boom of the 1980s and 1990s (Walsh *et al.* 1998). This movement gave a certain impetus to the creation of a new culture and capacity within the state and political establishment to enable local participation in decision-making (CWC 2000, Frazer 1996). Citizen participation was seen at the time not only as a necessary mechanism for developing more effective development programmes but also in renewing confidence in the institutions of the state. It can therefore be argued that participation can have a more profound objective by strengthening local democratic systems and consolidating the relationship between the citizen and the state (Healey 1997; Innes and Booher 2000).

Collaborative planning, and IAP was part of this 'new participatory' culture and attempted to forge a clear link between participation by the local community in the activities of the local authority and the idea and practice of active citizenship. Following Scott (2004), this type of partnership process offered the opportunity for partners to work within a discursive and interactive process, thereby creating a new style of discourse within local development.

1.6   Participation in Planning

The most important decision-making tool in the armoury of Irish local authorities is the development planning process (Lynch *et al.* 2008). Most local authorities in Ireland receive a relatively poor response when they invite comments on their draft five-year development Plan for any particular area. The typical interactions of the public with planners relate to one-off transactions, focusing on micro-issues and single development applications. And more often than not, the relationship is an adversarial one, focusing on points of disagreement about a single issue. Also, despite the efforts of central and local government planners, awareness about and participation in the planning system, particularly among disadvantaged communities, remains low. Many people do not come into contact with the planning system unless their amenities or interests are directly affected by a development proposal. Even where local communities are pro-active they are often faced with a large volume of legislation, complex procedures, jargon and a wealth of government guidance and policy to deal with (Lynch *et al.* 2008).

In Ireland, local authorities are responsible for developing strategic local development plans for each city, town and county. With the introduction of the Planning and Development Act 2000, there is a requirement for local authorities to invite public input at an early stage and to increase participation and transparency in the planning process. The decisions of the planning authority must by law be circumscribed by the development plan as the key policy document that determine these decisions. Citizen participation in the making of these policies, therefore, is critical; allowing ordinary people to input into the making of future decisions regarding individual developments that the development control system regulates. For the professional planner, the more sources of information that are available at the time of drafting the development plan the better.

Community participation in planning, it is proposed, offers the local authority the following advantages:
- The opportunity to access detailed local and user knowledge about particular land-use options
- The opportunity to access a community consensus about certain issues that may be complex or controversial.
- A structured set of information that is coherent and may be easily tailored to fit within the statutory plan.

- Access to a structured and organised community voice with whom to dialogue about development issues.
- Less conflict and less concentration on single issues since greater community consensus has been reached during the preparation of the development plan.

<div align="right">(Carnegie Trust 2011a)</div>

It is from this history that the concept of Integrated Area Planning or IAP was born. IAP was defined by Tipperary Institute as

> a practical and participatory process that empowers local people to collect and compile information while developing the skills and structures needed to prepare and implement a plan for a defined geographical area.
>
> <div align="right">(Lynch *et al.* 2008 p. 24)</div>

IAP is a model of collaborative planning-involving communities and citizens most affected by local area plans alongside policymakers and local officials in a partnership that recognises the complementary strengths of the various parties involved and that seeks to come to decisions in a participatory way.

Collaborative planners have taken the Habermasian theory of communicative action and examined its application in real-world situations; IAP is part of this tradition. Within the IAP system, a great deal of effort was expended on developing the communication mechanisms. both within communities and between the communities and the planning and political systems. The overall objective of the IAP process was that of *facilitating people collectively to make place together.* (Healey 1997, p. 49) In participating in an IAP, local planning becomes a means by which people may act to form and transform their own worlds, albeit within constrained situations and limited frameworks. Collaborative planning becomes a way of shaping or framing the web of relations through which people give value to or take actions with respect to the spaces with which they have some relation. For Healey and the other collaborative planners, such work also carries *transformative power* and, therefore, has the potential to invent new structure.

1.7 Introducing Resilience

By the late 2000s Ireland was in deep recession as the financial crisis led to a property crash, crippling debt, high unemployment and major cutbacks in Government expenditure. The ideals of social partnership and participation were abandoned by the State and many projects ground to a halt. I began to reflect on the IAP project in Ferbane, which had been shelved due to the recession and lack of funding and that the Ferbane community was struggling under the weight of recession.

By the time I came to embark on this thesis in 2010, I had been introduced to the concept of resilience. Resilience was attractive to me for a number of reasons. It holds that socio-ecosystems are constantly evolving in response to their environment; they are dynamic, complex adaptive systems. They are not in a steady state but tend towards various equilibria. When encountering disturbance or shock, systems can cross multiple thresholds and enter different regimes, or stable states, some of which may be positive, others negative. This seemed to resonate with developments in Ferbane and in the wider social economy; the dependence of Ferbane on the peatlands, the inter-relationship between the people and the eco-system there, the many changes and shocks that the area had experienced, and its precarious position within the wider economy. A further examination revealed to me that there were many similarities between collaborative planning and resilience thinking and that resilience building resonated very well with the process we were attempting in Ferbane.

By 2011, it was interesting for me to observe that the FDG had survived the shock of recession. By definition, it was displaying signs of resilience.

1.7.1 Definitions of resilience

Resilience has been variously framed as persistence, adaptation, and/or transformation. Therefore, there is a need to distinguish between different community capacities for resilience-absorptive, adaptive and transformative.

- Absorptive capacity is the ability to minimise exposure to shocks and stresses where possible and to recover quickly when exposed. This is congruent with short-term emergency response and with the definition of resilience as the ability of a system to 'bounce-back' to a former state after a shock.
- Adaptive capacity involves making proactive and informed choices about alternative livelihood strategies based on changing conditions.

- Transformative capacity refers to system-level changes that enable more lasting resilience. Transformative capacity may relate to governance, policies, regulations, and community networks, that are part of the wider system in which households and communities are embedded (Davoudi 2012).

Both adaptive and transformative frameworks are more consistent with long-term, capacity-building development initiatives than the first and thus more applicable in the Ferbane case. This is then consistent with what Davoudi calls *evolutionary resilience* (2012). Evolutionary resilience sees nature and society as prone to sudden change and with the potential to become something new and radically different from before. Faced with adversity, systems rarely return to where they were. In this model of resilience, past behaviours and trends are no predictors of future events. Resilience is increasingly perceived as the ability of community members to develop and engage community resources in order to thrive in an unpredictable and changeable environment. Resilience is not about bouncing-back or maintenance of current and existing characteristics but instead suggests systemic change, adaptation and proactivity in the face of stresses and challenges.

This prompted me to ask; what might a resilient community look like? How does resilience occur at a local level? And if it requires changes at a systemic level, how does this change come about?

1.8   Planning and Evolutionary Resilience

Davoudi (2012) draws parallels between resilience thinking and the interpretive (or communicative) approach to planning. Both schools of thought see physical spaces and places as complex, inter-related, socio-spatial systems, with a number of unpredictable feedback systems operating at different scales and timeframes. Both constructs reject the modernist 'will-to-order', both embrace change, uncertainty and novelty and advocate the search not for the 'certainties' of the past but reach towards transformation

What is important here is the intentionality of human action in *managing the adaptive cycle* (Davoudi 2012; Walker and Salt 2017; Powe and Hart 2017). This is where planning comes in-anticipating that change is a constant. Rather than seeing the world as orderly, mechanical and reasonably predictable, resilience thinkers and collaborative planners both see it as chaotic, complex, uncertain, and unpredictable. Evolutionary resilience is embedded in the recognition that the seemingly stable state that we see around us in nature or in society can suddenly change and becomes something transformed. This perspective challenges the

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adequacy of planners' conventional ability to generalise and to apply old thinking to new unchartered environments and to attempt to control the future. And it has the potential to offer a more holistic approach. There seemed to be, then, a 'natural fit' between resilience building and the local or community level. Most definitions of resilience reflect a tacit understanding that 'community' is the appropriate level at which resilience should be conceptualised, built and measured. This construct also sees 'community' or 'place' as a complex adaptive multi-scalar system that can develop or transform into something different.

We might therefore enquire as to whether and how engagement in an IAP or collaborative planning process could enhance a given community's ability for example:

- to withstand shock;
- to cope with change and disturbance;
- to improve the community's ability to self-organise
- to assist the community in developing new systems and structures
- to increase its adaptive capacity.

Eventually, I decided to frame my research around the idea of building resilience and the role of the IAP therein.

Using a participatory action-research perspective, this thesis seeks to enquire as to whether (*and how*) engagement in an IAP or collaborative planning process might enhance a given community's ability *to become* resilient or *increase its adaptive capacity* to withstand shock and to cope with change and disturbance. Did participation in collaborative planning improve the community's capacity to adapt and to self-organise by developing new systems and structures as the process unfolded? Resilience is perceived here as the ability of community members to develop and engage community resources in order to thrive within an unpredictable and changeable environment. Resilience was not seen as bouncing-back or systems maintenance but instead suggests transformative systemic change, adaptation and proactivity in the face of stresses and challenges. Transformative capacity refers to system-level changes that could lead to more lasting resilience. This is where resilience and collaborative planning intersect;. the study investigates the ways in which collaborative planning becomes a means whereby people act to form and transform their own worlds and to invent new structures, and in so doing, develop resilience.

Analysis of the literature reveals that while there are many resilience models and frameworks documented and developed, there are few effective measurement tools to identify the *impact* of resilience efforts on participating communities. Measuring resilience remains challenging

and there is a dearth of easily adaptable and practical quality tools to do so. While most documents regarding resilience explore its meaning and its relationship to concepts such as social capital or governance, few propose ways to measure these in practice. This thesis seeks to apply a resilience measurement framework to a collaborative planning process that spanned 20 years; using a retrospective and reflexive analysis of data collected over the course of the process, coupled with further primary data collected for this thesis, it aims to assess the impact of that course of action as it developed over a period of unprecedented change in a small town in Ireland.

1.9   Research Questions

The Research Question (RQ) explored here is:

> Did the process of Integrated Area Planning assist in developing community resilience in Ferbane?

This thesis will attempt to analyse some of the key concepts within resilience theory and examine their application to the IAP in Ferbane.

In framing the research, I examined a number of models and methods for studying resilience. After much deliberation, the three frameworks that seemed best suited to my purposes were:

- *The Community Resilience Manual; A resource for rural Recovery and Resilience* (2000) by the Centre for Community Enterprise in British Colombia, Canada
- *The Transition Handbook: From Oil Dependency to Local Resilience* (2008) By Rob Hopkins of the Transition Towns movement and
- *A Charter for Rural Communities* (2007) developed by the Carnegie UK Trust.

I decided that the following four issues were pertinent to my research –

- *Community-led Planning*
- *Leadership*
- *Social Capital*
- *Resilient Economy*

and should be developed into questions for me to consider.

The process of developing my key research questions (RQs) could then commence, and followed this trajectory:

RQ1: How did Community-led planning help develop resilience in Ferbane?

RQ2: How significant and important was leadership in developing resilience in Ferbane?

RQ3: What role did social capital play in the development of resilience in Ferbane?

RQ4: How important to community resilience in Ferbane was local involvement in its economic life?

1.9.1 RQ1: How did Community-led planning help develop resilience in Ferbane?

The models I adopted all proposed that community-led planning was a necessary step in developing resilience. *The Community Resilience Manual* was quite specific in this regard and proposed that the resilient community has prepared a development plan to guide its developmen that citizens are involved in creating and implementing community vision and goals; that there is ongoing action, and regular evaluation of progress towards community goals; and that Organisations use the community plan to guide their actions. I attempted to track the unfolding of the IAP in Ferbane and to ask whether the process succeeded in meeting these criteria.

Furthermore, from my research I was aware that for collaborative planners, developing and making strategies is seen as an opportunity to transform structures and change power relations in any planning system, it is important to focus on the *process* by which outcomes are decided, how decisions are made and who decides (Healey 1997; Innes and Booher 2000). For collaborative planners, this is key and had to be investigated in Ferbane.

The issue of power is embedded here as there are deeply unequal power relations among participants in such processes. Collaborative planning must encourage strategies which aim at 'opening up' networks to new participants and challenge exclusionary ones. Did this occur in Ferbane?

For Dryzek (1993), it is important to recognise that reaching consensus within planning systems is not enough. Existing power relations and assumptions about access to decision-making structures need to be overturned in such processes. Dryzek calls this 'radicalising the argumentative turn.' Did this occur in the system under consideration here?

1.9.2   RQ2: How significant and important was leadership in developing resilience in Ferbane?

When assessing the resilience of a community the frameworks propose that it should be audited by examining if local leadership is diversified and visionary, shares power and builds consensus. It also asks if organisations in the Community have developed partnerships and a collaborative working relationship and whether community members were involved in significant community decisions. Which of these conditions were present in the Ferbane IAP?

In Forester's view (1989) planners who wish to work for the common good must learn to recognise the forces that promote the general interest as opposed to those that serve the interests of the few. By implication, the professional planner's role in this is to create the conditions and develop the arenas within which 'ideal speech' can be pursued. Following Forester (1989), can IAP expose social and political relations of status, power and culture and act to counteract these?

Colin Copus (2000) maintains that the outcomes of participation are more dependent upon the attitudes of those holding power than the attitudes of those attempting to influence power-holders-the views of the representatives are therefore more important than those of the represented in participatory processes. Was this a feature in Ferbane?

The problems of developing collaborative systems within bureaucratic hierarchies are highlighted. Murray (2005) maintained that, in Northern Ireland, collaborative planning systems failed to create a new set of heuristics and had little impact on the traditional organisational culture. Harris (2002) concluded that although collaborative planning models have been around for a long time now, they have not succeeded in significantly changing planning systems and planning practice. Was IAP over-ambitious and optimistic as it hoped to make an impact within a highly regulated and top-down system of planning?

1.9.3   RQ3: What role did social capital play in the development of resilience in Ferbane?

Collaborative planners argue that the process of collaborative planning itself can be a tool that increases local social capital; arguing that social capital in civil society has the capacity to

build communities that are more socially just and environmentally sustainable. Did this occur in Ferbane?

I prepared a set of questions, following the Canadian Resilience Framework (2000), on issues related to social capital;

- There is a spirit of mutual assistance and co-operation in the community
- People feel a sense of attachment to their community
- The community feels a sense of pride
- People feel optimistic about the future of the community
- There is a strong belief in and support for education at all levels
- There is a variety of community organisations such that the key community development functions are well-served
- The community is self-reliant and looks to itself and its resources to address major issues
- To what extent were these factors present in Ferbane before, during and after the IAP process?

1.9.4 RQ4: How important to community resilience in Ferbane was local involvement in its economic life?

It is proposed that local economic life is enhanced when it is supported by community endeavour. The Canadian Resilience Framework (2000) identified six indicators that relate to the economic aspects of a resilient community. These are that:

- The community has a strategy for increasing local ownership
- Employment in the area is diversified beyond a single large employer
- Major employment firms in the areas are locally owned
- There is an openness to alternative ways of making a living and economic activity
- The community knows where to seek and secure resources
- The community is aware of its competitive position in the broader economy.

Using data collected in 2013, and drawing on a survey from 2018, and the 2019 Ferbane Community Action Plan, these six criteria in relation to the economic life of Ferbane will be investigated.

1.10 My Position in the Research

As will be explored in more detail in this thesis, I occupied a number of different positions in relation to the Ferbane project. In initiating the IAP process, I was part of the team of development workers who deliberatively shaped the IAP; however, at other points, I was an evaluator of the IAP process, standing apart and appraising the process. At other stages, I acted as a facilitator, encouraging the development group to set new targets and goals. And at other points, in fulfillment of this thesis, I was a PhD candidate, applying academic rigour and research principles to my work. At all stages of the project, I was able to conduct action research, where the steps in the IAP process were informed by a parallel piece of integrated research. Therefore the collection of data was able to feed into and inform the development process. All of this activity has given me unique and privileged access to people and information that others did not. For this thesis, I have used ten data sets spanning a period of 18 years and comprising Documentary research, Qualitative enquiry and Quantitative research and analysis.

1.11 Outline of the Chapters of the Thesis

Chapter 2: Collaborative Planning Theory and IAP
The epistemological foundations of the IAP framework lies within the realm of collaborative theory and practice. Collaborative planning focuses on the democratic management of spaces and the design of less oppressive planning mechanisms. This chapter explores these theoretical underpinnings, explains the reasons behind the 'communicative turn' in planning, looks at the key concepts it proposes and ends with a critique of collaboration from the theory and the practice.

Chapter 3: An outline of the concept of Resilience and some thoughts on its application.
Resilience theory, having its roots in ecology, has become influential in the social sciences. This chapter unpacks the terminology of resilience theory, examines its application in the social world and proposes a composite set of indicators for assessing community resilience. It ends by proposing a particular definition of resilience that best fits with collaborative planning endeavours.

Chapter 4: Methodology
This chapter proposes that the study of IAP in Ferbane is best understood as a case study in Action Research. The information presented in this thesis emerged over an 18-year period and was gleaned from over 10 sources of data-encompassing quantitative, qualitative and

documentary sources. This data, combined with the tacit knowledge, access to stakeholders and comprehensive understanding that I developed during a relatively extended period of time offers a particular opportunity to comment on the impact of the IAP process on resilience-building in Ferbane over the period of study.

Chapter 5: Collaborative Planning in Practice

Analysts have stressed the importance of planning as part of building community resilience. This chapter will retrospectively interrogate the process of plan development and implementation through the application of set questions to the planning process as it unfolded in Ferbane from the time of the rollout of the original development plan up to the present. Looking at the process of the preparation of the IAP and at its implementation over the years, the chapter investigates how local people were involved in the creation and implementation of community vision and goals and if there was ongoing action towards achieving the goals they set in 2001. This is followed by an evaluation of progress towards the community's strategic goals, examines the extent to which local organisations used the plan to guide their actions and finally assesses whether the community adopted a development approach that encompassed all segments of the population.

Chapter 6: Leadership

It is proposed that leadership capacity within a community is an essential aspect of resilience building. Within these frameworks, leadership tends to be defined in terms of *endogenous* features, based on the mobilisation of local resources and assets *by those living in the place itself*. In this chapter I will examine which, if any, of these factors were apparent in the design and roll-out of the Integrated Area Plan. However, local leadership had to find support from the broader or *exogenous* decision-making system that existed outside of the local area. A combination of endogenous or bottom-up processes combined with exogenous top-down factors merged in Ferbane through what is termed *neo-endogenous development* (Ray 2001; Shucksmith 2010) is proposed and interrogated here.

Chapter 7: Social Capital

This chapter will examine the linkages between social capital and resilience as it expressed itself in Ferbane. Social capital, defined as the norms, networks and associational life of a particular unit of population, has value; for many analysts, its strength or weakness can determine other outcomes such as the ability of a community to survive shocks, retain its essential form and move into a new, improved state. In other words, it can contribute to resilience by adding to the *adaptive* power of a community in the face of change.

For this thesis I explored a number of issues relating to various measurements of social capital such as local organisational life, community pride, mutual assistance, attachment, education and self-reliance in Ferbane. I interrogated the data collected between 2001 and 2019, looking for evidence of indicators of social capital and asking how significant the role of developing social capital was in the unfolding resilience-building endeavour.

Chapter 8: Resilient Economy

Both resilience and risk factors of the Ferbane economy are intrinsically connected to its past and present role as an energy-producing area. Reliance on resource extraction for energy production led to crisis; yet its store of community capitals and capacities led to a series of transitions that transformed it from a resource town through a process of *networked development*, using its natural and human assets to another altered state. Using data collected in 2013, and drawing on a survey from 2018, and the 2019 Ferbane Community Action Plan, this chapter will look at six criteria in relation to the economic life of Ferbane.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

This final chapter summarises the main findings emerging from this research under the themes as outlined above. This is presented with reference to the key questions and objectives that animated the work in addition to highlighting other findings that emerged from the process of inquiry. Finally, this study concludes with a look to the future, based on the findings of this research.

Chapter 2: Collaborative Planning Theory and IAP

Integrated area planning (IAP) is at the heart of the research question set out in Chapter 1. This chapter explores the theoretical underpinnings of this approach by reviewing collaborative theory and practice which led to the development of IAP as adopted and refined in Ferbane. The chapter will explore the rejection of rationalist planning models by those who favoured a more collaborative approach, called the 'communicative turn' within planning theory and practice. It will outline some of the key tenets of this approach, important in the development of IAP, and will later look at a critique of the method.

2.1   Introduction

Democratic deficits appear to be prevalent in modern societies (Arnstein 1969; Beck 1992; Judt 2010; Lee *et al*. 2015; Putnam 2000). In many established democracies, traditional forms of political participation are in decline, highlighting the distrust citizens have of state institutions. Burton (2003) states that

> this crisis is manifest in many ways from low turnout at election at local and national levels, fewer people, particularly the young, willing to stand for public office and a jaundiced view of the political classes by the public.
>
> (Burton 2003, p. 7)

As people are deemed to be disengaging from representative democracy, there is a widespread belief that public participation in decision-making and in policy development will lead to better policy-making, better policy and therefore to better outcomes (Bichard 1999, in Burton 2003; Chambers 1983; Frazer 1996; Lee *et al.* 2015). Summarising these arguments, the search for greater participation in decision-making is said to have the following benefits:

- That the public can offer more creative proposals and solutions than professionals alone
- That the public can offer a contrasting view to that held by the political and professional elite
- That local and lay knowledge can provide a 'common sense' perspective as users or consumers of particular services
- That participation will ensure 'buy-in' from the public and accelerate implementation.

Citizen participation can be seen therefore as a necessary mechanism for developing improved policy, more effective development programmes and renewing confidence in the institutions of the state. It can also be argued that participation can have a more profound

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objective i.e. strengthening democratic systems and consolidating the relationship between the citizen and the state.

The focus of this chapter is on one particular form of participation in governance, that of participation within the planning system. Traditional planning models have been criticised as adversarial (Lynch *et al.* 2008), anti-democratic (Forester 1989), stifling of creativity (Innes and Booher 2000) and lacking in coherence (Healey 1997). The planning system in Ireland has been particularly fraught over the past three decades. An unprecedented level of economic growth, with property development at its core, followed by a spectacular economic collapse, led to a crisis within the planning system (Lynch *et al.* 2008). In response to requests from communities and from agencies labouring under the weight of a flawed planning system. Tipperary Institute developed a framework for planning that sought to embrace the principles of participation and collaboration referred to earlier. The theoretical and philosophical underpinning of the IAP framework subsequently developed lies within the realm of collaborative theory and practice, with a focus on the democratic management of spaces and the design of less oppressive planning mechanisms. This chapter seeks to explore these theoretical underpinnings.

2.2   The Rejection of Modernism

In order to better understand collaborative planning it is necessary to look at its foundation. To its many critics, the planning tradition has generally been 'trapped' inside a modernist, instrumentalist rationalism from which it has been seeking to escape over the past five decades (Forester 1989; Harris 2002; Healey 1997). Planning is entrenched in the traditions of enlightenment thought, valuing scientific knowledge, objective fact, value-neutral judgement and empirical data. The roots of this tradition in Western development are deep and wide and led eventually to the modernist project, and, with the advent of industrialisation, the need for systems to manage the modernist machine and the socio-spatial issues it threw up (Healey 1997 and 2010). Planning emerged from this tradition. Rationalist models of land use planning were based on a technocratic conception of decision making, whereby public managers, in possession of objective knowledge, make decisions based on maximising social welfare. The measures were seen as providing both a corrective to the market and as a means of protecting the environment against market forces (Healey 1997). The belief was that scientific knowledge could provide an objective basis for identifying present problems and predicting future possibilities.

This association between planning and positivism/modernism led to the 'crowding out' of other approaches:

> The Social sciences have been dominated by a positivist epistemology which privileges scientific and technical knowledge over an array of equally important alternatives-experiential, intuitive, local knowledges; knowledge based on practices of talking, listening, seeing, contemplating, sharing; knowledge's based on other symbolic, ritual and artistic ways rather than in quantitative or analytical models based on technical jargons that by definition excluded those without technical training.
>
> (Sandercock 1998, in Allmendinger 2002, p. 4)

The rationalist approach acts to exclude other forms of knowledge including tacit knowledge and 'common-sense reason' and norms, all of which were not open to scientific measurement. The failure to take these other forms of knowledge on board has often led, it is argued, to poor policy outcomes, the disempowerment of citizens and to alienation from the political system.

The hegemony of positivism began to break down in the 1960s and 1970s). A disenchantment with modernism and rational planning approaches developed because these were believed to have led not only to a disenfranchised populace but to physical, social and economic legacies that were as negative as those that planning had originally sought to address! This disenchantment gave birth to a broad school of thinking that has been broadly labelled post-positivism and post-modernism. Post-positivism seeks to embrace approaches that place planning theory and practice within larger social and historical contexts. It also accepts the validity of normative criteria as a basis for deciding between competing theories, that there are varied explanations and theories applicable to various situations (Allmendinger 2002).

There are a number of fundamental, and perhaps related, principles that post-modernism embraces from Allmendinger (2002):

- A rejection of transcendental meaning, of universal explanations and of the grand-narratives
- The primacy of the discursively created subject
- The important role of culture in shaping society
- The fragmentation and dispersal of old systems and ideas
- The pluralist notion of power being dispersed throughout society.

The failure to recognise these principles, according to the post-modernists explains the lack of participation and democratic content, failed and unrealised results and expectations, urban decay, integrated spaces and a host of other outcomes, intended or not, that characterise modernism and by extrapolation, rationalist planning.

2.3   The Communicative Turn

Collaborative planning represents a reaction to the dominant techno-centric approach to public policy making and land-use planning in particular. Within this context, planning as it is understood may be defined as a modernist project in a now post-modern world. (Harris 2002). This disenchantment with modernist, rationalist planning approaches led to an examination of the ways in which policies were created and interpreted and re-shaped by those implementing them. Some planning analysts began to argue that processes of *negotiation and interpretation* were an inherent dimension of policy work. Therefore, policy was as likely to be dictated by the ongoing flow of events, activities and actions as through formal exercises in policy making. These were described as 'bottom-up' approaches to policy making as opposed to the more formal 'top-down' system. This work specifically emphasised the interactive nature of 'doing planning work' and looked towards theory for inspiration.

The movement towards collaborative planning has also been called the Communicative Turn; and has been heavily influenced by Habermasian communicative ethics and institutionalism and Giddens's structuration theory with its emphasis on participation, empowerment and partnership.

> What we today refer to as the communicative or collaborative turn in urban planning is in actuality a range of different theoretical pulses allied together by Habermasian or Giddensian thinking.
> (Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger 2002, p. 207)

Following Habermas, Healey (1997) endorses the notion of communicative ethics/communicative action; it is through *communication* that societies, cultures and systems such as planning systems, are created.

Attention, therefore, to communication within planning systems is vital.

> This focuses on how political communities communicate in public arenas, how participants exchange ideas, sort out what is valid, work out what is important and assess proposed courses of action…Habermas argues that it is through our communicative efforts that cultures are formed and transformed.
>
> (Healey 1997, p. 53)

Through discussions, people come to learn more about each other, see each other's perspectives and learn to reflect on their own. In this way, mutual understanding is developed, as is a store of social and intellectual capital which can be used at any stage to address core issues that may arise. In this way collective approaches to resolving conflicts may emerge. Healey calls this 'institutional coherence' or the development of institutional capacity within a society which can be called upon by stakeholders in future in order to address issues of common concern

Within IAP, the creation of a set of 'ground-rules' around members relationships and modes of communication as they set about the task of co-creating a plan was important. This draws on the concepts of ''ideal speech'' and ''authentic dialogue'', which are central to Habermasian dialogue; in communication, the parties must desist from the imposition of their convictions; acknowledge the equality of the other; acknowledge that they are engaged in mutual learning and a willingness to view the world from the perspective of the other (Samovar *et al*. 2006).

IAP and Collaborative planning also draw on Giddens's theory of structuration (Giddens 1984) in the creation of new structures and mechanisms for local development. In his theory of social action, Giddens proposes that as people acting in society we are socially made and culturally constructed and at the same time we are makers of society and of culture. We make history in the way we go about our affairs every day. For the collaborative planner, public policymaking and planning are viewed as social processes through which ways of thinking, ways of valuing, and ways of acting, are actively constructed by participants. Individuals are not isolated from one another, but live in complex webs of relations with others, and in these ways, culture is produced and reproduced.

We live through culturally bound structures of rules and resource flows, yet human agency, or our actions and choices as we move within the social world, in our culturally inventive ways, remakes these systems and in this remaking, we change ourselves and our cultures. *Our*

'context' is thus actively constituted through our actions (Healey 1997, p. 46). Within policymaking, for example, planners have a choice; whether just to follow the rules as already established or to change their application and thus change both the physical environment and the system that creates it (Westlund *et al.* 2013). We are all used to dealing with diverse situations and playing different roles; in coping with change. We are active agents in a culturally dynamic world. We are thus as accustomed to making cultures as to living within them (Giddens 1984). We therefore have the potential to make sense together and through discussion and working *collectively to make place together* (Healey 1997, p. 49). In this way, planning becomes a means by which people act in constrained situations. It becomes a way of shaping or framing the web of relations through which people give value to or take actions with respect to the spaces with which they have some relation. For Healey (1997), this work also carries 'transformative power' and therefore has the potential to invent new structure.

2.4   How Collaborative Planning results in Systems Adaptations

The IAP process essentially rests on creating opportunities for dialogue and understanding between stakeholders; of 'making place together'; influencing the development of new, more responsive planning systems, while working on issues of mutual concern. For collaborative planners, the act of communication and dialogue is central; it is during collaborative discourse that social change in complex post-modern societies begins to occur. During dialogue, participants begin to change and the way they act changes too. Innes and Booher (2000) describe in detail how these changes help complex systems to become complex *adaptive* systems. This concept is a crucial one, shared with resilience theory and practice, as we will see in the next chapter.

1. Engaging in dialogue helps participants to articulate their own identity both as an individual and as a stakeholder. Developing and articulating shared and linked identities is important in developing new relationships and new forms of co-operation.
2. Individuals develop and create new shared meanings as they begin to see things together; this is a process of socially constructing the concepts around which policy can grow. The group can act in concert in their own spheres because they are operating out of a shared set of principles;
3. Participants develop new heuristics and new rules of thumb *(e.g. doing things the IAP way)* that do not need rules and regulations and these heuristics can replace old failing systems. In a heuristic-based approach to policy individual agents act independently using the shared heuristics they have developed together. Each individual does what

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makes sense at the time given local knowledge and the feedback each gets from the others within the collaborative dialogue. The result is never predictable as one is creating a self-organising system through distributed intelligence; systems cannot be controlled only made more adaptive and intelligent (Meadows 2008).

4. Innovation then results as new practices and even new institutions emerge from such collaboration.

2.5   Networks

Collaborative planning focuses on the web of relations within which people live their lives. This is embedded in the networks within which people interact. It is within networks that the driving force of social change can happen and be mobilised. Attention then needs to be focused on certain nodes or points of intersection or *arenas of action* where networks intersect, and which can assist or impede the action of networks (Healey 1997).

Collaborative dialogue is a way to establish new networks among the key players in a system and to increase the distribution of knowledge among these players. This includes knowledge about each other as well as knowledge about the social environment where systems operate. Collaborative planning is thus proposed as a highly adaptive and creative way of conducting policymaking.

Planning governance or the management of public affairs may be aimed at sustaining networking webs or at transforming them; and IAP was about such transformation. Innes and Booher (2000) stress the importance of the development of new networks and the ways that complex and rapidly changing system can adapt. They maintain that systems can only change well if they are well networked so that their constituent components can co-evolve successfully. Any successfully adapting system must have good feedback mechanisms from its environment as well as good internal communication systems or distributed intelligence among its nodes. (Innes and Booher 2000, p. 5). Feedback mechanisms are also central within resilience theory (Walker and Salt 2006).

One of the causes of environmental tension is that people share common spaces but have no other relations with each other; they are strangers because they do not have any common networks. (Healey 1997, p. 60). Planning systems can provide the *arena* which allows different networks to come together to negotiate space. Collaborative planning brings together not just individuals but people representing different cultural networks with different ways of seeing, acting and doing.

Donald Schon (1973) argues that society must learn to become capable of transformation without causing intolerable disruption to citizens and systems. In what he calls a process of 'dynamic conservatism' social systems should be capable of dealing with change in ways that do not pose a threat to existing social structures.

> A learning system…must be one in which dynamic conservatism operates at such a level and in such a way as to permit a change of state without intolerable threat to the essential functions the system fulfils for the self. Our systems need to maintain their identity, and their ability to support the self-identity of those who belong to them, but they must at the same time be capable of transforming themselves.
>
> (Schon 1973, p. 57)

Schon therefore emphasises the importance of networks, flexibility, feedback and organisational transformation, recognizing that the 'ways of knowing' offered by the dominant rational/experimental model are severely limited in situations of social change. This concept of dynamic conservatism is also an important component of transformative resilience thinking and was important in Ferbane as new arenas with a more representative membership had to be created within the existing established planning framework available at that time.

2.6 'Authentic dialogue': Principles of negotiation

For Healey (1997, 2010) and for Innes and Booher (2000), the act of dialogue is perhaps the most essential aspect of the planning process. The ways that the parties work together, in dialogue, to resolve matters not only develops solutions to shared problems, but also creates new knowledge, new networks and new heuristics. Collaborative planning approaches are built over a course of *inclusionary argumentation* which generates conviction. This focuses on how people come together to talk and establish a new basis for trust and mutual understanding, a crucial organising principle incorporated into the IAP framework in Offaly.

In inclusionary argumentation the emphasis is on the *processes* through which participants come together, build understanding and trust among themselves and develop ownership of an evolving strategy (Healey 1997, p. 5). The aim is not just to develop a consensus around a particular issue through dialogue: *through participants thinking and acting together, they may transform their ideas, what is important to them, their ways of working and organising.* (Hillier 2002, p. 116).

For Innes and Booher (2000), the most important principle of inclusionary argumentation is that parties must begin with their interests not with a fixed position and must neither give in nor insist on their own way. They must be open to learning about the other points of view and seek mutual gain for all the parties concerned. The focus is on making allies. The parties must persist in both co-operating and competing with each other and accept this as a norm:

> The tension between cooperation and competition and between adversity and inquiry is the essence of collaboration.   (Innes and Booher 2000, p. 5)

Within 'authentic dialogue', each speaker must legitimately represent the interests he is supposed to represent; each must speak sincerely and in ways that the others can understand. To achieve collaboration, dialogue needs to be authentic, not ritualistic or rhetorical. Parties have to say what they mean and mean what they say and to feel safe and comfortable to speak their minds. Participants cannot fall back on the old ways of positional bargaining and of concealing their true motivations. This often means setting up new ways of working such as analysing sources of conflict, setting new ground rules, developing structures together and defining its own tasks.

Collaborative processes must embrace both diversity and interdependence. All the various groups affected need to be at the table and well represented, as excluded interests can destroy collaborative agreement; stakeholders must realise that they cannot achieve their goal without the other party's participation. Only jointly can they progress. Participants need to be able to offer something and be able to gain from it; the principle of *interdependence* is crucial here (Innes and Booher 2000, 2010). The stakeholders must be convinced that the participation of the other stakeholders is fundamental in allowing them to achieve their own particular purpose. So, for example, the business representative needs to be convinced that the participation of the community representative is vital in allowing him to achieve his objectives; the housing department must also see that such participation will ensure that they can implement a key piece of policy etc. In Ferbane, it was important for the state to have local people represented in order to legitimise new development projects in the post-carbon era; and important for local organisations to have access to state resources at a crucial juncture in the life-story of the town.

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Forester (1989) also focuses on the importance of interdependence:

> Mediation offers several opportunities under conditions of mediated power; a
> shift from adversarial to collaborative problem-solving, voluntary development
> controls and agreements, improved city-developer-neighbourhood relationships
> that enable early and effective reviews of projects, more effective neighbourhood
> voice and joint gains (both-gain outcomes) for the municipality, neighbourhood
> and developers alike. Such opportunities present themselves when no single
> party is so dominant that it does not need to negotiate at all.
>
> (Forester 1989, p. 99)

Forester (2009) maintains that mediation cannot solve the problems of radically unbalanced power; it can however turn adversarial potential into at least partial collaboration. This occurs when trade-offs and accommodations can be made that benefit both parties and where co-operation leads to better mutual solutions than pursuing alternative, adversarial strategies (Forester 2009).

For Innes and Booher (2000), engaging in 'authentic dialogue' results in reciprocity. As participants in a collaborative dialogue develop an understanding of their interdependence, they build up reciprocal relationships that become the glue for their continuing work. They learn that it is in their interests not only to work together but to offer something to the other party in return. They do not engage in trade-offs and concessions but rather in creating new scenarios and new projects that allow each party to develop and to gain.

2.7   Collaborative Planning and Social Capital

Social capital has been defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2001, p. 41) as *networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate cooperation within or among groups.* Central to a consideration of social capital is the extent to which people engage in voluntary relationships of trust, support or joint social activity with others (Healey 1997). Social capital is defined by Robert Putnam as the *connections among individuals-social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them* (Putnam 2000, p. 19). For Putnam, social capital can be measured by the degree of civic engagement that exists within any given society. Such engagement may be traced by charting participation in politics and public affairs, in community institutions such as clubs and associations, in the number of informal ties people hold with others and by examining patterns of trust and altruism as measured through philanthropy, volunteering, honesty and reciprocity.

Social capital is seen as both an outcome of, and a precursor to, successful collaborative planning. Through developing new relationships, new social capital is created between people who never worked together before and may never have met and may even have been antagonistic in the past. People come to value the new contacts they make and not just for the job in hand; new relationships form beyond the shared project, helping to develop new personal and professional networks that had not existed before. Participants also come to see the world from another perspective and to learn what issues matter to others; they come to respect each other's views and even to defend them to others, even if they did not agree with that perspective at the time of dialogue.

For Innes and Booher (2000) partners in a collaborative process can only be creative and innovative where sufficient social capital has been built. The social capital that exists within a given community can be leveraged to solve collective problems and to improve or maintain the well-being of that community in collaboration with the agencies that serve it and has the capacity to build communities that are more socially just and environmentally sustainable. The harnessing of the social capital that existed in Ferbane was essential to its success and was enhanced in turn by the institutional capacity-building that occurred as a result.

In 2013, reviewing the impact of Putnam of 13 years previously, Westlund *et al.* (2013) maintain that social capital has indeed become a new determinant in spatial development. This is because social capital is now recognised as encompassing the networks, norms and values of *all* societal sectors and not just those of the civic sphere as defined by Putnam. In particular, the social capital of the business sector and the norms and values of Government and its networks to other actors impact powerfully on the performance of various regions under study. The authors importantly point to the fact that therefore there is not one 'social capital' but a series of competing social capitals formed, carried and reproduced by various groupings in any given region or place. This richness enhances collaborative planning among a range of partners and was found to be crucial in the Ferbane IAP.

2.8   Collaborative Strategy Making

> The task and technique of strategy-making is the heartland of planning culture.
> (Healey 1997, p. 48)

Following Giddens, this approach of strategy-making through inclusionary argumentation maintains that people working within these processes act inventively despite being constrained by structuring forces.

For Healey (1997), strategy-making through inclusionary argumentation means that:

1. Practical consciousness and local knowledge must be respected as there is no one privileged correct rationality – if the distortions of power are to be overcome then all points of view must be heard and acknowledged.

2. Consensus is not uncovered via collaborative dialogue. It has to be actively created across the fractures of social relations of the various stakeholders to build new social capital that will endure.

3. This work therefore builds institutional capacity.

4. The power struggle which is involved in social learning strategies will be more effective in producing real shifts in power that the grand narratives of ideological battles. Strategy-making is a means of deliberative paradigm change. It is more than about producing collective decisions; it is about shifting and reshaping convictions. New strategies achieve impact by entering the consciousness of the official organisational culture – it becomes *the* way of doing things.

And as Innes and Booher (2000) described, a new heuristic is created. But how is such cultural change supposed to happen within complex and diverse systems? How do people get to share enough understanding about what the issues are and how to discuss them to enable a collective effort in strategy–making to proceed?

> Broadly-based strategy-making efforts are thus deliberate attempts at institutional capacity building by the forging of new networks and the infusing of ideas into the array of relational webs which layer over an urban region. The resultant strategies should then have the potential to be richly informed, drawing on a multiplicity of understandings and values. They may also end up being more effective too as more people are directly involved in actively seeking to change their own 'culture,' with respect to how to share spaces and make places, that is transformative work.
>
> (Healey 1997, p. 247)

The challenge for strategists is to find ways of collaborating across the web of relations with a stake in an area's future, to develop new ways of thinking about how to share place and space, which can endure over time.

2.9   Power and Participation

In any planning system, it is important to focus on the process by which outcomes are decided, how decisions are made and who decides. For collaborative planners, this process is key. The issue of power is embedded here. There are deeply unequal power relations among participants in the planning system. In Ireland, planning and governance have traditionally been centralised and bureaucratically defined (Lynch 2003; Meade 2005; Murphy 2002), allowing for little local input. Inequality persists and has grown in Ireland despite various interventions in housing, education and social services. And spatial segregation is growing also as investment flows out of the rural towards the urban (Mahon 2006; Meredith 2006; Meredith and Gilmartin 2014). A consequence is that those with the least opportunity for participation in the institutions of politics and power find themselves spatially concentrated and thus further excluded (Frazer 1996). The spatial marginalisation of the Irish peatland area became clear during the period under study here and key decisions regarding the future of the area were made elsewhere.

Forester (1989) emphasises the importance for planners to understand how the relations of power can shape planning outcomes. He emphasises the importance of knowing that one is 'planning in the face of power' and within deeply unequal power relations. Power within collaborative processes, therefore, may be viewed negatively as a distortion whose effects can be negated by constructing the conditions for 'authentic dialogue' In order to understand power, and to counteract it, Forester advocates focusing upon the *practical issues of information control, misinformation and distorted communication* (Forester 1989, p. 27) within planning systems.

For Healey (1997), power lies in the possession of wealth but also lies in the power to define how other people live, how they do things and what they are encouraged to value. These relations of power act as structures which frame subsequent actions. Local environmental planning exercises are attempts at 'framing' the rules for managing co-existence. Thinking about such strategies helps to identify the potentially powerful actor's interests in any situation and is useful in uncovering latent power relations in our thinking and acting.

In Pluralist and Weberian conceptions of power, inequalities arise because some groups have captured control of favoured areas of social and economic life and hang on to these. For Healey, an institutional approach to power relations focuses on the *relational webs* within which people live, how power is distributed among them and how access to material, social and cultural capital is created (Healey 1997, p. 118). Within this framework, inequality is

generated in the webs people have access to or have not got access to. We are born into rich or less rich networks. Social change must encourage strategies which aim at 'opening up' relational links and challenge exclusionary ones.

2.10   Strategy making for a shared-power world

Within rationalist planning systems, power lies with the bureaucracy and with those who are able to influence it, such as politicians, developers and landowners; local people have little say. In addressing the issue of power, collaborative analysts draw on Habermasian critical theory. An essential aspect of this is the rejection of the universal objective truth and a focus on the distortion caused and maintained through existing power relations. In order to alter power relations, and the society created by these, it is necessary to recognise these distortions and to construct new systems and new strategies through collaborative dialogue.

> A critical theory of planning must therefore suggest how existing social and political-economic relations actually operate to distort communications, to obscure issues, to manipulate trust and consent, to twist fact and possibility.
>
> (Forester 1989, p. 141)

But these problems are hardly inevitable. When planners recognise the practical and communicative nature of their actions, they can act to counteract them.

Critical theory, as interpreted by Forester (1989), offers several key dimensions that are useful:

- It assesses social and political economic structures as systematic patterns of practical communicative action.
- It focuses attention on the distortions of communication that shape citizens lives.
- It reveals that distortions have profoundly hegemonic influence with immobilising and depoliticising consequences.
- It contrasts distorted communications with the ordinary communication of mutual understanding and consensus that makes any shared social meaning possible.
- It shows that democratic processes are vulnerable as bureaucratic and market pressures alike threaten participation and communities of trust and solidarity.
- It proposes that reaching mutual understanding needs 'democratic argumentation', free from domination and capable of revealing distortion.

For collaborative planners, planning and making strategies together is seen as an opportunity to transform structures and change power relations. This is done as stakeholders collaboratively and interpretively work through and build up policy networks and alliances as their strategy-making work proceeds. Planning amounts to more than translating knowledge into action - it involves a style which emphasises knowledgeable reasoning and argumentation. (Healey 1997, 2010). The challenge for a planning system that recognises diversity and inter-cultural communication is to transform these demands into *inclusionary styles of argumentation* within which different ways of knowing, different forms of reasoning, and different values and systems of meaning are represented. Translated into the fields of management of local environmental change, such a planning system involves *developing conversations between stakeholders from different social worlds* and cultures, crucially those traditionally marginalised and excluded, to help arrive at principles for local government. Such principles then form the basis for making difficult decisions between different interests and different claims for policy attention.

2.11   Governance

The success of any collaborative planning system is extremely dependent upon the form of Governance that is in place. A top-down, instrumentalist approach is unlikely to give much room to inclusionary practices unless they concur with policy already made. Therefore, Healey (1997) argues for a democratic, pluralist mode of governance realised through a collaborative style of planning.

> This argument builds on a normative concern for a more people-sensitive form of governance and from a practical concern with the management of local environmental change in situations of multiple and often conflictual stakeholders, typical examples of 'shared-power worlds'.
> (Bryson and Crosby 1992, quoted in Healey 1997, p. 205)

> The systems of governance of a society or community refer to the processes through which collective affairs are managed.
> (Healey 1997, p. 206)

Governance is embodied in such terms as the 'common good' or the 'public interest' and operated within the 'public realm' or what Healey (1997) calls the 'arena' for the discussion of collective affairs. Governance, then, is not just the business of the state as enacted by government; governance activity is diffused through the multiplicity of social relations we

have and may take many forms. Governance systems therefore need to be responsive to changes in society and the economy, framing and promoting the activities of business and citizens and enabling a soft infrastructure of institutional capacity-building to take place among firms and among citizens. Within the IAP experience, the empowerment of local people to develop new systems of local governance and the encouragement of the political and bureaucratic systems to share power with them was crucial.

Governance structures should therefore recognise:

1. The range and variety of stakeholders concerned, their social networks, their diverse cultures, their systems of meaning and the relationships that may exist among them.
2. That much governance work occurs outside the formal systems of state.
3. The duty to spread power out and challenge power consolidation.
4. The need to open up opportunities for informal invention and for local initiatives.
5. That it should act as enabler and facilitator thus encouraging diversity.
6. That it should foster social inclusion and understand power relations.
7. The need for accountability, making available to all the arguments, the information, and the consideration of stakeholder concerns.
8. The need for systems of critical review and challenge.

(Healey 1997, pp. 288-9)

In the view of collaborative planners, then, governance needs to reinvent itself through public discourse.

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Schon (1973) calls this *public learning* within which new governance systems are created through communication.

> A social system learns whenever it acquires new capacity for behaviour, and learning may take the form of undirected interaction between systems … [G]overnment as a learning system carries with it the idea of public learning, a special way of acquiring new capacity for behaviour in which government learns for the society as a whole. In public learning, government undertakes a continuing, directed inquiry into the nature, causes and resolution of our problems. The need for public learning carries with it the need for a second kind of learning. If government is to learn to solve new public problems, it must also learn to create the systems for doing so and discard the structure and mechanisms grown up around old problems.
>
> (Schon 1973, p. 109)

The problem for government and planning systems is that the state can neither know enough nor be impartial enough to fully represent the public interest as the public interest has to reflect diversity and be established discursively. Concerned people must be able to call governance systems to account and to challenge decisions on the grounds that their particular stake has not been adequately taken into account.

According to Healey (1997), the state has four duties in this regard:

1. To pay attention to the diverse interests and concerns of members of the political community and to promote debate and understanding between interests.
2. To carry out agreed policies and programmes effectively.
3. To operate within openly agreed principles and to report back to citizens on what has been done on their behalf, giving good reasons for these decisions.
4. To foster the building of democratic governance capacity in order to sustain the conditions for collaboration.

Primary responsibility for task definition and task performance should be formulated as near as possible to where the task is performed – this is what is known as 'the theory of subsidiarity.' Subsidiarity emphasises the importance of regional and local government for many tasks related to local environmental change. This does not imply the displacement of top-down approaches by bottom-up ones but rather that all tiers of government are given roles appropriate to task performance. The way forward may be to allow different levels of government to have remits appropriate to the scale of their political communities but to leave

to each level the task of deciding on appropriate action. The criteria governing the terms on which challenges may be redeemed should ensure that each level can become a stakeholder whose position will be considered by each other level of governance.

Because collaborative planning is a bottom-up approach, the local arena, therefore, takes on a particular significance.

2.12   The Role of the Planner

> Power and the ability to act and invest in this society are unequally distributed
> and these inequalities provide and shape the context in which planners and public
> administrators and decision makers more generally work and act.
>
> (Forester 1989, p. 59)

In the process of planning collaboratively, the planner moves out of the role of expert to one of knowledge mediator and broker, using an understanding of the dynamics of government systems to draw in resources and assist in the use of information within collaborative systems, with a responsibility to ensure that the weaker and more marginalised members of society gain a voice. This was seen as a crucial aspect of the IAP project in Offaly.

Planners must recognise that what gets done depends heavily on what is said, how it is said and to whom. By paying attention to such issues, planners can subtly expose unwarranted excesses of power and can fulfil their mandate to foster more democratic planning.

> Despite the fact that planners have little influence on the structure of ownership
> and power within this society, they can influence the conditions that render
> citizens able (or unable) to participate, act and organise effectively regarding
> issues that affect their lives.
>
> (Forester 1989, p. 28)

For Dryzek (1993), planners cannot attend to policy without reference to the political context within which policy is made.

> Once again the myth of neutrality is exploded. Analysts cannot avoid taking
> sides on very basis issues of political structure. They can choose to side with
> authoritarian technocracy or with liberal democracy.
>
> (Dryzek 1993, p. 229)

Dryzek continues that 'defensible policy analysis must side with open communication and unrestrictive participation; in other words, with participatory and discursive democracy' (Dryzek 1993, p. 229).

A key source of planners' power to exert such influence is through the control of information. For Forester (1989), the progressive planner approaches information as a source of power to enable the participation of citizens in planning systems. Planners may also use information to prevent power distortions and expose any obstacles to participation. Social actors are often positioned against each other in the planning area. The poor and unorganised are unlikely to appear well-informed on issues that affect them and be ready to participate in formal democratic decision-making, in particular against wealthy interests. The progressive planner seeks to anticipate and counteract misinformation that hampers publicly accessible, informed, participatory planning. Each mode of power-decision-making, agenda-setting and needs-shaping presents distinct problems that need distinct solutions.

> Planners can respond to decision-making power by anticipating political pressures and mobilising countervailing support. Anticipating the agenda-setting attempts of established interests, planners can respond through a variety of informal, information-brokering roles, keenly attuned to the timing of the planning process, its stages and procedures, and the interests and perceptions of the participants all along the way. In addition planners may work to include or seek ties to this traditionally excluded, encouraging attention to alternatives that dominant interests might otherwise suppress. ...Anticipating and working to counteract distortions of communication that weaken democratic planning is at once a democratising as well as a practical organising process.
> (Forester 1989, pp. 46-7)

This view of the role of the planner is very far from that of the objective, detached decision-maker proposed within the rational planning model. It challenges planners to move from a technical to a political role, shaping planning systems towards democratic ends and using planning fora or arenas to deliberately shape social outcomes.

> In a society where capital accumulation is privately rather than democratically controlled, the result is a discouragement of participation, the defeat of community organisations who might fight for community needs against private capital and distract public attention away from social needs and onto the promotion of individual consumption.
> (Forester 1989, p. 79)

Once planners learn to anticipate the ways in which their organisations render people powerless, thus can they begin to respond. In Forester's view, planners who wish to work for the common good must learn to recognise the forces that promote the general interest as opposed to those that serve the interests of the few. They need to recognise that the ability of stakeholders to control the agenda depends on their credibility, their political resources and their wealth. The system is stacked in favour of the wealthy and powerful.

> Planners need to know that in the instrumental production and social-political reproduction of every organisation lie fundamental issues of justice and domination.
>
> (Forester 1989, p. 76)

For Dryzek (1993 pp. 227-8), it is important to recognise that reaching consensus within planning systems is not enough. Existing power relations and assumptions about access to decision-making structures need to be overturned if they are to be transformative. Dryzek (1993) calls this 'radicalising the argumentative turn.' And it requires *'relentless efforts on the part of the analyst to counter these agents of distortion'* in order to ensure that *'the only power remaining is that of the better argument.'*

> Within communicative theory, the planner's primary duty is to listen to people's stories and assist in forging a consensus among different viewpoints. Rather than providing technocratic leadership, the planner is an experiential learner, at most providing information to participants, but primarily being sensitive to points of convergence. Leadership consists not in bringing stakeholders around to a particular planning content, but in getting people to agree and in assuring that, whatever the position of participants within the socio-economic hierarchy, no group's interest will dominate.
>
> (Fainstein 2000, p. 6)

By implication, the planner's role here is to create the conditions and develop the arenas within which 'ideal speech' can be pursued. *Dialogue in the 'ideal speech' situation is free from deception, domination, strategising, and any exclusion of participants or arguments* (Dryzek 1993, p. 128). Habermas (in Healey 1997) recognises that the 'ideal speech' situation in which all participants have equal opportunity to participate and influence the dialogue is not something that can be achieved in practice but for Healey (1997) is rather a guidance or aspiration. It facilitates mutual learning through dialogue. It allows participants to listen and to judge their exchanges and to learn from them. This learning allows participants to develop critical skills which they can bring to bear in judging public policy options and to use in uncovering poor practice in public life.

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2.13 Discussion

In this review, it has been proposed that collaborative planning processes, such as IAP, must attend to the policy environment within which local development takes place. Transforming planning mechanisms, arenas and agendas to incorporate the voice of the traditionally excluded is a priority. This encompasses principles such as equality, transparency, inclusion and authenticity which must infuse such systems. This sets the bar quite high, and this thesis will interrogate to what extent these principles were upheld. The next section questions whether such change with planning systems is ever possible, either in the 'real world' or in theory.

2.14 Critiques of Collaborative Planning

Critiques of collaborative planning tend to fall into one of two categories. First are those that maintain that communicative approaches such as collaborative planning, while laudable, are obstructed in practice by the institutional and structural impediments intrinsic to the planning and policy systems that the collaborative approach seeks to work within, but ultimately change. These critiques take an empirical approach and are usually based on reviewing the evidence regarding the implementation of participatory/collaborative approaches within actual policy environments. The second category of critique tends to focus on the epistemology, much of it focusing on approaches to and understandings of power relations and the inadequacy of communicative approaches in explaining how collaboration can bring about change in the structures that oppress people. This second group of writers would generally question the efficacy of an approach to social change that depends on communicative action and consensual practice.

2.15 Critiques from the Practice

In reviewing the practice of collaborative planning it is important to examine evidence regarding its implementation in a number of settings. Williams (2002) reviewed empirical evidence from over 50 case studies conducted regarding participation in UK governance and decision-making during the 1990s. He concludes that while both Conservative and Labour governments have introduced significant bodies of policy that stress the importance of participation in governance, generally the participation of the public does not influence the decisions taken by state agencies. Williams argues that the state only takes into account the views of groups who have access to power and resources that the state cannot acquire easily or at all, or groups that threaten the state or are made up of a large majority of voters.

Therefore, despite the rhetoric of participation, there is little evidence to suggest that it had any real success in determining outcomes or in influencing either state officials or politicians.

> Those who hold no resources or pose no threat are unlikely to influence the state. Given that participatory forums are often established to engage the poor, disabled and marginalised ... they are therefore unlikely to influence the state ... The relatively powerless continue to have little chance of influencing the government or local state agencies through participation in dialogue, despite the increased opportunities for such dialogue.
>
> (Williams 2002, p. 12)

The literature reviewed by Williams (2002) suggests that few state agencies have created mechanisms that ensure that public participation influences decision-making. Most local authorities failed to link consultation results with decision-making practices nor with setting targets. Rarely was 'listening translated into action' (Williams 2002), Where the public have influenced decisions, the issues were relatively minor ones and studies reveal that the participating public also *felt* unable to influence major decisions.

Despite the fact that successive governments have purported to encourage public participation in decision-making, the bases from which the participating public engage is weak and therefore the outcomes of participation have not changed.

> The government has encouraged local agencies to be responsive to the public but at the same time it has reserved the right to speak on behalf of the public for the local authority and/or itself.
>
> (Williams 2002, p. 27)

The base of political inequality must be changed in order for participation to succeed in changing outcomes. Citizens need to be offered formal rights to determine public policies. And that formality may guarantee that state agencies act in accordance with the public's expressed wishes.

Exploring similar territory, The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Skidmore *et al.* 2006) commissioned a report reviewing studies into participatory processes within the UK. The authors of the report, like Williams, found problems with the system of governance itself; it is inequality in its various manifestations that acts against participation in power-sharing. And worse; the very structures established to facilitate participation may themselves serve to further marginalise the already powerless! This research by JRF (Skidmore *et al.* 2006) found

that the key factor influencing levels of participation in governance in the UK was *the existing pattern of linking social capital* – those already well-connected and already involved in governance tend to get better connected. Relatively few people were involved in governance, and the few people involved in one setting tended to be the same few people involved in the new, more 'participatory' systems. This research suggests that the way governance arrangements develop makes this problem worse. The problems with institutionalising participation lie at the level of the system as a whole, not in the bad practices of particular institutions.

Burton (2003), believes that there is a clash between representative and participatory governance and that local politicians believe that their role as public representatives to be undermined by participatory democracy and the rise of public involvement in decision-making and that public agency officials felt their role threatened in these situations.

Even more fundamentally, Colin Copus (2000), in his study of councillor's attitudes to participation, maintains that the outcomes of participation are more dependent upon the attitudes of those holding power than the attitudes of those attempting to influence power-holders-the views of the representatives are therefore more important than those of the represented in participatory processes. Councillors also see the 'traditional' ways of contacting them, such as via individual contact or the public meeting as more effective than any of the 'modernising' participatory methods.

Copus (2000) concludes that:

> whilst the modernising agenda aims to enhance local representative democracy, it may need to accept a broader range of more obviously political methods of participation as necessary to engage citizens and councils. Indeed it may mean that the modernising agenda moves from enhancing representative democracy to developing a more participative variant of political democracy than hitherto anticipated.
>
> (Copus 2000, p. 22)

Burton (2003), on reviewing a broad range of studies into public participation in regeneration programmes found that participatory democracy usually did not work well; were embarked upon too late; were provided with insufficient resources to make them effective and that the main decisions continues to be made not by local people but by the already powerful living outside the area.

Brennan *et al.* quoted in Burton (2003, p. 5) proposed some key success factors in community involvement in neighbourhood regeneration:

- The earliest possible involvement of local people in the initiative to ensure that the scheme meets local needs and priorities
- Community representation needs to be full and effective, enable to make decisions and in a position to act as an information conduit to local people
- The base of community involvement needs to be broad
- Building the necessary robust and effective community structures takes time.

These conditions however are rarely met in reality.

Michael Murray (2005) examines the role of consultation with the public on matters relating to rural planning matters in Northern Ireland since the 1970s. The problems and tensions relating to rural planning in Northern Ireland is referred to as one of those 'wicked problems' and Murray traces the development of policy and the change in policy-making from a top-down bureaucratic system to one that, in theory, sought to become more collaborative, inclusive and participatory. He emphasises that the *imperative of stakeholder consultation is now at the heart of contemporary public policy formulation* (Murray 2005, p. 169) Various government policy papers stress the importance of stakeholder and public consultation as the basis for good governance, wider democratic engagement, managing complexity and embracing change. Since that time, based upon this discontent and the 'consultation imperative', the state initiated four prominent consultation processes with rural communities regarding the development of an appropriate rural planning policy. Murray (2005) concluded that these consultations provided an important mechanism for measuring change in public opinion on the ground regarding rural planning and provided a 'barometer' on this matter. On the negative side however, it appears to Murray that an examination of these procedures continues to reveal serious structural deficits in the way rural planning and rural development policies have been formulated. In his opinion these participatory mechanisms have failed to produce a productive set of policies and frameworks that can reconcile the key issues of sustainable housing provision and sustainable rural development.

> Each policy domain has operated independently without an interactive understanding and shared vision of the type of rural society that is desirable and how that can be jointly secured at local levels.
>
> (Murray 2005, pp. 182-3)

It would appear then that the new, more collaborative planning system failed to create a new set of heuristics and had little impact on the traditional organisational culture.

The problems of developing collaborative systems within bureaucratic hierarchies are also highlighted by others. Harris (2002), for example maintains that although collaborative planning models have been around for a long time now, they have not succeeded in significantly changing planning systems and planning practice. Collaborative planning may be over-ambitious and optimistic as it hopes to make an impact within a highly regulated and top-down system of planning.

> The very real difficulties of accommodating collaborative forms of planning within existing planning frameworks are (therefore) recognised although the possibilities of these being overcome are exaggerated.
>
> (Harris 2002, p. 38)

Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger (2002, p. 214) draw on evidence to suggest that both the institutional context within which planners operate and the attitudes of planners militate against participation. Often, planners do not believe that they *should* act more democratically and fear that the public may have their own sectoral interests in the same way as other more powerful players; they operate from a fear that participatory processes will be hijacked by powerful forces.

Research by Conrad *et al.* (2011) in Malta demonstrated constraints to public participation originate from both the institutional framework, and the public mindset, asserting that movements up the 'ladder' of participation (Arnstein 1969) must be gradual for these to be effective, as concepts such as 'empowerment' cannot resonate within the existing context. Whilst the state needs to enhance the involvement of the public in strategic planning as well as in decision-making, there needs to be a corresponding emphasis on building the capacity of people to enable and empower them to participate effectively. In addition to both these strands, there also needs to be a better understanding of the institutional mechanisms most conducive to effective participatory democratic decision-making; planners cannot be assumed to be democratically friendly and the commodification of planning may mean that the public is treated as just another sectoral interest group.

Writing in 2019, the same institutional constraints were identified by Pacione (2019). His recent research contributes detailed insight into the effectiveness of public participation in planning by undertaking an analysis of public engagement in land use planning in Scotland.

Pacione (2019) concludes that, despite the rhetoric, the present developer-led land –use system and the bureaucratic mind-set mitigates against participation:

> Notwithstanding the Scottish government's stated commitment to public participation in planning, the present research suggests that current processes are not working sufficiently to enhance local democracy…Without fundamental change to the institutional ethos underlying Scottish planning there appears to be little prospect of any significant improvement in the currently deficient system of civic engagement in land use planning. Scotland will continue to have a centralised decision-making system and an unequal division of power between developers and local people, with a hard-pressed planning system in between. The gap between the rhetoric and reality of public participation in planning will remain as marked as it is now.
>
> (Pacione 2019, p. 15)

2.16   Epistemology

For writers who fundamentally disagree with the tenets of collaborative approaches, much of the focus is on power. These writers maintain that, contrary to what it sets out, collaboration ignores the workings, dynamics and machinations of power and is, in fact, vulnerable to the vagaries of power, 'allowing manipulation and control, confusion and exclusion, and other distortions to disrupt the process' (Harris 2002, p. 29).

Collaborative planning is also criticised for its apparent neglect of issues of structure and its over-emphasis on the capacity of individual agency to overcome blockages. It has also been accused of sacrificing outcomes to process and is seen as not radical enough to bring about the required degree of social change.

While the communicative model cannot be faulted for its ideals of openness and diversity, it is criticised by Fainstein (2000 p. 27) as 'substituting moral exhortation for analysis'. 'Ideal speech' as promoted by Habermas is viewed by Fainstein as a moral rather than a practical argument and its proponents seem blind to economic and social control and domination by the powerful; and indeed *there is an assumption that if only people were reasonable, deep structural conflict would melt away* (Fainstein 2000, p. 7).While accepting that many disagreements may be tackled through negotiation, Fainstein (2000) rejects the view that the powerless will gain an equal place at the table.; and even if they do participate that their views are unlikely to be given due consideration.

Fainstein (2000) accuses communicative planners of being blind to politics and insensitive to causes, constraints and substantive outcomes. With all of the focus on the subjective

interpretation and upon the planning 'conversation', the causes of inequality and powerlessness remain unaddressed.

Communicative theorists hold that stakeholders in a collaborative position must be willing to compromise on their interests. For Fainstein (2000) the willingness of the powerful to adjust their positions does not come about through the exchange of ideas; quoting Luckas (1971) she holds that 'major changes in perceptions of interest require restructuration as a consequence of a crisis or of a social movement, not simply verbal assent' (Fainstein 2000, p. 12). Changing speech does not transform structures. While ideas are important in giving rise to social movements that in turn may change consciousness and ultimately policy, without the threat of social force or disruption, nothing will change. 'The power of words depends on the power of the speakers' (Fainstein 2000, p. 12).

Kothari (2001) proposes that the use of participatory methodologies at local levels serves to distort rather than illuminate the exercise of power. With its almost exclusive focus upon the local or micro-level participatory strategies, understandings of power relations become distorted. These processes rarely make the required institutional linkages between the forces of local control and domination and those at a central level.

Flyvbjerg and Richardson (2002), using a Foucauldian perspective, maintain that collaborative approaches fail to capture the role of power in planning and are thus weak in their capacity to understand the real world and are ineffective as a basis for change. Habermas and his followers have little to say about power and the barriers power creates to discursive decision-making. It is meaningless to operate a concept of communication in which power is absent. Habermasian notions of creating 'ideal speech' situations are seen as utopian. Claims are made on the basis of seeking a consensus among equals and negating the affects of power- this is criticised as idealistic. For Foucauldians, Habermas pays scant attention to the preconditions of actual discourse, to problems relating to identity and to cultural divisions. By contrast, Foucauldian concepts of power focus on 'what is done' rather than on 'what should be done'.

> To control power, one needs power! If the goal of planning theorists is to create a planning that is closer to Habermas' ideal society-free from domination, more democratic, a strong civil society-then the first task is not to understand the utopia of communicative rationality but to understand the realities of power.
> (Flyvbjerg and Richardson 2002, p. 49)

Power is central to Foucault: 'understanding how power works is the first prerequisite for action, because action is the exercise of power' (Flyvbjerg and Richardson 2002, p. 57). In collaborative planning, power is viewed negatively as a distortion whose effects can be negated by constructing idealised debate. Even Healey recognises that an over-analysis of communicative acts can render the researcher blind to unequal power relations among participants. Collaborative planning focuses on the public forum where communication takes place; however much of politics takes place outside of the communication forum. Foucault pays more attention to the playing out of conflict rather than to communication within social contexts. In Flyvbjerg and Richardson's (2002) study of planners' behaviour, they found that institutions that are supposed to serve the public interest were revealed to be 'deeply embedded in the hidden exercise of power and protection of vested interests' (Flyvbjerg and Richardson 2002, p. 60).

For Foucault, resistance and struggle, not consensus, are vital for the practice of freedom. There is a need to analyse the *realpolitik* rather that the normative and to embrace conflict as part of freedom within the democratic system. Social and political theories that ignore conflict are potentially oppressive. Indeed, the more democratic a society is, the more it allows groups to define their own way of life and legitimises the inevitable conflicts this leads to. A strong democracy guarantees the existence of conflict. 'Planning is inescapably about conflict; exploring conflict in planning and learning to work effectively with conflict can be the basis of a strong planning paradigm' (Flyvbjerg and Richardson 2002, p. 62).

Harrison, writing from a neo-pragmatist perspective, also focuses on the normative and utopian nature of communicative ethics as proposed by Habermas and his followers. This approach focuses on the pragmatic application of ideas. Influenced heavily by Dewey, pragmatists are interested in 'the particular consequences of ideas for future practical experience or reflective action culminating in altered experience' (Flyvbjerg and Richardson 2002, p. 158).

Are all aspects of urban planning and management best handled through inclusionary argumentation? Pragmatism does not make such a sharp distinction between rational action and communicative action as Habermas. And unlike Foucault, they do not mistrust science and technology as long as scientists respect democracy and reflect moral values and considerations.

Habermas is interested in process. Pragmatists are interested in results and focus on process or methodology only to the extent that it will produce desired outcomes. In his critique of

collaborative approaches, Pennington (2002) draws upon the work of Frederich von Hayek who argued strongly for free markets as producing optimal outcomes. Hayek maintains that instead of seeking to manage social and environmental systems according to some holistic plan it may be better instead to look into a more impersonal, self-organising system to bring about the necessary co-ordination. Modern societies are too complex to be strategically planned and integrated, yet this is what Healey (1997) suggests. Co-ordination by a body such as the state appears to be radically at odds with the notion of 'empowering local communities'. It also over-estimates the extent to which social co-ordination can be achieved deliberatively. The range and complexity of the issues are too extensive to rely on conscious deliberation; the range of inter-connected variables that contribute to the quality of urban life is too complex to rely on conscious coordination. Instead, tacit knowledge is vital for this and according to Hayek the vast range of tacit knowledge –intuition, flair, talent etc-is best expressed when people are least constrained by social pressure and collective decision-making procedures which will dilute tacit knowledge. People best operate in a private sphere where they can make their own decisions. Therefore, the public sphere should not be allowed to interfere and certainly not to dominate the determination of policy.

For critics of collaborative planning, as explored here, the issue of power is crucial. Collaborative processes are accused of blindness towards issues of structure, assuming that 'ideal speech' and the conditions it creates can help to overcome deep inequalities of power and structure. Collaborative planners, on the other hand, maintain that new structures can be co-created through collaboration, dialogue and the development of relationships between parties who have some shared interest, even while coming from very different backgrounds, motivations, and power-bases. In order to do so certain conditions must be created and mutually accepted

The critical success factors in a participatory process include the earliest possible involvement of local people in the initiative to ensure that the scheme meets local needs and priorities, that community representation needs to be full and effective, that the base of stakeholder involvement needs to be broad and recognising that building the necessary robust and effective structures takes time. Crucially, an enabling policy environment must be present.

2.17 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on outlining the theoretical and epistemological roots of Integrated Area Planning. The Tipperary Institute team involved in framing the IAP was consciously and deliberatively implementing a framework that was fashioned within the principles of collaborative planning.

Specifically, the framework addresses;

- A critique of the hierarchical and adversarial planning system that has dominated Irish planning in favour of one that embraces collaborative principles and practice
- A process that is driven by a set of values and principles that stress inclusion, participation, accessibility and ease of implementation
- Collaborative strategy making that aims to generate shared conviction among the stakeholders and to allow them to co-create new structures and mechanisms for local development
- The importance of inclusion of all the diverse interests within the community in the IAP and the representation of all stakeholders
- The use of a range of techniques that value all forms of knowledge, from stories to drawings to anecdote to formal reports
- The creation of a system where knowledge is co-created by the participants through working together on issues of mutual concern and this 'making place together'
- Challenging the view that planners and experts hold knowledge which they then shape to fit the requirements of a particular area
- The development of new heuristics and new rules of thumb that stress the prerequisite of collaboration and discourse in working towards solutions
- Creating new arenas where networks can intersect through encouraging participatory ways of working and paying attention to issues of representation, styles of speech and who speaks for whom and when.
- Creating ground rules that facilitate 'authentic dialogue'
- Measuring the creation of new social capital through mapping new groupings and new developments within the area that result from the IAP
- Challenging the planning and the political systems to share decision-making power with local people and to shape development plans that are driven by local priorities
- Developing new systems of governance that encourage people to develop their own systems as well as to influence the policies of formal governance

- Valuing bottom-up approaches to policy development and creating mechanisms for the co-creation of policy by agencies, politicians and local people
- Challenging the planner to move from the role of technical expert to one of power broker and mediator.

These factors were incorporated into the design of the Integrated Area Planning project in Offaly which was initiated in 2000 in Ferbane. The success of the Ferbane IAP initiative in fulfilling these criteria will be explored in this thesis. Issues such as whether the IAP helped in pluralising power or in spreading decision-making through new networks and arenas must be interrogated when assessing the success or otherwise of the process in achieving the ideals of collaborative planning outlined here.

Chapter 3. An Outline of the Concept of Resilience and Some Thoughts on its Application

The concept of resilience has gained considerable attention and has indeed started to replace 'sustainability' as a galvanising term for ecologists and social theorists alike (Davoudi 2012). The use and study of resilience theory and practice across a range of disciplines is steadily rising, with a nine-fold increase in the use of the term 'resilience' in published items reported on the web of science between 1997-2015 (ODI 2016). The term, however, is poorly understood in the main. This thesis asks whether the process of developing an Integrated Area Plan for Ferbane assisted in the formation and strengthening of resilience in the area. In order to address this question, it is therefore necessary to introduce the concept of resilience and to assess whether the concept is germane or significant in such a setting. This Chapter attempts to provide a background to the concept of resilience. It seeks to situate resilience within the broader context of systems thinking and to introduce some key resilience terms such as adaptive cycles, alternate regimes and thresholds; and debates around such terms as "panarchy"; adaptability and transformability. Critiques of resilience theory and practice will be offered and finally an argument presented as to the usefulness and application of the concept of resilience within the social sphere, particularly a resource town such as Ferbane.

3.1   Definitions

Resilience as a concept was first explored by ecologists examining the nature of change within ecosystems, the causes of such change and their impacts. More recently, resilience has been taken up by academics and practitioners as a further development in the study of sustainability and by those seeking to understand climate change and the impact of human activity on the natural environment. Only later was the concept applied to the social world.

Resilience was first introduced by C.S. Holling within the field of ecology. Holling (1973) examined the ability of natural systems to survive and persist in the face of changes due to natural or anthropogenic environmental causes. He proposed that the key to sustainability in a system was its ability to recover after disturbance. Later, he began to link natural systems to human systems, stressing the interdependence of the two and the linkage of human to natural livelihood cycles (Holling 2007).

In physical sciences and engineering, resilience is often used to denote stability and persistence. It is about the capacity to withstand external shocks and bounce-back to the prior

state of "normality." According to Davoudi (2012), engineering resilience represents 'the resistance to disturbance and the speed by which the system returns to the original state' (Davoudi 2012, p. 300). It is therefore a conservative definition, urging a return to past certainties.

For others, resilience is not about bouncing back to where we were, but about the capacity for adaptation. Marten (2001), for example, defines resilience as the ability of social systems and ecosystems to continue functioning, even in the context of severe and unexpected stresses. He links resilience directly to the concept of 'adaptive development' or the ability of social systems to cope with change (Marten 2001).

Meadows (2008) similarly links resilience to adaptive capacity: 'Resilience is a measure of a systems ability to survive and persist within a variable environment. The opposite of resilience is brittleness or rigidity' (Meadows 2008, p. 76).

Walker and Salt (2006) define resilience as the ability of a system to absorb disturbance and still retain its basic function, structure and feedbacks. 'It is the capacity of a system to undergo change while retaining its essential function and identity' (Walker and Salt 2006, p. 32). This, they maintain, is related to the concepts of sustainability and to the challenge of meeting current needs without eroding the potential to meet the needs of the future.

The Resilience Alliance (2002) also defines resilience as a system's ability to absorb disturbances, to be changed and then to re-organise and still have the same identity and be in a position to retain the same basic structure and ways of functioning.

> It includes the ability to learn from the disturbance. A resilient system is forgiving of external shocks. As resilience declines the magnitude of a shock from which it cannot recover gets smaller and smaller. Resilience shifts attention from purely growth and efficiency to needed recovery and flexibility. Growth and efficiency alone can often lead ecological systems, businesses and societies into fragile rigidities, exposing them to turbulent transformation. Learning, recovery and flexibility open eyes to novelty and new worlds of opportunity.
> (Resilience Alliance 2002, p. 1)

Others, primarily in the social sciences, (Davoudi 2012; Mehmood 2016; Wilson *et al.* 2013) argue that resilience is related to transformation. In other words, it is about the capacity to break away from an undesirable state and even 'bounce forward' to a better 'new normal'. Resilience, therefore, has been variously framed as persistence, adaptation, and/or transformation.

3.2   Systems Thinking

The first key to understanding resilience is through the lens of systems. Donatella H. Meadows outlines this comprehensively in her 2008 *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*. Meadows (2008) maintains that resilience thinking *is* systems thinking:

> A system is a set of things –people, cells, molecules, or whatever-interconnected in such a way that they produce their own pattern of behaviour over time.
>
> (Meadows 2008, p. 2)

A system is complex and may respond in ways that humans cannot always predict; we can try to manipulate any given system and that manipulation may produce the effect we desire or may produce something entirely different. This is because a system's response to any force is characteristic of that system itself, and its response cannot be assumed to be simple and predictable. There is latent power within a system, and we need to understand its structure and function prior to intervention:

> once we see the relationship between structure and behaviour, we can begin to understand how systems work, what makes them produce poor results and how to shift them into better behaviour patterns.
>
> (Meadows 2008, p. 1)

Similarly, Walker and Salt stress that each system is a complex adaptive one and the emergent behaviour of the system

> 'cannot be understood by understanding the individual mechanics of its component parts or any pair of interactions …changes in one component can sometimes result in complete reconfigurations of the system; the system changes to a different stable state (or regime)'.
>
> (Walker and Salt 2006, p. 35)

3.3   Exploring Key Resilience Concepts

3.3.1   *Concept 1: We are all part of linked systems of humans and nature (or social ecological systems)*

A key aspect of systems thinking is that humans and nature operate as a part of the same system and are inseparable. The social and the physical spheres operate as one. We are all part of the system and we exist and act within wider linked social and ecological systems. For example, within any region, according to Walker and Salt (2006), the suburb and the wetland

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are both part of the same system. And the manager of the supermarket and the fisherman on the wetland are all part of the same system. If humans affect change in one part, it will have feedbacks in another; they do not occur in isolation. If we attempt to consider one part of the system in isolation from others, we will come up with a partial and thus unsatisfactory solution, which can cause bigger problems later.

Modern industrial systems developed because of human attempts to isolate selected elements of a system from the whole, exploiting certain aspects without reference to all of the other elements or to their interconnections: trees were seen as wood not as part of a forest; humans were viewed as units of labour rather than as actors within complex social systems. In resource towns like Ferbane, the natural environment was regarded as a site of energy production only, not as an entire eco-system. The emphasis was on extracting the optimum amount of fuel in the most efficient manner (albeit with an eye to providing employment in a marginal rural area). Efficiency and optimisation are the cornerstones of industrial development and economic growth. Efficiency however is the enemy of resilience because it depends on pushing any given system towards one *optimal state* and keeping it there in perpetuity in order to maximise returns. This model assumes that:

- No change in state or context will occur
- If change does occur, it will be predictable and manageable, therefore there is no need to be able to respond quickly to change
- Commodities have one particular use or function and can be exploited for that use only without causing unsustainable disruption to other elements of the system
- Systems can be returned to their original state post-optimisation

These industrial models are failing us as they misunderstand how our interconnected world actually works.

When we exploit any given ecosystem for one particular use only, we distort that system, often with unwanted consequences. Ignoring such complexity has demonstrably led us into problems. If we do not consider the response of the broader system, we are led not to sustainability but to collapse.

A drive for an efficient 'optimal state' outcome has the effect of making that total system more vulnerable to shocks and disturbances.

> The bottom line for sustainability is that any proposal for sustainable development that does not explicitly acknowledge a system's resilience is simply not going to keep delivering the goods (or services).
>
> (Walker and Salt 2006, p. 9)

> Resilience thinking presents an approach to managing natural resources that embraces human and natural systems as complex systems continually adapting through cycles of change'.
>
> (Walker and Salt 2006, p. 10)

Many resource towns were valued only for their productive capacity, without regard for the ecological consequences, nor for the fall-out in social and economic terms when production ceased. At a higher level, the environmental impacts of carbon-release via peat extraction was not considered either, leading to lack of resilience in the meta-system.

3.3.2 Concept Two: Complex Adaptive Systems

If resilience is the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance without changing to another state, or regime, then a resilient social system must have the ability to avoid such a regime shift and to continue to be able to provide humans with the goods and services needed to support life. Some describe resilience as the time it takes to 'bounce back' after a shock or disturbance, whereas Walker and Salt (2006) emphasise the *ability* or capacity within a system to recover as most important; the ability to resist falling into a new regime. Gunderson and Holling (2002) also proposed that the key to a system's sustainability was its ability to recover after disturbance and that ecosystems and social systems needed to be analysed together rather than independently, as both went through cycles of adaption in response to a changing environment. At this point, the important aspect to consider is whether resilience is about recovery or transformation. Can a place like Ferbane regain its former state (surely not, if its main enterprise departs) or must it seek another identity if it is to survive? For Ferbane this would mean looking at the peatlands and the social economy in a different way

Systems theorists maintain that all systems go through four stages of an adaptive cycle, as depicted in figure 2, below. Phase one is the rapid growth or r-phase. During this phase, the actors within a system exploit every resource, forge new paths and make new connections

within a weakly regulated environment. The system is full of possibility and is dominated by innovators and entrepreneurs, each grasping new opportunity and initiating intense activity and developing complexity. This occurred in Ferbane during the 1960s, as peat-generated electrical production was introduced to the area, creating employment, population growth and an attendant boom in the service industry in the midlands.
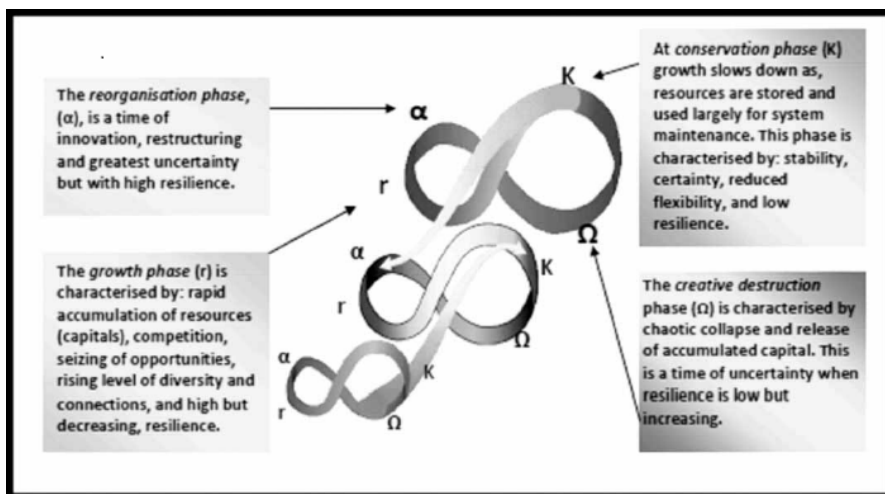
Figure 2:   The Panarchy Model of Adaptive Cycle
Source: Davoudi *et al.* (2012, adapted from Holling and Gunderson 2002, pp. 34-41) and Pendall *et al.* (2010, p. 76)

Phase two of the adaptive cycle is called the conservation or K-phase, where energy gets stored up, systems develop incrementally, material accumulates, and specialism occurs; specialists replace innovators. Specialists are more conservative and efficient in their use of resources than innovators but are also strongly competitive. Greater efficiency and economies of scale develop in the system along with internal regulation. Interconnections between elements increase and growth rates slow; the system becomes increasingly more rigid and resilience declines. The price of efficiency and stability is less flexibility in the system and crucially there is increased dependence upon existing practices and structures.

> A disturbance that exceeds the system's resilience breaks apart its web of reinforcing interactions. The system becomes undone. Resources that were tightly bound are now released as connections break and regulatory controls weaken. The loss of structure continues as linkages are broken and natural,

> social, and economic capital leaks out of the system ... but the destruction that
> ensues has a creative element...this is 'creative destruction.
>
> (Walker and Salt 2006, p. 78)

This occurred during the 1970s and 1980s in Ferbane as mechanisation in the bog increased and the ESB and BNM strove for maximum efficiency within the system; Ferbane continued to grow and thrive as a result of peat extraction.

Phase three is the release or Omega phase. This occurs when a shock or disturbance hits the system. The longer the conservation phase has persisted, the more rigid the system has become and the less resistant it is to shock; at this point the system is brittle and even a small change in the environment can destroy the whole enterprise; in other words it has lost resilience and must move into another state or regime. During the 1990s, it became clear that inefficiencies in the peat and electricity production systems, coupled with an increasing concern regarding the detrimental impacts of peat extraction in terms of carbon emissions, would mean the eventual wind-down of the industry upon which Ferbane depended.

Phase four is called the reorganisation or alpha-phase where the chaos that ensued from release quickly leads to a phase of reorganisation and renewal. It is this phase, from 2000 onwards, that is explored in this thesis.

> Novelty can thrive. Small, chance events have the opportunity to powerfully
> shape the future. Invention, experimentation and reassortment are the order of
> the day ... Pioneer systems may appear; new people can come into power; the
> future is up for grabs-it may repeat past cycles, begin rapid growth or become
> degraded. Systems cannot go from a release phase to a conservation phase but
> almost any other moves can occur.
>
> (Walker and Salt 2006, p. 78)

This adaptive cycle has also been applied to the social and economic world. For example, Schumpter (in Galambos 1993) described capitalist boom and bust as the 'perennial gale of creative destruction', breaking down stability but releasing energy and resources for innovation and reorganisation. Schumpeter used the term to describe the process of transformation that accompanies radical innovation in the business world and its impact on society. In Schumpeter's description of capitalist development, in Galambos (1993), innovative entry by entrepreneurs was the force that sustained long-term economic growth, even as it destroyed the value of established industries and the livelihoods of the people

working in traditional companies. In a critique of this approach, Davoudi (2012) cautions against the wholesale adaptation of ecological notions of resilience into the social world; pointing to the ability of powerful actors such as the State to intervene to prevent such harmful creative destruction and resisting neo-liberal resilience discourse that focuses on individual and community self-reliance in the face of disaster or market restructuring.

3.3.1   Concept 3: The Importance of Loops

Resilience thinkers place a great deal of emphasis on what are called feedback loops, of which the adaptive cycle has two opposing modes: a development loop (or 'fore' loop) and a release and reorganisation loop (a back loop). The fore loop is dominant in the growth and conservation phase and is characterised by the accumulation of capitals, by stability and conservation, a mode that is essential for system (and therefore human) well-being to increase. The back loop is characterised by uncertainty, novelty and experimentation. The back loop, prominent in the reorganisation phase, is the time for greatest potential for the initiation of either destructive or creative change to any given system. It is the time when human actions and interventions to bring about change can have the biggest impact. This is where social systems can best concur with ecological understandings of resilience and where possibilities for social transformation can occur (Powe and Hart 2017). It was at this point, as the uncertainty wrought by the imminent withdrawal of the ESB/BNM occurred that IAP commenced in Ferbane; at this point innovation and new thinking on the future identity of the town was considered imperative and timely.

3.3.4   Concept 4: Exploring Alternate States and Thresholds

One of the central tenets of resilience thinking is that all social-ecological systems have multiple regimes or alternate stable states that are separated by thresholds. Many systems can exist in what are called *alternate stable states*. It is possible for any given system to exist in a variety of stable states Some configurations are desirable from a human perspective, while others are undesirable. Each configuration is a set of system states that has the same essential structure and function - and such a configuration is termed a system "regime". As attributes of the system change, the positions of the attractors move around, and the various basins of attraction get smaller and larger or appear and disappear (Resilience Alliance 2010). This shifts the attention of analysts away from constancy and stability onto variability. Surprise and unpredictability become the order of the day.

Walker and Salt (2006) describe the process thus:

- Though social ecological systems are affected by many variables, they are usually driven by only a handful of key controlling (often slow-moving) variables
- Along each of these key variables are thresholds; if the system moves beyond a threshold it behaves in a different way, often with undesirable and unforeseen surprises
- Once a threshold has been crossed it is usually difficult (in some cases impossible) to cross back
- A system's resilience can be measured by its distance from these thresholds. The closer you are to a threshold, the less time it takes to be pushed over.
- Sustainability is all about knowing if and where these thresholds exist and having the capacity to manage the system in relation to these thresholds.

(Walker and Salt 2006, p. 63).

Crossing thresholds means that systems behave in a different way than before with unforeseen results and potentially huge implications for the people who live in a system. The key issue here is the ability of a system to absorb disturbance and still behave in the same way. If we can understand what the variables are and where thresholds lie along these variables, then we can start to observe, perhaps even to predict change within a system.

In the natural world, a controlling variable, like the nutrient levels in a lake will determine the density of the algae in the water and thus the ability of the lake to act as a successful breeding ground for fish. If the lake system develops too many particular nutrients, then it may cross a threshold and lose its ability to sustain a fish population. In the social system, a controlling variable might be the nature and level of employment in that same area. This is the variable that will determine the number of young people who remain in the area and have children, thus determining the social sustainability of that area. What becomes most interesting from a systems perspective are the slow controlling variables that determine the long-term sustainability of the area in both its ecological and social spheres .In Ferbane, as we will see later in this thesis, it is proposed that the slow controlling variables were to be found within the capacity for leadership and the strength of local social capital which led to the revival of the economy as it diversifies away from fuel production, resulting in a town that cannot merely survive but thrive. This would mean evolving to an alternate stable state, no longer a

resource town but remaining as an attractive place to live, to work and to do business (Powe and Hart 2017).

3.3.5 *Concept 5: Determinants of Resilience*

What maintains general resilience in a system or maintains the general capacities of a social ecological system that allows it to absorb unforeseen disturbance?

Levin (1999) in Walker and Salt (2006) suggested three factors: Diversity, Modularity and Tightness of Feedbacks.

- **Diversity**: this refers to the number of species, people and institutions that exist within any given social-ecological system. Diversity is not just about the number of species that exist in a system but also about the various roles that they perform. For a system to be resilient what is important is that each of the species that forms part of any given functioning group has a different *response* to shocks and disturbance (e.g. the existence within a system of different species who survive and thrive in different ways on a variety of types of waste). The more variations available to a system to allow it to respond to a shock, the greater the resilience of the system; diversity relates to flexibility and the range of options available to a system to respond to change. Increased efficiency is the enemy of resilience within a system because it reduces options and leads to a decrease in diversity.

  If there are a large number of different response types, the service provided by a functional group is likely to be sustained under a wider range of conditions, and this system has a greater capacity to absorb disturbances...the range of different response types available within a functioning group is referred to as response diversity and it's this aspect of diversity that is critical to a system's resilience. It's akin to risk insurance and portfolio investment.
  (Walker and Salt 2006, p. 70)

  If workers in the species perform the same functions in different ways, then resilience is enhanced. Anything that increases an ecosystems response diversity (including redundancy) strengthens resilience.

  In the publication *Resilient Nation*, Edwards (2009) applies a systems perspective when looking at emergency preparedness capacity in the UK. He believes that the policy to create highly specialised, heavily resourced state bodies to deal with national

emergencies is a mistake. Because all emergencies are different and occur in diverse environments, they require different responses. Rather than having one large, centralised response organisation, he believes that it is far better to use local voluntary bodies as diverse as the Army reserve, the WI, local farmer and Red Cross groups and to resource, train and empower them with skills to respond to local emergencies in the places that they know best, using their own unique skill sets. This resonates in a small-town setting in terms of the existence of a diverse number of local businesses and local organisations rather than reliance on large monopolistic entities.

- **Modularity:** This refers to the manner in which components of a system are interconnected, the more tightly controlled and connected a system is, the more fragile it becomes:

Highly connected systems with lots of links between the components are complicated systems. Any shock will therefore travel quickly through the whole system. *Complex adaptive systems* however are strongly linked internally, but only loosely connected to each other, and have a modular structure. This allows them to act relatively independently and to keep functioning when other linked modules fail. These modular systems moreover have the ability to self-organise and can therefore quickly recover reform after a trauma (Walker and Salt 2006, p. 121).

For resilience thinking then centralisation and rigidity are the enemies of resilience because they aim to predict the unpredictable and operate as if any given event can be planned and controlled centrally and uniformly when real life does not reflect this.

Edwards describes how 'brittle' our key systems are, precisely because they are too highly complicated and inter-connected. Our food supply depends on a highly complex oil-driven international distribution chain while shops, driven by efficiency criteria, stock only a four-day supply; we depend for power on electricity grids which are highly interconnected and run off a few, rapidly depleting energy sources. Overall, the UK's critical national infrastructure has become progressively more interconnected and reliant on expensive information and communication systems and has become vulnerable to disturbance and may be described as brittle. Our everyday lives and the national infrastructure which we rely upon operates in a fragile union, vulnerable to even the smallest disturbances in the network.

Edwards (2009) also gives a stark example of how the emergency response ability of New York City to the Twin Towers event of 2001 was severely hampered because a decision had been made some years before to centralise the city's emergency response capacity to an Emergency Co-ordination Centre- located within the Twin Towers complex. The concept of modularity in a setting like Ferbane would resonate in terms of the number of leaders the town produces, as well as the existence of alternative means of earning a livelihood that people have access to.

- **Tightness of Feedback:** It is important to look at how information travels through the system and crucially, how systems receive information in a time and a manner that allows the system to react in an appropriate fashion. The timeliness of information delivery and reaction in a system is called tightness of feedbacks and this:

> Refers to how quickly and strongly the consequences of a change in one part of the system are felt and responded to in other parts. Institutions and social networks play key roles in determining tightness of feedbacks. Centralized governance and globalisation can weaken feedbacks. As feedbacks lengthen, there is an increased chance of crossing a threshold without detecting it in a timely fashion.
>
> (Walker and Salt 2006, p. 121)

Meadows (2008) also pays a good deal of attention to tight feedbacks as a counter-force to the delays that are inevitable within any system. Delays are pervasive within all systems and are another strong determinant of system behaviour. A delay in a balancing feedback loop is likely to cause a system to oscillate due to information insufficiency and physical delays; these are very common. Recognising delays, understanding why they are occurring and quickly correcting them may (or may not!) force a major change in the behaviour of a system. Lengthening or shortening delays can produce major changes in the behaviour of systems

Ubiquitous delays are inevitable within systems and we are always surprised by how long things take to develop or change; every stock is itself a delay and all flows have delays. It is important to recognise where the delays occur and to see that changing the length of a delay may have big consequences. For systems thinkers, attention to the flow and timing of information is important here. Understanding the nature of information flows–or tight feedback-are essential as when they are missing, we are

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forced to act only when the result becomes obvious and a threshold has been reached (e.g. climate change; viral spread) and this of course is too late.

Meadows (2008) calls the limited flow of information possessed by actors in a system *bounded rationality*-we all make what seem to be rational decisions based on the information we have to hand. However, we do not have the full range of information available to us and can only act guided by what we know. We do not however know what other actors in the system are planning to do, what the full range of possible action might be nor the impact of our behaviour on the overall system. We tend to focus on the short-term and discount the future in our actions, often with great economic and ecological cost. We do not allow information we do not like to influence our decisions. This is acting within bounded rationality. And the bounded rationality of each actor may not lead to decisions that further the welfare of the overall system.

The 'cure' for this is better and more timely information or tight feedbacks and ensuring that the right information gets to the right people at the right time. However, most of the time people are presented with information out of context or in ways that disempower them. Within the context of IAP the need for access to information and to decision-makers was recognised as important. Increasing the opportunities for networked development was key. IAP was about making plans, citizen involvement in making these plans and building local institutional capacity to carry them out. However, it was also about linking people into the wider systems of political and bureaucratic decision-making where the future of the town would ultimately be determined

In 2016, Lovell *et al.* added two further characteristics of Resilience to this list; those of Adaptiveness and Integration.

- **Adaptiveness** is the capacity to adjust and react to new circumstances, especially during disruption. The ability to make new plans, to take new actions and to modify behaviour in the face of change is important, as is the ability to be flexible and to apply existing assets to new circumstances. This was crucial in the Ferbane situation demonstrated by a capacity and willingness to adapt to changed circumstances.

- **Integration** – this is the capacity that a system has to bring together disparate individuals, organisations, and groups together to find cohesive solutions and actions. Following Habermas an important aspect of IAP was the creation of new arenas where the various interest groups communicate in public arenas, exchange ideas, work out what is important and assess proposed courses of action.

3.3.6   Concept 6: Panarchy and Hierarchy

For systems thinkers, all systems are treated as part of a wider super-structure; each exists within other systems and everything is inter-connected. Whatever scale we are focusing on, local, national or global, it is affected by happenings in scales above and below, in time and in space. And each system above and below is at its own stage in an adaptive cycle. So any system we can imagine is:

> composed of a hierarchy of linked adaptive cycles operating at different scales. The structure and dynamics of the system at each scale is driven by a small set of key processes and, in turn, it is this linked set of hierarchies that govern the behaviour of the whole system. This linked set of hierarchies is referred to as a 'panarchy'.
>
> (Walker and Salt 2006, p. 89)

Panarchy is a term coined by Gunderson and Holling (2002) to describe the cross-scale and dynamic interactions between human and natural systems. The term fuses notions of unpredictable change with those of various structures or hierarchies. Importantly, the processes that produce panarchy are self-organising.

> Since the word hierarchy is so burdened by the rigid, top-down nature of its common meaning, we prefer to invent another term that captures the adaptive, and evolutionary nature of adaptive cycles that are nested one within the other across space and time scales. We call them panarchies, drawing on the image of the Greek god Pan - the universal god of nature. ... In addition to this creative role, Pan has a destabilizing role that is captured in the word panic, directly derived from one facet of his paradoxical personality. His attributes are described in ways that resonate with the attributes of the four phase adaptive cycle; as the creative and motive power of universal nature, the controller and arranger of the four elements- earth, water, air and fire (or perhaps, of K, alpha, r and omega!). He therefore represents the inherent features of the synthesis that has emerged in this comparison of ecological and social systems.
>
> (Gunderson and Holling 2002, p. 74)

Of particular interest within systems are the linkages across scales. They are a key aspect of the multi-scale adaptive cycles that make up a panarchy. What happens at one scale can influence or even drive what's happening at other scales. Ignoring the effects of one scale on another (cross-scale effects) is one of the most common reasons for failures in natural resource management systems. Therefore, in looking at change dynamics, we cannot focus on just one scale as what happens at one scale or level depends on its capacity to respond to the states and dynamics at the scales above and below. This is why it is so crucial in a process such as IAP that the players operating at a local level be cognisant of changes at the national scale that are vital to its operation; determinants of success do not just occur at the micro-level but are dependent on changes at the scales above. In later chapters it will become clear that without changes at the national policy level regarding planning and rural development, the transformative impact of IAP will essentially be limited.

3.6.7   *Concept 7: Memory and Self-organisation*

Self-organisation describes the capacity of a system to make its own structure more complex; its ability to learn, diversify and evolve. It is an essential and exciting characteristic of any resilient system, whether human or natural and must be preciously guarded. Unfortunately, within modern systems, self-organisation is often sacrificed for short-term activity such as production targets or market stability. Modern efficiency tends towards predictability and on imposing systems that stifle self-organisation. On the contrary, self-organisation arises from unpredictability and heterogeneity, is capable of creating entirely new structures and new ways of doing things. It does require freedom, experimentation and relinquishing control and many bureaucracies find this hard to do. However, while self-organisation can be suppressed, it is so key to living systems that even the most over-bearing power structure can never fully kill it.

> Resilience is a measure of a systems ability to survive and persist within a variable environment. The opposite of resilience is brittleness or rigidity. Resilience arises from a rich structure of many feedback loops that can work in different ways to restore a system even after a large perturbation ... Meta resilience comes from feedback loops that can learn, create, design and evolve ever more complex restorative structures. Systems that can do this are self-organising.
>
> (Meadows 2008, p. 76)

It was once thought that self-organisation was so complex that it was almost impossible to understand. Recently, however systems theorists have found beauty in the simplicity of some

self-organising systems. Even complex forms of self-organisation may arise from relatively simple organising rules-or may not! Some examples given by Meadows (2008) of simple organising rules that create great complexity include DNA, the agricultural revolution and the market. Systems thinkers believe that the self-organising powers of systems, based on system memory and diversity, allow systems to respond and change in ways that humans cannot predict.

> The recovery path of a forest patch that has been devastated by a fire or cyclone depends on the availability of seeds of the many species in the surrounding mature forest. That is, it depends on the 'memory' of the system at the scale of the whole forest. The recovery patterns of communities of people that have been subject to a devastating shock (environmental, economic or social) will depend on the memory of how to respond, embedded at the higher scale of the society in which the community exists'.
>
> (Meadows 2008, p. 76)

Humans strive to control systems when in fact many systems need to experience constant change; in fact, adversity and redundancy are ideal conditions within which some systems may actually thrive. Holling (2007), when applying diversity to natural eco-systems, also stresses how really robust resilience arises from diversity and how species can survive under various conditions and can substitute for other species because their difference in size are associated with different scales of movement. Applying this to social systems Davoudi (2001) calls it *ecological resilience* or the magnitude of the disturbance that can be absorbed before the system changes its structure. Here, resilience is defined not just according to how long it takes for the system to bounce back after a shock, but also how much disturbance it can take and remain within critical thresholds. For Davoudi (2012, p. 301) ecological resilience focuses on 'the ability to persist and the ability to adapt' preserving what we have and recovering to where we were, with the assumption that 'what we have' is a desirable state of affairs. In applying these principles to Ferbane, there was a strong emphasis throughout the period under study on the capacity-building of local organisations, thus adding to the store of social capital. It will also emerge that such processes, if they are to be truly transformative, take time and effort and that new structures will emerge to replace old. redundant ones when the right conditions prevail.

3.3.8   *Concept 8: Resilence, Risk and Limits to Growth*

Within capitalist societies, we are accustomed to the idea that the limiting factors to production were the availability of capital and labour. However, as Beck has pointed out in

his major work *The Risk Society* (1992), this is no longer the case; nowadays, with globalisation, the limiting factor*s are those produced by economic growth itself.* Pollution caused by over-production has made clean air and water a limiting factor; poor banking practice has made trust a limiting factor and oil depletion has made energy a limiting factor, inhibiting sustainable economic growth.

And this brings us on to a final insight from resilience thinking: that systems largely cause their own behaviour. Thus, for example, the world economic system is driven by capital investment which has grown exponentially over the past number of decades. This is because the system is dominated by a reinforcing loop that drives investment and growth. This input may have diminished due to the growing dominance of a balancing loop such as lack of trust or expensive energy. The issues here identify the driving forces that push the dominance of the balancing loop; e.g. less capital because of credit failures? Lack of confidence? High energy costs etc.

> A population is nothing like an industrial economy except that both can reproduce themselves out of themselves and thus grow exponentially. And both age and die. A coffee cup cooling is like a warmed room cooling, and like a radioactive substance decaying and like a population or industrial economy aging and dying, Each declines as a result of a balancing feedback loop.
>
> (Meadows 2008, p. 51)

> any physical growing system is going to run into some kind of constraint, sooner or later ... Growth in a constrained environment is very common, so common that systems thinkers call it the 'limits to growth' archetype.
>
> (Meadows 2008, p. 59)

Applying a systems perspective to Ulrich Beck's study of risk, we can see how exponential growth has acted as the reinforcing loop in industrial society and the recognition of risk, and the reflexivity it spawned, as the balancing loop. This had a direct impact on Ferbane as the recognition that peat extraction leads to unacceptable levels of carbon release, adding to climate chaos, led to the wind-down of the town's main industry. Peat extraction became an unacceptable risk. Modern society is now exposed to risk on a massive and globalised scale. Scientific advances have allowed large sections of humankind's basic needs to be met and have facilitated rapid and unprecedented population growth. Nuclear technology, pesticide use, pollution and massive deforestation have contributed to the growth trajectory and, despite their inherent risks, continue to occur on a globalised scale. Modernisation and global

industrialisation systems now carry within them the risk of the self-destruction of mankind. In the developed societies, basic needs have largely been met; however, the question of how much risk various social and economic groups will tolerate now looms large. Risk has its basis in industrial overproduction. Modernisation may be seen as the cause, and damage its side effect.

> They are risks of modernisation. They are a wholesale product of industrialisation and are systematically intensified as it becomes global. … Risk may be defined as a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernisation itself.
>
> (Beck 1992, p. 21)

But how much risk will a society tolerate in order to facilitate economic growth? How can risks be managed, minimised or prevented? What are the political limits to risk? To understand risk, it is necessary to go into these relationships and explore 'the social architecture and political dynamics of such potentials for self-endangerment' (Beck 1992, p. 22).

And for Beck (1992), as for the systems thinkers, there needs to be an end to the antithesis between nature and society if unacceptable risks are not to prove detrimental. This means that nature can no longer be understood *outside of* society or society *outside of* nature.

> The social theories of the nineteenth century (and also their modified versions in the twentieth century) understood nature as something given, ascribed, to be subdued and therefore as something opposing us, alien to us, as non-society. These imputations have been nullified by the industrialisation process itself, historically falsified, one could say. At the end of the twentieth century, nature is neither given nor ascribed, but has instead become a historical product, the interior furnishings of the civilizational world, destroyed or endangered in the natural conditions of its reproduction.
>
> (Beck 1992, p. 80)

The effect of the socialisation of nature is the socialisation of threats to nature and the creation of economic, social and political struggles and conflicts. And threats to nature become threats to society and its institutions.

> The central consequence is that in advanced modernity, society with all its subsystems of the economy, politics, culture and the family can no longer be understood as autonomous of nature. Environmental problems are not problems of our surroundings but-in their origin and through their consequences-are

thoroughly social problems, problems of people, their history, their living
conditions, their relation to the world and reality, their social, cultural and
political situations ... At the end of the twentieth century nature is society and
society is also 'nature'.

(Beck 1992, p. 81)

And as the human species is now, itself, threatened by the perturbation of nature the
engagement of the natural sciences with the social and political spheres become imperative.

3.4   The Play and the Plateau

Amongst resilience thinkers, the consensus is clear: that the sustainability of human enterprise
depends upon conserving the resilience of socio-ecological systems. Meadows (2008)
reminds us that attention needs to be focused on the system as a whole and to protecting the
resilience of the system over the long-term.

> I think of resilience as a plateau upon which the system can play, performing its
> natural functions in safety. A resilient system has a big plateau, a lot of space
> over which it can wander with gentle elastic walls that will bounce it back, if it
> comes near a dangerous edge. As a system loses its resilience, its plateau shrinks,
> and its protective walls become lower and more rigid, until the system is
> operating in a knife-edge, likely to fall off in one direction or another whenever
> it makes a move. Loss of resilience can come as a surprise, because the system
> usually is paying much more attention to its play than to its playing space. One
> day is does something it has dome a hundred times before and crashes.
>
> (Meadows 2008, p. 78)

3.5   Intermediate Conclusion

In reviewing the literature, it may be concluded that humankind is approaching a threshold. In
systems language, we may therefore be at the brittle late end of the conservation phase of an
adaptive cycle and therefore highly vulnerable to external shocks. The closer we are to the
end of the conservation phase the smaller the shock that is required to tip over into release
phase. This represents non-resilience at its worst.

Approaching the issue of resilience from a systems perspective opens a new way of
examining the state of the globe and the social eco-systems it contains. Since humans exist
within nature, human activity affects the eco-system and these changes feedback to affect the
state of the human sub-system. Beck expounds this most clearly as exposure to risk.

Globalisation has made us less resilient and more exposed to risk. It has led to the domination in the market of a few giant global corporations. This has stifled meaningful competition and blocked new entrants to the market system. It means that both local and global diversity is diminished. We have come to depend on these few corporations and on a declining fuel base for most of our essentials. This has led to homogeneity, monopoly and dependence. In systems thinking these systems are brittle and increasingly vulnerable to unexpected shocks. Growth and efficiency, the motivators of the market system, may lead ecological systems, businesses and societies into fragile rigidities, exposing them to turbulent transformation.

Resource towns like Ferbane are at the sharp end of shock, exposed as they are to global market forces, changing regulatory environments and changing demands for energy production. Dependency on one industry threatened its resilience leading to shocks and stresses in the system. By 2000, the question was how could Ferbane survive as a system without falling into an undesirable state where it could no longer provide an acceptable quality of life for its residents?

3.6 The Role of the State and Civil Society

According to Ulrich Beck (1992), with industrialisation and globalisation, power has shifted considerably from the institutions of the State to those of the market and the laboratory. In Beck's view, those in charge of developing and selling the products of science and technology are the new global super-powers. Society is undergoing a revolution fuelled by science and technology-that is a *non-political* revolution. The potential for restructuring society therefore migrates from the political system to the non-political and globalized system of economy and technology and to structures which are not democratically-elected and which are non-accountable.

Because of this, and because the State is so enmeshed within the system, centralised institutions are fundamentally incapable of responding to risks. Within the political sphere, participation of citizens is vital. However, in the risk society, people are torn between a bourgeois defence of private property and work rights through the market or non-politics and participation as a citizen in the political arena. With the hectic pace of technological progress people's private participation (or non-politics) in the market has been given primacy.

In his view, however, the risk society offers opportunities to activate the increased freedom, equality and self-expression that modernity brings and to use these against the fatalism of progress and the limitations of industrial society.

And, in Beck's (1992) opinion, the alternative society will not come from the body politic but from the research laboratories and executive suites-those who are in charge of developing microelectronics, genetic technology and information media. A different understanding of politics is required, and we must recognise that politics is no longer the only or even the central place where decisions are made about potential political futures. In the light of this then Beck proposes that the democratisation of powerful private and technological institutions is required, from parliamentary checks on technological development to the inclusion of citizens groups in technological planning and research policy, thus putting mechanisms in place to ensure that those who create the risks take responsibility for them and abandoning the fiction of centralised state control and explore new forms of direct consultation and shared control beyond centralised direction and progress. In the language of evolutionary resilience, this offers an opportunity for the transformation of society.

Within this then Judt (2010) proposes a new role for the State, that of arbiter and also the entity that creates the conditions and mechanisms to allow discussions between key parties to take place and a consensus to emerge:

> While the battles over particular interests and viewpoints rage and should rage in business (and also in the sciences) politics could lay down the overall (juridical) conditions, check the general applicability of regulations and produce consensus.
> (Judt 2010, p. 235)

A resilient systems approach recognises that for sustainability, human endeavour needs to shift from reshaping nature to satisfy short-term human demands to moderating human demands so that they fit within bio-physical limits. This must happen with both the productive and assimilative capacity of the eco-system and in a way that enhances long-term social and ecological resilience.

The phrase *Act Locally, think globally* was first attributed to the planner and theorist Patrick Geddes and socio-ecology. It is suggested that Geddes work mirrors contemporary debates on decentralisation and localisation (Young 2017).

Familiar concepts in Geddes work, according to Young (2017), include returning to living within the resources and assimilative capacity of an area (the local) that is connected to a wider global network, the need for decentralisation and localisation of power and economies, and the consequent benefits for well-being and human capital. And, of course, advocating the central role of planning in achieving this:

> Geddes's theory provides not only a condemnation of economic exploitation but also a platform from which a wide range of proactive ecological and social activism can embark. These projects such as renewable energy, green infrastructure and design, zero waste, urban agriculture, workers' rights, alternative transportation and public health, community empowerment, rights of nature, and a myriad other efforts aimed at social as well as ecological equity can draw strength and coherence from Geddes.
>
> (Young 2017, p. 36)

Many systems thinkers call for a reshaping of society towards this end and recognise that this will require a major refocus. Learning from systems is proposed as a way to open our political, social and economic policies and practices to novelty and new worlds of opportunity. The goal of human enterprise, in the twenty-first century, it is proposed, should be to retain ecosystems and economies in ways that promote diversity and resilience in the face of impending climate change and turmoil. The next section of paper will seek to introduce some of the solutions proposed by a resilience approach and will review some of the models already in operation towards this end.

Two recurrent themes here are the relevance of resilience models derived from ecology to the social world and the need to consider shifts in the focus and locus of power from the global to the local. The paper will then go on to explore the practical application of some of these theories by examining initiatives that seek to build and measure community-level resilience in the UK, Australia and Canada.

3.7   Critiques

Critiques of Resilience theory fall under three categories:
1. Those who question its relevance to the social world
2. The depoliticised nature of resilience theory and its inability to recognise the large-scale political, economic forces that are driving global change
3. The ability to define and measure the concept in ways that make sense in the social world

Theorists remain sceptical about transposing what is essentially an ecological model to the socio-economic sphere. For example, for Olsson *et al.* (2015) resilience theory expounds a conservative, consensus-based view of social systems and social change where resilience is taken to be a universal 'good'. It fails to ask fundamental questions such as 'resilience of what, against what and for whom'? and therefore ignores issues of power where one person's resilience may be another's vulnerability. For Davoudi (2012) in the social context, unlike in ecology, desirable outcomes are always normative and always tied to notions of 'good' or bad' outcomes; or winners and losers. There is not a natural inevitability. Davoudi (2012) indicates that analysts of social processes see resilience through the lenses of power and politics where some people gain and some people lose. Therefore, issues of justice and fairness need to be brought into play in such processes.

Lovell *et al.* (2016) posit that resilience theorists and practitioners tend to focus on local and regional systems. This is often because of the perceived conceptual 'fit' between locality and resilience and the fact that, in Asia and Africa at least (where 'resilience practice and measurement' is concentrated) most projects aimed at building resilience are concentrated at the level of the household and of the community. In analysing the field, they found that only a small number of evaluative tools looked at measuring the higher levels of systems, institutions and policies that can inhibit or enable 'resilience programming' to occur. This concern with the 'resilience of places' or 'community resilience' may be misplaced in terms of spatial scale. Rarely do resilience theorists analyse those global processes that actually structure change in those very local systems. In fact, they maintain that the processes that shape resilience operate primarily at the global level of capitalist social relations. For Bohland *et al.* (2019) narratives of resilience can in fact mask the very structural conditions that perpetuate the need for resilience in the first place!

This links then with the critique of resilience as a facade for neo-liberal restructuring. Resilience, defined as 'self-reliance' fits perfectly with conservative notions of free yet responsibilised individuals, notions of self-help and self-sufficiency (Chandler and Coaffee 2016; Olsson *et al.* 2015). Local empowerment towards resilience allows the withdrawal of the state to 'enable' local citizens to be active in their own governance and risk-management without interference by a centralising state (Zebrowski and Sage 2019). Resilience thinking obliges individuals and communities to fend for themselves, to distrust state planning and celebrates self-regulation and organisation. The free-market philosophy of Hayek thus chimes with notions of systems self-organisation as expounded by Holling (2002) and Meadows (2008). Davoudi (2012) is critical of writers such as Edwards (2009) where community

resilience is seen as meaning the withdrawal of the state, leaving 'resilient' communities to cope on their own.

> Advocating the rolling back of the state's support for vulnerable communities in the name of resilience is a misguided translation of self-organisation in ecological systems into self-reliance.
>
> (Davoudi 2012, p. 305)

3.8   Bouncing back…or forward?

In an analysis by ODI of resilience measurement frameworks and approaches almost all of those examined focus on resilience in the face of shocks and stressors, limiting damage from disturbances and recovery from these events. ODI (2016) proffers a definition of resilience gleaned from these frameworks:

> resilience as the practice of making people, communities and systems better prepared to withstand catastrophic events and able to bounce back more quickly and emerge stronger from these shocks and stressors.
>
> (ODI 2016, Introduction)

In a similar vein, when applied to an African context:

> A community is resilient when it can function and sustain critical systems under stress; adapt to changes in the physical, social, and economic environment; and be self-reliant if external resources are limited or cut off.
>
> (Frankenberger *et al.* 2013, p. 5)

Steiner *et al.* (2016) maintain that resilience is increasingly perceived as the ability of community members to develop and engage community resources in order to thrive in an unpredictable and changeable environment. Resilience is not about bouncing-back or maintenance of current and existing characteristics but instead suggests systemic change, adaptation and proactivity in the face of stresses and challenges. Therefore, there is a need to distinguish between different community capacities for resilience-absorptive, adaptive and transformative.

Absorptive capacity is the ability to minimize exposure to shocks and stresses (*ex ante*) where possible and to recover quickly when exposed (*ex post*). This is congruent with short-term

emergency response and with the definition of resilience as the ability of a system to 'bounce-back' to a former state after a shock.

Adaptive capacity involves making proactive and informed choices about alternative livelihood strategies based on changing conditions.

Transformative capacity relates to governance mechanisms, policies/regulations, infrastructure, community networks, and formal safety nets that are part of the wider system in which households and communities are embedded. Transformative capacity refers to system-level changes that enable more lasting resilience. Both adaptive and transformative frameworks are more consistent with long-term, capacity-building development initiatives.

Wilson *et al.* (2013) propose a typology that distinguishes between adaptive maintenance-where changes do not alter the prevailing system logic or functions-and transformation, which involves marked changes to system logic and function and where that transformation refers to the process of deep change of identity, feedback mechanisms, structure, and functions.

3.9   Radicalising Resilience

Davoudi *et al.* (2012) argue that resilience is not just about readiness to shock, disaster and other isolated, once-off events but is about long-term strategies that can mitigate and adapt to socio-economic and environmental challenges. These thinkers reject the notion of resilience as emergency planning and 'shock therapy' in favour of an *evolutionary* resilience. This instead of bounce-back and recovery emphasises concepts such as transformability and adaptability, as well as notions of learning and innovation:

> A place, within this framework may become more or less resilient depending on how the learning capacity of the communities helps them to prepare them for situations of crisis by being persistent, facing possible disruption by adapting to the change and progressing into a new state through innovation and transformation.
>
> (Mehmood 2016, p. 418)

These models reject the notion of 'bounce-back' resilience where resilience is seen as only related to emergency response and on short-term damage reduction to get people back to where they were before disaster struck.

In contract, socio-ecological or evolutionary resilience is seen as 'the ability of complex socio-ecological systems to change, adapt and crucially to transform in response to stresses and strains' (Davoudi 2012, p. 302).

Evolutionary resilience sees nature and society as prone to sudden change and becoming something new and radically different from before. Faced with adversity, systems rarely return to where they were before. Even small-scale changes can amplify and cascade into major systemic shifts. In this model of resilience, past behaviours and trends are no predictors of future events. This is best articulated by the model of the adaptive cycle. Planning in this scenario is about being prepared for innovation and ultimately transformation at times of change and uncertainty.

> Evolutionary Resilience, with its rejection of equilibrium, emphasises the inherent uncertainty, discontinuities and insights into the dynamic interplay of persistence, adaptability and transformability provides a useful framework for understanding how complex socio-ecological interdependencies work.
>
> (Davoudi 2012, p. 306)

For Shaw, this definition of resilience as transformation 'opens up opportunities for political voice, resistance and the challenging of power structures and accepted ways of thinking' (in Davoudi 2012, p. 307).

Davoudi (2012), when considering the application of resilience thinking to the social world, sees the *intentionality of human actions* is a key differentiating factor distinguishing resilience-making in the social as opposed to the ecological world. By their actions, technology and foresight, humans can break cycles and can sustain, diminish or enhance resilience in human systems.

In this way, socio-ecological resilience can operate differently and more intentionally than in nature.

> Resilience is seen as a radical agenda which provides for adaptation and the constant reinvention needed to allow society to innovate and to do new things as we plan for innovative transformation in the face of resource depletion and climate change. It is based on an intuitive 'sense-making' approach to new, unfamiliar and chaotic situations. where the social and the ecological are inherently inter-linked.
>
> (Davoudi 2012, p. 9)

3.9.1 *Collaborative Planning and Resilience*

In the current context, planning is conducted less through 'rational planning' models and more through informal activities and networks and within the interplay between actors. In

planning, although resilience is a relatively new concept it is rapidly gaining salience. There are parallels between evolutionary resilience and the interpretive approach 'as both emphasise fluidity, reflexivity, contingency, connectivity, multiplicity and polyvocality' (Davoudi and Strange 2009, p. 37). Both schools of thought see physical spaces and places as complex, inter-related socio-spatial systems, with a number of unpredictable feedback systems operating at different scales and timeframes. Both constructs reject the modernist 'will-to-order, both embrace change, uncertainty and novelty and advocate the search not for the 'certainties' of the past but reach towards transformation

Drawing on Chandler and Coaffee (2016), Collaborative Planning and resilience together can offer;

> A more open and fluid approach to the world, one which attempt to rethink or move away from traditional approaches … to a more open process-based approach, working with difficulties, being sensitive to feedback and not assuming that there is an inviolate or fail-safe cure or solution.
> (Chandler and Coaffee 2016, p. 4)

What is important here is the intentionality of human action in 'managing the adaptive cycle' (Davoudi 2012; Powe and Hart 2017; Walker and Salt 2017). This is where planning comes in-anticipating that change is a constant. Rather than seeing the world as orderly, mechanical and reasonably predictable, resilience thinkers and collaborative planners see it as chaotic, complex, uncertain, and unpredictable. Evolutionary resilience is embedded in the recognition that the seemingly stable state that we see around us in nature or in society can suddenly change and becomes something transformed. This perspective challenges the adequacy of planners' conventional ability to extrapolate, to apply old systems to new uncertain environments and to attempt to control the future. And it has the potential to offer a more holistic approach:

> Because resilience thinking does not decouple social and ecological systems, it offers distinct potential for addressing the complex, deep and dynamic socio-ecological problems we currently face. Resilience calls for a shift from the dominant "ecological modernisation" views of the environment, toward approaches that bring ecological values to the forefront of planners' concerns.
> (Davoudi 2012, p. 306)

3.10   Building and Measuring Community Resilience

The complex nature of resilience leads to a huge diversity and range of elements that could be operationalised and measured.

In terms of analysing resilience, Lovell *et al.* (2016) found a distinction between academic and grey literature with the latter often prepared to support operational organisations such as INGOs operating resilience programmes in the field. Academic papers were found to concentrate on policy and governance arrangements and on the framing and measurement of resilience.

> The scans indicate that the discourse on resilience is progressing from conceptual thinking to operational ways to build resilience and the governance arrangements needed to do this. This trend reflects the substantial investments in donor-funded programmes and initiatives to enhance resilience over the past 5 years, many of which are engaging with partners from developing countries.
>
> (Lovell *et al.* 2016, p. 6)

Indeed, over half of the papers scanned related to Asia and Africa and the themes that most commonly arose were Climate – 40%, Agriculture and Food Security – 28%, and Conflict – 21%. (Lovell *et al.* 2016, p. 12)

Steiner *et al.* found that while there were many resilience models and frameworks that by 2016 there were still few effective measurement tools to identify the *impact* of resilience efforts on participating communities. Measuring resilience remains challenging and there is a dearth of easily adaptable and practical quality tools to measure resilience. While most documents regarding resilience explored its meaning and its relationship to concepts such as social capital or sustainability, few proposed ways to measure it in practice.

Therefore, measuring resilience is not a straightforward task. By the middle of the past decade analysts of available data found that a variety of tools, methods and approaches were required. For example, the Baseline Resilience Indicators for Communities (BRIC) (Cutter *et al.* 2014) analysed data from 30 public sources, They came up with 49 indicators selected through conceptual, theoretical, and/or empirical justification as capturing qualities associated with community resilience within six domains: Social (10 indicators), Economic (8 indicators), Housing and infrastructure (9 indicators), Institutional (10 indicators), Community Capital (7 indicators) and Environmental (5 indicators).

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> Resilience measurement, like most efforts to measure complex phenomena, requires a multi-dimensional, multi-method approach. One of the main benefits of qualitative data and subjective data is that they provide a more detailed understanding of the dynamic relationships that explain variations in well-being following exposure to shocks and stressors.
>
> (Food Security Information Network 2015, p. 5)

Adger (2000) introduced the concept of *social resilience* as the capacity of groups to adapt, self-organise and recover from shocks through the production and reproduction of social capital and social innovation. Social relations, as part of social capital, are often the single most important element to capture when assessing resilience. Good qualitative data is required as social relations are difficult to capture quantitatively. Qualitative data can reveal *why* some households and communities are resilient and why others are not.

3.11   Measuring Capitals

The idea of capitals has increasingly been used to express the capacities available within the wider social context upon which governance activity, business initiative and cultural life can draw (ODI 2016). Most of the frameworks examined by ODI emphasise the measurement of capitals as central in capturing resilience. For TANGO (2012) community resilience is the extent to which communities can effectively combine social capital and collective action to achieve transformation. The Communities Advancing Resilience Toolkit (CART 2017) describes a resilient community as one that has the ability to transform the environment through deliberative, collective action and requires that the community as a whole copes effectively with and learns from adversity.

The publication also stresses the role of social capital in the process and the role of the various social actors in building social capital:

> Resilient communities have a high level of social capital. That is, mutual trust, social norms, participation and social networks. Resilient communities also possess the necessary resources, such as strengths and abilities, required to overcome vulnerabilities and adapt positively to change.
>
> (CART 2017, p. 9)

While capitals are the set of assets, skills and services that exist in an area/community, capacities may be seen as the ability of users to adapt use of assets in various situations,

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particularly in adversity. For ODI (2016, p. 28), the use of capacities is seen as a useful way for practitioners to 'get their heads around the rather nebulous concept of resilience'.

> Understanding resilience in terms of capacities clarifies that this somewhat abstract idea is simply a function of people's ability to anticipate, absorb and adapt to disturbances or to fundamentally alter (transform) their engagement with risk.
>
> (ODI 2016, p. 28)

The implication here is that capturing qualitative indicators of capital and capacity within a community is achievable and can provide a measure of local resilience. This insight proved valuable as the methodology for this thesis was being constructed. This work sought to capture the various capacities within the Ferbane community around aspects such as leadership and to assess levels of social and economic capital as developed throughout the IAP.

3.12   Measures of Resilience for Ferbane?

From the analysis of resilience thinking it was increasingly clear that there was a good deal of resonance between the concepts of resilience and collaborative planning as it applied in the Ferbane context. In seeking to construct a suitable set of indicators of resilience in Ferbane there were a number of concerns. First of all, many of the tools I analysed were designed for use in Africa and Asia within situations of environmental disaster and of food insecurity. Having had direct, first-hand experience of these situations I knew that tools such as those developed by agencies such as USAID, TANGO and DfiD for use in those areas would not be readily transferable to the Irish rural context. I also sought a set of indicators that would be multi-dimensional as recommended by the analysts above; one that looked not only at Social/Community Economic indicators but also one that captured Institutional aspects. This is because, in the context of *networked* development, there was a need to consider the interaction between different scales from the local to regional and national systems. I also sought a set of indicators that would measure the transformative capacity of the community and given the importance of climate issues one that embraced environmental considerations. To this end I focused on 3 main sources as detailed below.

3.12.1 *Carnegie UK Trust – Charter for Rural Communities 2007*

The Carnegie UK Trust proposed a model for the sustainable rural community called *A Charter for Rural Communities.* While not specifically referencing resilience, it was useful within this thesis as it was a holistic model proposing that the viable and sustainable rural community of the future would display a number of inter-related capitals and capacities as follows:

1. Optimising assets

   The Trust divided assets into 7 sectors-financial, built, social, human, natural assets, cultural and political assets. The Trust advocates an assets-based approach to development where the community highlights and focuses on developing its assets rather than on emphasising its defects in order to attract state aid. It recommends that communities own manage and ensure access to the 7 capital types in order to mobilise them for local development

2. Achieving fairness for everyone

   Echoing resilience theory the Charter embraces the notion of diversity within community as a key aspect. Concepts such as openness, inclusiveness and equity are emphasised. The vibrant community works to redress poverty and disadvantage and promotes the representation of all sectors of the community in its structures.

3. Empowering local governance

   The charter emphasises the importance of devolved community led decision making as a key feature of a health community. The community should have the capacity to participate in decision-making and the Government needs to revitalise both elected and participative governance structures, such as parish councils, and to legislate and support this.

4. Increasing resources for community benefit

   The charter states that the sustainable rural community is well-linked and networked both locally and internationally and is able to access funding and other supports from the State, the EU and private sources. It also recommends that it is in a position to run its own businesses in essential areas such as energy and food production. It recommends that services such as primary care for the elderly be handed over to the community with state funding intact. Communities should also be able to raise money locally.

5. Enjoying locally relevant services

   The charter stresses the importance of equity in service provision for rural areas. They stress that certain services are essential and should be available wherever people live. These include water, electricity, telecoms and broadband. Access to good and health food, a community meeting space, education services, benefits, health care and security are all basic rights and must be guaranteed. However these services may be provided by the State or co-produced with the state and other providers. It is important whatever the provider that those communities have a say in the planning and delivery of that service.

6. Enriching social capital and well-being

   The charter places emphasis on the importance of volunteering and local social action in a community. It also states that a welcoming ethos to outsiders and newcomers is important. Indicators include number of visits to neighbours, how safe people feel, the number of local businesses in operation and access to care locally.

7. Valuing local distinctiveness

   Using local environments as a learning platform, issues of academic, political and social concern through the lens of the local are seen as distinguishing features to be valued and utilised for sustainable local development. The Charter also places great emphasis on language and music in generating and maintaining a 'sense of place'.

8. Developing Reliable Infrastructure

   The charter emphasises the importance of community involvement in developing key infrastructure such as telecoms, broadband, transport services, energy, water and affordable housing. The charter also highlights the importance of renewable energy sources for local amenities and the possible ownership by the community of the energy production capacity.

9. Enhancing Environmental Capacity

   The Commission states that the sustainable rural community will be able to adapt to the low carbon economy of the future and will not only reduce its carbon footprint but will be in a position to produce its own energy and benefit from the retention of local bio-diversity.

10. Supporting a Dynamic Local Economy

   The charter emphasises the importance of the local economy to the area itself and to the wider economy as the source of food and fuel production and as the site for recreation and resource management. Sustainable tourism is also a valuable sector to be developed for local employment

The charter set out three enabling factors that are pre-requisites for successful rural communities:

1. Developing the capacity of local people, agencies and organisations

2. Enhancing community assets of all kinds

3. Effective community-led planning and strong local governance.

Aspects of this model are included in the questionnaires developed in fulfilment of this thesis.

3.12.2 The Transition Handbook, 2008

For Hopkins (2008), the author of The Transition Handbook, and the Transition Movement, *local is inevitable* and developing local resilience is the key to unlocking future social and economic security. As oil prices increase relentlessly due to increased world demand and dwindling supply, and as climate change threatens the extinction of the human race, society will be left with no choice; we cannot sustain the oil-fuelled globalised world trade system that operates now. The twin threats of peak oil and climate chaos means that oil will become too expensive and its use too damaging to remain the fuel of choice in our world. Without cheap oil, we in the West will be unable to continue to import cheap food and we will have to find an alternative energy source. We need to grow our own food, supply our own energy and provide our own transport. Society must move from the global to the local and the local must once again become the centre of production as well as consumption. Local is not just desirable, it is imperative.

For Hopkins (2008), a key to a sustainable future is the devolution of power back to communities. One vehicle for this at present, particularly in the UK, is the Transition movement. In order to achieve local production, communities need to be able to organise. The Transition movement as championed by Hopkins is a practical, hands-on attempt at grassroots level to allow people to come together and develop ways of growing and supplying local

food, localising energy production, exploring transport options and experimenting with building techniques that use locally-sourced materials in a way that builds local resilience against future shocks.

Dependence on the global market to meet basic needs in food and energy has made society brittle and dependent, enriching the few at the expense of the many. Transition is about moving from the global to the local through engaging the forces of social capital for local economic gain.

Transition to the local, in Hopkins (2008) view, demands that we undergo an evolution as a whole society and move to a different type of social structure with a different set of values and vision to the one that operates now. Echoing Meadows (2008), he says that we need to operate at the higher levels of the system or at the highest leverage points and focus on the visions or goals in society

> the evolution scenarios could provide a vision of an end goal so enticing that society would want to engage in the transition towards them ... Our best chance of dealing with climate change and peak oil will emerge from our ability to engage people in seeing the transition ... as an adventure, something in which they can invest their hope and their energy … a creative, engaging, playful process, wherein we support our communities through the loss of the familiar and inspire and create a new lower energy infrastructure which is ultimately an improvement on the present.
>
> (Hopkins 2008, p. 50)

Transition initiatives are based on 4 key assumptions

1. That life in a world with less energy consumption is inevitable and that we should plan for that eventuality
2. That at present our communities lack the resilience to enable them to cope with the dramatic fall in energy availability
3. That we must act collectively and with urgency in order to meet these challenges
4. That our collective efforts will be fruitful and that we can 'proactively design our energy descent, we can build ways of living that are more connected, more enriching and that recognise the biological limits of our planet (Hopkins 2008, p. 134).

The next step is the adaptation of society to less-less oil means less consumption at least for the developed West-less shopping, less travel, less choice, less consumerism. The trade-off in terms of lifestyle is that a society with less oil will be more self-reliant and more skilled and

resilient as people re-learn how to grow food and to organise themselves using fewer resources. It will become clear that the most sustainable scale of living is at the local level. A set of indicators of local sustainability that focuses on local resource production, organisation and governance is proposed and was incorporated into the methodology for this thesis.

3.12.3 The Community Resilience Manual

A resource for rural recovery and resilience was developed and designed by the Centre for Community Enterprise in British Columbia, Canada in 2000 and was based on practical work in a number of 'test sites' and has been used by many communities since that time. Its aim is to assist rural communities in decision-making and resource-mobilisation for local development. The motivation for the publication was based on rural decline and the collapse of manufacturing in British Columbia (BC) and other areas. It is an attempt to build local resilience in the face of rural unemployment caused by the stress and uncertainty of the global market which has undermined the traditional production base of forestry, fishing, mining and agriculture.

The authors at the Centre for Community Enterprise in British Columbia, Canada (2000) define a resilient community as

> one that takes intentional action to enhance the personal and collective capacity of its citizens and institutions to respond to, and influence the course of social and economic change.
> (Centre for Community Enterprise 2000, Introduction)

In their opinion, government has devolved more responsibility down to community level to develop and implement strategies to deal with economic downturn and that this presents communities with both a threat and an opportunity. The authors (2000) also believe that as circumstances change that communities need to evolve and develop new skills, structures and capacities to meet new challenges:

> In short current research supports the idea that resilience is not a fixed quality within communities. Rather, it is a quality that can be developed and strengthened over time. As resilience is strengthened, the capacity to intentionally mobilise its people and resources to respond to, and influence, social and economic change is enhanced.
> (Centre for Community Enterprise 2000, Introduction)

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The *Community Resilience Manual* (Centre for Community Enterprise 2000) then outlines its approach to development. The authors believe that community resilience draws on the inter-linkages and inter-dependence of the various sectors and members of a community. It is therefore focused on the need to improve and strengthen the capacity of these organisations and individuals, encouraging inter-dependence, self-reliance and sustainability as strategies to deal with the stresses imposed by globalisation.

Based on their research, the authors outline their thesis regarding how successful communities work:

- These communities take a multi-functional approach to development incorporating economic, social and environmental considerations
- They use strategic planning and other tools to maximise time and resources invested
- They develop plans that merge social and economic goals and build capacity
- They are able to mobilise around key priority areas
- They are able to mobilise human and financial assets and can leverage external resources
- They have established a critical mass of co-operating organisations through which local initiatives are implemented and evaluated

(Centre for Community Enterprise 2000, pp. 1-8/9)

This philosophy ties in with the concept of neo-endogenous or networked development, where local initiatives are backed up and supported by a pro-active state. It also underlines the need for area-based development programmes to include pro-active action targeted at raising the social and cultural capital of a given area, particularly a disadvantaged area that has been subjected to shock (Horgan 2008; Shucksmith 2000). Local resilience-building efforts must be supported by an enabling state. A combination of endogenous or bottom-up processes combined with exogenous top-down factors leads to *neo-endogenous or networked development*.

Because Ferbane could be defined as an ex-resource town, like many of those within the British Colombian context (Powe and Hart 1997) the framework appeared to be transferable. I also believed this to be the most comprehensive model because they identify 23 characteristics of a resilient community. They maintain that this list is not exhaustive but were chosen because they have the strongest direct relationship to resilience theory and practice,

given current knowledge about how successful communities work. The characteristics incorporated 4 important themes that I believed were useful in the Ferbane context:

1. Collaborative Planning
2. Leadership
3. Social Capital
4. Social Economy

What it lacked was a future orientation towards transformation especially transitioning to a low carbon future; a vital local and global issue. In order to include this dimension, I incorporated indicators from Carnegie (2007) and Hopkins (2008) to spark a discussion about possible future scenarios with stakeholders in Ferbane. I also sought a tool that would allow me to move beyond snapshots at one particular period of time and that would give a greater appreciation of temporal issues in measuring resilience (ODI 2016).

3.13 Discussion

Within resilience frameworks, Ferbane may be seen as a *complex adaptive system* (Powe and Hart 2017; Walker and Salt 2006) which goes through periods of growth and decline but must constantly evolve to make the most of its particular endowments and resources within a changing global economy. This is quite typical of situations in resource-towns, or places whose economy is largely dependent on resource extraction.

For resilience theorists, the greatest challenge facing resource towns is their *lack* of resilience as they depend so heavily on one driver and are open to the vagaries of an increasingly globalised economy and regulatory environment. In the terminology of resilience, by 2000, Ferbane was at an advanced stage of the adaptive cycle and had entered the *conservation* phase, displaying rigidity, risk aversion and low resilience (Gunderson and Holling 2002; Powe and Hart 2017). Eventually 'structural vulnerability provokes crisis and transformation' (Powe and Hart 2017, p. 34), as places become too dependent on one entity. Crisis or *release* occurs in resource towns when the market shifts away from the resource in question, decisions are made (usually by people external to the area) to scale-back on extraction, investment moves out, unemployment results and physical decay occurs in the infrastructure. The challenge at this point is to ensure that the systems operating in the area can assimilate disturbance without crossing a threshold into an alternative, and perhaps less 'friendly' stable state, resisting external disturbance and continuing to provide goods and services essential for a satisfactory quality of life for local people (Rees 2010, p. 32).

As seen earlier many writers point to the seemingly 'natural fit' between resilience building and the local or community level. Most definitions of resilience reflect an implicit understanding that 'community' is the appropriate level at which resilience should be conceptualised, built and measured. This construct envisages community as a system that can lose, develop or transform into a resilient entity. However, for this to occur, changes must take place at the higher, external level or scale where decisions regarding local development are made.

The definition of resilience proposed in this thesis is that resilience is not about bouncing back to a former state but about the capacity for adaptation and, crucially, for transformation to a better 'new normal' This definition of resilience as transformation proposes that the resilient community has a political voice, can challenge existing power structures and standard approaches and practices. Community resilience, therefore, within these frameworks is seen as the extent to which communities can become empowered to effectively combine capital, capacity and collective action in order to achieve transformation to a desirable altered state.

An important issue here is that of *resilience-building as process*; transformation does not occur overnight. This thesis tells a story of resilience-building that unfolded over a 20 year period, tracking and tracing the development of resilience in Ferbane as community members there engaged in a process of collaborative planning; and in that process built new institutions, forged new relationships and developed networks as they dealt with a series of economic and social crises. The longitudinal nature of enquiry allowed adequate time to assess how emerging systems and structures coped with shock and evolved to deal with new pressures as they arose. The linkages between collaborative planning and resilience building are here underlined; in fact the thesis demonstrates that the process of collaborative planning is in many ways as important, if not more important, than the actual plan itself as it is within this collaborative approach that new forms of social relationships are constructed, that place is reimagined and that the conditions for plan elaboration are mutually created by the parties involved.

This study challenges the notion that resilience is of little relevance to the social world; it also adds credence to the notion of resilience as an evolutionary process. Resilience-building through such processes as IAP is not about preparing communities for readiness to short-term shock and disaster, enabling them to 'bounce-back' to a former state ; rather it is about enhancing the learning capacity of communities, their ability to prepare and to adapt to

inevitable crises and, most importantly, empowering communities to progress to a new state through innovation and transformation.

This thesis also challenges any notion of resilience-building as a depoliticised activity; collaborative planning is an inherently political activity; challenging those with political and administrative power to share that power and decision-making with community stakeholders. And reciprocally, in Davoudi's view (2012) the 'resilience turn' signifies that planning theory should be prepared for innovative transformation because resilience proposes a paradigm shift: challenging planners to move from instrumentalist views of the environment toward approaches that bring ecological values to the forefront and creating the necessary linkages between socio-economic, ecological, cultural and political phenomena. Collaborative planning as resilience building offers these transformative possibilities.

At this point in the dissertation the theoretical foundations of Collaborative Planning and Resilience have been explored and the linkages to the Ferbane IAP have been established. The next chapter will explore how these theoretical frameworks were applied in practice in Ferbane over a 20-year period commencing in 2000 and will explain why approaching the unfolding story as a case-study, using an action-research methodology, was judged to be both feasible and appropriate.

Chapter 4. Methodology

And with the best leaders, when the work is done, the task accomplished, the people will say , 'we have done this ourselves'.

Lao-tzu, China 4000 BC

4.1   Introduction

Having discussed the theoretical underpinnings and the literature relevant to collaborative planning and resilience, this chapter presents the methodology used in the production of this dissertation. A case-study approach based on an action-research philosophy and practice is proposed as the most relevant and suitable to the study of unfolding resilience within the Ferbane context.

Between 2000-2010, I was employed as a programme specialist with Tipperary Institute, engaged in education and development initiatives with rural communities, and worked as part of a team in the design and implementation of a system of participatory local planning that later became known as Integrated Area Planning or IAP. One of the first places to develop an Integrated Area Plan was Ferbane. Commencing in 2001, this plan was prepared in a collaborative way with local people, facilitated by Tipperary Institute and funded and supported by a range of state organisations. This IAP led to the rolling out of development projects in Ferbane that continues to the present. This thesis is based on data collected and lessons learned from the implementation and review of that process over almost twenty years.

4.2   Relevance of the Study

The Ferbane case-study is relevant to the fields of collaborative planning and of resilience. Towns such as Ferbane, dependent as they are on the exploitation of natural resources (in this case peat), need constantly to adapt to changing circumstances, often dictated by the forces of the state and the market. By the early 2000s, it was clear that the economic base of Ferbane was set to change, with the announcement of the gradual winding-down of peat-fired electricity production, the mainstay of the economy. An over-reliance on one source of employment led to crisis, as is common in many resource towns; yet its stock of human and creative assets enabled it to recreate a new vision and a new transformative energy. Within resilience frameworks, Ferbane may be seen as a *complex adaptive system* (Walker and Salt 2006) which goes through periods of growth and decline, but must constantly evolve to make the most of its particular endowments and resources within a changing global economy. This

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is quite typical of occurrences in resource-towns, or places whose economy is largely dependent on resource extraction.

For resilience theorists, as explored earlier, the greatest challenge facing resource towns is their *lack* of resilience as they depend so heavily on one driver and are open to the vagaries of an increasingly globalised economy and regulatory environment. In the terminology of resilience, by 2000, Ferbane was at an advanced stage of the adaptive cycle and had entered the *conservation* phase, displaying rigidity, risk aversion and low resilience (Gunderson and Holling 2002; Powe and Hart 2017). Eventually 'structural vulnerability provokes crisis and transformation' (Powe and Hart 2017, p. 34), as places become too dependent on one entity. Crisis or *release* occurs in resource towns when the market shifts away from the resource in question, decisions are made (usually by people external to the area) to scale-back on extraction, investment moves out, unemployment results and physical decay occurs in the infrastructure. The challenge at this point is to ensure that the systems operating in the area can assimilate disturbance without crossing a threshold into an alternative, and perhaps less 'friendly' stable state, resisting external disturbance and continuing to provide goods and services essential for a satisfactory quality of life for local people (Rees 2010. p. 32).

In this case, the Ferbane community and other key stakeholders sought to intervene to prevent Ferbane entering a 'release' phase or period of decline. The response championed by the community was the development and rolling out of a range of projects to adapt and ultimately transform the economy from peat to an emphasis on more sustainable enterprises such as food production. Collaborative planners such as Innes and Booher (1990) maintain that processes like collaborative planning assist complex systems to become complex *adaptive* systems, as the creation of a new set of heuristics can replace old, failing systems. The new systems and institutions that are essential for resilience emerge from such collaborative processes. Again using resilience theory, collaborative planning theorists present the case for a shared sense of strategic purpose and a coherence in governance (as might be offered through IAP) where the private sector, government and civil-society work together during the precarious 'conservation' phase in order to prevent system release or collapse. Any successfully adapting system must have good feedback mechanisms from its environment as well as good internal communication systems or distributed knowledge among its nodes (Innes and Booher 2000, p. 5). Collaborative planning is a way to establish new networks among the key players in a system and increase the distribution of knowledge among these players, and so itself becomes a component in the resilience paradigm.

Again Ferbane demonstrates that collaborative planning can offer 'reorganisation without decline' (Powe and Hart 2017, p. 24). The fortunes of resource towns have a tendency to follow adaptive cycles, therefore 'it is crucial to understand the dynamics of such cycles, perhaps planning to avoid periods of release/creative destruction' (Powe and Hart 2017, p. 20). Studying the application of collaborative planning principles in order to arrest a destructive cycle of decline with one that builds local resilience in a town like Ferbane can assist other towns to emulate what has happened and for theorists to appreciate the co-application of collaborative planning within a resilience framework.

4.3 Case Studies

On examination of the literature and considering the time-frame and the data available to me, it became clear that a case-study approach to telling the story of the development of resilience in Ferbane was appropriate. Morland *et al.* (1992) define a case-study as an in-depth, multi-faceted investigation using a variety of research techniques of a single social phenomenon. The advantages of the case-study approach are that:

1. It permits the grounding of observations and concepts about social action in natural settings studied at close hand

2. It provides information from a number of sources over a period of time

3. It facilitates 'ground-truthing' by gaining an understanding of an issue from the point of view of the actors themselves, so that the researchers claims are grounded in the claims and experiences of those who make them.

4. It gives a holistic picture of the phenomenon studied from various points of view allowing the observer to examine social action in its most complete form, exploring the 'how' and the 'why'.

5. The researcher can examine the ebb and flow of social life over time and track changes as they occur.

6. Case studies have been important in the generation of new theory and ideas in the social sciences.

7. The case study can embrace the complexity and plurality of the social world and reveal details that might never have otherwise been considered.

For Morland *et al.* (1992), a case-study is useful for those who search for explanation and has an epistemological advantage over other methods as a basis for 'naturalistic generalisation' (Introduction). According to Stake (2005) , case-studies involve a full and thorough

knowledge and exploration of the *particular.* In developing a case-study it is necessary to be both intuitive and empirical and to make 'naturalistic generalisations' about a given situation arrived at by recognising similarity among issues within different contexts; they are thus a product of general and specific experience. Various ways of knowing, including tacit knowledge, are recognised and researchers use their own ordinary, everyday experience to interpret the knowledge they create in the research process.

In Stake's view, case-studies are down-to-earth, attention-holding ways of approaching research, while epistemologically in harmony with the researcher's lived experience. They are based on 'natural experience' acquired through personal involvement with the issue in hand. Within case-studies, tacit knowledge, or knowledge that cannot be easily accessed except through experience and reflection is key. Each person has great stores of tacit knowledge from which to develop new understandings. Accessing such knowledge can only happen through immersion or experience. When we need to understand something, to extend our experience or broadly to test our knowledge, case-studies are beneficial. With case-studies, the researcher is left with more to pay attention to, rather than less. Its best use may be in adding to existing experience and human understanding around a particular topic.

In fulfilling the criteria set out by Morland *et al.* (1992) and Stake (2005), it was possible for me to study the case of Ferbane over a 20-year period from a multiplicity of sources and, given my personal immersion in the place and topic, to undertake this close-up, observing the 'ebb and flow' of events, and tracking changes as they occurred. Working with so much data over such an extended period has allowed me to develop a holistic picture, observed largely from the standpoint of the participants with whom I had the most exposure.

4.4   Mixed Methods Research

Mixed Methods Research works particularly well for a case-study approach as it allows the researcher to take the rich empirical data yielded from case-studies and apply both quantitative and qualitative methods to the data collection. It therefore combines the specific *positivistic* elements of quantitative research with the specific *constructivist* elements of qualitative research (Kitchenman *et al.* 2010). Mixed Methods Research, in this case, included documentary analysis, qualitative approaches and quantitative study. This combination of methods, spanning an 18-year period, provided me with a rich, complex and varied set of data to analyse in order to best fulfil the overall research purpose. Following Plano Clarke and Ivankova (2016) it involved the integration and mixing of methods in order to gain a greater

understanding of the issue in hand. For this thesis, I used a mix of documentary analysis, qualitative data collection and analysis, and quantitive research.

4.4.1   Documentary analysis

Following Gibson and Brown (2011), the interrogation of documents may occur in conjunction with other forms of data collection. For Gross (2018, p. 6), documentary *analysis* is a form of qualitative research that uses a systematic procedure to scrutinise documentary evidence and answer specfic research questions:

> Similar to other methods of analysis in qualitative research, document analysis requires repeated review examination and interpretation of the data in order to gain meaning and empirical knowledge of the construct being studied. … when used in triangulation documents can help corroborate or refute, elucidate or expand on findings across other data sources, which helps guard against bias.
>
> (Gross 2018, p. 6)

Therefore, and following the guidance of Coffey (2014), I made a distinction between those documents that existed prior to and not because of the research and documents that were produced explicitly for the research (see table 1, below) In Coffey's (2014) view, such a distinction, however, should not distract us from recognizing the characteristics (and therefore the analytic potential) of all documents as constituting social science data or evidence:

> Reading documents and making sense of their contents requires readers to bring their own assumptions and understandings to bear. The culturally competent reader will 'know' how to use documentary sources to create the organizational reality they purport to describe. Knowledgeable readers will know something of the cultural features of the organization or cultural setting, and thus will be well placed to use what Mannheim called – appropriately – the 'documentary method'.
>
> (Coffey 2014, p. 8)

In the Ferbane case my familiarity with the area, with the project and with the participants afforded me access to documents that other people could not. It also allowed me to interrogate the documents as a 'culturally competent reader', familiar with the issues at hand. My store of tacit knowledge of Ferbane enabled me to develop new understanding, for example, on observing the development of resilience in the area over an extended period. As stated earlier, such knowledge can only happen through immersion or experience. I was thus able to 'read' and interpret the documents with greater insight and knowledge than a researcher who was unfamiliar.

4.4.2 *Qualitative data collection and analysis*

The emphasis for me in my overall approach both to the development of the IAP and in researching it was on participation and empowerment; giving voice to local people as actors. This could only have happened by affirming the value of the participatory process, seeking participants own accounts and interpretations of their experiences and *prior* to any interpretation. This arises from a conviction, common within community development work and in communicative ethics, that by framing well-structured questions within the right context those who are the target of any enquiry are best positioned to inform, analyse and ultimately change their own situations. This approach is not politically neutral; to believe and to promote this approach is to believe in the intrinsic value of community self-determination, often resisted by top-down forces (Chambers 1983). Power can be expressed through these conversations where, for example, participants were presented with an opportunity to evaluate the performance of the state and their commitment or not to local voice. For example, it becomes clear where the state did not follow through on commitments made.

I was able to develop themes for the Qualitative research based on documents already produced; for example the template produced by Fox-Timmons (2007) was again employed by me in 2010 and because participants were used to participating in interviews about the IAP and had been stimulated to talk about it earlier, they were in a position to talk fluently and easily and more analytically about the project when I met them in 2013.

> That is, the text is used to furnish indications or provide physical traces of what the reader interprets or understands as the social reality. Thus readers will read into the text what might reasonably be assumed to be the case, given a shared stock of tacit knowledge about this organization or social setting or intimate life and how they typically function. Typical cases are interpreted in terms of their typical manifestations, and their typical rhetorical representations. Thus documentary realities are built, consolidated and confirmed.
>
> (Coffey 2014, p. 359)

Communicative ethics as proposed by Healey (1997) following Habermas, understands that language is the foundational component of society. Dialogue becomes the core means of creating knowledge and understanding; it is through such processes of dialogue that both knowledge and structure are co-created. This allows for conditions of cultural difference and recognises multiple epistemologies. The research instruments chosen are informed by these values. The complexity of the issues under study demand this.

Miller and Glassner (2010) argue that gathering information about social worlds is achievable through interviews as evidence both of 'what happens' in these social worlds and of how individuals make sense of themselves, their experiences and their place within these (Miller and Glassner 2010, p. 52) Semi-structured interviews allow participants to express their views in their own terms (Bernard 1988; Pretty *et al.* 1995). They allow for a less constrained conversation between interviewer and participant, for new issues to arise, following new leads if they emerge. In these interviews, the interviewer can delve more deeply into issues and explore the matters of most interest to a particular participant. In the Ferbane case, it allowed interviews with the school principal for example to dwell on matters appropriate to education while the local shop-owner could talk about the business environment in Ferbane. In this way, if properly conducted, semi-structured interviews can be empowering for the participant as they can talk about the matters they are most comfortable with and each can speak to their own truth; in this way the interviewer can mine a richer seam.

For Bernard (1988), semi-structured interviews are encounters with informants directed towards understanding participants' perspectives on their lives, experiences or situations as expressed in their own words. They are good for liberating the views of interested informed participants. If properly framed, questions can form the basis of a *conversation between equals* rather than a formal question and answer exchange. For the FAO (1994) participants should also be free to steer the conversation, ask questions of the interviewer and the encounter should help to develop a relationship between the interviewer and the participant.

The disadvantage of these types of interviews is that they are time-consuming and labour-intensive in their collection, compilation and analysis. This indeed proved to be the case in Ferbane

4.4.3 *Quantitative methods*

In Cresswell and Plano Clark (2011), quantitative methods are used to examine the relationship between variables by collecting and analysing numeric data, whereas qualitative methods explore individual's experience within that phenomenon, collecting and analysing narrative and text expressed in words and images to explore a number of broad, open-ended questions. However, because qualitative data gives us the view of only a few people in-depth, the ability to generalise about the case in hand may be lost. The quantitative data collected in 2018 served as a useful update to the data collected earlier.

At this point in time, a new development plan was in preparation so the FDG needed information from the general public to feed into that process. By 2018 it was important for me to collect data that not only was up to date, but also reached out to a wider public in Ferbane. This was the first time since 2001 that the general public, rather than just those involved in the IAP were consulted. It was time to involve the general public again, not just the members of FDG and associate groups. Following Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), there was a need at this point to develop, implement and evaluate the programme, therefore a public attitudinal survey at the end of my research was ideal as a method of triangulation and complementarity.

Triangulation in this case (Greene *et al.* 1989) provides opportunities for corroboration and convergence of results derived through research methods earlier employed. Complementarity 'seeks elaboration, enhancement, illustration, clarification of the results from another' (Greene *et al.* 1989, p. 259). The surveys at the end of the project illustrated the impact of the IAP project in the eyes of the general public of Ferbane. They also highlighted new issues and challenges in developing local resilience and the degree of public interest and awareness of issues pertaining to local development. For example, the surveys revealed relatively high levels of social capital as measured in people's willingness to participate in and contribute to local development. It also demonstrated general public support for development initiatives in the town. Crucially they also flagged an interest in moving to a new phase for the area, centering on the green economy.

4.5   My Role in the Process

Over the period 2001-2019, I played a number of roles and was involved in the preparation of a number of documents relating to the project. My role changed over time; at various stages, I acted as *facilitator* and produced reports such as the first Review Report in 2003. I acted as *team leader* for a project funded by the Carnegie Trust, reporting in 2009. In 2010, I acted as the *evaluator* of the planning process, and used this data also in my Thesis as I had embarked on this PhD journey and in my role as *researcher*, I also conducted ten in-depth, semi-structured interviews as a primary source of data. By 2018, the Ferbane Development Group had embarked on another planning phase and invited myself and Ciaran Lynch to prepare and present a Community Survey and a Business Survey to feed into the 2019 Ferbane Community Action Plan. All of the documents produced between 2001-2019 were used as the data sources and were analysed as part of this PhD thesis and may be presented as follows, in table 1, depending on who conducted the studies and for what purpose.

(a)   Data collected by others for the IAP Project

YEAR	TITLE	AUTHOR	METHODOLOGY	WORD COUNT
2001	Ferbane Development Plan	Ciaran Lynch Tipperary Institute	Documentary Analysis	11,997
2007	Evaluation of the Ferbane Development Process	Fox-Timmons and Associates	Documentary Analysis	3,900
2009	The Integrated Area Planning (IAP) Process in West Offaly Phase 3 Report Vol 3: Ferbane	Fox-Timmons and Associates	Documentary Analysis	20,995
2019	Ferbane Community Action Plan and Supporting documents	Ferbane Development Group	Documentary Analysis	7,500 (approx.)

(b)   Data collected by me for the IAP Project

Year	TITLE	AUTHOR	METHODOLOGY	WORD COUNT
2003	Ferbane Review Report	Catherine Corcoran	Qualitative Data Analysis	1,500
2009	Final Report to Carnegie UK Trust	Catherine Corcoran	Qualitative Data Analysis	5,453
2018	Community Survey	Catherine Corcoran and Ciaran Lynch	Quantitative Data	5,461
2018	Business Survey	Catherine Corcoran and Ciaran Lynch	Quantitative Data	2,160

(c)   Data Collected by me for this Thesis

Year	TITLE	AUTHOR	METHODOLOGY	WORD COUNT
2010	Integrated Area Planning: Evaluating the Process in Offaly 2010	Catherine Corcoran	Qualitative Data collection and Evaluation report	9,472
2013	Semi-Structured Interviews	Catherine Corcoran	Qualitative Data	44,750

Table 1:   Details of the collection of Data utilised in this Project

4.5.1 *Insider and outsider*

In my position as a researcher, I was both an 'insider' and an 'outsider'. The issue of bias must be acknowleged: I was, by turn, a facilitator, participant and observer, close to the issue for 20 years or so, as an insider. At the same time, I was from a third level institute, a *researcher* not located in the area, remote from and unaffected by the decisions that impacted on people there. In Tanner's (2008) view, the vast majority of social science research involves some kind of insider-outsider relationship. The issue may not be whether an insider or an outsider has some kind of monopolistic or privileged access to social truths, but to consider their distinctive and interactive roles in the process of truth-making.

Without the presence of my colleagues and myself, it is quite likely that the IAP in Ferbane would not have happened. It is likely that some development intervention would have occurred, but it would not have been IAP. So in initiating the IAP, I was part of the team of *social actors* who deliberatively shaped the process, therefore arguably bound in as an insider. However, at other points, I was an evaluator of the IAP , standing apart and appraising it , therefore acting as *outsider*. At other points I acted as a facilitator, encouraging the development group to set new targets and goals, thus acting as both insider and outsider. There is thus a shifting continuum in such a situation between insider-ness and outsider-ness (McNess *et al.* 2015).

For most action-researchers, there is a distinct part of the task that will always deliver more attention to the research than those who are impacted by it; at most stages of the IAP project in Ferbane, the steering group members were invariably more interested in the achievement of the development *task-in-hand* and achieving the development goals set in the IAP than the process of getting to that goal; as facilitator/researcher I would have deliberately sought out and indeed created opportunities to gather information and research on the IAP itself. As an insider, I had privileged access to people and information that others did not. For Hellawell (in Mcness *et al.* 2015), empathy, or the capacity to recognise and share thoughts and feelings that are being experienced by others, may be the most useful trait of a researcher in such circumstances. In my research this was important especially when circumstances were tough on people in Ferbane for example during the recession, learning to ask different questions and have different expectations; knowing when to push and when to back off certain sensitive issues related to the economy or the impact of the recession on individual people. Action research requires us to distance ourselves and yet become immersed; not complete observers nor complete participants but operating in a *third space,* occupying both ends of the continuum as circumstances dictate.

Reflexivity and attending to the context of knowledge construction at all stages of the research was important. In reflecting on myself as researcher, I sought to acknowledge and examine my assumptions and preconceptions, particularly in relation to the impact of the IAP on the community in question. Owens (2007) explains that reflexivity demands that researchers consider *why* and *how* we use particular research tools and methods. At all times I attempted to find a balance between the research aims and furthering and refining the IAP project. This is congruent with participatory action research. As part of the team implementing the IAP I had to be cogniscant that I was seen in many ways as the facilitator and I had to be aware that the respondent participants in the research were also participants in the IAP project. This may have made participants more positively disposed towards the research, since they were also involved in its implementation. It also meant that they may have been too polite to be overly critical of the project to me. I attempted to counter this by the use of material gathered by other researchers (Fox-Timmons 2007, 2009), using survey data gathered anonymously in surveys (2018) and by asking probing, critical questions in my own research.

4.6   Action Research

In the 2008 publication *Integrated Area Planning: A Collaborative Approach to Decision-making,* the Tipperary Institute team (Lynch *et al.*) defined IAP as follows:

> IAP is an empowering, practical and participatory process to collect, analyse and compile information while developing the skills and structures needed to prepare and implement an inclusive and multi-faceted plan for a defined geographical area (Lynch *et al.* 2008, p. 24)

Lynch *et al.* (2008) articulated a set of related principles at that time. These were:

1. The plan will be developed using an action planning model.
   The plan, and the process that will be undertaken to develop the plan, will seek to enable the local community to identify, analyse and address the needs of their community. It will seek to build local capacity and to equip community members with the knowledge, skills and motivation to mobilise community, state and private effort in addressing the development of their area.

2. Integrated Area Planning assumes a commitment to working in an inclusive and participatory way

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The process for developing an IAP will engage actively with all sectors in the local community. The working group involved should be diverse, inclusive and committed to a partnership approach to local development.

3. The IAP should take an integrated approach to sustainable planning
   An IAP should incorporate a balance between social, economic and environmental needs and measures. The process will endeavour to ensure that the outcomes are equitable, realistic and sustainable.

4. Development plans should be clear and accessible
   The document produced should be written in clear and understandable language. It will present any profile of the area and any results of surveys in full and in summary, with suporting documentation in a format that will facilitate reference, action and evaluation by state agencies, local community and development organisations.

5. The planning process should seek to develop structures for implementation.
   The process will seek to engage state agencies fully, at local and county level, in inputting to the plan and taking responsibility for relevant parts of its implementation in partnership with the local community. It should seek to develop clear visions, goals and objectives with actions clearly linked to the attainment of agreed outcomes.

6. The process should be committed to ongoing communication
   As each stage of the IAP is advanced, regular communication will be required with the local community and the agencies involved. Decision-makers must find ways of working effectively with local people, if proper decisions are to be made. Such mutual collaboration not only ensures better outcomes, but allows communities to develop better working relationships with traditional power-holders and allows both parties to address issues in a proactive, non-confrontational way (Lynch *et al.* 2008, pp. 24-25).

Congruent with the values espoused above, the research for this thesis followed an action research framework where the action steps within the IAP project in Ferbane were informed by parallel integrated research. The 10 sources of data used in this thesis were directly connected to the IAP process as it rolled out in Ferbane from 2001 until the present. The research cycle had its roots in 'action research'; a framework that bridges the gap between theory and practice.

This was first conceptualised by Kurt Lewin in 1946 when he proposed that advances in social theory and social change might be achieved simultaneously or 'no actions without research, no research without action'. Action research was defined by Carr and Kemmins (1986) as:

> systematic reflexive enquiry, undertaken by the research participants to change a social situation or improve existing practice, in order to improve effectiveness.
> (Carr and Kemmins 1986, p. 162)

Put simply by McKernan (1996, p. 3) the aim of action research is to solve the immediate and pressing day-to-day problems of practitioners rather than those of researchers.

Building on this the participatory 'turn' in research for development purposes of the 1980s and 1990s (pioneeered by Robert Chambers 1983), also emphasised research as an instrument of social change. For Chambers (1983), confronting the challenges of the complex reality of the lives of poor people requires a revolutionary new professionalism; one that is underpinned by a methodological pluralism and a research approach that aims to transform and reverse power relations. To do better, we need to *know* better and this means attempting to see and experience poverty in the way that the poor do. In order for positive development to occur, the 'last' (or the rural poor) must be placed first, and must be given the power to speak in their own language and in their own way to the powerful. Fundamental to this new professionalism are facilitation skills, reflexivity, ground-truthing and respectful personal behaviour. Chambers' (1983) work spawned a new era of participatory reseach and participatory planning in development.

Marrying many of these concepts is that of Participatory Action Research (McTaggart 1997); a broad 'church' or 'family' of research approaches. Following earlier traditions of 'emancipatory' research (Humphries 1998; Maguire 1987) and 'research as advocacy' (Paine 1985), McTaggart (1997) challenges us to ask the questions 'what difference has this research made to improving the lives of those who have participated? What has changed as a result of the research? Who owns the research?'

Participatory Action Research (McTaggart 1997) operates under a set of principles which I have summarised as follows:

1. The research should contribute to changing the culture where it occurs to one that encourages people to work together in a spirit of rationality, coherence and justice towards building a better life.
2. The research should actively break down any power relations that exist between the 'researcher' and the 'researched. When status and power differentials exist among participants, these must be suspended and resisted in the course of the work.
3. Expanding participation for social improvement and people working collectively to change their language, modes of action and social relationships. Individual action researchers change themselves as they work, support others in their own efforts to change and together work to change institutions and society.
4. Being explicit about collecting data in a way that signals that change is happening.
5. Enabling people to develop their own understandings and critiques on the issues the research brings up
6. Establishing self-critical communities of people participating in all phases of the research process –planning, action, observation and reflection
7. Development of the self and of the group.

Paine (1985), in his work on the role of anthropology as advocacy, challenges the researcher to act as a 'translator' or 'mediator' between those who make planning policy and those impacted by it. Advocacy was an integral part of the IAP project; the IAP project was a deliberative process, designed to make statutory planning a more participatory and democratic exercise. In this way, the project itself (IAP) becomes deliberately normative, linked to the social values of the researcher (Greenbank 2003) or how the researcher would wish society to operate. In such a context, research methods cannot be value-free in their application. Therefore researchers need to adopt a reflexive approach and attempt to be open and honest about how their values influence their research. The interpretive understanding of human experience (Denzin 1992) recognises that knowledge is socially constructed and that human beings interaction with the world, and their interpretations of that interaction, is worthy of study. A more radical view of the research process is one that fits with Denzin's (1982, p. 18) desire for a social science that is committed 'up-front' to issues of social justice, equity, non-violence, peace and universal human rights. For Maguire (1987) research must be grounded

in, and take seriously, the struggles of those who are subjects of the enquiry and not simply to fulfil the researchers needs and expectations.

Following Denzin (1982), serving the community in which research is carried out rather than serving the community of knowledge producers and policy makers was an integral part of the action research . It was important at all stages that the collection of data served the IAP project and was thus an integral element of the overall scheme.

4.7 Data Collection: the Detail

4.7.1 Ferbane Development Plan 2001

By the early 2000s, due to the declining economic situation, it was decided to prepare a development plan for the area and through that, to identify and implement a number of projects. The methodology for developing the plan was overseen by Ferbane Development Group and facilitated by Tipperary Institute. This Plan had the distinction of having attempted, through a community survey, to identify locally defined priorities and to make recommendations based on such findings. The aims of the Plan were to increase the attractiveness of the town, to develop its commercial potential, promote the town as a centre of culture and heritage, enhance its environment and amenity and to promote more sustainable development patterns. At almost 12,000 words the Plan document is a comprehensive record of the planning process and aspiration of that time. It is treated in this thesis as documentary research and as a piece of participatory action research in that it expanded participation in development in the area, was an explicit sign that change was occuring and established a self-critical group who participated in all phases of the research and development project from planning to implementation.

4.7.2 Ferbane Review Report 2003

In 2003, a questionnaire was distributed to all members of the various steering groups that had been established to implement the Ferbane Development Plan as part of a review of its impact. A meeting was then held to discuss the findings and this report is based on the proceedings of that meeting. Attended by 30 people from the steering groups and facilitated by myself and other staff from Tipperary Institute, the meeting elucidated achievements of the plan to that point. This document, which I compiled, highlighted difficulties encountered, future plans yet to be implemented and proposed structures for the future. The findings of this Report were fed back into the IAP , thus signalling that another change was in train and

enabled participants, led by the FDG, to develop their own understandings and critiques of the issues emerging, leading to further development of the skills and competencies of the group.

4.7.3   Evaluation of the Ferbane Development Process 2007

An independent evaluation was commissioned in February/March 2007 in order to help provide direction for an updated version of the IAP . The review was undertaken by an independent evaluator, Fox-Timmons and Associates, who worked closely with the facilitator from WOP and with Tipperary Institute staff. The methodologies employed were as follows:

- Interviews with WOP/TI Staff involved

- Individual key informant interviews with the members of Ferbane IAP Steering group

- Focus Group meetings with the Ferbane IAP Steering group

- Additional meetings facilitated by West Offaly Partnership (WOP) with community members, local councillors and with representatives of local sport/social organisations and groups.

This evaluation material was compiled into a fairly brief report, analysed as part of the study and again proved valuable in developing the IAP beyond the local, as it encouraged the official state agencies in Offaly to pilot mainstreaming in other areas of the County. I used this report as a key document in my analysis,

4.7.4   The Integrated Area Planning (IAP) Process in West Offaly Phase 3 Report Volume 3: Ferbane 2009

In March 2009 Fox, Timmons & Associates were again employed to carry out Phase 3 of their research on Integrated Area Planning (IAP) in West Offaly. The focus of the research, which was based on telephone interviews with 34 stakeholders, was carried out in the 3 areas of Ferbane, Cloghan and Banagher in March and April 2009, and including 17 participants involved in Ferbane.

The research purpose was to examine the process in West Offaly to date, focusing on the experiences of stakeholder *participation* and to develop and complete a monitoring template for use in examining the progress of IAP in West Offaly in the future (see Appendix A). At this point the Offaly project was funded under the Carnegie UK Trust Rural Action Research Programme. The ambition of this project was to develop and mainstream the IAP into the county-wide planning system and to document roll-out. The partners were the three communities, each represented by a steering group, West Offaly Partnership (WOP), Offaly

Co. Council (staff and Elected Representatives), and Tipperary Institute. Written submissions were made to Offaly Co. Council in 2008 for consideration and inclusion in the County Development Plan. The report considered in detail the work and impact of the Programme Management Group or PMG, established in 2006 in order to assist in the overall monitoring and mainstreaming of the IAP project in Offaly. It became clear at this juncture that while the community actors were doing as they had promised, the state agencies in particular were not performing as had been hoped. Again, this document served as a key in documentary analysis and also provided a template for future research (see 6 below).

4.7.5   *Final report to Carnegie UK Trust May 2009*

This report, prepared by me in my role as project manager, acted as a summary of progress of the IAP project in Offaly as funded by the Carnegie UK Trust over a 3-year period. It also served as a vehicle by which to make recommendations regarding best practice in participatory planning approaches and was used by the Carnegie UK Trust in developing policy regarding community planning approaches, culminating in a report entitled *The Power of the Plan* (2011). The 2009 report looked at achievements to date, the work and impact of various structures and the development of relationships, supports and the sustainability of the IAP. It concluded that in initiating the IAP process, Offaly Co. Council had moved significantly in supporting a course of action to allow local groups to come up with a development plan for their area. In developing the plans together with the community and West Offaly Partnership, the seeds of a genuine partnership approach had been sown. While much had been achieved, there was still a long way to go before participatory planning practices took root in the County and became the norm for the Council to use in planning. The report concluded with a set of recommendations regarding the changes that needed to be made at micro, meso and macro levels in order to allow IAP to flourish. This was a significant report and was adopted and incorporated by the Carnegie UK Trust into a best practice guide, thus contributing to broader social improvement by inputting into policy at the macro-level.

4.7.6   *Integrated Area Planning: Evaluating the Process in Offaly 2010*

In June 2010, I made contact with 27 stakeholders who had been involved in developing the IAP in Ferbane and gained their approval to meet with them to review the IAP. These stakeholders were from community groups, elected representatives, staff of Offaly County Council and staff of the Offaly Local Development Company (OLDC), formerly called West Offaly Partnership (WOP). All of these people (except one) had met with Fox-Timmons and Associates in 2009 as in 4 above. I used the same monitoring template as had previously been

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agreed with all stakeholders in 2009. In that study, the researchers had used telephone interviews, whereas I met with each participant for a face-to-face interview at a place of their choosing; normally at their residence, their place of work or at a community meeting place. The meetings took the form of semi-structred interviews guided by the monitoring template (See Appendix A). The same monitoring template was used in each case.

In 2009, Fox-Timmons had amalgamated the findings by analysing the results from each of the area's respondents and combined them with the answers provided by the other 3 stakeholder groups-the elected representatives, staff of Offaly County Council and staff of the Offaly Local Development Company (OLDC). This was deemed appropriate at the time in order to fulfil reporting criteria. For this part of the research, I decided to adopt a somewhat different approach. Instead of amalgamating the findings about the three towns into one report, the approach here was to analyse each *stakeholder group* separately. This was for a number of reasons:

- To allow me to dig deeper with each stakeholder group in order to explore various themes in more detail.
- To capture any new and emerging themes that could warrant further investigation in subsequent work with the communities and other stakeholders.
- To develop a separate analysis that could prove helpful to each community; as each area was at different stages of plan implementation, they would need different actions and supports and separate, more tailored reports could assist them in this process.
- To support deeper analysis of the data as part of my PhD study

In compiling the report, I allowed the participants to 'speak for themselves', and therefore included almost all of the direct quotes gathered as answers to the questions in each section. This allowed for nuanced answers in the text. These were presented in italics in the reports. Answers were only excluded if judged overly repetitive or difficult to understand. The use of the monitoring template helped to ease the conversation as each participant was familiar with its content from previous experience and were aware that it was a tool to enable them to reflect on their own role in the development process in both a positive and constructively critical manner.

4.7.7 Interviews in Ferbane 2013

By 2013, I was deeply engaged in work for this thesis and had completed the first phase of my literature review. I was attracted to the concept of resilience and the potential of resilience theory to assist in telling the story about the changes and developments that had occurred in Ferbane during the implementation of the IAP.

I researched a number of models that are used to measure resilience. My first conclusion was that measuring resilience is not a straightforward task and that attempting to gauge what is still quite an abstract concept was challenging! Many of the resilience measurement tools I examined (Department for International Development BRACED model; Tufts University/World Vision: USAID Measurement Framework for Community Resilience, see Pasteur 2012) were developed to focus on livelihoods and/or food security, particularly in Africa. Jones *et al.* (2010) found that there was a distinction between academic literature on resilience-which tended to focus on policy and governance issues related to resilience - and the 'grey' literature focused on supporting operational approaches to resilience thinking, particularly for International NGOs and International donor organisations. Despite these conceptual hurdles, I remained convinced that resilience theory was relevant as it offered a model to examine the changes that occurred in a system (i.e. Ferbane). I thought therefore to enquire as to whether and how engagement in an IAP or collaborative planning could enhance a given area's ability *to become* resilient or *increase its adaptive capacity* for example:

- to withstand shock
- to cope with change and disturbance
- to improve the community's ability to adapt and to self-organise
- to assist the community in developing new systems and structures

In digging further I found a number of models of resilience that I believed could be employed to meet my research needs. The models outlined in Chapter 3 on Resilience theory – the Carnegie Charter for Rural Communities (2007), the Transition Handbook (2008) and the Canadian Resilience framework (2000)- all stressed the importance of planning as a tool in developing local resilience. For example, in the Canadian model among the 23 characteristics of a resilient community identified are the following:

- The community has prepared a development plan to guide its development
- Citizens are involved in creating and implementing community vision and goals
- There is ongoing action in achieving the goals agreed
- There is regular evaluation of progress towards community goals

- Organisations use the community plan to guide their actions

I also concluded that it was important to evaluate the organisations and institutions that exist in the area and the roles they perform . Modularity is another important concept from resilience theory that may prove useful in a community plan. The important issue here is the ability of a *number* of organisations to respond to a crisis or to change and be able to act independently when crisis occurs. This then prompted me to examine the strength of civil society organisations in Ferbane.

These publications on resilience recognise the importance of diversity within the local economy: A resilient local economy has a number of diverse businesses and employment opportunities, so that community well-being does not stand or fall according to the market fortunes of just one industry. Encouraging the development of a diverse economy and emphasising the inter-dependence of local businesses in order to create economic security were very important issues for Ferbane as it sought to move away from dependence on one employer.

The Carnegie and Canadian frameworks also stressed the importance of leadership in the process. From my work there and from analysing earlier documents it was clear that leadership was a key factor in Ferbane. The Canadian framework addressed such pertinent issues as:

- Leadership is diversified and representative of age, gender and cultural composition of the community
- Elected community leadership is visionary, shares power and builds consensus
- Community members are involved in significant community decisions.

It also offered scope to examine the exogenous factors in the development process such as:

- Organisations in the community have developed partnerships and collaborative working relationships.

The next step therefore was the more accurate framing and development of these themes prior to the fieldwork. I then set about preparing a set of guiding questions, based on the various resilience frameworks mentioned above (reference appendix B). In this preparatory phase I also re-read the previous reports pertaining to developments in the Ferbane area.

In July 2013, I contacted the Ferbane Development Group and requested that I again be allowed access to those people in Ferbane who were best positioned to talk about the IAP, this

time not as a project worker but in fulfilment of my thesis. I was provided with a list of 12 people whom the FDG decided were best positioned to talk about the IAP . These were all people who had been involved or were still involved in the project since its initiation in 2001. I initially contacted these people by telephone reqesting to meet them. I explained that I wanted to conduct research into the IAP as it had unfolded in Ferbane but this time with a view to gathering information as part of my PhD thesis. Since I had already met all of these participants at an earlier point, there was no problem in explaining the subject matter. I did, however, stress with each participant that these interviews were for a different purpose and not part of local development planning.

In total, over a four-day period I met 10 different people in their own homes, offices and on-site in Ferbane. Of the 12 people contacted just 2 were women and unfortunately, neither was available at the time to meet me due to other commitments. I collected almost 8 hours of recorded data, averaging 45 minutes per interview. Again, true to the spirit of participatory action research, I sought to break down any barriers between myself as the researcher and the participants by conducting the 'interviews' as conversations, allowing the participants to bring their own perspective to each conversation. For example with the local elected representative, we dwelled quite a bit on the political landscape in the County; with the Officer from OLDC we talked about the governance and inclusion and with the Tidy Towns representative we focused on environmental issues. The process yielded a tremendously rich body of data and each interview, refreshingly different in emphasis, scope and detail, sought to address the development issues facing Ferbane in a holistic and comprehensive fashion.

4.7.8 Community Survey 2018

This survey of households in Ferbane was carried out during the early part of 2018 as part of developing another Comunity Action Plan for the area (see 10 below). The questionnaire was designed by a Steering Group of Ferbane Development advised by Ciaran Lynch of Community Engagement Partners (CEP) and myself. I was also involved in the analysis following the packaging of the data using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences or SPSS by Ciaran Lynch. The survey took the form of a paper questionnaire which was delivered to households in Ferbane by members of the community and was collected by community members also. The survey form was self-applied and was based on individual households, although it did have an element of age-related responses particularly with regard to the nature of the recreational facilities which should be provided in the town. The survey (see Appendix C) was designed to generate a general understanding of community views about Ferbane at that point and its future, rather than to necessarily create a statistically robust

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output. Nevertheless, as can be seen in the graph below, it is reasonable to suggest that the results of this survey are generally representative of the views of the community of Ferbane and adjacent areas. The respondent population was closely aligned with the overall Ferbane population as indicated in the 2016 Census. A total of 239 household responses (out of a total 430 distributed) was received. The average household size was 2.54 persons; this compared with an average of 2.6 in Ferbane as a whole in the 2016 Census. On this measure, therefore, the survey population was a very good representation of the population of Ferbane.

This was the first time since 2001 that a survey of this size and magnitude was carried out in Ferbane and thus signalled to the wider community that another phase in the development of Ferbane was about to commence. The questionnaire was prepared by FDG and other community members and at this point, a whole new raft of people had become involved in the Ferbane development process, compelled by an interest in environmental issues. The survey was distributed by local people to their neighbours and collected from individual houses, thus ensuring strong local ownership and a good response rate. The material contained in the report was used in assessing the strength of social capital in Ferbane in this thesis.

4.7.9   Business Survey

This survey was carried out amongst businesses in Ferbane during the early part of 2018, again as a step in developing a new Plan for the area. The survey (see appendix D) took the form of a paper questionnaire which was delivered to businesses in Ferbane by members of the community and was collected by community members also. The survey form was self-applied by the businesses. The questionnaire and survey were designed to generate a general understanding of the business sector's views about Ferbane today and its future. Again my role was in analysing the data after it had been prepared by Ciaran Lynch.

It will be noted in the report that the businesses which responded represented a spectrum of different types and sizes. While it is not possible to be sure that this represents the full spread of business types in the community, it does give a sense of the views of more than one part of that community. A total of 16 business responses were received, representing a good spread in terms of how long the business had been established and the number of employees. The information received was used primarily in looking at the issue of the resilient economy in this thesis.

4.7.10 Ferbane Community Action Plan 2019

The Ferbane Development Group published a Community Action Plan in May 2019, following what the Action Plan calls

> a number of community planning exercises which at least, in part, have
> generated a good community response and positive outcomes for the town and
> the area.
>
> (FDG 2019, p. 1)

This document incorporated the findings from the two surveys as outlined above and then goes on to identify 6 Goals, with outcomes, a key project and a set of objectives under each goal. This Community Action Plan was compiled, written and distributed by the FDG and other groups and organisations in Ferbane. While continuing to emphasise the economic development of Ferbane via the Food Hub, it contains ambitious environmental goals, centred around the development of Ferbane as a carbon-free community by linking to Bord na Móna and others to provide 'clean and green' energy to the area and to redevelop the peatlands to become significant visitor attractions in an Irish and International context. It is notable in this new Community Action Plan that over the past 20 years Ferbane has evolved from a carbon-producing area to one that aspires to become a model for carbon-free living.

4.8   Data analysis

I approached the task of data analysis as an iterative process, where pre-established resilience theory was used to inform the initial coding practice itself (Saldana 2015) . This type of descriptive coding occurred as I summarised the primary or core description of each data piece. This allowed me to return to that particular data piece later when I could decide where any particular piece of data/quotation was going to be most salient. Following Cresswell (2003), the interpretation of the data was based on the interaction of participants own words and my interpretation of these as researcher. My own research experience allowed me to review, collate and 'make sense' of what participants had said in the light of key theoretical ideas and debates. By 2013, influenced by resilience theory, I had constructed the semi-structured questionnaire using the characteristics of resilience as proposed by the Canadian Resilience Framework/Transition Towns and the Carnegie UK Trust and then used these same characteristics as the structure upon which to base my analysis.

This framework was axiomatic to me as an analytical guide: it incorporated the spirit of participatory research I sought, it was a comprehensive framework, yet open enough to be interpreted by individual participants. I then reviewed policy developments and theoretical

debates in the light of participants' responses. In some cases, the analytical link between what was said and the theory was directly made.

The process consisted of listening to the transcripts a number of times, then reading and re-reading the various documents to become fully conversant with the data. I looked out for recurring references and themes and then for notable exceptions and divergences. Initially I analysed each document and transcription and coded each section according to one or more of the characteristics of resilence .These characteristics were later grouped under 4 main themes:

1   Leadership,
2   Collaborative Planning,
3   Social Capital and
4   Resilient Economy.

Following Saldana (2009), in this way coding itself became my analytical tool, as I moved from the data back to the code, which was linked to one of the characteristics of resilience as stated above. Each code was constructed from one of the 23 characteristics above. For example, taking the theme of Leadership, I allocated codes under the themes as follows:

1.1 leadership is diversified
1.2 leadership is representative of age, gender and cultural composition of the community
1.3 elected community leadership is visionary

2.2 shares power
2.3 builds consensus

3.1 Community members are involved in significant community decisions

I then highlighted all data from each of the 10 data sources listed in the charts above related to the theme of Leadership in orange and began to collate the coded phrases, sentences or paragraphs into meaningful sub-themes or categories under the theme, which then became one of my data analysis chapters. I chose the categories as the data directed. I then re-read all the reports and transcripts again to ensure that no important issues were missed or nuances misunderstood.

From the first and the second trawl of the data I was able to highlight the coded data in colour under the four main Themes mentioned above, and it became possible for me to extract what I

judged to be the strongest statements under each code. As the volume of data was significant, forging new connections between different documents and data collected and the literature proved very illuminating.

4.9   Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the methodology for this thesis followed a participatory action research trajectory within the framework of a case-study. The unique access that I had to the research area and to 10 different data sources allowed me to reach back over time and give an historical perspective to the research. True to the values of participatory action research, I sought opportunities to investigate the IAP project in ways that maximised community participation and empowerment in both the research and local development. The research methodology was not designed to fulfil my study requirements but instead to enrich the development trajectory. In doing so, it threw up a profound and complex set of data which I have supplemented with other research instruments set out in this chapter; I have sought to analyse this data thematically through the 'lens' of resilience; using Ferbane as a case-study of a community that has organised itself to withstand shock, change and disturbance while developing new systems and structures. In these ways it revealed the characteristics of a complex adaptive system. The following chapters will tell the story of how resilience grew and developed in Ferbane over the past 20 years, commencing with examining collaborative planning in practice in Ferbane .

Chapter 5: Collaborative Planning in Practice

5.1   Introduction

Analysts outlining the concept of the resilient community (Davoudi 2012; Hopkins 2008; Wilding 2013) have stressed the importance of planning as part of the development process. For this thesis, I have attempted to apply a resilience lens to community-led planning in Ferbane. This chapter will retrospectively interrogate the plan's development and implementation through the application of set questions as it unfolded in Ferbane from the time of the rollout of the original development plan in 2001 up to the present. Drawing on the Canadian Resilience Framework, described in the previous chapters and the 23 characteristics of Resilience already outlined, five of the 23 indicators focus on planning as key in developing local resilience, as follows:

1   The community has prepared a Community Economic Development (CED) plan to guide its development
2   Citizens are involved in the creation and implementation of community vision and goals
3   There is ongoing action towards achieving the goals in the CED plan
4   There is regular evaluation of progress towards the community's strategic goals
5   Organisations use the CED plan to guide their actions

Another indicator has been included in this chapter:

6   The community adopts a development approach that encompasses all segments of the population.

This final indicator, while not specifically one that relates to planning, is included because an essential aspect of planning as implemented and understood here is that the plan is socially inclusive. Also, in this study, the term CED or Community Economic Development (CED) plan is replaced with that of the Integrated Area Plan or IAP. IAP is broader than a CED as it encompasses social, environmental as well as economic concerns within its remit. This is consistent with good planning practice, underlined most recently in the publication by the Carnegie UK Trust (2016) on Turnaround Towns.

While related to the existence of a plan and its execution, the Canadian Resilience Framework does not propose indicators regarding the actual *process* of plan-making. As discussed extensively in earlier chapters, the process of collaborative planning is in many ways as important, if not more important, than the actual plan itself. In the view of Forester (1989), Healey (1997), Innes and Booher (2000), and other theorists, the plan-making project itself is essential as it is within this collaborative approach that new forms of social relationships are constructed, that place is reimagined and that the conditions for plan elaboration are mutually created by the parties involved. The author therefore will discuss plan-making in Ferbane in this chapter and will interrogate this through the lens of collaborative planning theory. The chapter commences by outlining how the IAP project commenced and unfolded in Ferbane. It then interrogates this using the key elements of collaborative planning theory as outlined in Chapter two-those of communicative ethics, participation, power, the role of the planner and the development of networks, followed by an assessment of contribution of the collaborative planning process itself to building resilience in Ferbane.

5.2   Background to Integrated Area Planning in Ferbane

Integrated Area Planning commenced in Ferbane in 2000.

From the 1990s, the operation of Partnership Companies such as West Offaly Partnership (WOP, later Offaly Local Development Company, OLDC) opened up spaces for community participation in decision-making in Ireland (CWC 2000, Murphy 2011). Following Burton (2003), it would appear that a consensus developed between WOP and the local authority (Offaly Co. Council), that local knowledge if brought to bear, could offer extra creativity and a fresh, 'common-sense' perspective to the County's planning system. When the idea of co-producing a development plan for Ferbane was mooted, it quickly gained the acceptance of the state bodies concerned. The fact that the area faced an existential crisis due to the wind-down of peat-generated electricity and the consequent loss of employment for the area added increased impetus and required a collective response from a range of stakeholders:

> The Ferbane community together with Offaly County Council and Shannon Development had become concerned at the stagnation and decline of the population of the town of Ferbane and its immediate hinterland, the declining employment associated with the local peatlands and power station and the restricted nature of other forms of economic activity in the area. In order to respond to these issues it was decided to have a development plan prepared for the area and through that process to identify and have implemented a number of projects. The plan comes against the background of increased funding for infrastructure provided for in the National Development Plan, an increased

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awareness of the need to promote sustainable rural communities and at a time
when overall economic activity in Ireland has been significant.

<div align="right">(Tipperary Institute 2001, p. 9)</div>

5.2.1 Community Survey

The first activity of the planning project that directly involved the local population was a
study with the people of Ferbane in 2000 about priority needs and other baseline information
needed for the integrated area plan (Tipperary Institute 2001). It was intended to gather this
information prior to the public announcement and formal initiation of the planning project. In
this case, TI acted as the designer of the data collection methodology, while the data was
collected by local people. It was important to empower local people to act as the data
collectors in order to allow them to 'own' the data collected and by extension, the resulting
final plan.

The emphasis here was on community participation and mobilisation and signalled a break
from the planning practices of the past. It represented a 'bottom-up' approach as opposed to
the more formal 'top-down' technocratic approach. It signalled a communicative approach to
planning, concerned with community, democracy, governance and the possible redistribution
of power in favour of the community (Harris 2002; Forester 1989; Healey 1997):

> A community survey was undertaken as part of the plan process. The purpose of
> the survey was to allow residents engage with the process and to express
> opinions on a wide range of issues. The survey represents an important
> component of the work and a questionnaire was developed with the steering
> group for the survey. It was not possible to address all issues, and those selected
> were contemporary at the time of development of the plan. The survey results
> present a picture of Ferbane at the time of the survey, and as new needs arise and
> others are addressed, it will in time become less relevant. However it presently
> represents an important record of the perceptions and opinions of the residents of
> Ferbane, without whose support the implementation of any community based
> plan would neither be possible nor desirable. It therefore represents an important
> step forward in planning for the future development of Ferbane. There was an
> overall response rate of around 65%.
>
> <div align="right">(Tipperary Institute 2001, p. 26)</div>

5.2.2 Creating a Vision

A key aspect of Integrated Area Planning is shaping a shared vision for the future of an area.
It therefore demands of all participants that they put aside current realities and project an ideal
future.

The aims of this aspect of the IAP are to:

1. Create a shared understanding among the group around a set of common priorities
2. Create a focus on the broad issues that affect the area
3. Provide a context within which development decisions could be re-examined

(Corcoran 2008)

This vision is, perforce, shaped collaboratively by key participants and provides the foundation for any subsequent plan that may emerge. Taking a vision-led approach serves to move people away from disagreement on small issues instead focusing on the bigger picture. In this stage of visioning, TI acted as a facilitator, encouraging all those involved to think beyond the present and to imagine, shape and articulate an alternative future for the town and for themselves. This represented the beginning of collaborative dialogue, where participants from diverse backgrounds came to 'make sense together' and through discussion and collaboration 'make place together' (Healey 1997, p. 49). It was also the start of the process of socially constructing space; of co-creating the concepts around which policy could grow (Innes and Booher 2000). For Forester (1989), Dryzek (1993) and Addison (2004), planners have a key role in articulating, promoting and leading an agreed vision for a given place, making use of their integration and collaboration skills to ensure the involvement of communities and partners in planning while navigating the surrounding political space:

> The vision for Ferbane that emerged from community consultation and that underlies this plan contains a number of elements that may be stated as follows –
>
> 1. Ferbane will be a place that contains a sustainable population that will ensure the town's long-term viability in social and economic terms.
> 2. The people of Ferbane will experience the town as a pleasant place in which to live, work and take their recreation
> 3. Those living in Ferbane will be able to access a number of different employment opportunities including those located within the town, those located within its rural hinterland and those located within nearby settlements
> 4. The community of Ferbane will be open, inclusive and welcoming
> 5. Ferbane will be in a position to derive economic benefit from those living and working in its rural hinterland as well as those who travel through the town
>
> (Tipperary Institute 2001, p. 16)

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5.2.3 *Steering and Task Groups*

Taking this positive statement as the foundation, the steering group and task groups were established and went on to develop and implement a detailed Integrated Area Plan. The IAP approach to planning started with the community and was a deliberately normative activity (following Healey 1997). Values were made explicit in the IAP starting with a consensually-designed vision statement regarding 'what kind of place' Ferbane would ideally become. This starting position generated a procedure whereby planners came to accept the values put forward by the community regarding an idealised future, which the planners then translated into the formalised planning system. In this way, planners and local communities came to share values (as proposed by Healey) and values became rooted within the social context where planning took place. IAP became a means by which local people acted in constrained situations; in this case within the constraints imposed in the construction of the statutory plan. In working together to shape the local planning process, planners scientific/technical knowledge was combined with moral principles and emotive reactions in a flow of political consciousness and common-sense (as proposed by Innes and Booher 2000).

A major step in the project was the appointment of a steering group for the IAP. The main responsibilities of this group were guiding the IAP by developing an overall set of visions for the plan, participating on task groups and ensuring that the wider population was consulted at all stages in the plan's development. This reflects collaborative planning models, which call for both diversity and interdependence among stakeholders in any planning system if the benefits of collaborative dialogue are to be achieved. All stakeholders should be at the table or engaged in some way if agreements are to be durable and fully informed (Innes and Booher 2000, p. 7). The steering group therefore was made up of local people, members of the County Council, representatives from BNM/ESB and West Offaly Partnership.

Collaborative dialogue is seen by theorists as a way to establish new *networks* among the key players in a system and to increase the distribution of knowledge among these players. This includes knowledge about each other as well as knowledge about the social environment where planning takes place. Negotiation and interpretation are thus an inherent dimension of planning work. Collaborative dialogue is a way to establish new *arenas of action* (Healey) such as the steering groups and task groups. These arenas should include the key players within the system as they engage in inclusionary argumentation that generates conviction, builds trust and develops mutual understanding.

In this way, members of such groups also co-create a shared identity (Innes and Booher 2000).

> There is a need to establish and develop support groups that will take responsibility for certain elements of the plan. The existing Steering Group needs support in order to move from policy to implementation, and broadening the scope of the Group to accommodate the establishment of representative sub-groups is recommended. A commitment has been shown by the County Council, statutory agencies and by locally elected representatives to the process; this commitment can be built upon to ensure that momentum gathered during the process is not dissipated as delays are experienced.
>
> (Tipperary Institute 2001, p. 16).

5.2.4 Thematic Analysis

For this section, the data was analysed thematically to look for statements made by respondents on the process of creating the IAP. In particular, key themes deriving from the theory of collaborative planning, as outlined in chapter 2, were used in the analysis. These key areas were:

1 Communicative Ethics
2 Power
3 Participation
4 The Role of the Planner
5 Development of Networks

These are now considered in turn in the following sections leading to a cross-cutting discussion and conclusion.

5.2.5 Communicative Ethics

As seen earlier in chapter 2 an essential aspect of collaborative planning is that of communicative ethics/communicative action; followers of this model believe that it is through *communication* that societies, cultures and systems such as planning systems, are created. Attention, therefore, to communication within planning systems is vital. Through discussions, people come to learn more about each other, see each other's perspectives and learn to reflect on their own. In this way, mutual understanding is developed, as is a store of social and intellectual capital which can be used at any stage to address core issues that may arise. Healey calls this 'institutional coherence' or the development of institutional capacity within a society which can be called upon by stakeholders in future in order to address issues of common concern

Heuristics, for Innes and Booher (2000) is a way of proceeding to a solution by trial and error or by rules that are only loosely defined. New heuristics are created through the development of new practices as each individual does what makes sense at the time, given local knowledge and the feedback each gets from the others within a collaborative dialogue. Each participant in the conversation acts independently, using the shared heuristics they have created together. Each does whatever makes sense in that particular context, given local knowledge and the feedback received from others within collaborative dialogue. Self-organising systems are thus created, and these systems devise their own way of doing things and their own structures. Thus new practices of 'sense-making' are created, as are new structures. Individuals participating in these new structures become recognised for their efforts (e.g. as Chair; as fundraiser; as an expert on wildlife or child-care) and thus new identities can also be created through participation in the planning process. Following Forester (1989), sense-making evolves through conversations between professionals such as engineers and planners with local people. For Dunn (1993), knowledge and in turn, structure is created through these conversations.

5.2.6 *Early Signs of Communicative Action in Ferbane*

In 2003, a questionnaire was distributed to members of the various steering groups that had been established to implement the Ferbane Development Plan. Respondents were asked to state what they believed the *achievements* of the Ferbane IAP to date to have been. These were stated as:

> The incorporation of aspects of the community plan into the Offaly County
> Development plan in a significant way
> The development of local structures and groups
> The provision of space for enterprise development
> Fundraising from the area, which eventually totalled 50,000 euro towards local
> development initiatives
> Plans for a childcare centre were being developed
> A new town sewerage scheme had been secured
> A local transport initiative had commenced
> An Education committee had been established and plans for a new secondary
> school advanced
> Car parking issues were addressed
> Community support was strong

<div align="right">(Corcoran 2003)</div>

5.2.7 'Soft' Achievements

Respondents also reported on the 'soft' achievements of the IAP such as developing a sense of community, getting people to work together, good working relationships with the state agencies and a general awareness of the town's potential. Respondents agreed that the provision of enterprise in the town should remain a priority. However, they also stated that there were a number of unmet needs and issues flagged included housing provision, safety arrangements, community development, the provision of play areas and public toilets. Funding remained a priority. Regarding the sequence of development, it was recognised that not every aspect of the plan could be tackled at the one time and therefore some of the gaps identified merely reflected the order that issues were addressed in, rather than the fact that these issues had been ignored to date. There was a recognition and acknowledgement of the contribution and time that had been given to the project and that there had been an increase in skills in the community in this area of planning work
(Corcoran 2003).

Regarding group functioning, there was some overlap in the issues tackled by the groups that needed to be addressed. People had given a lot of time and energy to the development group and this may not be sustainable. Renewing membership to include new people and ensuring that more people were involved was recommended. Integrating the development group with other groups operating in the town was needed. Maintaining focus was important and a need to provide groups with some support/training was identified. The issue of communicating the achievements and work of the groups to the community on a continuous basis was seen as essential.

5.2.8 Early assessment of communicative action 2003

At this point in time (2003) it would appear that most of the five indicators for community planning as outlined in the introduction to this chapter were being met: the community had prepared a plan for its own development, citizens had been involved in creating and implementing community vision and goals. There was ongoing action to achieve these goals via the task groups and local organisations were using the plan to guide their actions. It was however unclear as to whether or not there was ongoing evaluation of progress. There was some concern expressed about maintaining local motivation to keep implementing various aspects of the plan. The need to incorporate other local organisations was also highlighted. Issues such as widening participation, improving inclusiveness and adapting to meet the needs of more vulnerable groups in the area were brought up. Areas for continued attention were the

development of local communication systems, renewed structures and funding arrangements and the need for a focus on social issues. It was clear at this point that the communicative aspect of the project needed further development.

5.2.9 *Intermediate Assessment of Communicative action 2007*

The next evaluation of the planning process for Ferbane was conducted in 2007. Regarding the general thrust of the original 2001 Ferbane plan, the evaluators concluded that the plan had been drawn up in reaction to a lack of employment opportunities in the town and a decrease in population in the area. There was also a perceived need to give Ferbane a 'voice' in local development.

5.2.10 *The Emergence of Authentic Dialogue*

Respondents described how public meetings had been held and that task-groups were then set up to move issues forward. In Habermasian frameworks, this is where *authentic dialogue* takes place within a collaborative planning framework (Healey 1997). Task groups were normally made up of local people working together with officials from designated state agencies. The ways that the parties work together to debate and resolve matters not only creates mutually agreed solutions but also creates new knowledge, new networks and new structure. The participants should begin with their own interests and together create solutions as they work under a set of mutually agreed ground-rules and embark on joint fact-finding. The more diverse the group, the better. Each group researched and created well-thought out reports and thereby reached a consensus. Not everyone would have agreed initially but a decision would be reached and the facilitators were useful in helping to reach this consensus. In the language of collaborative planning, the facilitators were aiming to develop the conditions necessary for *ideal speech* to occur (Healey 1997). This is essential for collaboration; through forming a dialogue between people who all become equal in power and understanding.

For Ferbane respondents in 2007, successes and enthusiasm were perceived as 'contagious'- especially from the local people who drove the IAP. The strong leadership and vision of certain individuals in plan implementation was recognised and praised. However, it was also suggested that at task-group level some ideas were 'pushed' through which suggests the need for facilitation and support especially around chairing and conflict.

There were issues around maintaining energy and enthusiasm over time, therefore the need to have follow-up facilitation and organisation was perceived as being important in driving the project forward.

> Respondents felt that some issues are hard to handle publicly – there are sensitive issues to negotiate and there may be historical issues to take cognisance of. While it was felt the sub-committees were good at reaching consensus, there were some issues that should have been subject to wider consultation with local interest groups before reaching 'draft' stage.
>
> (Fox Timmons 2007, p. 4)

When asked about new challenges that Ferbane faced, there was a sense that there were other opportunities that were mentioned in the initial plan which could now be developed further. Needs such as social housing and recreational facilities arising from the change in demographics were seen as a priority. There was a desire expressed to develop tourism facilities, improve the overall physical appearance of the town and that the canal had potential for development. One respondent felt the challenge would be to look at longer-term issues that could arise in the town and adapting for different contingencies.

> A process is now in place for dealing with challenges – it has been started, not finished. Ferbane has led the way in taking responsibility and making things happen for itself. This can be seen in how the local clubs work well together and have led their own development – there is a strong community spirit. This new plan is an opportunity to involve people and build on successes.
>
> (Fox Timmons 2007, p. 10).

There was grass-roots enthusiasm for the IAP which was reflected in the substantial financial contributions made by community members. It was strongly believed that the plan had galvanised the community and allowed people to work together. The particular experience and influence of some community activists who worked on an ongoing basis with agencies at a policy-making level was recognised.

People expressed the view that the particular style and success of the planning and implementation of the IAP had sparked the development of other local initiatives such as the development of an all-weather pitch and the children's playground. In this way, the IAP acted as a pioneer or model for other groups in the town who saw the results that had been achieved through following a participatory process. Thus new heuristics were created and mutual sense-making was recognised by respondents as a way of 'making place together' (Healey

1997). It was agreed that certain changes might have happened anyway, but respondents stated that the Plan helped influence the manner and direction in which subsequent development happened.

> The challenge is to find other ways of engaging people in the process and getting greater 'buy-in' to give greater results – that there are more ways of getting involved than a questionnaire or public meeting. The new Plan should examine how to spread the principles of what the group is trying to achieve – that everyone has a responsibility to make it a vibrant and viable town.
> If the next five years are as successful, we will have a lovely little town.
>
> (Fox Timmons 2007, p. 12).

5.2.11 Later Assessment of Communicative Ethics 2010

In June 2010, 27 stakeholders from community groups, elected representatives, staff of Offaly County Council and staff of the Offaly Local Development Company (OLDC), formerly called West Offaly Partnership (WOP) were interviewed. Community group members believed that much of the original plan developed in 2001 had been implemented. The Business and Technical group was still meeting every six weeks. This group had some new development ideas in mind. In general, while one substantial business had closed due to the recession, businesses were still surviving. However, Wilton, a key tenant in the Cowpark, had gone into liquidation.

All of the remaining incubation units in the Cowpark had been taken over by a local business called Brosna Print so while that was seen as positive there were now no incubation units available for start-ups.

> The Cowpark needs capacity to extend and develop new businesses. The steering group is facilitated by OLDC but is not meeting much now. It is more broad-based-canals/festivals/childcare-all committees work very well. Overall the steering group needs to meet and reconstitute but it is a great way to transfer information.
>
> (Ferbane community member in Corcoran 2010)

The Environmental group, the Childcare committee, and a relatively newly-established Youth group were all reported to be active. The Crèche was seen a big bonus by the members interviewed:

> The Crèche is great and up and running with a new committee made up of the parents of the crèche and this is great. The crèche employs 13 people. With the childcare group we gave a five-year commitment start to finish and this worked.
> (Ferbane community member in Corcoran 2010)

Participants reported that Community involvement in and commitment to the IAP in Ferbane was very strong and the community had taken ownership of the plan, giving it financial, moral and physical support. Much had been achieved and those involved were very proud of these achievements which were perceived to be the result of that input.

> The focus has moved away from the negativity associated with BNM closures and onto a focus on Quality of Life. Looks at solutions not problems.
> (Ferbane community member in Corcoran 2010)

> An example is the playground group: the group formed and achieved tremendous success; they had a particular focus and a timeframe etc and finished on a good high and the area is well used. They could be attracted back.
> (Ferbane community member in Corcoran 2010)

> The youth café and the new business plan will bring in new people.
> (Ferbane community member in Corcoran 2010)

The impact on the participating Councillors and Council staff in terms of the new heuristics was seen as follows:

> The attitude of the Councillors changed. The councillors went by their own judgement or by officials but now learn to listen more to communities; IAP is a help to Councillors if they take the process on board-the process was badly needed from a long time ago. Councillors opened up doors and felt useful to people. It opened up people's options and fostered local ownership.
> (Councillor in Corcoran 2010)

> Planning is a fickle activity and it's hard to take on board what people say, especially if there are divergent views. You cannot take all views on board. From a planner's perspective, it has to stand the test of time and respond to future needs.
> (Local Authority staff member in Corcoran 2010)

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From these answers, it can be concluded that the local authority supported the IAP because it fulfilled their particular needs in relation to planning. The IAP was a co-ordination mechanism that allowed the local authority to 'hear' what communities had to say in a way that they could interpret and respond to within statutory limitations. In other words, it created the type of voice that was acceptable to the local authority and met their need to consult with communities, as was their statutory responsibility.

Interestingly, both community members and the staff from the local development company were able to cite examples of how the Local Authority had adapted their behaviour as a result of the IAP:

> The County Council are now reviewing the Clara plan and are asking WOP/OLDC for advice in community consultation-a genuine need that the Council has and they are pursuing this.
>
> (WOP staff member in Corcoran 2010)

> The local engineer put up a barrier for the new childcare centre within two months and did it with no fuss.
>
> (Community member Ferbane in Corcoran 2010)

For some, the strategic importance of IAP was recognised, in terms of introducing a way of organising locally:

> People must be prepared to change and co-operate across town boundaries. IAP helps communities to see where they are going and plan for it. It opens up options and the bigger picture. Tipperary Institute set a structure in a subtle way and really organised us into a good action group. They were very good in bringing people along.
>
> (Community member Ferbane, Corcoran 2010)

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For local residents, the development of new structures was seen as important:

> Different areas/estates have a chance to be there and have a say.
>
> A few on the steering group were long-term and unchanged but may not get involved outside of specific areas of interest.
>
> We worked in an organised fashion with a properly focused five-year plan.
>
> Communities now have a focus-that's the most important part.
>
> (Community members Ferbane, Corcoran 2010)

5.2.12 Conclusion

Overall, it can be concluded that a new set of communicative actions regarding the way that the local community approached development planning was created via the IAP. Following Healey, new structures, new conversations and new relationships were created as people 'made place' and in a way that 'made sense' at particular points in time. New relationships were created with councillors and local authority staff members, who were perceived as becoming more responsive and adaptive to community needs as the project matured. The particular way that the IAP was developed through an open, participatory methodology was replicated over the years, thus creating new heuristics; when new groups such as the childcare committee were established, they operated using the same ground-rules and structure that had been established earlier, with similar success. There was now an expectation that when a community decided on a course of action and organised for that, that the official agencies and elected representatives would respond. This of course was fine while the resources were in place, as they were in Ireland during the 'Celtic-tiger' years and within the context of Social Partnership, while this lasted. It was also fine when these conversations were confined to the local, community level; structural change did not occur so easily further up the decision-making ladder. As detailed below, it cannot be concluded that such new approaches had much of an impact at County Council level or where the real power to effect change was located.

5.3   Power

Power is understood in two dimensions; firstly, which outcomes are decided and by whom and secondly what outcomes prevail because those with power control the agenda and exclude the interests of the relatively powerless from emerging (Bachrach and Baratz 1962). As explored earlier for collaborative planners, planning and making strategies together is seen as an opportunity to transform structures and change power relations. This is done as stakeholders collaboratively and interpretively work through and build up policy networks

and alliances as their strategy-making work proceeds. Can deeply unequal power relations be negated by constructing these conditions for authentic dialogue? IAP is an attempt to develop conversations between stakeholders from different orbits to help arrive at a mutually acceptable level of consensus that can then be shaped into an agreed coherent plan. Such a process represented a different model from the norm where the interests of individuals and of the bureaucracy usually take precedence. If elected representatives understood the principle of reciprocity a value of IAP might be if maintaining electoral success and their own power was further ensured by their participation or 'championing' of the consensus created via IAP. In other words, did their participation in the IAP translate into votes? For Communities, it represented an opportunity to participate in decision-making about local development and creating a 'shared-power world' at local level with all the advantages this would bring to their own location and lives (Healey 1997; Forester 1989).

5.3.1 *Organising*

From discussions with community group members during the Evaluation in 2010, it was clear that many were aware of the need to organise in order to wrest some control of development planning from those who had previously sought, and succeeded, in determining the shape of local development:

> Communities are now awakened about the County Development plan; there is more in-depth discussion. They are more politically aware and it has brought the community closer together. There is a structure now for the future.
>
> Communities can control/input into the future of the area. If not someone else controls it.
>
> <div align="right">(Community Member Ferbane, Corcoran 2010)</div>

They were also aware that collective pressure for change could result in the redistribution of key assets for local development:

> Pressure on vested interests for land-the land commission released land and the relief road was built on church parish land.
> There is a need to use more local expertise and listen to the general population, not landowners.
>
> <div align="right">(Community member Ferbane, Corcoran 2010)</div>

The need to organise locally in order to have a coherent voice was recognised:

> Groups need to identify key drivers in the community to drive these processes.
> Get all groups involved and have stakeholders gathered beforehand.
> (Community member, Ferbane,Corcoran 2010)

Councillors also recognised the latent power of community as they became more organised:

> Councillors usually listen to the loudest voice rather than a community
> consensus. There is no such thing as a free lunch. A good group in the area can
> represent many and avoid vested interests. Councillors can get guidance and a
> community voice.

> Councillors are influenced by individuals rather than communities - remember
> who you represent. Councillors are still territorial and do not interfere.
> Communities should demand more of the Councillors.
> (Offaly Councillor, Corcoran 2010)

There was also a recognition that the stronger and more powerful voices within the community will tend to dominate if left unchecked:

> People may be shy and feel unwelcome. There is a fear of the strong who
> dominate. You judge groups by who is dominant-this puts people off. It is
> difficult to challenge people at that level. Challenging power is needed and
> debate is needed. The style of leadership is very important.

> There are stronger community groups now but what about the new estates and
> those not involved?

> The commercial aspect was good but other aspects fell through.
> (Community Member Ferbane, Corcoran 2010)

Respondents expressed awareness regarding the way decisions were made and were aware of the second face of power and how organisations *not represented* in plan-making can ignore, disrupt and undermine such participatory systems. The only state agency consistently involved in the IAP was the local authority, whose range of decision-making is quite limited.

There were no mechanisms in place to allow local voices to influence decisions that impacted on Ferbane in the key areas of employment, health or education provision:

> ESB/BNM should have been more involved.
>
> There is a need to make sure that all agencies are aware of their role. Other agencies such as the Vocational Education Committee and the Health Service Executive need to be involved
>
> Communities come to understand the limited role of the local authority's actions and what they do.
>
> <div align="right">(Offaly Councillors,Corcoran 2010).</div>

The issue of the failure of a proposed Primary Health Project for Ferbane was debated. In the review of the Plan in 2007, it was proposed that a new focus on Social Care was to be developed, again under the umbrella of FDG. A Task Group was established and contact was made with local healthcare professionals, the local authority and the Health Services Executive. It was proposed that a state-of-the-art health care facility would be developed at the Cowpark site that would house a GP, a primary health care service and other health related services. This did not happen as was revealed in the 2013 interviews

> CC: And what is your diagnosis of what went wrong?
>
> ***OLDC staff member***: The real nub of it was that the GP was at a certain age and didn't buy into it so it is GP-led . You do need someone pro-active, someone who could look forward a bit … but I don't think it was properly sold to the Department of Health or even at government level. It should have joined up some of their thinking outside of the general administration that's there at the moment. … Ferbane was an ideal set up for they had a couple of private providers as well … but they clouded things a little bit as well the pharmacists or whatever I'm not sure of the full story there because … I would say I think we could run primary care and we should have got primary care but we didn't.
>
> ***Community Member***: We had a group, we were engaged with the HSC who were favourably disposed to us this is going back five or six years and I suppose there was a local pharmacist … and another pharmacist and I suppose that vested interests got involved and f***ed it up. In a nutshell. If we'd stayed as a community and driven as a community we would now have a primary care centre in Ferbane.
>
> <div align="right">(Corcoran 2010)</div>

Again a number issues emerge strongly here: the issue of burnout, the inability of the state to respond to local needs and particularly the success of vested interests, in this case professional groups, in usurping a local development process when they saw that it was not in their interests

to do so. This is an example of the second face of power, where forces not represented nor visible can nonetheless prove disruptive.

5.3.2 *Limitations*

Some community members were very happy with the IAP and with its outcomes:

> It made the County Council accountable to communities.
> (Community member, Ferbane, Corcoran 2010)

For others, there was a sense of disillusionment also as some people questioned the commitment of the Council staff to taking on board the views of the community as expressed in the integrated area plans submitted to the Council:

> Submissions were not taken on board as the commitment was not there-there were time pressures and other priorities. Change processes take time. The Councillors and staff thought it was a good idea but how to enact it?
> There were no problems with relationships but commitment by the Council was questionable.
> (Community member, Ferbane,Corcoran 2010)

The power of local authority staff and their role in determining planning outcomes was recognised. For respondents, a certain lack of commitment and enthusiasm for the project by the planners was evident:

> It is uncertain that local authority staff understood what they were involved in. There was a lack of consistency with various staff. They were not organised internally to respond. The same people need to be involved to give consistency.
>
> PMG was a priority for Councillors but not for Council staff. Local area meetings were much livelier. Expectations were unclear.
>
> Planners need to input more and take more ownership in responding to community needs for action.
> (Offaly Councillors, Corcoran 2010)

At another level, the fact that participation was optional rather than statutory meant that they were not afforded the level of importance required:

> It needs statutory functionality and recognition in legislation

> For the future the IAP process needs support from the management executive and resources are needed. Councillors to keep it on the agenda and WOP to keep communities active and focused; keep things going and commitment should take root.
>
> (Offaly Councillors, Corcoran 2010)

The shifts in power between the various actors was keenly observed by the Councillors as was the role of the Councillors:

> (Re WOP) Councillors bring bad news whereas LDCs bring good news! Councillors do not have the same resources. Councillors watch how Partnerships operate as they have funding and councillors do not.

> The County plan is a very legal document. Council staff are very involved in the plan but not the Councillors. Now I have built up experience of how to deal with plans and how a community can feed into the plan; if community spirit is there it is important to influence the plan. Community may be willing to bite into it long-term.
>
> (Offaly Councillors, Corcoran 2010)

Some Councillors saw their role clearly as giving backing to their community's wishes:

> (IAP offered) leverage for councillors with the County council. The Ferbane councillors went as a united group.

> Councillors leadership was shown and supportive. They have not commandeered the whole thing.
>
> (Offaly Councillors, Corcoran 2010)

Others were somewhat reluctant regarding the value of the IAP:

> For elected representatives it's hard to equate at the ballot box; it's hard to measure.

> As a Councillor I did not like to push myself on the issues and I did not always feel that I should be there unless invited-a little barrier
>
> (Offaly Councillors, Corcoran 2010)

5.3.3 Discussion

The IAP project as it operated in Offaly was an attempt to empower participating communities to have their opinions and priorities represented in the statutory planning process by creating a structure at a local level to engage communities in policy-making. At the time it was conceived, the concept and operation of Social Partnership was being embraced by the Irish state. Such structures of consultation and agreement between the state, the market and civil society operated at macro and meso levels in Irish society, particularly during the 2000s (Murphy 2002). The attempt to mirror such a structure at a micro-level in Ferbane and other areas of West Offaly was therefore congruent with national policy and practice at the time. Social Partnership was seen by Larragy (2014) as an area where conceivably community and voluntary groups could gain access to the 'inner-sanctum' where agenda-setting takes place. It may also have the higher goal of the renewal of social movements and associational life; the challenge is to link such groups with the operation of the system of representative government in ways that revitalise the latter while renewing citizenship. This would involve bringing in groups that are usually marginal to such neo-corporate systems.

Meade (2005), however, criticises the participation of the community and voluntary sector in Social Partnership as a diversion from social mobilisation against an oppressive State, viewing it as a method of incorporation and ultimately a silencing of the critical voice. In fact, if we take Collins (2002) view, Social Partnership may have acted to help legitimise state actions in the eyes of the public. In the Ferbane case, involvement with the state in future planning may have acted as a distraction from the fact that major state investment and employment through the ESB/BNM was no longer going to be available to the area. The key question remains – can processes such as IAP, that empower local people, in any way shift the balance of power away from State and market interests? We have already seen that many of the powerful interests were not represented at the local level. How therefore can subordinate groups access agenda-setting arenas? It may be argued that it is the State who set the agenda as it frames local development planning, 'allowing' local groups access at designated points. Communities had no real bargaining power nor 'menace' and were regarded as the junior partner in the planning system. We have seen earlier that Ideal speech as promoted by Habermas is viewed by Fainstein (2000) as a moral rather than a practical argument. Following Foucault, Fainstein (2000) and Flyvbjerg and Richardson (2002) reject the view that the powerless will gain an equal place at the table; and even if they do participate that their views are unlikely to be given due consideration.

5.3.4 Participation

For TI and WOP, as facilitators, the potential for community participation to shape local development outcomes was a primary motivation in becoming involved in IAP in the first place. The principle of participation is one of the key values of community development and may be defined as the self-identification of needs and interests, the formulation of responses by the community or group concerned and their ability to influence outcomes (All Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Workers Education and Training 2018).

When examining its success in increasing community participation , it is important to ensure that the IAP included everyone in the community *and* that it addressed the needs of more marginalised groups, such that nobody was excluded either because of the area where they live or because of the social group that they belong to. Following writers such as Horgan (2008) and Shortall (2008) this means examining the IAP under this means two separate but related themes; those of social integration and social inclusion,

5.3.5 Definitions

Social inclusion has been variously defined, but normally refers to practices within a social intervention to ensure that everyone, regardless of circumstance, can achieve their potential and can participate in activities deemed normal within a given society. Social exclusion means being unable to participate in society because of a lack of resources that are normally available to the general population. It normally then focuses on *people or social groups* who are marginalised and the factors behind such exclusion.

The Irish Government's White Paper on Rural Development (1999 Introduction) defined it as:

> …a term linked to addressing the different processes of marginalisation in society. It embraces not only economic factors such as unemployment, poverty and inadequate incomes but also wider social issues of isolation, powerlessness and lack of influence and inequalities in terms of access to decision-making'.
> (Irish Government 1999, Introduction)

Social integration, while related to social exclusion, tends to focus on *geographic areas* that are deemed to be marginalised, understanding that disadvantage and deprivation tend to be concentrated in particular geographical locations. A development approach that focuses on the whole community aimed at addressing some of its structural limitations is envisaged,

identifying and addressing issues that limit/will benefit the community as a whole (Horgan 2008, p. 182).

It is important to distinguish between these terms, as failure to do so leads to imprecise targeting and ultimately a failure to address the key objectives of rural development policy and practice (Shortall 2008).

5.4   Assessment of Progress towards Integration and Inclusion

An important aspect of community involvement and in securing buy-in was the participation of local people in collecting the data for the original plan. In the independent evaluation of 2007, for example, respondents spoke about the initial meetings and questionnaires that had formed part of initial planning in 2001. Respondents had varied reactions to the work involved and the success of these measures. For example, one person remembered the hard work in administering questionnaires and another respondent spoke about how useful the surveys and meetings were in gathering wider community opinions about development priorities.

> The questionnaires, draft plan and public meetings were all seen as valuable consultation tools. Consultation was seen as vitally important in bringing people on board, involving them and making sure that the Plan took the direction the community wanted. In one case it was felt that there should have been even more consultation with local interest groups before sensitive issues came to draft stage. Respondents felt professional experience and credibility was important in supporting the development of the Plan and highlighting the need to cover other issues besides employment. The Plan must involve the community from the earliest opportunity to ensure it is a 'plan for the community by the community' and other agencies should be involved from the beginning. There is a dilemma in expecting people to take responsibility for engaging in the process and Plan, while acknowledging there are issues around engaging with social inclusion 'groups' who may not consider themselves groups or have unanimous needs. It was suggested that early meetings with relevant agencies might highlight where some of these groups are and potential needs.
> (Fox Timmons 2007, p. 4)

By 2003, when the first evaluation of the IAP took place, there was a recognition that while much had been achieved, more needed to be done to include a broader range of people. Furthermore, the respondents pointed to the need to ensure that everyone in the community had the opportunity of participating and that the process was inclusive of all social groups. To this end, participants agreed that participation needed to be encouraged, that inclusiveness

needed to be addressed and that the groups needed to be broadened to meet the particular needs of vulnerable people.

By March 2009, Fox Timmons & Associates found that the membership of the Ferbane Development Group had indeed been widened:

> Historically there has been a reliance on local business leaders to take the lead but there has been a conscious effort to broaden the remit of the group to include social inclusion issues. Those interviewed were positive in general about the work of the steering group. They are happy with what has been achieved with the first IAP and are enthusiastic about the latest IAP which is currently being drafted…. In the past the IAP tended to concentrate on enterprise and development, but in the recent past new actions have been identified and task groups have been formed around youth facilities, supports for older people, community centre facilities and the environment.
> (Fox Timmons 2009, p. 17)

There was still a desire to broaden the membership of these Task groups:

> The vast majority of those consulted feel the task groups could and should be bigger. 94% of respondents would like new people to become involved. There has been a conscious effort to include young people in research/planning and the development of youth facilities has become a priority in Ferbane. Methods of increasing participation that were recommended include identifying new leaders and targeting them to get involved, communicating success through public meetings and possibly a newsletter, linking into other existing organisations such as scouts and having open steering and task group meetings.
> (Fox Timmons 2009, p. 18)

Respondents also reported that consultation with the public was ongoing via public meetings and discussions and bringing young people on board to assist with data collection. They were clear that community involvement in researching and planning a vision for the area had taken place. Respondents were generally positive about the facilitating and guiding role of the Partnership company and agreed that WOP had played an important role in local community development and capacity building The evaluation was also positive in terms of the level of community knowledge and understanding about the Plan and various submissions that were made by the groups to Offaly County Council:

> In terms of knowledge and understanding there is general agreement that the local community was actively involved in developing the submission/plan, as evidenced for example by the extensive survey which took place in Ferbane. 88% of respondents either agree or strongly agree that the local community was

actively involved in its development. 81% feel the submission/plan is clear although some recognise that the IAP itself needs to be written up. 75% are satisfied that the submission/plan shows the wishes of the community. In terms of awareness of the submission/plan, the majority (56%) feel the wider community is aware of it. Many feel that levels of awareness could and should improve.

(Fox Timmons 2009, p. 19)

It was concluded that the steering and task groups needed to try to get new members on board to prevent burnout. Communication mechanisms needed to be augmented to ensure that the wider community and other stakeholders were kept up to date on developments. Overall, the report found that the planning process had become more inclusive in phase two but that such inclusion needed to be constantly attended to and encouraged by community leaders.

5.5   Feedback from the Community

In 2010, questions focused on the levels of community involvement and commitment to the IAP and sought to assess the issue of local leadership within it.

Eight of 11 people interviewed agreed or strongly agreed that levels of community involvement to date have been satisfactory. 'There was big "buy in"' (Corcoran 2010).

Five strongly agreed, three agreed and three neither agreed nor disagreed that levels of community commitment to date have been satisfactory

> This was huge as the Community invested 50,000 in the Business Park through buying shares and this provided seed capital for the venture.
>
> It depends who is on the group-some groups are strong. More people need to be involved.
>
> (Community Members, Ferbane,Corcoran 2010)

All eleven agreed, or strongly agreed, with the statement that *We rely on few people in the community to take leadership;* however, there was no consensus about the statement *We rely on a few people in the community to get the work done*

> The broad-base of some of the groups such as the Festivals and the Childcare group work very well.

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People have different interests e.g. Scouts, GAA, SVDP-and different commitments which may not overlap.

There are different interests. If people are asked to participate, they will. People will not go to meetings.

<div align="right">(Community Members, Ferbane Corcoran 2010)</div>

Ten people agreed, or strongly agreed, the statement that *We all work together with the interests of the community at heart leaving our individual interests aside,* with one respondent neither agreeing nor disagreeing

Competition yet co-existence. No individual interests were evident.

All worked for the town.

Community groups do but communities can be less involved.

Councillors do not always do so

.
<div align="right">(Community Members, Ferbane Corcoran 2010)</div>

The participants were then asked: *What has worked well about community involvement and what have you enjoyed most?* The answers to this question were analysed by the researcher and the conclusion was that the answers could be categorised under two headings; good process and positive local development outcomes. While all agreed that there are a limited number of leaders in the community, and that to a large extent that the IAP was led by business leaders in the town, there was a sense that there is quite an amount of diffuse activity happening in Ferbane and that there were different interest groups each pursuing their own objectives, and quite successfully.

Everyone had an opportunity to have a say and different areas and estates were represented. Lots of different people involved and goodwill was generated.

Setting achievable targets and working with people I did not otherwise know.

The community was under pressure and BNM/ESB put the fund into place in response. Social capital generated within BNM/ESB was released into the community and the senior staff became involved in community effort.

The fundraising was hugely successful. Local groups benefitted from the process and were strengthened by it. Co-operation with sports organisations e.g. allowing the school free access to the GAA facilities.

<div align="right">(Community Members, Ferbane Corcoran 2010)</div>

Participants were also asked: *What hasn't worked well in terms of community involvement i.e. what could be improved? What have you enjoyed least?* Again, answers here were analysed and categorised under two headings: the need for more local involvement and lack of physical outcomes

> We need to regenerate commitment and community involvement again. New developments need new people. Some groups set their aims too high and people got disillusioned and frustrated and involvement fell away.
>
> (Community Member, Ferbane Corcoran 2010)

The questions in this section sought to gather views on the size of the steering and task groups, whether all sections of the community were involved and to explore opinions from people about the involvement of new people on the committees.

There was no consensus on the issue of whether or not *the task/steering group is the right size*

> It needs to be regenerated. Ferbane Development Group needs to be reconstituted.
>
> The people involved are all successful people.
>
> Small is good and efficient. You want a focused Group of 6-8 people.
>
> (Community Members, Ferbane Corcoran 2010)

5.5.1   *Shortcomings*

There was also no consensus about whether or not all of the community was represented on the Ferbane Development Group; four neither agreed nor disagreed, four disagreed and three agreed with only one strongly agreeing

> However it is dominated by business people.
>
> There are a small number of people on the steering group for a long time and may not be involved outside their own area of interest.
>
> Many do not get involved especially from the local authority estates. Critics never get involved.
>
> There is a need for more buy-in.
>
> Poor youth involvement.
>
> (Community Members, Ferbane Corcoran 2010)

As seen earlier, it is important to have all of the affected groups represented in the collaborative planning process. In answers to questions posed, respondents highlighted those not involved and also ideas to include those hitherto excluded:

Regarding those not involved, there were varying opinions:

> Newer housing developments are not represented. Integration into the community has not happened yet.

> Opportunity was created but circumstances do not allow them to participate e.g. carers, non-English speakers.

> There are stronger community groups now but what about the new estates and those not involved?

> The community group is for those who wanted to be involved and some are disinterested at the early stages and at task group level getting people involved was easier. It is more of a challenge longer-term for enterprise and tourism. In communities, 7% participate and 7% knock others. If people are asked to participate, they will. Community groups do participate but communities can be less involved.
>
> <div align="right">Community Members, Ferbane (Corcoran 2010)</div>

Ideas to involve those excluded were stated as follows:

> New issues are developing. There is a need to pull in new/disengaged people. New services are needed at community level. To engage new people in processes it's very important to revisit process. To get new people involved, keep trying. Get one or two every year. Target areas for attention and get them to nominate someone to come on board-search people out and headhunt. A gradual approach to involvement; through small tasks they will feel part of it.

> Local people need to be proactive about recruitment.
>
> <div align="right">Community Members, Ferbane (Corcoran 2010)</div>

5.6   Inclusion or Integration?

For most of the leaders of the IAP there was an assumption that the plan was inclusive because there was a good response to the various consultations involved and the Plan was not 'hijacked' by any particular group in the area:

> CM1 It was a community task, it was community driven and it was community inclusive there was nobody that was excluded from it every household in Ferbane got a copy of the questionnaire there was a 70% response to that, When the first draft of the plan was prepared it was publicised for inspection and there was an open meeting for discussion which was probably relatively new to the town so I would say it has had a very positive impact it wasn't seen to be steered by any particular group or sector or particular corner in the town which I think was also very, very important all groups were equally included.
>
> (Corcoran 2013)

For Tovey (1999), however, it is not *places* that are poor and excluded but the people who live within these places whose deprivation and exclusion render them poor; therefore approaches to rural disadvantage should not start with a place-based approach but one that focuses on social groups. The tension between these approaches was voiced by one respondent:

> I still think … communities can play a role in creating employment; but also if you are unemployed you need to have more sustainable communities where people can have some reasonable quality of life in them, as well you know, to have some bit of hope, to have something to do even, to get involved in your community in some fashion and it's often not written or not even talked about. You need a community to be as socially inclusive as possible so you need to include all members of I; it's a challenge and sometimes it takes longer to do things.   (Corcoran 2013, Staff member OLDC Interview)

This echoes the findings of Williams (2002) and Skidmore (2006) where those already rich in social capital were invited, again and again, to represent the community voice on so-called 'participatory' structures. The challenges facing the IAP therefore included highlighting social inclusion as a complementary feature of social integration, to identify the marginalised within the community, to support them to identify specific needs and to develop and implement responses to those needs in the context of developing a socially integrated development strategy. Failing to tackle issues of social exclusion may mean that the IAP further excludes the powerless, if the mechanisms to include them are not in place.

5.7   The Role of the Planner

In collaborative planning, the planner's weapon was summarised in one word: 'organising' by Forester (1989) who insists that planners must encourage political organising and debate. In order to counteract power distortions, planners can facilitate community participation in decision-making by assisting citizens in organising themselves; in providing information to community groups about key developments that may affect them; they can support local action networks to organise and to call attention to policy alternatives that best serve community interests rather than the interests of the powerful few (Tewdr Jones and Allmendinger 2003). By implication, the planner's role is to create the conditions and develop the arenas within which ideal speech can be pursued. (Dryzek 1993). Thus, the planner in this case becomes a *facilitator of process.* In 1998, regarding the operation of IAP in Kinvara Co Galway, this author wrote that 'the presence of an external facilitator is pivotal to the success of the participatory process' (Corcoran 1998, p. 41).

> This is particularly so in the initial stages of the process, when the various actors require a mediator through which to come together. This role can evolve as the process develops, ensuring that any communication problems are recognised and dealt with to ensure a fair and balanced process. In addition to fulfilling the role of mediation, an outside body is expected to act as a support body, especially for the members of the community who are involved in guiding the process. The complexity of the planning process can often be a considerable barrier to those in the community who may have little or no knowledge of these complexities. The fact that there are unequal power relations between statutory agencies and local communities has to be acknowledged and recognised. The role of facilitator as 'power-broker' may not be inconsiderable in these situations.
>
> (Corcoran 1998, p. 41)

5.7.1   *Facilitation by the Partnership Company*

In the case of Ferbane, it was the Partnership Company, by proxy, that filled the role of Planner/facilitator rather than the Planners in Offaly Co. Council. WOP provided the external expertise, independence and fostered a partnership approach and the respondents recognised them as doing so. Commenting on this role, the staff of the Partnership company reported in 2010:

> WOP were already doing this work for 10-12 years in the county planning process. Linking the local authority to the community-communication and working on projects WOP management decided to dedicate time to this (IAP) and staff were always supported in the process. WOP/OLDC knowledge of the community and building relationships with leaders serves other objectives also.

> The process was facilitated all along to get consultation going, to develop the plan and now implementing with them
>
> Without us, it would not have happened as it is part of our function. Kept it alive and focused and gave it some direction. There was good representation of all of the community due to our social inclusion brief. Inclusion depends on how people are given the opportunity. The consultation process was highly inclusive and simple. It's about real participation in decision-making.
>
> (Corcoran 2010)

The participants were very positive regarding the involvement and commitment of WOP/OLDC to the IAP. Their level of engagement, facilitation skills and support were praised. The issues of the strengthening of local structures to ensure local control over issues were among the interesting points made. This underlines the importance of good facilitation in such participatory processes (Corcoran 2010).

By 2010, there appeared to be a need for OLDC to be invited back to assist the steering groups to look again at some of the strategic issues emerging in Ferbane:

> The issue now may be that there is a need for coordination of effort and activity once again. There is a need expressed by the participants regarding commitment to and involvement in issues such as employment and dereliction. There is also a recognition that many of the people involved have been working on their own for some time and need the input of new people. In terms of encouraging new people to become involved, suggestions cluster around relaunching of the IAP process through the steering and task groups and the development of new concrete projects to attract people on board once again. In this regard, it would appear that the role of the facilitator in the IAP process is important; what role does OLDC now have in the process and what role should it play? A decision may need to be made about the appropriate point of intervention balanced against the importance of local autonomy and resource availability.
>
> (Corcoran 2010 : 25)

Community members also recognised that a new phase of local development was being developed by some local leaders. The need for facilitation of a new process to communicate with local people, to overcome any reluctance about the FDG's role and to revitalise local support for this was recognised:

> There are now some key issues emerging in Ferbane. Some members have started to question the role of the enterprise group over the past 12 months-what is its role? Is it facility management only? They decided to hold a 'think-tank' with an experienced facilitator and this worked really well. They then decided to be more proactive and to establish new sub-groups. They have decided to be

more pro-active and to look at a number of key areas such as Printing, Business Development, Food business and Healthcare. They have some research done and a proposal is in preparation. If the IAP process had not happened these developments would not now be in place.

<div align="right">(Corcoran 2010:26).</div>

5.7.2 *Reviewing the Process*

Interviews conducted in 2013 also asked participants to reflect on the planning process itself. There was a consensus then that local organisations were active, diverse and met the needs of various groups within the community. However, there were reservations expressed regarding the ongoing activities of FDG in terms of age and lack of cohesion:

> I'd say they could be just a tad conservative at times. It's maybe an age thing as well … they had co-ordination at the time; they had leadership they had all the different task groups stroke sub-groups or whatever … they had their own independence or whatever and fed back to this monthly meeting …the sub-groups or task groups all centered on the steering group. That unfortunately didn't last The first Chair had his own style of leadership as well I'd say, a very strong leader … a strong driver of the project … (he was able to) bring enough people with him…and we were depending on him. (When he left) that changed the dynamic of the group because we tried and tried to get someone to carry that flag; by the time someone decided that they'd carry the flag the whole co-ordination had fallen flat on its face and it was really a collection of individual groups working, is that a simplistic way of looking at all of that?
> <div align="right">(Corcoran 2013, Staff member OLDC Interview)</div>

Encouraging independent community-based planning reviews from time to time was regarded as important, and often this role is imperceptible at the time it occurs:

> It's interesting because watching different ways of working groups…you do need a bit of co-ordination or look strategically now and again at what they're at. I don't think that wasn't (there) either but in order to do it with the existing players that were somewhat bombed out, that it wasn't going to happen because they didn't have the energy for it.
> <div align="right">(Corcoran 2013, CM2 Interview)</div>

> There are two ways of bringing people together in the community to do that; you can have an outside facilitator… coming in just bringing all the different groups together seeing what's happening or looking at the overall objectives - that these are being implemented; … or you are able to self-monitor what is happening and have the skills to do it … even to meet twice monthly or quarterly or whatever to say how's this going and to be able to do it in such a way that you're not lecturing or giving out to someone (about) what's not happening. That went and I don't think they even realise what they don't have at the moment.
> <div align="right">(Staff member OLDC)</div>

In 2013, a former facilitator of the IAP spoke about the changes in his role under the new
LEADER programme:

> I'm not involved down there at all any more you see well except for the young
> persons Job Seekers Resource Centre on Wednesday well it wouldn't be it's not
> in my job description at the moment. Things have changed a lot like over the few
> years. … It's very, very focused ; information provisions are the first goal, as
> well as services then community and statutory services; and then we have the last
> one is community action type planning, that kind of stuff, it doesn't have the
> same focus; it's not as important to the public or whatever and also there's so
> much unemployment at the moment.
>
> (Corcoran 2013)

5.7.3 *Discussion*

It is noteworthy that the crucial facilitation role in the IAP process was held by the
Partnership company WOP, or OLDC (after 2008). The advantages of this were the
experience of facilitation that they had built up, their close relationship with communities and
their knowledge of the policy environment. The major disadvantage was that WOP/OLDC,
like all Irish Partnership companies at the time, were not part of the statutory planning system.
While useful to the statutory planning system, in that they provided the 'community
consultation' role required by statute, it was not obligatory for the local authority to take on
board the views 'gathered' by the Partnership company from communities when compiling
the statutory Local Area Plan (Corcoran and Lynch 2011). We have also seen that the role of
the Partnership company changed quite radically post-amalgamation in 2008. Since that time,
greater state control over local development has occurred (Larragy J 2014; Forde *et al.* 2015).
Policies as outlined in the key documents 'Stronger Local Democracy-Options for Change'
(2008) and 'Putting People First: Action Programme for Effective Local Government' (2012)
aimed to achieve greater alignment between local government and local development systems
and agencies. Subsuming development agencies under local authorities became the norm, as
did competitive tendering for funding. In a study by Forde *et al.* (2015), a majority of local
and community development agencies interviewed stated that the impact of alignment on their
community development practice had been negative and had reduced local autonomy.

Most stated that competing with other communities for funding was a concern and that potential job losses were a worry.

> Respondents constantly talked about how increasing attempts to make them accountable to local authorities and the state were leading to the establishment of time-consuming bureaucratic practices and processes which were hindering their ability to do essential work on the ground.
>
> (Forde *et al.* 2015, p.29).

This was echoed in 2017 when an Irish national newspaper reported that the 35 Local Development Companies who deliver the LEADER programme, revealed the extent of bureaucratic blockages which left most of them unable to commit monies to a single project, after 10 months of the rural development programme. Their representative body, Irish Local Development Network, said:

> LEADER has changed from a development programme to an overly-bureaucratic process with unreasonably high barriers for applicants.
>
> (Irish Examiner 2017).

ILDN said the programme, with a budget of €250 million up to 2020, was over-administered, with a litany of extra procedures over-and-above requirements of good governance and warned that the programme could fail if problems were not addressed urgently. Within this framework, the role of the local development agency as facilitator in collaborative planning seems compromised.

Navarro *et al.* (2016) through surveying LAG managers in two case study regions in Spain (Andalusia) and the UK (Wales), found that LAG managers were very positive about the breadth of participation in their own group and its role in decentralising decision-making, but critical of the structure, operation and management of LEADER in rural development programmes. In particular, bureaucracy and the increased influence of regional and local government are perceived to have limited the autonomy of LAGs and to have deterred the participation of marginalised groups. This echoes with recent Irish experience as outlined and the role of Partnerships as facilitators or animators has been reduced or smothered in a quagmire of bureaucratic control.

5.8   Networks

Collaborative theorists maintain that, through developing new relationships, new social capital is created between participants who have never worked together before, may never have met, and may even have been antagonistic in the past. People come to value the new contacts they make and not just for the job in hand; new relationships form beyond the shared project and help to develop new personal and professional networks that had not existed before. Participants also come to see the world from another perspective and to learn what issues matter to others; they come to respect each other's views and even to defend them to others, even if they did not agree with that perspective during dialogue.

5.8.1   Constructing New Arenas

As discussed earlier, collaborative planning focuses on the web of relations within which people live their lives. This is embedded in the networks within which people inter-react. It is within networks that the driving force of social change happens. Healey called for attention to be focused on certain points of intersection or *arenas of action*. Planning processes need to use various fora or arenas deliberately to shape social outcomes. In this way arenas become places where stakeholders meet with a view to changing patterns of discourse and ultimately creating new structures for decision-making (Healey 1997 p. 269).

Subsequent to the publication of the IAP, Offaly County Council proceeded with the preparation of a town plan for Ferbane which integrated many of the objectives contained in the IAP. At a later stage (2006), it was recognised that there was a need to establish a higher level of policymaking for IAP for it to remain potent, thus came the establishment of the Programme Management Group or PMG. This was an attempt to set up an *arena* at County level whereby community interests would be represented directly by the participation of local people sitting with staff from the local authority, Councillors and WOP/OLDC in overseeing the integration and expansion of IAP in County Offaly. At this point it was clear that new structures or arenas had been created at a local level via the IAP and that the plan was being followed and implemented. Despite some setbacks, much had happened at a structural level. And groups were functioning well, but needed to be facilitated on a regular basis in order to keep focused and to recruit new members (Corcoran 2010)

The PMG, however, was not very successful due to its lack of power and lack of inter-dependent relationships (Innes and Booher 2000); it was important for communities and for the Partnership Company to be represented in order to have a say at County level; the same

was not true for the staff and Councillors. The latter were in a position of power and did not legally require the participation of other stakeholders is reaching their objectives. There was a failure to communicate effectively regarding the work of the PMG. In 2010, no community respondent was aware of the existence of the PMG. According to a representative of the partnership company:

> The PMG should be smaller and concentrate on liaison with local groups. There are so many groups in the local authority-people are in a spin. Focus on local action and bottom-up. This is a weakness in the project. It looked like a nice idea but did not work. It's worth continuing and testing further as timelines were too short.
>
> (Corcoran 2010, OLDC staff)

Within collaborative planning theory, such processes must embrace both diversity and inter-dependence; excluded actors can destroy collaboration if key decisions are made outside the agreed arena. Also stakeholders must be convinced that the participation of other stakeholders is fundamental in allowing them to achieve their goals. This was not the case here.

Modifications and improvements to the communication system were suggested by respondents in 2010 as follows:

> Planners need to input more and take more ownership in responding to community needs for action. The energy was there in the task groups. Task orientation really worked. Hopefully the Council will do more than consultation but get into action. Engaging new people is important. People get fed up with surveys. Tangible actions needed not just policies.
>
> (OLDC staff in Corcoran 2010)

> The level of involvement of Councillors depended on the person and whether their area was involved-did they know what was going on? The Councillors were very involved in Ferbane, they were not involved in Banagher and somewhat involved in Cloghan. There was confusion. Consistency is important.
>
> (Councillor in Corcoran 2010)

In Offaly the 'hard' tasks of translating IAPs into planning policy and ultimately into Local Area Plans was to be completed by the Planners and presented back to communities and to the elected members for discussion, further amendment and ultimately approval. For the process to work, issues around land-use planning etc. need to then be taken up by the Council with the groups when the time arrived to develop the statutory Local Area Plan and the findings of the local groups incorporated therein as appropriate. This did not happen uniformly in Offaly. In

Ferbane, in both phases of the project, the community plans as articulated in the IAPs was translated very clearly by the Planners into the statutory Local Area Plan. The Ferbane community remained satisfied that their wishes were reflected in the statutory plan and that they were listened to by politicians and planners alike. Thus, the planning system adapted to meet the expressed needs of local people. Communication with the other two communities however was uneven and neither Cloghan nor Banagher received feedback about their submissions from the Council. It was also difficult for them to see where the IAPs had been incorporated into planning policy. For the community, the level of satisfaction with the IAP therefore was directly related to the extent to which they believed that their wishes as communicated were translated into the formal planning system

The case study on creating and implementing community vision and goals, as told by CM 2 (provided in Appendix E) reveals the importance of creating effective arenas where social change can occur:

5.9 Relationships

One of the major successes of the IAP is the relationship building that has happened over time. It is felt strongly that, outcomes aside, the relationship building between Offaly County Council staff, Elected Representatives, WOP, the community steering and task groups and other agencies has been very important in terms of progressing the plan in the community and giving it credibility.

> Relationships have absolutely improved, the community will be much slower to complain about Planners, the council or councillors Initially I was impatient and asked will I bother going to meetings? I'm glad I didn't leave it – it's great to see things happening.
>
> (Banagher Community Representative 2009)

> Relationships have improved over time. If you go back two years ago if you met people in the street we were talking about the weather, now we are talking about the plan.
>
> (Cloghan Community Representative 2009)

> Outputs aside, the relationship building that has happened through the process has been good Offaly County Council Staff Member.
>
> (Fox Timmons 2007)

The relationships that had most scope for improvement were the relationships the communities had with Offaly Co. Council (Staff and Elected Representatives). By 2010, this

tended to depend on individual personalities and commitment to IAP. It was noteworthy that where a longer link existed between the community and council, as in Ferbane, relationships had developed further. The fact that Council staff engaged so thoroughly in 2001-02 in Ferbane and that the community's wishes were directly translated into the statutory Local Area Plan at that stage had sustained this positive relationship between the two parties.

As we have seen earlier in such settings the act of dialogue and communication is central. It is during collaborative discourse that social change in complex modern societies begins to occur. Comments regarding the communicative flow in IAP in 2010 were as follows:

> Communication is so important. And any effort that you put into that, repays itself. So many of these cases that go through the Labour Court and other courts - they are all through lack of communication at the beginning. And people get their backs up. And there's no way you can change it then.
>
> (Ferbane Community member)

The importance of negotiated outcomes between participants was noted:

> IAP is an opportunity for constructive communication. It's a chance for people not usually heard to be so. Clear guidance to Councillors about what communities want is needed. It is a negotiating tool-a balance of opinion. It is information for Councillors to guide decisions on tourism, zoning and use of the rural development fund.
>
> (Councillor 4)

The ability of communities to increasingly become aware of the decision-making process was stated:

> Relationships improved with the Council-we were ahead of our time; linking the Council to the community; give voice to community; opening doors and funding identified. Communities are now awakened about the County development plan- there is more in-depth discussion.
>
> (OLDC staff member)

The significant experience of senior figures involved of developing business relationships and of forging deals through their networks was brought to bear in Ferbane:

> A theme that could be pursued in this research is that of the role of BNM/ESB in promoting local development. Staff were encouraged/facilitated by management there to pursue local development and to use staff experience of social

networking to develop alternative enterprises. One of these senior staff was the one who identified the Cowpar; The Cowpark was then an empty space. This man had a vision based on his experience of various business parks and felt that the Cowpark was an asset that was not utilised. He then talked to a local politician and tapped into contacts within civil and business groups re the idea.

(Corcoran 2010, p. 26-27)

In relation to Ferbane the following comments on relationships were gathered:

Good relationships developed as projects were developed together. I got to know people personally and that can open doors and get you in.

We worked with area engineers and planners where this did not happen before; that was worthwhile. Get council officials involved. The county engineer was very involved in Ferbane and Cloghan. Relationships improved over time just from participation in the PMG and steering groups. Some councillors felt threatened by the process. IAP helped them more than they realise! There is a stronger relationship now with the county council and elected representatives as a consequence.

Relationships were always very positive never a negative tone in the thing. Stress occurred when community wishes did not appear in the County plan but this did not impact on relationships. The plan assisted in developing relationships and the quality of relationships is quite high.

(Ferbane Community members, Corcoran, 2010)

5.9.1 Conclusion

Traditionally, local authorities in Ireland have had a poor relationship with community groups. Even where a local authority has a progressive approach to the consideration of the views of the community on an issue or development, in general there are often no structures in place at local level formally to engage communities in policy making. In 2008, the study of the IAP project in Co. Galway concluded that there were new or enhanced structures for participation emerging, but they were largely small-scale, explorative and at the lower-end of the decision-making spectrum. There was a failure on the part of local authorities to move beyond rhetoric to action, and to move from ad-hoc consultation with communities to establishing local policymaking and implementation bodies with decision-making powers and the resources to implement emerging proposals. As may have been the case in Offaly, relationships were developed via the IAP, new networks were created, and the stock of social capital held by the community grew.

5.10 Conclusions regarding Collaborative Planning

It is evident from the data collected and from physical observation and assessment that the 2001 development plan had a significant impact on local development outcomes in Ferbane. The 2001 plan contained a number of ambitious targets in the areas of enterprise, tourism, housing, recreation and social development. Local development structures were strengthened, and local initiative stimulated. This was particularly evident in the area of enterprise development at the Cowpark. By 2003, when the first evaluation took place, it was clear that stakeholders had been involved in creating and implementing community vision and goals and that future action was planned. However, even at this point, there were concerns raised about maintaining volunteer motivation, the incorporation of other local groups into the process and the need to meet the needs of vulnerable groups in the community through more social development programmes.

The level of action orientation within planning and implementation was evidenced throughout. A large number and impressive scale of developments as listed by respondents was achieved in a relatively short length of time. Evaluators noted that success and enthusiasm were viewed as 'contagious' and that a 'virtuous cycle' of development had been created. Endogenous factors in the form of local participation and mobilisation, and exogenous state support combined to create successful outcomes. While certain developments, such as the construction of a new school, would have happened anyway, there was a general consensus that IAP had helped to influence the direction of local development

In terms of evaluation and planning, the IAP was evaluated at various points through internal and external methods such as surveys, questionnaires and public meetings. Most of these however were confined to stakeholders or those who were active in the community. Wider public consultation took place informally, via the task groups and through formalised community surveys-one in 2000 and another in 2018. Both of these were conducted by Tipperary Institute. Some evaluation took place under the auspices of West Offaly Partnership, who were the co-facilitators of the original 2001/02 plan and then remained as active supporters and co-funders until 2010. This all changed by 2010 with the combined impact of recession, state spending cutbacks, the termination of RARP funding from the Carnegie Trust and crucially the change in the role of WOP under new amalgamation arrangements signalled a turning point in the planning project. At this point, due to these and other factors the FDG retreated somewhat from the broad development remit that they had previously assumed. This was noted by stakeholders in the 2010 evaluation, which recommended renewed facilitation to re-boot local development and to bring new people on

board. Similarly, in 2013, there was a perception that the coordination role of the FDG had faded somewhat. This may have been due to burnout and in the absence of adequate facilitation as the role of the local development company changed under amalgamation.

In terms of participation, another aspect that was constantly mentioned was the level of hard work and commitment systems such as IAP such impose. Respondents were generally happy that the local community was aware of and supportive of the plan. The need to further widen participation was a constant feature of the evaluations, as was the need to keep local people informed and active in implementation. It is difficult for a voluntary community group to maintain constant levels of 'ongoing action in achieving the goals agreed' in the development plan.

It is clear that economic needs dominated, and that the response to this as enterprise development was a defining aspect of the FDG. Overall, stakeholders commended this; however, at every stage this caused a certain tension for two main reasons-the lesser focus given to social development and the dominance of existing leaders who were focused on enterprise as the catalyst for local development. However, the level of commitment and expertise of these senior people was always appreciated and their key role in leading local development was undoubtedly a critical success factor in the Ferbane story.

Consideration of *who* is involved however is a central question for some analysts. For the Rowntree Foundation (Skidmore *et al.* 2006), it was important to highlight that selective participatory processes tend to favour the already well-connected and that their power becomes even stronger via the 'new' participatory structures. Even worse is when marginalised people come to believe that participation in decision-making is not for them and thus exclude themselves from the decision-making arenas because of the presence of 'other' community members representing a local elite. This may have been the case in Ferbane where non-participation of local authority tenants, non-English speakers and carers was noted by respondents. It is notable that in 2010 and 2013 there was no consensus about whether all of the community was represented on the steering and task groups.

Overall, in terms of impact, can it be said that the IAP delivered actions to address the most important issues that affected the community? And even if it did, could local government address these key issues? The most important issue facing the Ferbane community was stated to be economic in nature, particularly the provision of employment to replace the jobs that were lost because of the move away from peat extraction by the area's largest employer, Bord na Móna. Local government in Ireland has little or no role in economic development beyond

the provision of minor infrastructure and limited amounts of grant-aiding to small businesses and community groups. The fact is that Ferbane was experiencing an existential crisis because of decisions taken at both European and National levels regarding peat extraction. No substantive national plan was in place to replace the hundreds of jobs that were at risk, leaving the provision of alternative employment to market forces and local endeavour. These local actors, including the local community, the Partnership Company and the County Council were trying their best to accommodate substantial economic forces without having any significant means of redress at their disposal. They also lacked significant space to influence EU rural development policy and the investment priorities of the Irish state. For critics of collaborative planning, there are deep structural issues at play in such cases that cannot be expunged by participation in local planning exercises; changing speech does not transform structures. For such critics, the threat of disruption to the state forces change rather than participation in palliative measures. Allowing traditionally excluded groups to participate in decision-making is not enough; they must be bolstered by access to resources such as cash, the provision of expertise and effective organisation.

This difficulty is symptomatic of an endemic problem inherent in the way in which many of the policy decisions regarding local development are made. Often, communities and other groups are asked to participate in discussions regarding the mechanisms for implementing visions that are decided elsewhere rather than being asked to participate in the setting of those visions. The involvement of local people as part of partnership structures is only likely to be meaningful if those local structures have real power to make decisions. In his examination of the constraints facing community groups, Frazer (1996) maintains that involving local communities in Partnerships in a way that is meaningful takes time. Some partners have been very reluctant to devote the necessary time and resources to broaden empowerment. Promoting participation among the most marginalised in the community requires extra effort. There are numerous causes behind people's unwillingness to participate, ranging from straightforward reasons such as time constraints to more complex ones such as lack of belief in the process or in one's ability to participate. In order to overcome these problems, it is necessary to go out into the community and actively encourage participation through a range of targeted measures. These measures may range from offering alternative times and venues for meetings to capacity building and training. However, all these exercises require a significant investment of both time and financial resources.

In Arnstein's (1969) typology, if partnership is to be achieved, power needs to be redistributed through negotiation between citizens and power holders. These two groups must

agree to share planning and decision-making responsibilities through such structures as joint policy boards, planning committees and mechanism for resolving impasses. In her opinion however in most cases where power has come to be shared it was taken by the citizens, not given by the city. Power had to be wrested by the powerless rather that proffered by the powerful. She maintains that partnership can work most effectively when there is an organised power-base in the community to which the citizen-leaders are accountable and where the group have resources to pay for independent technical advice and support. With these ingredients, citizens have some genuine bargaining power over the outcome of the plan and can approach the agencies with 'hat on head instead of in hand' (Arnstein 1969, p. 222).

CEDRA (2012) draw on the *Action Programme for Effective Local Government* entitled 'Putting People First' ('PPF') when recommending a new approach to local economic development planning.

> The Commission … advocates a more cooperative approach to local and community development with a more comprehensive role for local authorities in the strategic management of local development in the form of community and local development plans. This process (identified as Alignment of Local and Community development in PPF) will be overseen by bodies known as Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) that will utilise a community led approach to both planning and implementation of local development interventions in future. The approach advocated in PPF is in line with the integrated approach suggested by the research process of the Commission. In this context the Commission recommends the continued use of such an approach placing the emphasis on full and comprehensive participation of all members of the community.
>
> (CEDRA 2012, p. 48)

The importance of such mechanisms as the Ferbane IAP, which aims to align local priorities with national policy is therefore underlined.

Did Organisations use the CED plan to guide their actions? Organisations here are taken to mean the State bodies responsible for addressing development issues in Ferbane. As we have seen, these results were uneven; in the case of Ferbane, many of the community's concerns were reflected in the statutory plans drawn up by the local authority so in this case, the IAP did operate as required. However, this was due to a coincidence of many factors and cannot be read as a typical outcome.

If these 'arenas'- in Healey's lexicon- are to succeed, then those at the centre who hold power must delegate that power to local partnership groups to draw up these integrated plans for

their areas. This will mean those who currently have power and resources being required to share control with others. Echoing Arnstein's (1969) writing of 50 years ago, there are still very unequal relationships between the statutory and community sectors. This is also the case internationally more collaborative planning system failed to create a new set of heuristics and had little impact on the traditional organisational culture (Murray 2005; Pacione 2015).

The problems of developing collaborative systems within bureaucratic hierarchies are also highlighted by others. (Conrad *et al.* 2011) While participation in planning has been accepted in principle for a long time, it has generally not succeeded in significantly changing planning systems and planning practice. Significant structural and institutional barriers remain. Following Williams (2002), Burton (2003) and Murray (2005), it may be proposed that while the Irish planning system stresses the importance of participation and consultation in a legislative context that the practice is quite different. The Irish Government's Planning Act (2000) stresses the importance of public participation, or at least consultation, in the planning process. However, as in the UK, it does not prescribe the *mechanisms* that should be used to facilitate such participation. The IAP experience to date would suggest that in the absence of such mechanisms that the local authorities failed to link consultation results with decision-making practices nor with setting targets. Listening was not '*translated into action*' (Hayden and Boaz 2000; Burns *et al.*, cited in Williams 2002, p. 27). Following Williams here, while participants in the IAP have influenced decisions, the issues were relatively minor ones. The extent to which people in the participating communities *believe* that they were or are in a position to influence decisions is key here. Thus, issues of structure and power again take centre stage.

As stated earlier, there is an onus upon local authorities to build up the infrastructure of the community sector-the local support and umbrella bodies, networks and forums which facilitate groups, organise cooperation amongst them, build up long-term assets and endowments and conduct dialogue between the community sector and the state bodies. Without such development, it is unlikely that processes such as those explored here would hold significant sway in decision-making systems that are normally the remit of government. The Canadian Framework has proposed that the existence of a participatory community plan is a necessary condition in the development of a resilient community. We may conclude here that while this is indeed correct it cannot be concluded that the framework is in itself enough to operate as the complete template for resilient local development planning.

This chapter has established that the preparation and implementation of a community plan is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the development of a resilient community. In the next chapter we turn to consider a further element in the evolution of a resilient community, namely promoting community leadership.

Chapter 6: Community Leadership

6.1   Introduction

The idea that leadership capacity within a community is an essential aspect of resilience building has been underlined by researchers examining the literature on resilience (Edwards 2009; Hegney *et al.* 2008; Patel *et al.* 2017; Steiner *et al.* 2016) and by activist groups and policy makers who seek to support community organisations in resilience-building (Australian Government Social Inclusion Board 2009; The Centre for Community Enterprise B.C. 2000; Hopkins 2008; Wilding 2011). Within these frameworks, leadership tends to be defined in terms of the local community's own ability to lead development processes in a way that is participatory, inclusive, visionary etc. In other words, the *endogenous* features are emphasised, based on the mobilisation of local resources and assets *by those living in the place itself* (Cheshire *et al.* 2015). One of these frameworks *The Community Resilience Manual: A Resource for rural Recovery and Resilience* developed in Canada in 2000 posits four principles that need to be present for resilience to exist. One of these is *Promoting Community Leadership*. When assessing the resilience of a community the framework proposes that it should be audited with the following leadership issues in mind:

- Elected community leadership is visionary, shares power and builds consensus
- Leadership is diversified and representative of age, gender and cultural composition of the community
- Organisations in the Community have developed partnerships and collaborative working relationships
- Community members are involved in significant community decisions

In this chapter, I will examine which, if any, of these factors were apparent in the design and roll-out of the Integrated Area Planning project in Offaly which was initiated in 2000 in Ferbane and was later replicated in two other areas, Cloghan and Banagher. Data collected in 2009/2010 and 2013 concluded that leadership was indeed a core aspect of resilience building within Ferbane. However, while local-level or *endogenous* leadership was a necessary ingredient in local resilience building, it was not sufficient. Local leadership had to find support from the broader or *exogenous* decision-making system that existed outside of the local area. A combination of endogenous or bottom-up processes combined with exogenous

top-down factors merged in Ferbane through what is termed *neo-endogenous development* (Ray 2001; Shucksmith 2010) was required. This was the approach taken in Ferbane: when crisis hit in the late 1990s; due to the planned closure of the two largest sites of employment in energy production and extraction, a working group formed to address the issue of pending economic implosion in Ferbane. This group was led largely by business*men* and senior managers employed within the state agencies that were due to wind-down. Since that time, this group has led a 20-year project to develop enterprise and community services within the town, *with the active support of state agencies*. This chapter tells the story of this project, with a focus on the characteristics and features of leadership as stated above. It will first explore the issue of vision, power and creating consensus; it then moves on to look at issues of diversity, inclusion and representation and finally examines in detail the development of partnerships and collaborative working relationships established through the IAP.

6.2   Vision, Sharing Power and Creating Consensus

As explored earlier, by the late 1990s, Ferbane faced a crisis as the two main employers, Bord na Móna (BNM) and the Electricity Supply Board (ESB) announced a significant reduction in operations in the West Offaly area. High unemployment in Ferbane resulted, reflective of over-dependency on these traditional employers. A group called Ferbane Development Group was in existence at the time. And this group, made up mostly of existing community leaders, decided to take action.

Ferbane Development Group (FDG), already involved in developing a local heritage centre, decided to develop a plan for the Ferbane area in order to address these challenges. They were supported throughout with facilitation and guidance by very skilled and experienced staff from the local Partnership development company, then called West Offaly Partnership (later incorporated into Offaly Local Development Company). A research and educational organisation specialising in rural development, Tipperary Institute (TI) was appointed to facilitate the process. Key statutory agencies including Offaly County Council and existing local community groups were also involved.

A major step in the project was the appointment of a steering Group for the IAP. The main responsibility of this group was the leadership function: guiding the IAP by developing an overall set of visions for the plan, participating on task groups and ensuring that local people were consulted at all stages in the plan's development. This reflects collaborative planning models which call for both diversity and interdependence among stakeholders in any planning

system if the benefits of collaborative dialogue are to be achieved (Healey 1987, Forester 1989). Another key aspect of Integrated Area Planning is shaping a shared vision for the future of an area.

This vision was shaped collaboratively by key participants, led by the steering group and provided the foundation for the subsequent actions that emerged. To achieve this, TI acted as a facilitator, encouraging the people involved to think beyond the present and to imagine, shape and articulate an alternative future for the town. The IAP was also considerably enhanced by the skills and guidance provided by West Offaly Partnership. Taking this positive statement as the foundation, the steering group and other working groups were established and went on to develop and implement a very detailed Integrated Area Plan for Ferbane. Offaly County Council then proceeded with the preparation of a town plan for Ferbane, a statutory instrument which incorporated many of the objectives contained in the IAP (Corcoran 2009).

The Ferbane IAP was publicly launched in February 2002. It is important to note that at the time of writing the plan, the emphasis was placed firmly on enterprise development. As will become clear in later discussions, this was for a number of reasons, including the fact that replacement industry for ESB/BNM was perceived as a priority, the fact that considerable funding was available and the positioning and skills set of the FDG members.

A former member of the FDG Community Member 1 (CM1) explains:

> I came here at the end of 1999 just before the millennium and I suppose the big news when I arrived was that the power station had been closed down and so that was a kind of a death knell for the town and I suppose there was a sense of urgency and it was felt we had to do something about it and there were a number of initiatives and the first one … was building the Heritage Centre at the top of the town … then we decided that we should put together a five year plan for the town which we duly commenced in the year 2000 with the aid of the Tipperary Institute of Technology and supported by a lot of the local agencies like Offaly County Council, Shannon Development, County Enterprise Board. The plan was put together and launched in 2002.
>
> (Corcoran 2013, CM1 Interview)

Reflecting locally expressed concerns regarding economic decline, the Marketing and Enterprise group was by far the most dominant and that sector took up most of the effort of the FDG.

A limited company was formed in 2003 with not-for-profit charitable status. Ferbane was promoted as a business location by the FDG and the group developed a very ambitious plan for a Business Park. This was initiated when Offaly County Council agreed to hand over a 55-acre site called the Cowpark and rezone it for commercial use, with the aim of developing a critical mass of industry close to the town. The Ferbane Development group had strong support from state agencies such as Shannon Development and the local authority, Offaly County Council. Crucially, the group also received support from the West Offaly Enterprise Fund which had been set up when the ESB shut down the old power station (FDG 2002)

A prerequisite of Enterprise Funding was that the community would demonstrate its commitment by raising at least 5% of the capital requirement for the overall project. The Ferbane community rallied to this challenge by contributing to a fundraising lottery syndicate that raised €50,000 over a two-year period. 200 families contributed €4.60 per week or €240 per family per year for two years into the syndicate; 50% of this contribution was then invested in the Ferbane Business & Technology Park (FDG 2002). This development process was led by the FDG whose members had a strong entrepreneurial drive and considerable managerial experience.

Again, a member of the FDG explains:

> I always go back to I suppose my own business training; for a successful business you need three things: you need a good business plan, you need capable management capability and you need financial resources … I suppose we had, I felt, with the town plan, we had a good plan to work on. There was a strong buy in by the local community with capable people involved and it was the funding that was made available by the West Offaly Enterprise Fund and the Shannon Development helped us to make the first big investment of 1.4 million in the Ferbane Business and Technology Park.
> (Corcoran 2013, CM1 Interview)

An interesting aspect of the profile of FDG was that many of the leaders were former senior managers within the state agencies who were withdrawing from the area. These people, all middle-aged men, were able to use their managerial skills and their own networks to develop the community enterprise model that came to define development within Ferbane. Their profile and standing in the local community also gave credibility to the project and attracted funding and support from the local Partnership company, the local authority and other public funding sources (Fox-Timmons and Associates 2009)

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This was recognised as a key factor in interviews conducted in 2013:

> We had the manager at the ESB and then HR Manager… a man who was
> manager at the ESB Ferbane, lives here. On human assets and knowledge, we
> would have a lot of these guys who are ex-engineers. And accountants; some of
> these guys are now in their 70s.
>
> <div align="right">(Corcoran 2013, CM3 Interview)</div>

> Key stakeholders - we were fortunate, at the time, to have pro-active people. I
> mean P himself, was the chair. Others who became board members afterwards.
> These people were very important. Myself, I was in BNM and in the GAA. I
> managed the Ferbane team for six or seven years and we had the Championship
> for five years in a row - you had that sort of a little bit of credibility.
>
> <div align="right">(Corcoran 2013, CM2 Interview)</div>

Staff from the Partnership company also appreciated the strength and depth of local leadership in Ferbane:

> (On the Chair of FDG): Yes that's where the whole strong leadership kicks in
> isn't it? and having the skills as well you know that he (CM2) plays very much
> the developmental type role and a leadership type role I would say that. (The
> Ferbane community) probably would have the better ability to do it because it
> has the track record to look back on and say whether we've done this before and
> these were the needs at the time, to self-organise ; where you have strong leaders,
> that will happen firstly .It's visionary… not sure it was appreciated at local
> level…if you step back and look back at it there was a bit of vision there
> definitely there was. You can see what happened as a result.
>
> <div align="right">(Corcoran 2013 Interview with OLDC staff member)</div>

6.2.1   Diversity, Inclusion and Representation

In response to requests from communities and from agencies labouring under the weight of a flawed planning system, Tipperary Institute developed a framework for planning that sought to embrace the principles of participation and collaboration referred to earlier. One desired outcome of such processes is a 'shared-power world (Forester 1989; Healey 1997) via new governance arrangements, at least at a local level.

In examining such systems, the issue of power and its redistribution may be central. Collaborative planning approaches have been variously lauded as ways of sharing power in an unequal world (Forester 1989, 2010; Healey 1997, 2000) or conversely in imposing new forms of tyranny (Kothari 2001). Does collaborative planning reinforce existing leadership roles to the exclusion of other voices? The traditional 'Leader' mechanism which focused on enterprise is an example of a 'territorial' approach, where the development of the

geographical area was emphasised, the assumption being that this would lead to development gains for all in the area, including the least powerful. In many cases research has found that the potential for empowerment is not always realised and that new local governance arrangements can foster new forms of inequality and exclusion. Despite the inclusion of a broader range of actors, governance initiatives can also remain elitist as the 'usual suspects' continue to form management committees and thus direct local development efforts (Curtin and Varley 1997; Navarro *et al.* 2016; Shucksmith 2010).

An important aspect of the Ferbane case-study is indeed the extent to which leadership was confined to a certain group who tended to be older, middle-class and male. This is quite typical of rural development groups when an enterprise focus is chosen; a focus on enterprise and business development is perhaps of its nature confined to local elites who are adept at business and experienced in developing proposals, networking and comfortable in the business world. This makes local economic development exclusive by their nature (Shortall 1994). The focus on developing enterprise was, without a doubt, the main driver of development in Ferbane.

However, it can be argued that the provision of employment was one of the priority issues identified in the community survey conducted in 2001 as part of developing the IAP:

> The priority issues identified by respondents for the development plan were improved infrastructure and shopping facilities, tourism/urban renewal development, improved training and employment opportunities, improved youth and leisure facilities, improved transport facilities and improved health and childcare facilities.
>
> (Tipperary Institute 2001, p. 31).
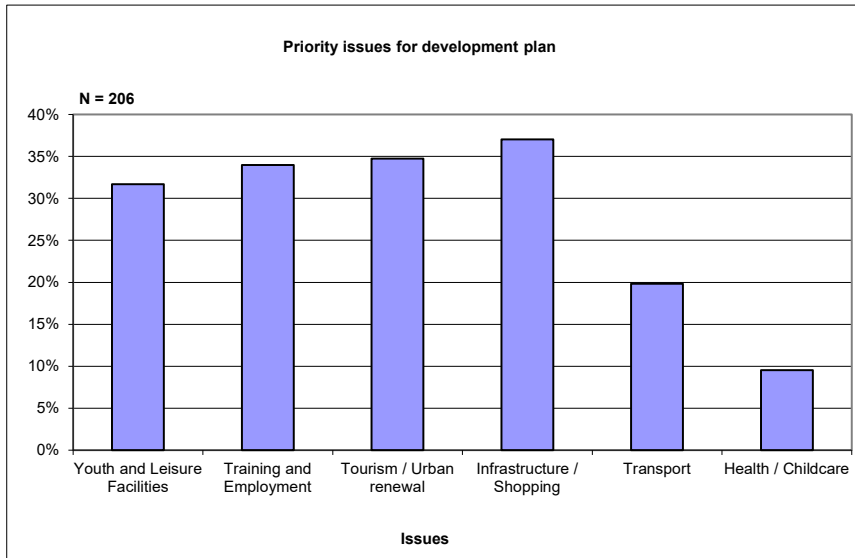
Figure 3: Results of Community Survey, 2001: The priority issues identified by respondents for the development plan

It is interesting to observe that while a range of actions were therefore possible, the main action that was selected was the development of the Enterprise centre. This was largely due to the availability of funding and the offer of enterprise space by the County Council. It may also be due to the fact that the development of enterprise was within the 'comfort zone' of the FDG. On the other hand, it is difficult for community groups to refuse such a large tranche of funding, and indeed, by 2005, adaptations had been made and other priority areas were indeed addressed. It may be the case that more targeted interventions to promote social inclusion than were developed under the IAP were required. This is perhaps what many respondents had in mind when they spoke of the need for more social development interventions in the area.

As an extension of this, frequently it is local 'notables' or the already powerful who tend to dominate development in rural areas, to the exclusion of marginalised individuals and groups (Curtin and Varley 1997; Shucksmith 2000). This trend continues as Navarro *et al.* (2016) discovered in a study on the operation of LEADER programmes in Wales and Andalucia, where the failure of the programme to reach marginalised groups such as unemployed people and the youth was identified. In terms of gender, it appears that women were under-represented in that traditional enterprise management space, appearing later on other groups such as the childcare initiative and the education committee. Shortall's 1994 work on Women

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in Local Action Groups asks the question – are women not seen in spaces where they are not expected?

> The importance of culture and norms is evident in shaping the spaces women occupy. Women in rural and urban areas in our culture generally have more childcare and housework duties…. In the former, the traditional barriers to women were repeatedly expressed; childcare, transport, lack of self-confidence, and this was the case even when women were successful business people.
>
> (Shortall 1994, p. 8)

The absence of women during the evaluation process is notable. This was also commented on by an interviewee in 2013 who highlighted the lack of female participation on the FDG.

6.2.2   *Show me a Woman!*

In 2008, Kirwan conducted a study on patterns of participation in another area where an IAP had taken place. By examining participation rates by gender at steering group meetings she concluded that while a relatively equal number of men and women started off on the steering group that as time went on there was a lower pattern of attendance by women over the lifetime of the project and that, as the period of the project extended that the decline in female participation was more significant than that of the male cohort.

One of the strategies adopted in the IAP that seemed to have been successful in promoting diverse leadership was the task group structure. As noted by Varley in 2006, reflecting the concern that an elite group may control the process, the development of task groups allows for the dissemination of power and control beyond a small centralised group. This was later underlined by Horgan:

> The development of task groups, and naming these groups as having lead responsibility for themes, aims to support social integration. … This mechanism is an important social inclusion tool, allowing individuals to become involved in discrete formats, tackling issues that are of prime interest. … The evolution of these task groups, from named interests and through the steering group, minimises the danger of co-option onto a structure for the sake of mere demonstration of inclusion.
>
> (Horgan 2008, p. 189-190).

In 2013, when asked the question: *Was community leadership inclusive*? respondents expressed different opinions; there was not a consensus on this issue. One view was that

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leaders were representative of the local community even if they were middle-aged, middle-class male professionals because they were from there, worked locally and were in close contact with the community. Others felt that the group, while undoubtedly effective, were elitist:

> I would agree it is (inclusive) but there's probably a slight leaning towards maybe people who have had management exposure in management positions which I suppose is a good thing and a bad thing. I think it's probably a strength that there have been people who have had management training who have been involved in the community and I think the community has benefited from that; it's very important that any community organisation … has to run itself on a business-like basis; it has to have key objectives and there has to be a modus operandi in terms of how you go about and achieve those objectives.
>
> <div align="right">(Corcoran 2013, CM1 Interview)</div>

From the Partnership company, who deal with many groups in other communities, the FDG did not appear to be socially diverse:

> P1: No; it's been patently obvious in Ferbane that - show me a woman that was involved in it apart from the childcare centre and if there was a younger person or people they are young parents or whatever.
>
> CC: And social class wise?
>
> P1: I would say they were all employed or in Ferbane I suppose… you try and have it a bit more inclusive and then again who says inclusiveness works either? So does the end justify the means? Probably no, it wasn't very socially inclusive; like I say it was a handpicked team … it is usually the people that are reasonably well involved that will get involved in groups and task groups or whatever and implement plans. … it wasn't the purest way you would ever pick a team if you look at it from a pure community development perspective … team leaders are picked first and then the teams are picked around them like the old school yard picking soccer teams that way of doing things. But it worked for them so one might say it was the right way to do it.
>
> CC: OK and do you think that community members, ordinary community members if you like, are involved in significant community decisions, or were?
>
> P1: I suppose there were and still are to a certain extent … ordinary members might have got a bit more involved in maybe the Tidy Towns type group … there were certain groups that weren't part of the original plan as well but have come on since … there are more ordinary people maybe involved in the whole Childcare project say but then that wasn't seen as a huge need in the original plan either. But it's only been since you start looking at the needs on the ground afterwards looking at say what were the needs … people were looking at a community playgroup at one stage that's where it started from. (The Childcare project) that's now one of the biggest employers in Ferbane … there's twelve or thirteen employees.
>
> <div align="right">(Corcoran 2013)</div>

There was also a view expressed that community involvement is sporadic and needs to be pushed at various times and stages of the development process. When a new initiative starts, community participation is perceived to be high and a new project can be initiated but is hard to maintain. It may also be the case that community involvement in the enterprise aspect of local development is low and limited to a select few, with experience and a track-record in business, whereas initiatives involving issues such as young people, childcare or tidy towns attract a wider representation.

In October 2003, a meeting attended by over 30 people involved in a variety of task groups was convened by FDG and facilitated by this author with colleagues from Tipperary Institute, with a view to rekindling interest in plan implementation, which was perceived to be flagging somewhat and in need of revitalisation. Some attendees had been involved intensively with the group and others were coming relatively new to the experience.

The report on the meeting concluded that:

- People have given a lot of time and energy to the group and this may not be sustainable.
- There was a need to renew the membership of the group to include new and more members
- There was a need to integrate the work of the FDG with the work of other groups
- It was important to ask more people to become involved.

(Corcoran 2003)

These themes were also explored in 2013, ten years later. Respondents were asked about how the FDG were engaged in motivating people to become involved in new enterprise development:

> CM4: They definitely have been (inclusive). At the moment I suppose it's just the amount of development that is going on; it's probably reduced a little bit but I know again there was a lot of community involvement in terms of trying to see the feasibility with the food hub to try and develop that and I know they've been working a lot and a lot of the local community people would have been canvassed and asked about that….I think they try to incorporate a lot of the young people in different groupings that they have within the town and they really have tried to promote youth leadership through Foroige and through involvement with other groups.

(Corcoran 2013)

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A distinction was also drawn between those who make decisions about community projects and those who actually participate in them:

> CM1: It tends to boil down to a lot of those people who are involved in committees; not every decision is referred to every household neither can it be workable if it was to do that. But every community organisation is made up of representatives of people in the local community so that it represents them.

> CM5: There's involvement in all the community groups, there's a cross section of involvement… I think like if you put all the groups together you have a good age mix…I know the business park group now have incorporated a few young people lately, and as I said the organizations like the GAA or the scouts, girl guides and all that, they have young people involved…. I think as representative of age and gender and that, yeah.

> (Corcoran 2013)

The limits of community inclusion were recognised by some observers:

> OLDC facilitator (In terms of inclusion) not as much as I'd like it to be now. …when you came to that final hard steering group, enterprise was seen as the main focus, the main role and I do think we missed out … Some community facilities are not what they could be … I still think that they took their eye off the ball with the Community centre.

> (Corcoran 2003)

(This refers to an opportunity presented in 2007 to enable the FDG to develop a community centre but this failed to get off the ground).

The issue of who participates and whether processes aimed at inclusion actually further exclude certain groups (Horgan 2008; Skidmore *et al.* 2006) is worth exploring.

> the IAP process is planning for the whole community-but, to do so, it must have emphasis on those traditionally disenfranchised, in order to represent everyone equally-therefore social inclusion is essential. Otherwise, it would only be those with high motivation, social capital and capacity who would participate pro-actively in the process, creating a void in what the IAP addresses and missing out on innovative and relevant approaches to problems that address both the community as a whole and the individual concerns and groups within that community.

> (Horgan 2008, p. 194)

A dilemma in terms of social class was eluded to by one respondent, stating that unemployed people and those living in local authority housing are hard to reach and do not get involved in community activities:

> CM3: Again, it depends on who you are talking about. I don't particularly think - and this may sound snobbish - but I don't think that people who live in local authority houses feel the same pride in their houses as people like me who built their own houses. OK, and that's just the house - if you can't have pride in your house you can't have pride in your place.
> CC: Is there a degree of social exclusion of local authority tenants?
> CM3: No, not really, no. These people are quite happy where they are. Not everyone's cup of tea - the houses on the left as you come in...I would say that over 50% to 60% of these people would be unemployed - long-term unemployed - not ex-ESB. No, no - that was the culture. Their fathers were unemployed and they were unemployed in the boom-time. That's what I'm saying: they would not feel a sense of pride in their community. They just drift from day to day - or whatever.
>
> (Corcoran 2013)

6.2.3 Discussion

The IAP was undertaken with the active cooperation of a number of stakeholders, including Offaly County Council, the community of Ferbane, Elected Representatives and local business interests. The issues which caused most concern locally in 2000 were the decline in population, the loss of major employers, reduction in employee numbers and lack of inward investment. The Ferbane IAP set out to address these and other issues through the development of policy and objectives in key areas and later through the establishment and support of groups having responsibility over discrete elements of the plan.

One of the facilitators (Corcoran 2013) explains:

> I think the plan was well thought through… they'd had a lot of community involvement and the community, pretty much everybody, had their opportunity for their input via a questionnaire and the consultation process that was going on after the questionnaires were collected and the first draft of the plans were produced. There was a good buy in to the plan and …there was a good buy in to the implementation as well.
>
> (Corcoran 2013)

In all of the interviews over the years, participants reported that community involvement in, and commitment to, the IAP in Ferbane was very strong and that in general, the community rowed in behind the process and the plan, giving it financial, moral and physical support. It is significant, for example that 50,000 Euro was raised by 200 families in the area in a weekly

lottery fund. Much had been achieved and those involved were reported to be very proud of these achievements.

The 2010 evaluation report concluded that while all agreed that the IAP was led by business leaders in the town, there was a sense too that there was quite an amount of diffuse activity happening in Ferbane with different interest groups each pursuing their own objectives, and quite successfully. Various task groups such as a Youth group, an Environmental group and Childcare committees either emerged from the IAP or were strengthened by it. However, while there was a lot of energy put into meetings about the plan and co-ordination via the umbrella steering group in the first year or two, this had lessened to a certain extent.

> Levels of community commitment to the process were perceived to be very high. There is some disappointment with the fact that a few people in the community take leadership roles and that the group relies on a few people to get the work done. While there is some tension present in the process within groups, the level of co-operation and working together to achieve common ends is perceived to be high. However, on digging a little further, it was discovered that certain groups such as new arrivals in the town, people living in certain estates and foreign nationals were seriously under-represented.
>
> (Corcoran 2010, p. 16)

6.2.4   *Developing partnerships and collaborative working relationships*

Since the early 2000s the uneven nature of development outcomes, the persistence and growth in inequality, the ravages wrought by recession on rural areas and a recognition that 'structure still matters' in rural affairs have prompted the emergence of concepts such as neo-endogenous or networked development. This recognises the critical requirement of combining exogenous and endogenous forces for local good, where local capacity and participation meets state goodwill and support.

Ray (2001) proposed the concept of *neo-endogenous development* to encompass both local and the e*xtra-local* leadership:

> Actors in the politico-administrative system (through the national up to the European level as well as in other localities) are all seen as part of the extra-local environment of rural development and as potentially recruitable by localities in support of their regeneration strategies
>
> (Ray 2001, p. 19).

Central to his thesis is that local areas must acquire the capacity to assume some responsibility for their own socio-economic development; that development gains are retained

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within the locality; that development is contextualized by focusing on the needs, capacities and views of local people and that the development of local structures sustains development momentum when official intervention ends. Endogenous development stresses local people's own agency, their own definitions of development, the importance of building social capital and networks in order to counter the forces of globalisation, privatisation and economic restructuring. (Shucksmith 2010). Networked development, it is proposed, should seek to involve all of the relevant stakeholders, from local to national and beyond, in the development process. While local capacity-building and participation is crucial for development to occur, so too is the role of an enabling state in providing the conditions and resources necessary to facilitate positive outcomes at a local level.

> Critical to the socio-economic development process are those institutions, actors and networks that have the capacity to link businesses, communities and institutions involved in governance at a variety of scales. Networked (i.e. neo-endogenous development) thus advocates an emphasis on local capacity building, but recognizes in addition the essential role of the state and other actors. Networked development therefore involves not only deliberative governance and territorial place shaping, but also institutional capacity-building and sharing of other responsibilities with an enabling state.
>
> (Cheshire *et al.* 2015, p. 18)

Related to the concept of networked development, with its emphasis on cross-scalar connections, shared responsibility and networks is that of evolutionary resilience. Again, within much resilience writing, the emphasis has been on examining the capacity of communities to become resilient in the face of shock and crisis (TANGO 2016; Lovell *et al.* 2016). However, attention to extra-local, extraneous forces is crucial to resilience.

Arguing for more place-based studies of the impact of globalisation, Woods (2007) proposed that it is the local that represents the ultimate outcome of global systems, and coined the phrase *the globalised countryside* to capture the multi-layered nature of development, from the supra-national to the local. Within this context, globalisation is seen not as an inevitably and monolithically oppressive force but as a process that is negotiated at many levels and by many actors. Gkartzios and Lowe (2019) propose that the foci of neo-endogenous rural development are place-making and community well-being, building resilience, coping with austerity and emerging geographies of exclusion and (in) migration triggered by economic crises while exploring alternative development approaches to the neo-liberal consensus.

It also possesses a place and practice-based epistemology:

> Neo-endogenous development was an effort to rationalize what was actually happening on the ground, a way of thinking about how things work in practice, accepting that rural development knowledge is produced by various agents.
>
> (Gkartzios and Lowe 2019, p. 11)

A critique of the model of resilience used here (The Canadian Resilience Framework) is that leadership is narrowly defined, with the emphasis on the capacity of local i.e. *community-based* leaders to push local development. What this author maintains is that leadership needs to come from many quarters if local development is to succeed in tackling complex issues of economic disruption and service decline. Therefore, taking a *networked* view is important- or sharing the responsibility for local development between capable local actors and an enabling state. Leadership for local development therefore, it is posited, needs to come not only from those living in the place but also from other significant actors. These usually include the state (typically elected representatives, local authorities, state agencies and development agencies) and the private sector (those who are investing or often disinvesting in a locale).

In the case of Ferbane, it is clear that both endogenous and exogenous factors were at play. An engaged local community, led by people with considerable managerial and entrepreneurial experience, formed a development group (FDG) in order to address the looming economic threat facing the town. This group were ably facilitated by the local development company, West Offaly Partnership, linking them into various funding mechanisms. FDG was adept at acquiring funding from external agents such as Shannon Development, the ESB and the local authority. However, this was only possible because of the ability of the local group to organise and to mobilise the local community in activities such as fundraising. This was done in a very participatory way, via a highly successful and lucrative local development lottery, with proceeds accumulating towards the development of local enterprises. The enabling mechanism afforded to the group by the ESB fund was crucial. There is no doubt in respondent's minds but that this combination of local leadership, facilitation by external agencies such as West Offaly Partnership/OLDC and Tipperary Institute and substantial funding combined to create success.

Endogenous development, which focuses only on mobilising local assets is insufficient to deliver significant development gains; local initiatives can be easily over-ruled and undermined by an unsupportive policy environment. It is usually exogenous factors that

determine what actually happens to an area, in sectors such as employment, essential services provision and infrastructure; and these decisions are most often made by agents operating outside of the said community, often without any significant connection to the area. Networked development therefore focuses on those processes that empower and enable local communities to develop the resources, capacity and skills that will enable them to develop *connections, collaborations and partnerships* that extend beyond that area and that connect them to broader networks where the decisions that impact upon their area are made. The next critical issue becomes the degree of influence that local people can bring to bear on these exogenous, top-down forces.

6.3   The Elected Representatives' Role

There were a number of points where the leadership style adopted was visionary and sought to encourage participation. Such an approach to local planning is of course, modelled on collaborative planning approaches, as discussed and outlined in chapter 3. Copus (2000) maintains that the outcomes of participation are, however, more dependent on the attitudes of the powerful than those attempting to influence them. An important dimension in the discussion on leadership then is the attitude of the locally elected representatives to IAP, and to participatory democracy in general. Similarly, important are the attitudes of key statutory agencies, particularly the local authority, to such participatory approaches in their area of jurisdiction.

In the evaluation of this IAP in Offaly in 2010, four local councillors representing all parts of West Offaly were interviewed. When asked about the role of Elected Representatives in the overall IAP within Offaly, three out of the four councillors interviewed agreed/strongly agreed that elected representatives were committed to the IAP and three agreed/strongly agreed that relationships between local people and elected representatives had improved over time due to the process. However, the length to which the development of good relationships/good communication actually changed the way decisions are made and changed the way in which Councillors conduct their business was quite another issue.

When the four elected representatives themselves were asked *What has been good about elected representatives' involvement?* They agreed that there was some buy in and that it was a good process:

> The attitude of the Councillors changed; Councillors used to go by their own judgement and that of the officials but now learn to listen more to communities. IAP is a help to Councillors if they take the process on board. This process was badly needed a long time ago.
> <div align="right">(Corcoran 2010, Cllr 1 Interview)</div>

> Some Councillors feel that officials know best but I always consulted local community groups and that is my way of doing business; take on board what people have to say because the Council have their own agenda. People in towns know best about the area so involve people more in decision-making
> <div align="right">(Corcoran 2010, Cllr 2 Interview)</div>

What has not worked well in terms of elected representatives' involvement? What could be improved?

> Some are worried about not getting the credit for things. I could have been more involved. Time was an issue and I did not push myself on the issues. I did not feel that I should be there unless I was invited-a little barrier. I was not always happy with the results. Cloghan people were not happy with the response to their submission. The system did not take many of their contributions on board. It is hard to measure the impact of being involved in IAP; and if it delivers at the ballot box-look at Marcella! Councillors are still territorial and do not interfere in another's area.
> <div align="right">(Corcoran 2010, Cllr 1 Interview)</div>

(Note: Cllr Marcella Corcoran-Kennedy was very involved in the local IAP group. She was not elected at the last election and the councillor here was inferring that the IAP process was not advantageous politically).

> I was not always happy with the results. Cloghan people were not happy with the response to their submission. The system did not take many of their contributions on board.
> <div align="right">(Corcoran 2010, Cllr 3 Interview)</div>

So, for the Councillors, there was a certain ambivalence and lack of firm commitment to such a participatory process.

This was recognised by staff in the planning office of Offaly County Council:

> Communities are still unclear about the link between the statutory plan and actual decisions therefore there is a lack of pressure on the Councillors. There was limited change in their behaviour as a result of IAP. The Councillors started off well in the process but this weakened off. IAPs were not necessarily on Councillors minds when they discussed the statutory plans. Some decisions were very far away from the IAPs. This led to apathy at local level and discontent and there was no big change in zoning as a result.
>
> (Corcoran 2010, Staff Member Interview)

Within Ferbane itself however there appeared to be a firmer commitment to the IAP.

In 2013, when asked about political leadership, all seven community respondents noted that local Councillor involvement in Ferbane was both significant and positive

> CC: Do you think that elected community leadership, the local councillors are visionary, that they try to share power and try to build consensus? (2013)
>
> Cllr 4: I would say overall they are yes.
>
> Cllr 2: I would agree, wouldn't I?! …I would take the view that I bring back everything, consult with everybody. I take on board what they are saying and then bring it back and say 'I am making my decision based on this' you know. I would have a vision and I would kind of share that vision of what Ferbane should be in 10 or 20 years' time, and then see what the people want.
>
> (Corcoran 2013)

The level of co-operation between Councillors in pursuing community interests was also noted by participants. In terms of success factors involved, besides considerable local goodwill and effort, the key role of the state agencies Electricity Supply Board (ESB) and Bord na Móna (BNM) in investing both money and management time was recognised; senior staff from these companies were 'released' to become involved as catalysts for community activity. The 2010 evaluation stated:

> The defining feature of the Ferbane IAP experience is the very positive relationships developed during the process and since with the local Council staff and elected representatives. This is quite different to the reactions in the other two areas and may be due to the level of engagement and working together on issues that occurred in Ferbane during the preparation and implementation of the plan. The active involvement of the local elected representatives on the steering group in Ferbane is notable.
>
> (Corcoran 2010, p. 20)

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By 2013 however, with the changes in local government structures in place, and with a change in Government, there was less optimism about the ability of small areas such as Ferbane to influence decisions taken in the County:

> This town always had (political assets) – when Brian Cowen was in power and was minister at the cabinet from 1990. None of our political masters now are at cabinet - whether Charlie Flanagan etc. Neither Laois nor Offaly have a minister nor junior minister. That's probably the first time in a long, long time. I can't remember when we didn't have one. It's a long time since we did. I am here in town, but my party's not in power. Marcella Corcoran Kennedy is from the town but she does not live in the town. So we do not have much influence … And we have a fair bit of influence within the County Council - but that has been diminished when we lost the Ferbane Electoral Area with the boundaries. Birr, Edenderry and Tullamore. Only three electoral areas in the next election, no Ferbane. We fight in the Birr Electoral Area so we are a small fish in a big pond.
> (Corcoran 2013, Cllr2 Interview)

6.4   The Role of the Local Authority

In examining the critiques of collaborative approaches and applying these to the IAP approach, a number of issues arise. A key concern in all participative processes is that of power. One crucial aspect of decision-making that was not mentioned in the Canadian Resilience Framework but used by this author was the role of officials or non-elected Government staff in decision-making The role of institutions and bureaucracy in decision-making that impact on areas such as Ferbane was also not highlighted. The attitudes of key officials such as planners is another key area that was not given much attention in the resilience literature.

From the discussion in the earlier chapter on Collaborative Planning, and following Williams (2002), Burton (2003) and Murray (2005), it may be proposed that, while the Irish planning system stresses the importance of participation and consultation in a legislative context, the practice is quite different (Corcoran and Lynch 2011). The Irish Government's Planning Act (2000) stresses the importance of public participation, or at least consultation, in the planning system. However, as in the UK, it does not prescribe the *mechanisms* that should be used to facilitate such participation. The IAP experience to date would suggest that in the absence of such mechanisms, the local authorities failed to link consultation results with decision-making practices and with setting targets. Listening was not 'translated into action' (Burns *et al.*, cited in Williams 2002, p. 27): while participants in the IAP have influenced decisions, the issues

were relatively minor ones. The extent to which people in the participating communities *believe* that they were or are able to influence decisions is key here.

These writers also maintain that the local authority struggles to accommodate local concerns as little discretion has been delegated from the centre. Also, local officials take the views of the central bureaucracy far more seriously than the demands of local people. In an interview with a senior official in Offaly County Council (2010) the following emerged:

> In terms of the role of the County manager and the Council in the process, priorities have changed. IAP is desirable from a community development perspective; but how can it influence policy? There are legal processes on zoning and environmental directives and the new Planning and Development act will have a bearing. Habitats and water directives are very important now for the Council. There is now a need for the Council to focus on legal requirements rather than on things like IAP. Our priorities must be in covering our statutory requirements. From the Council perspective, if IAP can feed into the statutory process that is good but it is not that essential. Environmental and population imperatives are the most important things now. IAP therefore needs to have a statutory basis. The Council may consult but this must be in the statutory planning process for it to really happen. Legal obligations now take precedence.
>
> (Corcoran 2010)

In addressing the ability of certain groups to influence decisions more than others, Williams also maintains that the *relatively powerless* will be less successful in influencing the state than those with more power i.e. those with access to resources that the state needs or those that the state fear due to their capacity to disrupt. Also, while governments have encouraged public participation in decision-making, there are no formal rights for citizens to participate enshrined in legislation.

In Offaly, the Senior Official stressed the importance of legislative rights in this regard:

> There is a need for IAP to play more into the statutory process. Timing is key and it needs to inform the very start of the planning process and to follow the process and procedures. IAP needs to be recognised formally in the statutory framework and cannot be an optional extra in the process.
>
> (Corcoran 2010)

The role of the *planner as facilitator* is given much significance within collaborative planning systems. Forester, in particular, stresses the centrality of the leadership shown by the planner and the planning organisation. For Forester (1989), planners must recognise that they are

'planning in the face of power' and must work to counteract the negative implications and distortions of power and of social and political inequality within the planning system. Planners must use the tool they have, which is in the *organisation of knowledge* to assist the poor and disorganised to participate in planning. In this way, Planners facilitate the democratic process which it is their duty to uphold. The Planner's role then becomes one of power-broking, mediating, active listening and organising (Forester 1989).

The problems of developing collaborative systems within bureaucratic hierarchies have been alluded to earlier. Harris (2002) among others maintains that although collaborative planning frameworks often seem to have been accepted by the planning profession that they have not succeeded in significantly changing planning systems and planning practice. This may be for a number of reasons: (following Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger 2002)

That planners do not believe in collaborative approaches; although they have studied these models, they are not convinced that participation is good at producing desirable outcomes

They may believe that participation is desirable but believe that they cannot or should not get involved in organising participatory process; that this is not the job of a planner.

They may believe that the institutional context within which planners operate is not democratically friendly therefore the pursuit of collaboration is not feasible

Planners may operate from a fear that participation will be hijacked by powerful forces within the community who do not have the 'public interest' at heart and that more formal procedures are more democratic

Planners are asked to give up large parts of their control and power and take on instead the less-familiar and riskier role of mediator, consensus-builder and organiser; this may be perceived as undesirable and risky

Collaborative planning exercises may be perceived as 'messy, 'untidy' and may not produce the type of information that planners may need in the production of formal plans.

When asked about the efficacy and desirability of the IAP model, some answers from Offaly Co Council staff in 2010 may be illuminating on the utility of IAP in allowing new, less powerful, voices to come to the fore was recognised:

> In development planning, landowner interests tend to dominate and the challenge for IAP is to see if the process could bring another set of interests to bear, as well as to identify a broader range of service needs.
>
> <div align="right">(Corcoran 2010)</div>

IAP was perceived by the staff as a bit 'messy' and 'untidy', producing information that the planners could not use:

> The problem with IAP is that a wish-list tends to develop from it and it is up to other agencies such as the Health Services Executive to respond and they cannot; it is hard for a national body to respond to local needs.

> IAP has proved to be successful in mobilising local groups. There is a need to guard against raising local expectations. The timing of the planning process is important and if the timing is out of sync with the statutory process then there is nowhere for it to move. A translation from IAP to LAP is not guaranteed. Political lobbying is important and this happened in Kinvara and it worked; not so in Banagher where there was no great lobbying. IAP had nothing to say on excessive zoning.
>
> <div align="right">(Corcoran 2010)</div>

Pressure due to lack of resources mitigated against success:

> Staff in the Council were involved but levels of commitment varied. Resources are a huge issue. Forward planning is a promoter of IAP and the area engineers related well to the process. Some staff gave more than others and some staff are very busy with other stuff. Forward planning has been reduced from five to two staff.
>
> <div align="right">(Corcoran 2010)</div>

Perhaps, most importantly, the fact that the IAP had no statutory basis considerably reduced its impact on local authority planning:

> The new Planning and Development act is vital. Statutory requirements will always come first. Communities are still unclear about the link between the statutory plan and actual decisions therefore there is a lack of pressure on the Councillors. There was limited change in their behaviour as a result of IAP.
>
> (Corcoran 2010)

6.4.1 Discussion

Some of the above echoes with Fainstein's (2000) claim that the causes of much poor and oppressive planning is not the fault of top-down expertise; instead business and developer interests continue to prevail in planning systems. Within the IAP experience there is certainly a suggestion that in one area, the failure to translate the expressed wish of the community (and of the planners) into planning policy was usurped because of political intervention on behalf of landowners (Corcoran 2008). The fact that many people in the local community did not make the linkage between a failure to take their views on board and the subsequent widespread zoning of land may lend support to Kothari's claim (2001) that the use of participatory methodologies may serve to distort rather than illuminate the exercise of power. The limited ability of community interests to influence policy in Ireland was noted by Scott *et al.* in 2009. They concluded that vested interests and embedded power relations can compromise attempts to construct participatory policy processes.

Fainstein's (2000) assertion that allowing excluded groups to participate in decision-making is not enough is important; it must be bolstered by access to resources such as cash, expertise and effective organisation in order to make it effective. Given that IAP is initiated by an external organisation it is worth developing on Kothari's (2001) fear that participatory processes are often designed in such a way that local knowledge and information serve to justify and legitimate pre-determined project goals rather than changing or even reshaping project priorities and objectives. This is particularly the case if IAP is expected to feed information into the formal planning system with its predetermined goals and objectives.

In Flyvbjerg and Richardson's view (2002), collaborative planning focuses on the public forum where communication takes place; however much of politics takes place outside of the public forum. It is important to find ways of exploring the places where planning and political practice is '*deeply embedded in the hidden exercise of power and protection of vested interests* (Flyvbjerg and Richardson 2002, p. 60). The Pragmatists such as Dewey discussed earlier question whether all aspects of urban planning and management are best handled

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through inclusionary argumentation. Pragmatism does not make such a sharp distinction between rational action and communicative action as Habermas. Habermas is interested in process. Pragmatists are interested in *results* and focus on process or methodology only to the extent that it will produce desired outcomes. In this context it may be argued that IAP, in its conception and application, is closer to Habermas than to Dewey (Harrison 2002).

The 2009 Final Report to the Carnegie UK Trust also examined the impact of political leadership from a community perspective:

> There were varying opinions from the respondents in relation to the role and performance of Offaly Co. Council in the process. There is general agreement that the quality of the relationships developed very much depend on the input of individuals within the Council. In some areas Elected Representatives have been very active and indeed in Ferbane, two Elected Representatives have joined the steering group. In other areas, involvement has been limited. In Cloghan, many members of the community are conscious that they don't have an Elected Representative for the town and many believe that this may make it hard for them to progress their plan, particularly where the Offaly County Council have to make an input. In Banagher many feel involvement by the Council could and should have been greater. In short, levels of satisfaction with Elected Representatives are directly linked to the extent to which Elected Representatives have committed to the IAP process.
>
> In terms of the role played by Offaly County Council staff in the process, there are varying opinions, again dependent on the commitment displayed by individuals working in the Council. Regarding the submissions made to the County Development Plan by the communities, there is some feeling of dissatisfaction with the outcomes of this exercise and in general it is felt that feedback from Offaly County Council to communities regarding submissions has been very poor. The biggest successes have been where individual staff members have assisted with addressing specific issues identified as problematic by communities e.g. traffic calming in Cloghan, and the business park in Ferbane. It is also confusing when the Co Council use other methods besides the IAP process in consulting communities about development priorities in the area in the process of compiling the Local Area Plans.
>
> (Corcoran 2009, p. 6)

6.4.2   Conclusion

A broad conclusion might suggest that the IAP process in Offaly did succeed in developing new structures for leadership and governance at community level and in bringing practical benefits to the area. What it did not succeed in doing was in changing the way that the state conducted its business; the state system did not take the views emanating from the participants on board in two out of three cases. Where it did, in Ferbane, there was a different set of factors at political and at practical levels that facilitated this. The 2009 and 2010 reports concluded that the considerable investment by Offaly County Council in the Ferbane

Cowpark development, both in freeing up the asset and in developing services on site, were notable. Those interviewed were appreciative of the role of the local Development Company WOP/OLDC and were keen to continue this relationship. Participants were generally positive about the role of individual Council staff and felt that relationships with Council staff were good or very good. Council staff also gained credit for improved local services. This was an example of networked development as outlined earlier in this chapter.

However, such networks must stretch beyond the local to be effective. It needs to be under-scored by legislation and statute. If partnership in planning is to be achieved in any context it means that decision-making power needs to be redistributed through negotiation (Corcoran and Lynch 2011). In the traditional planning system in Ireland, most of the decision-making power rests with planners and politicians and local communities have had little or no organised input into local and county plans. This reflects concerns, highlighted back in the 1990s about the relative lack of power that community groups possess. Their lack of corporate status, uneven funding allocation, organisational weaknesses and a difficulty in maintaining success as highlighted by Curtin and Varley in 1997 continue to feature.

If true partnership is to be achieved, partners involved must agree to share planning and decision-making responsibilities through such structures as the Programme Management Group, local planning groups and other mechanisms for making decisions and resolving impasses. The steering groups and task groups in West Offaly worked well during the pilot phase, implementing actions identified where possible. They worked particularly well where there was an input from elected representatives and Council staff. The Ferbane group worked very well in part due to the active participation in the group of the elected representatives as members. In Cloghan and Banagher successes were achieved when the local area engineer participated in meetings and opened channels of communication between the parties involved.

Several commentators have argued that community-led and managed local development has been severely undermined, if not eradicated totally, by the cohesion, integration and alignment processes that have taken place in Ireland. This occurred with the dominance, and subsequent collapse of social partnership in 2009 and with new legislation prescribing the reform of local government in 2008 and 2012 (see next Chapter for details). This has resulted in a loss of funding and a loss of autonomy and ownership of projects by local communities

Although social partnership arrangements fell victim to the financial and economic collapse of the country, some commentators (Allen 2009, Murphy 2011) would argue that its overall impact has been substantial and that the model of development it established succeeded in

subsuming community development projects through a mixture of funding, co-option and bureaucratic control. For the community development sector, social partnership has presented great challenges and at times it has proved divisive. In some circles it is claimed that State-mediated partnerships have generated community participation that is more tokenistic than real, and it is argued that State co-option has corroded much capacity for critical thinking within the sector, creating a dependent and subservient relationship with the State (Meade 2005). On the other hand, there are those who would argue that it has served as an opportunity to influence and integrate the demands of the community sector into national policy. Murphy (2011) and Allen (2009) conclude, that, despite its demise, that the effect of social partnership has been to restrict rather than encourage ideological debate in the sector and to curb resistance, silencing the critical voice. At a local level partnership became a default setting for community engagement with the State, and this reinforced its dominant role in sponsoring, funding and prescribing the shape of local development programmes and has further enhanced its power and reach into local communities, allowing the State rather than communities to decide on local development priorities. Even where a local authority in Ireland has a progressive approach in relation to the consideration of the views of the community on a particular issue or development, in general there are no structures in place at local level to formally engage communities in policy making (Corcoran and Lynch 2011). The difficulty experienced in Offaly while attempting to establish a new structure to reinforce partnership approaches to planning at an extra-local level is illustrated in the extract provided in Appendix F.

6.5   Summary of Findings

The IAP in Ferbane was led by a competent, organised and focused group of local people; many positive changes occurred, and it had a significant influence on the decisions that were made about the town. The investments made by the state, in enterprise and social development, were guided by community priorities established very early on in the IAP process. Therefore, it emerged that the first measure of leadership for resilience, that *elected community leadership is visionary, shares power and builds consensus* was found to have been achieved. In general, however leadership in Ferbane was not diversified and representative of age, gender and cultural composition of the community. The IAP did little to challenge traditional power-holding *within* the community. In addressing the issue of whether *Community members are involved in significant community decisions*, this did happen in Ferbane, and was dependent on an unusual consensus that developed between local or endogenous factors and external agencies in what may be termed 'networked development'

(Shucksmith 2010, 2012). The IAP appears to have been successful in Ferbane in balancing the control of development from exogenous agents towards endogenous or locally-led groups, who were able first of all to decide what areas of development were important and secondly *in forming successful partnerships* with state agencies. It was envisaged that this success could be replicated in other areas in West Offaly, but this did not happen. It is suggested that if a local authority wishes to support methods that foster resilience that the authority itself needs to use its power in a different way, promoting local innovation, empowering civil society and encouraging a vision-led leadership style (Shaw 2012). These practices mean little however if the participants have no power to enact the decisions made during even the best participatory process and with the most inclusive local leadership.

Having explored the issue of leadership, the next chapter will examine the level and significance of social capital within Ferbane and its role in the development of resilience.

Chapter 7 Social Capital

A community's "character" is only as rich as the resilience it offers when tested.

(Brown 2019)

As I said, Tidy Towns, things like that have taken legs again and I'd say a lot of the organisations are strong you know, they're maintaining themselves. There are plenty of clubs there for every sort of an activity…there are certainly a few additions and the ones that are there are quite strong I think, ...they're operating very successfully as well, you know.... the social services, sort of, organisations......they seem to be attracting in new and vibrant members as well.

(Corcoran 2013, CM5 Interview)

7.1   Introduction

Following the previous two chapters assessment of the contributions of community planning and leadership, this Chapter will examine the linkages between social capital and resilience as it expressed itself in Ferbane. The chapter opens with an analysis of the significance of social capital and its linkages to resilience theory. A critique of this approach is also outlined, followed by a brief introduction to the concept of social capital in the Irish context

Following this, a number of issues are explored relating to various measurements of social capital such as local organisational life, community pride, mutual assistance, attachment, education and self-reliance in Ferbane. Data sets collected between 2001 and 2019 are analysed, looking for evidence of indicators of social capital. To this end, a set of questions was prepared, in 2013, following the Canadian Resilience Framework, on issues related to social capital. Respondents were asked to comment on the following:

- There is a variety of community organisations such that the key community development functions are well-served?
- There is a spirit of mutual assistance and co-operation in the community?
- People feel a sense of attachment to their community?
- The community feels a sense of pride?
- People feel optimistic about the future of the community?
- There is a strong belief in and support for education at all levels?

- The community is self-reliant and looks to itself and its resources to address major issues?

Five years later, in 2018, a community survey was carried out to generate a broad understanding of the views of local people about Ferbane and its future. The results of this survey and their relationship to aspects of social capital are presented below. The chapter ends with a critical discussion on the relevance of social capital in the development of community resilience in Ferbane.

7.2   Social Capital

Social capital, defined as the norms, networks and associational life of a particular unit of population, (Chaskin 2001; OECD 2001; Putnam 2000) is proposed as an essential component of community resilience. Social capital has value; for many analysts, its strength or weakness can determine other outcomes such as the ability of a community to survive shocks, retain its essential form and move into a new, improved state. In other words, it can contribute to resilience by adding to the *adaptive* power of a community in the face of change. Central to a consideration of social capital is the extent to which people engage in voluntary relationships of trust, support or joint social activity with others (Putnam 2000; Healy 2005). Chaskin (2001) relates community capacity to take action to the interaction of human capital, organisational resources and social capital in a given community; if properly employed, these three factors can enable communities to solve collective problems and to improve or maintain their well-being.

Putnam focuses on the *connections among individuals-social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them* (Putnam 2000, p.19); social capital can be measured by the degree of civic engagement that exists within any given society. Such engagement may be traced by charting participation in politics and public affairs, in community institutions such as clubs and associations, in the number of informal ties people hold with others and by examining patterns of trust and altruism as measured through philanthropy, volunteering, honesty and reciprocity. Putnam distinguishes between 'bonding' social capital and 'bridging' social capital; bonding social capital represents the strength of exclusive ties within homogenous groups and is good at helping members to support each other and to mobilise solidarity among members. Bridging social capital links diverse people from different backgrounds to each other for mutual gain and advancement. Putnam studied various forms of bonding and bridging social capital by looking at evidence of citizen

engagement in various realms such as political, religious and civic participation, formal and informal networks and evidence of philanthropic and voluntary activity.

In an earlier work (1993), Putnam had proposed that, in addition to standard economic variables, that social capital was an important factor in explaining the relative success of certain Italian regions in attaining economic growth over other, less successful regions. This thesis was supported by Beugelsdijk and Van Schaik (2005) in their extensive work which showed a positive relationship between social capital, in terms of active group membership, and growth differentials in economic regions. An enrichment of the concept of social capital was proposed by Woolock and other scholars at the World Bank (2001, p. 72), proposing the concept of *linking* social capital, referring to ties between the relatively powerless and those in power, and the capacity of individuals or groups to leverage resources, ideas and information from formal institutions. The World Bank, in a series of studies, further advanced this theme, stating that *increasing evidence shows that social capital is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable* (2013). Such action may operate through informal social processes or through organised effort. This links social capital to the notion of the social economy, explored later in chapter 8 of this thesis.

In a critique writing in defence of social diversity, Portes and Vickstrom (2001) examined Putnam's work against a complex set of socio-economic criteria. They concluded that, upon controlling for a given State's percentage of population of Scandinavian descent and membership in the Confederacy, much of social capital's purported predictive power could be explained away. They ask whether Putnam's "social capital indicators" could simply be path-dependent cultural legacies.

> aken as a whole, this set of results suggests that, rather than an autonomous force, social capital—defined as communitarianism or trust—is really a by-product of more basic structural factors of which racial homogeneity, education, and economic equality are paramount. Communitarianism and trust are thus found in predominantly white, relatively affluent, and largely rural areas.
>
> (Putnam 2011, p. 12)

They finish by asking whether outdated concepts of communitarianism and interpersonal trust represent the best or the only ways of producing social cohesion in modern societies and propose that the millions of dollars spent on measuring trust and participation would have been better spent on programmes to promote and facilitate the integration of newcomers into US society.

Another critique of social capital prescription comes from Skocpol (1996) who responded to Putnam (2011) by pointing to the market as the primary actor driving social fracturing, as economic factors pull the better educated and more affluent away from engagement in civil society. Contemporary America has seen significant "brain drain" from less economically dynamic regions to metropolitan hubs; the same process is observed in Ireland where younger, more mobile and better educated rural people migrate from places like Ferbane to the bigger towns and cities (Meredith 2006; Meredith and Gilmartin 2014). While conservatives rallied around civil society as an alternative to governance by the state, Skocpol claims that US civic associations were until recently fostered by the institutional patterns of US federalism, legislatures, competitive elections, and locally rooted political parties. Skocpol (1996) concludes that

> Organized civil society in the United States has never flourished apart from active government and inclusive democratic politics. Civic vitality has also depended on vibrant ties across classes and localities. If we want to repair civil society, we must first and foremost revitalize political democracy. … Re-establishing local voluntary groups alone will not suffice.
>
> (Skocpol 1996, p. 22)

Brown (2019) proposes the phrase 'Blocking' Social Capital to describe how elite groups call on local bonds of solidarity and 'community' in order to prevent newcomers entering their area.

> Even today, master-plan or zoning documents frequently cite "community character" when preserving rigid zoning restrictions. These impulses draw on well-intentioned feelings of community pride and civic engagement to exclude outsiders from sharing in those benefits and opportunities.
>
> (Brown 2019)

In Brown's (2019) view, the rewards for becoming active in the community are more tangible when the sphere of community life is smaller.

> As Stern points out, "Maintaining exclusionary zoning requires residents to organize, share information, and protest." That close-knit circle of interaction is tailor-made to enable the kind of exclusion-based social cohesion that can result in formal opposition to the "wrong kind of people," such as in battles over affordable housing or homeless-shelter placement.
>
> (Brown 2019)

Brown also argues that social capital is increasingly a resource of the advantaged and an active hindrance to those who are outside looking in. Multiple research papers, including those undertaken in Ireland (Brady 2015; Healey 2005) have found that individuals from higher socioeconomic classes are more likely to register social connections, have richer (and wealthier) social networks, volunteer more often, report higher social trust, belong to information-sharing networks in schools or other institutions, and be politically engaged. The danger is that such groups, already rich in social capital, go on to develop an identity that stresses exclusion and use bridging social capital to prevent access by non-members. In rural areas, social capital can reproduce stagnation or inefficiency in a community. Political processes can be dominated by an "old guard" of community leaders, who rely on cosy relationships with the local administration in order to block newcomers.

One of the first analysts to use the term social capital, Bourdieu, saw it as irreducibly attached to class and other forms of stratification which in turn are associated with various forms of personal benefit or advancement (Siisiäinen 2000). Bourdieu regarded social capital as a property of the individual rather than the collective; a private rather than a public asset. Social capital is not uniformly available to members of a group or collective but available to those who provide efforts to acquire it by achieving positions of power and status and by developing goodwill. He identifies three dimensions of capital each with its own relationship to class: economic, cultural and social capital. Bourdieu's concept of social capital puts the emphasis on conflict and power. From Bourdieu's perspective, social capital becomes a resource in the struggles that are carried out in different social arenas. For Shucksmith (2000), Bourdieu's analysis of social, symbolic and cultural capital may offer an explanation as to why a territorial or area-based model of endogenous rural development may be a means of advancing the interests of a local elite, thus exacerbating inequality and social exclusion. Even worse, such local development models may also serve to mask and therefore legitimise and reinforce the existing power relations implicit in the development process itself.

7.3   Social Capital in the Irish context

Analysing the data collected by the Irish National Economic and Social Institute for the National Social and Economic Forum in 2005, author T. Healy found that volunteering, civic engagement and community involvement in Ireland were statistically associated with each other. The positive association between volunteering and community involvement was particularly strong. Seventeen percent of Irish adults undertook some form of unpaid voluntary activity on a regular basis and 22% were actively involved in some type of

voluntary or community group. Put negatively this meant that about four out of five adults were not involved in such activity and that two out of three had not participated in any type of civic activity in the past year. Unlike Putnam, Healy found that persons over 65 were far *less* inclined to be actively involved in their local community or in civic activity. Those with higher levels of education were much more inclined to be active; higher levels of education was one of the most important predictors of many forms of political and social engagement. The authors also quoted from UK data (Schuller *et al.* in Healy 2005) who, in a similar study, found higher levels of organising, advising and counselling skills among those with a higher education-all of which have the potential to contribute to higher levels of civic engagement. It was also reported that active engagement in the workforce was positively associated with volunteering. In addition, the hypothesis that length of residence is positively correlated with engagement and volunteering was, other things being equal, upheld. It would appear that people who have put down roots in a place are more likely to get involved locally. Time spent watching television and in commuting to and from work was negatively associated with volunteering. The survey also indicated that active community engagement is lowest among the elderly, the unemployed, the poorly educated, the ill and disabled and particularly those living in cities.

A Report by the Irish Central Statistics Office (CSO) in 2006 on Community involvement and social networks found much higher levels of participation in Ireland than the levels reported by Healy, revealing that almost two-thirds (65%) of persons aged 16 and over participated in at least one group activity. Overall, nearly one-quarter (24%) of people participated in informal, unpaid charitable work (CSO 2006, p. 5).

Analysis by age group indicated that individuals in the older age groups had higher participation rates than those in the younger age groups. Participation levels were 67% or higher for persons aged 35 or over, while participation levels of 60% or lower were recorded for persons under the age of 35 (CSO 2006, p. 9).

The highest participation rates were found among those living in households with two adults and one to three children, persons living in their accommodation for five years or more and in a rural area. Irish nationals had a higher participation rate than non-nationals. In general, it was found that as income levels rise, so did participation.

A later study (Brady 2015), found that people in rural areas and villages were more likely than those in towns and suburbs to participate in social groups. Brady attributed this to stronger community ties in more established rural areas compared with suburban areas with weaker

ties. Similarly, those with higher levels of education and those in employment were found to be more likely to participate in social groups than those with lower levels of education or those without a job. Echoing Granovetter (1973), Brady found that the number of weak ties (or social acquaintances) was related to improving individual's work opportunities and to better social integration, and that the interaction of living in a small town and investing in weak ties was significant.

7.4   Social Capital and Resilience

As outlined in earlier chapters the concept of resilience within communities has been the subject of recent analysis. Initially, the application of resilience theory to localities focused on the ability of communities to absorb, adapt and re-organise following natural or man-made disasters. Recently, however, the scope of such study has been broadened and also focuses on the ability of geographical areas to respond to all types of disruption.

In examining resilience in response to shocks in five African countries Woodson *et al.* (2016) state that a defining feature of community resilience is the extent to which communities can effectively combine social capital and collective action in response to shocks and stresses (Introduction). The theory maintains that the stronger the stock of social relations, or social capital within that area are, so the chances for that area in coping and recovery are enhanced.

> community resilience extends beyond issues of disaster management and is increasingly recognised as a key ingredient in assisting local places deal with more subtle forms of social disruption. In rural areas, such disruptions may arise from the demise of an industrial base, or the closure of a key employment hub, but they also take the form of protracted decline generated by service closure and depopulation. In determining how and whether local areas cope with such shocks, community resilience places particular emphasis on the collective nature of the response and the ability of local people to draw on communal resources to work together for the common good. Social capital, in the form of generalised networks of trust and reciprocity, is seen as an essential ingredient of community resilience.
>
> (Cheshire *et al.* 2015, p. 9)

Rather than emphasising systemic survival in the face of risk and exposure to shock and vulnerability, Davoudi *et al*. (2013) emphasise the potential of resilience-building as a dynamic process of adaptation and transformation.

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This is called evolutionary resilience and involves:

> building capacity for envisaging and embracing transformation through creativity and imagination, at institutional, community and individual levels and cultivating flexibility, resourcefulness and co-operative networks at various scales. (Davoudi et al. 2013 p. 319)

Therefore, in this definition, fostering resilience involves planning not only for recovery from shocks and crises, but also means developing strategies that prepare communities and the agencies that support them for change; enabling them to adapt and transform and to move from an unstable state to a new, transformed situation. This echoes Powe's 2017 work emphasising the importance of building resilience across all stages of the adaptive cycle.

7.5 Focus on the local

For many analysts, the focus for rural studies has been placed on the local community level, as it is at this level that most attempts at building resilience are implemented. The justification for this is both analytical and pragmatic. Over the past two decades, there has been resurgence in attention to community as a critical arena for addressing a range of issues, including resilience.

> Not only are local communities now defined as the appropriate site or scale of resilience building, but they are also posited as the principal actors with whom responsibility for fostering resilience is thought to lie. Just as governance theorists have described the shift from a socialised, welfarist mode of governing to an advanced liberal form of rule in which the activity of governing is devolved to, or at least 'shared with' actors and agencies 'beyond the state', so we have also witnessed rising expectations on individuals and communities to take greater responsibility for their own risk management.
>
> (Cheshire *et al.* 2015 p. 14).

Shifting responsibility for dealing with risk and shock, from the national and the state to the community and the local converges with the rise of the 'resilience agenda'. The concept and operation of social capital has also been increasingly used to express the *capacities* available within a given social context upon which governance activity, business initiative and cultural life can draw (SCDC, Eade 2007; Laverack 2006). Governance is not the sole preserve of governments - we are all involved and have experience of managing collective affairs. People, in effect, are asked to invent their own governance structures. This collective experience

provides a base and a resource through which new forms of governance can be invented. Governance therefore is conducted less through formal 'rational planning' systems and more through the informal activities of the various actors and the interplay between them. De Magalhaes, following Putnam (1993) refers to Governance capacity as the 'Social Capital of Places', a subset of the institutional capacity required in the increasingly complex process of urban governance.

Recognising this, I sought to explore the extent to which the endogenous features of social capital were felt and experienced within Ferbane, recognising that these factors were seen by many commentators as a necessary but not sufficient condition for local development.

7.6 Social Capital in Ferbane

Most of the issues addressed in this section will look at the health or otherwise of local social capital as proposed by the Canadian Resilience Framework introduced earlier. The first indicator examined here looks *at the variety of community organisations such that the key community development functions are well served*

The first piece of evidence to consider here was from the Ferbane Development Plan 2001. This stated that while there had been a significant history of community activity in the area that there were difficulties experienced by groups and organisations within Ferbane at that time:

> The consultation process has shown there to be concerns in relation to community structures in the area. There are reported difficulties recruiting people onto various committees and ensuring that workloads are shared. Some members of the community, who have sought to promote the continued development of Ferbane, view this against the background of significant community involvement over many years. If community structures are to operate efficiently they must be supported by the community and experience ongoing change in terms of personnel and resources. Ownership of initiatives set out in this report by the community in Ferbane is essential if such initiatives are to be sustainable.
>
> (Lynch 2001, p. 14).

The development plan set out a number of ideas and objectives around the issue of reviving and supporting community structures in the area:

> This report recommends that opportunity be given to community members to become involved in groups established to address sector issues (child care, environment, tourism and so on) and that the Steering Group draw up a list of such sub-groups based on survey findings. Households in the area need to be contacted to encourage participation in the community structures. In many cases

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it is easy for groups to operate without fixed goals or objectives and they can therefore lose shape. It is recommended that each sub-group established should be facilitated in establishing goals and objectives so that they remain cohesive and contribute to the overall fulfilment of the vision for Ferbane.

(Lynch 2001, p. 14)

This statement was then summarised in the plan (Lynch 2001) as indicated in figure 4, below:

Objective:	Actions:
That the people of Ferbane will establish community decision-making structures that give opportunities for participation to all	• New committees to be established • Integration of community development, sport and recreational organisations • Programme of community support to sports organisations • Participation rates in existing community organisations improved • New community development structures established

Figure 4:   Summary Statement – ideas and objectives around the issue of reviving and supporting community structures (social capital) in Ferbane (Source: Lynch 2001)

Between 2001 and 2003, a significant level of facilitation by Tipperary Institute and West Offaly Partnership resulted in the development of new community groups and structures in Ferbane and the strengthening of others. In 2003, respondents reported the following successes in the area of community structures since the Plan had been initiated:

1. Local structures and groups had been developed and strengthened by the process

2. The fundraising lotto had amassed 50,000 euro towards local development initiatives

3. An active childcare committee had been set up and plans for a childcare centre were being developed

4. A local transport initiative had commenced, initiated by community effort

5. An Education committee had been established and plans for a new secondary school were being advanced

Overall, community support was stated as 'strong'. A more focused sense of community was reported, and it was obvious that local groups and organisations were getting people to work together. New committees had been established and were active. More work needed to be done on the integration of and support for community development and sport and recreational organisations. Overall participation rates in existing community organisations had improved to some extent and new community development structures had been established under the umbrella of the Ferbane development Group.

7.6.1   2007 Evaluation

According to the 2007 Evaluation, by Fox-Timmons, further improvements/achievements in the area of social capital were recognised by respondents. A new, updated Plan was being developed and in order to establish new task groups, public meetings were held and then sub-committees were set up to move issues forward. Each group created well-thought out proposals and reports and reached a consensus. Not everyone would have agreed initially but a decision would be arrived at and facilitated until a consensus was reached. Achievements in the area of what we call social capital were noted as follows:

1. Establishment of an overall steering group and task groups and setting of objectives
2. The establishment of task groups having responsibility for discrete plan elements and their continual operation and development since 2002
3. Respondents reported that the various groups were working together in a co-ordinated fashion.
4. Significant funding had been raised and was being spent on different elements of the plan
5. The childcare centre was up and running with 15 staff and over 90 children enrolled in a top-class facility
6. The transport Initiative that was established had been serving the older population and the rural area
7. The second-level education committee was working very well and was successfully negotiating with the Department of Education on planning a state-of-the-art school. The twinning of the 2nd level schools was in progress
8. The plan had further developed a sense of community and provided a way forward to guide local development initiatives
9. The plan had brought Ferbane to the attention of the County Council and other agencies

10. Some young people had participated in County Council and public meetings where it was relevant to them.

The planning and implementation process had sparked other initiatives such as the development of an all- weather pitch and a children's playground plan i.e. it acted as a pioneer or model for other groups in the town who saw the results that had been achieved. According to the evaluators, some changes might have happened anyway but the Plan helped influence the way and direction in which development happened.

> There was community enthusiasm for the process which was reflected in the local contributions raised. The plan galvanised the community together. There was also particular experience and influence available from some community activists who work on an ongoing basis with agencies at a policy–making level.
> (Fox Timmons 2007, p. 11)

Respondents were still active, however due to the amount of time and energy involved, it was felt that new blood was needed to move things on and that the initial enthusiasm has waned and there was a need to get new people involved.

> The challenge is to find other ways of engaging people in the process and getting greater 'buy-in' to give greater results – that there are more ways of getting involved than a questionnaire or public meeting. The new Plan should examine how to spread the principles of what the group is trying to achieve – that everyone has a responsibility to make it a vibrant and viable town- meant representatives could move forward with a vision page.
> (Fox Timmons 2007, p. 12)

There was a dilemma expressed in expecting people to take responsibility while acknowledging there were issues around engaging with social 'groups' who may not consider themselves groups or to be socially excluded or to have unanimous needs. It was suggested that early meetings with relevant agencies might highlight the needs and concerns of some of these groups

> Generally respondents indicated that they thought that the plan had contributed positively to the development of Ferbane and indicated that participation in the process had been of benefit to them. In developing a new plan there are some historically sensitive disputes that will need to be handled carefully. Also departmental support was important and it was stated by some respondents that the new Plan is being drawn up in a different resource context. One respondent felt the challenge will be to look at longer-term issues that will arise in the town and start planning for different contingencies now. A process is now in place for

dealing with challenges – it has been started, not finished. Ferbane has led the way in taking responsibility and making things happen for itself. This can be seen in how the local clubs work well together and have led their own development – there is a strong community spirit. This new plan is an opportunity to involve people and build on successes.

(Fox Timmons 2007, p. 12)

7.6.2 *Evaluation 2009 and organisational development*

The next evaluation of the process, again undertaken by Fox-Timmons and Associates (2007) revealed the following:

- The Ferbane Steering group was meeting every second month with top people in agencies and there was a strong representation at County Council level because two Elected Representatives were active on the steering group

- Task Groups who then fed into a central Steering Group were operational. Task groups covered issues such as youth and elderly, enterprise development, environmental issues and recreation.

- A new plan was in preparation and a submission was made by the steering group into the County Development Plan and there was general satisfaction with the resultant County Development Plan from Offaly County Council

- An evaluation of the previous plan showed that there was a lack of women on board so this is something that the group was trying to address by consulting with other sectors including community and voluntary groups, sports sector etc.

- There was some burn-out in the group responsible for the implementation of the previous plan but new issues had been identified and unlike the previous plan which was perceived as being purely economic, the community, voluntary and sporting sectors were more deeply involved.

- Through the consultation process new people had been brought on board and new actions had been identified e.g. supports for older people, a community centre and a youth cafe.

- The general public in the town were kept informed about progress regarding the IAP and its outcomes through public meetings, local media and newsletters and the number of people involved continued to grow.

- Since 2007 there has been a conscious effort to broaden the remit of the steering and task groups to expand the work beyond an enterprise role and include social inclusion issues. Extensive research has taken place within the Ferbane area through a survey and contact with the community, voluntary and sporting sector. Public meetings take place on an annual basis in relation to community planning to discuss issues and ideas arising. Over 30 people have attended the public meetings. 94% of those consulted feel that levels of community involvement to date have been satisfactory. 81% feel there is a reliance on a few in the community

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> to take leadership, but less (69%) feel there is a reliance on a few in the community to actually get the work done. 81% agree that 'we all work together with the interests of the community at heart leaving our individual interests aside'. 88% feel that everyone in the community has the same opportunities to get involved even if they don't avail of it.
>
> (Fox Timmons 2007, p. 18)

The evaluation stressed the importance of good facilitation of the IAP process. West Offaly Partnership had a crucial role in support and capacity building in all areas and was highly respected by all partners. The evaluators recommended that one key designated West Offaly Partnership/Offaly Local Development Company staff member should work on a consistent basis with each community on the implementation of action plans and on capacity building of the steering group.

7.6.3 *Mutual assistance, Attachment and Pride*

In 2013, respondents were interviewed about perceived levels of social capital within Ferbane and for their own definitions of social capital: Many spontaneously focused in on issues related to self-help and mutual assistance:

> CM1: I think the experience and I suppose the performance of the last twelve years would indicate that the community is quite capable of addressing the issues and doing as much and having a strong input locally to find solutions to whatever problems there are … I think that's probably been one of the successes of the town, that the community took responsibility and went about putting a plan in place and I think that when that was observed by locals, by politicians, by local organisations by the community I think there was a sense of them trying to help themselves, so how can we help them? It wasn't a case of running up to the door and banging the table and saying we need jobs for Ferbane. Every town can do that but I think that's a waste of time. I think a community who addresses its own issues and takes responsibility for them and goes about doing something about it will be far more successful and also attract far more support from the agencies.
>
> (Corcoran, 2013)

Participants were invited to comment on levels and instances of mutual assistance in the town.

> CM8: In the Business Park every major decision is a management board decision-no individual makes decisions on their own. It's a small community and everybody knows each other. It would be very unusual to see people left behind. The Tidy Towns group for example help the elderly with their gutters and heavy jobs. Nobody is just left.
>
> (Corcoran, 2013)

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Some respondents believed that the IAP process had helped to foster mutual assistance between groups in the town by providing a structure to facilitate it:

> CM5: There's been a lot of experience gained there Yeah, I say all of that has had moved on as a result of that plan. You know, that there's different sectors, as I say, have come into being ... from groupings like the community playground: set up a group, fundraise, get the job done. If you want a group to work ... they work to a short-term plan, achieve it, then maybe disband so that can be worked off the umbrella group. And another one coming up at the moment is the, is new community area and the business park, you know. That's moving apace and will be put in place

> The school Principal described how the new Second-level school was opened up for use by local groups. This highlighted both the number of voluntary groups focusing on young people in Ferbane and the assistance afforded by the school to voluntary groups in the town:

> A decision was made on the Board of Management that all voluntary groups particularly those that are involved with young people have free access to the school … we don't ask for anything, now they would offer to make a contribution and that sort of stuff and they put teams in that are sponsored. Since we've opened the GAA would use it from time to time but now they have excellent facilities of their own. But however they have had a play that they wanted to put on and obviously we hosted it here for them. They had a variety concert that they wanted to put on for the Ladies Football Club we hosted it here for them, they have a fashion show every year we would host that here for them. There will be no charge for these community groups; this is a community school so we try to make sure our facilities are available. You would have the Rugby Club over here they use our facilities the whole time for no charge. You would have the Community Games Soccer Club, they'd all from time to time use our facilities, on a once off basis annually, for example, senior citizens would host a Christmas party here. … We try to make sure the facility is available but that decision was taken from the very outset with the Board of Management to make the facility available at no charge to voluntary groups. (The youth group) would be here from 7 to 10 on a Friday and if they were to pay the full commercial rate for that, easily €100 for the night, so we try to make it as available as possible to people.
>
> (Corcoran, 2013)

An extract from conversations held in 2013, which relates to the strength of local volunteering activity but also to the difficulties encountered by local groups, such as the Tidy Towns committee, is provided in Appendix G.

Interviews also explored the issue of attachment to place within Ferbane. All participants agreed or strongly agreed that people in Ferbane had a strong sense of attachment to place, although this varied across social strata, as seen earlier.

> CC: In terms of attachment how attached do you think people are?
>
> CM4: To Ferbane oh I think they're very much attached to Ferbane.
>
> CC: And how might that manifest itself?
>
> CM4: I think that quite a lot of young people would love to come back, I think they have great pride and love in their own area and they like to come back, you know from time to time. At school on a Friday evening people come back from College just to say hello. I think they have a great attachment to it. I think if people see organisations are running any particular events here within this area you would see people coming back to attend them. I think there's huge affection for the area from the people who are in it. I think they have great pride in what they have and they do feel it's a unique type of landscape and area that they live in.
>
> CM1: I think Ferbane is a strong community, it's a close knit community, there's a lot of pride I would say in the community and I think the town has benefited and the community has benefited I think from all the work that was done over the years and the success of what was done despite the setbacks that have been received and I suppose setbacks are really a test of your resilience and the structures that were put in place are still there and still operating but new objectives have been set.
>
> <div align="right">(Corcoran 2013)</div>

Particular themes mentioned by participants here were the strength of local commitment to community activity, a recognition of the importance of co-ordination between groups and the innovative use of resources. However, the pressures experienced by voluntary groups were also described.

> CC: If you cast your mind back to the plan, was voluntary activity, do you think, enhanced in any way by that planning process?
>
> CM4: Well I would say it was but I think that people have come under a huge amount of pressure in terms of volunteering and just in terms of time commitments. People are under more pressure now both in terms of work … and most people who are in work are now finding that they're probably working longer hours … Tidy Towns, there are still very positive, very strong commitment from people to these particular organisations.
>
> CC: OK and do you think there are many more diverse community organisations existing here now than in the past?

CM1: I would say yes I think there's a stronger community organisation now that's respected and supported as non-political so I would say the answer to that question is very strongly yes. Oh yes very strong and very well supported again I think that comes back to the earlier question you asked whereby about the buying in to it because the people the community took responsibility upon itself to solve its own problems I think people admired that and therefore the support was that much stronger than if you went knocking on the door looking for a problem and can you fix it for us.

(Corcoran 2013)

Related to our purposes here, Putnam and Brady (2015) discovered that size of community makes a difference to social capital accumulation, and that work on community projects, informal helping behaviour and charitable giving were more likely to occur in small towns than in big cities. Overall involvement in social networks was a stronger predictor of volunteering and philanthropy than altruistic attitudes; simply being asked to volunteer for a particular activity was the most common method of volunteer recruitment. And volunteering fosters more volunteering in both formal and non-formal organisations (2000, p. 121). This was reflected in Ferbane:

CM5: Well yeah, as I said, tidy towns, things like that have taken legs again and I'd say a lot of the organisations are strong you know, they're maintaining themselves. Like, you know there're plenty of clubs there for every sort of an activity … there are certainly a few additions and the ones that are there are quite strong I think, yeah … Vincent de Paul ... they're operating very successfully as well, you know ... the social services, sort of, organisations ... they seem to be attracting in new and vibrant members as well, you know. And I think what has been done has uplifted it an awful lot, you know, because as I say there is an upward move ... a serious upward move in terms of keeping the town going and I'd say a lot of people are conscious enough now of supporting locally … maybe more so than in the past . I think that's all down to; let's try and hold what we have anyway and, and if we can build anymore on it. Yeah, I would certainly say that there's a good sense of pride and everywhere has really upgraded, you know, the likes of the soccer pitch and the GAA, all that.

(Corcoran 2013)

7.6.4 *The role of the GAA*

A recent publication on Social Enterprise in Ireland (Cooke 2018) selected Ferbane as one of 21 enterprising communities in Ireland. One of the central tenets of the book is that the social capital created by the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) was a key driving force in community life in Ireland since its foundation in 1884. Based on the Catholic parish system, Cooke (2018) vigorously claims that the GAA forges strong bonding social capital among its players and supporters through its emphasis on parish and place:

200

This sense of place has been solidified and enhanced through years of service to local club, parish and community. Lifelong allegiances to the club and parish remain today as the most potent feature of GAA membership. The organisation endures as a dynamic force in promoting place and participation in community life.

(Cooke 2018, p. 41).

Probably the most important and deep-rooted activity in Ferbane, which unites the community and best represents its unique sense of place, is the local GAA club … Working closely with local businesses, schools, voluntary organisations and the wider public the voluntary community ethos of Ferbane GAA club is woven into the economic and social fabric of community life of West Offaly. An outstanding advantage, ever present in Ferbane, is its indomitable spirit that drives a bottom-up, empowered, self-reliant regeneration process. The current target of 200 jobs is achievable, given their record to date and the voluntary leadership available in the town.

(Cooke 2018, p. 106)

The contribution of the GAA to resilience was also noted by interviewees in 2013:

CM1: I still think that Ferbane is a resilient community; I still think for example the local GAA Club is getting better and stronger and very successful. The Gallen Community School is useful in the town; it's doing very well…I think that's all a reflection of the work done by the football minor group really I suppose it must be one of the strongest GAA organisations in the country; it's very well structured, very well organised, has its own code of conduct. Underage teams are made up to 16 and the amount of input they have in the GAA, the skills, football and hurling are now being seen in the success of not just the minor teams but also by Gallen Community School…I think the GAA is an integral part of any community and in some respects I think strong local organisations build strong communities.

(Corcoran 2013)

Other participants however noted the negative impact that the recession had had on local sports clubs:

CM6: There's not as many volunteers as there used to be 20 years ago; there was a big drop in volunteers during the Celtic Tiger as well; but it never seemed to pick up after that - they're gone. That's it. The GAA clubs and Rugby clubs - it's having a big impact on them as well.
CM7: I'm involved in the GAA club as well and yes, a big impact. Definitely this year there's a huge impact with lads gone away. Some are gone at present, some are planning to go later in the year. There's a big impact; it's unfortunate, but that's the way things are.

(Corcoran 2013)

(Note: In October 2019, Ferbane won the County Offaly GAA Football Final, ending a 25-year wait, which may be a sign of economic improvement as there are sufficient number of young players again available to make up a team).

7.6.5   *There is a strong belief in and support for Education at all levels*

By 2005, it was clear that other initiatives besides economic development were needed in Ferbane. Other priorities had been identified in the plan, and some of these related to education.

7.6.6   *Pre-school*

One issue that emerged was the need for a childcare facility within the town. This had been recommended in the draft town plan (2001):

> This report recommends the establishment and support of childcare facilities in Ferbane. There is scope to improve upon the scale and nature of services currently being provided, and training in childcare management is recommended for those wishing to be involved. The provision of childcare facilities will encourage greater participation of females in employment opportunities and in social activities.
>
> (Tipperary Institute 2001, p. 35)

A Childcare Committee was then established with the local school Principal, a member of the Ferbane Development Group, as Chair. This group comprised of a broader and more diverse group of volunteers than the FDG, and with active female members, worked closely with Offaly Childcare Committee at County level to establish the demand for the model of childcare and pre-school education that was best suited to the area. A proposal was prepared and submitted to the Department of Justice and a grant of 1,100,000 Euro was allocated to the project. A state-of-the-art crèche was constructed at the Cowpark and it opened in September 2006. Almost immediately, 92 children enrolled and 15 childcare workers were employed. The development of the centre was generally perceived to be a major social and cultural asset in the community. The crèche was operated under the auspices of the Childcare committee established their own company but operated under the overall umbrella of Ferbane Development Group.

7.6.7   Primary Education

St Cynoc's Primary School in Ferbane operates out of two school sites in the town and has 203 students registered (2018). A whole-school evaluation conducted in 2016 (Department of Education and Skills) reported that the overall quality of teaching and learning in the school was good, with some very effective practice observed. In English, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement was reported as very good and the overall quality of school planning was commended. As recognised by the school itself, there was scope for development in the quality of teaching and learning in Irish and in Music.

7.6.8   Second Level

Following many years of lobbying by the local community a new second-level school opened in Ferbane when two old, existing schools were amalgamated. Built in 2010, it is a state of the art facility and has the ability to provide the broadest range of subjects and opportunities for students. An interview with the school Principal in 2013 revealed that numbers within the school were rising, (reaching 368 in 2018). Student progression was guided and monitored by detailed individual education plans, which were developed collaboratively with students, parents and external support agencies as relevant. The very good range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities offered, including the staging of an annual musical, reflected the commitment of staff to extending students' learning experiences. The school's admission policy reflects its commitment to social inclusion.

Some highlights of the school review, conducted by the Department of Education and Skills in 2016, reported that the board of management was correctly constituted, and members are well informed on the board's role in governing the school. The board is highly committed to improving the functioning of the school. This voluntary board recognised and placed a strong emphasis on the school as the focal point for the community and promotes the school as such. In this way, the school board can be said to have made a significant contribution to linking the school with Ferbane civil society. The school's policy development and review procedures reflected good practices of teamwork and the inclusion of all stakeholders, as appropriate. As evidenced in meetings, and in responses to questionnaires, parents are very welcome in the school. The Parent's association, another voluntary organisation, was reported to be representative of the school's catchment area, is active in the functioning of the school and has a strong voice in policy development. The school's principal and deputy principal were reported as working well as a senior management team (SMT) and has been strategic in identifying and supporting teacher engagement with third-level led initiatives that espouse

actions related to the school's improvement plan for student engagement (Department of Education and Skills, 2016).

The school retained very strong linkages with prospective employers as the Principal explained in an interview in 2013:

> The concern for any rural area in Ireland at the moment is the provision of employment opportunities locally and the centres of Athlone and Tullamore I suppose the two most adjacent to us will remain strong and maybe even try and continue to grow to give opportunities to people within the area…there are some very good employers in the area and we would have strategic links through the school with some of them you know particularly with Industry we would have links with them and through a group called Atlantic Corridor. Atlantic Corridor would tie us up with opportunities and links with these companies. The school also made links with Ericsson, a multi-national telecommunications company who employ 800 people in nearby Athlone.
>
> (Corcoran 2013)

The fact that the new second-level school was open to all students of secondary age without grade discrimination was valued by respondents as contributing to social inclusion:

> CM 5 I think the school has been a huge addition…it has become comprehensive for everybody. All the kids are together in the one school. That has been very good... you know probably there was a breakdown there in the past... because people were going to different schools?".... you had the vocational, you had the secondary, there might have been a bit of a distinction.... and that's gone now, you know, so they're all under the one flag.... that has been very successful I think Ferbane is a very inclusive town that way. Like there isn't much social distinction, or... as you say, wealthy areas against poorer areas or things like that.
>
> (Corcoran 2013)

7.6.9 *Third-level education*

There is currently no provision for adult education, further education, or third-level provision in Ferbane. It is significant to note that the 2011 census of population reported that 20.3% of Ferbane residents held a third-level qualification, as opposed to 31% nationally. The issue of progression of students to third-level was raised as a matter of concern by respondents in 2013:

> CM1: The statistics would say there has been a poor level of transfer from secondary level to top level education and that could be historical too because there were very well paid attractive jobs in Bord na Móna so in the past people didn't have to go to third level those jobs have now gone so my understanding is that the transfer through to third level has improved.
>
> (Corcoran 2013)

So, while provision of education for children and young people is strong in Ferbane, there is a gap at third-level, and in further education, which may inhibit the personal and social development prospects of adults in the Ferbane area.

7.6.10 Optimism

One of the characteristics of resilience proposed by the Canadian Resilience Framework was that people feel optimistic about the future of the community. There was a general consensus in 2013 that due to recession and the economic downturn that optimism was in short supply in Ferbane.

> Staff Member OLDC: It's hard to know now certainly I know at the moment there's a lot of negativity out there that is fed by the media and whatever else .You do hear a lot of negativity which is sad like because if that were known, no one would ever do anything. I would think myself that it (Ferbane) has a good future so.
>
> CM1: I think, I suppose, there's optimism….the country at the moment has taken a fair hammering I suppose with all the austerity that's been implemented, increase in taxation and culling expenditure and I suppose what happened in 2008 when a lot of the bank debts were, I suppose, socialised so they became the responsibility of every member of the community and I think is probably still a burden that the people carry. And I would say there's still no less optimism in Ferbane than there is I'd say nationally; in fact to some extent I'd say it's probably a stronger community than, and in its own right, I would say the average community throughout the country maybe. That's because I still think there's a lot of wealth in Ferbane. I suppose maybe this goes back to the time when Ferbane boomed and the rest of the country was suffering economically in the Eighties and I think there is still a residue; there a carry over. It's a difficult question to answer. I would still think there is a strong degree of optimism here.
>
> <div align="right">(Corcoran 2013)</div>

By 2018, however a survey conducted with the business population explored in the following chapter indicated that business was steady or improving and a significant majority expected further improvement over the next two years. This is an indication that as the economy begins to recover, that overall optimism rises.

7.6.11 Self-Reliance

Another indicator as measured was that the community is self-reliant and looks to itself and its resources to address major issues In general, while it was recognised that Ferbane was strong in terms of local organisation, it was agreed that they were not, and could not be 'self-

reliant' in that all community initiatives depended on a positive policy environment and on funding and support from state agencies. There was a general recognition that the wider economic and operational environment played a crucial role in determining development outcomes

> Staff member OLDC Yes I agree there is (self-reliance) but that's being pretty much tested at the moment too isn't it? OK they might be able to work on different community projects or whatever but…the big major issue…employment or lack of employment …that was the main focus for the Ferbane Development Group starting off; their main focus was enterprise, job creation whatever; it wasn't as socially inclusive a plan as you see elsewhere; it was seen as the rising tide…but then they wouldn't have done it on their own. The supports were there as well. New water, new sewage, new school, the Business Park, community enterprise centres, childcare centre, new footbridge, new link road whatever; there are a lot of boxes you can tick there …
>
> CM 4: Well I would think that even when they were looking at the development in the Cowpark they were looking at how can we link this with IT and how can we link this with partnerships…. for example there is a culinary arts programme in Athlone IT that's what they are looking at, there are graduates coming out there, if there are any of them that have ideas in the food industry and that there is an opportunity to provide incubation and start-up opportunities for them in a place like Ferbane.
>
> <div align="right">(Corcoran 2013)</div>

The importance of support and coordination from the state agencies was mentioned by most participants. This was particularly the case when local groups started to wane or burn-out.

> Staff member OLDC: It's interesting because watching different ways of working groups …you do need a bit of co-ordination or strategic and look strategically now and again at what they're at … but in order to do it with the existing players that were somewhat bombed out it wasn't going to happen because they didn't have the energy for it. But what you needed was to be able to recognise if you could now looking back if people could say look I've given my five year ten year tenure and now get new people involved.
>
> <div align="right">(Corcoran 2013)</div>

While support from the agencies was recognised as important, there was a consensus that the initiation for local development had to emerge from the community itself; strong local groups attract support:

> CM3: The County Council would listen to a good strong development organisation in place, or environmental groups. And again, we have that structure

because we have the Development Group and we have the sub-groups, Tidy Towns, environmental groups - whatever.

CM 8 There are more voluntary organisations now and pretty much every group is catered for. To a certain extent they do their own thing so we are going to set up a website (Ferbane.ie) for all businesses, clubs and organisations as there is a need for this. We are doing it as a fundraiser for Tidy Towns. It will be a huge asset to organisations to cross-reference and not to clash with events.

(Corcoran 2013)

So overall from the 2013 interviews there was a consensus that there were high levels of social capital in the town and that elements such as pride, mutual assistance and co-operation were at a sufficient level to facilitate the building of local development 'on the shoulders' of social capital. The role of key institutions such as the school, the GAA and the Cowpark development in contributing to and fostering social capital was highlighted by respondents. While such assets can sustain a community up to a point, there was a strong recognition that maintaining optimism and pride in the face of economic turmoil was difficult and that social capital was severely tested by recession. However, as we saw in the chapter on the Social Economy, and from the general population surveyed in 2018, these indicators had risen considerably, concurrent with economic improvement.

7.6.12 2018 Survey

In early 2018, a questionnaire regarding local perceptions about Ferbane was distributed and a total of 239 household responses were received (out of a total 427). The following tables and graphs indicate how the survey population generally feel about the current situation in Ferbane. From this, it can be seen that, on balance, respondents were more positive than negative though with some degree of both uncertainty and disagreement.

Respondents were asked how their household felt about Ferbane as a place to live. The results are presented in figure 5, overleaf.
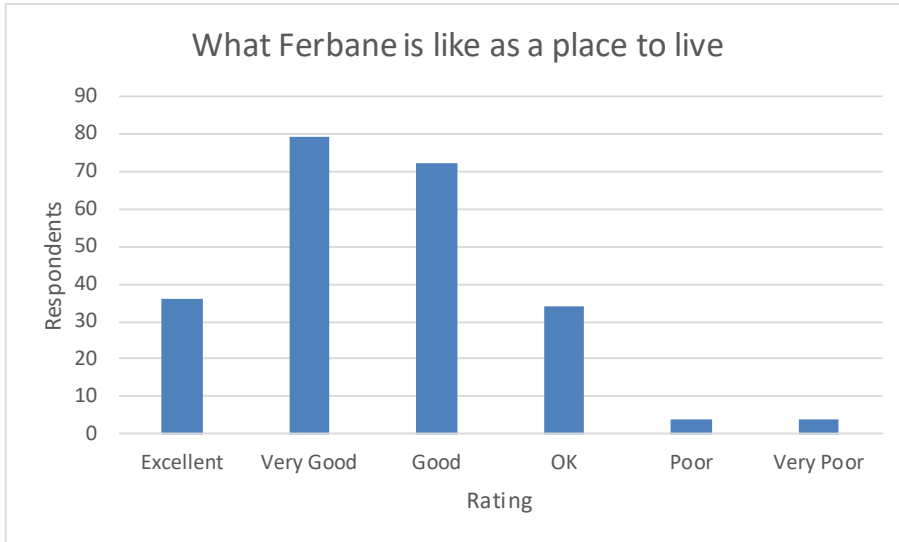
Figure 5: Responses to the 2018 Survey – Perceptions about Ferbane: How respondents' household felt about Ferbane as a place to live? (a total of 239 household responses were received).

As can be seen in figure 5, above, the results are generally positive though with room for improvement. The very small number who identify it as a poor or very poor place to live is noted, with the vast majority rating it as good or better.

Respondents were then asked to identify the best things about living in Ferbane. The most positive feature of living in Ferbane was stated to be a strong sense of community and neighbourliness (70 mentions), with good sporting and cultural facilities next (65 mentions). Its central location and proximity to other towns (61), high quality schools (43) and access to financial facilities (28) were high on the list and the fact that it was quiet, tranquil and safe was appreciated by residents surveyed. Respondents were also asked to indicate the three things about Ferbane which most need to be improved. The responses are indicated in table 2, below.

Item	Times Mentioned
Footpaths	57
Address the issue of derelict and boarded up buildings	32
A new community centre	32
Reopening of Garda Station	27
Lighting	24
Transport	20
Walking and cycling ways	20
Improved services for older people	19
Sustainable local employment	18
Speed issues	15
Broadband	14
Re open bank	14
Activities for youth	14

Table 2: Results of the 2018 Survey. Respondents were asked to indicate the three things about Ferbane which most need to be improved

Respondents were also asked to indicate how they felt about the town compared to a year ago and five years ago. The first question asked to what extent the respondents agreed with the statement that they felt better about Ferbane than a year ago. The results are shown in figure 6, below.
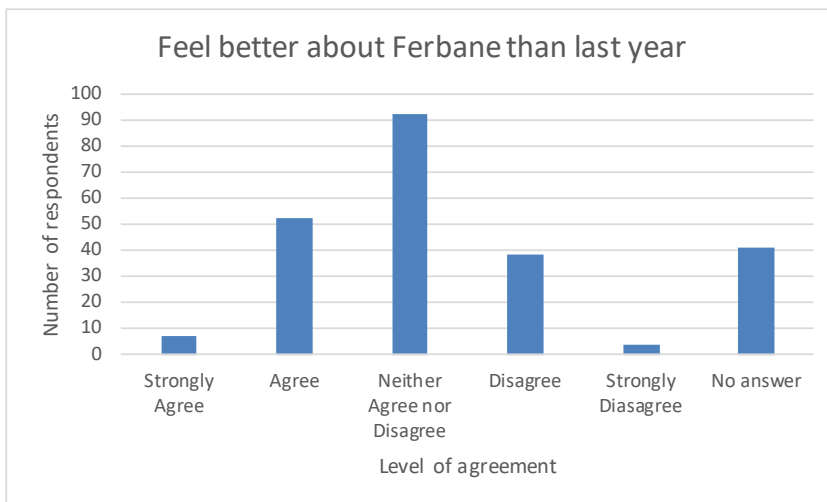
Figure 6: Responses to the 2018 Survey - Respondents were also asked to indicate if they felt that Ferbane was a better place to live than one year previously

This is quite a mixed response, but it is interesting to note that about half of those who answered did not feel one way or another. Those who agreed with the statement were slightly more numerous than those who disagreed but, overall, it is probably fair to say that the feelings about Ferbane had not changed much from the previous year.

Respondents were also asked to compare Ferbane today with the Ferbane of five years ago. Again, respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the statement that Ferbane was a better place to live today than five years ago. The results of the responses to this question are shown figure 7, below.
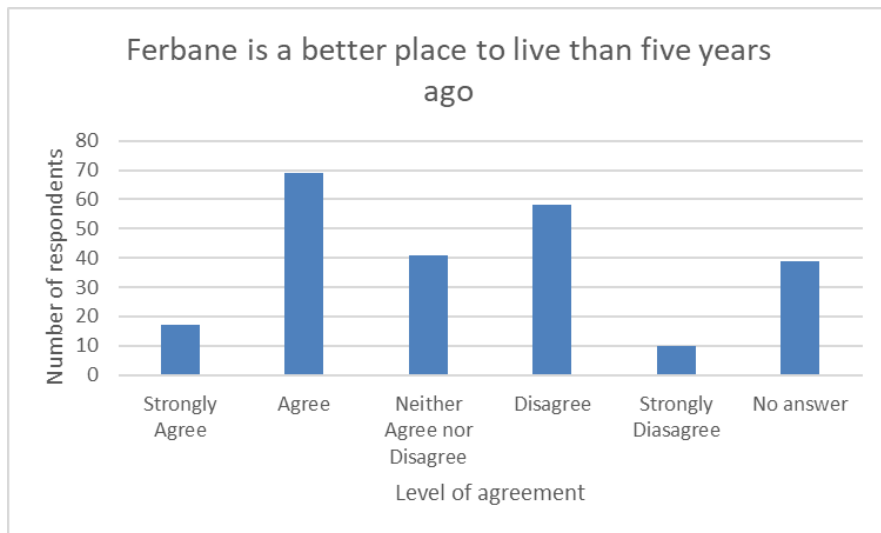
Figure 7: Responses to the 2018 Survey - Respondents were also asked to indicate if they felt that Ferbane was a better place to live than five years previously

Again, this is an interesting response. It shows that there are significant differences within the community regarding progress over the last five years. While 44% strongly agreed or agreed, 35% strongly disagree or disagreed.

The picture is somewhat better when it comes to the future. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statement that Ferbane had great potential to become an even better place to live. The results are provided in Figure 8.

There is great potential for Ferbane to become better
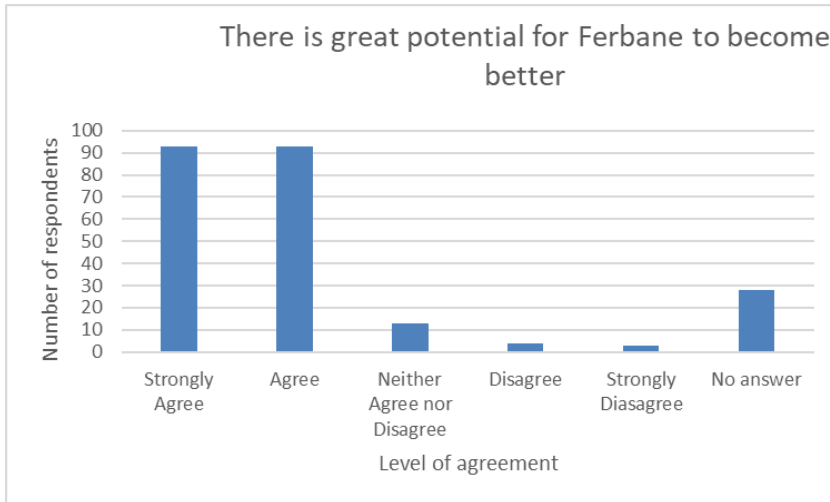
Figure 8: Responses to the 2018 Survey - Respondents were also asked to indicate if they felt that Ferbane had great potential to become an even better place to live in the future.

In this case the vast majority of those who responded could see a better future for Ferbane and this is encouraging for those who proactively seek to improve the town and a positive indicator of optimism among this population.

With regard to the future of Ferbane, respondents were also asked to indicate if it was likely that the next generation saw its long-term future in Ferbane. Of those who answered, only about 30% said that they did. Those who did not think that their younger people saw their futures in Ferbane were asked to indicate why not. Three key things were identified in the responses. Almost all respondents indicated the lack of suitable employment nearby while many also mentioned the lack of entertainment facilities. Some also mentioned that young people want to travel and may not come back. These are fundamental structural issues and suggest that Ferbane needs to consider how most to make the maximum of its location close to Athlone, the nearest centre of employment and educational activity.

Respondents were also asked to indicate if they would be willing to pay €2 a week into a fund to provide the contribution required for a good community project for which funding was obtained. Close to 90% of the households surveyed would be willing to consider contributing

at least, with over two-thirds definitely being willing to do so. This is an encouraging response and indicates a high level of community spirit.

7.6.13 Distances travelled

Respondents were also asked to indicate the distance travelled to work school or college by the members of their households. This breakdown is indicated in figure 9. This chart shows that while nearly 30% of the respondent household members travel less than one mile, nearly 50% of the respondent households travel more than 10 miles with nearly 25% travelling more than 20 miles. This highlights the emerging dormitory function of Ferbane.
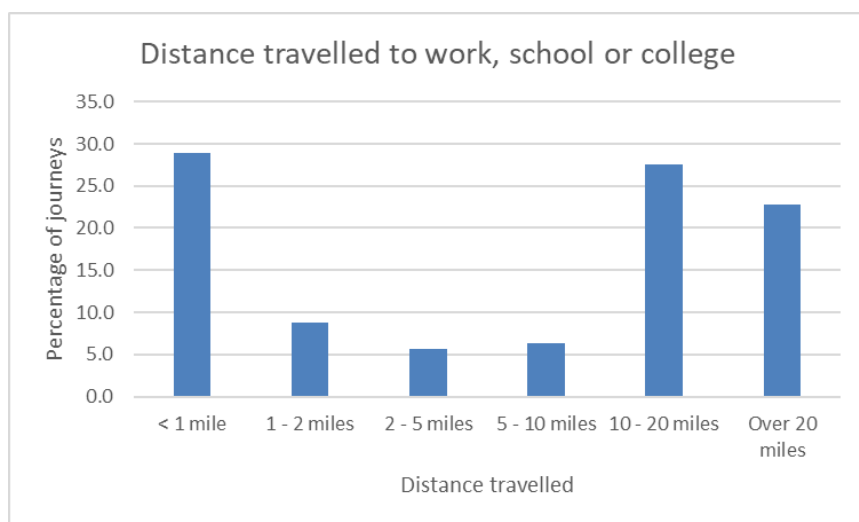
Figure 9:   Responses to the 2018 Survey - Respondents were also asked to indicate the distance travelled to work school or college by the members of their households

This has a number of implications for social capital. From studies conducted (Putnam 2000; Healy 2005) we know that time spent commuting results in less time available for voluntary and community activity. It may indicate also that respondents spend more time at work than they spend waking hours in Ferbane. It may also indicate increasing pressure on those of working age to give increasing attention to their jobs, rather than to family or community life, and may augur negatively for the associational life of Ferbane in the future. Writers such as

Shuman (2000) argue that Putnam's (2000) focus on civic and political change does not give enough emphasis to the importance of local *economic* development. Brady (2015) found that there was a link between employment and participation:

> Overall, participation in sports, social, civic, community, religious and political groups increases an individual's probability of being in employment by about four percentage points.
>
> (Brady 2015, p. 186)

The importance of relatively weak ties in contributing to employment opportunities in small towns referred to by Brady earlier may be rendered insufficient if people have no time to participate in social groups locally.

7.6.14 Survey: Final Comments

Respondents were also asked if they had any final comments which they wished to make. In analysing these, a focus was placed on comments which added to the responses already given and which were more than a summary of what had already been said. These added comments were intended to give additional guidance to the community as it considers its approach to the future Selected comments related to social capital were as follows:

> Ferbane has great potential due to its location and community spirit
>
> Ferbane is a lovely place to live with lovely people and looks quite well in comparison to other similar sized towns in the country. It's possible more people would get involved in community activities if whole town meetings were called a number of times per year."
>
> Filling out this form has reminded me just what a great place Ferbane is to live. We must remember this and make the most of all our excellent facilities.
>
> (Response to the 2018 Survey)

There were also some negative comments made regarding organisational life in the town:

> Ferbane has many good organisations e.g. GAA Soccer, Tidy Towns, Scouts, Girl Guides etc. Problem is it is the same people involved in everything helping to run things; more people need to get involved
>
> Encourage new membership to societies/groups/parish things as the same people are in everything and as good as they are it is off putting to others.

All my children have emigrated and would not return to live here. There is no community spirit. Closed shop for the few. It's who you know.

Ferbane has a bad reputation to outsiders as a very cliquish town. We should bring back things like the yearly Ferbane Festival to try and get a sense of community back. Apart from the GAA which is supported by the relatives of those playing, there is very little that happens that brings all of us together as a community. We lose out a lot because of that as a town.

(Response to the 2018 Survey)

In seeking to again address the issue of the variety and strength of voluntary activity in Ferbane at the present (November 2019) I made contact with FDG and received a list of 44 voluntary organisations currently operational in the area - see Appendix H for details.

7.6.15 Discussion

So generally from the interviews conducted in 2013 and the community survey of 2018, there was a recognition that while at a local level optimism may have existed, and community spirit had kept things going when the economy hit a downturn, the recession that ravaged the country and the subsequent austerity measures, emigration of young people and cut-backs in services had a negative impact on Ferbane. There was also a recognition that government policy mitigated against creating employment in smaller rural areas like Ferbane:

OLDC Staff member: Yes I think so; I would think towns like that have to have a reasonable future but we need to change our policies we need to change we need to have a better balance to change Ferbane's rural or regional development whatever….we need to look at our indigenous industries and how we can better promote them say at Ferbane levels and make sure they grow in the future and try and nurture them and make them grow. … Towns that size have to be hubs for small indigenous industries.

(Corcoran 2013)

The National Spatial Strategy (Department of the Environment and Local Government 2002) and the Report *Realising Our Rural Potential: Action Plan for Rural Development* (Department of Rural and Community Development 2017) stated that smaller towns and villages have much potential that can be capitalised on. The development of this potential is compatible with promoting critical mass within regionally located competitive urban areas, *if* these urban areas can be linked to the smaller centres and rural areas through physical

connections such as good communications, energy, roads or public transport networks and through innovation, enterprise promotion and business links.

> The strengths of the smaller towns and villages lie in their capacity to accommodate employment, residential and other functions on the basis of their comparative advantage in terms of lower costs and a quality of life which is attractive to many people.
>
> (Department of the Environment and Local Government 2002, p. 36)

The increasing proportion of people who live in Ferbane but work elsewhere is turning Ferbane into a dormitory/commuter town, linked to the growth nodes of places such as Athlone and Tullamore. The National Spatial strategy, in fact, recommended that a midlands growth node or Gateway be developed, linking the three towns of Athlone, Tullamore and Mullingar, which together offered sufficient levels of service, infrastructure and population to become a competitive urban node. This potential was already recognised by Ferbane residents:

> CM4: You would be looking at Athlone as being the major fulcrum in this particular area, perhaps Tullamore even though it is going through its own difficulties I would say commercially and that sort of stuff, but I would definitely say that Athlone would be with the College and with the development and IT development and that sort of stuff, it's possibly the area where you would probably see the most employment but we would be very much within that catchment … most young people who receive higher education that leave, some are coming back now and getting employment in the large hubs around here like for example at , Tullamore and Athlone, these are important hubs and you know a lot of the young people would like to return. At the end of the day it's about the way they look at their community.
>
> (Corcoran 2013)

A vision proposed that has relevance for Ferbane is that of the *Cohesive town* which encourages community engagement, a common sense of identity among residents while at the same time developing an understanding of social diversity (Hart and Powe 2007). This latter point may need more attention as Ferbane moves to another stage of development in the adaptive cycle.

7.7   Developing Local Capacity

The IAP process itself is philosophically and practically aligned to a capacity-building approach and has always included an objective of 'developing individual and collective capabilities to act purposefully for positive change in communities' (Ryan 2008, p. 68). This reflected a belief held by the IAP facilitating team around the value of developing local individual and collective capacity in order to benefit the communities and the individuals involved. It was hoped that the participants would develop their skills as local development agents, involved in developing local organisations, services and facilities. Members of the IAP steering group received training in group development, communication, networking, data collection and analysis and planning and environment.

In another area called Hackeststown in Co Carlow (Ireland), members of the local IAP steering group' having been involved for a number of months, completed a self -perception improvement inventory where they scored their own skills development. The IAP facilitators also scored the steering group in terms of their performance against the same set of indicators. The collation of results showed significant perceived improvement across all of the Indicators. Both the facilitators and the steering group members noted significant improvements in all areas. The most significant indicators in terms of perceived improvement were (9) Championing of the IAP Process, (7) Research Skills, (6) Strategic Thinking/Planning and (13) Sustainability awareness. At a later stage the participants were interviewed about specific issues such as their level of confidence in approaching state agencies on a scale from 'fearful' to 'confident' or about their personal motivations in becoming a member of the steering group for the IAP. The development of specific technical skills such as data collection was also tracked.

The final analysis of the data suggested to Ryan (2008) that the IAP did have the potential to assist the members of the IAP steering group to become effective local change-agents. Indeed, the IAP process itself could be described as intrinsically a capacity building exercise:

> Throughout the IAP process in Hacketstown, the research evidence suggests that the TI approach does draw out unrecognized or dormant potential by enhancing opportunities and access to resources. In so doing, it has the capacity to develop the individual and collective capabilities of a steering group to act purposefully for positive change in their own community.
>
> (Ryan in Lynch *et al.* 2008, p. 102)

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Partnership in planning can work most effectively when there is an organised group in the community which is accountable and where the group have access to independent technical advice and support. This support in this case was ably provided by West Offaly Partnership/Offaly Local Development Company and all respondents noted their hard work and commitment. Groups such as WOP/OLDC are ideally placed to act as facilitators in the IAP process. They are close to communities and their job is to strengthen community structures and to actively build the capacity of local groups. They are also informed about and able to understand and communicate state policy. This unique position allows them to act as a broker and facilitator in the process of putting the plans in place. This again ties in with the concept of neo-endogenous or networked development, where local initiatives are backed up and supported by a pro-active state. It also underlines the need for area-based development programmes to include pro-active action targeted at raising the social and cultural capital of individuals and of disadvantaged groups (Horgan 2008; Shucksmith 2000).

The Final Report to the Carnegie UK Trust (2009) recommended that, in line with the Planning and Development Act 2000, Offaly County Council could and should sub-contract the Offaly Local Development Company to do the community element of consultation and planning for local area plans for the smaller towns and villages and leave the technical elements such as zoning etc. to the planners. This did not happen as the overall IAP process did not survive the ravages of the recession, as detailed in the chapter on collaborative planning.

7.7.1 Developing local structures

A major step in the IAP process is the appointment of a Steering Group for the IAP. The main responsibility of this group was guiding the IAP process by developing an overall set of visions for the plan, participating on task groups and ensuring that local people are consulted at all stages in the plan's development. Perhaps the most essential principle adopted by TI in establishing a Steering Group was that the group be as representative as possible and that all of the different groups within the community would have an opportunity to be represented. This reflects collaborative planning models which call for both diversity and interdependence among stakeholders in any planning process if the benefits of collaborative dialogue are to be achieved.

There are choices that may be made when developing a group at local level to guide collaborative planning, for example:

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1. Should an existing group form the core of the group and then co-opt other people from under-represented groups?
2. Should an entirely new group made up of members of different sections of the community, representing all of the groups identified be established?

An interesting point arises in this context about the composition of the Steering Group and how it is constituted. A balance needs to be achieved between representation of all sections of the community while also ensuring that existing development groups in the area are enhanced and not disempowered by the IAP process. Their involvement is vital if local development efforts are to be sustained and the IAP supported. On the other hand, the IAP process might overwhelm an existing quiescent or moribund group, as it requires so much work. Also, all areas and groups need to be included on the Steering Group and cannot be ignored or marginalised. This is a sensitive area and for this reason requires careful facilitation.

One of the most detailed and time-consuming elements of the IAP, but perhaps the most satisfying for members, was that of working on one of the Task groups. Their 'task' was to take the visions and objectives established by the overall Steering Group and to propose how these visions and objectives were to be realised, reflecting the broad range of issues identified at the first public meetings as well as the information required to complete the statutory aspects of the planning process. Task groups therefore were established to develop the detail that was later to form the core of the plan.

A significant aspect of the workings of these groups was that membership was widened to include members of the community who were not members of the Steering Group and who had a specific knowledge about, or interest in, a particular issue. Thus the members of the education task group for example included local education providers, parents and other interested parties. This step in the plan may be used as a further opportunity to broaden community 'ownership' of the IAP. It may also serve to increase local knowledge and awareness of issues and stimulate local debate.

7.7.2 *Developing relationships with the agencies: linking social capital*

Local authorities in Ireland have had a poor relationship with community groups (CWC 2000; Walsh *et al.* 1998). Even where a local authority has a progressive approach and allows consideration of the views of the community on a particular issue or development, in general there are no structures in place at local level formally to engage communities in policy making, or to foster dialogue between state agencies and local people. Certain structures for

participation have been slowly emerging, but they are largely small-scale, explorative and at the lower-end of the decision-making spectrum. Generally, however, there is a failure on the part of local authorities to move beyond rhetoric to action, and to move from ad-hoc consultation with communities to establishing local policy-making and implementation bodies with decision-making powers and the resources to implement. In examining planning in Scotland, Atherton *et al.* (2002) find that there is a need for local authorities to build up the infrastructure of the community sector-the local support and umbrella bodies, networks and forums which facilitate groups, organise cooperation amongst them, build up long-term assets and endowments and conduct dialogue between the community sector and the state bodies. Scott (2004) recommends capacity building and skills development for partnership board members in order to increase their effectiveness; this is particularly important if the expectation is that more marginalised groups will participate in partnership processes.

Another vital aspect of the IAP was that significant players from relevant local authority departments were included as working members of the groups. When the task groups made recommendations around particular topics such as sewerage, traffic etc they were therefore informed both by local people's knowledge on local conditions and the staff's expertise and experience about the issue concerned. The groups were involved in drafting objectives and action plans to meet particular needs and submitting these for inclusion in the plan. This collaborative effort was essential in developing a partnership approach to local planning, and is in line with collaborative planning practice where the experts engage in dialogue with local citizens. Public representatives were invited to participate at crucial points in the process. At all meetings with these representatives and other public fora the information was presented by Steering Group members themselves, which increased their sense of ownership over the content of the final plan.

7.8   Conclusion

Returning to the original indicators related to social capital-those of pride, optimism, mutual assistance, commitment to education, attachment and self-reliance-the evidence presented here would indicate that Ferbane displayed a high level of social capital according to the measures presented. Following Putnam (2000), there appears to be a strong degree of involvement in local civic associational life, with a substantial number of clubs and organisations being active in the community. In fact, the thesis presented by the respondents here would suggest that it was this store of social capital-the norms, networks, values and shared understandings among the people of Ferbane-that facilitated the significant level of

local development. The Cowpark and the other facilities that grew from the early 2000s developed on the shoulders of local civil society; strong local organisations built a strong community that could go on to adapt to challenges as they emerged. Local effort and volunteering seemed to have created a virtuous cycle of development where groups automatically assumed responsibility for issues like maintaining the local environment without having to be prompted; a new heuristic was created.

Positive attachment to community was evidenced, with a strong sense of community and neighbourliness reported. People were willing to contribute financially to local development, as they have done in the past. General optimism about the past performance of the town met with a mixed reaction; perhaps this is indicative of the fact that it was impossible for Ferbane not to have been hard-hit by the double blows of the wind-down in its core employment base and the generalised recession that devastated rural Ireland from 2008. As we have seen in other chapters, significant levels of linking social capital also existed, and was further developed, as local people developed the skills and experience needed in order to leverage resources from formal state institutions.

An enduring issue of concern for area-based development initiatives such as this one is that a 'whole-of-community' approach may leave behind those groups in the community who are most in need of inclusion in such processes. We have seen evidence of this throughout the unfolding story of Ferbane. While local organisations are well-supported there is little evidence that they have been successful in reaching the most disadvantaged groups; in fact it was consistently acknowledged that groups such as the unemployed and non-nationals did not participate in general community meetings or on task-groups. There were also concerns raised at the lack of participation by women and in fact, among those most closely associated with the plan in 2013 there were no female participants available for interview. The survey results of 2018 were generally positive but there were several mentions of 'cliqueishness' and the view expressed that the same people were always to the fore in local organisational life. These issues touch on Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence, whereby individuals, through their experiences of the social world, and of its relationships, structures and institutions, develop 'natural' or 'taken-for-granted ways of thinking and behaving (Siisiäinen 2000). This may include gender relations in which both men and women agree that women are less capable of running local economic development programmes for example, drawing on Shortall's (1994) key question 'are women not seen in the places where they are not expected?' or class relations in which both working-class and middle-class people agree that the middle classes are more capable of leading and managing local organisational life. The silent operation of

local norms may mitigate against the participation of those traditionally excluded from development.

Despite claims that there was not a class-based divide within the area, participants were aware about who participated and who did not:

> CM8 There are attempts and efforts to keep people involved-an open invitation. But the unemployed sector and in some parts of the town there may be an impression that it's the same people involved all the time because by default people put themselves forward for these positions; its hard to convince people to put themselves forward.
>
> (Corcoran 2013)

While there was no evidence of 'blocking' social capital in Ferbane, there may have been an absence of 'bridging' social capital evident in a lack of diversity at least at leadership level in the community. This may have been due to a lack of emphasis on this issue within the development process itself, as expressed by one participant in 2013:

> CM1: I suppose there was never, in my recollection, there was never a focus put on building bridges between different economic strata within the community if that's what you mean, personally I didn't see that as being a major issue. …I suppose there are people who don't engage in that I suppose drugs have infiltrated society that's always a concern. I suppose the more activity you have the more kids are involved in some kind of community activity, sporting activities and social activity, they're fairly strong the town. I think that's very, very important.
>
> (Corcoran 2013)

While the community had the ability to rely on itself to adapt, and that social capital, if effectively mobilised, could translate into economic development, it was generally recognised that development needed the right policy environment and support structures in order to ensure the success of community endeavours. We have earlier explored how governance and planning activity is conducted less through formal 'rational planning' systems and more through informal networks and the interplay between actors (Healey 1997; Innes and Booher 2000). Despite high levels of social capital, there was also a recognition that there was less opportunity for employment in Ferbane itself than in the past and that local people would have to seek employment elsewhere. A small town like Ferbane was wide open to the vagaries of the market and of state policy that mitigated against the type of local economic development as had occurred in the past. Also, the high number of people commuting out of

Ferbane to access employment may be perceived as a threat to developing social capital because people have less time to devote to local associational life. We might well heed the warning from Cheshire *et al.* (2015) that

> Community resilience becomes reduced to a particular (rural) mind-set or attitudinal state as opposed to a complex set of networked resources that are often structurally and differentially distributed….The effect is a bifurcated set of policies that places a much weightier set of expectations upon rural areas than upon urban despite the unequal distribution of resources required for community resilience that leave rural areas disadvantaged from the start.
>
> (Cheshire *et al.* 2015, p. 21)

We might conclude that, despite possessing a high degree of social capital, without the development of essential services in the domains of health, education and social service provision and vital infrastructure such as better roads and broadband, Ferbane's adaptive capacity and therefore its resilience will be limited. This echoes Shaw's (2012) concern that we should not assume that communities such as Ferbane with high levels of social capital or 'natural' resilience are self-reliant, as this assumption serves to absolve the state from its responsibilities.

The next chapter builds on the former three; looking at how collaborative planning approaches, leadership and social capital contributed to the development of a more resilient economy in Ferbane.

Chapter 8: Resilient Economy

> The dominant driving force for change in Ferbane was the economic environment and employment opportunities. No doubt about that. That was very striking.   (Interview 2013)

8.1   Introduction

This chapter will examine the factors that developed the strength, and its antithesis brittleness, of the Ferbane economy. Ferbane's economic and social history is intrinsically connected to its past and present role as an energy-producing area. Reliance on ESB and BNM led to crisis; yet the human and creative assets that connection to these industries maintained is enabling it to recreate a new vision and new energy. Its industrial heritage gives the area a set of skills and perspectives not often found in solely agrarian contexts. In a rare gesture of visionary community service by a publicly-funded enterprise, the managerial skills of former staff of the ESB and BNM were 'released' into the community, facilitating the creation of a new type of economic activity. This we call here Social or Community Enterprise, which is explored below. The community cohesion created by being part of one economic entity with a shared culture in energy production was a factor too. An innovative local development company and a responsive local government also assisted the development process. The town may therefore be said to be in a period of transition from a resource town through a process of *networked development*, using its natural and human assets to transform to another altered state.

The Canadian Resilience Framework (2000) identified six indicators that relate to the economic aspects of a resilient community. These are that:

1. The community has a strategy for increasing local ownership
2. Employment in the area is diversified beyond a single large employer
3. Major employment firms in the areas are locally owned
4. There is an openness to alternative ways of making a living and economic activity
5. The community knows where to seek and secure resources
6. The community is aware of its competitive position in the broader economy

Using data collected in 2013 and drawing on a survey from 2018, and the 2019 Ferbane Community Action Plan, this chapter will look at these six criteria in relation to the economic life of Ferbane.

8.2   Background

The Integrated Area plan published in 2001 revealed the following structural deficits within the Ferbane Economy:

- Overdependence on BNM and ESB for employment
- Lack of alternatives to these two dominant employers
- The wind-down in operations by these two state agencies and the consequent lack of employment opportunities locally with up to 1,200 jobs at risk
- A decline in population as a consequence

This is quite typical of processes that occur in resource-towns, or places whose economy is largely dependent on resource extraction. The greatest challenge facing resource towns (and Ferbane could fit into this category, given its dependence on BNM and ESB), is their lack of resilience as they depend so heavily on one employer and are therefore open to the vagaries of an increasingly globalised economy. In the terminology of resilience, such places are at an advanced stage of the adaptive cycle and enter a phase of *conservation* where there is rigidity, risk aversion and low resilience (Gunderson and Holling 2002; Powe and Hart 2017). Eventually 'structural vulnerability provokes crisis' (Powe and Hart 2017, p. 34), as places become too dependent upon one entity. Crisis or *release* occurs when the market shifts away from the resource in question, decisions are made (usually by people external to the area) to scale-back on extraction, investment moves out, unemployment results and physical decay occurs in the infrastructure. The challenge at this point is to ensure that the systems operating in the area can assimilate disturbance without crossing a threshold into an alternative, and perhaps less 'friendly' stable state, resisting external disturbance and continuing to provide goods and services essential for a satisfactory quality of life (Rees 2010, p. 32). In this case, the Ferbane community and other key stakeholders sought to intervene to prevent Ferbane entering a 'release' phase or period of decline. As we have seen earlier, the response championed by the community was the establishment of Ferbane Business and Technology Park Ltd in 2003. This social enterprise focused on job creation in the Ferbane area through the provision of infrastructure, advice, funding and other supports to encourage business start-ups.

8.3   Social Enterprise/Social Economy

The twin concepts of social enterprise or enterprises linked to the social economy have gained currency over the past three decades. There may be no universally accepted definition as to what constitutes a social enterprise, although analysts agree that such bodies have both social

and economic goals. One definition put forward is that used by the UK Department of Trade and industry (2002, quoted in Walsh 2014):

> A Social Enterprise is a business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners.
>
> (Walsh 2014, p. 454)

Nyssens (2008) claims that in Europe the concept of the Social Economy first appeared formally in Italy in the early 1990s, linked to legislation on the co-operative movement there. The concept draws on notions of the social impacts of production, innovation and sustainability through trading and is linked to increased corporate social responsibility. Defourny (2001) proposed that social enterprises have an explicit aim to benefit the community, launched by a group of citizens whose decision-making is not based on capital ownership but on membership. As it limits its profit distribution, it avoids profit-maximising behaviour. It is participatory in nature and therefore has the potential to enhance democracy at a local level through its economic activity. For Nyssens (2008), social enterprises have the potential to link the social economy with community development, enabling enterprise to benefit the whole of community not just its members.

According to Zimmer *et al.* (2018), the tradition of the Social Economy has strongest roots in France and Spain.

> In France and Spain the third sector is to a large extent a carrier of the notion of doing business differently. There, third sector organisations are vehicles and instruments for the enhancement of a civic and community-oriented economy in contrast to the concept of a market economy that primarily caters to the interests of individual entrepreneur.
> (Zimmer *et al. 2*018, p. 12)

For Nyssens (2006, p. 12), social enterprises can have a *hybrid character*, generating funds from trading activities, from public subsidies and from voluntary sources obtained through the mobilisation of social capital, while remaining fully embedded within civil society. This describes the range of activities undertaken by FDG; the businesses operating in the Cowpark represent the trading-arm of the enterprise, the public subsidisation has raised 1.4 million Euro to date and over 50,000 Euro was raised via the mobilisation of the Ferbane community.

8.4   Social Enterprise in Ireland

Social Enterprises have democratic as well as economic objectives because they are managed by a group of people on behalf of their community, rather than by Directors on behalf of external shareholders. Walsh draws upon a number of criteria for a social enterprise as put forward by FORFAS which serves to distinguish such enterprises from traditional non-state organisations which depend on state funding or are involved in charity or advocacy, defining it as

> as an enterprise that trades for a social/societal purpose, where at least part of its income is earned from its trading activity, is separate from government and where the surplus is primarily reinvested in the social objective.
>
> (Walsh 2014, p. 456)

The benefits of social enterprises identified by Walsh (2014, p. 458) include:

- The ability to identify, meet and address demands for services that neither the private nor the public sector are willing to provide
- Flexibility and responsiveness in addressing local needs in innovative ways
- The creation of employment opportunities.
- Capacity to get people back to work and active in their community, building both social capital and community spirit
- The ability to engage with and deliver state and philanthropic investment
- The regeneration of local economies.

Such social enterprises can draw upon traditions of economic self-help, particularly in rural Ireland and thus have deep roots in the past tribulations of Irish society. The agricultural co-operative movement, founded by the social reformer Horace Plunkett, was a prominent example of locally-based enterprise development that spread rapidly to all parts of Ireland in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This introduced a co-operative model of agri-business and the movement became a significant player in Ireland before influencing such development models internationally. The Credit Union movement is a similar case in point.

Thus bottom-up, locally-based economic activity has a strong history in Ireland and indeed was operational in areas where and when the State or the Market failed to intervene.

> In one way or another, and to varying extents, people always have turned to informal, household and community economic strategies to survive and to achieve some measure of empowerment in the flux and stress of economic change.
>
> (Doyle and Lalor 2012, p. 13)

Cooke, indeed, suggests that the roots of what he calls community enterprise go back to six types of organisational structure that operated at a local level in Ireland. These organisations are the Catholic Church, the national school system, local government, the GAA, the co-operative movement, and the voluntary sector. He goes on to define community enterprise as follows:

> An enterprising community has the capacity to create wealth and develop social cohesion. It is a geographical area, urban and rural, with people living in close proximity and sharing responsibility for services, facilities and infrastructure that meet local needs and expectations. People cooperate with each other in voluntary networks, in parishes, half-parishes, housing estates and streets to maintain a supportive living environment. Local organisations collaborate with state agencies and the private sector in developing enterprise and jobs ... Communal activity creates social capital and acts as a glue in binding people together to pursue common objectives.
>
> (Cooke 2019, p. 10)

This definition is broader than the other definitions in that it posits that such enterprises have a role in creating social capital and in community development, tapping into deep-rooted loyalties and networks in the process of enterprise creation.

8.5   Development of the Social Economy in Ferbane

> No jobs and no future unless we do something - Ferbane RIP
> (Slide shown at a meeting in 2002 FDG)

In order to implement this proposal, a limited company called Ferbane Business and Technology Park Limited was formed with not-for-profit charitable status and proceeded with the development of a new business park. Offaly County Council agreed to rezone a 55-acre site called the Cowpark for commercial use with the aim of developing a critical mass of

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industry close to the town. The total budget was 1.4 million Euro. A grant aid application to Bord na Móna, West Offaly Enterprise, and Enterprise Ireland was very successful, and there was a lucrative local public fund-raising drive that amassed 50,000 Euro and the new company borrowed 350,000 Euro. This proposal for social enterprise development is summarised in the appendix I.

The next section of this chapter will tell the story of the development of the social economy in Ferbane using the six criteria for a resilient economy proposed by the Canadian Resilience Framework and introduced at the beginning of this chapter.

8.5.1   *The community has a strategy for increasing local ownership.*

A new company called Ferbane Business and Technology Park was established and developed business incubation units and office space over a portion of the Cowpark site. Offaly County Council also decided to develop 30 acres in the Cowpark with serviced sites, working with private developers on 10,000 square feet as the base, all with the potential to provide 200-plus jobs by 2012. There were over 140 people employed on-site during the construction phase with 14 companies operational in 2006, including Brosna Press printers. Then the recession hit, and all businesses were badly affected.

8.5.2   *Recession and Ferbane*

The economic issue that dominated the period of development under scrutiny in this thesis was the major recession that hit Ireland as part of the global downturn from 2008. Ireland was severely impacted by the crisis, much of it due to an over-exposed property market leading to unemployment, debt, austerity and emigration. The rural areas of Ireland were particularly hard-hit by recession, as highlighted in a report by Teagasc:

> Rural areas in Ireland have been severely affected by the economic downturn...
> This results from an over reliance on activities based on natural resources,
> construction, tourism and low value-added manufacturing, activities that have
> been severely affected by the downturn. In addition to the negative impact of the
> Economic Crisis, rural areas also often exhibit long term structural problems in
> relation to poor or non-existent infrastructure; inadequate and/or inappropriate
> labour force skills and competitive disadvantage in terms of attractiveness for
> new investment due to the pull from agglomeration benefits in urban areas.
> <div align="right">(O'Donoghue 2014, Introduction)</div>

The authors of the report pointed to the impact of the recession on employment in the small towns of Ireland and its links to the production of poverty in rural areas:

> Unemployment increased by 192 per cent in rural areas as compared with 114 per cent in urban areas during the recession … We highlight in our research that small and medium sized rural towns have been most affected by the economic downturn. This is due to a higher reliance on construction employment during the boom which collapsed during the economic crisis. This resulted in a greater fall in employment and differentially larger impact on local expenditure. It has also resulted in the smallest towns having twice the consistent poverty rate of the cities.
>
> (O'Donoghue 2014, Introduction)

In 2013, respondents reported that Ferbane, like most small rural towns, had been negatively impacted by the recession, commencing in 2008. The impacts were felt in terms of the decline in business in the town, and they affected the tenancy arrangements in the Cowpark development. Impacts were also noted in terms of emigration of young people, leading to a decline in volunteering and fewer people available to make up the local football team.

> CM1: But then I suppose the proverbial muck hit the fan in 2007/2008 and a lot of our tenants,I suppose, were construction related so the whole thing stalled and a lot of the businesses went under and eventually went bankrupt.
>
> (Corcoran 2013)

> CM4: High unemployment is a huge issue; there is massive youth unemployment everywhere and I think the figures are about they say 25% but it's just the fact that so many have left the country.
>
> (Corcoran 2013)

Reduced occupancy and business closures were noted also:

> CM 7 I'm a publican here in Ferbane. We have the pub 20 years now. Wealthwise, Ferbane has gone down a lot. There's a lot of unemployment, a lot of emigration: in the summer in particular, all the young people are gone. A lot of them are gone to America on a J1 - they can't get summer jobs so...Just looking at the Facebook page for my age, half the people are in Australia and that has a big impact on all the businesses in town. There's not as many volunteers as there used to be 20 years ago; there was a big drop in volunteers during the Celtic Tiger as well; but it never seemed to pick up after that - they're gone. That's it. The GAA clubs and Rugby clubs - it's having a big impact on them as well.
>
> (Corcoran 2013)

CM 5 We lost a few pubs I suppose in the meantime, which is a kind of an indication...(of), where we're going. A few shops have closed down. There's sweetshops, two sweetshops have closed down, you know, since, Grennan's and Murrays';… there isn't much. I don't know where the young people are going to get going again ... an awful lot of my kid's generation are emigrating either permanently, or for the two or three years in Canada, Australia or whatever, you know… So that, in terms of resilience, I suppose that is the biggest problem I would see.

(Corcoran 2013)

The significant impact of the recession on the Cowpark was noted by respondents in 2013:

CM 4: the development of the Business Park has been successful in some respects but unfortunately we're just hit with the worst economic downturn we've ever, that anybody has ever, experienced and that has caused serious difficulty for people who have invested in the area in terms of building advance units or even having their own companies there.…at one stage we had 120 jobs in the Business Park which was significant in a small community but a lot of those jobs have gone…because of the collapse in the construction industry.

(Corcoran 2013)

It was reported that there was a handful of properties in the town under administration with NAMA, the National Asset Management Agency established by the Irish State to 'hoover up' the property portfolios of financial institutions whose investments had failed during the economic crisis. This is a very onerous task as ownership of such properties is difficult to isolate and therefore issues relating to resulting dereliction becomes hard to resolve. Comments were made by most respondents regarding dereliction, as a result of business closures.

CM5: reflected Unfortunately as a result of the Celtic Tiger, I suppose we have a few new major eyesores in terms of businesses that were bought and didn't proceed, you know. Others, the corner, there as you come off the Ballycumber Road is probably the biggest downside of the town really. So I don't know where that is, or who owns it, or where it's going to go ... Ah, but that is really defacing the town most of all.

(Corcoran 2013)

However, CM5 and other respondents noted that the local Tidy Towns group had adapted their activities to deal with dereliction. They had painted several derelict properties in the town and worked hard to ensure that despite business failure, that dereliction, or at least a perception of it, was arrested:

CM5: I think nearly every other premises has really upgraded, tidied up and there's a nice standard, apart from that ... in the town. There's one other derelict business and the local group took it on and painted it and made it look perfect … it was deteriorating down to being an eyesore, so that was a great achievement; they painted it up. You wouldn't realise it was a derelict site.

(Corcoran 2013)

By 2013 the number of staff had fallen to 50. In 2010, during the height of the recession, a review of the plan for the Cowpark was initiated. FDG facilitated a workshop to help identify a future direction for the company and enable it to build on successes to date. The three principal areas identified were:

1. Diversification from the printing industry
2. Primary health care
3. A Food Project.   (Corcoran 2010)

Following a feasibility study, and the failure of the primary health project proposal (see previous chapter) it was decided to create a 'food campus' to attract food companies to invest, to relocate a food preparation business to one of the business incubation units and to convert the upstairs part of the building into a shared kitchen. An invitation was issued out to all food-producing companies within a 40-mile radius of Ferbane, promoting its new role as a food hub. Its attractive features such as its central geographic location, the availability of a set of fully-serviced sites, project support from OLDC and with child-care provision on site were advertised. The scheme was promoted as a site for clean industry focusing on the production of food with export potential, located just 15 kilometres from the industrial, research and educational hub of Athlone The rationale behind the new proposed Food Campus was that the production of food is an important sector in Ireland, with thousands of people employed and as a substantial source of foreign earnings (Henchion 2016). Many new companies were springing up to meet the new demands of the export sector. FDG, as a Social Enterprise, held considerable assets, had a good track record and provided a secure anchor from which to assist fledgling companies to develop (Correspondence seen 2013).

By 2018, this Social or Community enterprise model had been recognised as a success and written-up in a new publication featuring 21 of Ireland's most successful locally-based community enterprises.

The time-share kitchen is well-established and to date 12 start-up companies have been, or are, using the facilities to develop new food products. From phase 2 it was evident that several of these companies required their own production space and to this end two Shannon Development buildings on a 1.65 acre site

were purchased. One of the buildings was converted into two incubation units and an office. The second building continues to be occupied by an artisan food company. Grants were secured from the Regional Economic Development Zone, and EI (Enterprise Ireland). A further grant from EI provided 50% of a manager's salary, which allowed for the hiring of a fully qualified chef to operate as manager of the food campus and mentor individuals with ideas for new food-related products. With phases 1 and 2 in place, the Board is now ready to proceed to phase 3 and attract existing food businesses into the food campus. The project has the potential to increase existing employment levels from 40 to more than 200 people over a 2-year period and provide the local farming community with the opportunity to supply raw material to the food producers. The food campus is now a City and Guilds training facility. Five food entrepreneurs are using the time-share kitchens and over 300 people from the local area have attended training courses, with 30% now running their own food business or involved in the catering industry (Cooke: 104).

Building on this success FDG is now (2019) in the process of expanding the food hub, again with the support of agencies such as Enterprise Ireland:

With full planning recently approved we would hope to move onto Phase 3 to extend the existing HQ building on a stage-by-stage basis and developed for interested clients for the future business expansion and needs. Our immediate plan is to help a local food producing company "Black Boot Kitchens" expand their businesses in the Factory Meals sector by accommodating them to occupy two kitchens in the Incubation Unit on a one year lease basis. At the end of this year Black Boot Kitchens will have the option of availing of one our sites as outlined on the attached drawing of the revised layout of FB&TP site at a very competitive price to construct their own building thereby creating an additional jobs in the Business & Technology Park.

This will then enable us to relocate the equipment from the Time/Share Kitchens to one of the ground floor Incubation Units and also modify the current Time/Share Kitchen into Office and Storage space for existing tenants Cultec and Easytrack thereby affording them to expand their business and create first-time jobs in the area. This modification will also include an extension of the existing building to allow for additional ground space that can be used as additional extra storage space by Easytrack and/or be kitted out to Food Grade Standard for Food Incubation Units for Market demands. We currently have 1 food company on the waiting list and we have several letters with expression of interest for units if they become available in the near future.

All buildings are now fully occupied and over the next year we would hope to have all sites developed and sold leaving the Business Park in a better position to move on to the extension project
     (Ferbane Community Action Plan: Supporting Documents 2019)

It is clear, therefore, that FDG, by having a good strategy and by having strong adaptive capacity, has managed to survive the recession by diversifying its activity base, increasing local ownership of businesses and remaining open to new forms of economic activity.

8.5.3   *Employment is diversified and locally owned*

Diversity in resilience terms refers to the number of species, people or institutions that exist within any given social-ecological system. Diversity is not just about the number of things that exist in a system but also about the various roles that they perform. The more variations available to a system to allow it to respond to a shock, the greater the resilience of the system; diversity relates to flexibility and the range of options available to a system adapt and to respond to change (Meadows 2008; Walker and Salt 2006). Therefore, having a number of options for employment in an area makes it more resilient than an area dependent on one.

In 2013 respondents acknowledged that Bord na Móna was still a significant local employer, despite efforts to diversify the local economy:

> CM5: Bord na Móna is obviously very important still … there's probably over two hundred people permanent and probably seventy seasonals on top of that. And a lot of those seasonals, now would be young guys … We don't have any big employer, apart from that, really … So, I suppose we would be looking at a lot of the state sector as well.
>
> (Corcoran 2013)

> CM1: I suppose BNM is still a significant employer; to what extent this percentage of employment has been significant … I suppose if you'd asked the question five or six years ago I suppose the answer was yes.
>
> (Corcoran 2013)

The impact of reduced employment by these state agencies was felt keenly in the local economy:

> CM 7: BNM and ESB are still the two main employers, you know. But don't employ a quarter of what they used to. As for independent businesses, there's a couple, but they would be here years. There's no real new ones; the shops - all the small shops are closed now, bar one of the independent traders. In the last five years, about four of these closed down. Pubs-wise, there's five pubs left now trading in the town and a couple of these: I don't know how they're trading, but they are.
>
> (Corcoran 2013)

Local resilience is undermined if major decisions regarding the local economy are made outside of the locale (Powe and Hart 2017). BNM of course is not locally owned as it is a semi-state body with its headquarters in another county. Decisions regarding the future of

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BNM and its employees are made by the board of BNM, operating under the guidance of the Irish State. Apart from BNM and other local employers such as the schools, the health service executive and Offaly county council there is a list of 68 businesses located in Ferbane on the town's website (Ferbane Local Business Pages 2019). These include a wide range of businesses including clothing stores, restaurants and bars, hardware providers, a garden centre and florist, security services, a Credit Union, an undertakers, hairdressers and beauty salons, a medical practice and pharmacy, building contractors, a printing press, the crèche, a car dealership, a supermarket, transport services and auctioneers. Despite vociferous local opposition, the Ulster Bank, the only bank in Ferbane, closed its doors in 2014 after nearly 100 years of operation. Also, during this period, the full-time Garda presence in the town was withdrawn, a barometer of State retreat from the town.

A survey carried out amongst businesses in Ferbane during the early part of 2018 was designed to generate a general understanding of the business sector's views about Ferbane today and its future. A total of 16 business responses was received. The most recently established is there for one year, with the longest being in existence for 85 years. Three firms have been in existence for more than 50 years, with the average length being about 22.5 years.

A total of 102 full-time employees and 42 part-time employees were employed by the respondent firms, giving a total of 144 employees. These were distributed as follows between firms of different size. The smallest number of employees recorded was two and the largest 28.
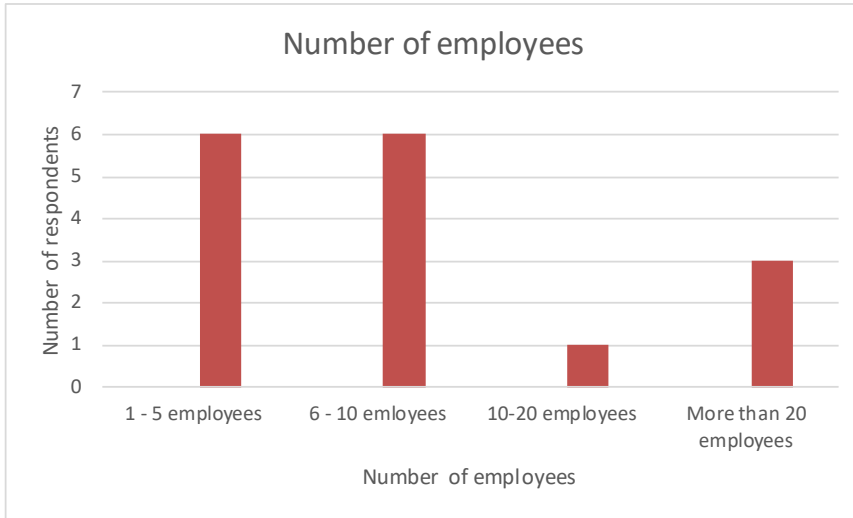
Figure 10: Responses to the 2018 Business Survey – Profile of Respondent Company size – Number of employees in the organisation

The firms tended to be concentrated at the smaller end of the scale as indicated in figure 10, above. This would not be surprising in a town like Ferbane.

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether their businesses had improved, declined or experienced no change during the last year and over the last two years. They were also asked to indicate what their expectations were in the coming two years. The responses, as indicated in figure 11 below, indicates quite a positive response to these questions.
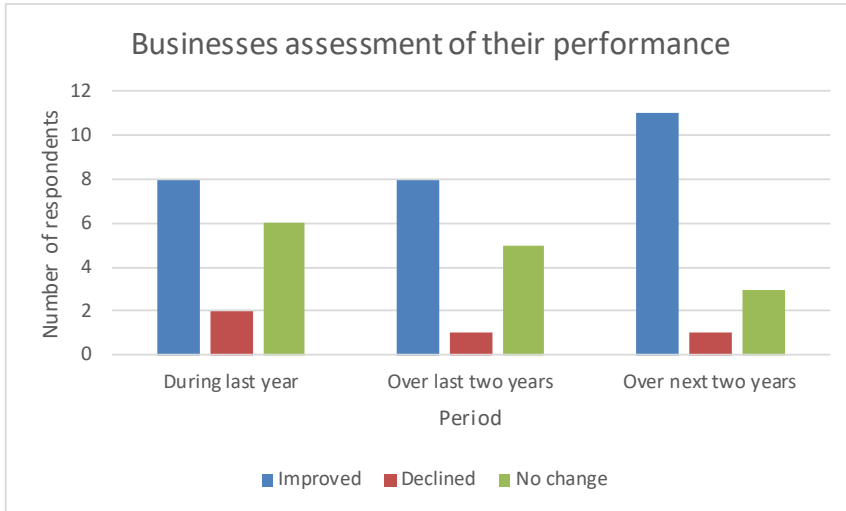
Figure 11: Responses to the 2018 Business Survey – Respondents were asked to indicate whether their businesses had improved, declined or experienced no change during the last year and over the previous two years, and what their expectations were in the coming two years.

The vast majority of respondents indicated that business was steady or improving and a significant majority expected further improvement over the next two years. This is a welcome perspective and suggests a sense of optimism and indicates that efforts to improve the situation even more would not be wasted.

8.5.4 *There is an openness to alternative ways of making a living and economic activity*

Ex-Resource towns are places that were formerly largely dependent on the extraction of natural resources such as fossil fuels or ore and whose original function has been lost as the market or legislative environment shifts, thereby reducing the need for production. While suffering from 'boom and bust' cycles that are typical of ex-resource towns, some places have retained comparative advantage through diversification of the economy while also striving to provide desirable places to live, to visit and to set up business (Powe and Hart 2017).

In 2013, the Ferbane respondents commented on the steps that had been taken in the town to diversify employment and to seek new opportunities:

> OLDC Co-ordinator: I suppose Ferbane has been showing resilience; like say, if you look back at that slide showing the one with RIP Ferbane dead … it would be dead; because it had to get up off its ass and do something for itself like and that was the feeling at the time; it did show resilience, it did, and certainly a bit of get up and go anyway.
>
> (Corcoran 2013)

> CM5: FDG is trying to get things going again and they're trying to get a new direction into things … we lost a few businesses, I suppose, that employ people and things like that locally and they're obviously a loss. Luckily some of them, Brosna Press and things like that, have managed to keep going; the town is doing all right. You know, Tidy Towns all that sort of thing, made a big impact. I think it has been a major raising of awareness in terms of maintaining the face of the town, you know, and the presentation of the town.
>
> (Corcoran 2013)

Youth emigration and lack of employment were seen by many as the biggest threat to the economic life of the town. However, the efforts of the FDG in counteracting this was noted:

> CM5: So they're moving now with this community kitchen and again … So that's positive anyway. They're appointing a manager and things like that and ah, yeah I think the park was a great addition. They're developing a kind of a community area, … a walkway, a picnic area, an activity area. So they're putting ... again a kind of a walking area, amenity area and wildlife area; it'll make a safe area for people ... to walk and things like that, if it's lit up and if there is activity like scouts and things like that it'll be great, you know.
>
> (Corcoran 2013)

In an examination of the needs of the speciality food sector in Ireland. Henchion (2014, p. 90) identified the potential for specialised food production in Ireland in the face of growing global demand and the disappearance of restrictive practices such as milk quotas. She identified a number of key strategic needs that an enterprise such as the food campus could satisfy:

- Improved infrastructure which is necessary to facilitate an expansion of the speciality food sector
- Incubation spaces required to kick-start new businesses but also for innovation
- Soft as well as hard infrastructures to support the expansion of the speciality food sector through formal training, mentoring and networking initiatives.
- The provision of some artisan skills which are limited on the ground

- Technical advice needs which may be high initially, and then remain low until the company seeks to expand its product range and/or scale up.
- Networking to provide communities of learning: advice training and information, identifying new partners, enhanced networking and collaborative action, building bridges, sourcing new ideas.

Powe and Hart (2017) state that it may happen in such ex-resource towns that the resource economy continues in a reduced form or that other specialisms and functions emerge to compensate for the loss of the old to ensure a more resilient and diversified economy. In the case of Ferbane, there are still people employed in the resource economy with ESB/BNM, but diversification is occurring. Whatever the case, as stated above, *maintaining adaptability* should be a key goal within settlement planning (Powe and Hart 2017, p. 39). Fostering endogenous knowledge to allow innovation to constantly occur was found to be a key component in the resilience of small towns. For example, the competitive position of the Ferbane area as an energy-producer was commented on. Many rural communities react negatively to proposals for wind farms due to environmental concerns and noise pollution, but this respondent did not see this as a problem in Ferbane:

> CM3: I suppose the whole background to the Midlands - we're kind of used to generating electricity with peat. So I wouldn't have thought there was going to be the same problem as you would have in other counties with wind energy; and you don't have that problem here in west Offaly as you would in what I call 'north' Offaly - Edenderry, Rhode - there's a huge objection to it up there as they would have had Rhode Power Station. I tell you what: there's a lot of people who have moved from the cities and they're the ones objecting - the locals aren't. We don't have that problem down here. People won't object because they're used to having their son work with BNM. So they're saying: 'Jesus! At least there's going to be jobs!' …On the other side, I'd say the downside of that, is that this energy is for export to the UK. 70% to 80% of that produced in the Midlands is for export. So what they are saying, particularly those objecting, is that it's bad enough that we are going to spoil the countryside but we're doing it for John Bull!
>
> (Corcoran 2013)

The unique industrial tradition of the area and its strategic location in the midlands, close to major roads and bigger towns was seen as giving Ferbane a competitive edge.

Again, geographies of proximity were recognised by respondents:

> CM 4: The engineering works at Boora was huge; there were very skilful people there in terms of their understanding of engineering but it is trying to see where are the opportunities for these people or what could you attract that would match the skills. Now of course the Boora works in Blackwater are really diminishing hugely over the years but I would say if you ask any industrial person I still think if you were coming in here and you are looking at industry and that you still have the infrastructure while you are close to Athlone and to the motorway 7 or 8 miles from here to … if you're talking about heavy commercial traffic, it's difficult; if you're a large company there is a difficulty there but with the new motorway from Athlone and getting to Dublin literally it's not more than an hour and 15 minutes.

> CC: OK very good and we talked a little bit earlier about alternative energy and could you see some businesses developing out of that here?

> CM4: Yes I could. A lot of these could be on the doorstep. But what do these industries need to service them? like what services do they require? …what supports would they require and is there any opportunity for us to meet any of their needs? I'd say there's not affordable housing; it's a question of can you get the money? I would say the water infrastructure is there, a new sewage works and obviously that means that there is capacity within the area for further development so it's not something that would hamper further development at the moment.
>
> (Corcoran 2013)

In terms of identity, there is still a tussle in local people's minds in deciding on the economic role of Ferbane, as it evolves from a resource town to more of a commuter town (Powe and Hart 2007; 2017)

> CM4: Even … people who are working in BNM…a lot of them are working in Boora or Blackwater or whatever; there's a lot of them have to travel to Newbridge; there's quite bit of travelling involved now for a number of people, but the numbers involved have reduced quite a bit; you also have people travelling to Athlone and Tullamore so it would be quite a shock; people are dependent very much on their car here. We have become a very car dependent society here. -I suppose the concern for any rural area in Ireland at the moment is just in employment opportunities locally and that and we would sincerely hope the centres of Athlone and Tullamore I suppose the two most adjacent to us will remain strong and maybe even try and continue to grow to give opportunities to people within the area; but there are some very good employers in the area.
>
> (Corcoran 2013)

The proximity to larger towns also has its disadvantages as it is difficult for smaller towns to compete with them for local business (Powe and Hart 2017)

> CM7: They're there anyway. Difficult times. Lookit: it's (Ferbane) curtailed in itself. Athlone is a large town nearby, Tullamore is nearby. People do go away, maybe, and spend their money in other towns. We have a good Centra here and Londis, but people just go away for the day out. The money is the other thing; it's just not there to be spent anyway and everyone is watching the money. You're trying to bulk it all into one to get the most out of it - the value or whatever - when you do decide to do a trip or whatever.
>
> (Corcoran 2013)

In terms of new business development, the Ferbane Food campus incorporates many of the needs that were identified by Henchion in the areas of infrastructure, incubation, training and technical support as well as giving local food businesses an exposure to new ideas and contacts. Most respondents recognised that it was a resource town transitioning to an altered state Overall, it would therefore appear that the Ferbane community, led by FDG was open to innovation and to seeking new forms of economic activity. It has capitalised on its reputation and on its natural, human and infrastructural assets and has continuously worked with the relevant state agencies in developing new forms of social enterprise.

8.5.5 *Seeking and securing resources*

Since 2000, the Ferbane community has been active in seeking and securing resources from external bodes and state agencies to support the development process within the town. The main examples of successful partnerships between Ferbane initiatives and external bodies were as follows:

- Site and Funding secured for the Cowpark Enterprise Centre from Offaly Co. Council/Shannon Development/County Enterprise Board/ESB/BNM/Enterprise Ireland
- Childcare centre with Offaly Childcare Committee/Department of Social Welfare/ Department of Education and Skills
- Sewage scheme developed by Offaly County Council
- Transport Initiative developed with OLDC/Rural Transport Scheme
- Car parking addressed with Offaly Co Council
- Twinning of 2nd level schools and new school premises developed with Department of Education and Skills and Public-Private Funding PPF

- Youth group established with Foróige, Irelands leading youth organisation
- Canal walking route developed with Offaly Co Council/Tourism Ireland/Waterways Ireland/The Offaly Way
- The Gathering 2013 with Bord Failte
- Atlantic Corridor Project
- Infill Housing – Offaly Co. Council
- Relief road developed – National Roads Authority

In 2013, respondents were asked to comment on the ability of the town to seek and secure resources from outside. This is linked to the notion of networked development (Shucksmith 2012), where bottom-up approaches to development fuse with the resources that external bodies have to offer to provide the means to allow local development efforts to thrive:

> The focus of networked development is therefore not only on the dynamic interactions within local areas, but also on those between local areas and the wider political, institutional, trading and natural environments. Dense local networks are important for building social and economic capital, but strategic connections beyond the locality are vital in positioning the territory to its best advantage. Such connections may be created and maintained by a variety of actors and institutions.
>
> (Shucksmith 2012, p. 12)

CC (2013): Would you agree that the Community knows where to seek and secure resources?

CM1: I would say yes it does. The community is pretty well adept at when it wants to address a problem and seeking aid from whatever institutions are available; yes I would say yes it is ... It's very difficult not to be aware of what is going on and nobody has the privilege of being insulated from the macroeconomic forces at work at the moment. … I would say the biggest, the main thrust of the plan was to create employment in Ferbane and that was very active and there was a large re-focus of resources and objectives that have been spelled out in the last three to four years and that are being pursued now.

CM4: Yes I think they're very good at identifying if they see there's an opportunity there, I think they are very good at trying to identify resources, I think that the local development company are good and supportive, I think the locally elected representatives will always try and point people in the right direction.

CM5: Ah, I think it does. But there's great support up there with the organiations, the Offaly development company, Enterprise Ireland, things like that, I think, in particular the business park group are very focused that way, you

know and they have secured a new momentum with the development, the community, the kitchens and things like that. I see they've got funding for the local manager. Ah, so yeah, they know where to go alright. I suppose they were looking to towns like Athlone, Tullamore or if you could drag in offsets of companies, they're something like we could be Feeder Company to … that service is being offered there. The facility is there … infrastructurally wise, it's not bad ... you know, the bypass was a huge addition there ... other than that the town is very well serviced.

<div align="right">(Corcoran 2013)</div>

CC In your opinion, are local organisations good at networking and developing relationships with external stakeholders?

> CM 1: I would say yes to that I would think so yes. It's very difficult not to be aware of what is going on and nobody has the, I suppose, the privilege of being insulated from the macroeconomic forces at work at the moment. Yes I think Ferbane is well networked certainly locally, internationally I'd say let's put it this way I consider that there is a big opportunity there if we want to be better networked internationally that there is room for improvement there.

> CM4: I think it's strong, I think it's good, positive relationships there with national organisations … I think they work extremely hard at trying to build networks. It depends now like when Ferbane Business and Technology was opened they had their own manager employed and basically they did a huge amount of networking through there. Now a certain amount of that would have died out when they weren't in a position to retain the manager. Now with the new manager coming in I'm sure that would be a large aspect of it. I know a lot of the national organisations we were trying to network with, we were trying to see whatever opportunities would be available for us. I know that the clubs were trying to network with groups outside as well. I know that the Tidy Towns will be very much involved with the local development companies and try and see what can we do. I would say all the groups were trying to look outside to see what they can and can't do.

<div align="right">(Corcoran 2013)</div>

8.5.6 *The Community is aware of its competitive position in the broader economy.*

In terms of policies to encourage the resilience of small towns, we saw earlier that five policy areas were selected as worthy of particular attention by Powe and Hart (2017):

- Encouraging entrepreneurs to establish businesses in small towns
- Encouraging those employed within the town to live locally
- Encouraging town residents to establish local businesses
- Encouraging residents to shop and enjoy leisure locally and

<div align="center">242</div>

- Encourage residents living elsewhere to shop and enjoy leisure in the town.

In the 2018 survey, respondents were asked to suggest improvements to make Ferbane a better shopping and service town. Figure 12, below, indicates the results mentioned most often.
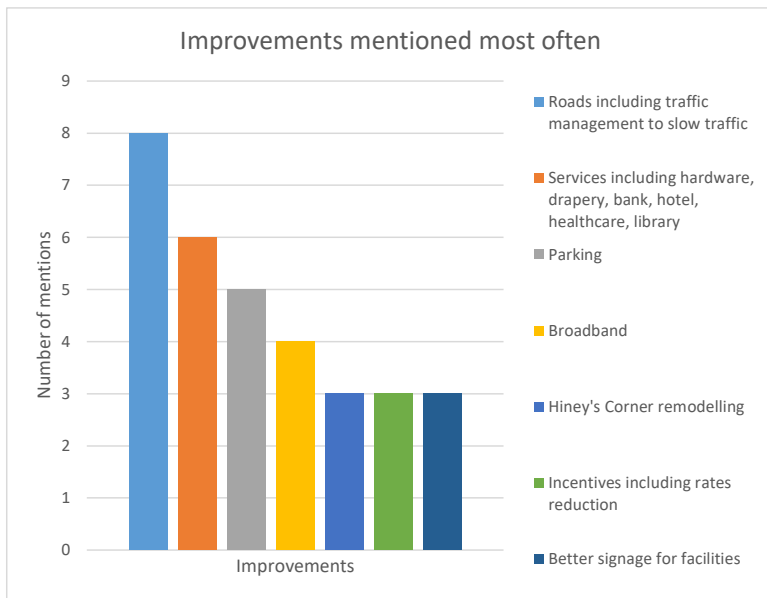
Figure 12: Responses to the 2018 Survey: Suggested improvements to make Ferbane a better shopping and service town (most mentioned responses)

This chart suggests that there is quite a broad range of matters that could be considered for attention. The parking situation was mentioned a number of times including the need to advertise the fact that parking was available in the town. Broadband was also mentioned, which is a common refrain throughout the rural areas of the country. A number of other matters (like a shop local campaign and better housing) were mentioned by individual respondents. Overall, the results would indicate that the business sector in Ferbane was aware of its competitive position in the wider economy and knew what issues needed to be addressed if Ferbane was to become a more attractive location for businesses. It would also indicate that some of the issues raised by Powe and Hart (2017) were part of the debate locally regarding small business development in Ferbane.

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Respondents were also asked to indicate whether there was anything about Ferbane which was affecting their ability to develop their businesses. Over 80% said that there were indeed obstacles. Lack of broadband was significantly the issue most referred to, with the need for an upgrading of the road to Kilbeggan also mentioned by many. A variety of other matters were mentioned including the slow decline of footfall, lack of financial services, lack of events in the town to attract visitors, limited parking and lack of promotion of the parking which does exist. The fact that the sewage treatment system at Lemonaghan was not working was also mentioned by a number of people.

Respondents were asked to indicate the resources which could best be used to attract more visitors. Those generally mentioned most often included –

- Lough Boora Wetlands which was mentioned 12 times
- The Grand Canal which was mentioned 9 times
- The Brosna River which was mentioned 7 times
- Clonmacnoise Monastic site which was also mentioned 7 times

The activity most often referred to was walking, although a number of other ideas were mentioned including a Bord na Móna museum and peat-cutting exhibition, to be housed in Ferbane; a Greenway from Lough Boora, through Pollagh, and on to Shannon Harbour; and a cycle route developed along the old railway line.

Respondents were also asked to indicate their views on business opportunities in Ferbane. Firstly, they were asked whether they knew of anyone who wished to establish a business in the town and faced barriers in doing so. About one in eight of the survey households said that they did know somebody in that position. Respondents who indicated that they did know somebody were asked to indicate what they believed the barriers to be. A wide variety of responses was given to this question but the factors which emerged most clearly were lack of finance. The deteriorating infrastructure was also mentioned by a number as well as the competition in adjoining major centres.

In a similar vein, the wider community survey also addressed the issue of business development in Ferbane. Respondents were also asked to indicate the three nearby resources which, if developed, would be likely to attract national and international tourists. Table 3, below, indicates the resources identified.

Resource	Number of mentions
Lough Boora	62
Grand Canal	56
Clonmacnoise	31
River Brosna	31
Bog lands	26
River Walks	25
Cycle Tracks (to and from Ferbane)	15
B and B availability	9
Historical Trips	8
Canal Cycle Way	6
Fishing	4
Bord na Móna	3

Table 3: Responses to the 2018 Survey: Respondents indication of the three nearby resources which, if developed, would be likely to attract national and international tourists

From this it can be seen that the community is generally conscious of the opportunities for the development of tourism and the main resources available in the area that had potential to attract visitors and for locals and residents living elsewhere to shop and enjoy leisure in the town

Respondents were also asked to indicate the uses to which they thought the emerging cutaway bogs should be put. They were given the options of environmental protection, tourism or windfarms and asked to pick one or more uses they considered suitable. The responses are indicated in figure 13, below.
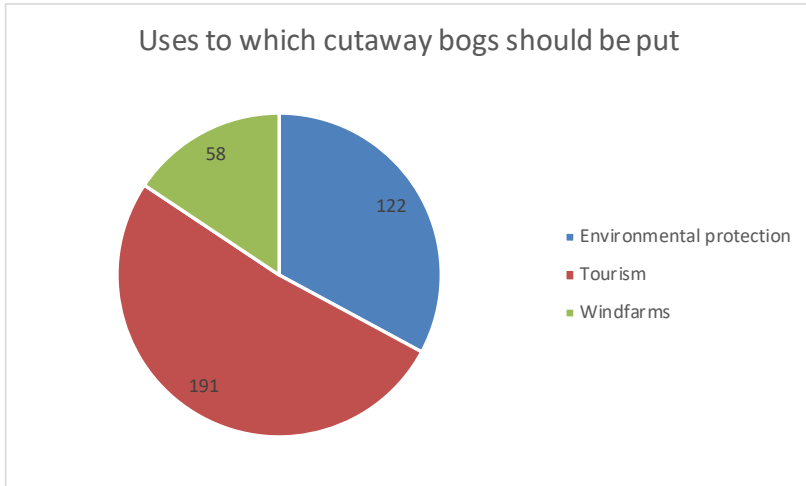
Figure 13: Responses to the 2018 Survey: Respondents were asked to indicate three nearby resources which, if developed, would be likely to attract national and international tourists

This indicates that there is strong support for their use for tourism purposes, with significant support also for environmental protection uses. The support for wind energy developments is relatively lower being about 30% of that for tourism, but with no indication of resistance to that form of energy generation.

Among the new developments often mentioned as having further potential for tourism and amenity development was Lough Boora. At the same time as the developments in Ferbane discussed here, BNM gave support to a local community coalition to create a dual leisure and wilderness area in Lough Boora - a classic post-industrial peatland area located 13 kilometers from Ferbane. Lough Boora Discovery Park extends to over 2000 hectares and has a network of off-road walking and cycle routes within a perimeter of approximately 20 kilometres. Various internal looped walkways and routes offer scenic beauty, heritage and an impressive collection of sculptures. While viewed positively, in both social and ecological terms by locals and commentators alike, according to an analysis by Collier and Scott (2008), BNM has retained a firm hold on its management. Community participation was not seen as a central, decisive factor in its success, but participation was experienced as a result of the project. There was little attempt to draw on local social capital at the initiation of the project; much of this was due to the lack of long-term planning on behalf of the mining company. However. the ecologists involved with the project were also mistrustful of involving local

people in planning about the future of the bogs; they did not trust local people to come up with solutions that were environmentally sound. Similarly, local stakeholders mistrusted the motivations of the mining company, believing that the company was incapable of developing a post-productivist role for the cutaway bogs. Ironically, the authors found that the three groups had much in common when it came to looking at the future functionality of the cutaway bogs; what was lacking were the mechanisms for collaborative planning to allow the parties to plan together. It is interesting to record that the authors of this study noted the absence of the collaborative, networked approach to developing Lough Boora that was so much in evidence in Ferbane at the same time.

Arising from the 2018 survey, the Ferbane community prepared a new action plan as it was considered appropriate to consider the next phase of development for the town and its hinterland. Six key projects have been identified for this new phase in the life of the area:

1. To develop the Food campus by linking it to incubator space, additional start-up units and expanded research and training facilities
2. To brand Ferbane as the green town of Ireland which provides most/all of its energy through green, locally sourced electricity, making Ferbane a carbon-free community.
3. To develop Noggus and Ballylin peatlands as significant visitor attractions for Irish and International tourists
4. To create new open public spaces in the town
5. To provide more housing and market Ferbane as a desirable place to live
6. To develop looped walks to maximize access to the River Brosna.

During the height of the recession in 2010 the Ferbane Business and Development Group developed a new strategy centring around the development of a Food Campus at the Cowpark. The group demonstrated their openness by again seeking new forms of economic activity. They called on local and state agency resources and have managed to turn around the fortunes of the Cowpark, rebranding it as a state-of-the art food campus, now ready to host new and existing food businesses targeting the export market. The profile of the campus as a social enterprise and as a 'clean-green' business is very well aligned to European and National policies and demonstrates that the Ferbane leadership is well aware of its position in the broader economy.

8.6   Discussion

The principal existential threat to Ferbane as an economic entity was its dependence on a single employer, Bord na Móna. This company had provided employment to over 1,200 people in the area for many decades. By 2000, it was clear to the local community and the agencies supporting it that alternative employment was needed; employment needed to be diversified away from BNM. The major thrust in the 2001 Integrated Area Plan prepared for Ferbane was the need to develop a new strategy for the local economy; out of this emerged the social enterprise managed by Ferbane Development Group. Rather than seeking to replace BNM with a single new industry, FDG and its supporting partners established the Cowpark, a purpose-built centre for the incubation of new and emerging small businesses. The group formed a social/community enterprise and gained considerable financial and technical support from state agency partners in this endeavour. They attracted large state funding of over 1 million euro for the Cowpark (excluding the land value) and 1.1 million for the childcare centre. The combination of timing, resource availability and the skill-set of the local leaders was almost unparalleled; the state agencies were under pressure to come up with a solution to the demise of the BNM, a good deal of state funding was available during the peak years of the Celtic Tiger and the managerial skills of senior managers who happened to live in Ferbane and were willing and able to lend their expertise in developing a new form of social enterprise were harnessed.

This typology of enterprise development may fit into what Curtin and Varley (2006) call 'ideal-pragmatist' local development, where local actors see development companies such as OLDC as offering valuable opportunities and resources to community interests, enabling community groups to use local-area partnerships to their own advantage. Within this model, local leaders are assumed to be few in number, emerging from existing local elites, inclined to an executive management style and skilled in pursuing change based on community defence and incremental improvements. Local agency in the face of crisis is assumed, as is the ability of local actors to forge gains with state actors who are forced by necessity to negotiate with local interests. This serves to detract from the wider restructuring processes occurring within Ireland as a whole and takes for granted that serious structural and political barriers will melt away under the force of such local agency:

> Since the late 1980s, academic and policy thinking on rural economic development has shifted towards a post-productivity paradigm with contemporary policies increasingly focused on the promotion of bottom-up governance models that seek to promote diverse high value added and innovative economic activities as the basis for the economic development of rural areas

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(Future of Rural Society, CEC, 1988, 2006; Ray, 1999; OECD, 2006; Tovey, 2006; CORASON, 2009). This paradigmatic shift recognises that rural economic development is particularly challenging as it is multi-faceted and multi-sectoral, spanning traditional agricultural policy, enterprise, rural and regional development, environmental policy and spatial policy. Thus issues and appropriate responses are cross-cutting touching many areas of public policy.

(O'Donoghue *et al.* 2014, Introduction)

Indeed, it was this particular combination of factors that enabled FDG to commence the process of diversification beyond the single large employer and the new social enterprises became locally-owned and managed, thereby increasing resilience. Ferbane already had a number of small and medium businesses, including a good retail base and an innovative printing firm giving significant employment. The local economy was severely tested in the recessionary years; like many other towns it experienced business closures resulting in unemployment, out-migration of young people and dereliction. The Cowpark development lost many key tenants during the recession, with employment numbers falling from 120 to 40 staff during that period. Despite this however it appears that the local economy proved resilient.

The situation of Ferbane in terms of crisis is not untypical. Rural Ireland was disproportionately impacted by the recession from 2008 and small and medium sized towns, on average, have been impacted to a greater extent by the economic downturn than cities. According to the Teagasc report of 2014, drawing on a number of data sources, these towns have suffered higher increases in unemployment rates, as well as greater decreases in employment levels. The economies of small and medium sized towns and the open countryside are disproportionally reliant on industrial sectors with falling employment such as agriculture, construction and industry. Poverty rates are also considerably higher in small and medium sized towns and the open countryside, with one third of working age households with no one in work, 50% higher than in cities (O'Donoghue 2014: Introduction). Consequently, consumer demand was depressed and small businesses in towns like Ferbane were considerably pressurised. Local groups such as FDG, and the agencies that support them have to work very hard indeed to counteract these National trends. Therefore, local involvement in securing the economic life of towns such as Ferbane remains pivotal.

Chapter 9 Concluding Chapter

This thesis has outlined how a process such as IAP can assist in building community resilience.

The definition of resilience used here is socio-ecological or 'evolutionary resilience':

> the ability of complex socio-ecological systems to change, adapt and crucially to transform in response to stresses and strains.
>
> (Davoudi 2012, p. 302)

In planning, although resilience is a relatively new concept, it is rapidly gaining traction. A collaborative planning model like IAP has a deliberatively normative agenda and proposes that planning which uses a resilience lens, is about being prepared for innovation, and ultimately transformation, at times of change and uncertainty. Evolutionary resilience and collaborative planning models such as IAP are compatible; in that they *both emphasise fluidity, reflexivity, contingency, connectivity, multiplicity and polyvocality* (Davoudi and Strange 2009, p. 37). Both embrace diversity in the inter-relationship between the social and the spatial; both recognise that geographical areas are not limited to a particular time and locale but are indeed complex systems, with a number of unpredictable feedback possibilities. Both comfortably incorporate change and uncertainty and advocate the search not for regularity and the solutions of the past, but seek, and anticipate social, economic and political transformation.

This thesis has demonstrated that collaborative planning can stimulate *pathways* towards achieving evolutionary or transformative resilience. With its emphasis on empowering local people to generate answers to issues in collaboration with state agencies, its focus on linking local concerns to wider political processes, its emphasis on equality and its insistence on communication, building capacity and networks, a relatively nebulous and ambitious project of resilience building can occur, given the right supports and policy environment. This thesis has shown that it is also possible to move beyond providing a snapshot of a given phenomenon at one particular period of time and argues for a better appreciation of temporal issues in measuring resilience. Indeed, it appears that the struggles that communities work through, in partnership with others, may allow solutions to 'wicked problems' to slowly emerge.

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An important issue here is that of *resilience-building as process*; transformation does not occur overnight. In fact here I have the privilege of examining a story that unfolded over a 20 year period!

Ferbane is still on that journey!

9.1   Findings

In this section, I will present a synopsis of my findings under the 4 headings of Collaborative Planning, Leadership, Social Capital and Resilient Economy and to demonstrate how these four features assisted in developing resilience in Ferbane.

9.1.2   How did Community-led planning help develop resilience in Ferbane?

For this part of the thesis, I used a framework developed by the Centre for Community Enterprise, British Colombia, in an attempt to apply a resilience lens to community-led planning in Ferbane. Most of the five indicators for planning proposed by that model were met in Ferbane: the community had prepared a plan for its own development and citizens had been involved in creating and implementing community vision and goals. There was ongoing action to achieve these goals via the task groups established and local organisations were using the plan to guide their actions. Respondents were generally happy that the local community was aware of and supportive of the plan. The need to further widen participation was a constant feature, as was the need to keep local people informed and active in implementation. Using these measurements then, it can be said that community-led planning did assist in developing resilience in Ferbane.

For collaborative planners, participation in developing and making strategy is seen as an opportunity to transform structures and change power relations. In any planning system, it is important to focus on the *process* by which outcomes are decided, how decisions are made and who decides. Within many models of resilience building also, the process of developing a plan is seen as a pre-requisite.

For Dryzek (1993) however, it is important to recognise that reaching consensus within planning systems is not enough. Existing power relations and assumptions about access to decision-making structures need to be overturned. Dryzek calls this 'radicalising the argumentative turn.' Did this occur in the processes under consideration here?

The IAP undoubtedly had a significant impact on local development outcomes in Ferbane in the areas of enterprise, tourism, housing, recreation and social development. Local development structures were strengthened, and local initiative stimulated. This was particularly evident in the area of enterprise development.

Following Williams (2002) here, while participants in Ferbane have influenced decisions, the issues were relatively minor ones, and did not have much of an impact beyond the purely local. While the notion of participation in planning was accepted in principle by the elected representatives and state agencies, it has generally not succeeded in significantly changing planning systems and planning practice and many structural and institutional barriers remain. For collaborative planning projects to have a higher level of success, and to achieve change, partners involved must agree to share planning and decision-making responsibilities through such structures as the Programme Management Group, local steering planning groups and other mechanisms for making decisions and resolving impasses. In Ferbane these worked particularly well where there was an input from elected representatives and Council staff. However, since these structures did not have statutory recognition they were not a priority for the planning officials at a County level.

Overall, in terms of the economy, no national plan existed to replace large job losses that were occurring in the peatlands; the provision of alternative employment was left to market forces and local endeavour. Local stakeholders lacked the political power to influence EU rural development policy and the investment priorities of the Irish state. The effective disinvestment by large-scale actors such as ESB and BNM would never be matched by a neo-liberal state whose policies effectively left Ferbane and other ex-resource towns to rely on whatever resources they could muster in the face of countermanding economic restructuring. For critics of collaborative planning, such as Fainstein (2000) there are deep structural issues at play in such cases that cannot be expunged by participation in local planning exercises.

A broad conclusion might suggest that the IAP process in Offaly did succeed in developing new structures or arenas (Healey 1997) for leadership and governance at community level and in bringing benefits to communities at a practical level. The ability of such local-level partnerships to build relationships and broker connections through collaboration was also noted by Scott in the LEADER programme in Northern Ireland (2004). New relationships and new networks in Ferbane that have proved to be enduring were formed and added to the resilience of local community infrastructure and its ability to access decision-makers. Local support was evidenced in the financial contributions made by the public, the galvanising of

the community and the creation of new networks in the area. The particular style and success of the IAP sparked the development of other participatory development initiatives in the town and thus created new heuristics and new ways of 'making place together'.

What it did not succeed in doing was in changing the way that the state conducted its business; the local authority accepted the findings and recommendations emanating from the IAP when these fitted in with their particular requirements. Also, the community became aware that they could change certain aspects of local development through collective pressure and cohesion. In so doing, local actors demonstrated an awareness that it was necessary to jump from the purely local and to scale-up their political efforts to a broader context as it was only at that wider level that local issues could be effectively addressed. This echoes Cox's (1998) thesis around spaces of dependence and engagement. In order to secure the conditions through which the interests of local actors can be realised, networks outside the purely local or site-specific spaces of dependence must be created and negotiated by local powerholders.

Broader 'spaces of engagement' must be created in order to support and to influence the objectives of actors operating in space-specific contexts. The locally-elected representatives in Offaly were aware of this; in order to retain credibility in their own locale (space of dependence) they needed to show that they could influence the decision-makers in the wider context on behalf of their constituents. Some positive change in the behaviour and attitude of locally elected representatives was recorded, and in the Ferbane case, they actively championed the IAP outcomes in the broader sphere in their spaces of engagement with the representatives of the state. However, the state system did not take the views emanating from the participants on board in two out of three cases. Where it did, the urgency of attending to the issue of economic decline, a high degree of local participation and an unusual level of commitment of state personnel, support and funding facilitated the process beyond what is normally the case for such endeavours.

Several commentators have argued that community-led and managed local development has been severely undermined, if not eradicated totally, by the constraining cohesion, integration and alignment processes that have taken place in Ireland since the collapse of Social Partnership in 2009 and with new legislation prescribing the reform of local government. This has resulted in a loss of funding and a loss of autonomy for Partnership companies such as WOP/OLDC and ownership of projects by local communities. Funding priorities are now decided at a central level and community groups must apply for such funding according to a set of criteria decided elsewhere. Therefore the space for local-led participatory planning and

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project development has narrowed considerably since the initiation of the Ferbane project in the early 2000s.

9.1.2   How significant and important was leadership in developing resilience in Ferbane?

In chapter six, when assessing the resilience of community leadership, I proposed a model that enquires if local leadership is diversified and visionary, shares power and builds consensus. It also asks if organisations in Ferbane have developed partnerships and collaborative working relationships and whether community members were involved sufficiently in significant community decisions. Therefore, a *networked* view of development is important (Shucksmith 2010): one where leadership for local development comes not only from residents but also from the state and the private sector

Kothari (2001) proposed that the use of participatory methodologies with their almost exclusive focus upon the local distorts understandings of power relations and rarely make the required institutional linkages between the forces of local control and domination and those at a central level. However, for many resilience thinkers (Hopkins 2008; Carnegie 2011a) the local is key and the devolution of power back to communities is vital for resilience-building.

Following Forester (1989), can a process such as IAP expose social and political relations of status, power and culture and act to counteract these?

In the case of Ferbane, it is clear that both endogenous-local and exogenous-external factors were at play. An engaged local community, led by potent people with considerable managerial and entrepreneurial experience, formed a development group (FDG) in order to address the looming economic threat facing the town. This group was supported by the local development company, West Offaly Partnership and was successful in acquiring substantial funding. However, this was only possible because of the ability of the local group to organise and to mobilise the local community in activities such as fundraising. It was the combination of local leadership, facilitation by external agencies and substantial funding that enabled success.

The next critical issue becomes the degree of influence that local people can bring to bear on these exogenous, top-down forces. The IAP appears to have been successful in Ferbane in balancing the control of development from exogenous agents towards endogenous or locally-

led groups, who were able first of all to prioritise the projects it wished to pursue and secondly in forming successful partnerships with state agencies.

It was envisaged that this process could be replicated in other areas in West Offaly but this did not happen. The commitment by elected representatives to fulfilling the wishes of local people as expressed through their participation in planning was not followed through into decisions. IAP therefore did serve to expose social and political relations of status, power and culture but was not successful in counteracting these. At the end of the day, the elected representatives and the officials gave precedence to the normal routines, practices and established ways of doing things; a new heuristic of 'doing things the IAP way' was recognised as desirable, perhaps laudable but in no way as obligatory.

9.1.3   *What role did social capital play in the development of resilience in Ferbane?*

Collaborative planners and resilience theorists alike argue that social capital has the capacity to build communities that are more equitable, sustainable and resilient, and indeed that participation of itself adds to the stock of local social capital. Did this occur in Ferbane?

In Chapter seven, returning to the original indicators related to social capital-those of pride, optimism, mutual assistance, commitment to education, attachment and self-reliance-the evidence presented here would indicate that Ferbane displayed a high level of social capital. This store of social capital facilitated the significant level of local development, and the development process initiated by IAP strengthened these further. Strong social capital built a strong community that could go on to adapt to challenges as they emerged and created a virtuous cycle of development. As we have seen in other chapters, significant levels of linking social capital also existed, and was further developed, as local people developed the skills and experience needed in order to leverage resources from the State

Forester (1989) and Dryzek (1993) insist that the collaborative planner has a responsibility to ensure that the weaker and more marginalised members of society gain a voice. This study confirms that a 'whole-of-community' approach may leave behind those groups in the community who are most in need of inclusion. Local organisations in Ferbane are well-supported but there is little evidence that they have been successful in reaching the most disadvantaged groups; in fact, it was consistently acknowledged that groups such as the unemployed and non-nationals did not participate in the IAP process. There were also

concerns raised at the lack of participation by women. The survey results of 2018 were generally positive regarding local leadership, but there were several mentions of 'cliqueishness' and the view expressed that the same people were always to the fore in local development. Hidden local norms may serve to exclude certain groups from development processes.

While there was no evidence of 'blocking' social capital in Ferbane, there may have been an absence of 'bridging' social capital evident in a lack of diversity at least at leadership level in the community.

The recession commencing in 2008 and the austerity measures that followed had a deep impact on service provision in Ferbane. Emigration, unemployment and lack of funding affected all organisations, clubs and development efforts. Despite possessing a high degree of social capital, without consistent investment in the development of essential services in the domains of health, education and social service provision and vital infrastructure such as better roads and broadband, Ferbane's adaptive capacity and therefore its resilience will be constrained.

9.1.4 *How important to community resilience in Ferbane was local involvement in its economic life?*

Ferbane's future as an economic entity was threatened by the withdrawal of a single employer. This is typical of ex-resource towns, built as they were to service an extractive industry. The major thrust in the 2001 Integrated Area Plan prepared for Ferbane was the need to develop a new strategy for the local economy; out of this emerged the social enterprise managed by Ferbane Development Group. The combination of timing, resource availability and the skill-set of the local leaders enabled FDG to commence diversification beyond the single large employer and the new, emerging social enterprises became locally-owned and managed, thereby increasing resilience.

The recession that ravaged the country and the attrition of subsequent austerity measures, emigration of young people and cut-backs in services had a negative impact on Ferbane. Despite this however it appears that the local economy proved resilient.

During the height of the recession, in 2010, the Ferbane Business and Development Group developed a new strategy centring around the development of a food campus at the Cowpark Enterprise Centre. The group demonstrated their openness by again seeking new forms of economic activity. The profile of the campus as a social enterprise and as a 'clean-green'

business is closely aligned to European and National policies and demonstrates that the Ferbane leadership is well aware of its position in the broader economy.

Ferbane was faced with two major challenges during the period under study. Its main source of employment and economic activity was threatened as peat-fired electricity production was to be wound down. The deep recession of the late 2000s hit existing local businesses and the new social enterprise formed by the local community as an attempt to diversify its employment base lost a number of key investors. Despite this, there was a consensus among stakeholders that Ferbane had somehow managed to 'hold its own' in economic terms. The economic shape of the town remained relatively intact, with the survival of most small to medium sized businesses and the ability of the Cowpark Social Enterprise to continue and re-imagine itself as a food campus, retaining the support of the local community and the state agencies in this transformative endeavour.

There was also a recognition that government policy mitigated against creating employment in smaller rural areas like Ferbane: the high number of people commuting out of town to access employment may be perceived as a significant threat. However, it might also present an opportunity as Ferbane evolves.

9.2   Discussion

Applying a resilience framework to Ferbane, it is arguable that a phase of creative destruction and release (collapse and uncertainty) occurred in the early 2000s and was followed by a phase of reorganisation (innovation and restructuring) during the latter part of that decade (Holling 2007, Powe and Hart 2017). Aiding this process was the importance of a local pressure group, FDG, with a common sense of strategic purpose, political will and a coherence in governance within the private, public and civic sectors. In Ferbane, the slow controlling variables were to be found within the capacity for leadership, the strength of local social capital and the revival of the economy as it diversifies away from fuel production, resulting in a town that does not merely survive but thrive. This would mean evolving to an alternate stable state, no longer a resource town but remaining as an attractive place to live, to work and to do business (Powe and Hart 2017).

In applying the lessons of resilience to planning for small-town change, Powe and Hart propose that the principal challenge is that of maintaining resilience at *all* stages of the adaptive cycle. Interventions in small towns normally occur at the release phase or when crisis emerges. The lesson may be that the release phase can be avoided or mitigated by prolonging

phases of exploitation and growth, stabilising the system when it reaches conservation. Thus managing small-town change becomes a long-term process rather than a reaction to crisis. In such activities, local actors still have agency to better plan and to manage for change; for example, by remaining innovative during the conservation phase and maintaining adaptability so that new trajectories can be found that can avoid the worst excesses of creative destruction. It may happen that the resource economy continues in a reduced form or that other specialisms and functions emerge to compensate for the loss of the old to ensure a more resilient and diversified economy.

Whatever the case, *maintaining adaptability* within small towns should be a key goal within settlement planning. This ability to adapt was clear in Ferbane as the town's economy developed resilience in response to changes in the wider environment. Fostering endogenous knowledge to allow innovation to constantly occur was found to be a key component here. As seen earlier, for Davoudi *et al.* (2013), resilience is not about a return to normality or equilibrium, but about accepting that adapting to change is possible, even desirable. This is what Davoudi *et al.* (2013) refers to as 'evolutionary resilience', a process of 'becoming' or the ability to plan and manage change, accepting it as the norm. For Scott (2013), this model of resilience provides an alternative narrative for rural development practice, emphasising adaptive networked governance, embedding ecological concerns within governance structures and providing policy makers and practitioners with an opportunity to blend local and global concerns within development processes.

While recent developments in Ferbane have complied with many of the indicators proposed in the Resilience Framework in terms of diversification, innovation, networking and competitive placement, the major economic forces impinging on the town cannot be given adequate consideration if the broader restructuring pressures operating at the level of the macro-economy and wider policy context are left unconsidered.

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In Powe and Hart's (2017) research, a key priority in developing resilience is the steady management of change in order to avoid the worst excesses of the release phase while embracing the innovation that such a release phase can entail:

> Whilst the regeneration context that follows release is well known, the model suggests the need to prolong the phases of exploitation/growth, stabilising the system once it reaches the conservation phase and attempting to reorientate systems without entering the release stage. Whilst policy focus has tended towards the regeneration scenario, if release is to be avoided, managing change might be seen as a long-term sustained process rather than being constrained to episodes of decline/stagnation. The outcomes of the model suggest that a key challenge of managing change is to maintain resilience across the adaptive cycle.
>
> (Powe and Hart 2017, p. 36)

A more critical stance would be to point out that in the case of Ferbane, as in many other ex-resource towns, the Irish state failed to tackle the economic redevelopment of such rural areas and where they do engage, it is through out-sourcing to local social enterprises. It is 'taken for granted' that local communities will rise to the challenge of preventing economic collapse and that local people will take up the mantle of saving the local economy in the face of wider re-structuring systems that extend way beyond their control.

> The historical tendency of most state agencies to focus on urban centres … has resulted in a situation whereby in most parts of rural Ireland, LEADER is the only active development agency.   (O'Keefe 2014, p. 448)

Shucksmith (2012) argues that inequalities between rural areas may be exacerbated by relying only on such bottom-up development models. Such an approach assumes that a sufficient degree of human and social capital is present in any given area in order to facilitate the development of social enterprise. Areas that are well-served with such assets may be able to capitalise on these, and may well already be better-off than areas without these assets and where more investment is needed. This was highlighted by the Irish Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas in 2014:

> Stronger rural areas are not only located in a geographically advantageous place but also have the human and social capital to identify their needs and effectively engage with the design and implementation of a variety of local, regional and national supports such that whatever strategies are developed, they can use these to further their own development.   (CEDRA 2014, p. 36)

In this regard, it may be argued that Ferbane was the exception rather than the norm. In Ireland a long-running concentration process has been drawing people and economic activity away from inaccessible rural areas into urban areas, at least initially. However, over the past 30 years counter-urbanisation has occurred, as flows of people have moved from the urban to the immediately surrounding countryside (Meredith 2006). Such trends were underlined more recently by Meredith and Gilmartin (2014) when examining population trends 1986-2011, confirming the variation in demographic terms between strong growth nodes and the weaker, less accessible rural areas. This has meant that the more accessible rural areas have become growth nodes; the more remote rural areas, by contrast, have experienced a process of decline.

Inequalities between the urban and the rural were highlighted in the Ferbane business survey which identified the lack of broadband facilities as the most significant impediment to the development of both new and existing businesses. A similar issue was outlined by Shucksmith (2012), who pointed out that failure to provide equal access to broadband exacerbated rural disadvantage. Under the new National Broadband plan (2019) all areas of Ireland will have access to high-speed broadband within 7 years. It is unclear whether small towns like Ferbane will be given priority. CEDRA also highlights the constraining impact that Ireland's sub-standard rural road network has on economic development, another issue that Ferbane residents pinpointed in 2018. Poor access to finance was also stressed by CEDRA, reporting that one in five SMEs in Ireland stated that access to capital was a major constraint (CEDRA 2014, p. 55).

Overall, while the focus of this and other similar studies is on the micro level, it is important to note that the future of settlements like Ferbane will not be decided only at this local level. The policy directives of bodies such as the EU and WTO, macro-economic trends in areas of inward investment and global trade and the policies (or lack of same) of the Irish State will be much more influential in determining the fate of such small towns:

> Roberts and Thomson conducted an analysis of the Western Isles economy which demonstrated that national economic policies (on interest rates, taxation and public expenditure, for example) 'are a much more significant force in shaping the development path of a rural region' than local policies. This is consistent with a UK government report on rural economies which argued that 'policies with a national sweep have a much greater impact on economic health than any rural-based initiative but contrasts with much policy expectation and effort (in Shucksmith 2012, p. 25).

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Notwithstanding the importance of macro-level processes and policies, there will still be micro-level variations in performance. This thesis has demonstrated that, given proper support and effective engagement, local communities can demonstrate effective agency in the face of top-down constraining forces,

9.3   The future?

The National Spatial Strategy (2002) recommended that a 'midlands growth node' or 'Gateway' be developed, linking the three towns of Athlone, Tullamore and Mullingar, which together offered sufficient levels of service, infrastructure and population to become a competitive urban node. This potential has already been recognised by Ferbane residents and the 2019 Ferbane Community Action Plan envisages Ferbane not as an 'ex-resource town' but as a centre for small, sustainable enterprise, powered by local renewable energy with a range of outdoor attractions for local people and visitors to enjoy.

Also, given its size and location, it is unlikely that any single enterprise yielding a large number of jobs will again locate in Ferbane. It is more likely, given state policy, and shifting 'geographies of proximity', that Ferbane will increasingly become a commuter or 'dormitory' town, serving the larger 'growth' towns such as Athlone or Tullamore.

Taking the challenges and extraneous factors into account, the creation of micro-enterprise in rural areas is set to be of increasing importance in terms of economic development, the livelihoods of people living in those areas and hence the resilience of rural communities (Lynch 2014; Powe and Hart 2017). The development of the food campus is a case in point, as are attempts to develop the cutaway bogs as a site for tourism or alternative, renewable energy production. The shift in the area's role from that of an energy-producer to embracing a new identity as a base for sustainable food production, tourism and green energy fulfils the requirement for resilient town economies to be locally-owned, diversified, open to change and linked into the broader economy.

In this regard, it might be proposed that Ferbane is ready to take another 'leap forward' in the resilience trajectory; that of transitioning to a carbon-free future. For the Transition town movement, as we saw in chapter four, the primary concern was to take the dual challenges of peak oil and climate change head-on by making use of community strengths and local resources.

The second distinctive feature is its focus on learning from social and economic processes and activities located in 1,100 Transition towns and cities all over the world. It is thus both a local and an international movement that focuses on:

> Rebuilding local agriculture and food production, localising energy production, rethinking healthcare, rediscovering local building materials in the context of zero energy building, rethinking how we manage water, all build resilience and offer the potential of an extraordinary renaissance-economic, cultural and spiritual. (Hopkins 2008, p. 15)

For Mehmood (2016) not only does the notion of Transition Towns help explore the potential of smaller towns to build resilience but also allows for inter-scalar linkages and helps build networks with other towns of varying social, economic, cultural and environmental asset bases. This international dimension may be an attractive prospect for a town like Ferbane.

An important and effective means of ensuring consistent economic development is to facilitate local community involvement in the design and implementation of longer-term development plans. These strategies need to be driven from the community level and be cognisant of State economic strategies, linking the regional and the local to wider planning frameworks and medium-term strategic priorities (CEDRA 2014; Powe and Hart 2017).

In general, however, these planning processes do not generally seek to go beyond the localised ambition of collaborative planning and facilitating community participation (Carnegie 2011a). If conceived of differently however, they could lead to a profound change in the relationship between state agencies and citizens, should for example, the community-led model be adopted as a universal approach to local planning on the part of the local authorities. It might be proposed that a new relationship could be built between local authorities and communities which would not only make for more effective community plans but could mobilise citizen participation, promote social inclusion and strengthen the democratic system itself (Lynch *et al.* 2008)

A top-down, instrumentalist approach is unlikely to give much room to inclusionary practices unless they concur with policy already in place. Governance systems therefore need to be responsive to changes in society and the economy, framing and promoting the activities of business and citizens and enabling a soft infrastructure of institutional capacity-building to take place within firms and among citizens.

9.4 Creating new forms of Public Discourse

In terms of public policy-making, writers such as Beck (1992), Putnam (2000) and Edwards (2009) propose a new role for the State; that of arbiter between the various players in the system and also the entity that creates the conditions and mechanisms to allow discussions between key parties to take place and a consensus to emerge. Irish policy offers the potential at least for the State to play such a role through the development planning system. Participation in planning can work most effectively when there is an organised group in the community which is accountable and where the group have access to independent technical advice and support. In the Ferbane case, support was ably provided by West Offaly Partnership/Offaly Local Development Company and all respondents noted their hard work and commitment. Groups such as WOP/OLDC are ideally placed to act as facilitators in the IAP process. They are close to communities and their job is to strengthen community structures and to actively build the capacity of local groups. They are also informed about and able to understand and communicate state policy.

This unique position allows them to act as a broker and facilitator in putting the plans in place. This again ties in with the concept of neo-endogenous or networked development, where local initiatives are backed up and supported by a pro-active state. It also underlines the need for area-based development programmes to develop actions to raise the social and cultural capital of individuals and of disadvantaged groups (Horgan 2008; Shucksmith 2000). The Final Report to the Carnegie UK Trust in 2009 recommended that, in line with the Planning and Development Act 2000, Offaly County Council could and should sub-contract the Offaly Local Development Company to provide the community element of consultation and planning for local area plans for the smaller towns and villages and leave the technical elements such as zoning etc. to the professional planners. This did not happen as the overall IAP process did not survive the vicissitudes of the recession of the 2000s; within a new environment perhaps there are now opportunities for this type of partnership between the local authority and the development company to be revisited.

In reviewing the IAP, the use of public fora such as focus groups, task groups and public meetings were deemed to be successful in getting at least some members of the community to participate in public discourse. (Corcoran, in Lynch *et al.* 2008). For some participants it is notable this was their first experience of involvement in this type of public forum. In addition, the creation of a representative body designated as the IAP Steering Group, which involved as wide a spectrum of the community as possible, helped to further spread participation into the community.

From interviews with those who did not get involved, it would seem necessary to employ methods more closely tailored to those in the community for whom the thought of participating in public discourse presents significant challenges (These challenges may range from physical disabilities to transport difficulties, from fear of public engagement to lack of personal social skills, etc). These new initiatives might include area-based house meetings and a broader range of communication techniques, including more judicious use of local and social media. Many of these initiatives require some degree of capacity building among the community and represent a significant investment of both time and resources, which as noted above are already limited. There is a role here for someone from outside the Steering Group, e.g. from the Local Authority or a Partnership company to consider the concept of capacity building at the pre-planning stage.

9.5   The Issue of Power-Again!

The empowerment of local communities as part of Partnership structures, however, is only likely to be meaningful if the Partnerships themselves have real power. Where Partnerships are *ad hoc* arrangements which statutory agencies can opt into or out of at will then they will remain unlikely to share any of their power or control over resources. This was seen in relation to the Programme Management Group established to oversee the IAP at County level. Attendance at the PMG was not a priority for Council staff nor for Councillors. It lacked convening power and had no statutory basis.

If these processes or 'arenas' – in Healey's lexicon – are to succeed then those at the centre who hold power must delegate that power to local partnership groups to draw up these integrated plans for their areas. This will mean those who currently have power and resources being required to share control with others. Echoing Arnstein's (1969) writing of 50 years ago, there are still very unequal relationships between the statutory and community sectors. This is also the case internationally where collaborative planning failed to create a new set of heuristics and had little impact on the traditional organisational culture (Murray 2005; Pacione 2019).

A change to a more collaborative approach would challenge power structures at the levels of the community and Local Government; it would ask experts to adopt a far less prescriptive approach; it would ask politicians to share some of their decision-taking power with lay members of the communities from which their power derives; it would ask existing community leaders to act in ways that reflected the views of the community more than their

own personal views (Corcoran and Lynch 2011)). In addition to such structural changes a new approach would require changes in the education of planners and other professionals; in the resourcing of community organisations and their volunteer leaders (Conrad *et al.* 2011); and in the relationship between those elected to political office and their constituents. These are substantial and fundamental changes to the structure of organisations that presently prevail and would require commitment and leadership at the highest levels if they are to be effectively implemented

9.6 Original Contribution

I believe that this thesis adds to knowledge in the field of collaborative planning and resilience building in a number of ways;

1. There are relatively few empirical studies of resilience-building in a European context, with most studies in the field being concentrated in the Global South (Lovell 2016, p. 12). This thesis, focusing on an area under stress in Ireland, forges a path for the study of resilience in spaces where this has not occurred before. It therefore proposes that resilience-building has as much relevance here as in Africa or Asia and also demonstrates that lessons and knowledge gained in one locale can, with sensitivity, be applied in a range of contexts.

2. This thesis has moved beyond providing a snapshot of a given phenomenon at one particular point in time and argues for a better appreciation of temporal issues in measuring resilience. This study has taken a longer-term approach by assessing the contribution of a collaborative planning process on community resilience over a period of almost twenty years. While not a longitudinal study in the strict sense, it does allow the reader to experience resilience development over a relatively long period of time, rather than a snapshot which other studies might provide. In so doing, it also provides the reader with a possible *pathway* to local resilience-building over an extended period. It also offers the opportunity to measure resilience on an ongoing basis rather than solely as an end-of-project evaluation mechanism.

3. This study adds to the armoury of resilience measurement and assessment. Steiner *et al.* (2016) found that while there were many resilience models in existence, there were few effective measurement tools to identify the *impact* of resilience efforts on participating communities; most documents regarding resilience explore its meaning and its relationship to concepts such as social capital or sustainability, but few

Commented [MS1]: Do you mean a point in time here? Your 20 years is still a period of time.

Commented [MS2]: Long-lens might suggest looking through a telephoto lens from far away rather than the longer term approach which you are advocating.

proposed ways to measure it in practice. The four main indicators of resilience featured here-collaborative planning in practice, community, leadership,social capital and resilient economy-offer a practical set of tools that could be adapted to suit a number of contexts and are thus transferable.

4. This thesis also underlines the importance of taking a *networked approach* to the study of resilience development. Most studies of resilience have focused on the community-level alone, ignoring the higher level of systems, institutions and policies that can inhibit local development and that perpetuate the need for resilience in the first place. This thesis has underlined the fact that local resilience-building efforts must be supported by an enabling state. A combination of endogenous or bottom-up processes combined with exogenous top-down factors leads to *neo-endogenous or networked development*. Every chapter of this thesis has demonstrated that, given proper support and effective engagement, local communities can demonstrate effective agency in the face of top-down constraining forces.

5. Despite its currency, there is little research in an Irish context on the topic of small-towns, and specifically on ex-resource towns and the impact of socio-economic change at this micro-level. As we have seen, rural Ireland has suffered disproportionately from the impacts of the recession of the late 2000s. This study shines a light on these inequalities and also demonstrates how small rural communities might organise to combat the negative impact of restructuring external forces. With its emphasis on action-research, this study also demonstrates how development can be enhanced by relevant and timely information from researchers who can act as both 'insiders' and 'outsiders', using their skills and knowledge to enhance local development initiatives.

9.7   Challenges

There were certain challenges associated with this research.

A case study such as this is not 'generalisable' in the conventional sense. By definition, case studies can make no claims to be typical. We have no way of knowing, empirically, to what extent Ferbane is typical of small towns in Ireland or of ex-resource towns in general. Also, because the sample is small and particular to that time and place, and because data is predominantly non-numerical, there is no way to establish the probability that it is representative of some larger population. Furthermore, a case study throws up too much data for easy analysis and simplicity of representation, particularly over such a long period of time.

The individual researcher's own expertise, local knowledge and intuition is a vital part of the case study approach. In this study, I deliberately chose what questions to ask, and how to ask them, what to observe and what to record. In compiling the thesis in this way, I had to draw out issues of interest from the data and constructed an opinion about those issues; I had constantly to make judgments about the significance of each piece of data. Also, although I sought to be objective, my position as action-researcher and development worker meant that the research was not, and cannot be, completely objective, nor could I easily make transparent all the judgements I made. At each point I endeavoured to present adequate evidence to support the analysis but a certain amount has to be taken on trust and on the reader's judgement of my credibility and ability to be objective, despite my proximity to the area and to the subject.

Despite these challenges, I believe that the thesis provides an original account of the emergence and process of transformative or evolutionary resilience building over two decades underpinned by a wealth of practitioner experience and insight. Following Flyybjerg, (2006) this thesis could be deemed a critical case-study, in that it makes a unique contribution to the study of resilience and collaborative planning, constructed as it is upon context-dependent knowledge. A critical case-study such as this can, in the hands of an experienced researcher, have strategic importance in relation to the issues in hand. True to the values of participatory action research, I sought opportunities to investigate the IAP project in ways that maximised community participation and empowerment in both the research and local development. The research methodology was not designed to fulfil my study requirements alone, but instead to enrich the development trajectory. In doing so, it threw up a profound and complex set of data which I have supplemented with other research instruments set out in this chapter; the unique access to the research area and to 10 different data sources allowed me to reach back over

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Commented [MS3]: I remember the external examiners pointing you to Bengt Flyvbjerg's paper "Five Misunderstandings about Case Study Research" with the suggestion that this might constitute what he calls a critical case study. You might wish to insert a brief reference to that after this sentence, perhaps? (see his paper attached to my email) Something like: "Flyvbjerg (2006) has argued that such case studies are important to the development of context-dependent knowledge which he sees as the basis of social science."

time and give a retrospective perspective to the research. This deep engagement with the case study enabled me to reveal aspects of local development that are often overlooked in studies that are confined to a shorter time-frame.. Issues encountered in this process of collaborative planning such as volunteer fatigue, the slow evolution of community structures, the influence of wider economic change and wider governance changes are all charted over the course of the thesis.

9.8   Future Studies?

Resulting from this study are a number of research possibilities that could be explored:

At the local level, it would be interesting to follow-up on the study of community resilience within Ferbane in order to track future developments as the community seeks to implement the new community plan, with its focus on sustainable tourism and energy production.

At a regional level, it would also be interesting to study the issue of community-based resilience in the Irish Midlands in the context of the imminent closure of all peat-fired energy production in the area. This will have a transformative impact on affected communities. A recent Government initiative entitled *Just Transition for the Midlands Region* will be supported by the inclusion of the Midlands Region on the EU Platform for Coal Regions in Transition. The aim of the Platform is to provide support for regions heavily involved in fossil fuel industries and provide opportunities for national, regional, and local representatives and EU staff to discuss how these regions can best decarbonise their economies. It is important that communities are involved in social dialogue as part of this process and action research could play an important role here.

At a national, policy level, it is important for researchers to continue to analyse various Government interventions and their impact on community planning. The implementation of initiatives such as the CEDRA (2014) report and the *Action Programme for Effective Local Government* entitled 'Putting People First' ('PPF') which recommended a new more inclusive and co-operative approach to local economic development planning needs to be tracked and evaluated over time

9.9   Conclusion

I conclude by concurring with Davoudi's view (2012) that the 'resilience turn' signifies that planning theory and planning practice should be prepared for innovative transformation because resilience requires a radical challenge to the status quo. For planning theory and practice, resilience offers nothing less than a paradigm shift: a fundamental questioning of the central tenets of contemporary approaches to planning and policy making (Shaw 2012). Resilience calls for a shift from instrumentalist views of the environment toward approaches that bring ecological values to the forefront of planners' concerns and creates the necessary linkages between socio-economic, ecological, cultural and political phenomena. In this era of ongoing and inter-connected crises, such a new paradigm is surely welcome.

Appendices

Tipperary Institute: Phase 3 IAP Research

Designed by Fox-Timmons & Associates

MONITORING TEMPLATE

CONTENTS

1.　BRIEF PROFILE OF IAP DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION IN THE AREA
2.　STRUCTURE AND ROLES
3.　COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
4.　INVOLVEMENT OF OTHERS: WOP, Offaly Co. Council staff and Elected Representatives, Programme Management Group
5.　THE LOCAL AREA PLAN: Knowledge and understanding
6.　RELATIONSHIPS DEVELOPED OVER TIME: Ultimate benefits
7.　SUPPORTS: Existing and Future
8.　SUSTAINABILITY AND THE FUTURE
9.　MONITORING AND EVALUATION
10.　ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

1. BRIEF PROFILE OF IAP DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION IN THE AREA

AREA ....

briefly describe step by step how the plans have happened since 2007 (text describing area by area/use table developed in phase 1 and 2)

2 STRUCTURE AND ROLES

a)

Structure	yes	no	comments
Steering group			
Task groups			
Plan developed			

b)

Plan implementation to Date	none	some	all	comments
Plan implementation				

c)

Meetings	At least once a month	At least once a quarter	At least every 6 months	6 months +	comments
Steering Group					
Task Groups					
Public meetings					

d)

Regular Attendance at meetings	<10	10-20	20-30	30+	comments
Steering Group					
Task groups					
Public meetings					

e)

Occasional Attendance at meetings	<10	10-20	20-30	30+	comments
Steering Group					
Task groups					
Public meetings					

What has been your role to date? (Break down into Community, WOP, Co Council)

- ♦
- ♦

3. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

a)

Levels and Commitment	Strongly agree	agree	Neither agree nor disagree	disagree	Strongly disagree	Comments
levels of community involvement to date have been satisfactory						
levels of community commitment to date have been satisfactory						
We rely on few people in the community to take leadership						
We rely on a few people in the community to get the work done						
We all work together with the interests of the community at heart leaving our individual interests aside						
We organise our own meetings without the assistance of West Offaly Partnership						

b)

What has been good about community involvement i.e. what has worked well, what have you enjoyed most?

- ♦
- ♦

c)

What hasn't worked well in terms of community involvement i.e. what could be improved? what have you enjoyed least?

- ♦
- ♦

d)

Community Group Size and Representation	Strongly agree	agree	Neither agree nor disagree	disagree	Strongly disagree	Comments
The task/steering group is the right size						
all of the community is represented on the group						
Everyone in the community have the same chance to get						

involved in developing plans						
new people should get involved						

e)

What are the benefits to communities of being involved in Integrated Area Planning?

- ♦
- ♦

f)

How new people could get involved?

- ♦
- ♦

g)

What should be done to encourage new people to get involved?

- ♦
- ♦

4. INVOLVEMENT OF OTHERS: WOP, Offaly Co. Council staff and Elected Representatives, Programme Management Group

Involvement of Others:

a)

West Offaly Partnership	Strongly agree	agree	Neither agree nor disagree	disagree	Strongly disagree	Comments
The level of involvement to date has been good – WOP has engaged well with the process						
WOP is committed to the process						
Relationships with WOP have improved over time						

b)

What has been good about the involvement i.e. what has worked well?

- ♦
- ♦

c)

What hasn't worked well in terms of WOP involvement i.e. what could be improved?

- ♦

d)

What are the benefits to Offaly West Offaly Partnership of being involved in the IAP process?

- ♦

e)

Offaly Co. Council Staff	Strongly agree	agree	Neither agree nor disagree	disagree	Strongly disagree	Comments
The level of involvement to date has been good – staff have engaged well with the process						
Offaly Co. Council Staff are committed to the process						
Relationships with staff have improved over time						

f)

What has been good about the involvement i.e. what has worked well?

♦

g)

What hasn't worked well in terms of co. council involvement i.e. what could be improved?

♦

h)

What are the benefits to Offaly Co. Council staff of being involved in the IAP process?

♦

i)

Elected Representatives	Strongly agree	agree	Neither agree nor disagree	disagree	Strongly disagree	Comments
The level of involvement to date has been good – Elected Representatives have engaged well with the process						
Elected Representatives are committed to the process						
Relationships with Elected Representatives have improved over time						

j)

What has been good about the involvement i.e. what has worked well?

♦

k)

What hasn't worked well in terms of co. council involvement i.e. what could be improved?

♦

l)

What are the benefits to Offaly Co. Council Elected Representatives of being involved in the IAP process?

m)

Programme Managemnt Group	Strongly agree	agree	Neither agree nor disagree	disagree	Strongly disagree	Comments
I am clear on the work being carried out by the PMG						
The level of involvement to date has been good – PMG has engaged well with the process						
PMG is committed to the process						
Relationships with PMG have improved over time						

n)

What has been good about the involvement i.e. what has worked well?

♦

o)

What hasn't worked well in terms of PMG involvement i.e. what could be improved?

♦

5. THE LOCAL AREA PLAN: Knowledge and understanding

Knowledge and Understanding	Strongly agree	agree	Neither agree nor disagree	disagree	Strongly disagree	Comments
The local community was actively involved in developing the plan						
The plan is clear						
The plan shows the wishes of the community						
The local community is aware of the plan						
The plan can be implemented						

6.   RELATIONSHIPS DEVELOPED OVER TIME: Ultimate benefits

a)

Who has been involved in the development of the plan?

- ♦

b)

Quality of Your Relationships in IAP process	Very good	Good	Neither good nor bad	poor	Very poor	Comments
Community groups (steering/task)						
General community						
WOP						
THE TIPPERARY INSTITUTE						
Council staff						
Elected Reps						

c)

In what way have relationships changed over time?

- ♦

7.   SUPPORTS: Existing and Future

a)

Those who have supported your work in the development of the plan	Have been supportive	Could have been more supportive	Don't Know	Comments
West Offaly Partnership				
THE TIPPERARY INSTITUTE				
Co. Council Staff				
Elected Reps				
Other				

b)

Levels of Support and Commitment	Strongly agree	agree	Neither agree nor disagree	disagree	Strongly disagree	Comments
The levels of support given been good						
The new Integrated Company will have the						

same commitment to the process						
The plan shows the wishes of the community						
The Council will continue to support the process						

c)

Recommendations on how the support should continue

- ♦
- ♦

8.   SUSTAINABILITY AND THE FUTURE

a)

The Future	Strongly agree	agree	Neither agree nor disagree	disagree	Strongly disagree	Comments
I feel hopeful about the future of the task group/steering group						
I feel hopeful about the future of the PMG						
I feel hopeful about plan implementation						

b)

Comments on future implementation of the area plan

   ♦

c)

Sustainability	Strongly agree	agree	Neither agree nor disagree	disagree	Strongly disagree	Comments
it would be worth doing another plan in the future						
IAP is a useful process in helping communities						

d)

Comments on what would encourage communities to get involved in making another plan again

- ♦

9.   MONITORING AND EVALUATION

a)

The plan should be monitored by	Yes	No	Don't Know	Comments
Steering/Task Group				
West Offaly Partnership				
Programme Management Group				
Co. Council Staff				
Elected Representatives				
Other (Details)				

b)

Recommendations on how the plan should be monitored e.g. should it be monitored in terms of the area planning process, implementation of plans, level of community involvement etc.

- ♦

c)

Ongoing Monitoring	Yes	No	Comments
I am willing to be approached again for monitoring purposes			

10. ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

CONTENTS

2. BRIEF PROFILE OF IAP DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION IN THE AREA
2. STRUCTURE AND ROLES
3. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
4. INVOLVEMENT OF OTHERS: WOP, Offaly Co. Council staff and Elected Representatives, Programme Management Group
5. THE LOCAL AREA PLAN: Knowledge and understanding
6. RELATIONSHIPS DEVELOPED OVER TIME: Ultimate benefits
7. SUPPORTS: Existing and Future
8. SUSTAINABILITY AND THE FUTURE
9. MONITORING AND EVALUATION
10. ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

2. BRIEF PROFILE OF IAP DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION IN THE AREA

AREA ....

briefly describe step by step how the plans have happened since 2007 (text describing area by area/use table developed in phase 1 and 2)

3 STRUCTURE AND ROLES

a)

Structure	yes	no	comments
Steering group			
Task groups			
Plan developed			

b)

Plan implementation to Date	none	some	all	comments
Plan implementation				

c)

Meetings	At least once a month	At least once a quarter	At least every 6 months	6 months +	comments
Steering Group					
Task Groups					
Public meetings					

d)

293

Regular Attendance at meetings	<10	10-20	20-30	30+	comments
Steering Group					
Task groups					
Public meetings					

e)

Occasional Attendance at meetings	<10	10-20	20-30	30+	comments
Steering Group					
Task groups					
Public meetings					

What has been your role to date? (Break down into Community, WOP, Co Council)

-
-

3. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

a)

Levels and Commitment	Strongly agree	agree	Neither agree nor disagree	disagree	Strongly disagree	Comments
levels of community involvement to date have been satisfactory						
levels of community commitment to date have been satisfactory						
We rely on few people in the community to take leadership						
We rely on a few people in the community to get the work done						
We all work together with the interests of the community at heart leaving our individual interests aside						
We organise our own meetings without the assistance of West Offaly Partnership						

b)

What has been good about community involvement i.e. what has worked well, what have you enjoyed most?

- ♦
- ♦

c)

What hasn't worked well in terms of community involvement i.e. what could be improved? what have you enjoyed least?

- ♦
- ♦

d)

Community Group Size and Representation	Strongly agree	agree	Neither agree nor disagree	disagree	Strongly disagree	Comments
The task/steering group is the right size						
all of the community is represented on the group						
Everyone in the community have the same chance to get involved in developing plans						
new people should get involved						

e)

What are the benefits to communities of being involved in Integrated Area Planning?

-
-

f)

How new people could get involved?

-
-

g)

What should be done to encourage new people to get involved?

-
-

4. INVOLVEMENT OF OTHERS: WOP, Offaly Co. Council staff and Elected Representatives, Programme Management Group

Involvement of Others:

a)

West Offaly Partnership	Strongly agree	agree	Neither agree nor disagree	disagree	Strongly disagree	Comments
The level of involvement to date has been good – WOP has engaged well with the process						
WOP is committed to the process						
Relationships with WOP have improved over time						

b)

What has been good about the involvement i.e. what has worked well?

- ♦
- ♦

c)

What hasn't worked well in terms of WOP involvement i.e. what could be improved?

♦

d)

What are the benefits to Offaly West Offaly Partnership of being involved in the IAP process?

♦

e)

Offaly Co. Council Staff	Strongly agree	agree	Neither agree nor disagree	disagree	Strongly disagree	Comments
The level of involvement to date has been good – staff have engaged well with the process						
Offaly Co. Council Staff are committed to the process						
Relationships with staff have improved over time						

f)

What has been good about the involvement i.e. what has worked well?

♦
♦

g)

What hasn't worked well in terms of co. council involvement i.e. what could be improved?

♦
♦

h)

What are the benefits to Offaly Co. Council staff of being involved in the IAP process?

♦
♦

i)

Elected Representatives	Strongly agree	agree	Neither agree nor disagree	disagree	Strongly disagree	Comments
The level of involvement to date has been good – Elected Representatives have engaged well with the process						
Elected Representatives are committed to the process						
Relationships with Elected Representatives have improved over time						

j)

What has been good about the involvement i.e. what has worked well?

-
-

k)

What hasn't worked well in terms of co. council involvement i.e. what could be improved?

- ♦
- ♦

l)

What are the benefits to Offaly Co. Council Elected Representatives of being involved in the IAP process?

m)

Programme Managemnt Group	Strongly agree	agree	Neither agree nor disagree	disagree	Strongly disagree	Comments
I am clear on the work being carried out by the PMG						
The level of involvement to date has been good – PMG has engaged well with the process						
PMG is committed to the process						
Relationships with PMG have improved over time						

n)

What has been good about the involvement i.e. what has worked well?

- ♦
- ♦

o)

What hasn't worked well in terms of PMG involvement i.e. what could be improved?

- ♦
- ♦

6. THE LOCAL AREA PLAN: Knowledge and understanding

Knowledge and Understanding	Strongly agree	agree	Neither agree nor disagree	disagree	Strongly disagree	Comments
The local community was actively involved in developing the plan						
The plan is clear						
The plan shows the wishes of the community						
The local community is aware of the plan						
The plan can be implemented						

6. RELATIONSHIPS DEVELOPED OVER TIME: Ultimate benefits

a)

Who has been involved in the development of the plan?

- ♦
- ♦

b)

Quality of Your Relationships in IAP process	Very good	Good	Neither good nor bad	poor	Very poor	Comments
Community groups (steering/task)						
General community						
WOP						
THE TIPPERARY INSTITUTE						
Council staff						
Elected Reps						

c)

In what way have relationships changed over time?

- ♦

7.   SUPPORTS: Existing and Future

a)

Those who have supported your work in the development of the plan	Have been supportive	Could have been more supportive	Don't Know	Comments
West Offaly Partnership				
THE TIPPERARY INSTITUTE				
Co. Council Staff				
Elected Reps				
Other				

b)

Levels of Support and Commitment	Strongly agree	agree	Neither agree nor disagree	disagree	Strongly disagree	Comments
The levels of support given been good						
The new Integrated Company will have the same commitment to the process						
The plan shows the wishes of the community						
The Council will continue to support the process						

c)

Recommendations on how the support should continue

- ♦
- ♦

8. SUSTAINABILITY AND THE FUTURE

a)

The Future	Strongly agree	agree	Neither agree nor disagree	disagree	Strongly disagree	Comments
I feel hopeful about the future of the task group/steering group						
I feel hopeful about the future of the PMG						
I feel hopeful about plan implementation						

b)

Comments on future implementation of the area plan

- ♦

c)

Sustainability	Strongly agree	agree	Neither agree nor disagree	disagree	Strongly disagree	Comments
it would be worth doing another plan in the future						
IAP is a useful process in helping communities						

d)

Comments on what would encourage communities to get involved in making another plan again

- ♦

9.   MONITORING AND EVALUATION

a)

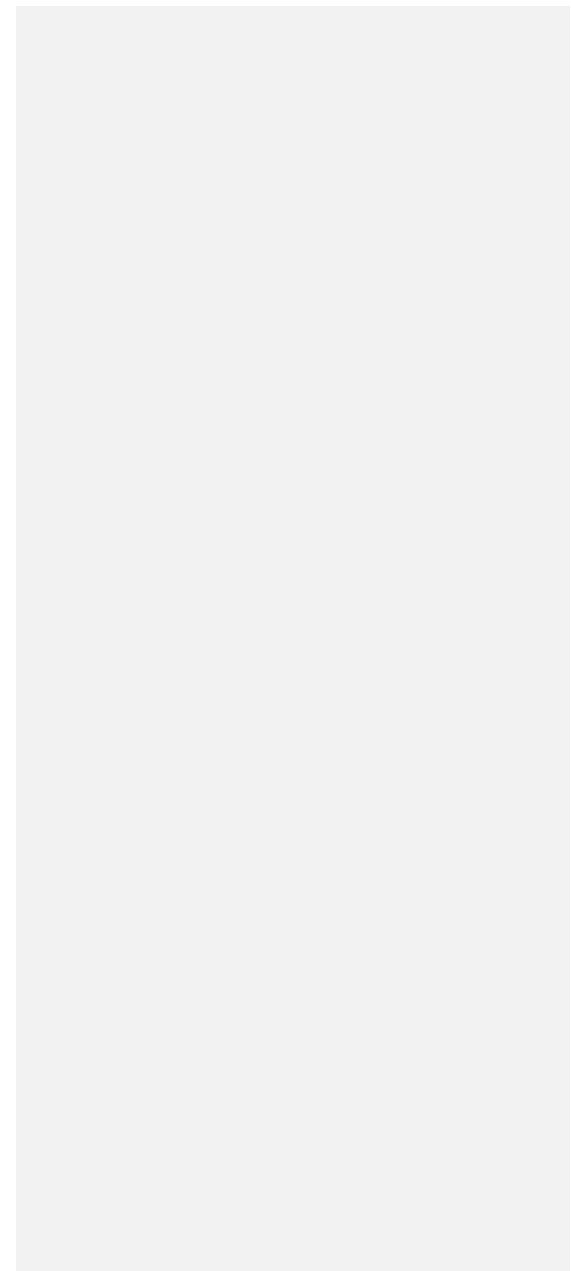| The plan should be monitored by	Yes	No	Don't Know	Comments
Steering/Task Group				
West Offaly Partnership				
Programme Management Group				
Co. Council Staff				
Elected Representatives				
Other (Details)				

b)

Recommendations on how the plan should be monitored e.g. should it be monitored in terms of the area planning process, implementation of plans, level of community involvement etc.

- ♦
- ♦

c)

Ongoing Monitoring	Yes	No	Comments
I am willing to be approached again for monitoring purposes			

10. ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Appendix B: Question Guide -Ferbane June 2013

Section A-General warm-up questions

1.   Can you outline how you think Ferbane is doing now in general terms?

2.   In your opinion, what overall difference did the IAP make to Ferbane?

3.   If I were to ask you to define what a resilient community is what would you say?

4.   How does Ferbane perform under these criteria?

Section B-Questions drawn from The Community Resilience Manual – A resource for rural recovery and resilience produced by the Centre for Community Enterprise in British Columbia, Canada and the Australian Social Inclusion Board..

Do you 1. Strongly agree, 2, agree, 3. Disagree, 4. Strongly disagree or 5. Don't know about the following statements as they apply to Ferbane at the moment as opposed to before 2001. Why do you think this?

A.   Community Leadership is diverse and representative of age, gender and cultural composition of the community

B.   Elected community leadership is visionary, shares power a and builds consensus

C.   Community members are involved in significant community decisions

D.   The community feels a sense of pride

E.   People feel optimistic about the future of the community

F.   There is a spirit of mutual assistance and co-operation

G.   People feel a sense of attachment to the community

H.   The community is self-reliant and looks to itself and its resources to address major issues

I.   There is a strong emphasis on education at all levels

J.   Many more diverse community organisations exist here now

K.   Local organisations have developed partnerships and work collaboratively

L.   Employment in the area is diversified beyond a single large employer

M. Major employment firms in the areas are locally owned

N. There is an openness to new forms of economic activity

O. The community knows where to seek and secure resources

P. The community is aware of its competitive position in the broader economy

Q. The community has prepared a development plan to guide its development

R. Citizens are involved in creating and implementing community vision and goals

S. There is ongoing action in achieving the goals agreed

T. There is regular evaluation of progress towards community goals

U. Organisations use the community plan to guide their actions

V. The development approach is inclusive of all segments of the population

W. The extent of stakeholder engagement in the IAP process was high

X. There are (new) social structures in the area and *bridging* social capital created between local people who did not previously have a relationship with each other (Explain terms used)

Y. The degree of *linking* social capital created between local people and other agencies is high

Z. That representatives from each of the stake holding groups participate in the process

THE CARNEGIE COMMISSION FOR RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

A Charter For Rural Communities
The Final Report of the Carnegie Commission for Rural Community Development

Supporting a Dynamic Local Economy

Optimising Assets

Achieving Fairness for Everyone

Enhancing Environmental Capacity

Empowering Local Governance

Developing Reliable Infrastructure

Increasing Financial Resources

Valuing Local Distinctiveness

Enriching Social Capital and Wellbeing

Enjoying Locally Relevant Services

Realising Participative Community Planning

Building Capital

Growing Capacity

CarnegieUK
TRUST
CHANGING MINDS • CHANGING LIVES

Section B – Inspired by the Carnegie UK Trust Petal Model-Charter for Rural Communities

Looking at the Petals on this Charter…

Do you
1. Strongly Agree, 2. Agree, 3. Disagree, 4. Strongly disagree or 5. Don't Know
about the following statements as they apply to Ferbane at the moment as opposed to before 2001:

1.	**Achieve fairness for everyone.**

Ferbane organisations strive to **achieve fairness for everyone.**
Ferbane organisations work to redress poverty and disadvantage
They promote the representation of all sectors of the community in its structures.

2.	**Assets and Resources for Community benefit**

Ferbane is well-linked and networked both locally and internationally
Ferbane is able to access funding and other supports from the State, the EU and private sources.
Ferbane could run its own businesses in essential areas such as energy and food production.
Run primary care for the elderly with state funding
Ferbane is able to raise money locally.

3.	**Enjoying locally relevant services**

Ferbane has access to
- Telecoms and broadband.
- Access to good and health food,
- a community meeting space,
- education services,
- benefits,
- health care
- security
- Communities have a say in the planning and delivery of that service.

4.	**Developing Reliable Infrastructure**

There is active community involvement in developing key infrastructure such as
- telecoms,
- broadband,
- transport services,
- energy,
- water and
- Affordable housing.
- Renewable energy sources for local amenities and the possible ownership by the community of the energy production capacity.

| 5. | **Enhancing Environmental Capacity** |

The vibrant rural community will be able to adapt to the low carbon economy of the future and will not only reduce its carbon footprint but will be in a position to produce its own energy and benefit from the retention of local bio-diversity. Please comment

| 6. | **A dynamic Economy and Financial Resources** |

What is your assessment now of the economic situation in Ferbane? How does it compare with the past?

1. Did any form of 'future-proofing' such as local energy plans or food production result?
2. Did the process draw in those people not normally involved in such processes?
3. What are the dominant driving forces for change in this community?
4. What economic forces might draw people to the area now and in the future?

| 7. | **Governance** |

1. Did more local participation in the planning process occur since the IAP?
2. Did participation in general civic life increase?
3. Did fora for discussion on key issues emerge? What are these?
4. What organisations are influential here?
5. Were local organisations strengthened by the IAP process? In what ways?
6. Were relationships with state institutions strengthened by such participation?

Appendix C: Community Survey 2018, which was carried out on behalf of the Ferbane Development Steering Group

There have been many positive developments in Ferbane over the last 15 years or so. However, it is now time to consider the next phase of the town's development. This community survey is being carried out on behalf of the Ferbane Development Steering Group. This Group is thinking about the future of the town and area over the next ten years in the light of the major changes which are likely to take place locally and nationally during that period. The purpose of the survey is to identify the development needs of Ferbane as seen by the community itself which will have a big impact on the final plan.

When you are finished please put the questionnaire in the envelope provided for collection. The unopened envelopes will be given to Community Engagement Partners in Thurles for processing.

All information will be treated as completely confidential and only overall information will be used in any report.

A: First some basic information about your household

Q1. How many people normally live in your household?

Q2. How many people in the household are in each of the following age-groups?

Age-group (Years)	0-6	7-12	13-18	19-30	31-50	51-65	66-75	76+
Number of people								

Q3. What is the current occupation status of the adult members of the household under 30 years old? (Please tick all that apply)

Occupation Status	Number of Adults under 30 years of age	Number of Adults 30 years of age +	Total Number who work outside of Ferbane
(a) Full time paid work			
(b) Part-time paid work			
(c) Full time home maker			
(d) Full-time adult education or training			
(e) Part-time adult education or training			
(f) Unemployed and seeking work			
(g) Unemployed and not seeking work			
(h) Retired			
(i) Carer for a family member			

Q 4. What is the main form of transport used by the members of your household?

Type of transport	Numbers using it

Walk/Cycle	
Own private car	
Public transport	
Taxi	
Friend/Relative's private car	

Q 5. How far do members of your household travel each day to work, school or college?

Distance	Number of members of household
Less than 1 mile	
Between 1 and 2 miles	
Between 2 and 5 miles	
Between 5 and 10 miles	
Between 10 and 20 miles	
More than 20 miles	

B: Now some information about how you feel about Ferbane

Q 6. Overall how would your household rate Ferbane as a place in which to live? *Please circle your answer.*

Excellent   Very Good   Good   OK   Poor   Very Poor

Q 7. Please indicate how the members of the household feel about Ferbane at present by ticking the appropriate box for each statement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
We feel better now about Ferbane than we did this time last year					
Ferbane is a better place to live in today than this time five years ago					
There is great potential for Ferbane to become an even better place in which to live					

Q .8. What do the members of your household feel are the three best things about living in Ferbane?

1.

2.

3.

Q 9. What do the members of your household feel are the three things about living in Ferbane that most need to be improved?

1.

2.

3.

C: Now a few questions about the social, business and recreational services which you would like to see provided in Ferbane.

Q 10. Are there services/businesses not currently available in Ferbane which you would like to be provided?

Yes ☐   No ☐

If 'Yes' please go to Question 11

If 'No', please go to Question 12

Q 11. Please list the services or businesses you would most like to see provided?

Service One:

Service Two:

Service Three:

Service Four:

Q 12. Do you know of anyone who would like to live in Ferbane but can't find a suitable dwelling?

Yes ☐   No ☐

If 'Yes' please go to Question 13

If 'No', please go to Question 14

Q 13. What kind of property are they looking for? *Please tick all that apply*

A family dwelling to buy	A family dwelling to rent	An apartment to buy	An apartment to rent	Other

Q 14. With regard to the younger members of the household, do they see themselves making Ferbane their long-term home?

Yes ☐   No ☐

If 'No' please go to Question 15

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If 'Yes', please go to Question 16

Q 15. Why do the younger members of the household not see themselves living in Ferbane in the long-term?

D: And now, a few questions about the potential for business development in Ferbane and the surrounding areas

Q 16. Do you know of anyone who would like to set up a business in or near Ferbane but is unable to do so?

Yes ☐   No ☐

If 'Yes' please go to Question 17

If 'No', please go to Question 18

Q 17. What is preventing them setting up a business?

Q 18. What are the three resources in or near Ferbane which you think would be likely to attract national or international tourists to the area if they were more developed?

1.

2.

3.

Q 19. A substantial area of cutaway bogs will become available over the next decade. Do you think that those areas should be used as –

a) Areas of environmental protection

b) Areas for the development of tourist facilities

c) Areas for the development of windfarms

(Please tick all that apply)

E: And finally, a few questions about the recreation facilities which you would like to see provided in Ferbane.

Q 20. Please ask each age-group in your household to pick the 3 new recreational activities they would most like to have available in Ferbane. Then put those in order of popularity with 1 being the activity which would be most popular for that age group.

Age Group	Recreational Activity One	Recreational Activity Two	Recreational Activity Three
1 - 18			
19 - 30			
31 - 50			
51 - 65			
Over 65			

Q 21. If funding for a good community project was obtained but required a community contribution, would your household be willing to pay €2 a week into a fund to provide that contribution? *(Please tick whichever applies)*

Yes

Not sure

No

Any other comment

Please use this space to share any other ideas of your household about the Future development of Ferbane and its immediate area.

You have now completed the questionnaire. Thank you for taking the time to do this.

If you would like any further information about the survey, please contact ██████████@gmail.com or on ████████████.

Appendix D: Ferbane Business Survey, 2018

There have been many positive developments in Ferbane over the last 15 years or so. However, it is now time to consider the next phase of the town's development. This survey is being carried out on behalf of the Ferbane Development Steering Group. This Group is thinking about the future of the town and area over the next ten years in the light of the major local and national changes which will be experienced over that time.

The survey is aimed at gathering the experiences, expectations and opinions of the businesses in the area and will have a big influence on the final plans proposed.

You are asked to complete the attached survey form and place it in the envelope provided. You may ignore a question if you are not in a position to answer it. The envelope will be collected from you within a week of the form being delivered to you. The envelopes will be passed unopened to Community Engagement Partners who will carry out the analysis and provide a report to the Steering Group and to all others who wish to have a copy.

All information in this survey form will remain confidential and will be used to provide general information and analysis only. The survey forms will be confidentially shredded once the data analysis is complete.

1.	**How long have you been trading from this address?** ....Yrs....... Months

2.	**How many people work in this business**	☐	Full-time

	☐	Part-time

3.	**What is the approximate average number of paying customers of this premises?**

	Weekly …………………	Daily …………………...

4.	**Does the flow vary significantly throughout the year?**

	Yes	☐	No	☐

If 'Yes' what do you think is the cause(s) of this variation?

5.   **As far as you know are most of your customers: (Please Tick)**

Regular local   ☐

Occasional local   ☐

Passers By   ☐

Tourists   ☐

A mix of the above   ☐

Don't Know   ☐

6.   **How has your business performed in the following periods?**

	Improved	No change	Declined
Last twelve months	☐	☐	☐
Last two years	☐	☐	☐

7.   **How do you think business will be over the next two years?**

Improving ☐   No Change ☐   Worse ☐

8.   **What improvements would you make to Ferbane to make it better it as a shopping and service centre?**

1.

2.

3.

9.   **Do you know of anyone who would like to set up a business in or near Ferbane but is unable to do so?**

Yes ☐   No ☐

If 'Yes' please go to Question 10
If 'No', please go to Question 11

10.   What is preventing them setting up a business?

11.   Is there anything about Ferbane which is affecting your ability to develop your own business?

Yes ☐   No ☐

If 'Yes' please go to Question 12
If 'No', please go to Question 13

12.   What are the things about Ferbane which affecting your ability to develop your business?

13.   What are the three resources in or near Ferbane which would be likely to attract national or international tourists to the area if they were more developed?

1.

2.

3.

14.   What would need to be done for your business to benefit from more tourists to the area?

1.

2.

3.

Not Applicable

15.   Please list here any other comments which could guide actions to improve business in Ferbane in the future?

You have now completed the questionnaire. Thank you for taking the time to do this for us.

If you would like any further information about the survey, please contact ██████@gmail.com or on ███████.

Appendix E: Case study on creating and implementing community vision and goals as told by CM 2

If you force something on people, the first chance they get, they will resist it, and they will make you pay for it. Whereas, if people have bought into it and come with you, then the change might take a bit longer to get, but it will last. When a meeting is called, it's timely and relevant. Meetings are relevant because they are usually looking for a decision. And one of my basis beliefs is - and I have argued several times that - the effort you put in, up front, is very well worthwhile.

Because, in theory, I studied - and you probably did, too - on the different theories of change management, the Crisis Coercive - the fecking implementing: you have the one when you communicate in advance. And that, to my mind, is the best one, because the effort you put in to communicate and create a vision for people, you can see where you're going. The balloon model, where you have the driving forces, and restraining forces: if you can weaken the restraining forces instead of intensifying the driving forces, you get the change to take place. Much better, and it sticks

The other one that I did a good bit of study on was the Transformational Model - the key stakeholders. Identify who are the key stakeholders - whether they are for it or against - and you know then what you have to do. I came to the theory - but I found that the theory I learned subsequently, matched the practice, in a lot of cases: but in Change Management, certainly so. Create a vision, try to get people to see where you want to go, and try to identify the key stakeholders you want to bring with you - and that old 80/20 principle works. It really does.

CC: Do you think that the process that TI facilitated with you helped?

Yes. Theory had a part to play. I came from the practical side of things. And learned the theory post the event. And found that the theory fits and that the effort you put into bringing people with you is very valuable. And that is where the theory helps. And the structure...the structure is important, too. And that's all part of the communication process. Now there's people who get tremendous change just by coming in. And in Crisis Management you have no choice but to do it. Where you have the coercive style, that style works too, but in the general scheme of things, the best way is to bring them with you. And you won't bring everyone; but try to identify who the key stakeholders are. And focus your

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efforts in trying to get them. And there's nothing as good as getting someone who opposes someone now championing the cause. It's a wonderful achievement.

CC: Are there more forums for key discussions to take place - for example, community meetings?

If you wanted to be very positive towards the IAP, you'd probably say that subconsciously we have copied that several times over. Subsequently, because we were exposed to it first time round. Anything that ever happened might not have been successful at all. And you see, part of the Change Management thing: when things happen and go through nobody makes much comment on it. And it becomes the norm. Whereas, when you are not working through a structure, it can be a different case. And you might get a result and you might not, but you don't know the difference. If someone has had experience and exposure to that, they are more likely to use it - even subconsciously.

Appendix F: Extract from: Integrated Area Planning in West Offaly Final Report to the Carnegie Trust Rural Action Research Programme (Source: Corcoran 2009)

The empowerment of local communities as part of partnership structures is only likely to be meaningful if Partnerships themselves have real powers. Where Partnerships are ad hoc arrangements which statutory agencies can opt into or out of at will then they will remain unlikely to share any of their power or control over their resources. There are still very unequal relationships between the statutory and community sectors. If this power differential is to be addressed within the context of IAP, it will be necessary to provide resources to ensure that there is ongoing training and support available for community representatives in any partnership process. Only in this way are they likely to develop the necessary skills and confidence to participate in the process as equals. It is also important to establish fora where the parties can meet, discuss and make decisions together as equal partners. The establishment of the Programme Management Group (PMG) was an attempt to address this issue in Offaly. The group met 11 times and was quite representative of the partners; however, attendance, particularly from community members, was patchy. The PMG certainly opened up channels of communication between the partners. However, the ownership of the process was always an issue; in most cases the PMG was seen to be operating under the auspices of TI rather than under the auspices of the Co Council. Also, the strategic role of the PMG was never fully realised. And perhaps the fact that it met 11 times over 2 years for a couple of hours at a time made such a strategic role impossible to achieve. It is now important to critically review the Programme Management Group and to examine setting up a structure that works for the implementation stage of the planning process. Clarity is needed in terms of where the IAP process goes to from here and its linkage with the rural development programme and other community initiatives. A written agreement between all stakeholders might be a useful tool in terms of clarity on roles and responsibilities in the process.

Partnership in planning can work most effectively when there is an organised group in the community which is accountable and where the group have access to independent technical advice and support. This support in this case was ably provided by West Offaly Partnership. All respondents noted the hard work and commitment of West Offaly Partnership in this process. Groups such as WOP are ideally placed to act as facilitators in the IAP process. They are close to communities and their job is to strengthen community structures. They are also informed about and able to understand and communicate Council policy. This unique position allows them to act as a broker and facilitator in the process of putting the plans in place. It is therefore recommended that, in line with the Planning and Development Act 2000, Offaly County Council could and should sub-contract the Offaly Local Development Company to do

the community element of consultation and planning for local area plans for the smaller towns and villages and leave the technical elements such as zoning etc. to the planners In the proposed model then the 'hard' tasks of translating IAP's into planning policy and ultimately into Local Area Plans is completed by the planners and presented back to communities and to the elected members for discussion, further amendment and ultimately approval. For the process to work issues around land-use planning etc need to then be taken up by the Council with the groups when the time comes to develop the statutory Local Area Plan and the findings of the local groups incorporated therein as appropriate. This did not happen uniformly in Offaly. In Ferbane in both phases of the project the translation of community plans as articulated in the IAPs was translated very clearly by the Planners into the statutory Local Area Plan. The Ferbane community remains satisfied that their wishes are reflected in the statutory plan and that they were listened to by politicians and planners alike. The process of communication with the other 2 communities was uneven and neither Cloghan nor Banagher received feedback about their submissions from the Council. It was also difficult for them to see where the IAPs had been incorporated into planning policy. It remains important that the Council give feedback to communities about their submissions and that new channels of communication between the planners and communities are given space to develop.

It was agreed that the project was seen by all partners as a pilot scheme and is one that could have a significant impact on how plans are prepared in the County into the future. Therefore, all partners are committed to the replication of this scheme in other parts of Offaly. This was a significant breakthrough in that the Council accept and indeed welcome the very visible presence of WOP as the main facilitators of this process. This is a good precedence for the future not just for Offaly but for other Counties as well.

Appendix G: A description of local volunteering with two members of Ferbane Tidy Towns, 2013 (Source: Corcoran 2013)

CM 7: We secured funding from West Offaly Partnership and OLDC to develop a park and we are three-quarters finished now. So soon it will be opened officially. It's a wood preserved beforehand and now we have paths going around it. And we have a wild-flower garden and a bridge going over a stream. And we are about halfway through a Wildlife Survey down there and there's big interest in it. We have the Scouts who want to do a little project in it; talk about doing composting there as well. And things like that: so it should be good. There were a few grants going around and we take the money when we get it. That was an area that was never going to be developed, although zoned for industrial purposes, it was never going to be developed. And Offaly County Council generously gave us the land. Eamon Dooley helped them. There are 16 in the Tidy Towns…

I suppose it's a project, something like this, that does generate a bit of life, a bit of a buzz and it brightens up the place, thank God. … There's good voluntary help still there and goodwill. There's great will and even with charities collecting there, people are giving money and that is good to see. Tight as things are, but still there's goodwill. People don't have money but there is time there

CM6: People may not want to dedicate themselves every week, but in projects there's no problem getting them, you know. They come and go and if they see something that needs doing, they'll do it. Once it can be done, it will be done. … Even last year, we started an initiative asking people instead of volunteering for Tidy Towns just to look after your estate. The response was massive. This year we didn't approach any residents - we didn't have to.

CC: They did it automatically - what you started last year?

CM 6: So each area, each housing estate - let it be Gallen View they look after their own area. The bigger group does not have to be there. It's done. There's a competition for the best residential area; Best Business on Main Street. It's just for a certificate. You see them out sweeping in front of their shops in the mornings and it's good … But it's a visible thing. You can see people out there doing it, in fairness now. And they're doing it of their own accord … The Tidy Towns Group - three of them - walk the streets in the morning at 6:30 in the morning and pick up litter every morning.

CM 6: FAS is involved as well. FAS is based out of the priest's house - the parish office.

They'd look after the hanging baskets and boxes - water these on Main Street, mowing lawns, the play area, grand - repetitive tasks like that - they look after.

CC: [Maintenance of the town?] Are there residents' associations? Is there a list?

CM7: There are. I can give you a list. They're all busy and all do their own bit. The place looks better for it. A bit of competition between them all and they want to be a little bit ahead of the others, you know.

CC: What are the organisations that are strong here?

CM7: The Scouts are going well and the Brownies. We have the best Foroige in Ireland, run by Barbara Dooley. A big committee. All the sporting groups - the GAA - go as well. Gallen United have a facility up the road. Senior citizens, the Bridge Club, Active Aged, women's group, all are catered for; there is something for everyone. Every age group. We have the Library, of course. We have a state-of-the-art school. We were lucky to get it.

Appendix H: Clubs and Organisations in Ferbane, November 2019

Active Age (Ferbane & Belmont)

Belmont Bocce Club

Belmont Men's Shed

Bridge

Bright Beginnings Community Creche

Catholic Church

- *Collectors*
- *Church Choirs*
- *Ferbane Apostolic*
- *Ferbane Parish Pastoral Council*
- *Funeral Stewards*

Ceilidh

CoderDojo

Community Games

Ferbane Athletic Club

Ferbane Business and Technology Park

Ferbane Coffee Morning Group

Ferbane Community Alert

Ferbane Friendly Phone Call Service

Ferbane GAA Gymn

Ferbane Historical Society

Ferbane St Vincent De Paul

Foroige

GAA *(Ferbane Football & Belmont Hurling) & (Ferbane Belmont Minor Club both Football & Hurling)*

Gallen United Soccer Club

Game club

Heritage Centre

High Street Drama Group

High Street Social Dancing

Ladies Football Naomh Ciaran - (2019 - Intermediate All-Ireland Champions)

Lions Rugby Club

Lynx Cycling Club

Macra

Parent and Toddlers Group

Pitch and Putt

Residents Associations: *Knockaulin Drive, Delvin Park, Ballyvora Grove, Gallen View, Ballycumber Road.*

Schools Board of Management

Schools Parent Teacher Associations

Senior Citizens (Ferbane & Belmont)

Singing Circle

Tidy Towns

Appendix I: The Proposal – Application to the ESB's "Community Development Fund" for funding in 2002

2002: The Proposal

Ferbane, having benefited from a source of secure employment for in excess of 50 years, is now facing a severe economic downturn due to the reduction of employment opportunities in the ESB and Bord na Móna. Both companies enjoyed the loyalty of the community, in providing **employees** for operations and **goodwill** in allowing the necessary infrastructure development. The community on the other hand was rewarded with stable and well-paid employment that boosted the economy of Ferbane. However, this phase is now over and the challenge presented is to redirect the energy of the Community towards the development of a culture that supports enterprise focused on the needs and opportunities of the market place.

The people of Ferbane fully appreciate the contribution the ESB and Bord na Móna have made (and are continuing to make) towards the development of Ferbane and its hinterland. However there is also an acute awareness that the Community must seek other options for employment in the locality if Ferbane is to survive as a viable entity into the future. This proposal outlines a significant development that can be undertaken on a phased basis through the provision of a **Business & Technology Park** within three-quarters of a mile from the centre of the town of Ferbane.

The **Community** have demonstrated their willingness to become involved in the development of the town and have actively supported the funding of this project.

Enterprise Ireland has signalled its confidence in the viability of this project by committing **€300,000** towards this proposed development and we are confident that **Offaly Co Council** will provide the site on acceptable terms

Ferbane Business and Technology Park Limited are now applying to the **ESB's "Community Development Fund"** for a once off capital grant of **€975,000** and a contribution towards a manager's salary of **€19,000** per annum for the first three years of this project. This funding, if approved will enable the Community of Ferbane grasp the opportunities presented in this submission to develop the town so that it can continue to grow and contribute to the development of the West Offaly Region.

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