

Rural Vibrancy in North-West Europe

- THE CASE OF SOUTH KERRY

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List of Acronyms

ABCD	Asset-Based Community Development
CLLD	Community-Led Local Development
CAP	Common Agriculture Policy
CEDRA	Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas
CIEL	Centre for Innovative and Entrepreneurial Leadership
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DG	Directorate General
ESPON	European Spatial Planning Observation Network
EU	European Union
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
HSE	Health Services Executive
ICA	Irish Countrywomen's Association
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IT	Institute of Technology
KCC	Kerry County Council
KETB	Kerry Education and Training Board
KTI	Killarney Technology and Innovation
LAG	Local Action Group
LAP	Local Area Plan
LCDC	Local Community Development Committee
LEADER	Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Economie Rurale (Links Between Actions for the Development of the Rural Economy)
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MK	Mid-Kerry
NESC	National Economic and Social Council
NSS	National Spatial Strategy
NWE	North-West Europe
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAP	Policy and Advisory Panel
RSS	Rural Social Scheme
RVMI	Rural Vibrancy Measuring Index
SICAP	Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme
SKDP	South Kerry Development Partnership
TD	Teachta Dála (Member of the Irish Parliament)

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Foreword *by Mike Stolete*

"It used to be that jobs and economic opportunities drew migrants. No longer. Today's populations are more mobile than ever. Armed with information and freed by technology, today's migrants choose their communities much more carefully than ever before. Therefore, communities must be savvy in the retention and attraction of people. In fact, if communities don't inspire their citizens they run the risk of becoming failed communities."

*Introduction to **Beyond Economic Survival: 97 Ways Communities Can Thrive – A Guide to Community Vitality***

What we wrote in the foreword of **Beyond Economic Survival** is truer today than six years ago when it was first published. The worldwide economic downturn back then saw most senior levels of government spend massively to stimulate their economies. Subsequently, we have experienced a swing of the pendulum to a 'barren' fiscal landscape. This has meant a significant decline in funding for social, development and community agencies that were integral to rural vibrancy, and in some cases to the survival of rural communities. While larger communities could make up this 'capacity gap' by reallocating resources, many smaller communities have struggled.

Today, more than ever, we need ways of measuring these rural vibrancy gaps. Without proper measurement, gaps may widen, and a steady seepage of rural folk migrating to their urban neighbours will become a dangerous, irreversible flow. We need new ways of measuring that can not only affect policy but also mobilize the latent potential available within each and every community.

When we first published our work on perceptual indicators, the community of traditional measurers looked at us cautiously. But we persisted. Why should we look only at measures like GDP per capita or unemployment rate as ways to evaluate a community's well being without figuring out a way to measure community pride, its warmth towards newcomers, or its attractiveness to 25-34-year-olds (a critical demographic for long-term vibrancy)? As a former federal economist, I found that baseline measures of these perceptions were often more valuable than their statistical counterparts. They also provided galvanizing information for truly engaging community members, and ultimately, for mobilizing communities to take responsibility for their own welfares.

The creation of a 'Rural Vibes Toolkit' in South Kerry by Brendan O'Keeffe and his team (Department of Geography, Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick, and South Kerry Development Partnership) builds beautifully on earlier work using the indicators created in our own community vitality work here in Canada. Dr O'Keeffe's work also creates new indicators to reflect the local context, and augments these perceptual indicators with other rich statistical measures of rural vibrancy and public sector provision.

We would vociferously echo the report's recommendations in Ireland, amongst Rural Alliances INTERREG Programme partners, and at home in Canada:

- increase funding to those civil society organizations who are often not only glue, but often necessary fuel, for communities,
- increase the levels of public service to rural areas to begin to address and rebuild the gap,
- find innovative ways to engage the potential of youth so they can truly be part of their communities and discover the opportunities hidden at home,
- help to shine a light on economic opportunities whilst offering a boost to harness these opportunities to address the rural "economic gap", and finally
- advocate for rural proofing policy.

We would encourage other Rural Alliances INTERREG Programme partners to adopt the 'Rural Vibes Toolkit' and learn from the important work being done in Ireland. Not only will these efforts collect valuable baseline

data, they will also begin to engage communities in innovative ways, offering them the greatest chance of better understanding themselves, and harnessing their own significant potential.

Can we benefit from sharing our collective knowledge, approaches and tools across oceans, countries and continents?

Dr. O’Keeffe’s work proves that we can.

I believe rural vibrancy will only blossom when we are able to truly share with and learn from each other, reaping the wisdom and instinctive innovation in those who call rural home.

“We are the leaders we have been waiting for.”

Hopi Elder

Mike Stolte

Co-Author ***Beyond Economic Survival: 97 Ways Communities Can Thrive – A Guide to Community Vitality***

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Preface *by Sheila Casey*

South Kerry Development Partnership Ltd. (SKDP) is delighted to present the findings of this extensive research undertaken into the vibrancy of South Kerry. We also sincerely thank Dr. Brendan O’Keeffe and his team in Mary Immaculate College, for their work in preparing the report. This report represents one of the benefits that accrue from collaboration between local development bodies and higher-education, and in SKDP we place considerable importance on action research, on-going evaluation and reflective practice.

This report is an objective and robust piece of independent research. It profiles the high levels of vibrancy that result from community development. It is heartening to see in many ways that despite the multiple issues facing the communities and individuals in South Kerry, there is still such a high level of vibrancy, dynamism, vision, determination, innovation and knowledge capacity locally. Furthermore, the report also highlights the desire and spirit of the people of South Kerry to develop and help themselves if supported and enabled to do so. The data presented here make compelling cases for increased and on-going investment in community development and in the rural economy.

SKDP is proud to be at the fore of local development partnership companies in Ireland in leveraging investment, including from EU-funded programmes such as the INTERREG IVB North West Europe initiative. Over the last number of years, SKDP’s involvement with both the COLLABOR8 and the Rural Alliances projects has enabled a number of major initiatives to be developed. These include the Reeks Mountain Access Forum, which as well as providing support to many communities, boosts economic activity, particularly in more isolated parts of South Kerry. Other primary beneficiaries of Rural Alliances were Valentia Lighthouse, which had just over 7,000 visitors in 2014 and The Old Mill in Killorglin, which is being transformed into a community enterprise centre. Other successful projects include The Dawn Film Trail in Killarney and the tourism promotion of the Beara Peninsula.

The total value of the EU contribution was some €420,000 but the additional leveraged funding resulted in an investment of circa €1m in South Kerry over the 4 years of Rural Alliances. Further significant investment is likely to take place in the coming years in projects initiated through Rural Alliances bringing additional spin off benefits in areas such as job creation and economic growth.

Much has been achieved under Rural Alliances, but we in SKDP are not going to rest on our laurels. We are already working on our next INTERREG funding applications to complement our other programmes such as Rural Development (LEADER) Programme and the Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme in order to ensure that South Kerry gets the investment it needs and deserves. We look forward to continued collaboration with DG Regio and with the INTERREG Secretariat in bringing the next round of projects to fruition.

This report on Rural Vibrancy presents challenges to us all, but it also presents several pointers and signposts. South Kerry Development Partnerships, our communities and the local business community will be pursuing the implementation of the report’s recommendations. In addition, we will be working with public bodies to ensure the implementation of those recommendations that pertain to them, and we will continue to work with, and lobby our public representatives to ensure that they bring about the policy and practice changes that are required to ensure that South Kerry and all rural regions realise their development potential. Tús maith leath na hoibre!

Sheila Casey
Chairperson, South Kerry Development Partnership Ltd.

Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of three surveys on rural vibrancy in South Kerry. The surveys were conducted independently by The Department of Geography, Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick. The College was South Kerry Development Partnership's academic partner during the Rural Alliances INTERREG IVB NWE Project over the past four years. In this capacity, the College operated as an impartial and external 'critical friend,' reviewing SKDP's participation in Rural Alliances and the impacts of the ensuing projects. Rural Alliances involved fourteen rural development organisations, agencies and authorities from Ireland, Wales, Belgium, The Netherlands, Germany and France. Together, these partners committed to a series of tasks, one of which was to undertake a study of 'rural vibrancy,' across their respective territories in NW Europe. The partners envisaged that by undertaking such a study they would develop a template and toolkit to enable communities to measure the vibrancy of localities and to devise appropriate strategies and projects. Measuring rural vibrancy would also ensure the setting of targets for public service provision and the performance of state agencies and local government in respect of delivering for rural citizens.

Methodology

Two of the partners in Rural Alliances, namely the University of Marburg (Germany) and Trinity St. David (University of Wales) devised a system for measuring the vibrancy and activities of community and voluntary groups. Originally, this system comprised a series of questions presented in excel, but for convenience and accessibility in South Kerry, a paper-based questionnaire was also used. The South Kerry questionnaire also included some revised and additional questions, so as to enable community leaders to give their views, not just about community development, but also about the rural economy, migration, planning and the role of statutory agencies and public bodies in delivering services to local citizens. Over one hundred groups completed this questionnaire, and the preliminary results were the subject of discussions and workshops on the part of the South Kerry Community Forum. Thus, this report presents both quantitative and qualitative data. The research findings were shared with the INTERREG partners when they came to a meeting in Killarney, and by means of a shared intranet platform.

Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick and SKDP believed that in order to establish a more holistic and accurate measure of rural vibrancy, it would be necessary to go beyond documenting and measuring the activities and perspectives of community groups. Indeed, there is a very substantial body of international literature on rural community development that supports this approach. Recognising that rural vibrancy is multi-faceted, the College undertook two additional pieces of work in South Kerry. Firstly, they examined the distribution and accessibility of public services (e.g. post offices, libraries, garda stations and schools) across South Kerry and secondly, they undertook a survey of 1,000 citizens from all walks of life, so as to establish people's perspectives on the vibrancy of their communities. This survey parallels similar work undertaken in Canada by CIEL (The Centre for Innovative and Entrepreneurial Leadership), and we are grateful to CIEL for sharing their data and methodologies with us. This citizens' survey is the largest of its kind ever undertaken in Ireland, and South Kerry is leading the way. Thus, the three elements of the report on rural vibrancy relate to:

1. The activities, vibrancy and perspectives of community and voluntary organisations;
2. Public Service Provision in South Kerry; and
3. Citizens' Perspectives of Rural Vibrancy.

In addition to benchmarking rural vibrancy and providing communities with a toolkit, this work, and especially the data collected have been used to provide an evidence-base for policy position papers produced by Rural Alliances. These position papers, which have been submitted to national and EU authorities and politicians are therefore underpinned by an extensive body of scientific evidence and are reflective of the views and experiences of a wide spectrum of individuals and communities.

Results / Key Findings

Community and Voluntary Organisations in South Kerry are more active than ever before. They have more members, more capacity and more responsibilities than at any time in the past. Several have progressed from being single-issue or narrowly-focused organisations to being more broadly-based, inclusive, skilled and strategic. Community and voluntary groups experience increased demands for the services they

provide. Yet, they face growing challenges in raising funds, dealing with a growing bureaucracy, getting members to take-on committee and officer roles and in reaching out to newcomers. The survey of civil society organisations reveals that:

- There are 243 community and voluntary organisations affiliated to the Community Forum in South Kerry.
- Among affiliated community organisations, the total membership has increased from 1,220 in 1990 to 4,027 in 2014.
- Of the group members, 52 percent are male and 48 percent are female.
- Only 23 percent of the membership of civil society organisations is aged between 18 and 40, while 28 percent is aged 65 or older.
- Community groups are generally well organised and have clear policies, procedures and operating systems; 95 percent have a clear and agreed vision, 61 percent have a documented strategic plan, 58 percent have a website or facebook account, 53 percent have a procedure for the rotation of officers and 42 percent have a recruitment strategy.
- The range of services and activities operated by community and voluntary groups has expanded very considerably, and over 95 percent operate at least two services. Indeed, the level of service provision on the part of voluntary bodies in many communities is almost commensurate with that of a municipal (local) authority in most European countries.
- The average annual turnover of a community group (among those surveyed) is €275,000, with 29 percent of groups' funds coming from local fundraising.
- While membership and activity levels have grown across the board, there is scope for increasing involvement by young people and foreign nationals.

When asked to identify the main issues facing their organisations and local communities, community leaders listed the following: funding cutbacks, growing levels of bureaucracy, structural / internal issues, recruiting new members, filling vacancies at officer level, managing increasing demands for local services, the alignment of local government and local development, migration and depopulation.

The survey questionnaire also asked respondents to put forward three words to best describe their local community. The most popular descriptions were: Vibrant, Friendly, Positive, Active, Helpful, Pleasant, Worried, Under Pressure, Close-knit, United and Supportive. When asked to identify the main issues and challenges facing their localities, survey respondents referred to emigration, the lack of employment, unemployment, cutbacks to public services and isolation. These challenges find greatest expression in the Iveragh and Kenmare Community Forum areas, while in Killarney the main issues relate to the environment and infrastructural provision. In Mid-Kerry, people share the concerns of those in Iveragh, while they also identify a need to provide more facilities for young people.

This report also presents data on levels of public service provision in South Kerry. The findings reveal that levels of service provision in most communities fall below the targets set by government under the National Spatial Strategy in 2002. In fact, over the past decade public service provision has been reduced, and the closure of some vital services, the downgrading of others and the under-funding of many are adversely affecting the vibrancy of rural communities. In many instances, the withdrawal of the State and the pressures on public, social and commercial services can cancel out the otherwise positive impacts of the work being done, on a voluntary basis, by community groups. While service provision in the main towns, especially in Killarney is commensurate with population levels, many villages lack the essential services that are required to enable them to sustain themselves economically. The loss of services is also having negative social consequences, and is compounding isolation and peripherality.

Across South Kerry, the mean level of service provision when measured against the national targets is 75 percent. While communities closer to Killarney benefit from better services, some in Iveragh record scores of below 60 percent. At present, over 70 percent of villages have a multi-purpose hall, tourism, culture and / or heritage groups, local eldercare facilities, a post office, community alert and a sportsfield. However, less than half have a playground, locally-provided education programmes (for adults), a local politician (unlike all villages or communes in France), a garda presence or a playground. Community and voluntary groups, many with the assistance of South Kerry Development Partnership, are striving to fill these service

provision gaps. Over three-quarters of communities have a women's group/ICA Guild, older people's group and a parents' association. Yet, only a minority have a sheltered housing scheme, community enterprise (or co-operative), an estate management project, a social outlet (excluding pubs) or a dedicated conservation/wildlife area. Thus, this report identifies specific gaps in terms of community-level and public service provision, thereby providing pointers towards relevant strategies and actions for the promotion and attainment of rural vibrancy and sustainability.

The third set of results presented in this report is drawn from a survey of almost 1,000 citizens. This is the most substantial dataset presented in the report, and it is anticipated that as INTERREG partners across NW Europe finalise similar research utilising the 'Rural Vibes Toolkit,' the findings presented here in respect of South Kerry can be compared and contrasted with experiences of rural communities abroad. The citizens' survey reveals that people are generally proud of their communities. Just over 40 percent participate in some kind of community activity or structure, with middle-aged people being the most likely to get involved in community development. The data also reveal that people who devote time to volunteering are more likely to vote in elections and referenda. Among those who do not volunteer, the most-frequently cited barrier is a lack of time, although one-third of the non-volunteers stated that they would be open to joining an organisation and to getting more involved in their local community.

The survey questionnaire covered fifteen indicators of economic vibrancy, twenty-one of socio-cultural vibrancy and seven of environmental vibrancy. The report details the findings in respect of each individual indicator. Among the measures of economic vibrancy are: business activities, job opportunities, standard of living and local service provision. Social vibrancy encompasses quality of life, facilities for particular population cohorts (e.g. youth), local amenities and the openness of community organisations. Environmental indicators of vibrancy include: the quality of the landscape and built environment.

In general, citizens perceive that their communities have higher levels of social vibrancy than economic vibrancy. This is particularly the case in Iveragh and in the Kenmare Community Forum area. The survey results reveal the importance of supporting local businesses and of the relationship between businesses and communities (a core theme of Rural Alliances). The findings also show that people believe innovation is valued in South Kerry and that entrepreneurs can access relevant information and supports locally. However, outside of Greater Killarney, people do not generally believe that their localities attract investment or have adequate levels of public service provision.

Most people view South Kerry as being friendly and welcoming and as having good community facilities. People are also generally happy with the quality of local schools and with amenities for older people. They are however, concerned about what they perceive to be a lack of amenities and outlets for the youth.

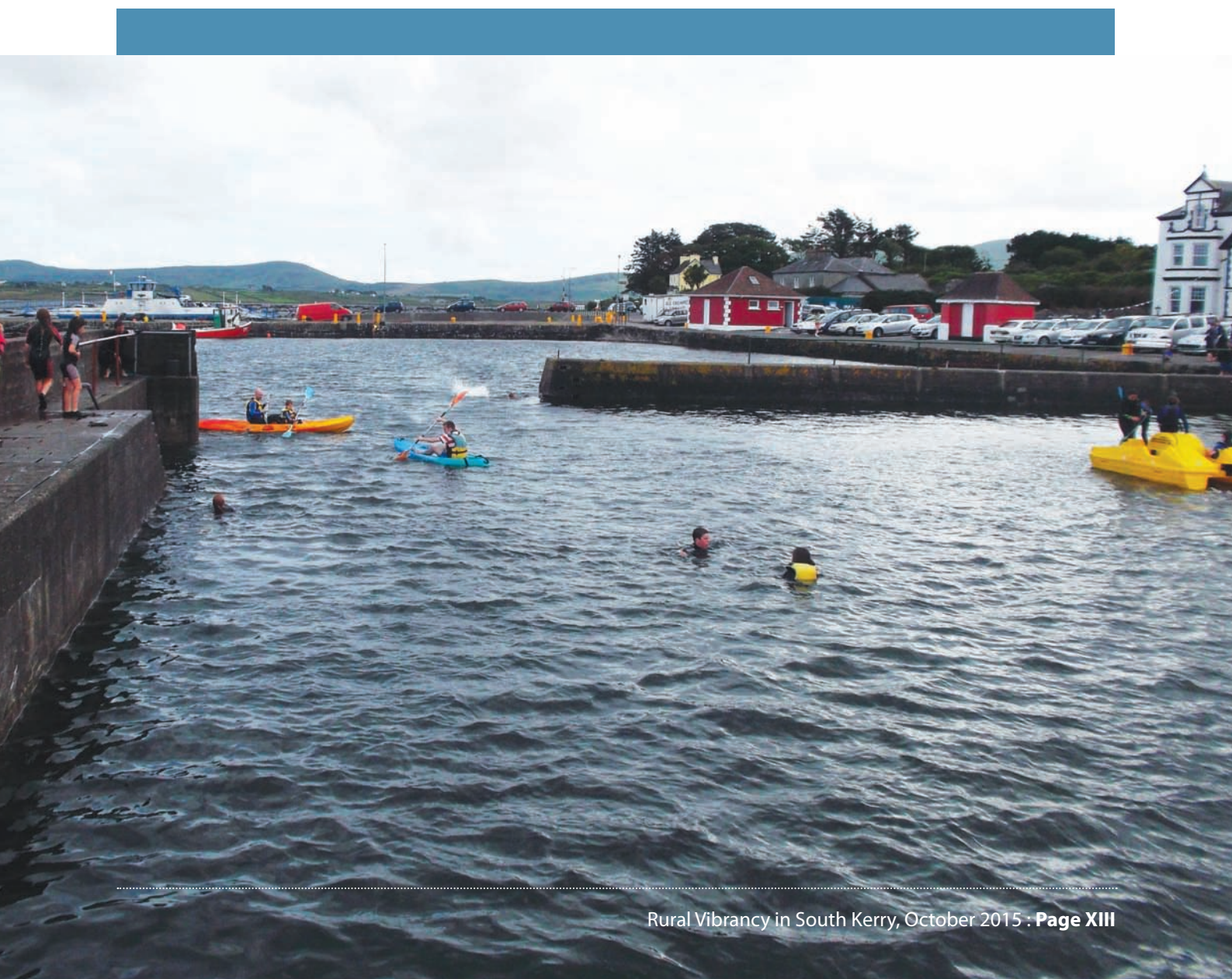
People in South Kerry also have positive perceptions of their natural environment, including the landscape, water quality and farming practices. They have some concerns however about the quality of the built environment and the role of the planning system in failing to adequately protect the environment.

Citizens' perceptions of rural vibrancy are analysed across the four community forum areas (of Iveragh, Kenmare, Killarney and Mid-Kerry), so as to determine the impact of geographical factors and considerations. The results are also analysed by age-cohort, gender and other social variables, so as to enable communities and agencies to better understand, and respond more effectively to local and particular dynamics and drivers of development.

Recommendations

Drawing on the three sets of data referred to here and the lessons learned from transnational collaboration through Rural Alliances, this report recommends that:

- Civil Society (community and voluntary organisations) should receive greater recognition and support – legally, institutionally and financially for the work they do, the services they provide and their contributions to local democracy.
- Specific initiatives are required locally to promote the expansion of the social economy and community businesses, and greater participation by young people in community development. These should be implemented by civil society and SKDP, with support from government.
- In recognising the role it has played in stimulating and supporting community and economic development, South Kerry Development Partnership should remain an autonomous Local Action Group, rooted in the communities of South Kerry, and permitted to take on a wider development brief and be more innovative and flexible.
- Levels of public service provision should be retained in all communities, as the first step towards the achievement (within five years) of the service provision targets set out in the National Spatial Strategy. These targets need to be incorporated into the National Planning Framework and be legally binding.
- Public sector activity, and especially economically-oriented investment in South Kerry needs to be increased, so as to stimulate economic development and provide favourable conditions in which entrepreneurs and civil society can promote projects, create jobs, generate economic activities, make investments, enhance quality of life and conserve and add-value to local resources.
- Rural-proofing of national and EU policy needs to be universally applied, so that all parts of rural Ireland (especially South Kerry) are empowered and enabled to develop to their potential, and contribute to sustainable and balanced regional and territorial development.



Achoimre feidhmiúcháin

Tá torthaí thrí shuirbhéanna ar bheocht tuaithe i gCiarraí Theas ar fáil ins an tuairisc seo. Stiúradh na suirbhéanna go neamhspleách ag Roinn na Tíreolaíochta, Coláiste Mhuire gan Smál, Ollscoil Luimnigh. Bhí an coláiste mar chomhpháirtí acadúil le Páirtneracht Forbatha Chiarraí Theas Teo le linn Tionscadal na gComhaontas Tuaithe le ceithre bliana anuas. Sa tslí seo, bhí an coláiste ag feidhmiú mar 'chara criticiúil' a bhí neamhchlaonta agus seachtrach, ag déanamh léirmheas ar rannpháirtíocht SKDP i dTionscadal na gComhaontas Tuaithe agus tionchair na tionscnaimh iarmhartacha. Bhí baint ag ceathar déag eagraíocht, gníomhaireacht agus údarás forbartha tuaithe ó Éire, An Bhreatain Bheag, an Bheilg, An Siltír, An Ghearmáin agus An Fhrainc le Comhaontais Tuaithe. Le chéile d'oibrigh na páirtithe seo ar sraith tascanna, ceann dóibh siúd ab ea staidéar a dhéanamh ar 'bheocht tuaithe', ina gcríocha féin in Iarthuaisceart na hEorpa. Bhí na páirtithe den tuairim dá ndéanfaidís staidéar den saghas sin, d'fhorbairfidís teimpléad agus sraith straitéisí ionas go mbeadh pobail in ann beocht na limistéar a thomhas agus straitéisí agus tionscadail cuí a cheapadh. Le beocht tuaithe a thomhas, bheadh cinntiú ann ó thaobh leagan síos spriocanna i gcór soláthair na seirbhíse poiblí agus feidhmíocht na gníomhaireachta stáit agus rialtas áitiúil ó thaobh cuir ar fáil do saoránaigh tuaithe.

Modheolaíocht

Chruthaigh dhá pháirtí sa Chomhaontais Tuaithe, Ollscoil Marburg (An Ghearmáin) agus Trinity St. David's (Ollscoil na Breataine Bige), córas chun beocht agus gníomhaíochtaí grúpaí pobail agus deonacha a thomhas. I dtosach, 'sé a bhí i gceist leis an gcóras seo ná sraith ceisteanna sa chlár Excel ach baineadh úsáid as ceistneoir ar pháipéar comh maith chun éascaíocht agus fáil ar a dhéanamh níos fusa i gCiarraí Theas. Bhí roinnt ceisteanna athbhreithnithe agus ceisteanna breise laistigh den cheistneoir i gCiarraí Theas, ionas go mbeadh ceannairí pobail in ann a gcuid tuairimí a roinnt, ní hamháin faoi fhorbairt pobail, ach faoin ngeilleagar tuaithe, imirce, pleanáil agus ról na gníomhaireachtaí reachtúla agus comhlachtaí poiblí i dtaobh seirbhísí a chur ar fáil do saoránaigh áitiúla. Líon níos mó ná céad ghrúpa an ceistneoir seo amach, agus tharla plé agus ceardlanna i ndiaidh na réamhthorthaí eagraithe ag Fóram Pobail Chiarraí Theas. Dá bhrí sin, cuireann an tuairisc seo sonraíocht chainníochtúil agus cháilíochtúil in iúl. Roinneadh na torthaí taighde leis na páirtithe INTERREG nuair a d'fhreastal siad ar chruinniú i gCill Áirne, agus i dtéarmaí ardán inlíon comhroinnte.

Chreid Coláiste Mhuire gan Smál, Ollscoil Luimnigh agus SKDP go mbeadh sé riachtanach níos mó ná taifead agus tomhas a dhéanamh ar ghníomhaíochtaí agus tuairimí de ghrúpaí pobail, chun tomhas níos iomlánaíche agus níos cruinne a fháil ar bheocht tuaithe. Go deimhin, tá cnuasach shubstaintiúil litríocht idirnáisiúnta ar fhorbairt pobail tuaithe, a thacaíonn leis an gcur chuige seo. Ag aithint go bhfuil beocht tuaithe ilghnéitheach, thug an Coláiste faoi dhá phíosa oibre breise i gCiarraí Theas. Ar dtús scrúdaigh siad an dáileadh agus teacht ar sheirbhísí poiblí (m.sh. postoifigí, leabharlanna, stáisiúin na nGardaí, agus scoileanna) timpeall Ciarraí Theas agus ina dhiaidh sin, rinne siad suirbhé ar 1,000 saoránach as gach cúlra, as gach aicme, chun tuairimí daoine i dtaobh beocht a gcuid pobail a fháil amach.

Is ionann an suirbhé seo agus obair den chineál céanna a deineadh an CIEL (The Centre for Innovative and Entrepreneurial Leadership) i gCeanada, agus táimid fíorbhuíoch do CIEL as a gcuid sonraíocht agus modheolaíochtaí a roinnt linn. Is é seo an suirbhé saoránach is mó dá leithéid a deineadh riamh in Éirinn, agus tá Ciarraí Theas chun tosaigh. Ar an gcaoi sin, baineann na trí ghné den tuairisc seo ar bheocht tuaithe le:

1. Na gníomhaíochtaí, beocht agus tuairimí na n-eagraíochtaí pobail agus deonacha;
2. Soláthar na seirbhíse poiblí i gCiarraí Theas; agus
3. Tuairimí Saoránaigh i dtaobh Beocht Tuaithe.

Maraon le tagarmharcáil beocht tuaithe agus ag cur sraith straitéisí ar fáil do phobail, baineadh úsáid as an obair seo, agus an sonraíocht a bhailíodh ach go háirithe chun bunús fianaise a chur ar fáil do pháipéir seasaimh beartais déanta ag Comhaontais Tuaithe. Dá bhrí sin, tá na páipéir seasaimh seo, a thugadh do údarais náisiúnta agus eorpacha agus do pholaiteoirí, tacaíthe ag cnuasach mhór fianaise eolaíoch agus léiríonn siad na tuairimí agus taithí de réimse leathan daoine agus pobail.

Torthaí/Príomhthorthaí

Tá Eagraíochtaí Pobail agus Deonacha i gCiarraí Theas níos gníomhaí ná riamh. Tá níos mó baill acu, breis cumas agus freagrachtaí breise acu ná aon am atá thart. Tá dul chun cinn faoi leith déanta ag roinnt mhaith dóibh-ó bheith ina n-eagraíochtaí cheist aonair nó eagraíochtaí cúng dírithe go bheith bunaithe níos leithne, cuimsitheach, oilte agus straitéiseach. Tháinig méadú ar éileamh ar na seirbhísí a chuireann grúpaí pobail agus deonacha ar fáil. É sin ráite, tá tuilleadh dúshláin os a gcomhair amach i dtaobh cistí a chruinniú, ag deileáil le maorlathas atá ag fás, ag spreagadh baill chun ról ar choiste agus ról oifigeach a ghlacadh agus i dtaobh síneadh amach do dhaoine nua.

Cuireann an suirbhé ar eagraíochtaí na sochaí sibhialta an méid seo in iúl:

- Tá 243 eagraíochtaí pobail agus deonacha cleamhnaithe leis an bhFóram Pobail i gCiarraí Theas.
- I measc eagraíochtaí pobail cleamhnaithe, tá méadú tagtha ar an mballraíocht iomlán ó 1,220 i 1990 go 4,027 i 2014.
- Is fireann iad 52 faoin gcéad agus baineann iad 48 faoin gcéad de bhaill an ghrúpa.
- Níl ach 23 faoin gcéad de bhallraíocht eagraíochtaí na sochaí sibhialta idir ocht mbliana déag d'aois agus daichead bliain d'aois, fad is atá 28 faoin gcéad seasca cúig bliain d'aois nó níos sinne.
- Go ginearálta tá grúpaí pobail dea-eagraithe agus tá polasaithe soiléire, maraon le modhanna agus córais oibriúcháin acu; tá fíis aontaithe soiléir ag 95 faoin gcéad, tá plean straitéiseach ag 61 faoin gcéad, tá suíomh gréasáin nó cuntas Facebook ag 58 faoin gcéad, tá modh do uainíocht na n-oifigeach ag 53 faoin gcéad agus tá straitéis earcaíochta ag 42 faoin gcéad.
- Tá méadú faoi leith tagtha ar an réimse seirbhísí agus gníomhaíochtaí atá á rith ag grúpaí pobail agus deonacha, agus ritheann níos mó ná 95 faoin gcéad dhá sheirbhís ar a laghad. Go deimhin, tá leibhéal soláthair seirbhíse ar thaobh na gcomhlachtaí deonacha i go leor pobal beagnach comhchuíseach leis an leibhéal atá ag údarás áitiúil i bhformhór na dtíortha Eorpacha.
- 'Sé €275,000 an láimhdeachas meán bliantúil atá ag grúpa pobail (i measc na grúpaí a ndearnadh suirbhé orthu), le 29 faoin gcéad de chistí grúpaí ag teacht ó thiomsú airgid áitiúil.
- Cé go bhfuil fás tar éis teacht ar bhallraíocht agus leibhéal ghníomhaíochta, tá deis ann do dhaoine óga agus náisiúnaigh eachtracha níos mó páirt a ghlacadh.

Nuair a iarradh ar cheannairí pobail na príomhshaincheisteanna atá os comhair a n-eagraíochtaí agus pobail áitiúla a aithint, liostaigh siad an méid seo a leanas: ciorruithe maoinithe, leibhéil maorlathais atá ag fás, saincheisteanna struchtúracha/inmheánacha, baill nua a earcú, folúntais a líonadh ag leibhéal oifigeach, bainistíocht a dhéanamh ar éileamh méadaithe ar sheirbhísí áitiúla, ailíniú rialtas áitiúil agus forbairt áitiúil, imirce agus bánú.

D'iarr an ceistneoir suirbhé ar freagróirí freisin trí fhocal a phiocadh chun cur síos a dhéanamh ar a bpobal áitiúil. Ba iad na focail is coitianta ná: Bríomhar, Cairdiúil, Dearfach, Gníomhach, Cabhrach, Tíriúil, Imníoch, Faoi bhrú, Dlúth, Aontaithe agus Tacúil. Nuair a iarradh ar freagróirí an tsuirbhé na príomh-shaincheisteanna agus dúshláin atá os comhair a gceantar a aithint, rinne siad tagairt do eisimirce, an easpa fostaíochta, dífhostaíocht, gearradh siar ar sheirbhísí poiblí agus scoiteacht. Is san Fóram Pobail in Uíbh Ráthach agus sa Neidín a bhí na dúshláin sin is mó chun tosaigh, i gCill Árne faraor, baineann na príomh-shaincheisteanna leis an timpeallacht agus soláthar bonneagair. Tá na fadhbanna céanna ag cur as do na daoine i gCiarraí-Lár is atá ag cur as do mhuintir Uíbh Ráthaigh, ina theannta sin aithníonn siad go bhfuil gá le breis áiseanna a chur ar fáil do dhaoine óga.

Sa tuairisc seo tá sonraíocht ar leibhéil de sholáthar seirbhíse poiblí i gCiarraí Theas ar fáil. Léiríonn na torthaí go dtiteann leibhéil soláthair seirbhíse sa chuid is mó den phobal faoi bhun na spriocanna a leag an Rialtas síos faoin Straitéis Náisiúnta Spásúlachta i 2002. I ndairíre, le deich mbliana anuas tá soláthar na seirbhíse poiblí laghdaithe agus tá dúnadh roinnt seirbhísí rithabhachtacha, íosghrádú cinn eile agus tearcmhaoiniú roinnt mhaith dóibh ag déanamh dochar agus damáiste do bheocht na bpobal tuaithe. I go leor cásanna, is féidir le tarraingt siar an Stáit agus na brúnna ar sheirbhísí poiblí, sóisialta agus tráchtála, na tionchair dhearfacha den obair atá á dhéanamh, ar bhonn deonach, ag grúpaí pobail a chealú. Fad is atá soláthar seirbhíse sna príomhbhailte, go háirithe i gCill Árne, i gcomhréir leis na leibhéil daonra, tá ganntanas ann i go leor sráidbhailte ó thaobh na seirbhísí riachtanacha atá ag teastáil chun iad féin a chothú go heacnamaíoch.

Tá iarmhairtí sóisialta diúltacha ag eascraí as caillteanas seirbhísí, agus tá aonrú agus imeallachas ag dul in olcas dá bharr.

Ta Meánleibhéal an tsoláthair seirbhíse ar fud Ciarraí Theas ag 75 faoin gcéad nuair a chuirtear é i gcomparáid leis na spriocanna náisiúnta. Fad is atá buntáiste ag baint le pobail níos gaire do Chill Áirne i dtaobh seirbhísí níos fearr, baineann scór de níos lú ná 60 faoin gcéad le roinnt dóibh in Uíbh Ráthach. Faoi láthair, tá halla ilchuspóireach, turasóireacht, grúpaí cultúr agus/nó grúpaí oidhreacht, áiseanna áitiúla do chúram seanóirí, oifig an phoist, pobail ar aire agus páirc spóirt ag níos mó ná 70 faoin gcéad de shráidbhailte. É sin ráite, tá clós súgartha, cláir oideachais atá curtha ar fáil go háitiúil (do dhaoine fásta), polaiteoir áitiúil (murab ionann agus gach sráidbhaile nó común sa Fhrainc), nó láithreach garda ag níos lú ná leath dóibh. Tá grúpaí pobail agus deonacha ag obair go dian chun na bearnaí atá ann ó thaobh soláthar seirbhíse a líonadh, roinnt mhaith dóibh ag fáil cabhair ó Pháirtneracht Forbatha Chiarraí Theas Teo. Tá grúpa na mban/Gild ICA, grúpa na seanóirí agus cumann tuismitheora ag níos mó ná trí cheathrú de phobail. Fós, níl scéim sciath-thithíochta, fiontar pobail (nó comharchumann), tionscadal bainistíochta eastáit, asraon sóisialta (coinneigh amach tithe tábhairne) nó limistéar caomhnaithe/fiadhúlra ach ag mionlach dóibh. Dá bhrí sin, aithníonn an tuairisc seo bearnaí áirithe i dtaobh leibhéal an phobail agus soláthar na seirbhíse poiblí, ar an mbealach sin ag cur leideanna i dtaobh straitéisí ábhartha agus gníomhartha do chur chun cinn agus gnóthachtáil beocht agus inbhuanaitheacht tuaithe ar fáil.

Tá an tríú sraith torthaí atá ar fáil sa tuairisc seo tógtha ó shuirbhé a rinneadh ar bheagnach 1,000 saoránach. Is é seo an tacar sonraí is substaintiúil ins an tuairisc, agus meastar fad is atá páirtithe INTERREG ag cur taighde den chineál céanna i gcrích ar fud Iarthuaisceart na hEorpa ag baint úsáid as 'Sraith Straitéisí do Bheocht Tuaithe', is féidir na torthaí seo maidir le Ciarraí Theas a chur i gcomparáid agus i gcodarsnacht le heispéiris na bpobal tuaithe thar lear. Léiríonn suirbhé na saoránach go bhfuil daoine bródúil as a bpobail i gcoitinne. Glacann díreach os cionn daichead faoin gcéad páirt i ngníomhaíocht nó struchtúr pobail de shaghas éigin, s'iad na daoine meánaosta an dream is mó a bheadh suim acu bheith páirteach i bhforbairt pobail. Léiríonn na sonraí freisin go bhfuil daoine a ghlacann páirt in obair dheonach níos dealraithe chun vóta a chaitheamh i dtoghcháin agus reifrinn. I measc na daoine nach ndéanann aon obair dheonach, is é an bac is mó a luadh ná easpa ama, cé go ndúirt trian den dream nach oibrítí deonacha iad go mbeadh siad páirt a ghlacadh in eagraíocht agus níos mó a dhéanamh in a bpobal áitiúil.

Chlúdaigh an ceistneoir suirbhé cúig tháscaire déag de bheocht eacnamaíoch, ceann is fiche de bheocht sóisialta/pobail agus seacht de bheocht comhshaoil. Cuireann an tuairisc seo torthaí i leith gach táscaire ar leith in iúl. I measc na tomhais de bheocht eacnamaíoch tá: gníomhaíochtaí gnó, deiseanna fostaíochta, caighdeán maireachtála agus soláthar seirbhíse áitiúil. Cuimsíonn beocht sóisialta cáiliúocht na beatha, áiseanna do chohóirt daonra ar leith (m.sh. óige), áiseanna áitiúla agus oscailteacht na n-eagraíochtaí pobail. I measc na táscairí comhshaoil de bheocht tá: caighdeán an tírdhreacha agus na timpeallachta tógtha. Go ginearálta, tá saoránaigh den tuairim go bhfuil leibhéal bheocht shóisialta níos airde ná leibhéal beocht eacnamaíoch ina bpobail. Tá sé seo amhlaidh go háirithe in Uíbh Ráthach agus i réimse Fhóram Pobail an Neidín. Léiríonn torthaí an tsuirbhé an tábhacht a bhaineann le tacaíocht a thabhairt do ghnóthaí áitiúla agus an tábhacht a bhaineann leis an gcaidreamh idir gnóthaí agus pobail (príomh théama de Chomhaontais Tuaithe). Ina theannta sin léiríonn na torthaí go gcreideann daoine go bhfuil meas ar nuálaíocht i gCiarraí Theas agus gur féidir le fiontraithe teacht ar eolas ábhartha agus tacaíochtaí go háitiúil. Lasmuigh de Chill Áirne áfach, ní chreideann daoine go dtarlaíonn infheistíocht ina gceantair nó go bhfuil leibhéal dhóthanacha de sholáthar seirbhíse poiblí acu.

Tá an chuid is mó de dhaoine den tuairim go bhfuil Ciarraí Theas cáirdiúil agus fáilteach agus go bhfuil áiseanna maithe pobail ann. Go ginearálta tá daoine sásta le caighdeán na scoileanna áitiúla agus leis na háiseanna do dhaoine aosta. Tá siad cineál imníoch faoin easpa áiseanna agus asraonta don aos óg faraor.

Tá tuairimí dearfacha ag na daoine i gCiarraí Theas faoin a dtimpeallacht nádúrtha comh maith, an tírdhreach, caighdeán an uisce agus cleachtais feirmeoireachta san áireamh. Tá roinnt cúis imní acu faraor faoi chaighdeán na timpeallachta tógtha agus an ról atá ag an gcóras pleanála i dteipadh an timpeallachta a chosaint i gceart.

Déantar anailís ar thuairimí saoránach i dtaobh beocht tuaithe sna ceithre réimse fóram pobail (Uíbh Ráthach, An Neidín, Cill Áirne agus Ciarraí-Lár), chun tionchar na tosca geografacha agus breithnithe a fháil amach. Déantar anailís ar na torthaí freisin de réir chohórt aoise, inscne agus athróga sóisialta eile, ionas go mbeidh na pobail agus gníomhaireachtaí in ann tuiscint níos fearr a fháil, agus freagairt níos éifeachtaí do dinimic áitiúla agus dinimic ar leith agus tiománaithe na forbartha.

Moltaí

Ag tarraingt ar an trí shraith de shonraí a luaitear anseo agus na ceachtanna a foghlaimíodh ó chomhoibriú trasnáisiúnta trí Comhaontais Tuaithe, molann an tuairisc seo an méid seo a leanas;

- Ba chóir go mbeadh an tSochaí Shibhialta (eagraíochtaí pobail agus deonacha) ag fáil níos mó aitheantas agus tacaíocht ó thaobh dlí, ó thaobh institiúid agus ó thaobh airgeadais don obair a dhéanann siad, na seirbhísí a chuireann siad ar fáil agus a ranníocaíochtaí le daonlathas áitiúil.
- Tá gá le tionscnaimh shonracha go háitiúil chun an leathnú ar an ngeilleagar sóisialta agus gnóthaí pobail a chur chun cinn, maraon le rannpháirtíocht níos mó ag daoine óga i bhforbairt pobail. Ba chóir don sochaí shibhialta agus SKDP iad seo a chur i bhfeidhm, le tacaíocht ón Rialtas.
- Ag aithint an ról atá Páirtneracht Forbatha Chiarraí Theas Teo tar éis imirt ó thaobh spreagadh agus tacaíocht i bhforbairt pobail agus forbairt eacnamaíoch, ba chóir don eagraíocht fanacht mar Ghrúpa Gníomhaíochta Áitiúil atá neamhspleách, fréamhaithe sna pobail i gCiarraí Theas, agus cead acu treoir forbartha níos leithne a ghlacadh agus a bheith níos nuálaí agus níos solúbtha.
- Ba chóir leibhéil de sholáthar seirbhíse poiblí a choinneáil i ngach pobal, mar an chéad chéim i dtreo bhaint amach (laistigh de cúig bliana) na spriocanna soláthair seirbhíse leagtha amach in san Straitéis Náisiúnta Spásúlachta. Ní mór na spriocanna seo a ionchorprú sa Chreat Pleanála Náisiúnta agus a bheith ceangailteach de réir dlí.
- Ní mór gníomhaíocht na hearnála poiblí a mhéadú i gCiarraí Theas, agus go mór mhór infheistíocht atá dírithe ar eacnamaíocht, chun forbairt eacnamaíoch a spreagadh agus coinníollacha fabhracha a chur ar fáil inar féidir le fiontraithe agus an tsochaí shibhialta tionscadail a chur chun cinn, postanna a chruthú, gníomhaíochtaí eacnamaíochta a ghiniúint, infheistíochtaí a dhéanamh, cáilíocht na beatha a fheabhsú agus acmhainní áitiúla a chaomhnú agus cur le luach acmhainní áitiúla.
- Ní mór Promhadh-Tuaithe de bheartais náisiúnta agus an AE a chur i bhfeidhm go huilíoch, ionas go mbeidh údarás ag gach ceantar tuaithe in Éirinn (go háirithe Ciarraí Theas) agus go mbeidh siad in ann barr a gcumas a bhaint amach ó thaobh forbairt de, agus cur le forbairt réigiúnach agus forbairt críche atá inbhuanaithe agus cothrom.





Introduction

In Ireland and throughout the European Union there is much debate and growing concern about the future of rural regions and communities. We hear a lot of media coverage about decaying rural towns, service depletion, isolation, poor connectivity, a growing digital divide and on-going out-migration. There is definitely a need to take stock of the difficulties and challenges facing rural Europe and to invoke policies and practices that enable rural territories to grow and prosper. However, we need to do so, not by looking only at what has failed, but rather by also looking at what works. Promoting and delivering rural development imply that we recognise that rural communities and territories are characterised by tremendous diversity, and that a 'one-size-fits-all approach' will never work. Challenges and opportunities vary across rural Ireland and throughout Europe, and while rural people share common bonds through their relationships with landscape, culture, heritage, farming, fishing and the natural environment, each territory must be enabled, empowered and supported to devise and implement its own strategies and interventions that are rooted in place, appropriate to local conditions, driven by local citizens, properly resourced and always open to evaluation, innovation and improvement.

Earlier this year, the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) updated its landmark study 'The New Rural Paradigm', in which, drawing on evidence from over thirty countries, it presented a development trajectory for rural regions and territories, based on investments rather than subsidies and on multi-sectorial approaches rather than agency silos. The OECD also emphasised the need to move away from government deciding for communities or telling communities what to do, so as to engender instead a set of governance arrangements based on partnership, collaboration and mutual respect, with high levels of citizen input and participation. Those of us who live in rural Europe, and those who visit our communities will know that the rural economy has changed, and while agriculture remains a core economic activity, rural areas have much more to offer. Rural areas are open repositories of our heritage, culture, identity, folklore, values and way of life. Farmers and other rural dwellers produce our food and work as guardians of the countryside. 'The rural' landscape and people are the building blocks of our tourism and food industries. Rural spaces and places are not just of local value, they are of strategic national and European significance and importance. The rural merits much more attention, investment, recognition and support than is currently the case. As this report and the wider work of Rural Alliances prove, rural areas can, and are succeeding. The data presented here tallies with much of the aforementioned OECD evidence and the implementation of the policy and practice recommendations presented here will contribute to a better quality of life for citizens, more balanced regional and territorial development and improved outcomes for communities and government.

Rural development is a public good. As a 2012 OECD study demonstrates, rural regions make a vital contribution to national and European growth. That study notes that with proper investment and institutional support, rural regions have generally outperformed urban regions over recent years. The OECD goes on to note that broadly-based, inclusive growth brings benefits to countries in terms of equity, resilience and fiscal health. Human capital is a robust determinant of regional growth. Co-ordinated policy packages and interventions are more effective than individual policy measures. Rural areas merit integrated development strategies, and must no longer be seen as subordinate hinterlands of towns or city regions. Trickle-down growth does not happen generically, and rural areas cannot be expected to mop-up urban spillovers or play second fiddle to other territories. Instead, the rural offers a dynamic space in which traditional economic activities and social cohesion can successfully function alongside high-tech industries and the knowledge economy. Thus, rural Europe needs to focus on opportunities, play to its strengths, build alliances, promote social and cultural capital, protect its natural environment and contribute to the balanced and sustainable growth of our regions, States and European Union.

The Rural Alliances Partnership has taken on board this new approach to rural development. Through it, twelve partners from different rural areas in North West Europe have worked together for 3 years to solve the challenges facing their rural businesses and communities. The partners have also sought to unleash and maximise the development potential of their respective localities and regions and to work collaboratively through transnational partnership to promote knowledge transfers and to bring about a governance and policy environment that are conducive to development that is territorially-balanced, sustainable and community-led. They did this thanks to the opportunity afforded by EU finances. INTERREG is a European funding programme that promotes territorial cooperation between different countries. It has three strands. Strand "A" provides support for cross border projects. The "B" strand is divided into different geographical zones, while "C" enables member states to work together on common projects. The Rural Alliances project (strand B) is part-funded through the INTERREG IVB North West European Programme¹.

South Kerry Development Partnership is one of the founding members of Rural Alliances. The Alliance members are:

1. Brecon Beacons National Park Authority [UK]
2. University of Wales, Trinity St David [UK]
3. Innovatiesteunpunt vzw [BE]
4. Vlaamse Landmaatschappij (VLM) [BE]
5. Stichting Streekhuis Het Groene Woud & De Meierij [NL]
6. Huis van De Brabantse Kempen (NL)
7. Gemeente Lochem [NL]
8. Philipps-Universität Marburg, Fachbereich Geographie (DE)
9. South Kerry Development Partnership Ltd. [IE]
10. Comhairle Contae Mhaigh Eo (Mayo County Council) (IE)
11. Maison de l'Emploi, de Développement, de la Formation et de l'Insertion du Pays de Redon – Bretagne Sud (MEDEFI) [FR]
12. Laval Mayenne Technopole (FR)



Rural Alliances members and many governmental, private and civil society bodies have been working together to enable linkages and to promote collaboration between communities and businesses as part of a wider set of strategies to promote the vibrancy of rural territories, so that rural communities are buzzing, friendly, attractive, creative, energetic, active, innovative, enterprising, inclusive, respectful and sustainable. The agreed objectives of Rural Alliances were as follows:

- Form a new type of alliance (Enterprise-Community Alliance) between enterprises and local communities, mobilising rural residents of all ages, backgrounds and residential status. They will work together to help their communities to adapt to the changing demography in modern rural society.

¹Rural Alliances Project, 1 April 2010 – 31 October 2015. Final Report

- Harness the best qualities of enterprise principles, combined with community values, to construct these new alliances, empowering people living in rural areas to be their own agents for change and contribute to better social inclusion and increased competitiveness.
- Create new relationships between the public sector and rural communities to work together to safeguard & enhance rural resources and services, including innovative finance methods.
- Create a Rural Vibrancy Measuring Index, to help people assess their community and identify actions to undertake.

The partners have successfully involved local citizens and business representatives in the development of over seventy alliances across a wide range of themes, including health care, renewable energy, destination management, event organisation, financial engineering, arts and crafts, culture and heritage and sustainable transport. These successes are manifest in the number of citizens attending and contributing to the transnational exchange meetings, with an average of eighty or more people from these different alliance groups and representative countries attending the workshops, visits and meetings.

Rural Alliance partners have been implementing projects in their respective territories in addition to collaborating with one another to promote knowledge transfers, the dissemination of good practice and the formulation of policy proposals. The partners established a dedicated Policy and Advisory Panel (PAP) to review and evaluate the implementation of projects, to undertake research and to formulate evidence-based policy papers. The PAP included independent experts from universities and think-tanks who worked as 'critical friends,' in liaising with the implementation partners. PAP members were charged with pooling the lessons emanating from the partner areas and with furthering the implementation of rural-friendly policies. Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick was appointed as South Kerry Development Partnership's academic partner on the PAP.

In its business plan, which was approved by the INTERREG Secretariat, Rural Alliances committed to several tasks, one of which was to undertake an assessment of rural vibrancy. The purpose of this was to generate a template to enable rural communities to:

- take stock of local assets and resources,
- devise a tool for the establishment of development baselines and
- formulate strategic plans to add value to local assets, enhance services, generate employment and enhance quality of life.

In giving effect to this commitment, the members of the PAP, under the guidance of the two lead university partners (Trinity St. David and Philipps-Universität Marburg) devised a tool for the measurement of vibrancy among civil society organisations. This tool profiled community voluntary organisations, their activities, achievements, issues and challenges. It was applied in South Kerry, and all organisations affiliated to the South Kerry Community Forum were invited to participate in workshops and one-to-one sessions to profile community vibrancy. The South Kerry dataset and experiences were shared with all partners, and some partners subsequently undertook similar research. In order to build on this work and in line with the broader objectives of Rural Alliances, Mary Immaculate College also undertook a scoping study to map the provision of public services in all communities in South Kerry. In addition, the College spearheaded the roll-out of a very comprehensive survey among almost one thousand citizens, thereby generating a very extensive database on perspectives of rural vibrancy and providing signposts for rural, territorial and regional development. The results from these three inter-related pieces of work are presented in this report.

Rural Vibrancy

Defining and measuring vibrancy are challenging. Yet, measuring and assessing levels of vibrancy at community and sub-regional level represent essential contributions to:

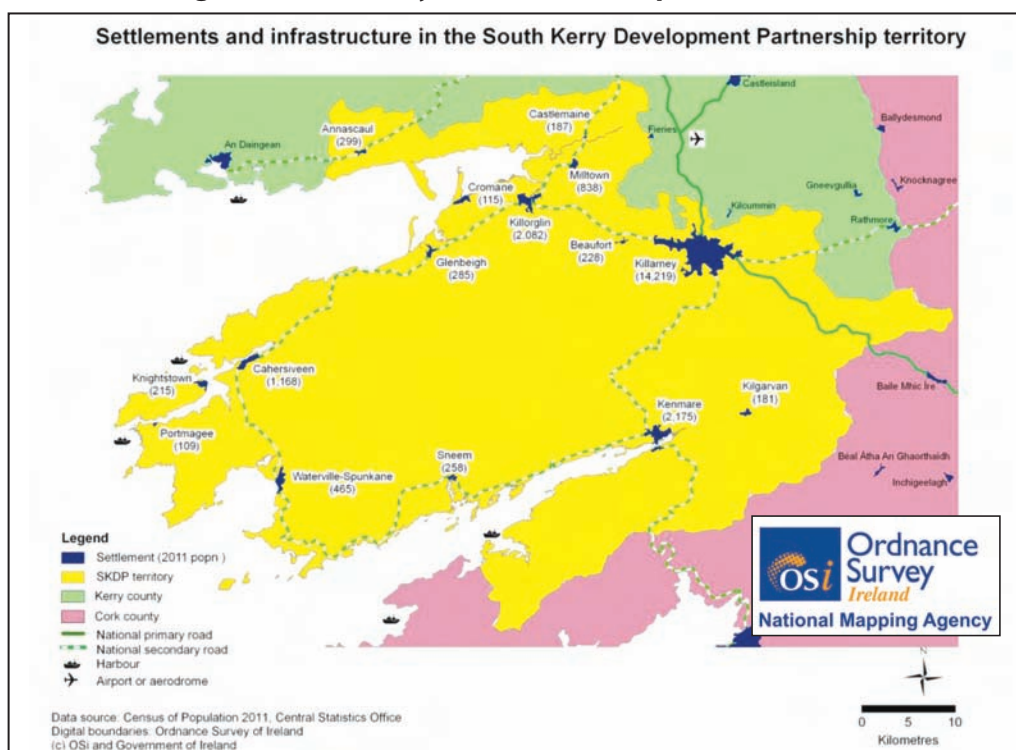
- establishing baselines for development trajectories;
- enabling stakeholders to identify assets and territorial potential;
- evaluating interventions to date; establishing what is working well and what is not; and
- setting targets and timelines for sustainable development and summative growth.

While the concept of 'vibrancy' may seem somewhat intangible, it is of vital strategic importance. Writing in the Irish Examiner (August 13th 2015), Prof. Cathal O'Donoghue, the head of Teagasc's Rural Economy and Development Programme noted that "vibrant communities can, with local leadership, do a lot for themselves to make their areas better places to live in. This vibrancy is a really critical building block of rural economic development. Without it, it will be hard to attract businesses and visitors." Similar sentiments emanate from across the Atlantic. In Canada, the CIEL (Centre for Innovative and Entrepreneurial Leadership) has noted that the most successful communities in economic and social development terms are those that attract people and inspire them (Stolte and Metcalfe, 2009). The work of CIEL and specifically, its publication '97 Ways Small Communities Can Thrive—A Guide to Community Vitality' proved to be very welcome and significant assets to Rural Alliances, and to South Kerry Development Partnership and Mary Immaculate College in particular, in operationalising the concept of 'rural vibrancy' and in measuring communities' experiences and perspectives. Indeed, as the work on the measurement of rural vibrancy is completed in the other Rural Alliances areas across NW Europe, we anticipate broadening our collaboration and extending it to include rural communities in Canada.

South Kerry

South Kerry comprises the southern half of County Kerry in the South-West of Ireland. Its northern boundary runs from the Cork border, north of Barraduff, Killarney and Killorglin, into the south-side of the Dingle peninsula as far as Annascaul. It covers a total geographic extent of 2,529 km² and a land area of 2,462 km². The following map shows South Kerry, bordered by North and East Kerry and North and West County Cork.

Fig. 1.1: South Kerry: Location and Population Centres



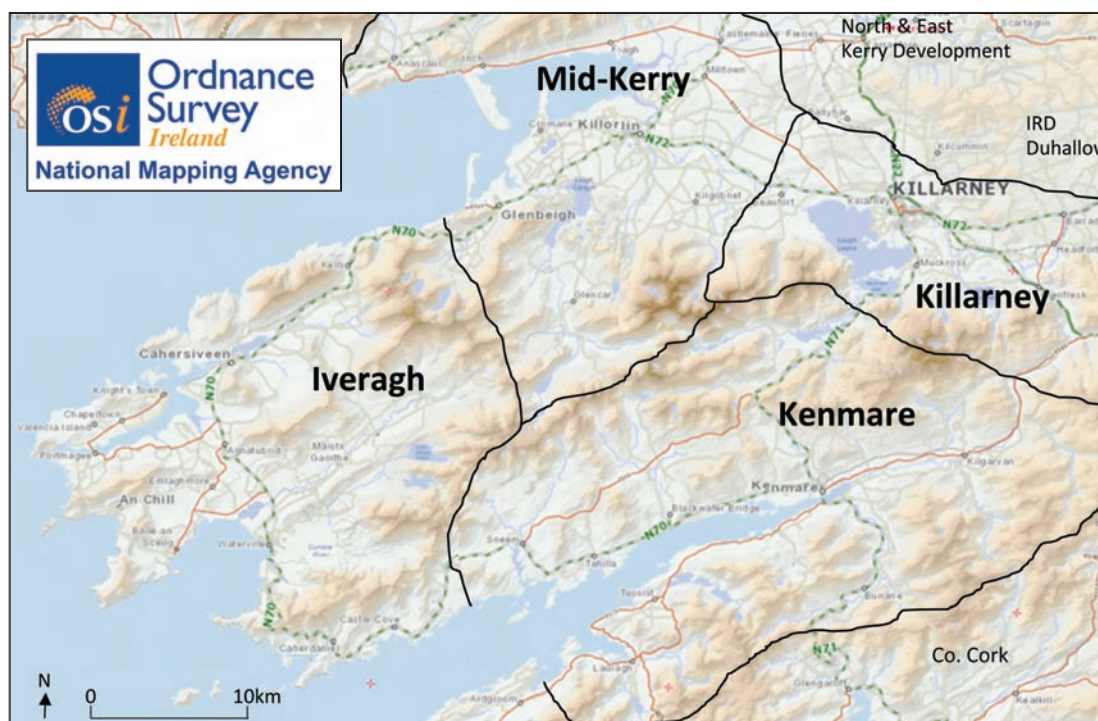
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In 2011 (the most recent census year), the population of South Kerry was 52,685, comprising 36% of the total population of County Kerry. Towns and villages are dotted along the secondary road network with the largest town of Killarney (14,219) connected to the wider region via the N22 primary route. Killarney railway and bus station has services to Tralee, Cork and Dublin. The next largest towns of Kenmare (2,175) and Killorglin (2,082) mark the southern and northern entry points, respectively, to the Iveragh peninsula. Kenmare lies along the N71 running from Killarney to Bantry / Glengarriff (West Cork), while Killorglin is on the N70 and is equidistant from Tralee and Killarney. The three towns of Killarney, Killorglin and Kenmare make up over one-third (35%) the population of the territory while the remainder dwell in the smaller towns, villages and open countryside.

The density of population in South Kerry is 21.4 persons per km2. This equates to 71% of the county average (30.1 persons per km2) and just 45% of the state average of 67.1 persons per km2, reflecting the rurality of the area along with such factors as its less accessible peninsulas, the upland interior of Iveragh, and the almost uninhabited 100 km2 land mass of Killarney National Park.

Its diverse physical and human geography gives South Kerry a challenging profile, with one-quarter of the area demonstrating urban settlement patterns and relatively strong levels of accessibility while the remaining three-quarters is characterised by weak accessibility and dispersed rural living. Such territorial diversity points to some of the logistical challenges of designing and delivering successful social inclusion and community activation initiatives across South Kerry. Throughout this report there is extensive geographical analysis of the research findings. The data are interrogated across the four Community Forum areas in South Kerry, so as to enable a micro-level analysis of the findings. The following map shows the delineation of the Community Fora.

Fig. 1.2: Community Forum Areas in South Kerry



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Rural Alliances in South Kerry - The Local Partners

South Kerry Development Partnership, the local practitioner partner in Rural Alliances, was established by local community leaders in the late 1980s, and the organisation has over 25 years' experience in bottom-up and area-based development. It has successfully implemented several iterations of LEADER (rural development programme), community development and social inclusion programmes and has levered considerable exchequer and EU funds into South Kerry. The Partnership is run by a voluntary Board of Directors and is owned by the communities of South Kerry. It provides a governance forum through which these communities can work effectively and collaboratively with one another and with public bodies and the social partners to promote sustainable development and territorial competitiveness.

Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick is a leading Irish university college, with particular expertise in education and the liberal arts. Its teaching is underpinned by high-quality research, and the College is renowned for its linkages with communities. The Department of Geography in Mary Immaculate College caters for a growing student body and is research-active on several fronts, including environmental science, marine and aquatic environments, climatology, historical and evolving landscapes, political science, urbanisation, demography, economics and urban and rural development. Dr. Brendan O'Keeffe, a member of the Department, has served on the Rural Alliances Policy and Advisory Panel since 2012.



Defining Rural Vibrancy – A Review of International Literature

This section presents a scoping overview of international literature, including policy and practice evaluations that are relevant to the assessment and promotion of rural vibrancy in NW Europe in general, and South Kerry in particular. It begins by looking at rural change and it acknowledges how rural territories across Europe have become more differentiated and varied over recent decades. Consequently, policy and practice responses are required to be more flexible, innovative and inclusive of local citizenry and civil society. The provision and accessibility of local services emerge as integral to the promotion of vibrant rural communities. Good governance, endogenous development and adherence to multi-sectoral approaches are also found to deliver better results in terms of enabling rural territories to be vibrant and competitive, and to contribute to the overall growth of regions and countries. However, development trajectories need to be sustainable, and in this respect, rural communities need to promote economic gains, socio-cultural progress and environmental conservation simultaneously.

This literature review identifies various components of rural vibrancy. These include the performance of the rural economy, the availability and quality of jobs, the ability of localities to retain their populations (especially the youth), the range of community and cultural facilities, the quality of life, the ability of citizens to contribute to and influence local development and decision-making and the quality of the natural environment. Rural vibrancy is a complex and multi-faceted concept. Measuring and assessing it requires the application of multiple indicators that span economic, socio-cultural and environmental variables. To this end, this section outlines the basis on which the Rural Alliances Partnership formulated sets of tools that capture several indicators of vibrancy, and which seek to enable rural citizens to have a say in assessing the vibrancy and future development of their communities. The tools are:

- A grid and questionnaire to measure the vibrancy of civil society and to capture its experiences and perspectives of territorial development and local governance issues;
- A citizens' questionnaire, designed to capture citizens' views on several indicators of vibrancy in their communities; and
- An on-line interface on which citizens can rate community vibrancy on selected indicators.

The models presented here are flexible and can be adapted for different geographies and depending on the resources communities have. Indeed, the citizens' questionnaire that was applied in assessing vibrancy in South Kerry was subsequently modified and adapted by other Rural Alliances partners, including in the application of the Rural Vibes interface (www.ruralvibes.eu). This internet-based tool allows citizens to score their local community on several indicators under the following headings:

- Action, Involvement and Interaction
- Integration and Inclusion between Different Groupings
- Common Objectives, Democracy and Communication
- Activities and Facilities
- Local Economy
- Local Business Activities.

2.1 Rural Vibrancy and the Changing Rural Context

Former Kerry footballer and the founding chairperson of CEDRA (the Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Area), Pat Spillane has often cited the inability of some rural GAA clubs to field a team as one of the factors that motivated him to put himself forward in championing the development of rural Ireland. Spillane's reference to the challenges facing rural sporting clubs can be applied to several communities along Ireland's western seaboard. It is indicative of a weakening in the economic and social vibrancy of rural regions and territories. Other similar indicators that have come to the fore in recent years include the closures of garda (police) stations, banks and post offices and the amalgamations of rural schools. Rural transport services have been reduced and the centralisation of some health and social services has adversely affected rural communities. As one commentator observed on a recent visit to a village in the South-West, "Everything is gone. The community is trying to buy the AIB building to turn it into a community amenity. But the community itself is dwindling. Young people can't wait to emigrate, even though they are heart-broken doing it" (Finlay, 2014: 12).

It is evident that communities across rural Ireland and NW Europe in general currently face unprecedented challenges. The messages in John Healy's iconic work, 'No one shouted Stop,' which dealt with the demise of a small town in the West of Ireland in the 1950s resonate again over sixty years later. In their analysis of contemporary approaches to rural policy and regional development, Walsh and Harvey (2013: 54) conclude that "the failure to effectively develop, resource and apply rural-proofing in particular has led to a situation where key national strategies, especially in the area of job creation, lack a meaningful rural dimension, and in instances have none at all." The aforementioned CEDRA Commission has produced a report (2013) profiling rural change and presenting concrete policy recommendations to government. CEDRA has reported that "rural communities have disproportionately experienced the negative impacts of the current economic crisis due largely to their heavy reliance on declining employment sectors, particularly the construction industry, with the result that unemployment in rural areas increased by 192% between 2006 and 2011, compared to 114% in urban centres" (2013: 11).

While CEDRA is realistic about the scale of the challenges facing rural Ireland, it also acknowledges (2013: 12) that, "rural Ireland has significant potential; the commitment shown, from communities of engaged citizens to individual entrepreneurs, to supporting the development of Ireland's rural areas demonstrates a belief in their future viability, and is inspirational in its energy." This vision of the rural as a vibrant space resonates with successive reports of The Carnegie UK Trust (2007, 2009, 2014)² and with the outcomes of the most recent (2015) OECD Rural Development Conference³, which noted that:

- The term 'rural' is synonymous with unharnessed potential for growth.
- It is important to build a modern, evidence-based understanding of rural places that better reflects the 21st Century reality of life and the drivers of rural economies.
- Rural policy should be an important part of any national strategy promoting inclusive growth.
- National prosperity does not depend solely on economic indicators such as GDP, but rather on a broad range of factors, including environmental quality and social interactions.
- Well-being should become the focus of public policies and, due to the wide variation of regional performance within countries, it is important to have regional indicators of it.
- The foremost objective should be to improve the well-being of all rural people.

² Carnegie Trust publications include those authored by the Commission for Rural Community Development (2007) and The Carnegie Rural Development Programme (2009).

³ The OECD Rural Development Policy Conference, National Prosperity through Modern Rural Policy: Competitiveness and well-being in rural regions took place on 19–21 May, 2015 in Memphis, United States. The conference was hosted by the White House Rural Council with the support of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and Mexico's Secretariat for Agrarian, Territorial and Urban Development. More information is available on: <http://www.oecd.org/rural/rural-development-conference/>

The Conference also illustrated the benefit of international policy dialogue rooted in sound evidence, including the promotion of an integrated, place-based approach. The delegates called on the OECD to assist governments in implementing the 'New Rural Policy'; in particular in data collection and the identification of best practices. In his plenary address to the Conference, the EU Commissioner for Agriculture, Mr Phil Hogan specifically mentioned LEADER and Community-Led Local Development as examples of best practice.

Commissioner Hogan's decision to highlight the impacts of LEADER, and the European Commission's steadfast support for the LEADER methodology and CLLD (Community-Led Local Development) are rooted in experience since the 1991 reforms of the Common Agriculture Policy. The most recent EU-wide evaluations of LEADER note the considerable outputs and impacts LAGs (Local Action Groups) have had in generating and increasing levels of social and economic capital in rural territories. These observations parallel the account of an active and progressive civil society (High and Nemes, 2007; Metis GmbH, 2010; RuDi, 2010; Kirwan *et al.*, 2010). Specifically, in the Irish context, Walsh and Harvey record that

"the move from top-down to bottom-up approaches to rural development forty years ago was critical in halting and reversing the decline of rural areas. Ireland's improved rural performance can, at least in part be attributed to the level of community action in the 1970s and 1980s, which played an important role in the development of social capital, physical capital (community halls, etc.) and, possibly more importantly, in the promotion of social inclusion" (2013: 50).

These sentiments resonate with the editorial of The 'Irish Examiner' newspaper (August 10th 2015), which, while lamenting the depletion of rural services and the decline of rural communities, particularly those most distant from tourist hotspots, concludes that:

"Things are not as bad as they might be, though. It is just possible that a lot of the less productive areas, in a material sense at least, of rural Ireland would have been carpeted in coniferous forests but for the European Union intervention and support through the admirable LEADER programme of two decades ago. Initiatives such as these show that rural Ireland has the enthusiasm and spirit needed to survive and grow, even in a more urbanised world and relatively modest investment could be the catalyst for sustaining communities and a culture that have weathered many a storm."

As evidenced by extensive international literature and experiences, civil society bodies and good governance represent core elements of contemporary approaches to rural development (Murdoch and Marsden, 1998), and are integral to the promotion of regional and territorial competitiveness and vibrancy (ESPON, 2006 and 2009). Over the course of the transnational collaborations through Rural Alliances, the leadership abilities, creative capacity and ingenuity of civil society became increasingly evident. Information exchanges and project site visits enabled partners to gain insights into the processes that have contributed to enabling businesses and communities to form linkages and to promote internal dynamism and vibrancy. The publication 'Samen Strek op z'n Brabants – de doe democratie in de praktijk,' which was edited by Paul Spapens (Oisterwijk), showcases the work of several community-led initiatives throughout Brabant. These cover care of the environment, village renewal, social economy, community service provision, rural tourism, education, up-skilling of local populations and economic diversification, and they have at their core, processes that involve collaboration – within and between communities, and collaboration between civil society, businesses, farmers, public officials and elected representatives. Similar observations emanate from Germany, where Dehne (2012: 8), having observed approaches to rural service provision, advocates an enhanced role for civil society. He states that, *"die Erosion im Ländlichen Raum kann nur mit Hilfe von bürgerschaftlichem Engagement vermieden werden. Aufgabe von Staat und insbesondere der Kommunen ist es, dieses zivilgesellschaftliche Engagement und die Eigenorganisationen der örtlichen Daseinsvorsorge zu ermöglichen, zu begleiten und wertzuschätzen"*⁴.

⁴ This literally translates as follows: The erosion in rural areas can be avoided only by means of civic engagement. It is up to the State, and especially the local authorities to allow / facilitate such civil society engagement and to support and enable the self-organization of local public services.

Our collective experiences through Rural Alliances resonates with the contents and sentiments of the OECD's 2015 update of its landmark policy document 'The New Rural Paradigm.' In it, the OECD observes the successes that have been achieved through policy and practice interventions based on multi-sectoral approaches, good governance, partnership, high levels of citizen participation, investments in the rural economy and infrastructure and inter-regional collaboration. Bryce (2013) presents a body of statistical evidence from across the OECD member states demonstrating how, with proper investment and good governance, several rural regions and territories are outperforming urban regions in terms of their growth rates. Indeed, the OECD Secretary General, states unequivocally that "The success of large numbers of rural regions highlights the potential that can be tapped when rural communities are able to mobilise their place-based assets" (OECD, 2015: 4).

The need for on-going investment in place-based strategies and interventions, rather than sectoral approaches, is also underscored by the Barca Report (2009) on territorial cohesion in Europe, and is strongly articulated by the Assembly of European Regions (2010), which, in addition to endorsing regional and territorial subsidiarity and bottom-up development, specifies that "synergies should be enhanced between CAP and Cohesion policy, in order to support a multifunctional development of rural areas. The challenges faced by rural areas should be taken into account in the guidelines. Bridges should be envisaged to foster the non-agricultural factors of rural development" (2010: 7). Thus, rural vibrancy is not just about outputs or about measuring competitiveness at a given point in time, it involves and relates to development processes and the extent of linkages, collaboration and joint-action between and within communities, and between civil society, the private sector and public bodies.

2.2 Public Policy and Rural Vibrancy

While civil society bodies are key agents in enabling vibrancy, and they are increasingly relevant to public service provision in the context of neo-liberalism and the Retrenchant State, statutory agencies and the private sector are not exonerated from their responsibilities and roles in respect of enabling all places to realise their development potential. Indeed, the OECD has long identified the need for tailored approaches to public sector involvement in rural regions. As early as the 1990s, the OECD had encouraged national authorities to recognise the great diversity that exists across rural areas. It emphasises the need to abandon conventional 'wisdom' that 'rural and agriculture are synonymous' (1996: 23). The Organisation argues that in order to promote sustainable rural development: the State sector must "recognise and account for the uniquely rural assets – landscape, culture, history, etc. – that combine to national life and societal well-being. The mise en valeur of these assets must be recognised in establishing and evaluating rural development policy goals" (1996: 25-26).

Building on the notion of the State as an enabler and facilitator of rural development, the OECD (1995) contends that employment enhancement in rural areas requires a mix of policy approaches and interventions on the part of national (and EU) authorities. These, it identifies as:

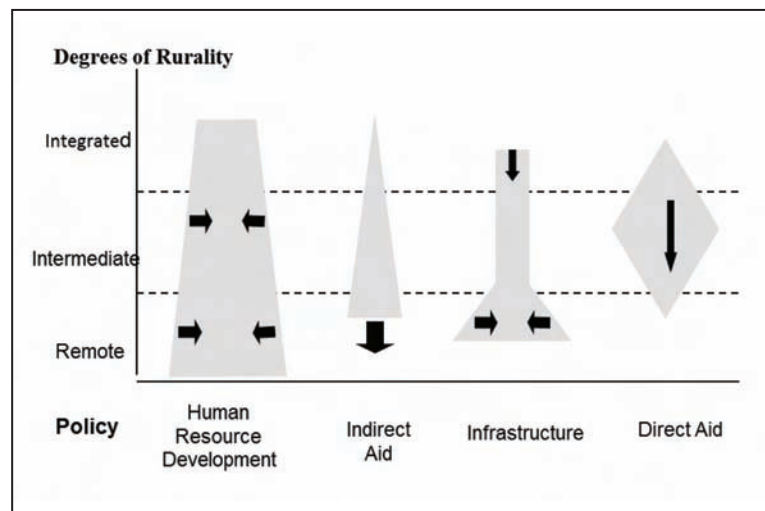
- Direct Aid
- Indirect Aid
- Human Resource Development
- Provision and Development of Infrastructure.

Direct Aid can be said to cover financial incentives, assistance with regular production and help with start-up businesses, and may take the form of grants, loans and subsidies. While direct aid is one of the more prevalent forms of State intervention in employment generation, the OECD concludes that, "the provision of financial aid is often inadequate without accompanying measures to provide aid to production and / or start-up" (1995: 24).

The provision of indirect aid involves the public authorities improving the 'environment' in which businesses operate. This can involve the removal of barriers to market relations, providing mechanisms to disseminate new technology and/ or by improving the services provided to businesses. As with direct aid interventions, the OECD argues that indirect aid actions should also be integrated with other strategies that seek to promote the territorial competitiveness of the targeted rural area. It also argues that while services may require substantial subsidies initially, they should become self-sustaining over time. Davis and Shortall

(1999) support the thesis that the State should provide stimuli to local economic development. However, they caution against resourcing of area-based development, which fails to invest in the capacity of the rural territory to manage and sustain resources. They point out that the boundaries of small rural territories are more open in economic terms than regional or national economies, and they point out that “this can result in substantial financial leakages from an area following capital or revenue injections, especially if the manufacturing and service base is already weak” (1999: 208). Thus, area-based development needs to apply a holistic approach that includes investment in all territorial resources, including environmental and human capital. Overall the OECD stresses the need for a mix of strategies and interventions, with these being tailored in line with local geographies, as the following diagram illustrates.

Fig. 2.1: Appropriate Policy Mix and its Evolution for Employment Measures in Rural Areas.



Source: OECD, 1995: 38

As the diagram illustrates, it is not just the policies and interventions that are required to be innovative, it is also the way in which they are applied and adjusted to the characteristics of different rural areas (based on the three-part typology) that require innovation. The shapes in the diagram correspond to the distribution of each policy type by degree or rurality. Thus, the quadrilateral for human resource development reflects a recommendation that the largest share of human resource development funds be spent in the more remote areas and that in integrated areas, most human development investments should come from market-based decisions emanating from the social partners. A similar pattern may be observed in terms of indirect aid and infrastructure, the latter being heavily weighted in favour of remote rural areas. The arrows on the figure suggest how the expenditure path for each programme type should adjust over time as initial investments by public authorities take effect. In terms of the institutional framework for the realisation of these interventions, the OECD has consistently advocated a partnership approach with high levels of local support and participation (OECD, 2006), while the European Commission has provided for renewed investment in Community-Led Local Development (2011, 2014).

In its 2015 policy update, the OECD has capitalised on the availability of spatial information (such as GIS) and taken into account the changing human geography in countries and regions, in developing an extended territorial classification mostly based on population densities, location of main urban centres and journey-to-work flows. Within this approach, rural regions are classified into “close to cities” or “remote,” and when this methodology is applied to South Kerry, most of Beara and Iveragh are classified as remote. Thus, while South Kerry has operated as a dynamic functional territory on which LEADER has been based since the mid-1990s, it is important to take cognisance of internal variations – both in measuring rural vibrancy, and in defining and shaping responses, including public policy and agency interventions and activities. Walsh (2007) provides a more refined typology of rural area types. This seven dimensional typology classifies Killarney and its environs as urban and peri-urban, the Laune Valley is classified as an agricultural area undergoing adjustment, while most of peninsular South Kerry is described as ‘high amenity landscape’ or ‘structurally weak.’

The need for territorially-differentiated approaches pertains across NW Europe and by extension, across the territories covered by the Rural Alliances partners. In the case of France, for example, the State body with responsibility for planning and the co-ordination of territorial development strategies (DATAR) has developed a comprehensive typology of rural spaces (<http://www.datar.gouv.fr/typologie-des-espaces-ruraux>)⁵, and DATAR stresses how public policy and agency interventions need to avoid a 'one size fits all' approach, so as to instead tailor interventions in line with the needs and potential of locales. This point is also supported by the German Ministry for Agriculture and Food (Bundesanstalt für Landwirtschaft und Ernährung, 2013).

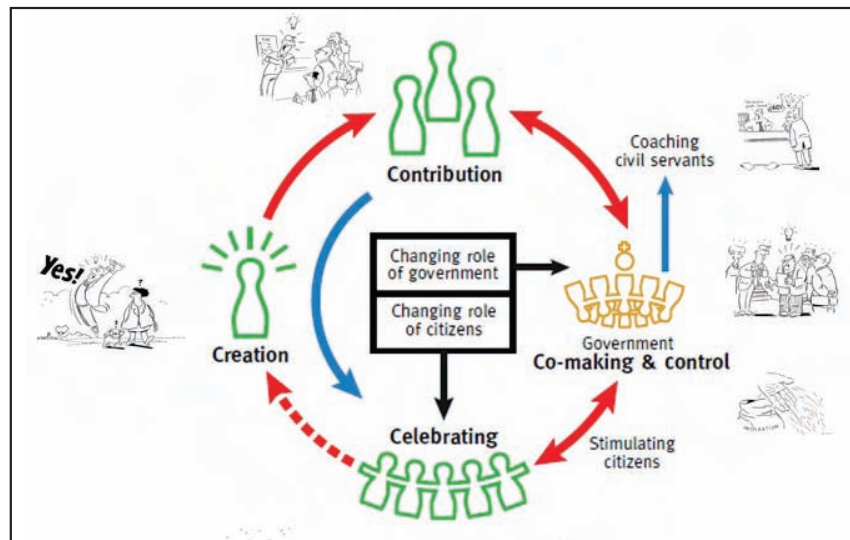
This brief overview of the literature on public policy approaches to 'the rural' notes how policy-makers and those involved in the delivery of policy and services are increasingly recognising that attempts to stereotype or pigeonhole rural communities or to use broad-brush strokes to classify rural areas or in responding to the needs of rural citizens are likely to end in failure and may have unintended negative consequences. Instead, responses need to be more nuanced and sophisticated, so that they take account of the diversity of rural area types, the range of needs of citizens and the potential of places to unleash and contribute to their own development. Therefore, while the tools for measuring rural vibrancy that have been devised by Rural Alliances have been, and are being applied throughout NW Europe, the data they generate can be distilled down to sub-regional and community level, - thereby contributing to place-based strategies for sustainable development.

Independent and practitioner assessments of what works well and what needs to be avoided in the promotion of rural and community development envisage a changed role for the public sector, whereby the State progresses from being a regulator to an enabler of communities. This evolution in how the State is perceived and in how it perceives itself is eloquently articulated by van de Wijdeven and Hendriks (2010), who describe processes of 'Democracy of Action' and 'Do-Democracy'. The processes were also presented by Laurens de Graaf and Ted van de Wijdeven (from Tilburg University) to the Rural Alliances' Partners Meeting hosted by SKDP (October 2013). These processes are reflected in the so-called "Brabant Model," which has been developed reflecting strong bottom-up citizen participation in local development around the region of Noord Brabant (The Netherlands). The "Brabant Model" provides a pictorial description of how to initiate change and self-determination at the local level through collective endeavour. It can be seen moreover, as a model of "how to prompt communities into taking collective initiatives with the aim to come out stronger together" (Rural Alliances, Factsheet on Governance, 2014). The diagram overleaf presents the Model, which is cyclical in nature. Successful processes generally begin with a citizen or group of citizens coming up with an idea or suggestions (Creation). This is followed by a consultation with the wider local citizenry (Contribution), and may take varying forms (e.g. open meetings, presentations, displays, research, consultations via ICT). Following consultations, the initial idea or proposal is refined and strengthened, and presented to the local partnership or council (Co-Making and Control). The local partnership, mayor or elected officials then facilitates the citizens or civil society in interfacing with civil servants in the cases when public sector inputs are required to enable a development to happen (Coaching Civil Servants). The public sector then responds as an enabler of the development process and as a provider of funding (Stimulating Citizens). In implementing and completing their initiatives, communities are encouraged to celebrate (Celebrating), thereby helping them to sustain citizen participation and to stimulate new ideas (Creation).

⁵ The DATAR typology identifies eight types of rural areas, coming within three broad categories as follows:

- les "campagnes proches des villes" (le périurbain) qui sont marquées par une occupation résidentielle importante. L'agriculture peut y tenir une place encore conséquente mais subit une forte pression foncière.
- les "nouvelles campagnes" qui développent à la fois des fonctions résidentielles, touristiques et "de nature" (lieux de ressources en eau, de maintien de la biodiversité...). Elles présentent le plus fort solde migratoire du territoire rural et bénéficient d'une dynamique de l'emploi très positive.
- les "campagnes fragiles" constituées de territoires vieillis et peu densément peuplés. Ces territoires sont caractérisés par un espace rural à dominante agricole ou bien à dominante ouvrière dont le tissu industriel connaît un déclin marqué. Ils cumulent les handicaps d'un niveau de revenus modestes et d'un déclin démographique.

Fig. 2.2: The Brabant Model



Source: Rural Alliances, Factsheet on Governance (May, 2014).

2.3 Rural Vibrancy – Public and Community Services

As evidenced by an extensive range of international literature, public service provision is integral to economic development and territorial competitiveness (McDonagh, 2001; OECD, 2006). Walsh and Harvey (2013) advocate a renewed commitment to rural-proofing of public policy, and the implementation of the equivalence principle⁶, whereby rural services and infrastructure would be maintained, and rural citizens would experience enhanced levels of service provision, rather than discrimination on the basis of geography. They contend that “even if they are not reducible to strict economic measurement, there are compelling reasons for favouring rural areas, such as cultural, linguistic and ecological, which should also be measured against the costs of not doing so, which are those of exclusion, isolation and poverty (2013: 44). According to DG Regio, “Small and medium-sized towns are more important than their size might suggest, providing infrastructure and services that are key to avoiding rural depopulation and urban drift” (2008: 4). Similarly, The European Union’s global strategy Europe 2020 emphasises the need for “investing in research and development as well as innovation, in education and in resource efficient technologies” so as to deliver direct benefits to rural areas (European Commission, 2010: 9). Thus, the bulk of international literature and case study evidence from several countries illustrate the merits of investment in rural economies and societies.

In line with the aforementioned typologies of rural spaces and the widely-acknowledged need for public service provision in ensuring the on-going development and vibrancy of rural communities, the Carnegie UK Trust has produced a series of reports on what it calls the ‘Enabling State,’ in which it showcases practical examples of public service delivery approaches that give citizens and communities more opportunity to shape the services that they receive and to contribute to their own well-being. The Trust advocates greater involvement by civil society in the design and delivery of public services. Such a bottom-up approach is the cornerstone of third sector and social economy enterprises, and these have been particularly successful in rural Spain and Italy. The French journalist Éric Nunès has documented the impacts of public service closures and subsequent decline experienced by French villages.⁷ In a widely-publicised article in the French daily, *Le Monde*, he also described how the fortunes of one village in particular were revived through the actions of civil society with the support of public bodies. Similarly, in the German context, Hercksen (2012) presents several examples of community shops, as evidence of community self-help and an element

⁶ The ‘equivalence principle’ implies that resources are transferred from strong / prosperous areas to areas that are peripheral or lagging, and that minimum standards and maximum distances apply to the organisation and delivery of services, thereby ensuring that citizens have comparable levels of access to public services, regardless of where they live.

⁷ Nunès’ article, which was published in *Le Monde* in 2012, can be read on: <http://crise.blog.lemonde.fr/2012/11/05/a-lure-quand-les-services-publics-sen-vont/>

of economic infrastructure that also delivers social gains. He observes that: “meisens haben dieser neuen Dorfläden-Konzepte mehr zu bieten, als den bloßen Verkauf von Lebensmittel. Viel mehr präsentieren sie sich oftmals als multifunktionale Dorfzentren, die zusätzlich unterschiedliche Dienstleistungen anbieten oder vermitteln und darüber hinaus als Treffpunkte und Kommunikationsräume fungieren” (2013: 31)⁸.

Drawing on the framework provided by the European Spatial Development Perspective (European Commission, 1999), the Irish Government (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2002: 13) listed specific services that should be available to citizens at various spatial tiers from the city to the village nucleus. In respect of villages and small towns, the Strategy specifies the services that should be provided as follows:

Table 2.1: Services and Amenities that should be available in rural Ireland at the Level of Villages and Small (Sub-County) Towns

Tier	Villages	Small Towns
Services/ Amenities	Shop Pub Local Community Groups Outreach Access to Community Development Officer Community Transport Quality Road Infrastructure Local Civic Programmes Local Area Plans Amenity Area	<i>All those available in villages, plus:</i> Local Politician Post Office Indoor Sports' Area Access to Education Programmes Local Childcare Local Eldercare Community Alert Garda Presence Enterprise Workshop Multi-Purpose Hall Sports Field Playground Facility for Teenagers / Young People Tourism, Culture, Heritage Groups

Adapted from Ireland's National Spatial Strategy (Department of Environment, 2002: 113)

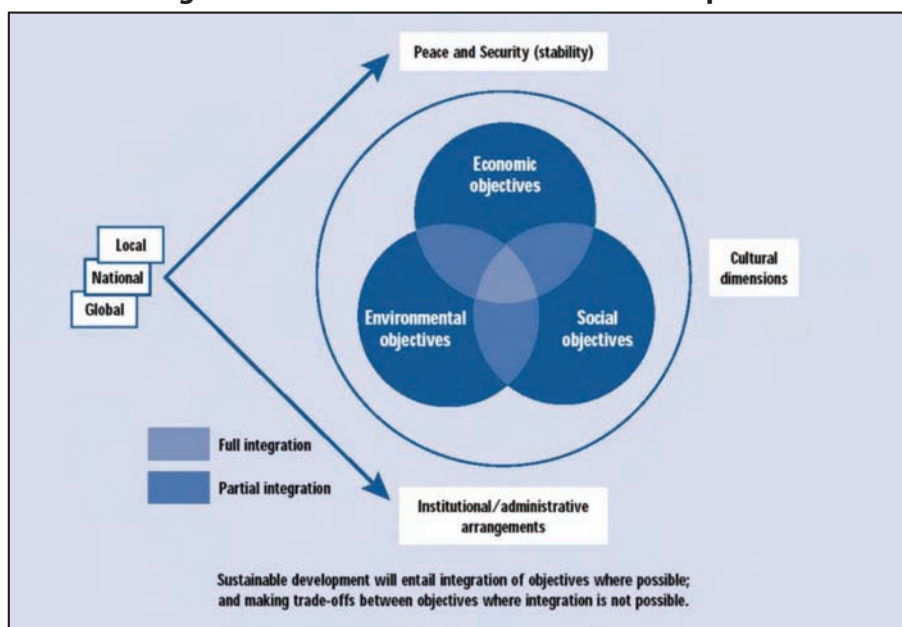
The provision and accessibility of such amenities represent clear and measurable indicators of rural community vibrancy. In a similar vein, although with a focus on enterprise needs and potential, The Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA, 2014) acknowledges the importance of good quality infrastructure, access to services and the provision of high-speed broadband in enabling enterprise development and economic diversification in rural areas. CEDRA also identifies the need for improved access to services in rural areas, and it specifies the importance of a good quality water supply. The German Ministry for Agriculture and Food (Bundesanstalt für Landwirtschaft und Ernährung, 2013) makes similar observations. Thus, academics, practitioners and policy-makers converge in identifying and articulating the association between rural vibrancy, regional development and the provision of accessible, affordable and high-quality public services and infrastructure.

⁸ This literally translates as follows: Usually have this new village shop concepts have more to offer than the mere sale of food. Moreover, they serve as multifunctional village centres, which also offer or provide different services, and also act as meeting points and places of communication and interaction.

2.4 Sustaining Rural Vibrancy

Literature on the vitality of regions and territories also emphasises the need for endogenous and exogenous (top-down and bottom-up) interventions to be underpinned by the principles of sustainable development. The concept of sustainable development has been hotly debated, and has come into sharp focus recently as societies strive to mitigate and ameliorate climate change and environmental degradation. Sustainable Development has been defined by the United Nations as “development that meets the needs of the present generation, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.” At a summit (Earth Summit) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, world leaders acknowledged that the attainment of sustainable development had three dimensions, namely economic, socio-cultural and environmental, as presented in the following diagram. Thus, the objective of development interventions should be to achieve an equilibrium between all three dimensions.

Fig. 2.3: Dimensions of Sustainable Development



Source: OECD, Development Co-Operation Directorate.

The Rio Summit and subsequent United Nations’ gatherings have re-affirmed commitments to sustainable development, although several States, including Ireland have failed to comply with aspects of international agreements on environmental protection. Indeed, Ireland has increased, rather than decreased greenhouse gas emissions over recent decades.

Significantly, the UN (United Nations) has noted that sustainable development cannot be attained simply by actions at the international and national levels. It requires action at the local level – hence the maxim ‘Think Global, Act Local.’ Since the advent of UN pronouncements on sustainable development, and following on the successes of several grassroots’ and NGO-led initiatives, many local authorities, including Kerry County Council⁹ have been promoting Local Agenda 21. Similar initiatives are underway throughout NW Europe and beyond.

In the Irish context, COMHAR – the National Sustainable Development Council¹⁰ (2002) put forward the following key principles of sustainable development:

1. The use of non-renewable resources should be minimised.
2. Use of hazardous/polluting substances and wastes created should be minimised; waste management should be environmentally sound.

⁹ For information on projects and initiatives currently supported by Kerry County Council under Local Agenda 21, please consult: <http://www.kerrycoco.ie/en/allservices/environment/localagenda21environmentpartnershipfund2014/>

¹⁰ In January 2012, the sustainable development role performed by Comhar, the Sustainable Development Council (SDC), was integrated into the work of the National Economic and Social Council (NESC). NESC has since developed its work in a way that integrates sustainable development issues into its analysis of significant national challenges. For details see www.nesc.ie

3. Renewable resources should be used within the capacity for regeneration.
4. The quality of soils and water resources should be maintained and improved.
5. The diversity of wildlife, habitats and species should be maintained and improved.
6. Air and atmosphere should be protected and human-induced effects on climate minimised.
7. Social inclusion should be promoted to ensure an improved quality of life for all.
8. The development of resource potential in one region should not compromise the ability of other regions to achieve their own potential.
9. Sustainable development depends on co-operation and agreement between states.
10. The quality of landscapes, the heritage of the man-made environment and historic and cultural resources should be maintained and improved.
11. Decision-making should be devolved to the appropriate level.
12. Stakeholder participation should be promoted at all levels of decision-making.

Drawing on these principles, and working in collaboration with Trinity College Dublin, Comhar (2011) has produced a policy paper on community energy. This paper notes how community-based energy generation can play an important part in job creation, local income generation, enhancing support for renewable projects and ensuring community involvement in Ireland's transition to a low carbon society. Many of the themes it identifies have been addressed by South Kerry Development Partnership through Rural Alliances. In concert with COMHAR and TCD (Trinity College Dublin), the SKDP Policy Position Paper on community-led renewable energy projects articulates ways in which community projects can be further enabled and strengthened through better information provision, the tailoring of government and planning provisions to respond to the scale of projects and easier and more efficient connection to the national grid in the absence of localised supply loops. Other grassroots initiatives, although operating in different sectors, but which are encountering similar political obstacles, as they strive to promote economic gain, while basing themselves on ecological principles include Farmers' Markets, Local Food Networks and Community Shops. Marsden and Sonnino (2008) attribute the tardy and limited evolution of multi-functional agriculture, in part, to the reluctance on the part of the State (government) to intervene in a supportive manner. Similar observations may be made in respect of community energy projects in Ireland, where unlike in Germany, the State (regional and national government) is more supportive (Bundesanstalt für Landwirtschaft und Ernährung, 2013).

Community energy projects, local food networks, and multifunctional agriculture represent examples of ways in which local and bottom-up actions contribute to rural vibrancy and broader societal good. The merits of summative growth, whereby regional and national gain emerges from the sum of localised and territorial output has long been well recognised (McCafferty and Walsh, 1997), and has been recently articulated by Ireland's Minister for State for Rural Economic Development, Ann Phelan, who has written:

"The evidence is clear – rural areas make a significant contribution to the production of the raw materials and activities which drive significant parts of national economic life such as through agriculture, food, tourism, construction materials and energy. Developing and maintaining a vibrant rural economy is, therefore, of vital national importance"

Minister Phelan, writing in The 'Irish Examiner', 14th August, 2015.

In addition to improving the quality of life in communities, local dynamism also serves to enhance citizens' quality of life and make locations attractive to investment and population retention and growth. Drawing on neighbourhood experiences in Chicago (Diers, 2004) articulates how ABCD (Asset-Based Community Development) harnesses social and cultural capital and empowers disadvantaged communities to transform marginal areas into attractive and vibrant communities. The Asset Based Community Development Institute (McKnight, non-dated) encourages communities to empower themselves by creating associations, whereby individuals come together to take action. The Institute refers to importance of 'connectors' in enabling the formation and development of associations, and in this respect, at a local level, the Directors and staff members of SKDP (and other Rural Alliances partners) can be viewed as leaders and enablers in enabling associations to flourish. The Institute recommends associations to be inclusive of citizenry and to be proactive in reaching out to all members of community, and it contends that strength and power derive from inclusion. Community development and the associated fostering of social capital have been widely acknowledged as

the bedrocks of participative democracy – whereby citizens engage in local decision-making and collective community action. One of the most celebrated works on social capital¹¹ is that produced by Putnam (2000), entitled ‘Bowling Alone.’ Putnam argues that those who live in communities with strong social capital have a greater sense of responsibility towards their neighbours and their neighbourhoods, are more content with their lives and are more likely to find sustainable solutions to local problems from within the community rather than continually and exclusively seeking outside help. Putnam claims that television and other features of consumerist self-centric society have drawn us away from ‘bowling together,’ and he argues in favour of strengthening civil society (bowling together) for the wider social gain. In examining the linkages between forms of social capital and the strength of democratic processes, Younge (2012) presents comprehensive sets of data from across European democracies demonstrating the association between representative and participative democracy. Her research demonstrates that States with high levels of volunteerism (social capital) generally have the highest levels of voter participation. Thus, communities and societies that are vibrant in terms of volunteerism and social capital are also likely to have healthier and more active democratic participation in decision-making and politics.

Other advocates of the ABCD approach conclude that “the fundamental philosophy of community preservation is that when individuals, organisations and communities are empowered to work together to make growth decisions, the constituency for planning expands and the result is a better reflection of community values that contribute to the quality of life” (Hamin *et al.*, 2007: 1). This research provides tangible evidence at the neighbourhood level to support the aforementioned OECD thesis that all communities have positive aspects and they recommend that planning and evaluation processes seek to identify and promote local assets and resources. Communities also need to work to put in place policies and measures to ensure the positives are retained, while looking at the aspects of their localities that need to be improved.

Such approaches are supported by the American Planning Association (2012: 3), which has stated that ‘smart growth’ is more likely to be achieved when communities:

- have a unique sense of community and place;
- preserve and enhance valuable natural and cultural resources;
- equitably distribute the costs and benefits of land development, considering both participant and the short- and long-term time scale;
- create and/or enhance economic value;
- expand the range of transportation, employment, and housing choices in a fiscally responsible manner;
- balance long-range, regional considerations of sustainability with short-term incremental geographically isolated actions;
- promote public health and healthy communities;
- apply up-to-date local and regional performance measures of successful urban and regional growth;
- encourage compact, transit-accessible (where available), pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use development patterns and land reuse; and,
- increase collaboration and partnerships to advance place-based and regional goals and objectives, while respecting local land-use preferences and priorities.

These indicators can serve as targets in guiding local, territorial and regional development strategies, and in respect of this study, they provide tangible indicators for the measurement and progression of rural vibrancy. Indeed, their attainment represents a direct contribution to what ESPON (European Spatial Planning Observation Network, 2009) and the OECD (2013) among others have termed ‘territorial

¹¹ Social Capital may be defined as: Interpersonal networks that provide people with resources or status, which they can exploit in other areas of social life and potentially leverage in the pursuit of economic or cultural capital... Families and communities are generally the levels on which social capital is constructed... The idea of social capital has been linked more generally to the notion of noneconomic resources... While... research has focused on strategies of accumulation of capital and the reproduction of inequality, others have treated social capital as a basis for social solidarity and as a collective resource that makes trust possible—as in Robert Putnam and Francis Fukuyama’s account of community and civil society. In these conceptions, social capital is neither possessed nor accumulated by individuals but rather is held by a social group. Social capital is thus envisioned as a productive variable that facilitates development and democracy (Calhoun, 2002).

competitiveness.’ However, as noted by the Rural Alliances partners from the outset, rural vibrancy is not just about output and performance indicators, it also implies understanding development processes, enabling active citizen participation and promoting collaborative governance. Thus the Rural Alliances partnership has stated that “‘Rural Vibrancy’ describes the nature of a rural community, which is characterized by active involvement and the creative, dynamic interaction of people from different groupings with the capacity to create common objectives and to act jointly to develop their community.”¹² ”

2.5 Rural Vibrancy, Local Governance and the Current Reforms in Ireland

This review of international literature has noted a growing convergence among academics, practitioners, independent evaluators and rural stakeholders that views the promotion of rural vibrancy and sustainability as emanating from an emphasis on the local/ territorial and the advocacy of multi-level governance, built on local partnerships. This area-based, integrated and endogenous approach is increasingly recognised among policy-makers at the EU level, as it is solidly based on the evaluations of previous rounds of EU structural and cohesion funds. Consequently, Community-Led Local Development has been incorporated into EU regulations, and such methodologies have been endorsed by several member states. In December 2013, under the Irish Presidency, the European Council endorsed the set of rules and legislation governing Cohesion Policy investment (2014-2020) with CLLD (Community-Led Local Development) at its core. Indeed, the European Commission had been pushing for the mainstreaming of CLLD since 2011, and in so-doing it cited LEADER as an example of the successful application thereof (European Commission, 2013). According to the Commission (2014: 1), CLLD “is a specific tool for use at sub-regional level, which is complementary to other development support at local level. CLLD can mobilise and involve local communities and organisations to contribute to achieving the Europe 2020 Strategy goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, fostering territorial cohesion and reaching specific policy objectives.” Specifically, the Commission standpoint, endorsed by the European Council, provide for a single methodology regarding CLLD, which they envisage as a preferred conduit for the disbursement and management of ESI (European Structural and Investment) Funds, which:

- focuses on specific sub-regional areas;
- is community-led, by Local Action Groups composed of representatives of local public and private socio-economic interests;
- is carried out through integrated and multi-sectoral area-based local development strategies, designed taking into consideration local needs and potential; and
- includes innovative features in the local context, networking and, where appropriate, co-operation.

The key components of CLLD are:

- Local Action Groups (LAGs);
- The Area-Based Approach; and,
- Local Development Strategies.

South Kerry Development Partnership has been operating on the basis of these three components since 1990, and since then the organisation has gained considerable knowledge and cultural capital from its experiences in delivering area-based development throughout South Kerry. Moreover, SKDP’s broadly-based structure, particularly through its Community Fora, provides a vehicle for participative democracy, SKDP’s Board of Directors, its vertical linkages with public bodies and its track record and recognisability nationally and internationally offer mechanisms through which CLLD is being realised, and through which local influence can be brought to bear on county, national and EU policy.

The progression from LEADER as a programme (for the diversification of the rural economy) to a methodology and the realisation of a more holistic approach to promoting territorial competitiveness is supported by evidence from several OECD countries (OECD, 2013). This progressive approach empowers LAGs to fully-realise the LEADER Specificities in a way that is not fully possible where a LAG is seen as a programme delivery body, rather than a development agency.

¹² Extract from an internal document prepared by Florian Warburg, Philipps-University of Marburg on the Development of the Rural Vibrancy Measuring Index.

The LEADER Specificities are as follows:

Specific Feature	Definitions/ Sub-Features
The Area-Based Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on the unique nature of local development conditions • Creates added-value based on local resources • A proactive (promotive) approach to development
Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal, target-oriented, multilateral co-operation between different types of players; non-hierarchical
Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying new ways of doing things; new strategies to old and new problems • Enhancing Territorial Competitiveness
Integration of the Sectors (multi-sectorality)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic combining of resources, activities and players • Concentration of forces – critical mass • Long-term Synergy and Complementarity
Local Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a new collective identity, and a new player based-on partner unity, delivering contractually specified co-ordination and collaboration
Decentralised Financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A global subsidy to enable the LAG to direct resources in line with local needs and for the realisation of specific strategies • Flexible and speedy support for innovative projects • Subsidiarity and autonomy in financial decision-making
Bottom-Up Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The active involvement of all sources of local creative potential • Empowerment and allowing (new) players new possibilities to articulate themselves

In assessing and promoting rural vibrancy, the need to incorporate process indicators, and specifically citizens' perspectives on the role and approaches played by South Kerry Development Partnership was underscored, and indeed, was rendered urgent by Irish government moves (since 2012) to reconfigure sub-national government and to bring LEADER more under the remit of local government, rather than pursuing a CLLD (Community-Led Local Development) methodology.

In its original proposals on a reconfigured relationship between local government and local development, the government, as expressed in a White Paper on Local Government, (Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, 2012: 28 – 32) had envisaged that a to-be-established sub-committee of each City / County Council (to be titled a SCP – Socio-Economic Committee), would have responsibility for the oversight and management of local and community development. This suggestion raised the ire of many local development actors, particularly those involved in the delivery of LEADER in rural areas, who contended that local development should be driven by community-based civil society organisations in partnership with local government among other public and private bodies. Their position was supported by the European Commission (2013), and the European Court of Auditors, with the Court having stated, that “one of the key features of the LEADER approach is that decisions should be made not by public authorities but by a wider local partnership, where the local government is included” (2010: 18).

In a policy position paper (O’Keeffe and Douglas, 2013), which was launched by then S&D (Social Democrat) MEP for Ireland South Ms. Phil Prendergast in June 2013, ILDN (the Irish Local Development Network), of which SKDP is a founding member, argued that rather than local authorities being responsible for the co-ordination of local development, they should be responsible for the co-ordination and monitoring of all public sector inputs into, and activities in counties, and should publish the details of state agency interventions and outputs, while promoting increased inter-agency collaboration and greater targeting of

resources. This policy position paper cited successive independent evaluations and international literature in clarifying why LAGs should continue to operate autonomously in line with partnership principles and participatory governance – as vehicles for Community-Led Local Development, but with increased capacity to contribute to policy formulation.

In response, and following widespread public protests including public meetings, resolutions passed by local authorities and a citizens' march on Dáil and Seanad Éireann (houses of parliament) in July 2014, the government modified its proposals somewhat. SECs have been replaced with LCDCs (Local Community Development Committees), which are currently preparing local and community plans. These LCDCs as well as existing LAGs (Local Action Groups), SKDP among them, have been declared eligible by the Irish government to tender for the delivery of LEADER in rural sub-regions for the period 2016-2020. Thus, a duplication of structures has emerged, with rival and parallel bids for LEADER being submitted from some rural territories. At the same time, the Irish Government unilaterally cut LEADER funding – by reducing its contribution relative to the allocation received from the EU and by re-balancing Pillar II of the CAP in favour of farm-based schemes¹³.

Walsh and Harvey (2013) observe parallels between the formulation and roll-out of the Irish government's White Paper on Local Government Reform and a reduction in the attention given to the social inclusion agenda. They note (2013: 50) that there has been a sharp fall in investment by government in community development. They record that 2009 saw the abolition by the government of the Community Development Programme and that funding for the Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP) fell by 42 percent between 2008 and 2013, at a time when government current spending overall fell by only 4.3 per cent. In assessing the reconfiguration of local government¹⁴ and the proposed subordination of local development to city and county councils, they contended that "the local development companies¹⁵ in contrast have an ethos that has been adapted to assist unemployed people and disadvantaged groups and communities, providing a trusting, non-threatening, comforting environment that could be lost if they were to be annexed (ibid.).

While describing LEADER as an "acknowledged success" (2014: 47), and lauding the participation of communities in local and rural development planning, CEDRA comes down in favour of the administrative arrangements articulated in 'Putting People First – Action Programme for Effective Local Government' (Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, 2012), and favours conferring on local government roles in the planning of rural transport (2014: 53), the provision of enterprise supports (2014: 46-47) and the oversight of Community-Led Local Development (2014: 48). CEDRA's articulation of this one aspect of government policy is at odds with most independent observations (including those put forward by ÖIR, 2006; Metis GmbH, 2010; Pawlewicz and Szamrowski, 2013) and international best practice (as identified by Douglas, 2005; 2010) and with the European Charter for Multi-Level Governance (Committee of the Regions, 2014), which strongly advocates "promoting PARTICIPATION and PARTNERSHIP involving relevant public and private stakeholders throughout the policy-making process" (2014: 4). In order to explore the apparent contradiction between CEDRA and elements of current government policy on the one hand, and the bulk of international evidence on regional and rural development and the sentiments

¹³ LEADER funding at EU level comes from the CAP (Common Agricultural Policy). The total value of the Irish CAP allocation for the period 2010-2014 is €12.19bn. Of this, €8.59bn (70%) is allocated to farm and agri-food subsidies, and €3.6bn is allocated to 'rural development', through what is called Pillar II of the CAP. However, within Pillar II, the bulk of the resources are allocated for agri-related activities, including forestry and agri-environmental schemes, such that only 7% of Pillar II (or 2.05% of the total CAP) is actually allocated to LEADER. During the period 2007 – 2013, 10% of Pillar II had been allocated to LEADER, and had the Irish government maintained this, the current LEADER envelope would be €419.09m, rather than the €250m (announced by government in 2014). Alternatively, and / or in addition, the government could have maintained its co-financing contribution; it currently provides 43% co-financing for the farming element of Pillar II, but only 35% co-financing for the LEADER element thereof. Co-financing LEADER on the same basis as the other elements of CAP Pillar II would increase the envelope from €250m to €297.87m. The LEADER envelope agreed in 2007 for the then programme period was €425m.

¹⁴ The Local Government (Reform) Act, 2014 has brought about the abolition of all 80 Town Councils, the fusion of eight regional authorities and two regional assemblies into three new regional authorities and the formation of municipal districts within counties.

¹⁵ Since 2009, the term Local Development Companies (LDCs) has been used by government as the nomenclature for LAGs (Local Action Groups).

expressed by those who attended protests and community meetings across South Kerry on the other hand, it was essential that this assessment of rural vibrancy gather specific data on the views of citizens on local government reform and the role and direction of SKDP in this changing landscape. This represents a necessary element of the data collection process in South Kerry that was not necessary in the other Rural Alliances territories.

2.6 Rural Vibrancy and the Role of the PAP (Policy and Advisory Panel)

Considering international literature, national policies and initiatives and local experiences, the Rural Alliances PAP (Policy Advisory Panel), at its meeting in Lochem (March 2013) acknowledged the need to go beyond the survey of civil society organisations, so as to ensure a more extensive, inclusive and participatory approach to the measurement and promotion of rural vibrancy. Thus, the partners agreed to explore the idea of a citizens' survey. It was envisaged that by surveying a representative sample of citizens in each of our rural territories across North West Europe, we would add to the data and insights we had gained from the survey of benevolent associations. PAP members suggested that a citizens' survey would offer possibilities to engage with people who, for whatever reasons, are not members of community organisations. Thus, it would ensure we heard other voices and could gain a broader range of perspectives on rural vibrancy, and what could or should be done to promote it. This proposal became a reality in South Kerry initially, and was subsequently extended, albeit in varying formats and in varying degrees, to some of the other partner territories.

PAP members, most notably the university partners favoured the operationalisation of measures of rural vibrancy at the level of the commune / municipality / community, in recognition of the variety of rural area types across NW Europe, and so as to capture as effectively as possible, nuances at sub-regional level. Such an approach is consistent with the academic literature on the nature of rural spaces. In Ireland's case alone, it has been documented how the effects of economic adjustment experienced by rural areas have varied spatially throughout the country (Walsh, 2007). A number of typologies, both economic (NSS, 2000; Walsh & Kavanagh, 2005; ESPON, 2006) and socio-political (Marsden, *et al.*, 1993; Murdoch, *et al.* 2003) have been constructed to outline the varying spatial disparities between and within rural regions and territories. The transformation of rural spaces, in response to globalisation, has produced a patchwork landscape of strongly-performing territories alongside new peripheries and increased manifestations of social exclusion and environmental fragility. In addition, rural areas are experiencing growing variance in social structures, due to either the presence or absence of amenities and assets, and proximity to urban centres.

By sharing data on rural vibrancy¹⁶ and by feeding the views of community leaders and rural citizens into the formulation of policy proposals, Mary Immaculate College, South Kerry Development Partnership and others in Rural Alliances were ensuring an evidence-based approach to the formulation of policy and the implementation of best-practice. The sharing of data and experiences on a transnational basis has also promoted learning among partners, and has allowed for some comparability of findings and experiences across the variety of rural area types that pertain in our territories. Above all, the collection of data from a wide spectrum of citizens and stakeholders across fourteen partnership territories would provide a solid evidence-based on which to formulate and progress policy papers.



¹⁶ The South Kerry report on the vibrancy of civil society organisations was posted on NING (the Rural Alliances intranet platform) in advance of the partners' meeting in October 2013. The South Kerry citizens' questionnaire was circulated to partners and posted on NING in October 2013.

2.7 Operationalising Rural Vibrancy – Measures and Indicators

“The best indicators are locally meaningful and are effective measures... Communities use a portfolio of indicators to benchmark, to measure progress toward the goals identified in their comprehensive plan or other visioning document” (Hamin et al., 2007: 5).

These authors also note that indicators enable communities to identify problems not foreseen in planning processes, and encourage stakeholders to revise targets and approaches. They note that “indicator projects draw the community together in efforts to measure and achieve community goals over time, and can publicise those efforts as well, thereby encouraging public support” (ibid.). These perspectives suggest merits to repeating the RVMI Community Groups’ and Citizens’ Surveys periodically across the Rural Alliances territories and beyond. They further underscore, from a practitioner perspective, the importance of collecting data at the community (most local) level and sharing data and experiences among communities.

Using indicators allows for the measurement of effectiveness, efficiency, equity, impact and sustainability of development interventions. Indicators permit comparisons between what has been achieved and what was planned (effectiveness) and the level of resources used (efficiency). Indicators also allow for comparisons between different types and forms of experiences and interventions, and enable one to draw conclusions on the degrees of sustainability of contrasting approaches. In line with the overwhelming recommendations from previous studies, the indicators applied here are arranged in sets that are mutually-consistent and reflect a multi-dimensional approach. This study of rural vibrancy takes on board the sentiments of the NESC – National Economic and Social Council (2002) that “selecting a coherent set of economic, social and environmental indicators strengthens the legitimacy of each of the three categories by ensuring that these are part of a wider multi-dimensional whole” (2002: 7). The NESC also recommends that “indicators of economic development should have relevance to those of social and environmental development and vice-versa, rather than each set being considered in isolation” (ibid.).

This holistic perspective is also supported by the OECD, which states that, “rural development is a complex, multi-sectoral concept. Thus rural conditions and trends can only be described by using a comprehensive set of rural indicators” (1996: 101). The Organisation goes on to propose a basic set of integrated rural indicators / variables, covering four main development concerns: demographic, economic, social and environmental.

Table 2.2: OECD Rural Variables: Basic Set.

Population and Migration	Economic Structure and Performance	Social Well-Being and Equity	Environment and Sustainability
Density Change Structure Households Communities	Labour Force Employment Sectoral Shares Productivity Investment	Income Housing Education Health Safety	Topography and Climate Land Use and Change Habitats and Species Soils and Water Air Quality

Source: OECD (1996: 101)

Similarly, the work of Bell and Morse (1999 and 2001) emphasises the need for indicators to be interconnected and mutually re-enforcing. This is consistent with the discussion on sustainable development presented earlier in this report, which also emphasised the importance of balance between the economic, socio-cultural and environmental dimensions. Bell and Morse specifically cite the Bellagio principles¹⁷ for evaluating sustainable development.

¹⁷ These principles were agreed following an international meeting (in Bellagio, Italy) financed by the Rockefeller Foundation in 1996. Full details can be found on https://www.iisd.org/measure/principles/progress/bellagio_full.asp

At the EU level, Eurostat (the European Statistics Agency) collects and publishes data on the European economy, society, culture and environment. Its 2012 report identifies indicators of sustainable development under the following chapter headings:

1. Growth, jobs and the crisis
2. Energy: increasing consumption, increasing dependence
3. Role of transport in the economy
4. Undesired impacts of transport
5. Regional disparities
6. Poverty and social exclusion
7. The waste problem and how it can be solved
8. How we are pushing back nature
9. Global climate change
10. Europe in a globalised world
11. Is Europe living up to its international commitments?
12. Fewer and fewer children in our ageing society
13. Is green growth a solution?

In a similar vein, in 2013, Ireland's (then) eight regional authorities contracted Future Analytics Consultants to measure the progress being achieved in securing the objectives of the Regional Planning Guidelines and, by extension, the NSS (National Spatial Strategy). The ensuing report (2014) quantifies the extent of employment creation required in all regions to bring them up to the levels envisaged by government. It also notes the need for more regionally-differentiated approaches to planning and service provision and it outlines the varying performances of Irish regions in respect of environmental quality. This framework document provides a reference for South Kerry and other rural territories. The methodology underpinning the Regional Authorities' research is based on extracting and presenting quantitative data in three thematic areas, as identified in the following table.

Table: 2.3: Indicators Used by Regional Authorities to Measure Progress on the Delivery of Regional Planning Guidelines and the National Spatial Strategy.

Economic Prosperity	People and Places	Environment and Infrastructure
Employment Rate Small and Medium Enterprises IDA Companies IDA Employment Sectoral GVA Contribution GVA Per Person Tertiary Education Broadband Coverage Internet Access Personal Computer Ownership	Population and Population Change Urban / Rural Share Dependency Rate Housing Stock Housing Vacancy Work-Related Commuting	Status of Water Bodies Compliance with UWWTD Licences WTP/WWTP Capacities Renewable Energy Capacity Managed and Unmanaged Waste EU Habitats and Species

Adapted from Future Analytics (2014)

This Irish template has been operationalised at the regional level, while in the UK, the Government's Countryside Agency designed a specific 'Rural Community Vibrancy Index,' as a statistical measure of the potential for, or reality of, community participation in rural settlements. Among the factors it includes are features such as pubs, village halls, public transport, childcare facilities and schools. Thus, its composition resonates with the listing of public and community services articulated in Ireland's National Spatial Strategy. On the Countryside Agency's Index, towns and villages can score a maximum of 14 points. A score of less than four points can imply that a community has poor community vibrancy, a score of five to eight points is "positive" and a score of nine or above means a community has "extensive" vibrancy. A study currently

being undertaken by the James Hutton Institute in Cabrach (in rural Scotland) has found that resilience and empowerment are linked to perceptions of vibrancy, population density and demographics, interpersonal relations and land ownership. This study also notes the importance of community leadership and empowerment in underpinning the community's successes.

Citing the international agreement, which Ireland (and the other EU member states) signed following the Rio Summit on Sustainable Development, and noting the importance of community development in promoting sustainability, Irish government guidelines describe Local Agenda 21 as a process; "it is an approach, based upon collaboration and participation, which respects the social, cultural, economic and environmental needs of the present and future citizens of a community in all its diversity and which relates that community and its future to the regional, national and international community of which it is a part" (2001: 12). The guidelines also encourage local authorities to engage with community and voluntary fora and to formulate sustainable development indicators. In a related manner, and with respect to the social and governance indicators of vibrancy mentioned already in this report, the Central Statistics Office (Ireland) provides national (and some regional) level data on social capital (which this report has identified earlier as an indicator of community vibrancy). The CSO (2009: 4) has identified social capital as a measure of individual involvement in social networks and community activities that "can be used as a good indicator of how well local communities are working together for the benefit of all." It records that in Ireland:

- almost two-thirds (65%) of persons aged sixteen and over participated in at least one group activity;
- nearly one-quarter (24%) of people participated in informal, unpaid charitable work;
- over half of the population aged fifteen and over (52%) had at least six people whom they could turn to in a time of need, while only 2 percent stated that they had nobody to ask for help;
- most (85%) of the people reported that they believe that by working together, people in their neighbourhood can influence decisions that affect them;
- almost four-fifths (79%) of people agreed that most of the time people in their neighbourhood try to be helpful, while 62 percent agreed that in general most people can be trusted.

The CSO's analysis by socio-demographic characteristics showed that persons least likely to participate in voluntary and community group activities were lone parents, persons under 65 living alone, newcomers to communities, urban dwellers, those living in rented households, those with lower educational attainment levels and those in lower socio-economic groupings. Older people had slightly higher participation rates than younger people, but gender was not a significant determinant of participation in community or voluntary associations. The research found that the younger age groups also had lower rates of weekly contact with neighbours than older age groups, with the lowest percentage being recorded for those aged 15-24 years and 25-34 years (both 67%) and the highest percentage for those aged 65-74 years and those aged 75 and over (both 88%) (2009: 28).

Taking these findings into account and considering the observations of the Countryside Agency (2006), among others, on the ways in which rural deprivation and disadvantage affect different social groups, the analysis presented in this report stratifies responses in the citizens' survey on rural vibrancy by age, employment status and occupation. This is essential as participation in civil society and perceptions of place vary across population cohorts, and it is important that practitioners and policy-makers respond appropriately to peoples' needs, expectations and recommendations.

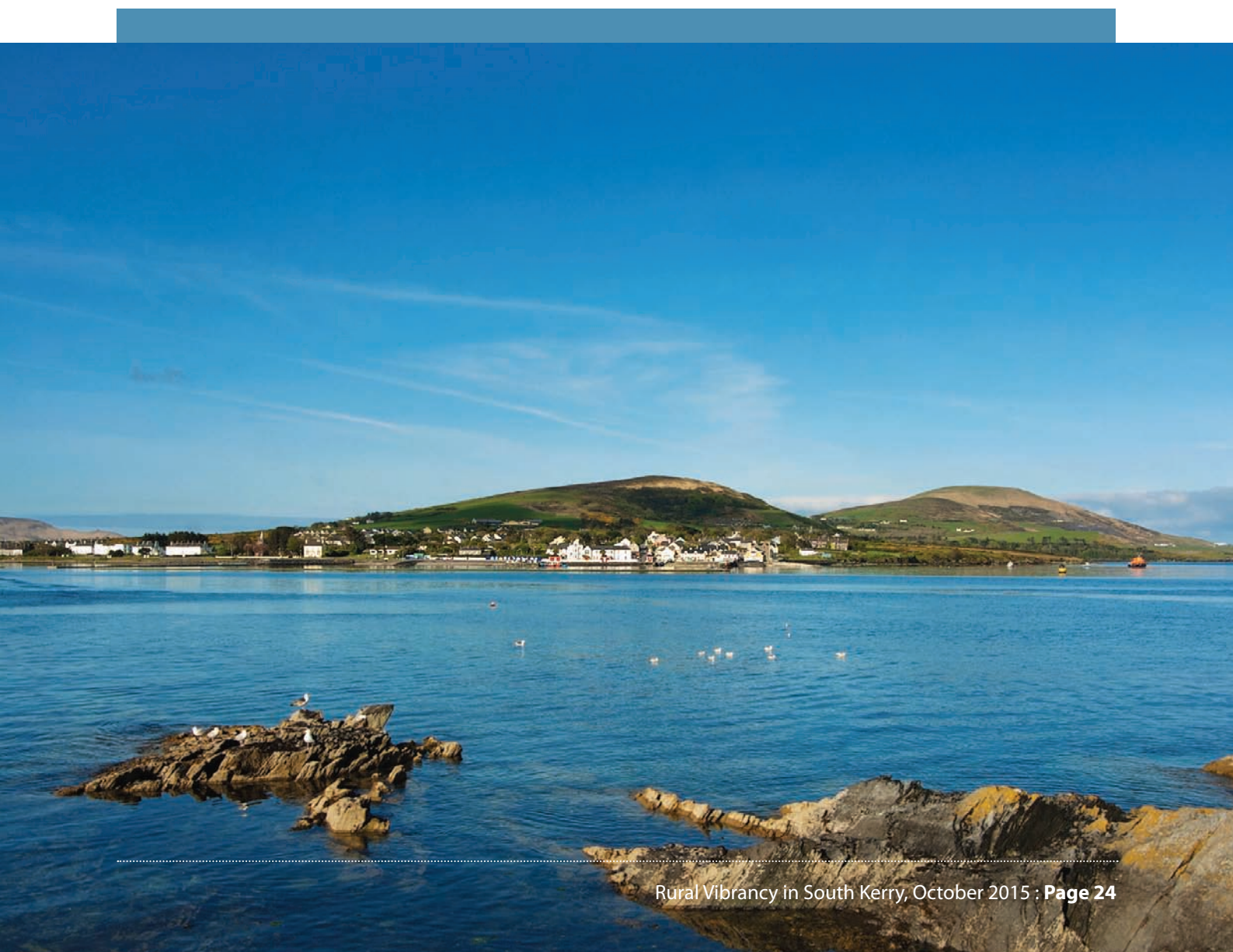
¹⁸ Cabrach is a small community in Moray, Scotland, which has struggled with service decline and depopulation (roughly 70% in the last 100 years).

¹⁹ The CSO research was prompted by The National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) Report 28, June 2003, which recommended further research on the measurement and application of social capital indicators in Ireland. Specifically, the report recommended: 1 Linking indicators of social capital to measures of poverty, social exclusion and inequality in line with the recommendations in the NESF Framework on Equality Report. 2 Developing a module on Social Capital for application in various household surveys including the Quarterly National Household Survey. A module on social and cultural participation was included in the 2006 Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) which is carried out throughout the European Union. This survey collects information about the income and living conditions of different types of household and provides measures of poverty and social exclusion.

As the international literature suggests, citizens' views of their communities are associated with their inclusion or exclusion from community structures. Meanwhile, political science literature suggests that participation in community activities and organisations is associated with levels of trust in public institutions (local authorities, the government, parliament and EU institutions) (Younge, 2012). The CSO report (2009) also records Irish citizens' levels of trust in neighbours and their fellow citizens. Eurobarometer research across the EU (and other European States such as Turkey) provides similar insights, while also examining citizens' levels of trust in public bodies including EU institutions. However, very little research has been done at local level to establish the extent of the degree of association between participative democracy (membership of civil society bodies / benevolent societies) and representative democracy (trust in institutions and frequency of voting in elections and plebiscites). Therefore, by incorporating questions on the volunteerism and voting, it is envisaged that the citizens' survey elaborated by Mary Immaculate College and South Kerry Development Partnership, can contribute to an enhanced understanding of the motivations of community leaders and the drivers of community development.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of relevant international literature and good practice in rural development. It has identified issues and challenges relating to the measurement and promotion of rural vibrancy. The chapter has clearly noted how tools for the measurement and assessment of rural vibrancy must be suitable for application at the community level, and yet enable communities and other end-users to combine their experiences and findings, so as to collaboratively contribute to the attainment of contextual conditions - in terms of resources, governance, infrastructure, service provision and policy that are conducive to the sustainable development of localities, territories and regions. Drawing on these key values and principles, the following chapter describes the data collection tools and methodologies used by South Kerry Development Partnership and others.





Methodology - Research Design and Data Collection

The literature review presented in the previous chapter and the learnings gained over the course of four years of transnational collaboration form the basis of the research methodology through which data on rural vibrancy were collected in South Kerry. The following diagram which was produced by the Rural Alliances partnership²⁰, shows the cyclical process through which the methodology was developed. The process emphasised regular consultation with, and feedback to rural stakeholders, so that the methodology and data collection tools were refined in order to make them relevant, robust, user-friendly and reliable, and so as to ensure that they generated sufficient high-quality data to provide an evidence-base for the policy and practice recommendations put forward by the PAP (Policy and Advisory Panel).

Fig. 3.1: The Rural Vibrancy Measuring Index Development Process.



In line with the model presented here, the processes in South Kerry included initial consultations with the Community Forum, to determine civil society's expectations of the RVMI. The Community Forum also provided a vehicle for the dissemination of results and the advocacy of the research findings.

²⁰The diagram is taken from an internal document prepared by Florian Warburg, Philipps-University of Marburg on the Development of the Rural Vibrancy Measuring Index.

3.1 Survey Instruments

The three main survey instruments used to collect the RVM data in South Kerry were:

- A survey of civil society organisations;
- A survey of citizens; and
- An audit of public service provision in all communities.

In addition, almost 500 individuals in South Kerry completed a questionnaire about rural vibrancy through the on-line Rural Vibes platform www.ruralvibes.eu, thereby contributing directly to the data pool of responses from rural citizens across NW Europe.

Survey of Civil Society Organisations

The initial work on this aspect of data collection was undertaken by the two lead university partners within Rural Alliances, namely Philipps-University of Marburg (Germany) and Trinity St. David (Wales). They had formulated an excel-based grid, with several indicators of rural vibrancy. The indicators focused predominantly on governance and the roles played by civil society, the public sector and business community in contributing to several aspects of local development. It examined in particular, the status and strengths of linkages and alliances between multiple stakeholders and the potential for inter-agency collaboration, which as the previous chapter has shown, are integral to the attainment of sustainable regional development. Respondents completed the grid using excel and they could select three options from a drop-down menu (yes / no / not applicable) on each of the indicators provided.

Taking the universities' grid as the point of departure, South Kerry Development Partnership and Mary Immaculate College held consultations with rural stakeholders and piloted the data collection instrument among civil society organisations. The feedback was positive in that community and voluntary organisations in South Kerry welcomed the coming on stream of an instrument to enable them to measure vibrancy in a tangible way and across several indicators. They also warmly welcomed the transnational nature of this research, and stated how they looked forward to sharing data with communities from Belgium, France, The Netherlands and Wales. However, they advised of the need to expand the range of indicators so as to focus more on economics, the quality of life for local citizens and social issues.

Many group members also reported that they would like the option of a paper based questionnaire rather than the excel grid when recording the data for their organisation or community. Having taken on board this feedback and in seeking to incorporate more of the dimensions of rural vibrancy, as had emerged from the literature review, Mary Immaculate College formulated a survey questionnaire, which was subsequently administered and completed by 102 civil society organisations in South Kerry during 2013. The questionnaire is presented in Annex I of this report.

The questionnaire that was used to collect the data on the vibrancy of civil society in South Kerry began by asking groups to list their achievements and to profile their membership since 1990 (or from when they were founded). It asked about the processes through which the group has enabled community involvement in decision-making, and it elicited details on the groups' activities and operations, including the resources (financial, cultural and social capital) available to them. The questionnaire then afforded civil society respondents an opportunity to comment on the vibrancy of their localities; it asked them to describe their communities and to identify the most significant issues facing them. The questionnaire included very specific questions on the contributions and limitations of South Kerry Development Partnership, other development agencies and public bodies in respect of the promotion of rural vibrancy.

Citizens' Survey

The Rural Alliances partners and the author of this report are most grateful to CIEL (The Centre for Innovative and Entrepreneurial Leadership), and in particular to Mike Stolte and Richard Metcalfe for making available to us, their publication 'Beyond Economic Survival – 97 Ways Small Communities Can Thrive – A Guide to Community Vitality'. This landmark study presents indicators and measures of community vitality and it describes ways in which communities are successfully promoting their own development. The CIEL publication represents the cornerstone on which the citizens' survey in South Kerry and the Rural Vibes data collection tool were built. It is also important to acknowledge the support and encouragement provided

by Mike Stolte, and in particular his willingness to share the questionnaire he and his colleagues had used to collect data on community vitality in rural Canada. Our collaboration with Mike and CIEL has provided us with an international context in which we can situate our work in South Kerry and in North West Europe, and CIEL's publications has provided us with points of reference and comparison.

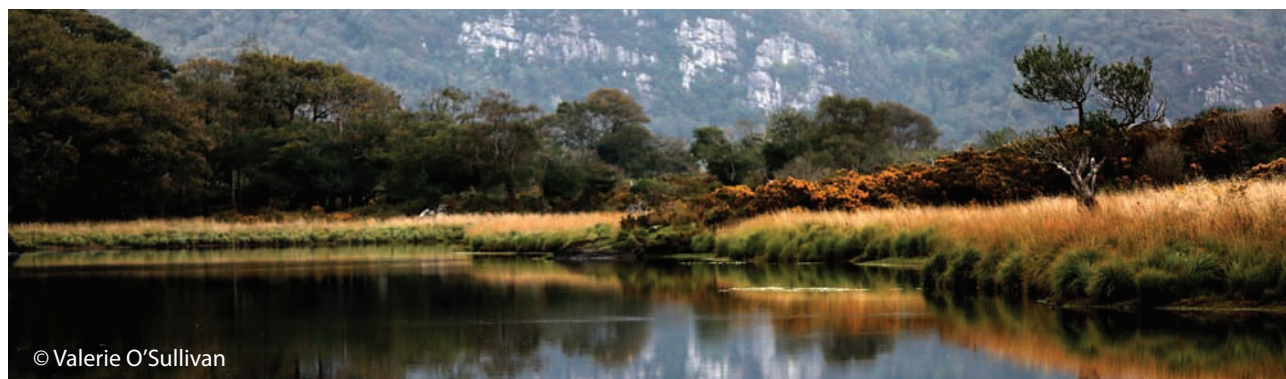
Drawing on the work of CIEL, and considering the international literature on rural vibrancy and the projects observed and insights gained from our own work and from our transnational exchange visits, we produced a citizens' questionnaire that was appropriate to our local context. The questionnaire, which is presented in Annex 2 of this report begins by profiling the respondents in terms of their gender, age cohort, length of time living in South Kerry, employment status, occupation, membership of civil society and voter behaviour. These independent variables are necessary so that in our analysis of the data, we can examine any similarities and differences between population cohorts, in respect of their perspectives and experiences of rural vibrancy. Moreover, in line with the good practice recommendations put forward in the literature referred to here, the indicators selected for this study also allow for national and transnational comparisons. The findings can be compared with elements of previous studies, while the evaluation template itself could be applied in other areas, thereby maximising the potential for transferability of learnings.

The questionnaire captures citizens' perspectives of the level of vibrancy in their local community on fifteen economic indicators, twenty-one socio-cultural indicators and six environmental indicators. Respondents were presented with a Likert scale on which they could indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a given statement on community vibrancy. Thus, they could indicate, on a five-point scale (from strongly agree through to strongly disagree) the extent to which they perceived the statement applies or not to their local community. Respondents were also free to select a 'Don't Know' option each time.

In line with the literature observations on local development, participative democracy and trust in institutions, respondents were also asked about their level of trust in public bodies, namely The Government, Dáil Éireann (national parliament), Kerry County Council, The EU and The European Commission. The questionnaire concluded with a series of statements about rural development and local governance in Ireland. These focused on the current set of reforms of local government. Respondents were invited to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement (on a ten point scale) with a series of statements. Similar research using this template has already been undertaken in County Mayo, such that the potential for greater comparative analysis exists.

Audit of Rural Service Provision and Accessibility

As noted in the previous chapter, the provision of accessible, affordable and high-quality public services is strongly associated with rural vibrancy and the attainment of sustainable territorial development. Ireland's National Spatial Strategy lists the public services that ought to be provided in rural communities, and it specifies those services that should be available in small towns and villages. Using this listing as its template, this report lists the services provided in every community in South Kerry, and it assesses their levels of public service provision relative to the targets specified by government. Given the limited time and resources available for this study, qualitative data on rural service provision were not collected, although this may be pursued in future research, and by other researchers. However, both the citizens' and community groups' questionnaires included questions about local services, such that this report presents a considerable volume of data on service provision in South Kerry.



3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The data presented in this report were collected independently by staff and student interns from the Department of Geography, Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick. Thus, in order to ensure objectivity, South Kerry Development Partnership has not been involved in the collection, processing or analysis of data. Instead, SKDP provided the university with access to databases on the activities of civil society organisations and it enabled the university to make direct contact with the relevant personnel. In addition, SKDP informed the public about the impending surveys and their objectives, and once the data from the civil society survey had been collated, the Partnership convened Community Forum meetings at which feedback was provided, and discussions on policy and good practice recommendations ensued.

Civil society groups participated in the RVMI data collection processes in a number of ways. About sixty organisations sent representatives to a series of community-based workshops. These were facilitated by university personnel, and group representatives completed the questionnaire in a round table format. While each group's responses were individual and confidential, the round-table format allowed for discussion and information-sharing. Thus, groups learned from one another, in addition to pooling their data. The remaining groups (forty-six) completed the questionnaire on their own, with the university researcher in attendance, working through the questions with the respondents. Most of the groups completed the survey during summer and autumn of 2013. As the data were returned, the researchers (Mary Immaculate College) transferred data from any paper-based questionnaires to the excel grid that had been developed and refined by Philipps University, and this was posted and updated on NING (Rural Alliances intranet platform), so that all partners were fully informed throughout. The lessons learned from this data collection exercise were communicated to all partners via the PAP and systematically and directly to Philipps University. SKDP convened Community Forum meetings in October and November 2013 at which Brendan O'Keeffe (Mary Immaculate College) made presentations on the findings and representatives discussed their implications. These meetings were attended by Siobhán Griffin from Kerry County Council, and a number of public representatives also participated. The following table lists the civil society organisations that participated in this survey.

Citizens in South Kerry (both members and non-members of civil society organisations) participated in the RVMI data collection process through completing a questionnaire. Mary Immaculate College researchers collected the data from citizens over a number of months from late 2013 to early 2015. The majority (in excess of 80%) of questionnaires were completed face-to-face, with the interviewer calling out the questions, while also presenting them visually to the respondent. The remainder were completed by the 'drop and collect' method. The data collection process involved calling to people's homes (particularly in remote areas), meeting people at events and in public spaces, and calling to business premises (pubs, cafés, shops, workshops and offices). The researchers are very grateful to all respondents. Almost 1,000 people (n=972) fully completed a survey questionnaire. The completed questionnaires were processed and stored in line with specified procedures in Mary Immaculate College²¹. In the course of collecting the data, the researchers stratified the respondents by gender, age cohort, occupation, nationality and geography so as to ensure the sample was broadly representative of the South Kerry population. The second table (Table 3.2) lists the number of responses by community.



²¹ <http://www.mic.ul.ie/research/Pages/ResearchGovernance.aspx>

Table 3.1: Civil Society Organisations (Community and Voluntary Groups) that participated in the RVM Civil Society Survey

Iveragh Forum Area	Kenmare Forum Area
ACARD Caherdaniel Community Care Cahersiveen Men's Shed Cahersiveen Social Services Chapelton Tidy Towns Coiste Forbartha na Sceilge Teo Comhchoiste Ghaeltacht Uibh Ráthaigh Dromid Community Care Fertha Drive Residents Association Fertha View Day Centre Foilmore Community Centre Forbairt na Dromoda Teo I.R.D. Foilmore-Kells Co. Ltd. IRD Waterville Ltd. Iveragh I.T. Training Company Knightstown Tidy Towns Knockeen Rowing Club Portmagee Community Centre Portmagee Development Group Ltd. Portmagee Rowing Club Reenard GAA Club Skellig Rangers GAA Club South West Kerry Family Resource Centre Southwest Kerry Women's Association Ltd. The Kerry Way Committee Valentia Active Retirement Association Valentia Community Centre Valentia Community Health, Welfare Association Valentia Island Graveyard Committee Valentia Island Heritage Centre Valentia Island Lighthouse Valentia Island Tourism Group Valentia Women's Group Waterville Community Care Waterville Community Centre Waterville Tidy Towns	Ardbhearna Residents Association Blackwater Women's Group Bonane Community Co-Op Society Ltd. Carnegie Arts Company Ltd Dromneavane Residents' Association Kenmare Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Kenmare Community Alert Kenmare Men's Shed Kenmare Special Needs Group Ltd Kenmare Tidy Towns Committee Kerry Blackwater Development Group Kilgarvan Community Council Kilgarvan Community Development Kilgarvan Youth Club Lauragh Community Centre Committee Lauragh Development Group Lauragh Tidy Towns Committee Kenmare Women's Group Templenoe Community Centre Templenoe Community Council
36 Organisations	20 organisations

Killarney Forum Area	Mid-Kerry Forum Area
<p> Ballydribeen Residents Association Ballyspillane Community & Family Resource Ctr. Barraduff Community Field Organisation Beaufort Special Needs Project Deafhear.ie Fossa Historical Society & Fossa Community & Development Association Gap Valley Group Irish Rural Dwellers Alliance Kerry Life Education Ltd Kerry Mental Health Association Kerry Parents and Friends Association Kerry Stars Special Olympics Club Kerry Sustainable Rural Environment Group Kilcummin ICA Killarney Men's Shed Killarney Women's Organisation for Training and Empowerment (KWOTE) Michael Linehan Heartsafe Killarney Ltd. Muckross Community Association Pinewood Residents Association South Kerry Women in Agriculture Southwest Counselling Centre Tidy Towns Association of Beaufort Parish Women in Agriculture </p>	<p> An Bhainseach Residents Association Beaufort GAA Club Beaufort Pioneer Group Castlemaine Community Council Castlemaine FRC Castlemaine Tidy Towns Glencar Community Care Glencar Community Centre Glencar ICA Inch Community Council Iveragh Park Residents Association Keel GAA Club Killorglin Archive Society Killorglin Community Council Killorglin Family Resource Centre Killorglin Tidy Towns Langford Downs Residents' Committee Listry Community Council Men's Sheds Mid Kerry Tourism Puck Fair Rural Men's Group Sean Cháirde </p>
23 organisations	23 organisations



**Table 3.2: Number of Responses to the Citizens' Survey Questionnaire
from each Community (by Community Forum Area) in South Kerry.**

Mid Kerry	No. Respondents
Annascaul	15
Castlemaine	19
Cromane	5
Glenbeigh/Glencar	24
Inch & Keel	20
Killorglin	86
Listry	26
Milltown	57
TOTAL	252

Killarney	No. Respondents
Barraduff	11
Beaufort & Black Valley	29
Firies	8
Fossa	40
Glenflesk & Headford	27
Killarney & Environs	162
Muckross	32
TOTAL	309

Kenmare	No. Respondents
Blackwater & Templenoe	6
Bonane	16
Kenmare	71
Kilgarvan	21
Lauragh / Tousist	32
Sneem	29
TOTAL	175

Iveragh	No. Respondents
Baile na Sceilge	9
Caherdaniel	21
Cahersiveen	58
Dromid	8
Kells / Foilmore	19
Portmagee	22
Valentia	33
Waterville	22
TOTAL	192

In addition, forty-four people completed the questionnaire, but their responses were not specific to one community. This occurred when a respondent lived equidistant from two villages / towns, worked in one community and lived in another adjoining one, or had ties to more than one community.

Presentation of Results

This chapter presents three sets of results. Firstly it deals with the findings from a survey of civil society bodies (community and voluntary organisations). This provides a profile of civil society in South Kerry – what it does, its achievements and the issues and challenges it faces. Secondly, this chapter presents a very extensive set of results from a scoping study among almost 1,000 citizens from all walks of life, in which they articulate their perceptions of their localities and their views on rural development and governance. Thirdly, this chapter presents data on public service provision in South Kerry. Taking a template from Ireland’s National Spatial Strategy, this chapter maps the extent of service provision in each community. Together, these three sets of results provide a composite and comprehensive measurement of the levels of rural vibrancy in South Kerry. In addition the research findings generate several signposts to government, public bodies, policy makers, SKDP and local organisations as to ways in which rural vibrancy can be better promoted.

4.1 Results from the Survey of Civil Society

This section presents findings from the elaboration of the RVM (Rural Vibrancy Measuring Index) among community and voluntary organisations in South Kerry. The findings from this research show a very high level of vibrancy among civil society organisations. Most community and voluntary groups, have, over the past twenty years, expanded their membership, broadened their range of activities and increased the level of services they provide to local citizens. The research reveals that civil society organisations see themselves as having very clear local development briefs that transcend economic, social and environmental functions. Their members have acquired and apply a broad range of skills, and in most cases, linkages with the business community have enabled knowledge and resource transfers that benefit community development.

Leaders of civil society in South Kerry stress the on-going importance of animation and capacity-building, so as to enable organisations to meet new challenges, expand their activities and continue to promote greater social inclusion. They face particular challenges due to out-migration and the State’s gradual withdrawal from many rural areas. They are also concerned regarding the current reforms of local government, and the moves towards an increased centralisation of power in Ireland.

As civil society organisations have grown in vibrancy over recent decades, they have progressively become more involved in lobbying and seeking to influence policy, and there is a general acknowledgement that more work needs to be done in order to create structures and an environment that are more conducive to evidence-based policy-making that takes due account of bottom-up experiences.

4.1.1 Data Collection

The primary tool used to collect the data presented here was adapted from a template provided by the Philipp's University Marburg and the University of Wales (Trinity St. David), who are the two lead partners in the Rural Alliances Policy and Advisory Panel. A key objective of the RVMI research is to ensure that the policy proposals advanced through the Rural Alliances Transnational Partnership are evidence-based and are informed by the experiences of key actors who are at the coalface of promoting sustainable rural development at the local level.

The template provided by the two universities was circulated in 2012 together with a report on rural vibrancy and development policies – mainly in the UK. The data collection template offered a series of questions on several variables relating to the vibrancy of civil society organisations and local governance, and was piloted in South Kerry and in some of other partner areas at the end of 2012 in conjunction with the Transnational Partners' meeting in Oisterwijk. The Oisterwijk meeting noted the usefulness of several of the proposed research variables, and the importance of community participation and buy-in to the RVMI process, with some partners reporting that excel was not the most appropriate format for all communities. This theme was further taken-up at the next meeting (Lochem, spring 2013), at which SKDP also introduced the proposal of a citizens' survey, so as to widen the possibilities for citizen participation in the RVMI, and so as to ensure a broader and more extensive set of perspectives on rural vibrancy.

Using a bottom-up and inclusive approach to the RVMI, and to ensure that the process was completely objective and independent (in line with best practice with respect to evaluation and measurement), the research was conducted by Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick. SKDP facilitated the process by contacting groups to advise them of the merits of the RVMI and the benefits of joining with partners from across North West Europe in giving effect to this element of Rural Alliances. The University partner (Mary Immaculate College) worked with the SKDP Community Forum to transfer the questions from the pre-given excel format into a questionnaire format that was used to collect data and enable groups to qualify their answers, comment on issues, provide additional and contextual details and clarify particular aspects of their experiences and perceptions of vibrancy.

In practice, the questionnaires were administered to groups with the university staff acting as facilitators at workshops – held in community centres across South Kerry. Some workshops included a number of people from a single group, with members coming to a consensus on their responses to the variables listed in the RVMI. Other groups discussed their responses and issues with neighbouring groups, although each one completed the RVMI questionnaire individually. Finally, the researchers met a number of groups on a one-to-one basis. This work was undertaken in the main during July, August and September 2013. In practical terms, the researchers held sessions in each community centre at 11:00h, 14:00h and 21:00h so as to facilitate participation by representatives from the maximum number of groups.

There are 253 groups affiliated to the South Kerry Community Forum. Of these, 120 are broadly-based and deal with multiple issues. The others are mainly single-issue organisations. Therefore, those 120 groups were all invited to participate in the RVMI process, of which 108 did. The high response rate is mainly attributable to:

- The independence and objectivity of the researcher
- The use of facilitation and a community-development format in undertaking the research
- The transnational dimension of the work; participants in South Kerry were very encouraged by the fact that the RVMI was being implemented in other regions in North West Europe and they look forward to their views and recommendations being amalgamated with those from other rural communities – strength in numbers.

Once the groups had given their inputs, the university transferred the data into excel and this output was subsequently sent to all PAP members. The completed excel sheet and details of the methodology were communicated to all partners via NING (Rural Alliances intranet platform) in October 2013²², and received positive comments from Marburg University. In order to analyse the data and so as to generate graphs

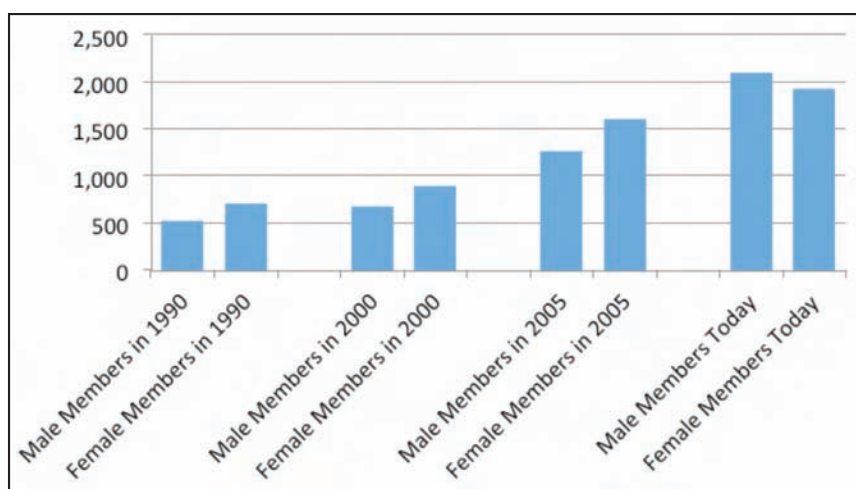
²² In addition to displaying the results, the NING contains the questionnaires used for the civil society and citizens' surveys in South Kerry.

and other readable outputs, the data were also transferred to SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science). Most importantly, and in order to enhance the relevance and applicability of measuring rural vibrancy and seeking to promote vibrant communities, feedback was provided to meetings of all community fora in South Kerry. This involved the university team making a presentation to civil society representatives and inviting them to comment on its accuracy and to discuss how their recommendations ought to be advanced locally and through policy developments. In February 2014, the preliminary findings were presented to the Board of Directors of South Kerry Development Partnership.

4.1.2 Civil Society Membership

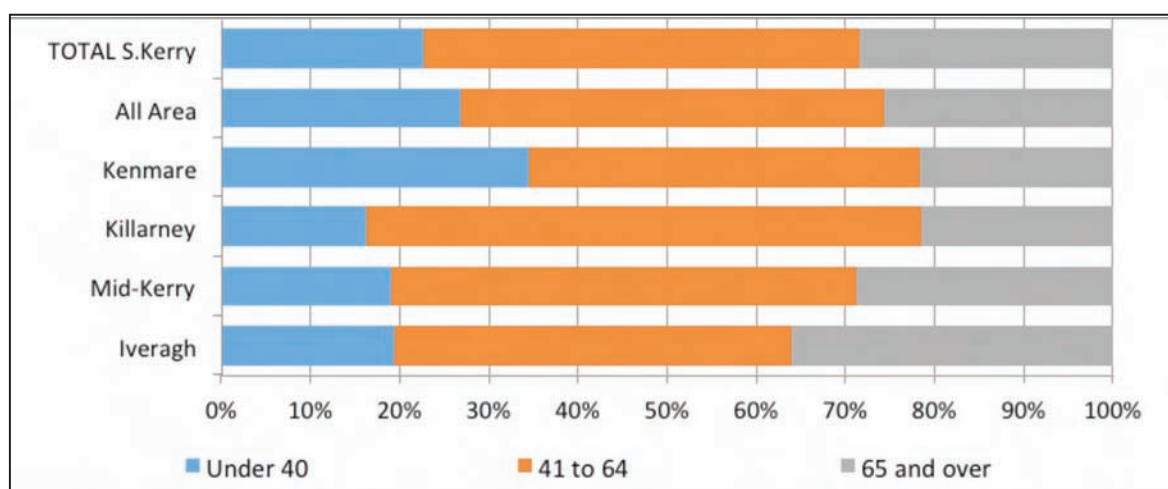
The civil society organisations in South Kerry, who participated in this research, have a total membership of 4,027. This represents a more than three-fold increase since 1990, when the total membership stood at 1,220. While membership has increased across all types of community groups and in all parts of South Kerry, the greatest increase has been among males, as the following bar-graph illustrates.

Fig. 4.1.1: Membership of Selected Civil Society Organisations in South Kerry, 1990 – 2013.



The increased level of citizen participation in civil society organisations, as evidenced by this graph is an indicator of a growing level of rural vibrancy. However, as the following graph shows, there are some grounds for concern regarding the age profile of members.

Fig. 4.1.2: Age Profile of Selected Civil Society Organisations by Community Forum Areas, 2013.



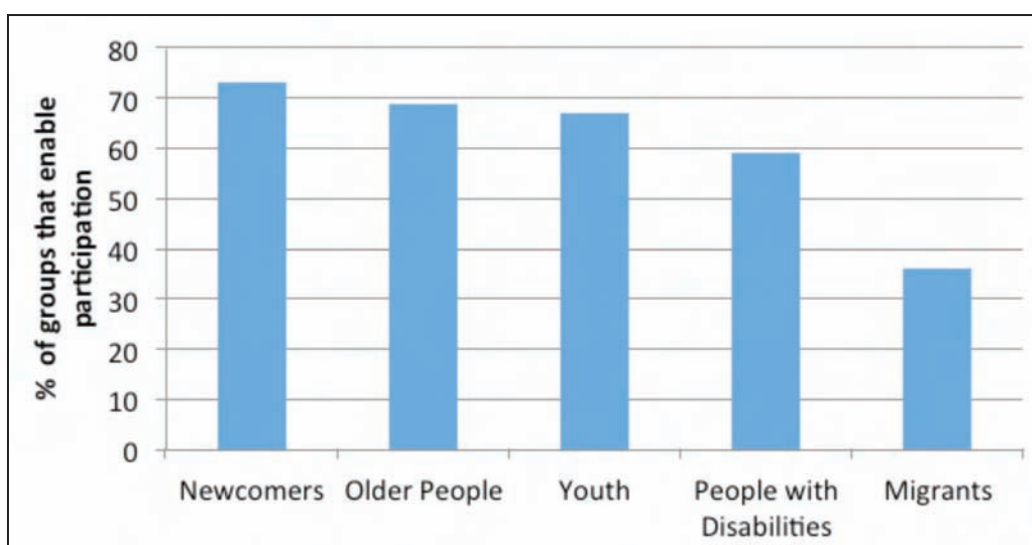
²³ Although sporting organisations, and in particular GAA clubs, have tended to acquire a remit that extends beyond sport and youth development, these figures exclude the membership of sporting organisations, as those enumerate persons aged <18 among their membership. If sporting organisations were to be enumerated here, a similar proportional increase in membership would be observed.

²⁴ 'All Area' refers to civil society organisations whose operations extend across all four community forum areas.

As the graph shows, only 23 percent of the membership of civil society organisations is aged between 18 and 40, while 28 percent is aged 65 or older. Therefore, if organisations are going to continue to be relevant and vibrant, they will need to attract a greater proportion of young people. As the graph also shows, this issue is most pressing in the Iveragh area, which is the most rural part of South Kerry. While the need to attract young people is an on-going issue for civil society organisations generally, an older age profile is also indicative of an experienced membership.

In addition to providing local services and developing the local economy, civil society has a key role to play as an enabler of participative democracy. As several Irish and international studies have shown, a vibrant and inclusive civil society is positively associated with high levels of voter participation (representative democracy), greater social cohesion and higher levels of happiness and human welfare. As the following diagram shows, civil society organisations in South Kerry perceive themselves as being generally inclusive of older and younger people and of newcomers to communities. However, they have been less successful in promoting participation among the migrant communities (mainly British, Polish and Lithuanian), and while these foreign nationals tend to attend events organised by civil society, they have not tended to join or to take-up officer positions in civil society organisations. Nationals from Asian countries, notably The Philippines are perceived to be the most willing to participate in civil society organisations.

Fig. 4.1.3: Percentage of Civil Society Organisations in South Kerry that enable Participation in Decision-Making by Particular Population Cohorts.



The data presented here in respect of the membership of civil society are based on the responses received from organisations themselves. Section 4.2 of this report deals with these issues in greater depth.



4.1.3 The Modus Operandi of Civil Society Organisations

The RVMI looked specifically at governance and community participation in decision-making. On these indicators, the research found that in South Kerry, 55 percent of groups involve the wider community 'to a large extent,' while a further 30 percent do so 'to some extent.' Among some of the groups who do not involve the wider community there are specialist groups or support organisations e.g. those dealing with physical disabilities or specific environmental issues. Another of the indicators of community involvement is that of convening open meetings so that citizens can articulate their views and feed-into decision-making processes. There was a total of 54 public meetings convened by civil society organisations in South Kerry during 2012. These were in addition to the AGMs (Annual General Meetings) convened by organisations, 68 percent of which are open to the public.

As the following bar-graph shows, there is considerable variation in terms of the extent to which groups in South Kerry possess features that are associated with good governance, and by extension, inter alia, a high level of vibrancy.

Fig. 4.1.4: Percentage of Civil Society Organisations in South Kerry reporting positively on Indicators of Vibrancy.



Almost all organisations have a clear and agreed vision, although the proportion which has documented this in the format of a (multi-annual) strategic plan is just under 60 percent. In the course of the research, the majority of the organisations which have not articulated their vision by means of a documented strategic plan, stated that they would like to do so, or intend to do so in the near future.

As the graph shows, the vast majority of the groups report having access to the services and supports of South Kerry Development Partnership. When they were asked specifically about their experiences with SKDP, they generally responded very positively and were particularly praiseworthy of the directors and staff. They referred to the merits of SKDP being a locally-based and bottom-up organisation, with the appropriate knowledge and insights that are required to support rural development. However, they objected to what they perceive to be a growing amount of red tape, emanating from central government, which is affecting the implementation of LEADER and other area-based initiatives, and which is a barrier to the attainment of rural vibrancy.

Almost 80 percent of organisations have a constitution and articles or memorandum of association. These are essential legal documents in enabling any organisation to employ staff and handle public money.

With respect to indicators of future vibrancy and embracing new technologies, the majority of organisations reported having a website and / or Facebook account. The highest level of use of modern technologies is in the Killarney area, while the lowest is in Kenmare.

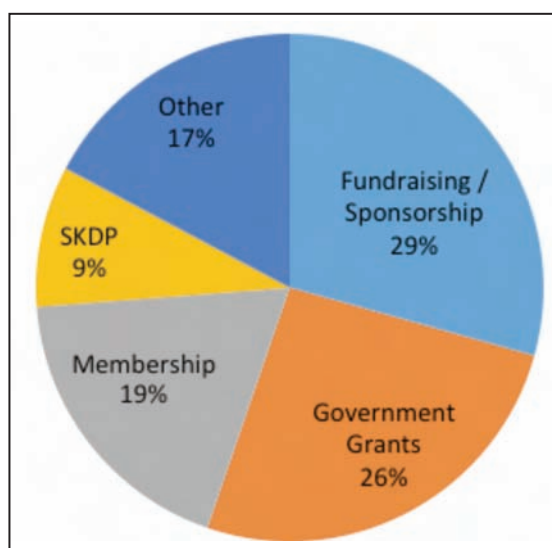
The research findings indicate that training and recruitment are the two areas to which civil society organisations need to pay greatest attention. While most groups have benefited from training for officers and members, generally under the auspices of SKDP, only a minority report that they currently have access to a dedicated training programme. On further exploration (in workshops) of this issue, it emerged that almost all groups participate in the information sessions that SKDP organises for civil society²⁵, but as this is not in the format of accredited or formalised training, the survey participants tended not to count it as such when replying to this question.

Just over half of organisations report that they have mechanisms in place for recruiting new members, although not all have formalised these in the sense of formulating a dedicated recruitment policy. In the past, organisations tended to use word of mouth and other informal mechanisms to recruit new members. In more recent years however, they tend to use a mix of methods including open-days, exhibitions and the local media. Recruitment of volunteers tends not to be a stand-alone task, as was often the case previously, but is something to which officers are constantly attentive.

As they have evolved and developed over the past twenty years, civil society organisations in South Kerry have assumed responsibility for the delivery of local services and the promotion of community and economic development. They are the main providers of childcare, are responsible for the governance of elementary schools, own and manage over ninety sporting and recreational facilities, manage housing estates, promote tidy towns (and villages), provide community-based elder care and respite, operate social economy enterprises, run social housing projects, provide tourist information, convene support groups for particular population cohorts, conserve heritage artefacts and amenities and are engaged in environmental conservation. Indeed the range of services they provide is similar to that delivered by a commune / municipal authority in France, The Netherlands, Belgium and several other European countries.

The evolution and progression of many community and voluntary organisations from being largely single-issue to becoming multi-sectoral are associated with the animation and capacity-building work that has taken place, most of which has been enabled by LEADER and successive local development programmes. The expanding remit of civil society is also associated with growing demands for community services, but is contingent on communities' abilities to access resources. Thus, in 2012, the organisations (excluding sporting bodies) that took part in this study had an annual turnover in excess of €30million. As the following pie-chart shows, local fundraising and sponsorship represent the single largest source of funds for civil society in South Kerry. This finding provides further evidence of a close relationship between the business community and civil society – a key objective of Rural Alliances.

Fig. 4.1.5: Civil Society in South Kerry – Main Sources of Income, 2012



²⁵ South Kerry Development Partnership organises 4 to 6 training sessions for the Community Forum every year covering issues such as insurance, legal matters, youth development, child protection, group promotion, strategic planning and advocacy among others. Sessions generally consist of a presentation and workshop and are of 2 – 3 hours duration.

While a mixed source of funds can be positively correlated with the vibrancy of civil society, the two main funding sources available have contracted in the past five years. Since the onset of the financial crisis, citizens' disposable income has declined and many local businesses have had to curtail the amount of money they can divert to sponsoring civil society events and activities. At the same time, central and local government offices have fewer grants to disburse. This decline in the funding available to civil society organisations is occurring at a time when there is a growing demand for the services they provide.

As the pie-chart shows, just 17 percent of funds come from ‘other sources.’ These refer mainly to income generated through economic activities i.e. sale of goods and services. Thus, there is clearly greater need to promote social economy and community business activities in South Kerry, as already noted in respect of rural regions generally - by the OECD (Noya and Clarence, 2009).

4.1.4 Horizontal and Vertical Governance – Linkages between Organisations and between Civil Society and the State

In addition to engaging citizens in decision-making locally, civil society organisations generally seek to articulate citizens' views upwards (vertical linkages), so as to enable policy-makers and public bodies to be more responsive and proactive in addressing local needs and conditions. By virtue of their membership of the South Kerry Community Forum, all civil society organisations in South Kerry engage in vertical governance. Moreover, SKDP has a strong and positive relationship with Kerry County Council and Siobhán Griffin from the Community & Enterprise Section of Kerry County Council facilitates forum meetings in collaboration with SKDP. Siobhán provides information on policy matters and takes feedback from the Forum to the County Council. Indeed, in 2013 and early 2014, the Forum worked on submissions to the Kerry County Development Plan. In addition to influencing policy via the Community Forum, 54 percent of organisations in South Kerry reported that they also do so unilaterally or in conjunction with other bodies, with whom they share a common interest e.g. to improve services for older people or children. Others have lobbied to retain local services, such as post offices, coastguards and garda stations. These issues are further explored in the next section in this report.

The RVMI research also asked civil society representatives to identify the main issues currently facing their organisations. The following Wordcloud presents the main issues that emerged:

Fig. 4.1.6: Main Issues facing Community and Voluntary Organisations in South Kerry



As the Wordcloud shows, the following were the most frequently (in descending order) cited:

1. Funding
2. Structural / Internal issues
3. Recruiting New Members
4. Officers / Rotation
5. Local Issues
6. Alignment
7. Migration / Depopulation

Unsurprisingly, funding (and the increasing difficulty raising funds) emerges as the top issue. This is likely to be an on-going challenge for organisations and a factor in the attainment of rural vibrancy. On a positive aside, communities that have organised a local lotto were less likely to report having financial difficulties. The most successful lottos are those that involved all groups in a parish, rather than those operated by a single group.

The growing level of bureaucracy is strongly perceived as a barrier to the development of civil society and the broader promotion of rural vibrancy. Civil society leaders reported that all public agencies have become increasingly bureaucratic and more difficult to deal with. With specific reference to South Kerry Development Partnership, they acknowledged that most of the bureaucratic burden emanates from central government, as evidenced by the following comments, “there is too much red tape when you are applying for grants. Things should be more straightforward and easy to follow. However, the local SKDP staff in Cahersiveen are very helpful” and “the staff are very helpful, but the length of time from application made to funding agreement took quite some time.”

The structural and internal issues (no. 3) to which respondents referred and the local issues (no.6) which they mentioned tended to be group and place specific. They included the challenges associated with premises that have become too small for current activities, the costs associated with maintaining particular heritage features and / or the tendency in some communities for people to participate sporadically, rather than consistently, in community development.

The recruitment of new members and the rotation of officers are issues for several organisations, and these are more likely to present challenges in the areas that are worst affected by out-migration and rural decline. Thus, the vibrancy of civil society is both reflective of, and influenced by the vibrancy of the context in which organisations operate.

The issue of ‘alignment’ came up several times, and this has been the subject of public meetings organised by civil society in South Kerry, Mayo and elsewhere in rural Ireland during 2013 and 2014. The concerns stem from the October 2012 declaration (without prior consultation with civil society or elected councillors in local government) by the Ministry for the Environment, Community and Local Government that the functions of rural development partnerships such as South Kerry Development Partnership would be subject to an additional tier of bureaucratic controls under the auspices of local authorities (2012: 28 – 30). Given the absence of a municipal tier of government in rural Ireland, the abolition of town councils, the large scale of Irish counties (the second largest in Europe) and the democratic deficit inherent in Irish local government due to the excessive influence of Dublin over local affairs and finances, civil society leaders are strongly concerned that the alignment proposals represent a further diminution of local democracy and an attack on rural Ireland. County Mayo hosted two very large public meetings at which citizens expressed their opposition to alignment (in Claremorris and Westport), while there were also very large public meetings in South Kerry. Since the mobilisation of civil society opposition to alignment, central government has decided to row back on its initial proposals, which had also drawn international criticism (e.g. from the Council of Europe and the European Commission). Nevertheless, civil society remains sceptical and very anxious about this issue, and many citizens perceive a growing democratic deficit in rural Ireland.

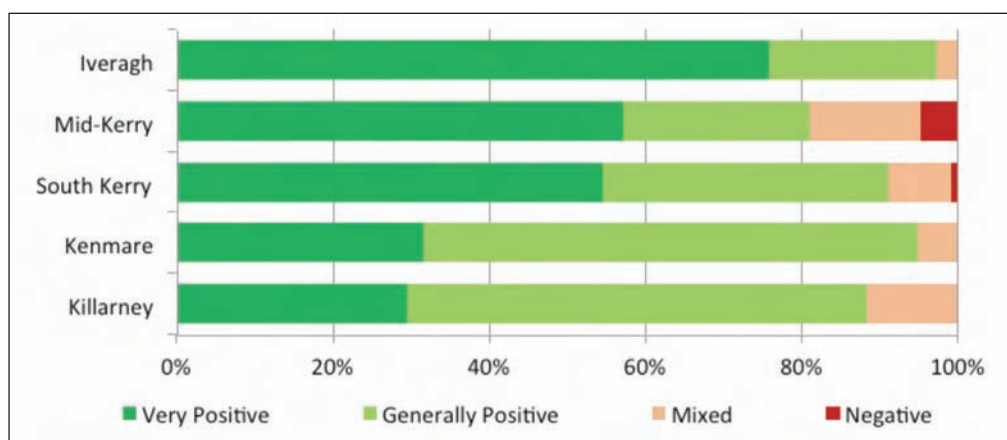
4.1.5 Perceptions and Experiences of South Kerry Development Partnership

Our survey questionnaire included several specific questions about South Kerry Development Partnership. Representatives of civil society were asked to rate the impact of the Partnership on their local community and to comment on the effectiveness or otherwise of various programmes. The questionnaire probed their perspectives on the main achievements, strengths and weaknesses of the Partnership. As the vast majority of community groups have had direct dealings with SKDP, they were asked a series of questions about their experiences of the Partnership and its way of dealing with them.

The Impacts of SKDP

Civil society representatives were asked “How would you rate the impact of South Kerry Development Partnership on your local community?” They were given five options ranging from ‘very positive’ to ‘very negative,’ and the following graph presents the findings by Community Forum area.

Fig. 4.1.7: Perceptions of the Local Impact of South Kerry Development Partnership



The graph shows that across South Kerry (as a whole) 91 percent of community group representatives believe that the Partnership has had either a ‘very positive’ or ‘generally positive’ impact on their local community. As the graph shows, positive sentiment towards SKDP exceeds 80 percent in all four Community Forum areas. The following statements provided by survey respondents are indicative of the positive commentary about SKDP. They reveal the aspects of the Partnership that community groups believe ought to be maintained, fostered and developed as SKDP continues to strive to promote rural vibrancy:

- They have a real interest in the community.
- If we come up with an idea, they will tell us if it is good or daft.
- They know the community.
- When you are talking to those people, it is always positive.
- They are the only people doing anything for this area.
- Anything that happened around here is due to them.
- The Partnership is connected to the local area.
- SKDP have helped every organisation, not just financially, but with advice and availability.
- They know the people and they know the area.
- SKDP has harnessed the skills, energy and enthusiasm of the local people.
- They are accessible.
- Local facilities have benefited e.g. the hall.
- The distribution of funds is well done.
- SKDP know the groups since pre-development stage.
- SKDP is local and has supported our community in all its endeavours, especially in providing capital.
- We have been given excellent support by the partnership down through the years, and would not have been able to make the progress we have without their help.
- Providing work e.g. TÚS and RSS brings money into the area.

These sentiments reveal that community groups value the Partnership's collaborative approach to development. They appreciate the access to a locally-rooted support structure that understands their needs and has the openness, flexibility and friendship that are required to work with them.

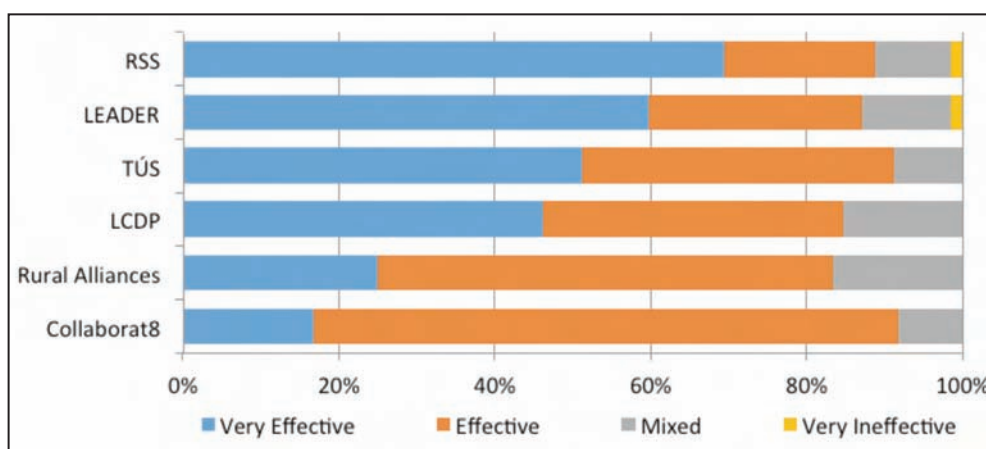
As the graph also suggests, there are some mixed sentiments about SKDP, and a number of people whose overall sentiments are positive, put forward some comments on how the Partnership could improve. The following statements provided by respondents are indicative of challenges as perceived by community groups:

- Our experience with SKDP has been very positive. However, the level of paperwork was very time-consuming.
- Their bureaucracy is gone unreal. You have to cover yourself backwards way beyond what is needed.
- E-tendering is a big problem, because it does not always deliver value for money and leads to funds going out of the local area. Anyway, it is off-putting to have to ask voluntary committee members for personal details.
- Why are there politicians on the board? Politicians play with people's lives. They are only interested in individuals, not communities.
- They are hamstrung by the State agencies on their board and don't want to be seen to be rocking the system.
- It's not their fault, but they suffer from over-regulation.
- If they are to be meaningful, they need to be innovative and take risks.
- They have become too defensive and risk-averse, because they are worried about their survival.
- You have to prove you don't need the money in order to get it. They are gone like the banks long ago.
- They provide great facilitation, despite the awful constraints.
- They were grand before, but now they are making us jump through hoops, just to cover their own asses.
- There are huge concerns locally about alignment. The government seems to be setting up councils to siphon off European funding.
- Alignment is a major threat to the future of local and community development.

These views as expressed directly by community group members sound a number of warning bells for SKDP, as they indicate that the Partnership is increasingly perceived as becoming affected by bureaucratisation. Although many community representatives note that the increased levels of bureaucracy emanate from central government more than from other sources, the findings suggest that any further bureaucratisation is likely to compromise SKDP's ability to function as a promotive LAG, as recommended by successive evaluations of LEADER from Kearney *et al.* in 1995 to the most recent EU-wide reviews undertaken by Metis GmbH. The findings also reveal a strong desire on the part of community leaders to see the Partnership and local politicians communicating to government officials and policy-makers the importance of enabling LEADER Local Action Groups to be more responsive, flexible, innovative and pro-active both as project promoters themselves and as facilitators of others in delivering projects.

The following bar-graph presents the survey findings in respect of people's assessment of the effectiveness of various programmes administered by SKDP. The findings reveal that for each programme the percentage of respondents who perceive them to be 'effective' or 'very effective' exceeds 80 percent, with the RSS (Rural Social Scheme) and LEADER seen as the most effective. The data presented here exclude persons (up to 40 percent of respondents in respect of some programmes), who stated that they do not distinguish between the various programmes operated by the Partnership, but rather perceive each of them as complementary elements of an integrated approach to local and rural development. Indeed, their observations tally with the recommendations of the international literature on best practice approaches to rural development, which note the need for holistic, multi-sectoral and complementary interventions and investments in rural areas, rather than separate or straight-jacketed programmes.

Fig. 4.1.8: Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Programmes administered by SKDP



The Rural Social Scheme has operated nationally under the aegis of the Department of Social Protection (formerly the Department of Social and Family Affairs) since 2004. It offers financial support and work skills to small farmers and fishermen in return for 19.5 hours per week work in the community²⁶. It is operated and administered locally by LEADER Local Action Groups, and in South Kerry there are currently 138 participants on the Scheme. The LAGs are also responsible for the operation of TÚS, a labour market scheme through which long-term unemployed people can get a top-up on their social welfare payment in return for community-based placements. Eligible work categories include environmental projects, caring, general community work and heritage, cultural and para-educational services. SKDP operates five TÚS schemes, with a total of 110 participants. The RSS and TÚS represent very significant contributions to poverty alleviation and the promotion of social inclusion. TÚS has been a springboard to employment and re-training for many people, while the RSS provides a significant income boost to families who would otherwise face considerable hardship. The benefits of these two schemes extend beyond the participants. Local management and oversight by SKDP ensures that work programmes and experiences are meaningful and progressive for participants while also being responsive to the needs and development agendas of community and voluntary organisations.

Among the host organisations providing work placements are GAA clubs, tidy towns associations, active retirement groups, festival committees, social economy projects, community businesses, childcare and eldercare providers, inshore rescue, graveyard committees, lakes and rivers trusts, independent living facilities and social services. A supplement that accompanied The Kerryman newspaper on May 27th 2015 profiled several instances of the valuable work being done by the RSS and TÚS. The work of the RSS and TÚS represents important contributions to the vibrancy of rural communities in terms of improved service delivery, an enhanced quality of life, greater social inclusion, environmental conservation and the freeing-up of volunteers and community leaders so that they can devote more time to strategic issues, governance, forward planning and fundraising. Valentia Lighthouse, which is one of the core Rural Alliances projects, is a case in point. As the schemes cater for different population cohorts, they can respond in a tailored and focused manner to participants, while local management ensures high levels of visibility and accountability.

²⁶ The type of work done by RSS participants includes: maintaining and enhancing way marked ways, agreed walks & bog roads, energy conservation work for the elderly and the less well off, village and countryside enhancement projects, social care and care of the elderly, community care for both pre-school and after school groups, Environmental maintenance work, maintenance and care-taking of community and sporting facilities, projects relating to not for profit cultural & heritage centres and community administration/clerical duties

Achievements of SKDP

The survey questionnaire asked respondents to identify the key achievements of South Kerry Development Partnership. In response, most referred to the endogenous and collaborative manner in which the Partnership operates, rather than to a specific or singular project output. The Partnership was described as the “backbone of community” and an organisation that:

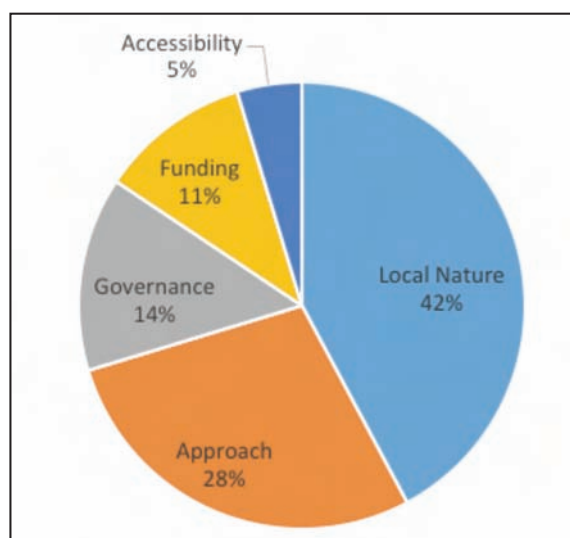
- Assists small communities with projects;
- Brings communities together;
- Brings in funding;
- Builds communities;
- Delivers community development;
- Develops community infrastructure;
- Enables community self-help;
- Encourages entry into self-employment;
- Ensures enterprise development;
- Facilitates community development and citizen participation;
- Fosters local participation;
- Funds projects, communities, facilities and places;
- Gives people skills and knowledge;
- Harnesses skills and energies;
- Helps groups and organisations (to develop and deliver);
- Highlights issues;
- Informs citizens - particularly about funding, employment and guidance;
- Keeps relevant;
- Keeps the place alive;
- Links groups;
- Localises the delivery of employment, infrastructure, jobs and supports;
- Operates employment schemes;
- Promotes Cooperation;
- Resources groups and centres;
- Responds to communities
- Supports social cohesion, communities, businesses, enterprises, groups, start-ups and individuals;
- Trains community groups, individuals and businesses; and
- Works with communities.

A number of respondents referred to specific programmes operated by SKDP, most notably the RSS, TÚS and LEADER. As the above list shows, SKDP’s achievements are perceived as having a strong focus on community development and the promotion of social and knowledge capital. These are important drivers of rural vibrancy and must continue to be promoted. The list also reveals a perception of SKDP as a broker and cajoler of external resources on behalf of South Kerry. Such brokerage functions are important in enabling peripheral territories to achieve competitiveness, and in further developing its role in this regard SKDP needs to continue to be a dynamic and flexible organisation that is responsive to local communities and is constantly informing itself about potential opportunities and alliances. Given the historical association between LEADER (SKDP’s single largest programme) and the promotion of rural economic diversification, it may seem surprising that enterprise development, economic diversification and innovation feature less prominently on the list of achievements. This may be due to the fact that the survey participants were drawn from civil society rather than from the social partners (private or productive sector). However, as noted in Chapter Two (of this report), economic development of rural areas requires enhanced public service provision and an increased role for civil society as service providers and business operators. Thus, the findings here further underscore a need for greater promotion of the social economy, and a more promotive approach on the part of SKDP to this end.

Strenghts and Weaknesses of SKDP

The questionnaire contained two open-ended questions (questions 27 and 28), one of which asked 'What do you perceive to be the main strengths of South Kerry Development Partnership?' This was followed by a question that asked respondents to identify SKDP's main weaknesses. When asked to identify the Partnership's main strengths, most respondents referred to its local base and accessibility to local citizens and organisations. They also referred to its bottom-up approach and the fact that it is owned by the communities rather than being a statutory body. All the various comments and observations were classified under five headings, and the following pie-chart presents the breakdown of responses under these headings:

Fig. 4.1.9: Perceived Main Strenghts of SKDP



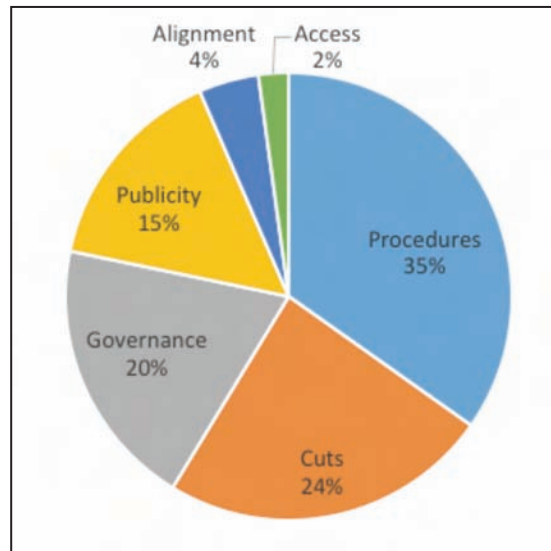
As the pie-chart, shows, respondents place a high value on SKDP being a local organisation. Among the sentiments the expressed were:

- SKDP is based locally and knows the needs of communities.
- They are on the ground and very accessible.
- They have good local staff, who know the area and the people.
- [There is] great local knowledge and understanding throughout the organisation.
- They know local groups and are very accessible.
- SKDP has a strong local input.

Over one-in-four (28%) of the strengths listed by respondents relate to SKDP's approach to development. Several respondents referred to the helpfulness and 'can-do' attitude of the board and staff members. They also mentioned the positive relationship the organisation fosters with project promoters and community organisations, and they spoke about the passion board and staff members have for their local communities. The pie-chart also shows that SKDP's governance arrangements and structure were mentioned by a number of respondents (14% of all the strengths listed). Respondents referred to the role played by community directors on the board and to the operations of working groups and sub-committees, which they stated, provide mechanisms for on-going consultation on, and inputs into, local and rural development. As the pie-chart shows, respondents also referred to SKDP's ability to broker funds and resources for projects and for the territory.

When asked to identify the Partnership's main weaknesses, respondents were more likely to refer to procedural matters than to anything else, as the following pie-chart shows. Specifically, they identified the increased bureaucratization of funding procedures and processes as being excessive. Many respondents referred to the growing levels of red tape as a barrier to innovation and local development. While they were praiseworthy of individual staff (past and present), they condemned what they perceive to be the excessive amount of time staff members are spending in the office when, as one respondent stated, "they are needed in the communities like never before."

Fig. 4.1.10: Perceived Main Weaknesses of SKDP



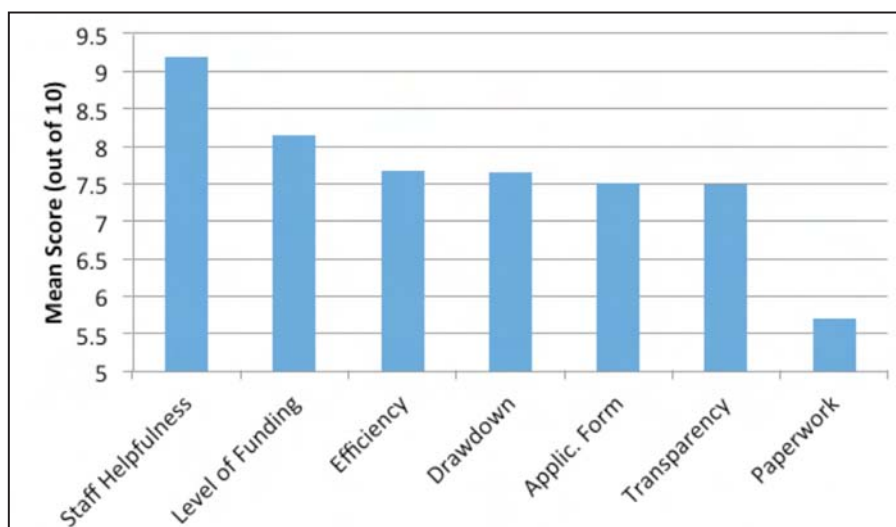
As the pie-chart also shows, almost one-in-four (24%) of the weaknesses identified by respondents refer to the cutbacks to the SKDP budget (particularly since 2011). While several respondents noted that these cuts will make the sustainability of their current projects more difficult and will oblige them to scale-back community development initiatives, they were even more critical of the staff losses that had ensued as a result of the budget cuts. Several respondents reported that they had developed a strong and positive working relationship with SKDP development officers, and they recounted how these officers had assisted several enterprises and communities. They reported that the cuts to SKDP seemed excessive relative to those affecting other publicly-funded bodies, and some questioned why there was not more of a public outcry from the organisation over the loss of key staff members. Similar sentiments were expressed by those who highlighted governance weaknesses in SKDP. These alleged that the Partnership had become “too afraid of government officials” and was “becoming influenced by politicians and public servants.” Others claimed that the board was too slow to react to the threats to LEADER and needed to be more proactive in “taking on vested interests.”

These criticisms of SKDP, while far less widespread than the praise of the organisation, are hard-hitting and were communicated to members of the Board and the Community Forum as part of the research feedback process. Since these and other research findings were illuminated and discussed internally, and with Rural Alliances partners, SKDP has been more assertive in the local and national media and has highlighted the consequences of funding cutbacks for the LEADER model and for rural communities. Communities across South Kerry have also become more assertive in articulating their opposition to ‘alignment,’ whereby SKDP could become subservient to Kerry County Council, and several took part in a protest in front of County Buildings in Tralee and a march on Leinster House (seat of the national parliament in Dublin).

Project Promoters’ Experiences of SKDP

The survey questionnaire concluded by asking groups a set of questions about their experiences of dealing directly with South Kerry Development Partnership in their capacity as project promoters (i.e. entities that had accessed LEADER or Local Development funding). Respondents were provided with a ten point scale and could rate on it, their experience of dealing with the Partnership. They were invited to award scores ranging from zero (very negative) to ten (very positive). As the following bar-graph shows, the mean scores awarded by project promoters were all in excess of five, and ranged from 5.7 up to 9.2.

**Table 4.1.11: Mean Values of Promoters' Assessments of their Experiences of SKDP
(Scale Values: 0 = very negative and 10 = very positive)**



As the graph shows, the highest level of satisfaction among project promoters is with the 'helpfulness of the staff.' In their comments, several respondents singled-out named staff members for individual praise. They related how development officers came to meet with their organisations at night and during weekends, and how they appraised groups of opportunities.

The graph also shows a high level of satisfaction with the level of grant-aid provided for projects. This may be associated with EU operating rules that allow for matching funding to include voluntary labour, thereby tapping-into the high levels of social capital that pertain in several communities across South Kerry. Promoters' levels of satisfaction with the efficiency with which their application was processed, the procedures for the drawdown of funds upon completion of the project, the clarity of the application form and the transparency of the funding process are at similar levels – ranging from 7.5 to 7.7. However, the corresponding score in respect of the level of paperwork required when accessing funds administered by SKDP is notably lower, at 5.7.

The following table presents the modal (most frequent) value in each Community Forum area in respect of the performance indicators. The data presented here reveal that promoters' perceptions are generally similar across South Kerry. There is a generally positive perception of the role played by staff, the level of funding provided and the procedures for the processing of funding applications. The lowest scores – across all Community Forum areas – are registered in respect to the level of paperwork associated with the accessing of LEADER and Local Development funding.

Table 4.1.1: Modal Values in Each Community Forum Area of Promoters' Assessments of their Experiences of SKDP (Scale Values: 0 = very negative and 10 = very positive)

Performance Indicator (Project Promoters Experiences of SKDP)	Iveragh	Kenmare	Killarney	Mid-Kerry	All Areas
The Helpfulness of the Staff	10	9 & 10	10	10	10
The Level of Funding Received	10	8 & 10	10	10	9
The Speed and Efficiency with which the Application was processed	10	8 & 10	8	8	10
The Drawdown Procedure	10	10	7	10	10
The Transparency of the Application Process	10	8	8 & 10	7 & 8	10
The Clarity of the Application Form	6	8	8	8	10
The Level of Paperwork Required	4	8	5 & 7	5	8

²⁷ 'All Areas' refers to groups that cover more than one Community Forum area.

The following comments expressed by project promoters are indicative of their sentiments in respect of their dealings with SKDP:

- People can go in and talk common sense with them, and that straightens out any problem.
- It is great just to be able to pick up the phone or call into the office to ask for some advice.
- The slowness of the system is unreal, although I don't think that is their fault.
- In the past, a normal project application would require ten pages. Now it would take 100 pages for the same scale of project. It makes no sense, because all accounts can be audited. Copies of cheques should be sufficient.
- The 75 percent level of grant aid is essential.
- They have supported projects that would otherwise not have happened.
- The process is slow and tedious, but N (staff member) makes it easier. No way would an ordinary citizen be able to complete an application form.
- The partnership has great potential, but it is overwhelmed with bureaucracy.
- They are helpful, but all the 'I's have to be dotted and the 't's crossed.

The views expressed by project promoters, as recorded in this survey are in line with those expressed by LEADER project promoters and by LAG staff members as recorded in the EU 7th Framework evaluation of LEADER that took place in 2010 (RuDi Network, 2010). That EU-wide review of LEADER noted that while Local Action Groups in Ireland were successful in fostering entrepreneurship and community development, they were considerably hampered by growing levels of bureaucratic control, and were consequently losing the ability to promote innovation and risk-taking. The findings presented in this report suggest that in the intervening five years (since the RuDi Network study), there has been insufficient headway in progressing its recommendations.

4.1.6 Perceptions of Place and Community

Through agreement with the Rural Alliances Transnational partners, Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick and SKDP added some questions to the RVMI in order to capture data on local issues and to bring a qualitative dimension to bear on the research. Therefore, the survey work in South Kerry included a number of questions about rural development, planning issues and perceptions of rural vibrancy. One of these supplementary questions asked respondents to provide 'three words to describe your community'. The following Wordcloud presents the words that community groups leaders used to describe their own places. The words presented here are from across South Kerry as a whole:

Fig. 4.1.12: Wordcloud depicting how Community Leaders describe their local communities



As the Wordcloud shows, perceptions of community are generally very positive, and are dominated by references to social capital and the development roles played by civil society organisations. The word that emerged most frequently in response to this totally open-ended question was “vibrant.” The descriptions put forward by community group members and leaders are consistent with the views of their localities as expressed by the wider local citizenry (see Section 4.2 of this report) in that both cohorts perceive South Kerry as socially vibrant, characterised by a friendly, caring, helpful, supportive, spirited and willing communities. The absence of descriptions associated with economic development suggest less positive perceptions of South Kerry’s economic profile. Indeed, the more negative descriptions presented in the Wordcloud generally relate to structural weaknesses associated with out-migration, the ageing of the population, the loss of services, isolation and a lack of opportunities locally.

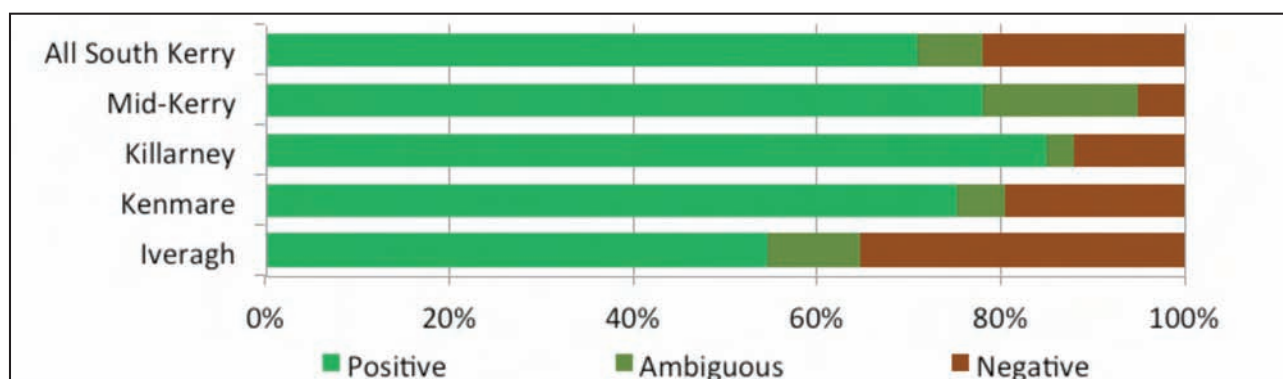
The following table presents the most-frequently cited words in each of the Community Forum areas²⁸.

Table 4.1.2: Most-frequently Cited Words to Describe the Local Community in South Kerry

Iveragh	Kenmare	Killarney	Mid-Kerry
Vibrant	Friendly	Vibrant	Vibrant
Positive	Active	Active	Friendly
Active	Vibrant	Young	Helpful
Willing to Help	Pleasant	Worried	Active
Under Pressure	Close-knit	United	Supportive
Proud	Beautiful	Supportive	Optimistic
Isolated	Ageing	Sharing	Generous
Hopeful for the future	Workers	Resourceful	Caring
Energetic	Welcoming	Reserved	Welcoming
Ageing	Volunteering	Progressive	Volunteering
Worrying		Unemployed	Neighbourly

The following graph provides a very general classification of the types of words used by civil society representatives to describe their communities, across the forum areas:

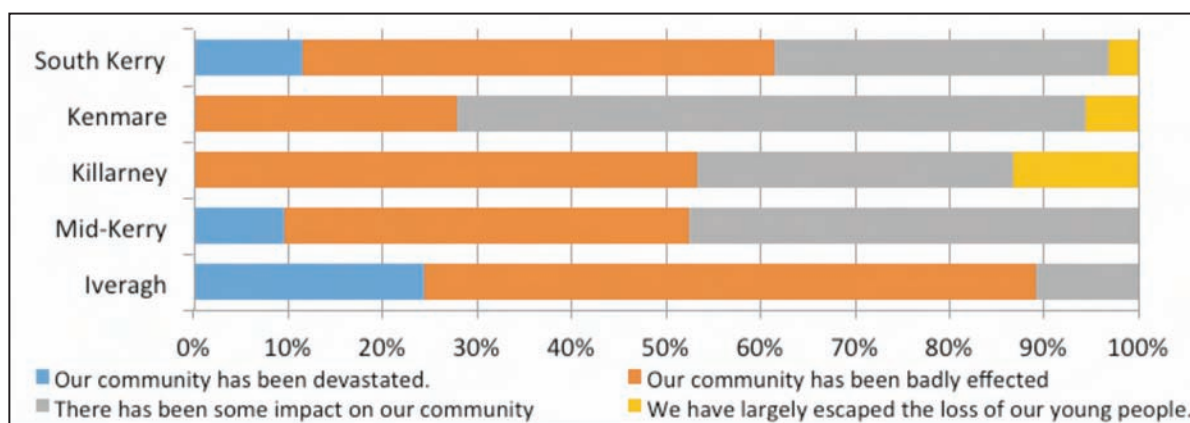
Fig. 4.1.13: Perceptions of Place in South Kerry, as derived from a Classification of words used by Civil Society Representatives to describe their Local Communities



²⁸ All words have been translated into English for the purpose of this report. Many had completed the RVMI questionnaire in Irish.

As noted earlier, the vibrancy of civil society organisations is affected by the vibrancy of their broader geographical context. In South Kerry, as in Mayo and several parts of rural Ireland – particularly in the west of the island, the ability of organisations to be vibrant and to recruit new and young members has been limited by out-migration, particularly since 2008. Thus, while civil society has proven itself to have the capacity to promote multi-scalar development projects, manage public funds, enable democratic participation in decision-making and deliver local services, maintaining current levels of social capital in South Kerry, will require on-going investment not just in community development, but also in promoting the economic diversification and enhanced connectivity of the territory. South Kerry needs to be able to offer more attractive and reliable economic opportunities to young people if the current levels of social capital are to be maintained, and the current (and growing) pressures on voluntary organisations are to be alleviated. As the following graph shows, civil society representatives in South Kerry view migration as having had a negative impact on their community, and this is particularly the case in the most rural parts of Iveragh.

Fig. 4.1.14: Perceived Impacts of Out-Migration on South Kerry



The graph shows that almost 90 percent of respondents in Iveragh believe their communities have been either 'devastated' or 'badly affected.' Over half of respondents in the Killarney and Mid-Kerry Community Forum Areas believe their communities have been adversely affected by out-migration while respondents in the Kenmare area are less pessimistic about the impact of out-migration on their localities. Nevertheless, almost all respondents across South Kerry note that there has been at least some local impact of out-migration.



4.1.7 Future Development Trajectories

Having established a profile of the work of civil society, the modus operandi of community groups, their outputs, impacts and interfacing with South Kerry Development Partnership, the survey questionnaire turned its attention to the future development of communities. The questionnaire contained a number of questions in which respondents were asked to identify what needed to be done to promote sustainable development in South Kerry. They were asked to put forward any concrete proposals they had for SKDP and for other agencies. They were specifically asked to identify the development issues currently facing their communities. The following Wordcloud provides a picture of the main issues they identified.

Fig. 4.1.15: Wordcloud depicting Issues Facing Local Communities in South Kerry



The dominant words (issues) across South Kerry are the inter-related issues of unemployment, employment (creation) and the prevention of youth out-migration. These issues arise extensively across all four Community Forum areas. The other large word that appears in the Wordcloud is 'Lack.' This word is the prefix to a number of statements including 'lack of services,' 'lack of jobs,' 'lack of transport' and 'lack of infrastructure.' These responses provide very clear signposts for SKDP and other agencies including public bodies in terms of the interventions that are required to enable South Kerry to become more territorially competitive; there is a need for investment in infrastructure provision, along the lines advocated by the OECD (as referred to in Chapter Two of this report), so that public capital is channelled into direct job creation and into enabling and sustaining the conditions that are supportive of local innovation and entrepreneurship.

Other issues raised by community group leaders in South Kerry relate to the need for improved public service provision locally. Investment in public service provision is essential for local economic development in addition to improving the quality of life for local citizens. Among the public service activities that are specified here are transport, broadband, health and education. The survey findings also highlight a number of social issues that need to be addressed. These focus primarily on two population cohorts, namely the youth and the elderly.

Over the course of their participation in this research civil society leaders in South Kerry consistently stated that they do not expect government or external agencies to solve local problems, but that they expect government to work with them and with local businesses and SKDP in enabling the territory to realise its development potential. Indeed, as this report has already demonstrated, civil society is making a very considerable contribution to the development of the local economy, the provision of services and the enhancement of the quality of life. Therefore, partnership approaches that capitalise on the strengths, experiences, local knowledge and commitment of civil society and draw-on the technical know-how, operating systems and resources of government offer the most effective means of addressing the issues presented here. Indeed, as the following Wordcloud illustrates, civil society is currently addressing a broad spectrum of issues, and civil society has the capacity and vision to continue to address these issues. It behoves government to row in behind communities and to support them in doing so.

Fig. 4.1.16: Wordcloud depicting the issues Community Groups report they are addressing



4.1.8 Conclusion

The survey results presented in this section show that civil society is a very significant driver of vibrancy in South Kerry. Community and voluntary organisations are the leading providers of many local services and the main platforms through which citizens can participate in local decision-making and community development. SKDP is an important enabler of the development of social capital, and the Partnership fosters creative and knowledge capital – key ingredients of rural vibrancy. The close relationship between SKDP and civil society has been positive in enabling ideas and visions to evolve into projects. The future sustainable development of South Kerry needs to build on existing achievements and structures, so as to expand on the current pool of knowledge and maximise efficiencies. Thus, civil society and SKDP are integral to the on-going promotion of rural vibrancy, and it behoves regulatory bodies to provide them with due levels of support, greater flexibility and adequate resources, so they can be proactive and innovative in responding to local needs, involving people and promoting South Kerry’s development potential.



4.2. Results of the Citizens' Survey

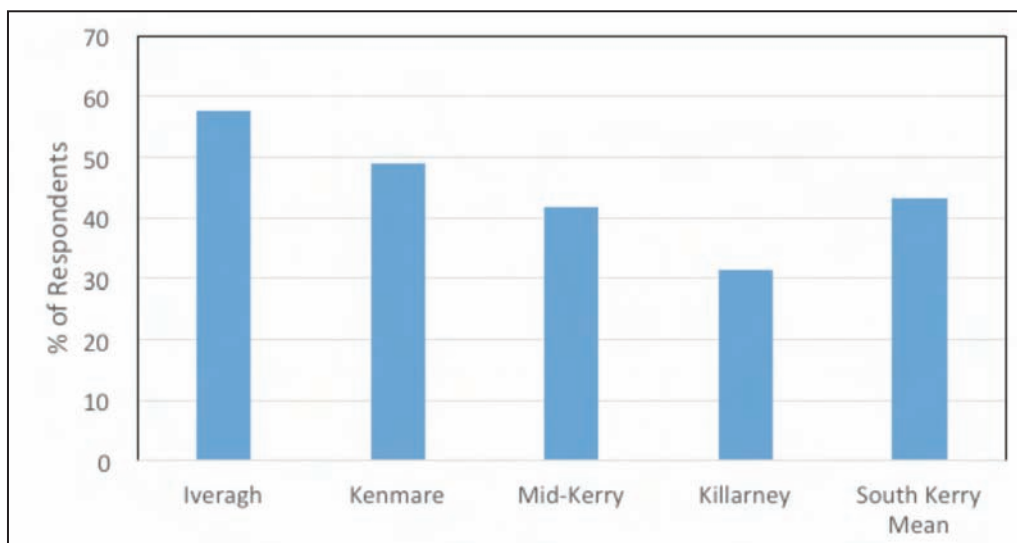
This section presents the results of the Citizens' Survey on rural vibrancy. It begins with the data on volunteerism and community development. It then looks at indicators of democracy (representative and participative) and the relationships between them. It also considers the variations across the four Community Forum areas in South Kerry (namely Iveragh, Kenmare, Killarney and Mid-Kerry). The report then presents the data on the many indicators of rural vibrancy, revealing how citizens perceive their communities. These data are analysed by geography (Community Forum areas) and by population cohorts. The presentation of findings concludes by dealing with citizens' views on local government reform and the reconfiguration of governance arrangements in respect of the delivery and administration of rural development programmes.

4.2.1 Volunteerism in South Kerry

According to our survey, 42 percent of people in South Kerry claim to be a member of at least one community or voluntary organisation. Sporting organisations, notably the GAA are the most popular group-type, particularly among young people and among males of all ages. Females are more likely to belong to organisations the main aims of which are social inclusion, community welfare and personal development. The mean number of hours people devoted to community / voluntary activities is 5.73 per week, with males recording higher values (30 minutes more) than females. The modal response was two hours.

While the level of volunteerism, as measured by 'membership of a community or voluntary organisation,' is above the State average, the survey reveals geographical variations within South Kerry, that are in line with national trends; levels of volunteerism tend to be lower in more urban locations (CSO, 2009). As the following graph shows, people in the Killarney Community Forum Area are the least likely to belong to a community group, while those who live in Iveragh are most likely to be members of community-based organisations.

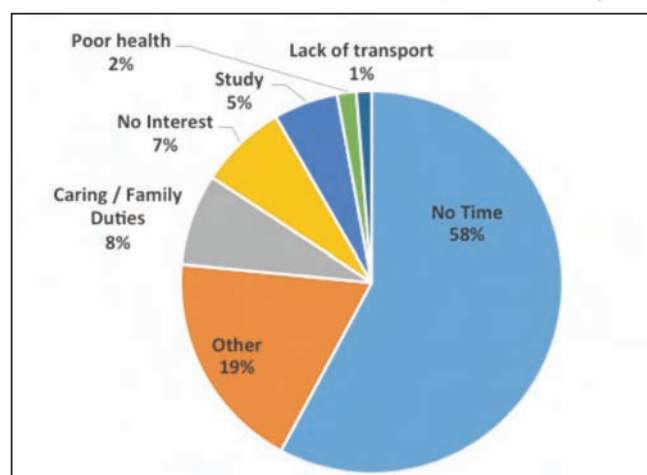
Fig. 4.2.1: Percentage of Persons who belong to at least one Community or Voluntary Group by Community Forum Area



The survey also reveals some differences across age cohorts, which are broadly similar to the patterns identified by the CSO (2009). However, the most significant differences in respect of membership of a community or voluntary organisation, emerge in respect of nationality. While over 40 percent of Irish and UK nationals belong to a group, the corresponding figure for all other nationalities is 17 percent, with Lithuanians being the most distant from civil society.

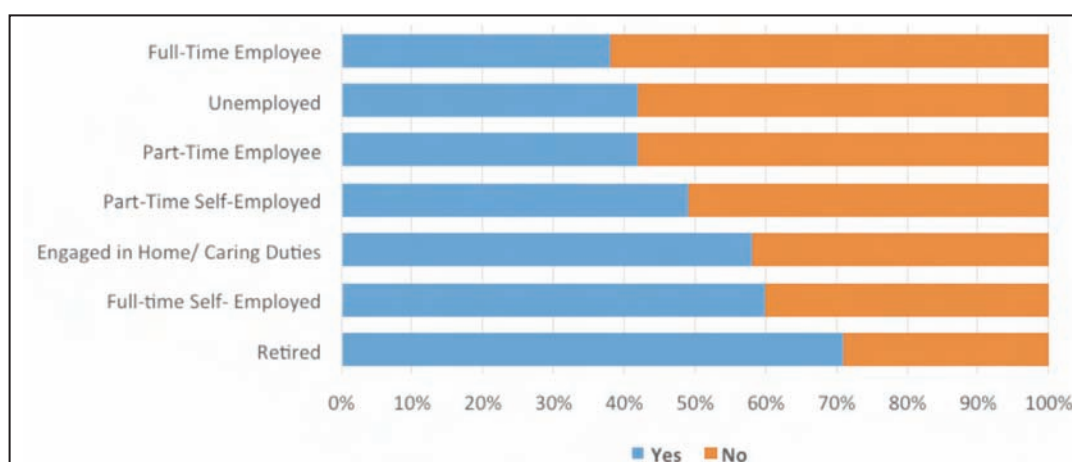
Among those who are currently not members of community or voluntary groups, one-in-three stated that they 'would be interested' in joining a group. This suggests that there is a degree of untapped social capital in South Kerry. When asked to identify the factors that prevent them personally from joining a group, people noted the following:

Fig. 4.2.2: Factors that Prevent People from Joining Community or Voluntary Groups



Having time on one's hands is certainly an enabler of participation in community and voluntary groups and attendance at community events. As the following graph shows, retired people, homemakers and the self-employed are more likely than are others to be members of groups.

Fig. 4.2.3: Membership of Community or Voluntary Groups by Occupational Status

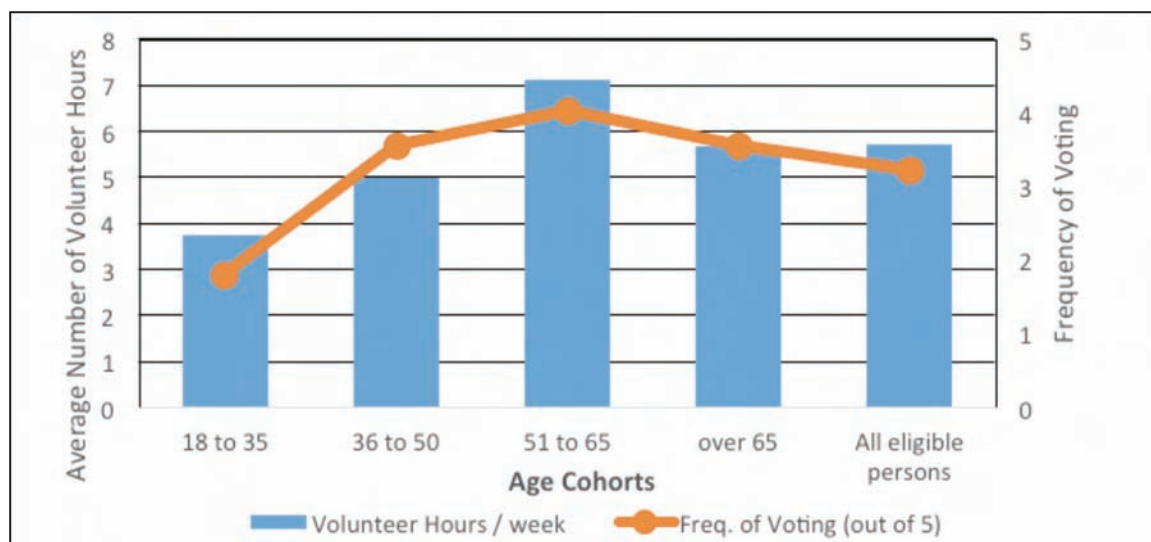


The below average level of participation in community organisations on the part of unemployed people suggests that social and attitudinal barriers exist that prevent some people from joining organisations in their communities. Thus, there is a need for groups to reach out to the unemployed and foreign nationals, while it behoves bodies like SKDP to provide training and confidence-building mechanisms to enable those who are socially excluded to become more active in their communities.

International literature has identified an association between participative and representative democracy. This implies that people who are members of a civil society (voluntary) group are also more likely to trust public institutions and to vote in elections and referenda. The South Kerry dataset bears out this hypothesis, while also revealing some interesting local factors.

Our survey questionnaire presented people with a list of the five most recent elections (local, national and EU) and referenda, and asked them if they had voted in each case. Among those eligible, 45 percent claimed to have voted in all five plebiscites, while 21 percent of people reported that they have not voted on any of the five occasions. The average number of times people had voted was 3.21 (out of 5). However, among those who are members of community or voluntary groups the average frequency was 3.84, as opposed to 2.66 among those who are not community group members. As the following graph shows, persons who vote are also more inclined to devote time to voluntary activities. The graph also shows the significance of age as a determinant of engagement in fora for participative and representative democracy; middle aged people devote the greatest amount of time to voluntary activities and are also the most likely to have voted. In contrast, those aged 18 to 35 score lowest on both indicators.

Fig. 4.2.4: Amount of Time devoted to Community and Voluntary Activity by Mean Frequency of Voting in Elections and Referenda

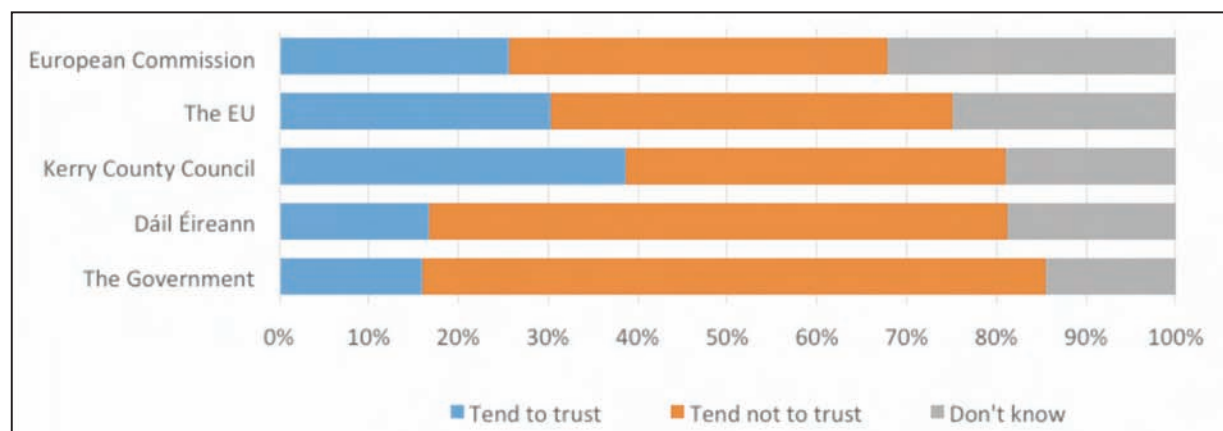


The significance of nationality as a determinant of engagement in local decision-making, already recorded in respect of membership of community and voluntary groups also emerges in respect of participation in elections. Although they are eligible to vote in local elections in Ireland, only 24 percent of Polish nationals and less than 10 percent of Lithuanian nationals reported that they voted. UK and other EU nationals were more likely to vote, but not to the same extent as Irish nationals. Thus, the data reveal lower levels of engagement in both representative and participative democracy among foreign nationals who reside in South Kerry.

The data gathered for this study show that citizens who have lived most or all of their lives in South Kerry and are Irish nationals, are more likely to engage in structures (organisations) and processes (voting) that give them a say in local decision-making. Thus, the findings point to a need for greater engagement with incomers to South Kerry, so as to encourage their participation in all facets of community life. As later sections of this report reveal, one's engagement in community organisations and local decision-making impacts on one's perceptions of community and the vibrancy thereof.

According to the literature, citizens' participation in democratic processes is associated with their perception of public institutions, and specifically the extent to which they trust institutions. The following graph presents the findings in terms of citizens' levels of trust in selected institutions.

Fig. 4.2.5: Citizens' Levels of Trust in Selected Public Institutions



The graph shows that only a minority of citizens 'tend to trust' the selected public institutions, which are key elements of our democracy. Levels of trust in national institutions, namely 'The Government' and 'Dáil Éireann' are particularly low. While declining levels of trust can be associated with current government

policies, and in particular the neo-liberal austerity agenda, they are indicative of a downward trend over several decades. This decline in trust in government is not unique to Ireland, and as successive Eurobarometer studies show, it can be observed in several European countries. The graph also shows that citizens in South Kerry are about twice as likely to trust EU institutions as they are to trust national bodies. Nevertheless, trust in the EU and the European Commission is low, and over one in four citizens replied 'Don't Know' when asked this question. The highest level of trust (at 37%) pertains in respect of local government – Kerry County Council. However, a greater proportion of citizens (40%) state that they tend 'not to trust' their local council. The level of trust in Kerry County Council is higher than the average level of trust in local government among Irish citizens as recorded by Eurobarometer (2012). That Eurobarometer study, which was completed in over thirty countries found that citizens in Ireland and Greece had the lowest levels of trust in local government, 30 percent and 23 percent respectively. In contrast, levels of trust in local government tended to be much higher in other European countries, particularly in the more decentralised states, such as Austria and Sweden.

Some geographical variations can be observed within South Kerry in respect of attitudes to public institutions. Citizens' levels of trust in national government and Dáil Éireann are highest in Greater Kenmare, while people in Killarney exhibited the highest level of trust in Kerry County Council (45% of people stated that they 'tend to trust' KCC). Citizens in Iveragh were the most likely to trust the European institutions, and they recorded the lowest levels of trust in national government and the Dáil.

The figures on citizens' trust in public institutions do not bode well for representative democracy. Successive Eurobarometer studies reveal falling levels of trust in democratic institutions across Europe generally. Before the current economic crisis, citizens were much more likely to trust the EU and national governments than is currently the case. The Eurobarometer of Spring 2007 recorded that 57 percent of citizens stated that they 'tend to trust' the EU, while the corresponding figures for national parliaments and governments were 43 percent and 41 percent respectively. By 2014 (Eurobarometer, May 2014), the percentage of citizens who stated that they 'tend to trust' the EU had fallen to 31 percent, while 28 percent stated that they 'tend to trust' their national parliament and 27 percent their national government. The South Kerry data, which were collected at about the same time as the Eurobarometer datasets, show that attitudes in South Kerry are not untypical of broader European attitudes.

As the following table shows, the levels of trust in selected public institutions are similar among those who are members of community and voluntary groups and those who are not. Thus, the findings on this variable in respect of citizens' attitudes in South Kerry are at somewhat variance from those reported in much of the international literature.

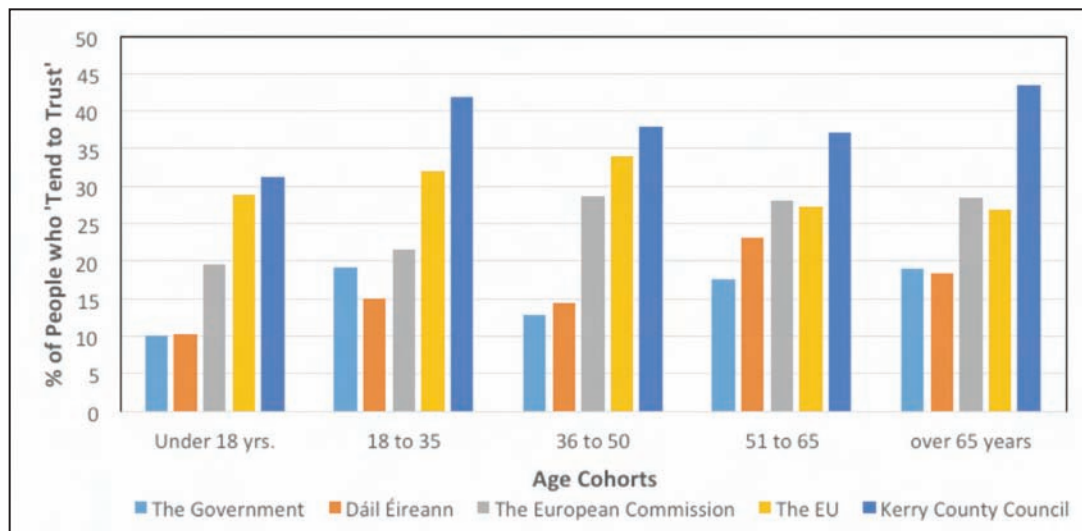
Table 4.2.1: Levels of Trust, as indicated by Percentage of Persons stating they 'Tend to Trust' selected public institutions by membership or not of a community or voluntary body

Institutions	Members of Community / Voluntary Bodies	Non-Members of Community / Voluntary Bodies
The Government	16.3	15.0
Dáil Éireann	17.3	15.7
Kerry County Council	36.0	40.3
The EU	29.2	31.1
European Commission	25.6	25.6

As the following graph shows, age is associated³⁰ with levels of trust in public institutions, in that those aged under 18 exhibit the lowest levels of trust of any age cohort. Persons aged over 65 are the most likely to trust public institutions, although those aged 51 to 65 years are more likely to trust Dáil Éireann.

³⁰ The relationship between Age Cohort and Percentage of Persons who 'Tend to Trust' is statistically significant ($P < .05$) in respect of all institutions, but the statistical relationships are weak – ranging from .093 to .158.

Fig. 4.2.6: Citizens' Levels of Trust in Selected Public Institutions by Age Cohort



Among the independent variables (i.e. age, gender, occupational status and nationality), nationality exhibits the greatest level of association with indicators of both participative and representative democracy. Relative to the survey sample, non-Irish nationals were more likely to reply 'Don't Know' to the questions on trust in public institutions, and with the exception of UK nationals, they are much less likely to vote or to join a community and voluntary organisation than are Irish nationals. Less than a quarter of Polish nationals, the second largest ethnic group in Ireland voted in the most recent local elections, and fewer than one in twenty is a member of a community or voluntary group. The only exception that emerges from this study is membership of sporting organisations (mainly the GAA) on the part of young Poles and Lithuanians. Thus, while considerable work remains to be done in promoting both representative and participative democracy in South Kerry, it is evident that non-Irish nationals need to be prioritised.

4.2.2 Perceptions of Place and Community

As noted in the literature review presented earlier, capturing citizens' views of place enables us to gain insights into the levels of vibrancy in communities. Perceptions audits allow researchers, practitioners, community leaders and service providers to gauge public sentiment and to gather feedback on local services, amenities, inter-community dynamics and future development trajectories.

The perceptions of citizens in South Kerry are presented over the following pages. The presentation begins with the economic indicators of rural vibrancy. Such indicators include the availability of employment, the quality of jobs, the performance of local business, support for local business and the value for money afforded by public bodies. This elaboration is followed by a presentation of citizens' perceptions of the socio-cultural vibrancy of their communities, including the operations of civil society organisations, the provision of cultural, arts and recreational facilities, the inclusion / exclusion of particular population cohorts and the mechanisms for community-led local development. The presentation of community perceptions concludes by examining people's perceptions of the local environment, including water quality, building control and the role of farmers in protecting the landscape.

Economic Vibrancy

The following graph presents a summary overview of citizens' perceptions of economic vibrancy in South Kerry. The graph shows that a majority of people agree with the following four statements:

- Local businesses appreciate local custom.
- Local people are good to support local businesses.
- People in this community have a good standard of living.
- People with business ideas can get support and advice locally.

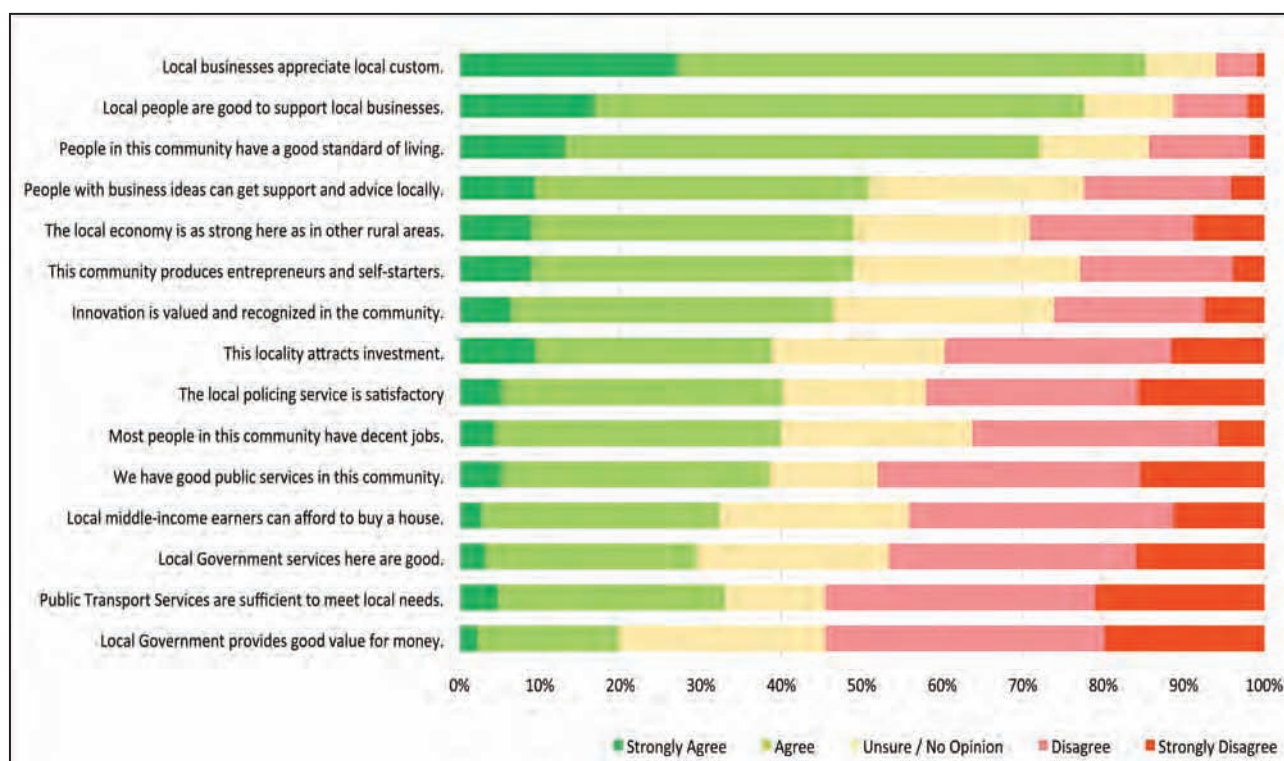
The graph clearly shows a positive perception of the relationship between local businesses and their customers. This relationship is, as evidenced by the international literature, integral to the vibrancy of rural and regional economies. By the same token, vulnerable territories, particularly rural areas that experience

large tourist inflows can be subject to what is known as the 'leaky bucket' or 'rusty bucket' scenario, whereby money flows outward from a territory / region through local residents taking their custom from local shops to foreign-owned businesses and on-line retailers and through multi-national and externally-owned hotel chains, shops and other service industries. Retaining and growing family and local businesses, and ensuring customer loyalty to local businesses are challenging, particularly in a difficult economic climate when short-term discounts appear attractive. However, the survey results suggest that citizens in South Kerry are generally well-motivated in this respect.

A clear majority of people in South Kerry (72%) either agree or strongly agree with the view that people locally have a good standard of living. Consultations with civil society organisations, as part of this research revealed that social factors and the quality of the natural environment are significant in making South Kerry an attractive place in which to live and work. With regard to the economy specifically, tourism is perceived as creating job opportunities at several skill levels and in most parts of South Kerry. Moreover, infrastructure used primarily for tourist purposes, e.g. hotels, walkways, recreational facilities, restaurants and cultural amenities are also used extensively by local people, thus ensuring that tourism not only creates jobs, but also provides opportunities and spaces for recreation and social activities, thereby increasing people's standard of living.

The graph also shows that most respondents believe that people with business ideas can get support and advice locally. The provision of enterprise development supports is a key function of South Kerry Development Partnership, and the fact that a majority of people recognise and acknowledge this service represents positive testament to the Partnership.

Fig. 4.2.7: Levels of Agreement or Disagreement with Statements about Economic Vibrancy among Citizens in South Kerry



Among citizens, just under half agree with the statements that: 'The local economy is as strong here as in other rural areas' and 'Innovation is valued and recognized in the community.' Meanwhile, only 40 percent agree with the statement that 'Most people in this community have decent jobs.' These sentiments are indicative of a concern among citizens regarding the fragility of the South Kerry economy. While agricultural productivity has increased over recent decades, the sector's ability to create jobs has contracted, and the number of farmers in South Kerry has declined. The marine sector is not as well-developed in South Kerry as in other parts of the West of Ireland, and while marine leisure has expanded in recent years, this industry remains vulnerable to seasonality. Manufacturing and construction in South Kerry have suffered

job losses over recent years, although the construction sector expanded temporarily during the decade to 2009. Its growth served to enable small farmers to secure additional income and the sector provided employment for young people who would otherwise have left South Kerry. However, the construction industry has contracted very significantly since the advent of the current economic recession, and has left few lasting benefits locally. Killarney, Kenmare and Cahersiveen experienced very considerable job losses in manufacturing over recent decades. Among the most significant of these were the closure of Pretty Polly in Killarney and Wilson Socks in Cahersiveen. Killorglin has been more successful in industrial terms, and hosts significant employers such as Fexco, Astellas Ireland, Temmler Ireland and ProMed, which between them employ over 400 people. The single largest employer in South Kerry is Liebherr Ireland, whose plant in Fossa employs 650 in the manufacture of cranes and construction equipment. The service sector has expanded in South Kerry over recent years, as it has nationally. This has paralleled a notable increase in female participation in the labour force. The decisions by government to locate public service jobs outside of Dublin – in South Kerry’s case to locate the Legal Aid Board in Cahersiveen and a section of the Department of Justice in Killarney – have certainly helped to promote economic vibrancy. However, more initiatives of this nature are required, as currently, only 5 percent of the South Kerry workforce is in the public sector.

Citizens’ mixed sentiments regarding the local economy are also reflected by the fact that in response to the statement ‘This locality attracts investment,’ 39 percent agreed and 40 percent disagreed. While Killorglin has successfully attracted and sustained foreign direct investment, Cahersiveen and Kenmare do not have any IDA-supported industries. Killarney has seen some IDA-based companies located in the Tiernaboul Industrial Estate on the outskirts of the town. Apart from Liebherr Ireland, which came to Fossa in the 1960s, the largest and longest-established IDA-backed firm in the Killarney area is the US-owned SPX Flow-Technology, which employs 103 people.

Our survey also looked at the perceptions of the public sector’s contribution to economic vibrancy, it finds that citizens are generally critical of levels of public service provision, as the following table shows:

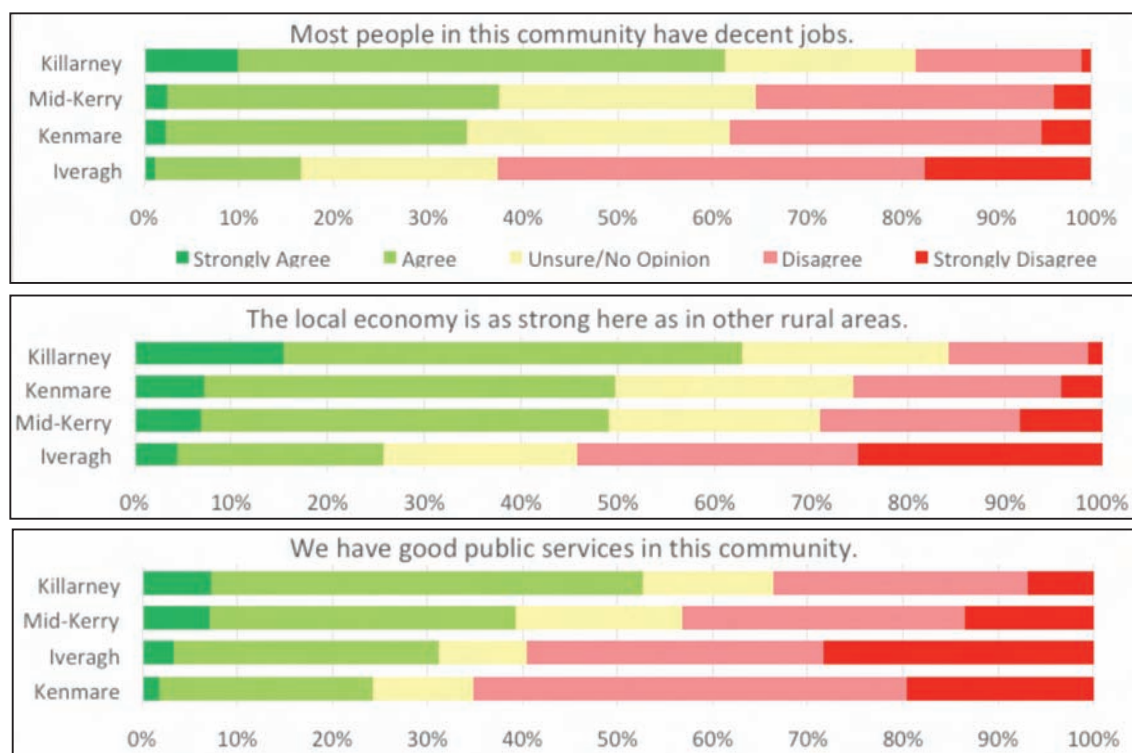
Table 4.2.2: Levels of Agreement with Selected Statements on Public Service Provision in South Kerry

Statement	% of Respondents who either Agree or Strongly Agree
Public Transport Services are sufficient to meet local needs.	33.0
Local Government provides good value for money.	19.8
Local Government services here are good.	29.5

As subsequent sections of this report show, citizens are more likely to be satisfied with the education services than other public services. The graph presented here also illustrates that 40 percent agree with statement that the policing service is satisfactory. While this is a minority view, the proportion of the population sharing it is above the mean for public services in general; 39 percent agree with the statement ‘We have good public services in this community.’ The survey findings clearly underscore the need for greater investment in public service provision in South Kerry.

The survey results reveal the significance of geography as a determinant of citizens’ perceptions of rural vibrancy. On most of the indicators of economic vibrancy, citizens in the Killarney Community Forum Area are more likely than others to express positive perceptions of the local economy. In contrast, citizens in Iveragh are the least positive about their locality’s economy. The following bar graphs are indicative of the responses from across the four community forum areas.

Fig. 4.2.8: Citizens' Perceptions of Economic Vibrancy – on selected indicators, by Community Forum Area



$P < .001$, Cramer's $V = .132$, $.189$ and $.155$

The spatial patterns presented here are similar to those that emerged from the RVM survey among civil society organisations. Both sets of results reveal the persistence of severe structural weaknesses in peninsular South Kerry (Iveragh and Gtr. Kenmare). The survey among community groups documents how unemployment and out-migration represent more significant challenges in Iveragh than elsewhere in South Kerry, while the citizens' survey finds that Iveragh records the lowest level of vibrancy on eleven of the economic indicators, while Kenmare records the lowest levels on four of the fifteen indicators. The following table presents a geographical breakdown of the results in terms of economic vibrancy – showing the values recorded for the Community Forum areas with the highest and lowest levels of agreement with the statements/indicators used to measure vibrancy.

The table shows a considerable disparity between Greater Killarney and the other Community Forum areas in South Kerry. Killarney citizens record the highest levels of agreement with twelve of the given fifteen statements on economic vibrancy. The gap between Killarney and the other forum areas is most pronounced in respect of external inputs into economic development, specifically levels of satisfaction with public service provision and the ability of the locality to attract external investment. Meanwhile, there is greater convergence across South Kerry in respect of the elements of economic vibrancy that generally emerge from within localities' own resources, namely the relationship between local businesses and customers, the support provided to indigenous entrepreneurs and the ability of communities to foster innovation. Thus, despite their structural weaknesses, the Iveragh and Kenmare Community Forum areas record notable levels of economic vibrancy in terms of the social and local dimensions thereof. This suggests that with the appropriate supports from external bodies and public policy, in line with the OECD models presented earlier in the literature review, these more peripheral parts of South Kerry may well be able to attain higher levels of economic development.

In addition to spatial factors, there are other correlates with people's perceptions of the economic vibrancy of their communities. As the following table shows, there are statistically significant age-related variations on a number of indicators. While older people are generally more positive about the state of the local economy, young people exhibit a higher degree of positivity about the living standards and the quality of jobs. However, the cumulative levels of positivity among young people on both these indicators are driven by the responses from Killarney and Mid-Kerry.

Table 4.2.3: Spatial Patterns in Perceptions of Rural Economic Vibrancy – Percentage of Persons Expressing Agreement with Indicators of Vibrancy, with results presented for the Community Forum Areas recording the Highest and Lowest Levels of Agreement³¹ for each Indicator

Indicators of Economic Vibrancy	Highest	% in Agreement	Lowest	% in Agreement	Gap between the highest and lowest
Local businesses appreciate local custom	Kenmare	87.6%	Iveragh	83.9%	3.8%
Local people are good to support local businesses	Killarney	81.9%	Iveragh	72.3%	9.5%
People in this community have a good standard of living	Killarney	83.7%	Iveragh	56.0%	27.7%
People with business ideas can get support and advice locally	Iveragh	60.3%	Killarney	45.3%	15.1%
The local economy is as strong here as in other rural areas	Killarney	62.8%	Iveragh	25.7%	37.1%
This community produces entrepreneurs and self-starters	Kenmare	51.9%	Mid-Kerry	44.8%	7.0%
Innovation is valued and recognized in the community	Killarney	48.6%	Iveragh	43.5%	5.1%
The local policing service is satisfactory.	Killarney	47.7%	Iveragh	34.4%	13.3%
Most people in this community have decent jobs.	Killarney	61.3%	Iveragh	16.5%	44.8%
This locality attracts investment	Killarney	59.4%	Iveragh	25.1%	34.3%
We have good public services in this community.	Killarney	52.6%	Iveragh	24.3%	28.3%
Public Transport Services are sufficient to meet local needs.	Killarney	42.5%	Kenmare	14.7%	27.8%
Local middle-income earners can afford to buy a house.	Mid-Kerry	39.3%	Kenmare	28.8%	10.4%
Local Government services here are good.	Killarney	35.2%	Kenmare	24.3%	10.9%
Local Government provides good value for money.	Killarney	29.0%	Kenmare	11.5%	17.5%

³¹ The values presented here have been computed by adding the percentage of persons who stated they 'agree' to those who stated that they 'strongly agree'.

Table 4.2.4: Levels of Agreement³² across Age Cohorts on Indicators of Economic Vibrancy on which Age-Based Differences are Statistically Significant³³.

Vibrancy Indicator	Age Cohorts					Total	Cramer's V
	Under 18	18 to 35	36 to 50	51 to 65	over 65 years		
Local businesses appreciate local custom.	78.4%	82.7%	88.4%	88.6%	84.3%	85.5%	.095
People in this community have a good standard of living.	86.9%	76.4%	69.4%	65.4%	69.9%	72.0%	.098
People with business ideas can get support and advice locally.	49.4%	38.0%	50.8%	62.4%	54.2%	50.9%	.112
The local economy is as strong here as in other rural areas.	55.1%	45.8%	44.5%	51.5%	55.8%	49.1%	.121
This community produces entrepreneurs and self-starters.	34.8%	42.5%	55.3%	50.9%	57.8%	48.9%	.137
Innovation is valued and recognized in the community.	34.9%	37.6%	46.6%	54.8%	55.8%	46.3%	.118
The local policing service is satisfactory.	38.8%	36.6%	42.1%	38.9%	46.7%	40.1%	.096
Most people in this community have decent jobs.	55.8%	46.8%	36.3%	33.6%	34.6%	40.0%	.131
This locality attracts investment.	40.6%	46.5%	37.3%	33.6%	34.0%	38.7%	.126
Local Government services here are good.	22.0%	26.5%	32.2%	30.5%	34.9%	29.6%	.112

The data presented in this table represent further evidence of the need to ensure that development interventions and endogenous actions in South Kerry are better targeted towards meeting the needs of young people, and are more supportive in enabling them to realise their development potential. The data show in particular, a need to provide greater supports for entrepreneurship and innovation among the youth.

Unlike is the case in respect of participation in civil society, nationality and the length of time one has been living in South Kerry are not significant correlates with perceptions of the vibrancy of the local economy. There is a general convergence in the attitudes of natives and newcomers in respect of the vibrancy of the local economy across the four Community Forum Areas. Indeed, the only variable on which there is any significant (statistically) divergence is 'The local policing service is satisfactory.' Those who have lived in South Kerry for at least 50 percent of their lives were more likely to agree with this statement than were those who had spent most of their lives elsewhere.

³² Values are computed by adding the percentages of persons who respond 'agree' and 'strongly agree.'

³³ Statistically significant = $P < .01$. The text is in bold when values are above average.

Similarly, there was no statistical correlation between nationality and people's responses in respect of ten of the fifteen indicators of economic vibrancy. The following table presents the findings with regard to the indicators for which the variations in responses were statistically significant. It reveals that British and Irish nationals are more aware than are others of how to access business supports. Language may be a factor in this regard, as is the fact that the vast majority of Poles in Ireland are employees rather than self-employed, and those who operate as sole traders are in sectors that are not eligible for public funding. The below average score in respect of 'other EU' nationals is somewhat surprising given that many are in self-employment. Non-Irish and non-British nationals are more likely to view South Kerry as a place that attracts investment. The divergence between Poles and 'other EU' nationals in respect of their perception of public transport services can be attributed to the fact that More Poles reside in Killarney than elsewhere in South Kerry, while German and Dutch nationals tend to live in the Kenmare and Iveragh Community Forum Areas.

Table 4.2.5: Levels of Agreement³⁴ by Nationality on Indicators of Economic Vibrancy on which Age-Based Differences are Statistically Significant³⁵

Economic Indicator	Irish	British	Polish	Other EU	Total
People with business ideas can get support and advice locally.	52.0%	53.3%	42.4%	40.0%	50.9%
The local policing service is satisfactory.	40.1%	44.9%	37.5%	36.6%	40.3%
This locality attracts investment.	37.2%	27.7%	81.3%	61.5%	39.3%
Public Transport Services are sufficient to meet local needs.	34.8%	26.0%	50.0%	9.5%	33.2%
Local Government provides good value for money.	19.8%	11.6%	26.5%	15.0%	19.8%

Socio-Cultural Vibrancy

The survey results reveal that South Kerry (and almost all communities therein) score higher on the indicators of socio-cultural vibrancy than on the exclusively economic indicators. Indeed, as the previous pages have shown, citizens' levels of agreement were highest with the economic indicators that had a local or social dimension than with those relating to external institutions or exogenous interventions. When taken in conjunction with the results of the survey among civil society organisations, these findings suggest that communities in South Kerry are characterised by high levels of innovation, internal dynamism and strong social capital. However, citizens' do not perceive that this capacity on the part of local actors is sufficiently matched by public institutions, and they raise questions about the commitment of exogenous bodies to responding adequately to enabling all parts of South Kerry to realise their development potential.

The following bar-chart (overleaf) presents a summary overview of citizens' perceptions of socio-cultural vibrancy in South Kerry. The graph shows that a majority of people agree with nineteen of the twenty-one statements about the socio-cultural vibrancy of their communities. Over three-quarters of people are in agreement with eight of the indicators, as the following table shows:

³⁴ Values are computed by adding the percentages of persons who respond 'agree' and 'strongly agree'.

³⁵ Statistically significant = $P < .01$. The text is in bold when values are above average.

Table 4.2.6: Percentage of Persons in Agreement with Statements about Socio-Cultural Vibrancy in their Communities

Indicators of Socio-Cultural Vibrancy	% of Persons in Agreement
People greet each other, regardless of whether or not they know them.	84.0
We have at least one public festival annually.	82.2
Citizens are committed to this community - they have a strong sense that they belong here.	80.1
We have good sports and recreation facilities in this community.	79.2
There are good facilities for meetings locally.	78.2
The community has a distinct culture and heritage that are appreciated by the community.	78.1
Citizens are interested in national and international news and current affairs.	77.0
You see many active, healthy-looking seniors in this locality.	75.2

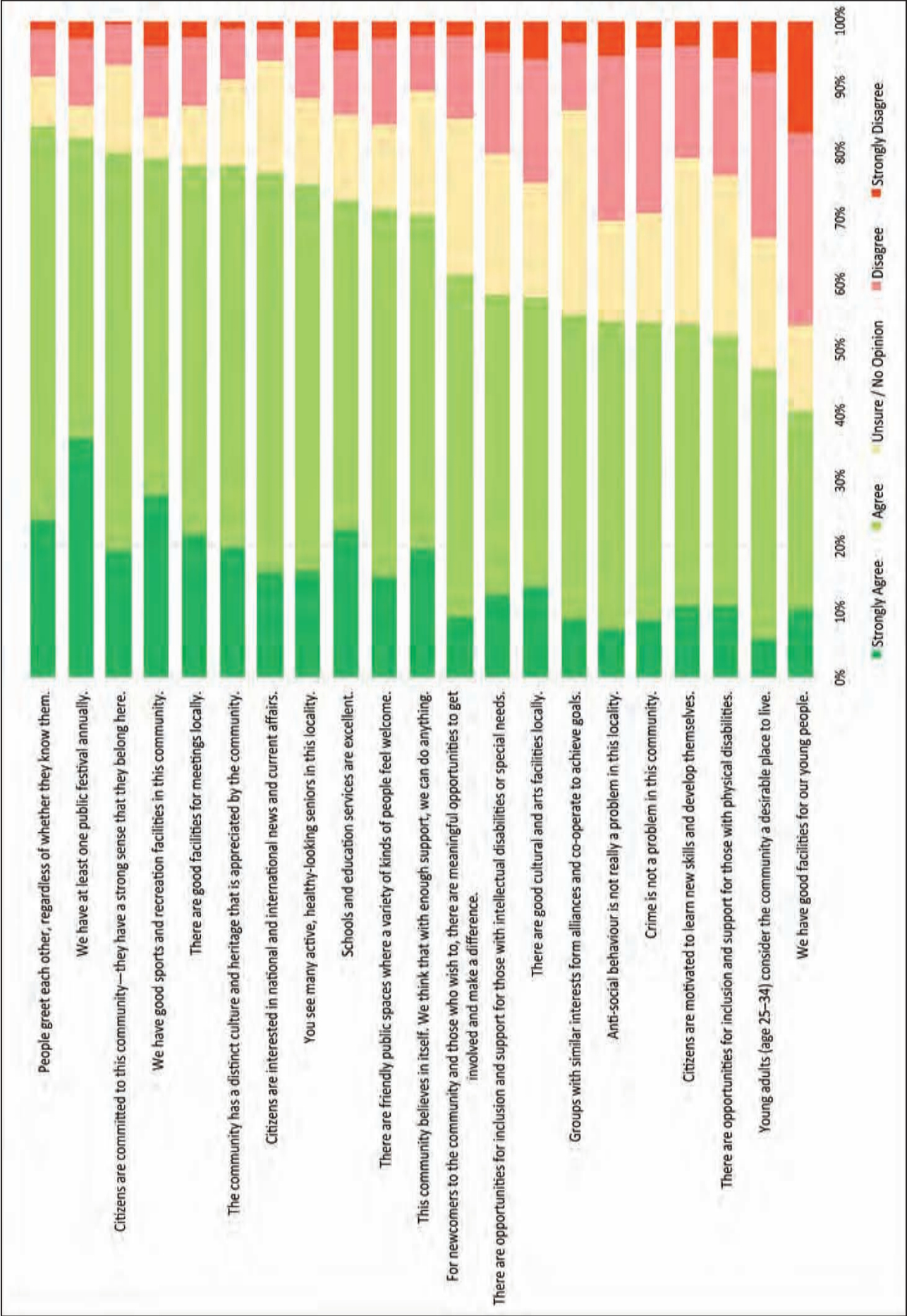
These sentiments imply that people perceive their communities to be friendly, welcoming and embracing and they feel proud of their localities. Consultations undertaken during the fieldwork for this survey and that with civil society groups reveal how people value the support of friends, neighbours and community, particularly during times of need such as during periods of illness and bereavement. The significant milestones in the lives of people in South Kerry are generally celebrated with one's local community. Thus, pride of place and loyalty to the parish and community are part of the socialisation process.

As the presentation of the findings of the civil society survey demonstrated, communities in South Kerry have, over the past twenty years, made very considerable strides in enhancing community facilities. Several community centres have been refurbished and extended, and sports and recreational clubs have enhanced their facilities, modernised their equipment and enabled more people to participate in their activities. The outputs of these efforts on the parts of civil society organisations are among the determinants of the positive perceptions of community facilities expressed by citizens. Citizens are however, more critical of the perceived lack of arts and cultural facilities in their communities, and in particular of the ways in which communities cater for young people.

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Fig. 4.2.9: Levels of Agreement or Disagreement with Statements about Socio-Cultural Vibrancy among Citizens in South Kerry



As the graph also shows, a majority of people in South Kerry believe their local communities to be welcoming and inclusive. They perceive that their communities cater for the needs and contributions of older people. They are however, less enthusiastic about the supports and services provided to people with disabilities and special needs and the extent to which newcomers are included in local communities. As the following table shows, there are some notable differences on the basis of nationality in response to the statement 'For newcomers to the community and those who wish to, there are meaningful opportunities to get involved and make a difference in the community.' British nationals are the least likely to agree with this statement, while Irish nationals have a more favourable view of the openness of their own communities than do newcomers in general.

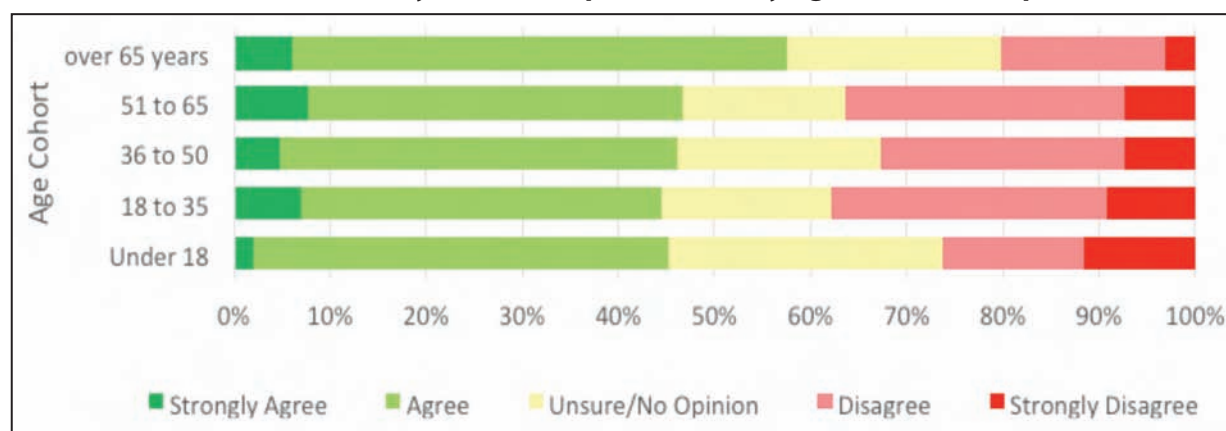
Table 4.2.7: Levels of Agreement / Disagreement with the Statement 'For newcomers to the community and those who wish to, there are meaningful opportunities to get involved and make a difference in the community' by Nationality of Respondent

Nationality of Respondent	Level of Agreement or Disagreement				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure/ Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
Irish	2.2	12.0	23.0	53.1	9.8
British	6.1	14.3	30.6	40.8	8.2
Other Nationalities	1.1	15.7	30.3	46.1	6.7

P<.01. Cramer's V=.14

As the following graph shows, there is little discernible difference between the responses of young people and those in other age cohorts in their perception of communities' attractiveness to young people. When placed in the context of the broader findings unearthed in this study, the responses suggest a concern over the lack of employment opportunities, and the forced out-migration of young people.

Fig. 4.2.10: Levels of Agreement / Disagreement with the Statement 'Young adults (age 25–34) consider the community a desirable place to live' by Age Cohort of Respondent



Citizens' responses to the indicators of socio-cultural vibrancy reveal a concern with crime and anti-social behaviour. Rural crime has been highlighted extensively by the Irish media and by NGOs, including those working with older people over recent years. While some communities have well organised community alert schemes, and several groups in South Kerry administer supports such as alarm systems to rural residents, there is a widespread and growing concern among people that reductions in Garda numbers and the closures of rural Garda stations is leading to increased criminality.

The following table presents a geographical breakdown of the results in terms of socio-cultural vibrancy - showing the values recorded for the Community Forum areas with the highest and lowest levels of agreement with the indicators used to measure vibrancy.

Table 2.4.8: Spatial Patterns in Perceptions of Rural Socio-Cultural Vibrancy - Percentage of Persons Expressing Agreement with Indicators of Vibrancy, with results presented for the Community Forum Areas recording the Highest and Lowest Levels of Agreement³⁶ for each Indicator.

Indicators of Socio-Cultural Vibrancy	Highest	% in Agreement	Lowest	% in Agreement	Gap
People greet each other, regardless of whether or not they know them.	Kenmare	92.3%	Mid-K.	80.2%	12.1%
We have at least one public festival annually.	Iveragh	89.8%	Killarney	76.9%	12.9%
Citizens are committed to this community- they have a strong sense that they belong here.	Kenmare	87.5%	Killarney	77.4%	10.1%
We have good sports and recreation facilities in this community.	Killarney	86.3%	Kenmare	64.7%	21.6%
There are good facilities for meetings locally.	Iveragh	86.2%	Kenmare	62.2%	24.0%
The community has a distinct culture and heritage that is appreciated by the community.	Kenmare	81.8%	Mid-K.	76.6%	5.2%
Citizens are interested in national and international news and current affairs.	Kenmare	88.9%	Mid-K.	71.2%	17.7%
You see many active, healthy-looking seniors in this locality.	Kenmare	77.3%	Killarney	74.3%	3.0%
Schools and education services are excellent.	Kenmare	77.5%	Iveragh	68.1%	9.4%
There are friendly public spaces where a variety of kinds of people feel welcome.	Iveragh	75.3%	Mid-K.	70.0%	5.3%
This community believes in itself. We think that with enough support, we can do anything.	Iveragh	22.5%	Killarney	17.0%	5.4%
For newcomers to the community and those who wish to, there are meaningful opportunities to get involved and make a difference.	Kenmare	68.0%	Killarney	55.0%	13.0%
There are opportunities for inclusion & support for those with intellectual disabilities/ special needs.	Iveragh	70.5%	Kenmare	37.0%	33.5%
There are good cultural and arts facilities locally.	Iveragh	67.2%	Mid-K.	49.0%	18.2%
Groups with similar interests form alliances & co-operate to achieve goals.	Killarney	57.3%	Kenmare	51.3%	6.0%
Anti-social behaviour is not really a problem in this locality.	Kenmare	79.5%	Mid-K.	42.4%	37.2%
Crime is not a problem in this community.	Iveragh	68.6%	Mid-K.	41.8%	26.9%
Citizens are motivated to learn new skills and develop themselves.	Mid-K.	60.2%	Kenmare	46.7%	13.4%
There are opportunities for inclusion and support for those with physical disabilities.	Killarney	64.1%	Kenmare	32.3%	31.7%
Young adults (age 25–34) consider the community a desirable place to live.	Killarney	66.7%	Iveragh	30.4%	36.3%
We have good facilities for our young people.	Mid-K.	53.3%	Kenmare	20.6%	32.7%

³⁶ The values presented here have been computed by adding the percentage of persons who stated they 'agree' to those who stated that they 'strongly agree.'

The survey findings in respect of the spatial patterns in the socio-cultural vibrancy of communities in South Kerry differs from that observed in respect of economic vibrancy. The data showed that in economic terms, Killarney is much more vibrant than other parts of South Kerry, and that citizens perceive a considerable gap between Killarney and peninsular South Kerry. However, in their assessment of the socio-cultural vibrancy of their communities, citizens are generally more upbeat, and all four Community Forum areas come out on top in respect of at least two of the indicators of socio-cultural vibrancy. The Kenmare and Iveragh Community Forum areas, which had the lowest levels of economic vibrancy score highest in respect of socio-cultural vibrancy. On the twenty-one indicators presented to citizens, Kenmare scores highest of the four areas in respect of eight indicators, while Iveragh comes out on top for seven indicators. Killarney and Mid-Kerry record the highest scores on four and two indicators respectively.

Kenmare's high scores in terms of eight indicators of socio-cultural vibrancy are associated with citizens' perceptions of their communities as friendly and welcoming places. Kenmare and its environs are seen as being inclusive of newcomers and older people. This positive perception is articulated by citizens' in Kenmare town as well as those in the surrounding communities. The Kenmare Forum Area is also perceived as having a cultural identity and heritage that are valued and appreciated, while the area is also perceived as safe and tranquil. However, Kenmare, along with Mid-Kerry, also has the lowest scores on more of the socio-cultural indicators than any other Forum Area – seven out of twenty-one. These low scores can be attributed to citizens' levels of dissatisfaction with the local sporting facilities and the amenities available for young people and those with special needs.

Iveragh's positive scores on seven of the twenty-one socio-cultural indicators are based on a pride in endogenous activities, including the provision and development of community facilities, the hosting of festivals and the maintenance of attractive public spaces. Like Kenmare, the area is perceived as peaceful. Citizens in Iveragh are however concerned about the area's attractiveness to young people, and while this may be associated with a level of dissatisfaction with education services locally, it is more directly associated with the area's economic weaknesses.

Killarney registers the highest scores in respect of four of the indicators of socio-cultural vibrancy. Interestingly, in the context of the Rural Alliances project, the survey results show the Killarney Forum area as having the highest level of agreement among citizens in response to the statement 'Groups with similar interests form alliances and co-operate to achieve goals.' A micro-geographical analysis of the responses, reveal that within the Killarney Community Forum area levels of agreement with this statement are highest among people who live in Killarney Town, rather than among those who live in the outlying communities in the Forum Area. Over the past three years, the Killarney Local Government Action Group, which is a cross-party pressure group that opposed the abolition of Killarney Town Council and which favours a more devolved or decentralised model of government in Ireland, has pointed out that the Town Council³⁷ traditionally played an important role in facilitating local bodies including town traders, tourism stakeholders and benevolent bodies to work collaboratively. Moreover, the Town Council, and in particular the office of the Mayor provided a focal point for civic functions, including the hosting of large-scale national events and the development and maintenance of international linkages. The cohesion among groups in Killarney has contributed to the town's successes on many fronts, not least in winning the national Tidy Towns Competition. Among local citizens, Killarney is seen as offering good facilities for people with special needs and as an attractive place for young people.

Mid-Kerry also scores well in respect of amenities for young people. Indeed, the area is renowned for the sporting achievements of its people, not just in football, but also in cycling and athletics. Citizens in Mid-Kerry are more concerned than are citizens elsewhere about the levels of crime and anti-social behaviour in their locality. They would also like to see more arts and cultural facilities. These sentiments were expressed at a time when SKDP was in the initial phases of promoting the development of the Old Mill in Killorglin, and suggest that in doing so, the Partnership is responding to a local need and filling a void.

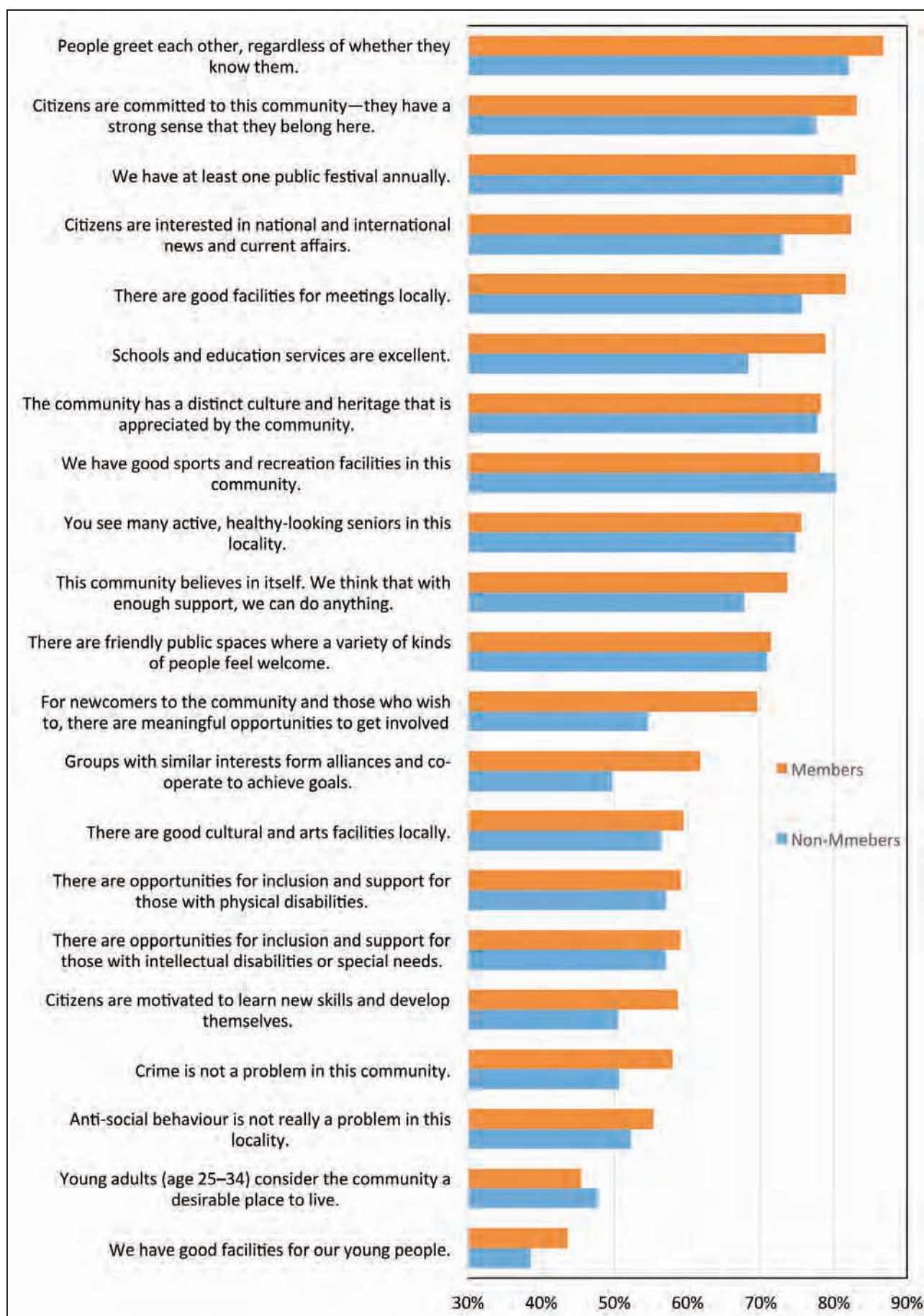
³⁷ With the coming into force of the Local Government (Reform) Act, 2014, Killarney UDC and 79 other town-level authorities across the State were abolished and absorbed into County Councils.

In addition to the geographical variations, there are also variations in the responses to the socio-cultural indicators in respect of other independent variables. As the following graph shows, people who are members of a community or voluntary group are more likely to express agreement with the statements about the vibrancy of their communities than are non-members. Group members have a more favourable perception of their communities on all but two of the twenty-one indicators. When the data presented in the graph are controlled for age, group members are more positive about the socio-cultural vibrancy of their communities on all indicators. The divergence in opinions is greatest in respect of the ability of local groups to form alliances and to work collaboratively, which suggests that either non-group members are less informed about the work of local community groups, or that group members are more likely to praise the work of their own organisations. The differences in opinions are statistically significant ($P < .01$) in respect of the following indicators:

- This community believes in itself. We think that with enough support, we can do anything (Cramer's $V = .164$).
- For newcomers to the community and those who wish to, there are meaningful opportunities to get involved and make a difference in the community (Cramer's $V = .202$).
- Citizens are interested in national and international news and current affairs (Cramer's $V = .12$).
- There are opportunities for inclusion and support for those with physical disabilities (Cramer's $V = .134$).
- Groups with similar interests form alliances and co-operate to achieve goals (Cramer's $V = .169$).
- The community has a distinct culture and heritage that is appreciated by the community (Cramer's $V = .130$).
- Schools and education services are excellent (Cramer's $V = .123$).



Fig. 4.2.11: Percentage of Persons Expressing Agreement with Indicators of Vibrancy by Membership or Not of a Community / Voluntary Association



Gender is not a significant determinant of citizens' perceptions of socio-cultural vibrancy in any of the community forum areas. The only indicators with which women are more likely to agree than are men (statistically significant relationships i.e. $P < .01$) are as follows:

Table 4.2.9: Levels of Agreement among Males and Females on Indicators of Socio-Cultural Vibrancy on which Gender-Based Differences are Statistically Significant

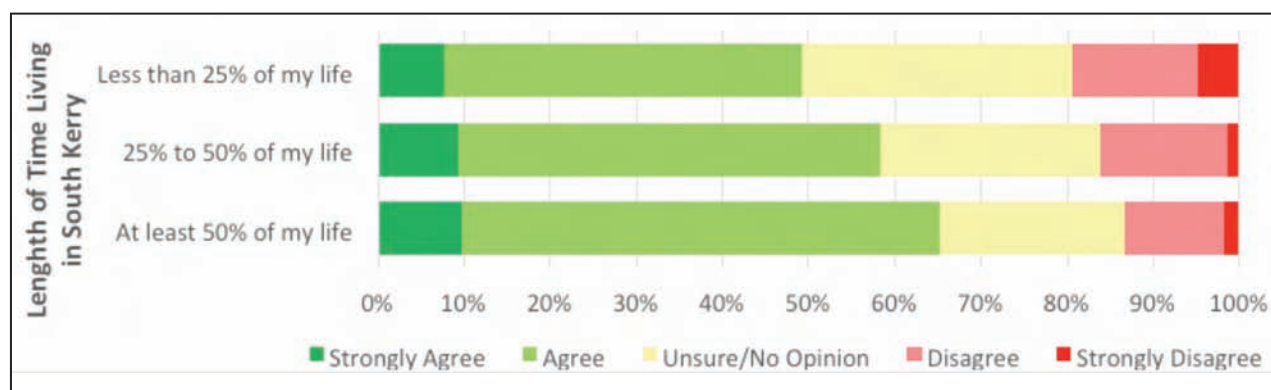
Vibrancy Indicator	% of Women who Agree or Strongly Agree	% of Men who Agree or Strongly Agree
Citizens are interested in national and international news and current affairs.	82.2%	70.1%
Schools and education services are excellent.	74.8%	68.8%
Young adults (age 25–34) consider the community a desirable place to live.	43.7%	49.9

As is the case with the economic indicators of rural vibrancy, the survey finds a general convergence in attitudes to socio-cultural elements of community among newcomers and those who have lived most or all of their lives in South Kerry. The only two variables on which there is a significant level of divergence are:

- 'Anti-social behaviour is not really a problem in this locality.' Those who have lived locally for 25 percent to 50 percent of their lives were least likely to agree with this statement.
- 'Citizens are interested in national and international news and current affairs.' Level of agreement with this statement was highest among those who have lived most or all of their lives in South Kerry (80%) and lowest among those who live locally for less than 25% of their lives (65%).

However, as the following graph shows, there is also a notable (albeit not statistically significant) difference in respect of communities' attractiveness to young people.

Fig. 4.2.12: Levels of Agreement / Disagreement with the Statement 'Young adults (age 25–34) consider the community a desirable place to live' by Length of Time Living in South Kerry



Relative to other independent variables, age has a more significant bearing on citizens' perceptions of socio-cultural vibrancy – responses vary more extensively across age cohorts. Indeed, of all the independent variables catered for in this study, age is the most significant in terms of its impact on attitudes to socio-cultural vibrancy. The following table presents the indicators on which responses differed significantly according to respondents' ages:

Table 4.2.10: Levels of Agreement across Age Cohorts on Indicators of Socio-Cultural Vibrancy on which Age-Based Differences are Statistically Significant

Vibrancy Indicator	Age Category					Total	Cramer's V
	Under 18	18 to 35	36 to 50	51 to 65	Over 65 years		
People greet each other, regardless of whether or not they know them.	63%	84%	88%	87%	87%	84%	.120
Citizens are committed to this community they have a strong sense that they belong here.	72%	68%	84%	88%	85%	80%	.130
Citizens are interested in national and international news and current affairs.	52%	67%	81%	87%	88%	77%	.150
You see many active, healthy-looking seniors in this locality.	57%	72%	75%	81%	85%	75%	.128
Schools and education services are excellent.	61%	61%	76%	81%	83%	73%	.130
This community believes in itself. We think that with enough support, we can do anything.	57%	60%	73%	77%	84%	70%	.114
For newcomers to the community and those who wish to, there are meaningful opportunities to get involved and make a difference.	54%	44%	67%	70%	75%	61%	.126
There are good cultural and arts facilities locally.	54%	50%	59%	62%	68%	58%	.111
Groups with similar interests form alliances and co-operate to achieve goals.	47%	45%	59%	58%	69%	55%	.115
Anti-social behaviour is not really a problem in this locality.	31%	50%	58%	65%	52%	54%	.108
There are opportunities for inclusion and support for those with physical disabilities.	55%	53%	50%	47%	64%	52%	.098

The data presented in this table reveal that older people tend to have a more positive perception of the socio-cultural vibrancy of their communities than do those aged under sixty-five. Middle-aged people record above average levels of positivity on most variables too. However, young people (those under 35 years of age) are less positive about the levels of socio-cultural vibrancy in their communities. Thus, as previous sections of this report have shown, there is a considerable need in South Kerry, particularly outside of Killarney, for greater participation by, and involvement of young people in several facets of local life.

This report has already noted how participation in community groups and attitudes to public institutions are associated with one's nationality. However, nationality is less significant as a correlate of perceptions of socio-cultural vibrancy at community level. On most of the twenty-one indicators, thereof, there are no significant differences in the responses provided by people of different nationalities. The following table deals with the six variables on which the level of dispersion (on the basis of nationality) was statistically significant. The table presents the percentage of persons (by nationality) expressing agreement with various indicators of socio-cultural vibrancy, as they apply to their local communities.

Table 4.2.11: Levels of Agreement across Nationalities on Indicators of Socio-Cultural Vibrancy on which Differences are Statistically Significant

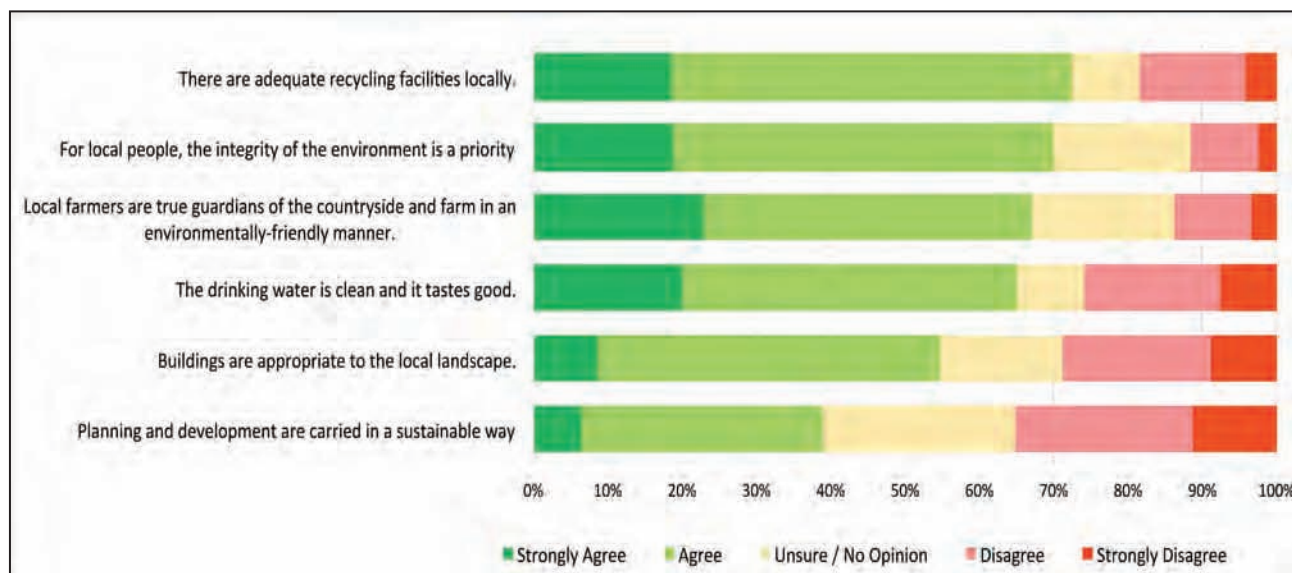
Socio-Cultural Indicator	Irish	British	Polish	Other EU	Total
You see many active, healthy-looking seniors in this locality.	75.8%	64.6%	82.9%	70.7%	74.9%
Schools and education services are excellent.	74.9%	56.5%	51.5%	74.4%	72.8%
There are friendly public spaces where a variety of kinds of people feel welcome.	69.3%	73.5%	96.9%	90.5%	71.4%
For newcomers to the community and those who wish to, there are meaningful opportunities to get involved and make a difference in the community.	62.9%	49.0%	42.4%	60.5%	61.1%
Crime is not a problem in this community.	54.6%	49.0%	57.6%	59.5%	54.2%
We have good facilities for our young people.	40.7%	30.6%	51.5%	36.6%	40.1%

As the table shows, Irish nationals have the most favourable view of the socio-economic vibrancy of their communities, while British nationals tend to have the least favourable perspective. Non-Irish nationals perceive communities in South Kerry as being friendly and welcoming. However, the data presented in this table in respect of the opportunities provided to them to contribute to, and get involved in making a difference in their communities, suggest that more needs to be done on the parts of host communities and support agencies to make civil society structures more representative and inclusive of local populations. The data also reveal that British and Polish nationals have concerns regarding the quality of local schools. While the ethos of schools may be an issue for some British nationals, this is generally positively perceived among Poles, who instead are more likely to express concerns regarding the low levels of community and parental input into the life of schools that pertain in Ireland.

Environmental Vibrancy

The following graph presents a summary overview of citizens' perceptions of environmental vibrancy in South Kerry. The graph shows that a majority of people agree with five of the six statements about the vibrancy of the physical environment in South Kerry. The graph clearly shows a positive perception of the local environment.

Fig. 4.2.13: Levels of Agreement or Disagreement with Statements about Environmental Vibrancy, among Citizens in South Kerry



The survey findings show that over 60% of respondents are satisfied with the local recycling facilities, people's attitude to the environment, the conservation role played by local farmers and the quality of the drinking water. The indicators on which they express the lowest levels of satisfaction relate to planning and the built environment. Not surprisingly, levels of dissatisfaction on these indicators are highest in the communities that have been blighted by ribbon development and ghost estates.

The following table presents a geographical breakdown of the results in terms of environmental vibrancy – showing the values recorded for the Community Forum areas with the highest and lowest levels of agreement with the indicators used to measure vibrancy. A statistical analysis of these data reveal that on four of the six indicators, there are no significant differences in the responses across the four areas. However, there is a discernible level of significance in the extent to which people in the Kenmare Community Forum area are more likely than others to view the integrity of the environment as a priority. The gap between Killarney and the other areas in respect of the sustainability of the way in which building and development are undertaken is also significant. The results reveal considerable disquiet about the processes applied in the Kenmare Community Forum Area. This may be among the reasons as to why the level of trust in Kerry County Council is lower in Kenmare than is the case elsewhere in South Kerry.



Table 4.2.12: Spatial Patterns in Perceptions of Environmental Vibrancy – Percentage of Persons Expressing Agreement with Indicators of Vibrancy, with results presented for the Community Forum Areas recording the Highest and Lowest Levels of Agreement³⁸ for each Indicator

Indicators of Environmental Vibrancy	Highest	% in Agreement	Lowest	% in Agreement	Gap between the highest and lowest
For local people, the integrity of the environment is a priority.	Kenmare	81.3%	Mid-Kerry	61.9%	19.4%
The drinking water is clean and it tastes good.	Iveragh	69.7%	Mid-Kerry	60.0%	9.7%
There are adequate recycling facilities locally.	Mid-Kerry	76.6%	Kenmare	70.4%	6.1%
Planning and development are carried in a sustainable way.	Killarney	47.2%	Kenmare	28.9%	18.3%
Buildings are appropriate to the local landscape.	Killarney	59.2%	Kenmare	50.0%	9.2%
Local farmers are true guardians of the countryside and farm in an environmentally-friendly manner.	Mid-Kerry	70.4%	Killarney	64.1%	6.2%
For local people, the integrity of the environment is a priority.	Kenmare	81.3%	Mid-Kerry	61.9%	19.4%

While persons of all nationalities are more concerned about the quality of the built environment and the operation of the planning regime than they are about any other aspects of the environment in South Kerry, some statistically significant differences emerge in respect of attitudes to the provision of recycling facilities, the conservation role played by local farmers and the quality of the drinking water. On each of these three indicators, Irish nationals are more likely than any others to express satisfaction. The divergence between the attitudes of Irish nationals and others is most pronounced in respect of attitudes to the behaviour of farmers. Non-Irish nationals are more likely than are Irish nationals to express dissatisfaction with the way in which farming is undertaken in South Kerry in terms of its impacts on the natural environment.

Table 4.2.13: Levels of Agreement by Nationality on Indicators of Environmental Vibrancy on which Differences are Statistically Significant

Socio-Cultural Indicator	Irish	British	Polish	Other EU	Total
There are adequate recycling facilities locally.	73.9%	70.0%	67.6%	73.8%	73.2%
Local farmers are true guardians of the countryside and farm in an environmentally-friendly manner.	70.9%	43.5%	50.0%	34.1%	66.6%
The drinking water is clean and it tastes good.	68.5%	57.1%	42.9%	38.1%	65.4%

³⁸ The values presented here have been computed by adding the percentage of persons who stated they 'agree' to those who stated that they 'strongly agree'.

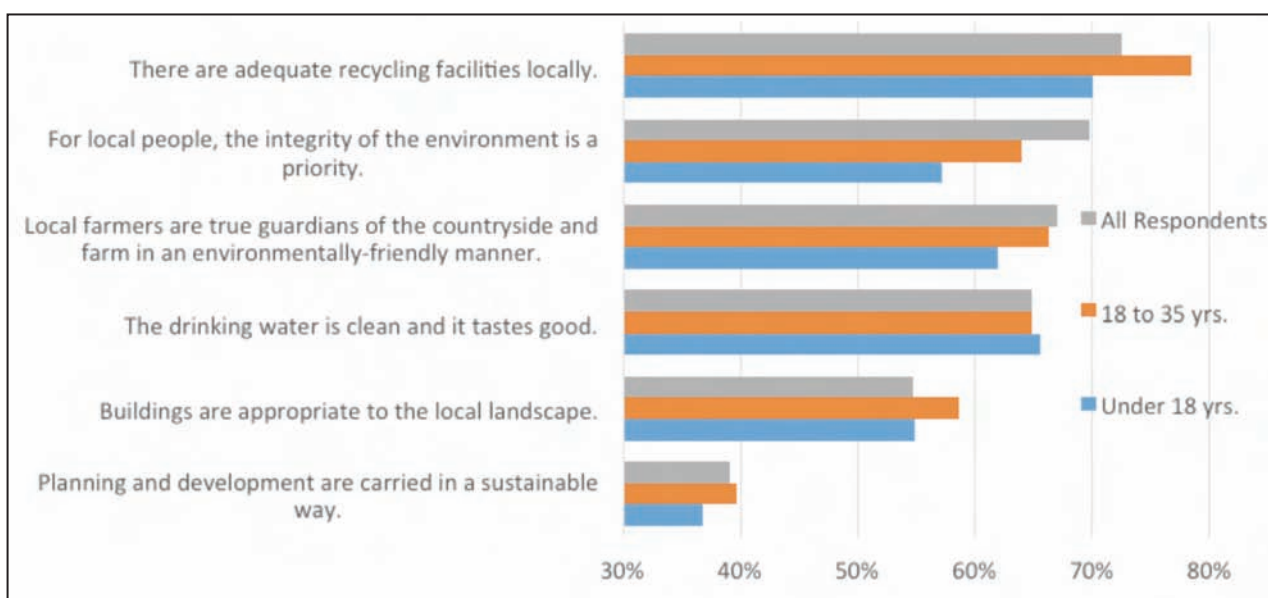
There are also some clear age-related patterns emerging from this dataset. Younger people are more likely to be critical, while older people are more complacent about local people's attitudes to the environment. While 82 percent of those aged over 65 believe that 'For local people, the integrity of the environment is a priority,' only 57 percent of those aged under eighteen agree. The following table presents the results by age cohort.

Table 4.2.14: Levels of Agreement, by Age Cohort, on Indicators of Environmental Vibrancy on which Differences are Statistically Significant

Vibrancy Indicator	Age Cohort					Total	Cramer's V
	Under 18	18 to 35	36 to 50	51 to 65	Over 65 years		
For local people, the integrity of the environment is a priority.	57.1%	64.0%	68.6%	76.1%	81.7%	69.8%	.102
The drinking water is clean and it tastes good.	65.6%	64.8%	54.8%	68.2%	80.7%	64.9%	.118
Planning and development are carried in a sustainable way.	36.8%	39.7%	39.8%	34.7%	48.0%	39.0%	.141

Among young people (those aged under 18 and those aged 18 to 35), the levels of agreement with the statements about environmental vibrancy are as follows:

Fig. 4.2.14: Levels of Agreement with Indicators of Environmental Vibrancy as they apply to Respondents' Local Communities – Young People and those in All Other Age Cohorts



The graph shows that young people, particularly those aged under eighteen are more likely than are members of the population generally to have concerns regarding environmental practices and people's attitudes and behaviour.

4.2.3 Conclusion

While it is not the purpose of this report to make value judgements on the vibrancy of individual communities, citizens and those involved in rural development and service provision are entitled to data, benchmarks and signposts to enable them to take stock of community resources and to establish baselines and targets in planning and goal-setting. The availability of comparative data and benchmarks has been extensively promoted by NGOs and lauded in international literature on regional and territorial development (ESPON, 2009; Douglas, 2010; Pike, 2011). However, as Cochrane (2011) notes, indicators of levels of local and regional development need to move beyond competitiveness criteria, and need to focus on development processes and the strengths of local systems. The indicators applied and the data presented in this study go a considerable way to providing communities in South Kerry with tangible measures of their assets, the resources available to them, outstanding issues and potential development trajectories. Moreover, they provide communities with mechanisms through which they can appraise and review development interventions on an ongoing basis.

The international literature review presented in Chapter Two of this report suggests that in promoting regional and territorial development, it is essential to recognise and operate on the basis of local diversity, and to tap into local resources – tangible and latent – in promoting sustainable development. The merits of taking a locally-differentiated approach have been underscored by the findings from South Kerry. While there are overall trends and similarities across this micro-region, internal variations are extensive. Understanding this geographical variety and incorporating it into the formulation and evaluation of development strategies are essential if resources are to be targeted and optimised.

The following table presents the cumulative vibrancy scores for South Kerry. The values presented here have been computed from the indicators in respect of the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, socio-cultural and environmental. This report has already presented the responses for vibrancy indicators individually, i.e. for the fifteen indicators of economic vibrancy, twenty-one indicators of socio-cultural vibrancy and six indicators of environmental vibrancy. The data presented here below are the overall scores (1 = negligible vibrancy and 5 = absolute vibrancy)³⁹.

Table 4.2.15: Overall Vibrancy Scores for South Kerry on the Dimensions of Sustainable Development

	Economic Vibrancy - Cumulative Score	Socio-Cultural Vibrancy - Cumulative Score	Environmental Vibrancy - Cumulative Score
Mean	2.92	3.40	3.28
Median	2.93	3.48	3.33

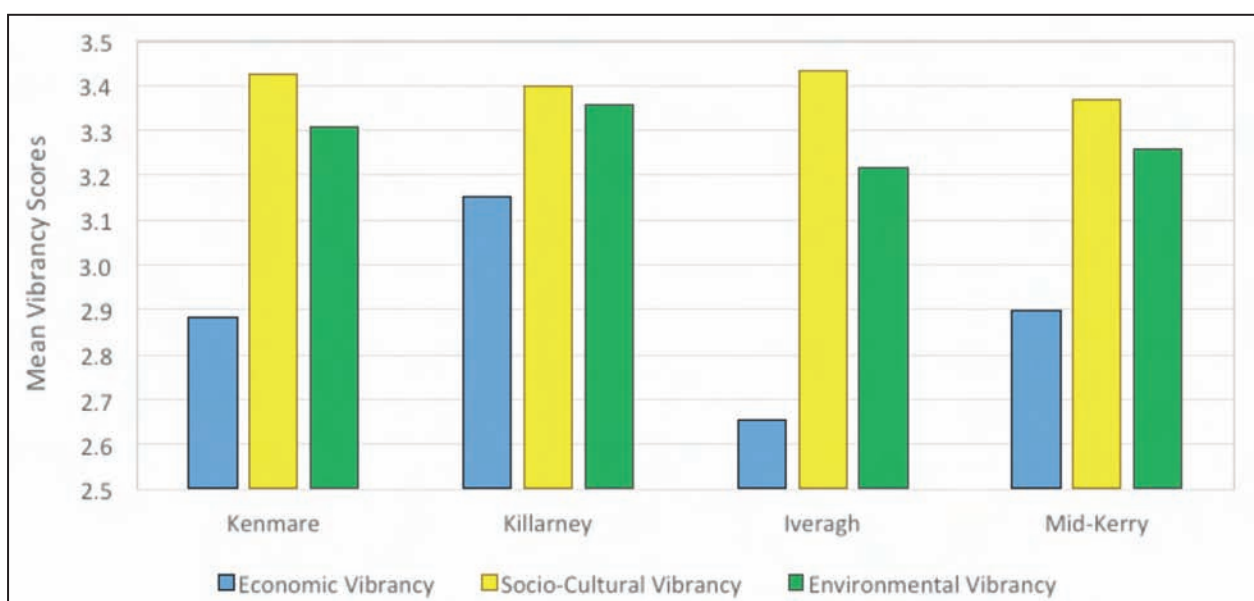
Taking South Kerry as a single unit, the data reveal that on average, citizens have a more favourable perception of their communities' socio-economic vibrancy than they do of South Kerry's standing in respect of the other dimensions of sustainable development. That said, they generally believe the local environment to be of good quality, while they are less positive about the level of economic vibrancy in South Kerry. These cumulative findings are consistent with the analysis of the responses to individual indicators, as presented earlier.

³⁹ All indicators have been weighted equally. Values were assigned on the basis of: Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neither Agree nor Disagree = 3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly Disagree = 1. Other responses (e.g. Don't Know) were excluded from the calculations.

In line with the recommendations for a micro-geography approach to territorial development and the promotion of community vibrancy, the following series of graphs presents data on rural vibrancy in South Kerry at a local level – firstly at the level of the Community Forum Areas⁴⁰ and secondly at community level (twenty-eight communities).

As the following graph (fig. 4.2.15) shows, socio-economic vibrancy is almost equally strong in each of the Forum areas. Communities need to work to maintain the currently high levels of social capital, and as this report has already acknowledged, there is a need to ensure civil society is more inclusive, particularly of the youth and foreign nationals. Scores on environmental vibrancy indicators are broadly similar across the four areas, although they are somewhat higher in Killarney and Kenmare. The association between tourism and environmental conservation is of paramount importance to South Kerry, and the conservation of natural resources and the landscape will need to be integral to all development strategies and approaches.

Fig. 4.2.15: Cumulative Scores for Communities across the Four Community Forum Areas on the Dimensions of Sustainable Development



The greatest divergence across the Forum areas can be observed with respect to their economic vibrancy. The data reveal that the Killarney Area has the strongest level of economic vibrancy, while Iveragh has the lowest. These findings underscore the need for Iveragh and Kenmare to secure greater levels of external support and investment, so as to enable them to develop their potential in line with the development methodologies advocated by international experts including the OECD (2013). The data also suggest that benefits may accrue to peninsular South Kerry through the forging of increased economic linkages with Killarney.

The following graphs present the cumulative vibrancy scores on the dimensions of sustainable development for each of the twenty-eight communities in South Kerry.

⁴⁰ In completing the citizens' questionnaire, a number of respondents associated themselves with more than one community e.g. originally from Cahersiveen, but living in Killorglin for two years or being equidistant from two villages. These cases (n=30) have been excluded from the computation of the vibrancy scores presented at Community Forum and individual community level.

Fig. 4.2.16: Economic Vibrancy - Culmulative Score for each community

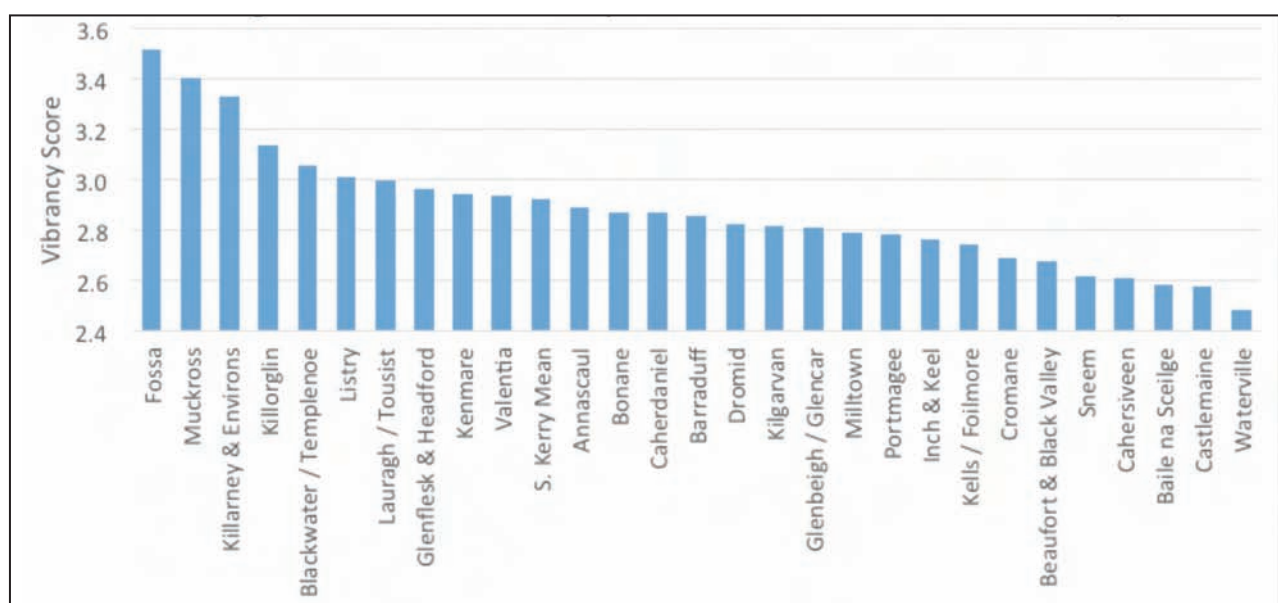


Fig. 4.2.17: Socio-Cultural Vibrancy - Culmulative Score for each community

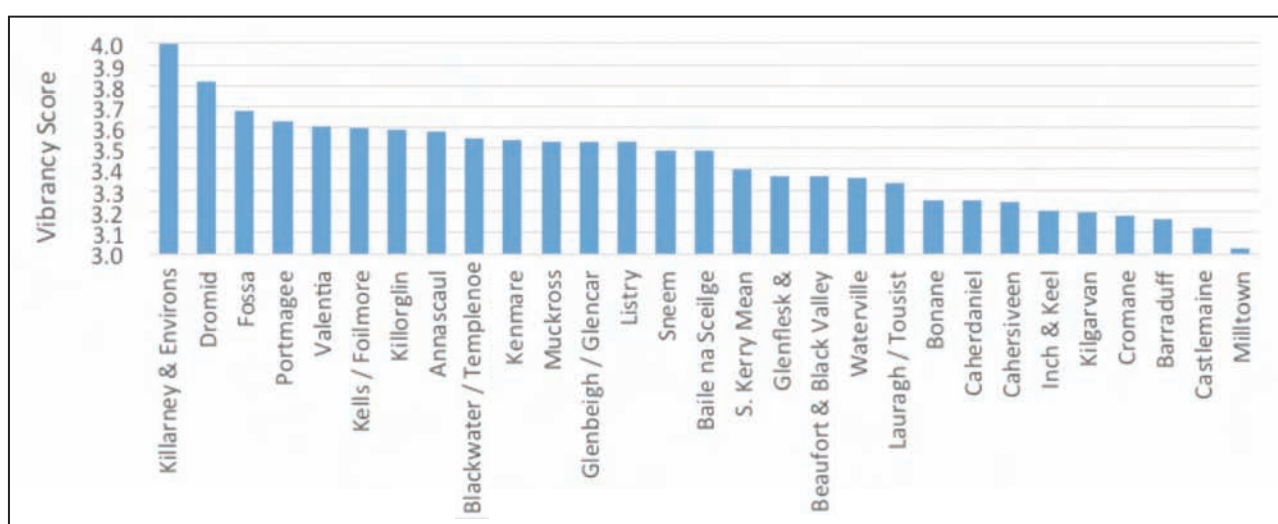
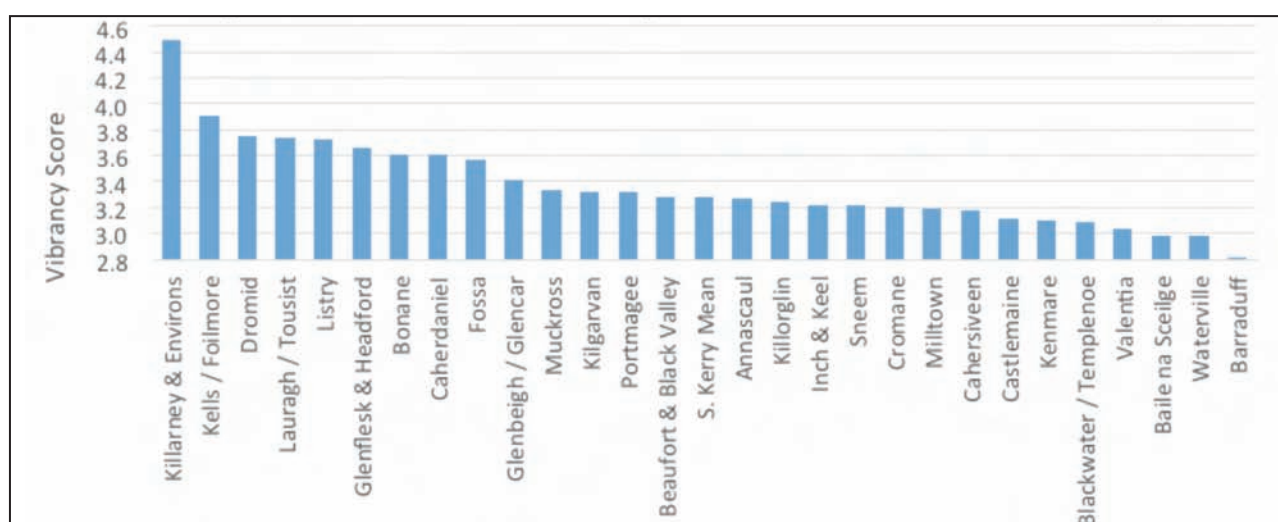


Fig. 4.2.18: Environmental Vibrancy - Culmulative Score for each community



4.3 Rural Service Provision and Local Governance

The Literature Review presented in this report (Chapter 2) highlighted the association between rural vibrancy and public service provision. It cited several international studies that demonstrate how rural areas with good quality and accessible public services are more vibrant and successful than those that lack essential services, or those whose services are under pressure. This section utilises the targets specified in Ireland's National Spatial Strategy as a template for measuring the extent of public service provision in South Kerry. This approach offers clarity and allows communities to benchmark their access to essential services against regional and national norms.

The Literature Review also noted the importance of collaborative partnership governance in enabling rural territories to develop in a sustainable and inclusive manner. Indeed, the Rural Alliances Partnership has produced a dedicated handbook on governance, and the Brabant Model on collaboration between the State and communities has been widely acknowledged and well-received among rural stakeholders, including politicians. While most OECD countries have, in recent years, been making strides towards the promotion of Community-Led Local Development and partnership governance, Ireland has been flirting with, and indeed embarking on a course of centralisation that sets it apart from most other democracies. Government has been pushing the alignment of local government and local development, while already having taken core functions and competencies from local authorities and abolished town councils. Specifically, the Local Government (Reform) Act, 2014, provides for the establishment of LCDCs (Local and Community Development Committees) in every county. These Committees are responsible for the formulation and oversight of a community and economic development plan. Conferring this responsibility on local government has the potential to put city and county councils in a co-ordinating position in respect of enterprise development agencies, and to ensure a dovetailing of infrastructure provision with the spatial distribution of enterprise activities. Local authorities are however somewhat hampered in these respects given that enterprise agencies such as IDA Ireland, are under Department of Environment guidelines, excluded from the membership of LCDCs. LAGs and Civil Society are however, represented on the LCDCs. Given the roll-out of the LEADER application and tendering process in Ireland during 2014 – 2015, many LCDCs are set to become delivery agents for LEADER – a function performed by community-led Local Action Groups to date⁴¹. In some Irish counties (although not in Kerry) LCDCs are also leading to the duplication of other functions, as they prepare to become rival implementation bodies for LEADER and other programmes.

This chapter presents data on public service provision in South Kerry, using the National Spatial Strategy template. It then presents results from the citizens' survey that quantify public opinion on the government's current approach to the governance of rural areas.

4.3.1 Public Service Provision in South Kerry

The following tables present data on the availability of public services in South Kerry. The first of these deals with public service provision in South Kerry's main towns (Killarney, Killorglin, Kenmare and Cahersiveen). The table lists (in the first column) the services, which the NSS specifies ought to be provided in towns⁴². As the table shows, the four towns perform well in respect of the services they have. While most of the specified services are delivered by statutory agencies and local government, some are delivered by civil society, with State support. Of the four towns, Killarney has the most extensive range of services and the highest levels of service provision. Killarney has South Kerry's only railway station, and is its transport hub, in that most bus services to destinations outside Kerry pass through Killarney, and most require passengers to change there. While three of the four towns have a community hospital, the level of health service provision is below par relative to that found in towns of a comparable size elsewhere in Western Europe, and no town has an Accident & Emergency Unit. While Kerry County Council provides municipal spaces, the towns lack town or municipal halls equivalent to those of the Breton, French, German and Italian towns with which they are twinned.

⁴¹ Beginning in 1990, SKDP prepared multi-annual territorial development plans for the periods 1991 – 1995, 1996 – 2000, 2000 – 2006 and 2007 – 2013. It implemented the strategies and actions specified in these plans by drawing on LEADER, successive Local Development Programmes, INTERREG, LIFE, contracts from government departments and by brokering resources from the public and private sector on behalf of South Kerry. The total value of the funds the Partnership has brought into South Kerry exceeds €200m.

⁴² The official definition of a town is a settlement with at least 1,500 persons (Central Statistics Office).

Table 4.3.1: Public Service Provision (provided by the State) in South Kerry's Towns (based on those specified in Ireland's National Spatial Strategy)

Services & Amenities identified in the NSS	Killarney	Killorglin	Cahersiveen	Kenmare
A. Town Amenities				
Regional Transport Linkages	<p>Bus connections to Cork, Limerick and Tralee every second hour (weekdays).</p> <p>Rail Connection to Dublin and Cork (change in Malrow) every two hours from 5:30h to 19:30h (ex. Killarney).</p>	<p>4 daily bus connections from Killarney and 5 to Killarney (weekdays). Reduced Sunday service.</p> <p>Same frequencies to Tralee, plus additional bus to IT Tralee during college term.</p>	<p>Twice daily return bus connection to Killarney (and one to Waterville) Weekdays. Reduced Sunday service.</p> <p>Daily (one way) seasonal bus on Ring of Kerry from Tralee</p>	<p>Three daily return buses to and from Killarney (weekly to Sneem) (weekdays). Reduced Sunday service.</p> <p>Daily (one way) seasonal bus on Ring of Kerry from Tralee</p>
Second Level School	Community College, Denominational Second Level Schools.	Community College, Denominational Second Level Schools.	Community College	Community College
Adult Education Opportunities	<p>SOLAS and Community Training Workshops, SKDP & KETB Courses,</p> <p>Specialist training provided by benevolent bodies with State supports.</p>	Outreach through SKDP and Kerry Education and Training Board	Outreach through SKDP and Kerry Education and Training Board	Outreach through SKDP and Kerry Education and Training Board
Health Centre	Dental Clinic and Public Clinic for Children and Older People	Dental Clinic and Public Clinic for Children and Older People	Dental Clinic and Public Clinic for Children and Older People	Dental Clinic and Public Clinic for Children and Older People
Day Hospital/Clinic	Community Hospital (39 beds) mainly respite (for older people) with outreach and outpatients facilities.	None	Community Hospital (33 beds) – mainly respite (for older people) with limited outreach and outpatients facilities.	Community Hospital (44 beds) – mainly respite (for older people) with limited outreach and outpatients facilities.

Services & Amenities identified in the NSS	Killarney	Killorglin	Cahersiveen	Kenmare
A. Town Amenities				
Pharmacy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Community-Based Healthcare Options	HSE Clinic (dental and child health)	None	HSE Clinic (dental and child health)	HSE Clinic (dental and child health)
Garda Station	Yes (24 / 7)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Court Services	District Court	Closed	District Court	District Court
Enterprise Centre	Technology and Innovation Centre.	Incubation Units	Incubation Units	Incubation Units
Training Opportunities	As per adult education	As per adult education	As per adult education	As per adult education
Electoral Area Plans	County Council Local Area Plan	KCC Local Area Plan	KCC Local Area Plan	KCC Local Area Plan
Sports, Amenity and Play Areas	Municipal Sports Complex, Gymnasia and Pools in Local Hotels, Outdoor Playgrounds, National Park. Community Amenities.	Gymnasia and Pools in Local Hotels, Outdoor Playground, Community Amenities.	Gymnasia and Pools in Local Hotels, Outdoor Playgrounds, Community Amenities. Marina.	Gymnasia and Pools in Local Hotels, Outdoor Playground, Community Amenities.
Cultural Facilities	Town Hall, Muckcross House, Civil Buildings	Civil Buildings	Civil Buildings	Civil Buildings
Seasonal Tourist Of ce	All year round, State Run	Community-Run (seasonal)	Community-Run with State Support (seasonal)	Community-Run with State Support (seasonal)
Range of Retail Shops	Extensive	Yes	Yes	Yes

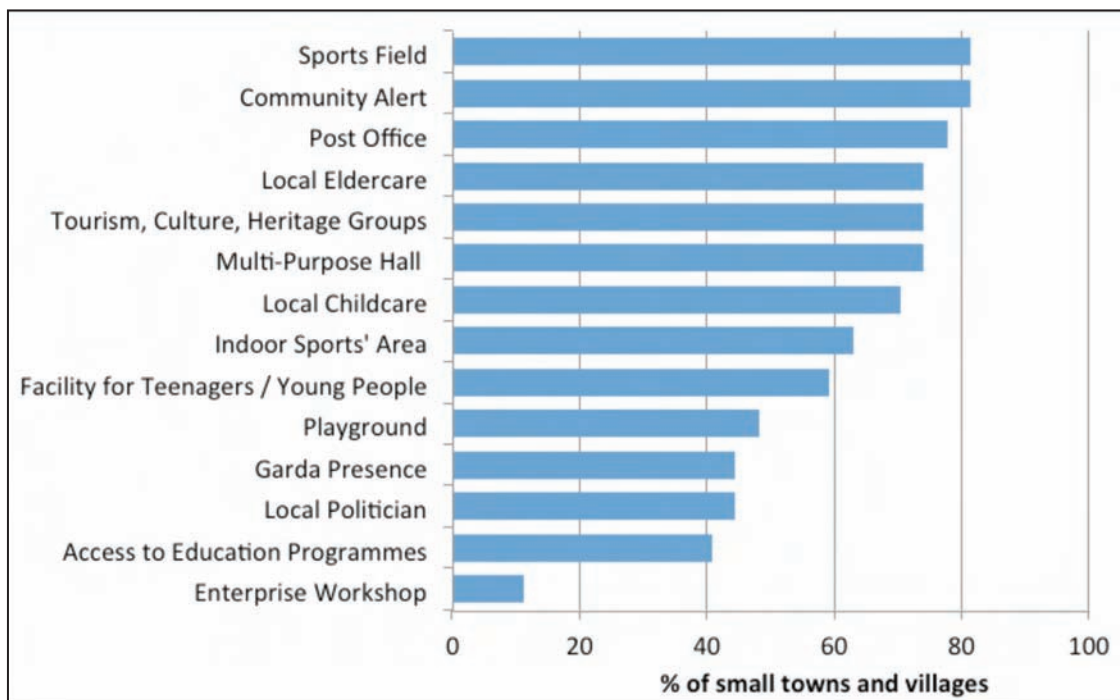
Services & Amenities identified in the NSS	Killarney	Killorglin	Cahersiveen	Kenmare
A. Town Amenities				
Entertainment Services	Extensive (but not State / public services)	Community-Run	Community-Run	Community-Run
Town Council / Electoral Area Meetings	Abolished 2014. Part of South & West Kerry Municipal District.	Part of South & West Kerry Municipal District (4,319 persons per elected member).	Part of South & West Kerry Municipal District (4,319 persons per elected member).	Part of South & West Kerry Municipal District (4,319 persons per elected member).
County Council Office	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Library	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Social Welfare Office	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Local Development Company	Yes, SKDP	Yes, SKDP	Yes, SKDP	Yes, SKDP
Waste Management Programme	Yes, for all four areas. See http://www.kerrycoco.ie/en/allservices/environment/wasterecycling/			

"In the last fifty years the service sector has moved to a dominant role in developed economies. The service sector, in aggregate, now dominates total employment and value-added in OECD countries, accounting for more than 70% of these two measures (OECD, 2005). As shown in Table 1.1 the role of services continues to increase in importance. While services play a slightly smaller role in rural regions than in urban, they are still the dominant component of the economy. This makes it clear that a vibrant service sector is both vital for a prosperous local economy and a crucial mechanism for ensuring that the needs of individual citizens are met"

(OECD, 2010: 14).

The NSS also specifies the services that should be available in smaller towns and villages. These are listed in the following graph, together with the percentage of small towns and villages that have each service, while Annex III presents the full breakdown of service provision in each population centre.

Fig 4.3.1: Percentage of Small Towns and Villages in South Kerry that have the Services specified in the NSS⁴³



As the graph shows, over 80% of communities have a sports-field and community alert network, with these services being delivered by civil society organisations. As the civil society survey (Section 4.1.1) has shown, organisations in South Kerry have managed to lever public funding to enable them to develop and enhance sports and recreation amenities. They have also received funding from the Department of Social Protection to provide alarms and a monitoring system for elderly people, although this funding stream has been cut considerably since 2009.

Over 75 percent of villages in South Kerry currently have a post office. Less than two decades ago, 100 percent of villages had this service. Among the post offices that have closed in recent years are those in Cromane, Knightstown and Muckcross. The rural post office network has been under severe pressure due to falling revenues and reliance on Department of Social Protection contracts. In 2012 the Irish Postmasters Union published a review, undertaken by Grant Thornton, which outlined ways in which post offices could diversify and expand their service offering. The attainment of the Grant Thornton recommendations requires a renewed commitment on the part of the State to maintaining this infrastructure in rural communities. As with the retention of local shops, it also requires that local people keep their custom locally, in as far as possible.

In South Kerry, three-quarters of communities have a support service for older people, while more than two-thirds have a childcare service. Support services for older people generally comprise a day-care facility offering a hot meal, social activities and ancillary personal care services (e.g. physiotherapy and chiropody). Some are adjacent to public-run and community hospitals, while most are operated in community centres, and are run by community-based benevolent bodies, with the HSE (Health Service Executive) providing

⁴³ Village nuclei and other smaller settlements are not included in the data presented here.

grant aid. These services rely heavily on local volunteers to staff and manage the services, and many dovetail with Kerry Community Transport, so that older people who reside in rural areas, and who do not have private transport, can attend. As the population ages, demand for eldercare has grown. Meanwhile, the level of public funding provided has been declining, thereby putting the services under increased pressure. However, most communities have invigorated local fundraising efforts rather than reduce their services. In fact, most have expanded their operations in recent years, and several such as those in Cahersiveen, Waterville and Kenmare operate on social economy principles.

One of the public services delivered through partnership between the State and civil society is Valentia Community Hospital. This project merits individual mention, given the hospital's unique geography – on an offshore island with a permanent resident population of 665 persons. The hospital is administered by Valentia Community Health & Welfare Association Ltd., a not-for-profit association with charitable status. The association has open membership and its voluntary Board of Directors is elected by the membership at its AGM. It has operated for over 140 years, and currently provides long-term, respite and convalescent care for twenty people. Between 2009 and 2013, the hospital faced a very uncertain future, as its funding was cut when the government re-calibrated its contribution to nursing homes and care facilities. In 2013, the islanders negotiated a revised funding agreement with the government, but are currently actively fundraising to cover the costs of a refurbishment of, and extension to their hospital. Valentia Community Hospital represents one of the many examples of public services, delivered by a community association that works in partnership with the State, while at the same time being subject to the fiscal and regulatory pressures emanating from the top-down.

Community childcare has expanded very considerably in South Kerry since 2002, and is indicative of civil society filling a gap, as childcare provision in Ireland lagged way behind that provided in most European countries, and the Irish State has shied away from the universalist approaches to service provision that pertain in Scandinavia and France. All of the community childcare facilities in Kerry have been purpose-built with funding coming from the EU (DG Equality) Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme. This Programme, was succeeded in 2007 by the National Childcare Investment Programme, which was State-sponsored, and which has provided grants to communities to part-cover staffing costs en lieu of the shortfall that arises from providing fee concessions to people on low incomes. Most services in South Kerry offer full day-care packages, and collaborate with local schools to provide pre- and after-school care. Through their successful management of eldercare and childcare facilities, civil society organisations in South Kerry have proven their ability to manage public funding, undertake large scale projects, promote social inclusion, deal with HR issues, keep abreast of legislation in a complex field and deliver services in line with local needs and expectations.

Halls and sports arenas across South Kerry have benefited from LEADER funding and sports capital grants, particularly since the late 1990s. When they were constructed in the 1930s and 1940s, most halls were built for the purpose of hosting dances and variety shows, and many were poorly insulated and badly equipped. As country dances yielded to the showband and ballroom era of the 1960s, and these in turn gave way to the discos of the 1980s, many halls began to fall into disrepair, and some had become like glorified basketball and handball courts, rather than serving as community centres. During the 1990s, LEADER had begun to reignite community spirit and communities found they needed centres that could cater for both large scale events (e.g. tops of the parish / the school concert) and for smaller more intimate gatherings e.g. adult education classes, community group meetings and display areas for heritage artefacts among other functions. Consequently, several communities embarked on major refurbishments and modernisations of their community centres, such that today South Kerry has a very decent stock of buildings with the capacity to cater for multiple needs and activities. The renewal of community centres paralleled the modernisation of many sporting and recreational facilities, as pitches were drained and re-surfaced and clubhouses were refurbished and kitted-out with up-to-date equipment for local athletes. The growth in marine leisure has provided a new lease of life to water-based sports in South Kerry, and the area's many rowing clubs are among those that have refurbished their premises and updated their equipment. These investments in community infrastructure have made community activities more accessible to a larger population, and are among the factors that have encouraged greater participation in community activities on the parts of males

and younger people. Several of the amenities and facilities that are integral to fostering local capital and the provision of local services receive valuable support from SKDP through the Rural Social Scheme and TÚS. These schemes, not only provide valuable experience and income sources for participants, they also provide civil society organisations with access to a reliable and co-ordinated pool of labour that supports the work of volunteers.

The data presented here also show that just over half of small towns and villages have their own playground, although this figure is likely to increase over the next few years as additional community playground projects come to fruition. Outside of the main towns, playgrounds are mainly SKDP-funded, owned and operated by local volunteers and insured by Kerry County Council.

Less than half of communities have a garda presence, as several rural garda stations have closed in recent years (since 2012), including those on Valentia Island, Baile na Sceilge, Beaufort and Kilgarvan. These closures have been opposed by local communities and the withdrawal of the physical police presence is a source of anxiety, particularly for older people. This issue emerged repeatedly in the responses to the citizens' survey.

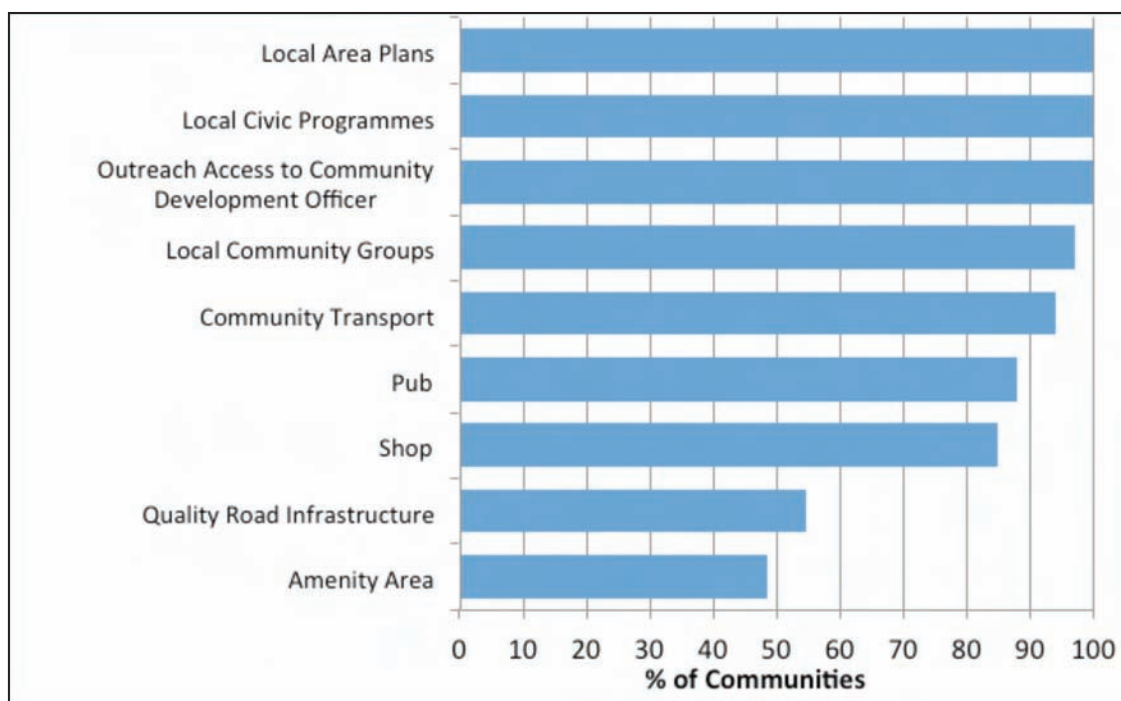
Just over forty percent of communities have local access to education and training programmes. Courses delivered by SKDP and the Kerry Education and Training Board generally reach all communities in South Kerry, although on a rotational basis, or subject to local demand. The four largest towns have more permanent education and training venues, including evening access to school premises. In Cahersiveen the O'Connell Adult Education Centre, which was established by volunteers, and is managed by Kerry Education and Training Board, offers a wide range of courses for education and pleasure.

Of all the indicators specified in the NSS, towns and villages in South Kerry score lowest in respect of having their own enterprise workshop. When this was explored with civil society leaders during the administration of the community groups' questionnaire, many survey participants questioned the feasibility of such workshops outside the main towns. Indeed, since the publication of the NSS in 2002, there have been very significant changes to the structure of the global economy, such that manufacturing has declined in importance and the service sector has expanded very considerably. Consequently, nowadays, ICT centres are more important as elements of economic infrastructure than are workshops. In this context, the paucity of ICT infrastructure in South Kerry and the relatively low levels of broadband penetration underscore the need for investment in connectivity in the short to medium term. One of the more innovative and successful projects in terms of South Kerry's ICT infrastructure is The KTI (Killarney Technology and Innovation) Centre, which is a purpose-built enterprise incubation and business innovation complex, offering offices and serviced desk spaces at competitive rental rates. The Centre, which has been supported by SKDP and local government, among others, provides an attractive business start-up location for knowledge-intensive enterprises, including in the fields of e-commerce, financial services, software, multi-media, web and knowledge-based activities.

In addition to specifying services that should be provided in small towns and villages, the NSS lists those that should be available in smaller settlements. The following graph presents the data in respect of the presence of these specific services across all settlements across South Kerry.



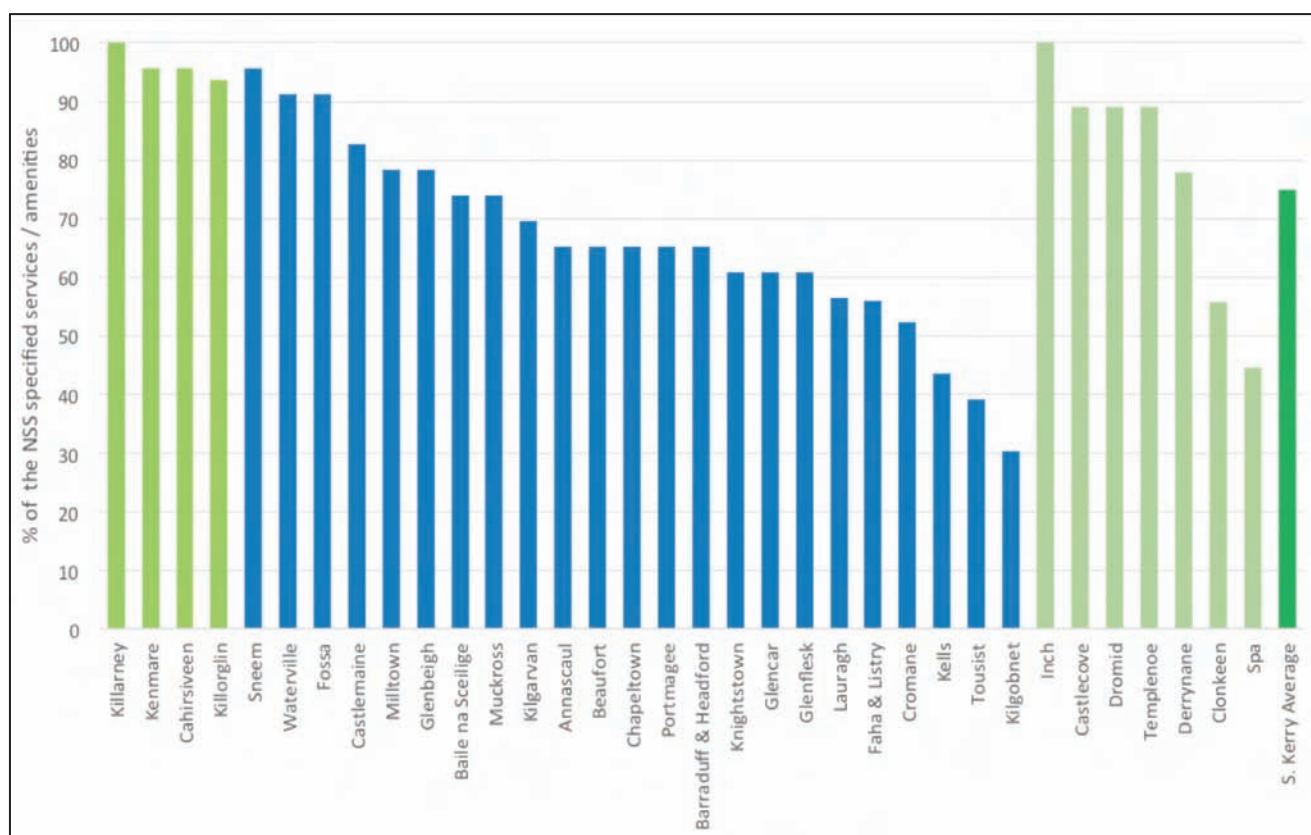
Fig. 4.3.2: Percentage of Small Towns and Villages in South Kerry that have the Community Amenities specified in the NSS



As the graph shows, all communities in South Kerry are covered by Local Area Plans and Local Civic Programmes, provided by South Kerry Development and Kerry County Council. They also have access to development officers through the Partnership and the Kerry Community and Voluntary Forum, and civil society is organised in virtually every parish in South Kerry. While most communities have at least one pub and shop, many of the smaller and more rural communities do not, as globalisation and commuting patterns take their toll on rural areas. The loss of commercial services is not unique to peripheral areas and those with low population densities, it also affects communities that are in peri-urban fringes (i.e. within 15km of a significant urban centre e.g. Killarney), as commercial outlets in villages and village nuclei (e.g. the pub and / or shop at the crossroads) cannot compete with their equivalents in nearby Killarney. In addition, several smaller shops and long-established family businesses in Killarney have closed or had to come up with new business plans in the face of direct local competition from the multiples and multi nationals. The latter have the benefit of purpose-built out-of-town centres that offer free parking, while many indigenous businesses have, by virtue of their locations, steeper challenges in attracting and retaining customers. Indeed, in Killarney there is some evidence of ‘the donut effect’ as population growth and commercial activity levels in the town’s suburbs exceed those in the town centre. The graph also shows that road connectivity remains an issue in many parts of South Kerry, and this issue, along with broadband penetration, will require concerted efforts on the part of the relevant statutory authorities. The final variable on the graph shows that just under half of communities have an amenity area.

The following graph provides an overview of service provision and accessibility across three settlement tiers in South Kerry. It categorises communities/settlements into three sets namely, (i) the main towns, (ii) villages and (iii) village nuclei (as per the three colours used in the graph) and it records how each community/settlement scores in respect of the levels of service provision it has, on the basis of the indicators specified in the NSS. The data presented here (and in Annex III) for 2014 / 2015 provide benchmarks against which communities, SKDP, Kerry County Council and statutory service providers can monitor service provision levels over time and ensure their maintenance and development. The data presented here and the application of the template provided in the NSS represent important steps in monitoring service provision in rural communities. However, further work is required to monitor and guarantee the quality (and not just the presence) of services. In addition, there is also a need to map accessibility to services, as distance and connectivity are determinants of their effectiveness and impacts on citizens’ lives and local economic vibrancy.

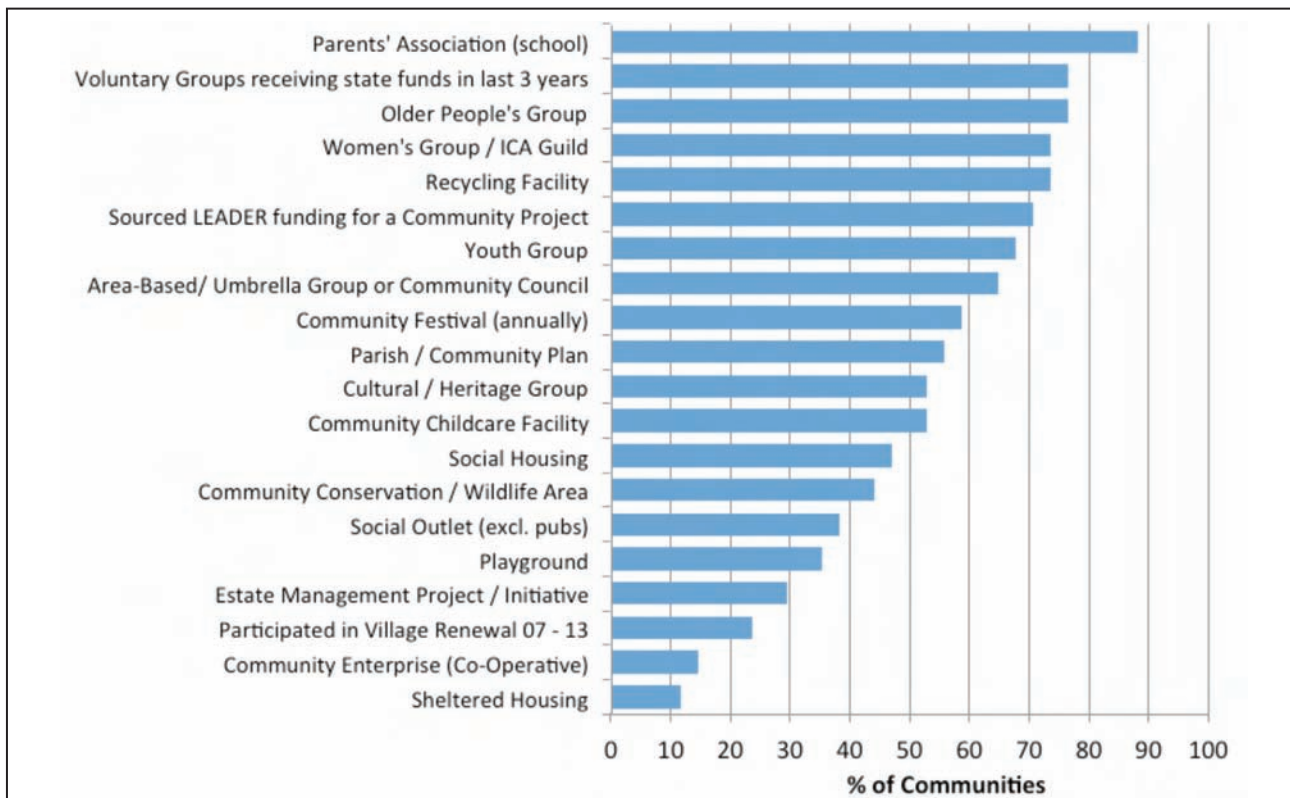
Fig. 4.3.3: Distribution of the Services specified in the NSS for each Settlement Tier as indicated by the Percentage of Amenities each Settlement has.



The literature review (presented in Chapter Two) also elaborated on the association between rural vibrancy and high levels of social capital. Over the course of the Rural Alliances transnational collaboration, several documents produced by the University of Marburg, among others also noted the centrality of community groups to fostering and maintaining rural vibrancy. Drawing on the literature, this research elaborated indicators of social capital and applied them to communities in South Kerry. The following table presents the percentage of communities in South Kerry that have the specific organisations/groups and facilities/amenities that are indicative of social capital. While the list is not exhaustive, it provides tangible evidence for the measurement of socio-cultural vibrancy in South Kerry, and is therefore complementary to the data generated by the surveys among civil society organisations and citizens, as presented earlier in this report. Annex IV provides the full breakdown of the data presented here in respect of each of the thirty-four geographical communities in South Kerry. The data were sourced from secondary sources (e.g. community publications / newsletters) and primary data collection (interviews with officers in civil society organisations).



Fig. 4.3.4: Percentage of Communities in South Kerry having specified Indicators of Social Capital



As the graph shows, communities perform stronger on some indicators than on others. Almost all have a parents' association. Parents' Associations have been increasing in number across Ireland over the past twenty years, as parents become more assertive in their participation in the governance of schools. The associations provide mechanisms through which schools have become more democratic and inclusive, and those schools that are under the patronage of the Catholic Church (90%+ of primary schools) are obliged to have two parents' representatives on their Boards of Management. The challenge for many associations is to progress from being simply a fundraising or events' management body, to one that is more directly involved in decision-making in respect of the strategic development of schools and of education policy, so that the vision of partnership between the home and the school is more extensively and effectively delivered.

As the graph also shows, over 70 percent of communities have seen a project delivered since 2007 as a result of collaboration between the local community and the State. Such projects, most of which were LEADER-supported are indicative of the realisation of the Brabant model at local level. They include projects oriented towards the provision of local amenities (e.g. playgrounds and parks), but increasingly they include environmental and conservation projects including the rehabilitation of coastal dunes and waterways. One of the more unique projects is the designation of Western Iveragh as a Dark Sky Reserve –the first in Ireland. This status was awarded by the International Dark-Sky Association (www.darksky.org), in 2013, in recognition of the work done by the Kerry Dark Sky Group – a totally voluntary association. Western Iveragh is one of only 3 'Gold Tier Reserves' on the planet, and the only 'Gold Tier Reserve' in the Northern Hemisphere. Consequently, the area is attracting astronomers and star-gazers from all over the world. A similar collaborative inter-community approach to local development also underpins the South Kerry Geopark. Both these initiatives capitalise on South Kerry's outstanding natural resources and rural landscape, and have future development potential for future development in tandem with environmental conservation efforts. Inter-community collaboration, the valorisation of natural resources and due recognition of the farming community as among the guardians of the countryside, are integral to the development of the South Kerry Greenway, work on which has recently commenced. The Greenway will run along the route of the derelict railway from Glenbeigh to Valentia Sound (30km), and like the Western Greenway (in County Mayo), it will attract visitors, while also serving as a valuable local amenity and public service. SKDP has been to the fore in promoting this project.

Most communities have their own women's group and a group for older people. The former have a long history in rural Ireland, dating from the formation of the ICA (Irish Countrywomen's Association) in the 1880s in parallel with the emergence of the co-operative movement, which was spearheaded by Sir Horrace Plunkett. As well as offering an outlet for personal development and social interaction at the local level, the ICA is organised into county-level federations, thereby enabling inter-group networking. It also has a national structure and co-ordinating office, which have enabled the Association to contribute to policy-making. This structure provides for a bottom-up approach to the formulation of policy, and provides a template that other community-based organisations could adopt. Partly because of its nomenclature, the ICA has however, suffered from an image problem, and is often stereotyped as being for older women and farmers. Consequently, many of the more-recently formed women's groups in South Kerry (and elsewhere in Ireland) operate independently, rather than as part of a network or federation, with the result that their contributions to decision-making beyond their local communities are limited. In contrast, the Men's Sheds' Movement, which has expanded very considerably across Ireland over the past five years, operates as a networked structure, which while allowing local sheds to develop projects and pursue activities as their members see fit, also promotes inter-group networking and has a national structure offering co-ordination, leadership and platform for highlighting and lobbying on men's issues. Currently, there are Men's Sheds in Cahersiveen, Killarney, Killorglin, Kenmare, Sneem and Baile na Sceilge, in which a total of over 400 men participate regularly.

Older people's groups have a shorter history in South Kerry than does the ICA, but their popularity and membership have increased considerably in recent years, and many active retired groups exist across South Kerry. They provide a social outlet, and many are also active in lobbying on behalf of older people. They have been particularly vocal on the importance of retaining and safeguarding public services. The data presented in the graph reveal that groups for young people are less prevalent than are groups for other age cohorts. While it can be argued that many sporting and recreational organisations have a young age profile, not all young people are interested in sports, and the main activities promoted by sporting organisations tend to be more male-oriented than catering for females. Thus, the data suggest a need for a renewed focus on youth development and gender-proofing of such efforts.

In South Kerry, 62 percent of communities have an umbrella or co-ordinating structure (usually a Community Council) that enables diverse community and voluntary groups to come together and make common cause. Community Councils generally offer a legal and administrative mechanism through which civil society organisations can formally collaborate with others, secure insurance cover for activities and manage public funding. Many also function as the legal owners or trustees of community property. Those communities that have such enabling structures are more likely to have a community or parish plan (53 percent of communities) and to have secured public funding, including LEADER grants.

Social housing and community childcare are more prevalent in the more populous communities, and communities that have one tend to have the other as well – often on adjoining sites. However, the presence of such facilities is also associated with local dynamism and leadership, as is the case in Dromid, where the local community has been very visionary and motivated in ensuring all sectors of society are catered for.

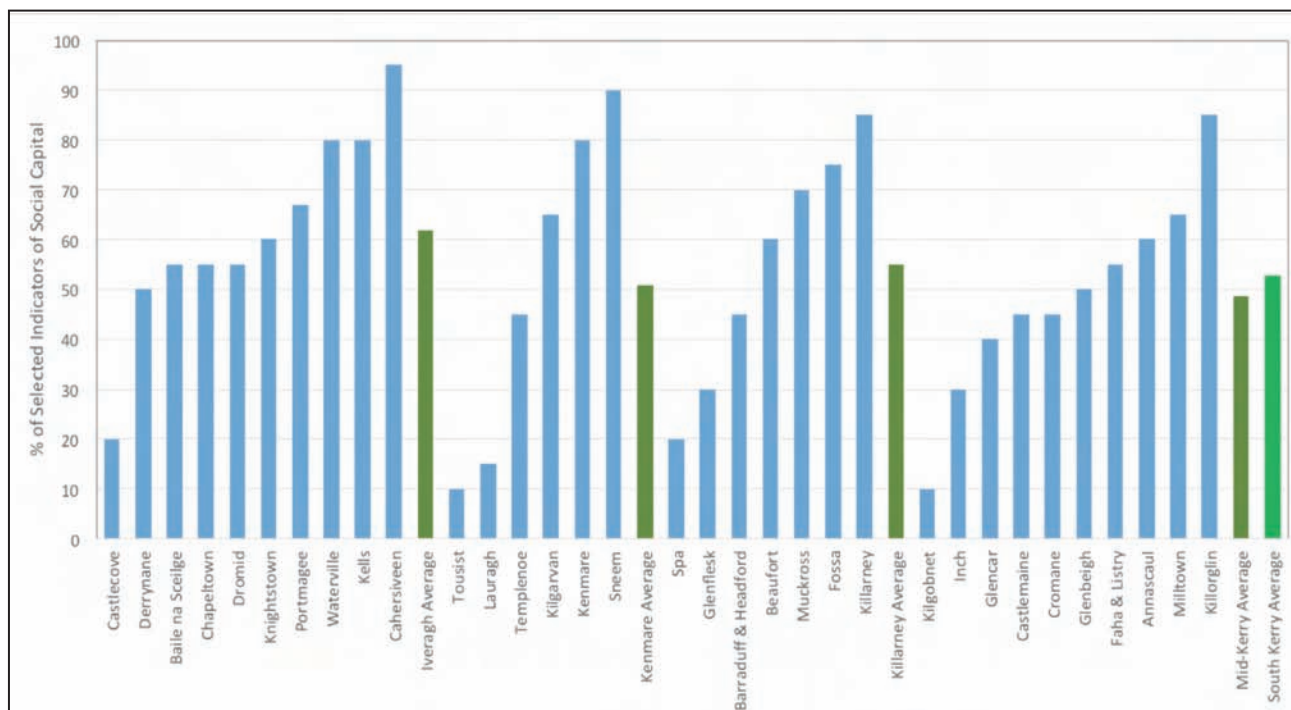
Estate management is also associated with urban populations, and South Kerry Development Partnership's LCDP (Local and Community Development Programme) has been an enabler of residents' participation in structures that give them greater say in the development of their estates and in the design and delivery of projects that make estates more attractive and improve peoples' quality of life. Collaboration between SKDP and Kerry County Council has been integral to the successes of estate management initiatives, and while it is beyond the scope of this report to evaluate them, the feedback from civil society leaders is that estate management ought to be mainstreamed, and extended so that residents are empowered to contribute to the governance of their estates. A network of estate management groups in conjunction with the Community and Voluntary Forum may assist in the transfer and sharing of learnings.

The data presented in the preceding graph also suggest there exists potential to develop more wildlife and conservation areas and to provide more social outlets (other than pubs) in local communities. Finally, the data reveal that South Kerry has few community businesses or social economy enterprises. Their absence

to date, despite high levels of social capital otherwise, suggests that Rural Alliances has targeted a niche, not yet fully developed, but which can draw on communities' expertise in other areas. Transnational collaboration over the past four years has planted many seeds among community groups and business leaders in South Kerry, and with funding and agency supports, these can be cultivated to ensure thriving and sustainable community businesses that will deliver social gains and simultaneously promote economic development and job creation.

The following graph summarises the extent of quantifiable social capital in each community and in the four Community Forum areas in South Kerry. Its purpose is NOT to compare and contrast the performance or fortunes of the various locations, because unlike the public services dealt with already in this section, community activities do not have a single or fixed location. Indeed, an organisation may have its primary base in one community, but draw members from several neighbouring communities. Instead, the purpose of the graph is to enable communities to see the totality of social capital across clusters of communities and to provide signposts in terms of promoting inter-community collaboration, in strengthening community organisations and in making them more proactive and inclusive. Therefore, the communities are presented here in clusters by Community Forum⁴⁴.

Fig. 4.3.5: Distribution of Elements of Social Capital as indicated by the Cumulative Percentage of Selected Social Capital Indicators each Community has.



⁴⁴ The graph beings by presenting the communities in the Iveragh Forum Area. It then presents, in turn those in the Kenmare, Killarney and Mid-Kerry Community Forum Areas.

4.3.2: Local Governance and Rural Vibrancy

The literature review (Chapter 2) and the Rural Alliances report on governance have referred to the body of international literature and learnings from several rural regions and territories that demonstrate the merits of collaborative and partnership governance in promoting rural and local development. As the literature review also noted, Ireland's local partnership structure in the form of LEADER LAGs, has, despite favourable national and international reviews, come under increasing pressure. The growing bureaucratisation of LEADER as a programme, the administrative regulations placed on Local Action Groups and more latterly, the attempts to bring LEADER within the remit of local authorities in a highly-centralised State, as is the case in Ireland, have provoked strong reactions from rural development stakeholders and rural citizens. These reactions have been most pronounced and calls for the safeguarding of LEADER and the promotion of Community-Led Local Development have been most vociferous in the West of Ireland (including Kerry). Given the fluid governance environment in which rural development is consequently coming to operate in Ireland and the need for reliable data on citizens' perspectives, the citizens' questionnaire that was used to appraise rural vibrancy for this study concluded by asking members of the public for their views on a number of functional, institutional and policy issues in connection with contemporary rural and local development.

Some of the issues presented in the survey questionnaire are currently being hotly debated by rural development stakeholders and policy-makers. LEADER has been operating for over two decades, and in 2007 it progressed from being a Community Initiative to a mainstream element of EU policy, with a dedicated funding stream as part of the Common Agriculture Policy. While mainstreaming signals a positive EU commitment to LEADER, and indicates that funding for it will continue, this change in the status of LEADER has been accompanied by increased government bureaucratic regulation over the past five years. In addition, in Ireland, there are increased contestations over the appropriate delivery mechanism for rural development programmes and supports.

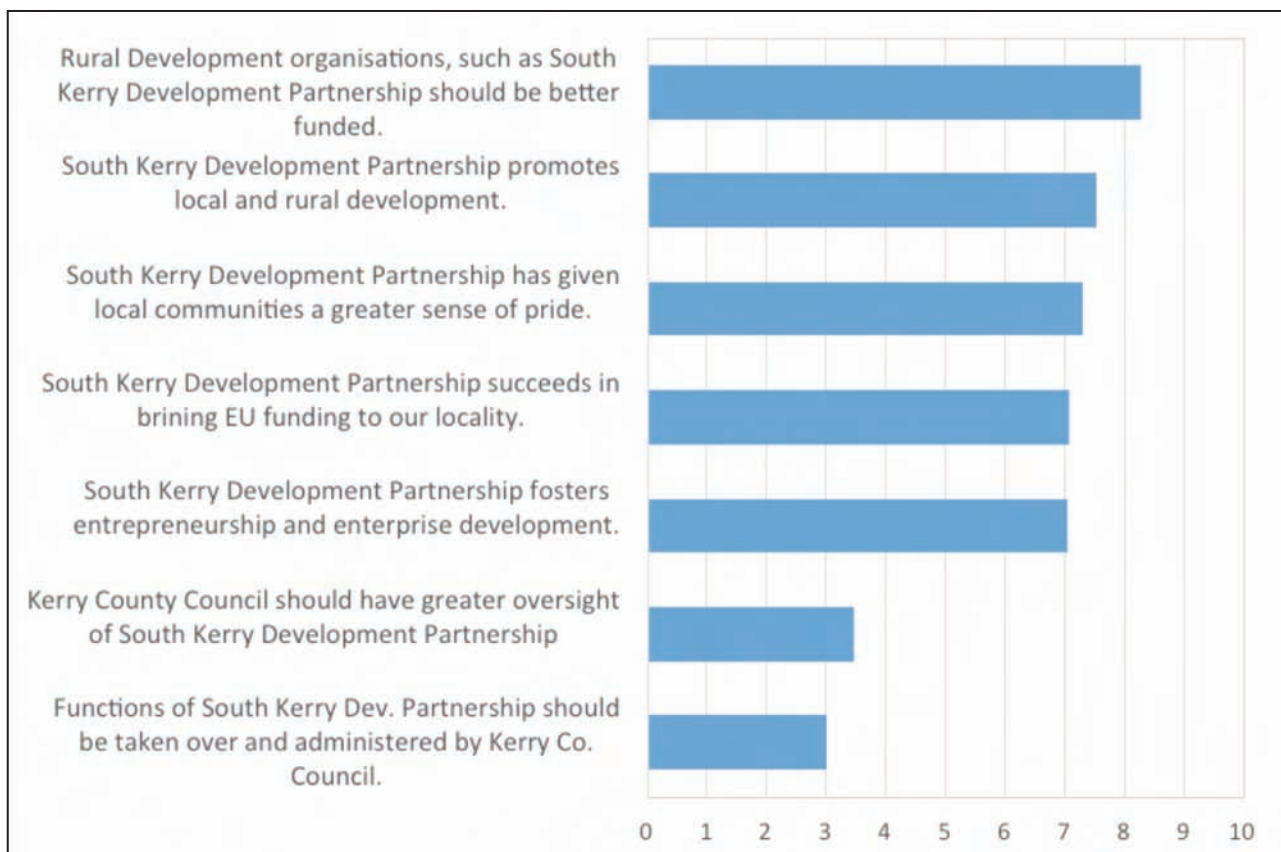
In their contributions to the debate about the delivery of rural development, LEADER LAGs/ Partnerships, The European Commission, most academics and the AEIDL LEADER Observatory have emphasised the specific features of LEADER, particularly its bottom-up approach to development and its multi-stakeholder partnership structure. This horizontal and participative structure ensures that LEADER Partnerships are community-led and are not dominated by any one sector or set of interests. Moreover, they have the advantage of being able to avail of the skills, expertise and goodwill of a range of bodies and organisations working in collaboration. LEADER is also associated with an area-based and multi-sectoral or integrated approach to development. This implies that development is organised on the basis of a place or territory, and that strategies are implemented across a number of sectors, transcending economic diversification, environmental conservation and community development among others.

Successive independent evaluations have contended that Ireland, Finland and Spain are the EU member states that best adhered to the LEADER model as envisaged by the European Commission. This viewpoint has recently been articulated in a European Court of Auditors Report (2010), which is critical of member states that have attempted to designate local authorities as LEADER-delivery mechanisms, thereby putting civil society organisation in a subordinate position. Observers have raised questions about the models that have arisen in Ireland since the Cohesion Process (Quinn, 2009), with some claiming that it has made LEADER territories too large and governance structures too rigid, with the result that community input and ownership have been reduced (O'Keeffe, 2015). The size of the LEADER budget for the period 2015 – 2020 has been cut and the Irish exchequer is providing a lower level of co-financing to LEADER than to any other element of the CAP. The policy document (White Paper) 'Putting People First' published by the government in October 2012 advocated an increased role for local authorities in co-ordinating local and rural development, and it also envisaged councils having a delivery role. The subsequent 2014 legislation (Local Government (Reform) Act) institutionalised partnership-like structures within local authorities in the form of LCDCs (Local and Community Development Committee), which were charged with formulating a local community and economic development plan. In June 2015, the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government stated that LCDCs were its preferred delivery mechanism for LEADER. Therefore, given the importance of geography and governance to the future of LEADER, and the range of views that have been expressed on these matters – often without any supporting evidence or statistics

– the citizens' questionnaire on rural vibrancy in South Kerry asked respondents for their views on the accessibility of SKDP, its impacts on local communities, its performance relative to other organisations, its development functions, its funding and the catchment area it should cover.

On a scale of one to ten, where one indicates 'strongly disagree' and ten indicates 'strongly agree' promoters were asked to indicate their levels of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements about South Kerry Development Partnership, rural development and local governance. The following graph synthesises their responses:

Fig. 4.3.6: Mean Scores indicating Levels of Agreement or Disagreement, among Citizens on a Scale from 0 to 10, where 0 represents total disagreement and 10 represents total agreement, in response to a Series of Statements about Rural Development in South Kerry



As the graph very clearly shows, citizens in South Kerry are strongly supportive of South Kerry Development Partnership and of the area-based approach to rural development (as indicated by the scores that range from 7.1 to 8.3. In contrast, there is a much lower degree of support for the provisions set out in the Local Government (Reform) Act (2014).

The following table reveals that while a clear majority of citizens are in favour of retaining and strengthening the current LEADER Local Action Group and Partnership approach to rural development, there are variations across the four Community Forum Areas.

Table 4.3.2: Citizens' Responses to Statements about Rural Development in Each Community Forum Area

Statements about Rural Development and Governance	Mean Levels of Agreement (0 = Absolute Disagreement, 10 = Absolute Agreement)			
	Kenmare	Iveragh	Mid-Kerry	Killarney
Rural Development organisations, such as South Kerry Development Partnership should be better funded.	8.97	8.65	8.20	7.57
South Kerry Development Partnership promotes local and rural development.	8.15	7.74	7.64	6.18
South Kerry Development Partnership has given local communities a greater sense of pride.	8.18	7.61	7.33	6.27
South Kerry Development Partnership succeeds in bringing EU funding to our locality.	7.54	7.91	7.28	5.79
South Kerry Development Partnership fosters entrepreneurship and enterprise development.	7.63	7.41	7.38	5.86
Functions of South Kerry Dev. Partnership should be taken over and administered by Kerry Co. Council.	1.34	1.98	3.35	4.65
Kerry County Council should have greater oversight of South Kerry Development Partnership.	1.74	2.63	3.55	5.27

As the table shows, support for SKDP and its approach to rural development is very high in the Iveragh, Kenmare and Mid-Kerry Areas. While support levels in Killarney are also high, some respondents there are more ambiguous. The three more rural parts of South Kerry, namely Iveragh, Kenmare and Mid-Kerry have been covered by South Kerry Development Partnership since its inception in the late 1980s, and communities in these areas feel they have a long-established ownership of the partnership. The organisation is clearly perceived locally as being 'of the community.' The Killarney Area was not covered by the first LEADER Programme, and it was not until 1995 that it was incorporated into the territory covered by SKDP. Thus, the processes through which Killarney and its environs came to experience community-led local development were less endogenous than elsewhere in South Kerry. In addition, Killarney, being a hub town (as designated under Ireland's National Spatial Strategy 2002 – 2020) was excluded from the most recent LEADER Programme. The decision to exclude Killarney and all hub towns was taken by central government. Consequently, LAGs were not permitted to provide LEADER funding for any projects in hub towns. While SKDP continued to support projects and initiatives in Killarney through programmes such as the LCDP (Local and Community Development Programme) and labour market activation measures (e.g. TÚS), the absence of LEADER projects in Killarney made SKDP less visible there than elsewhere in South Kerry.

An analysis of the Killarney data generated for this survey reveals that non-Irish nationals, those who have moved to Kerry in recent years and those aged under 18 were more likely to be ambiguous about rural development and governance issues, and almost one-third of young adults did not offer any opinion on the issues presented to them. These reactions to the survey questionnaire indicate that some young people

and non-locals see themselves as part of a transient population, and are therefore less concerned about the future of rural development and local governance.

Of the seven statements about rural development and local governance presented in the questionnaire, five are affirmative of SKDP and CLLD (Community-Led Local Development), while the final two assert the position advocated by government in the White Paper on Local Government. The following bar-graph presents the mean aggregate level of agreement across the five assertive statements about SKDP and CLLD, while the second graph presents the mean levels of agreement, in each community, with the government’s current approach.

Fig. 4.3.7: Mean Levels of Agreement with Given Statements Acknowledging the Outputs of SKDP and favouring Increased Rural Development Funding, in each Community in South Kerry

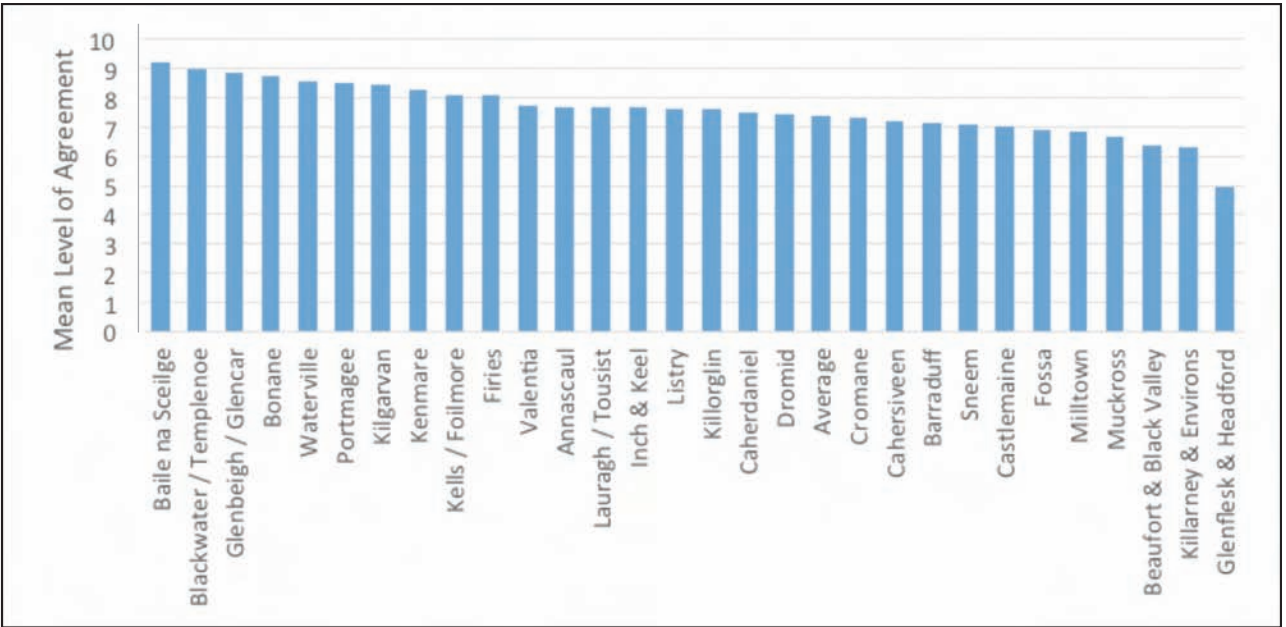
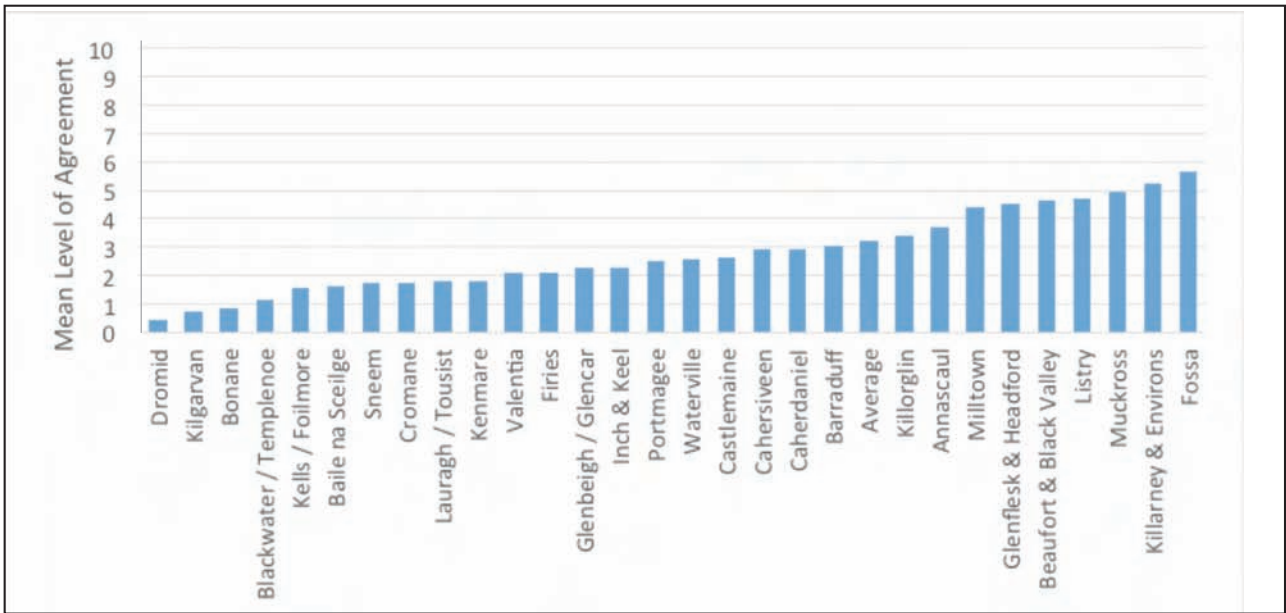


Fig. 4.3.8: Mean Levels of Agreement with Given Statements about the Alignment of Local Development and Local Government as advocated by Government, in each Community in S. Kerry

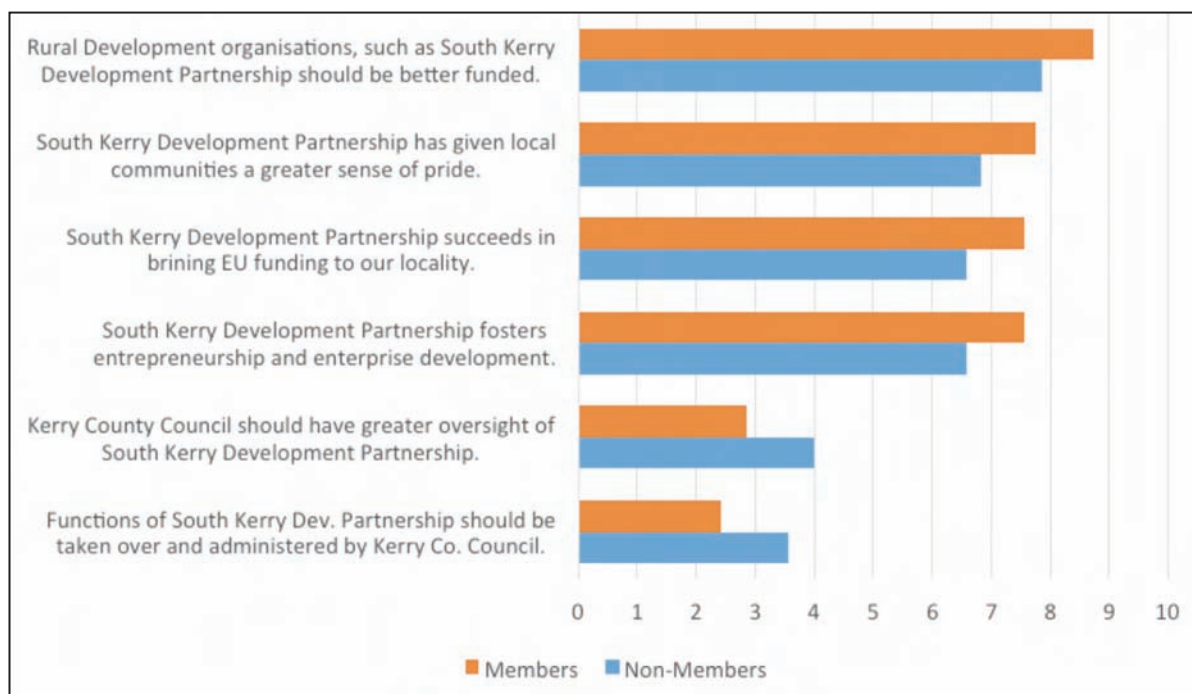


The previous table has presented the mean levels of agreement or disagreement with various statements about rural development and governance. When the modal (i.e. most frequent) values are applied (rather

than the average), the value in response to the affirmative statements about SKDP is ten⁴⁵. Modal values of ten emerge consistently in all Community Forum areas, with the exception of Killarney, where values range from five to ten. The modal value in response to the proposal that 'Functions of South Kerry Development Partnership should be taken over and administered by Kerry Co. Council' is zero in all Forum areas. Modal values of zero emerge in three of the four Forum areas in response to the White Paper proposal that 'Kerry County Council should have greater oversight of South Kerry Development Partnership,' and the modal score across South Kerry as a whole is also zero.

As the following graph shows, there are some differences between the attitudes of members of civil society organisations and non-member with respect to their views on the future trajectories of rural development and local governance. People who are members of a civil society organisation are more strongly supportive of SKDP and the LEADER model of rural development than are people who do not belong to any organisation.

Fig. 4.3.9: Mean Levels of Agreement / Disagreement with Given Statements about Rural Development and Local Governance by Membership and Non-Membership of Civil Society Organisations



Among members of civil society organisations, the modal value for the level of agreement with the five affirmative statements about SKDP is ten, while the modal value for the level of agreement with the government's proposed approach to local development is zero.

While levels of support for SKDP and Community-Led Local Development are high across the board, there are some variations by population cohorts. As the following table shows, females are more strongly supportive of LEADER/ CLLD (Community-Led Local Development) than are males. This may be associated with women having traditionally been more active as members of civil society organisations. The table also shows that older people are more supportive of the bottom-up approach to local development. While younger people are generally supportive of SKDP and CLLD, they are less emphatic than are older people – a finding that further underscores the need for greater efforts to engage young people in the work of civil society and in participative democracy.

⁴⁵ The five statements as presented in the questionnaire are: Rural Development organisations, such as South Kerry Development Partnership should be better funded. South Kerry Development Partnership promotes local and rural development. South Kerry Development Partnership has given local communities a greater sense of pride. South Kerry Development Partnership succeeds in bringing EU funding to our locality. South Kerry Development Partnership fosters entrepreneurship and enterprise development

Table 4.3.3: Mean Levels of Agreement / Disagreement (0 = total disagreement and 10 = total agreement) by Gender and Age Cohort in response to given statements about SKDP / LEADER / CLLD (Community-Led Local Development)

Statements	Gender		Age Cohorts				
	Males	Females	Under 18	18 to 35	36 to 50	51 to 65	over 65 years
South Kerry Development Partnership promotes local and rural development.	7.19	7.40	6.05	6.61	7.57	7.79	8.04
South Kerry Development Partnership has given local communities a greater sense of pride.	7.02	7.49	5.83	6.65	7.55	7.74	7.97
South Kerry Development Partnership fosters entrepreneurship and enterprise development.	6.85	7.20	5.90	6.20	7.44	7.42	7.74
South Kerry Development Partnership succeeds in bringing EU funding to our locality.	6.89	7.22	5.57	6.12	7.39	7.69	7.68
Rural Development organisations, such as South Kerry Development Partnership should be better funded.	8.00	8.48	7.08	7.60	8.58	8.63	8.95
Functions of South Kerry Dev. Partnership should be taken over and administered by Kerry Co. Council.	3.08	2.91	4.19	3.91	2.79	2.23	2.86
Kerry County Council should have greater oversight of South Kerry Development Partnership.	3.59	3.38	4.94	4.65	3.01	2.57	3.31

The findings presented here show very high levels of support for South Kerry Development Partnership and for its approach to development (governed by the principles of the LEADER Methodology and Community-Led Local Development, as presented in Section Two of this report). The findings from this extensive survey of local citizens are consistent with those from the survey of civil society organisations, in which community group leaders expressed very positive sentiments about the Partnership and its on-going contributions to local development. The results from both sets of surveys demonstrate strong support for SKDP continuing to be the delivery body and Local Action Group for LEADER from 2015 onwards. In contrast, there is no discernible support in any location or among any population cohort for the notion of aligning local development with local government or for having Kerry County Council (or by extension any part thereof such as the LCDC – Local and Community Development Committee) become the delivery body for local or rural development. Indeed, in Kerry’s case the local authority has been supportive of subsidiarity, the Local Action Groups and of working with the most appropriate delivery bodies for area-based programmes and initiatives. Thus, while there may be a disconnect between Dublin and citizens in South Kerry with respect to the rural development agenda, the approach taken by Tralee has been more constructive and is more consistent with the approach favoured by local stakeholders.



4.4 Summary and Analysis of the Research Findings

The three sets of research findings presented in this chapter reveal that in South Kerry:

- Civil Society is increasingly active in the provision of local services, particularly social services.
- Community and voluntary groups are generally well-organised and have increasing levels of skills and the proven ability to deliver projects efficiently and effectively. Investment in community development delivers public goods, and needs to be prioritised.
- The animation, capacity-building and funding provided by SKDP have been, and are integral to the development of communities and the promotion of rural vibrancy.
- Community groups are under increased pressures as they endeavour to fill gaps caused by the retrenchment and centralising State. Such pressures are increasingly unsustainable and have been exacerbated by funding cut-backs, not least the cuts that led to the loss of key personnel from SKDP. These cuts need to be reversed and the surrounding supports need to be re-instated and strengthened.
- The increased bureaucratization of the way in which publicly-funded programmes (including LEADER and SICAP) operate is perceived by civil society as a barrier to innovation and the attainment of vibrant community development. Programmes need to be administered in a more 'common sense' manner, with an appropriate balance between the need for public accountability and efficient delivery.
- In order to maintain and increase their levels of dynamism and their capacity to 'do development and democracy', community and voluntary groups need to become more inclusive and representative of younger people and those who have moved to South Kerry, especially those who have come here from Poland and Lithuania, and Central Europe generally.
- Public service provision in most of South Kerry falls below the 2002 target levels specified in the National Spatial Strategy and it is essential that rural service provision be underpinned by specific measures in the forthcoming National Planning Framework. Areas with the weakest levels of public service provision, most notably Iveragh, need to be prioritised in the safeguarding of existing services and in the roll-out of new services, particularly broadband.
- By virtue of its local base and inter-sectoral composition, SKDP has proven to be a significant lever and broker of resources and investments that have created jobs and spawned other developments. Thus, the Partnership needs to calibrate itself both as a delivery body for specific programmes and as a promotive agent with the agility and flexibility that are required to identify new opportunities and potential for communities and businesses across South Kerry.
- While levels of social capital and socio-cultural vibrancy are high in most communities, voluntary groups and the delivery of local services are under pressure from the contraction of the local economy, particularly outside of Killarney. Thus, there is a need for renewed and on-going investment in economic diversification, the provision of more public service jobs and the development of the SME sector.
- Rural communities are the main economic base of the towns of Kenmare and Killorglin, and the development of these towns is best achieved and sustained by rural-urban collaboration and the building-up of vibrant rural communities. Cahersiveen also performs some important service functions, but needs to become more of a focal point, and less of a 'pass-through' town.
- The Brabant Model of governance and 'do democracy' elaborated by Rural Alliance partners in The Netherlands, has direct applicability in South Kerry (and beyond).





Conclusion and Recommendations

This report represents part of the South Kerry contribution to a wider piece of action research on rural vibrancy that has been promoted by fourteen organisations in rural territories across North-West Europe. It has been made possible by the hundreds of people throughout South Kerry who gave of their time and expertise, and shared their views so openly and honestly throughout the research process. This is their report. The initiative has been enabled by the European Union, DG Regio (Directorate General for Regional Affairs), with funding provided through the INTERREG IVB NWE strand. The funding has ensured the formation and strengthening of over eighty alliances between communities and businesses in tandem with the development of community enterprises. This action research report and the review of Rural Alliances in South Kerry are also the products of collaboration between local development and higher education, namely between South Kerry Development Partnership and Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick. The research contains a wealth of data and information about rural vibrancy in South Kerry, including a distillation of findings at a micro-geography level. While the report's contents are of academic interest and value, they are also of use to community and voluntary organisations, SKDP (South Kerry Development Partnership) and other LAGs (Local Action Groups), service providers, planners, all tiers of government and policy-makers, among others. Thus, the report has gone far beyond simply recording and presenting data, and it has made several practical recommendations and provided many signposts throughout as to how rural vibrancy and sustainable development can be enhanced and better promoted.

Acknowledging Volunteerism and Promoting Community Development and Active Citizenship

The research findings clearly demonstrate that civil society in South Kerry is characterised by high levels of vibrancy, dynamism, vision, determination, innovation and knowledge capacity. Volunteers are the backbone of many communities. As the data presented here show, people who volunteer and who contribute to community development are more likely to become informed and active citizens, and are more likely to vote in elections and referenda. Thus, there is a proven positive relationship between community development and a healthy democracy – between participative democracy (volunteering) and representative democracy (voting). Community and voluntary bodies are performing important service-provision functions and are significant generators of local economic development. However, they face challenges in filling gaps, particularly as State services are scaled back and re-organised. Meanwhile, the wider economic re-structuring of rural territories is delimiting their abilities to meet some new and emerging challenges. These observations on civil society, as supported by the data presented in this report, can also be made in respect of many communes and municipalities in other regions throughout rural NW Europe. Community-led development works and local leadership and citizen participation need to be supported and facilitated. In continental NW Europe, local level bodies (e.g. French Communes – average population 1,700) enjoy constitutional protection and legal guarantees. In Ireland, in contrast, the work of civil society often goes under the radar of the public consciousness and the national media, and policy-makers can be inclined to take volunteers for granted. This needs to change. By profiling,

quantifying and highlighting the work of civil society bodies and their contributions to economy and society, which are on a par with those of commune/municipal authorities elsewhere in Europe, this report provides evidence to support the case for constitutional recognition of the value of civil society. Such recognition would represent a positive value statement by the Irish people and State and would provide due affirmation of the many thousands of volunteers throughout Ireland. Moreover, it would, through follow-up legislation and changes in agency approaches to public policy delivery, ensure more equitable partnerships, the mainstreaming of citizen consultation on public policy matters, greater citizen inputs into decision-making and enhanced collaboration between representative democracy (particularly local government) and participative democracy (community organisations) – as implied in the Brabant Model. The specific recommendations already put forward in this report with respect to increasing participation levels among young people and foreign nationals require local action with support from local government and the statutory sector.

Tailored Approaches to Local Conditions, Needs and Potential.

Several of the findings presented here demonstrate that although South Kerry is a cohesive territory with a long-established tradition in local development, there are notable internal geographical variations, both in the levels of vibrancy that pertain and in the responses and approaches of civil society. Communities and citizens in Killarney and its environs acknowledge that their area has higher levels of service provision, better connectivity and more opportunities for young people. Meanwhile Iveragh and the Kenmare area emerge as having the highest levels of social and cultural capital. The geographical variations in respect of the many issues covered in this report underscore the importance of dealing with communities and parishes at the most local level possible and of avoiding a 'one size fits all' approach. Public policy needs to be tailored for specific geographies, and it is recommended that local authorities be empowered to monitor and publicise the extent of public/statutory body activities and investments in each county and municipal district. The delineation of municipal districts at sub-county level represents a positive element of the Local Government (Reform) Act, 2014, as it brings local government closer to the citizen, thereby opening the potential for greater transparency and subsidiarity. In South Kerry's case however, the South and West Municipal District is one of the largest and most diverse in Ireland (has limited internal public transport services), and its boundaries were drawn without due consultation with local citizens. Therefore, in line with Article 5 of the European Charter on Local Self-Government (which Ireland signed in 1997), it is recommended that local government units downsize further and acquire meaningful devolved powers from central government, but that boundaries be governed by citizen plebiscites rather than imposed by central government.

The South Kerry experience demonstrates the Community Forum areas, all of which are less than half the size of a municipal district, are important in enabling local people to address issues and concerns that are specific to their own localities. While SKDP has demonstrated the flexibility to adapt and respond to local communities, not all agencies have the ability or resources to do so, whilst others require attitudinal change and direction from central government to ensure they become more citizen-friendly. Therefore, it is recommended that training be provided to the staff of public bodies to equip them with the necessary skills to ensure a more adaptive and citizen-responsive public service. In addition, it is recommended that agencies provide more outreach services and that bodies such as third level institutions make greater use of ICT so as to provide remote access to mainstream services and the widespread development of the knowledge economy. Civil society has shown itself to be a competent delivery mechanism and a willing partner to work with the public sector in ensuring citizen-centred, expanded, flexible, innovative and more localised models of service delivery. Therefore, it behoves the State and its agents to respond positively and imaginatively to the willingness of civil society.

Rural Development as a Public Good

The literature review (Chapter Two) highlights several OECD and other international studies, as well as the CEDRA report, in presenting considerable evidence in favour of strategic investments in rural territories. Such investments need to be targeted towards the most vulnerable areas, so as to redress the growing gap between core and peripheral regions and territories. In 1999, the European Spatial Development Perspective advocated balanced regional development, partnership between urban and rural territories and an adherence to the principles of environmental sustainability. In Ireland, in 2002, the then government introduced the National Spatial Strategy, which designated a number of gateways and hubs, with the objective of providing a counterbalance to the Greater Dublin Area. These attempts at promoting development outside 'the core' were and are important because international experience shows that growth is more sustainable when it is summative – based on the sum of contributions from all regions – rather than reliant on a single core or metropolitan region. Despite these positive developments in public policy,

Ireland, due to a lack of accompanying governance reforms or devolution, failed to arrest the trend towards the agglomeration of the Greater Dublin Area. Consequently, by 2007 international experts were warning that Ireland was in danger of becoming a 'city-state,' in which all regions were becoming subservient to the needs of Dublin. The current debate about congestion and a housing shortage in the Greater Dublin Area highlights the problems associated with agglomeration economies, which fail to invest in the potential of all regions. While Dublin and Ireland's second tier cities must be enabled to continue to contribute to national and regional prosperity, this must be done in a much more enlightened and sustainable manner with all regions benefiting from public and private sector investment. Experiences from Germany, Scandinavia, and indeed the CLÁR initiative in Ireland, point to the merits that can arise from prioritising key strategic investments in peripheral locations, rather than 'waiting' for a trickle-down effect from urban centres. Specifically, within South Kerry, towns demonstrate a reliance on the purchasing power of those who live in the surrounding rural communities and on the environmental goods, services and economic activities associated with South Kerry's outstanding landscape. Thus, instead of expecting rural South Kerry to benefit from some kind of urban spill-over, it is recommended instead, that initiatives such as REDZ (Rural Economic Development Zones) take a holistic approach that enables parallel investments in both town and countryside. In addition, the roll-out of key infrastructure, including broadband ought to extend to rural communities in tandem with adjoining urban areas.

The attainment of balanced regional and territorial development requires multi-level governance and greater citizen inputs into, and oversight of, the planning process. Therefore, it is recommended that Municipal Area Plans, for which municipal district councils should have implementation powers, be made up of a composite set of local community plans, which SKDP (and in other parts of Ireland the equivalent LAG) should facilitate and prepare. The need to strengthen democracy in Kerry has been heightened by the loss of town councils; Killarney Town Council had provided a focal point for civic engagement. Meanwhile, the complexities associated with the recent layering of local government structures are putting an undue burden on democratically-elected councillors, most of whom are part-time and unpaid. The reduction in the number of political representatives at local level in Kerry comes just two years in advance of the county losing a T.D. (going from two 3-seat constituencies to a single 5-seat constituency). Thus, in order to redress this democratic deficit, Kerry should aim to become a pilot county for a localisation of democracy.

Promoting Public Service Provision

The literature review presented in Chapter Two of this report clearly demonstrates the link between rural vibrancy and public service provision. International experience and research on this matter are eloquently summarised by the European Spatial Planning Observation Network, which states that, services of general interest are, "not only preconditions of growth and job creation, but also a fundamental pillar for the achievement of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Moreover, the access to services of general interest represents an important dimension of social and territorial cohesion" (ESPON, 2013: 1). This report presents data on the levels of service provision in each community in South Kerry, relative to national policy targets. The results are variable. Across South Kerry as a whole, the towns and villages offer 75 percent of the recommended range of services for settlements of their size. Cutbacks to service provision over recent years have undoubtedly been necessitated by a need to restore public finances, but in Ireland, as in some other countries, there is an unhealthy and damaging trend towards centralisation and neo-liberalism. Consequently, free market principles are being allowed to govern the basis on which public services ought to operate. Meanwhile, the State is being relegated from an active participant and advocate on behalf of vulnerable groups, to a passive bystander. While such approaches may save governments some money in the short-term, the medium to long-term damage done as a result of inter-regional imbalances, growing income inequality, increased levels of isolation, mental ill-health and other social problems is already proving to be costly. The message from this report is clear: now that the economy is beginning to show signs of recovery at national level, service provision must be restored to pre-recession levels, and investment needs to be accelerated so that all communities in South Kerry attain the service provision targets specified for them in the National Spatial Strategy. In addition, it is recommended that the forthcoming National Planning Framework (successor to the NSS) be on a statutory footing and include provisions for the safeguarding of local service provision and the promotion of balanced regional and territorial development. Specifically, this report also concurs with the recommendations of the OECD (2010) report 'Strategies to Improve Rural Service Delivery,' and these ought to be applied forthwith in Ireland.

Reducing Bureaucratic Burdens

The research findings presented here reveal strong support for South Kerry Development Partnership and for the LEADER and Partnership approaches to development. Considering its demonstrated role in stimulating local economic development, leading community development and enabling participative

democracy, it is recommended that, in line with the considered views of the European Court of Justice, the European Commission and independent evaluators, SKDP enjoy an increased budget and greater autonomy to make decisions about the allocation and distribution of rural and local development funds. The survey findings presented here also identify aspects of the local development system that require overhaul. Citizens in general and community leaders in particular, are concerned that the increased assertiveness of central government in directing where funds should and should not go, is leading to less-than-strategic investments at local level. In addition, the survey findings show that community group leaders are particularly perturbed over the loss of key personnel from SKDP, as a result of what they perceive to be disproportionate funding cuts. The cuts to LEADER and to community development are having a disabling effect on the capacity of civil society and are exacerbating the gap between the core and a growing rural periphery, whilst also compounding social exclusion. It is strongly recommended that these cuts be reversed so that projects can proceed and that SKDP can remain truer to its core mission, as deliverer and enabler of area-based development, rather than an administrator of schemes and funds. The recommendations of the very first LEADER evaluation in 1995 that LAGs be promotive agents with the capacity to lead and deliver projects are still relevant today. Furthermore, it is recommended that funds for area-based development (including LEADER and SICAP) be directed towards projects and initiatives that are determined more by local priorities rather than stipulations set by central government, quangos or service-level agreements with local authorities.

In acting as a promotive agent for local development and rural vibrancy – in all its respects, SKDP must act as a driver and enabler of civil society and as an active broker of resources. As Section 4.1 of this report shows, rural communities have demonstrated their ability to help themselves when empowered to do so. To this end, it is recommended that SKDP enable and that all statutory bodies support civil society in accessing European funds and initiatives such as the INTERREG programme. Access to such funds will benefit rural communities in promoting innovation and in establishing social enterprises that can provide citizens with enhanced local services, generate new employment opportunities and provide civil society with independent and more sustainable funding streams. SKDP has been very successful in securing such funding, but in order to continue to access these resources, the issue of match-funding needs to be addressed. It is recommended that a targeted fund be established to enable not-for-profit organisations such as SKDP to continue their involvement with EU-funded projects through the provision of the match-fund element required to cover salaries and travel. The bureaucratic regulation of such initiatives needs to be appropriate, so as to ensure transparency and accountability, whilst not stifling participation or innovation.

The need for more streamlined and less onerous bureaucratic control rings loudly from the findings presented in this report. However, the roll-out of alignment and the establishment of structures associated with the implementation of the Local Government (Reform) Act, 2014 have added an additional layer of bureaucracy to the funding application process. Project promoters are facing a scenario in which they will have to work with one agency (a LAG e.g. SKDP) to develop their project, but may have to have their application for funding approved by a separate entity i.e. the LCDC (Local Community Development Committee) of the County Council. The survey results show that such a scenario lacks any support amongst citizens and/or project promoters. Previous experiences in Wales and in some Anglo-Saxon countries show that where rural development is directed by local authorities, with LAGs functioning as subordinate implementing bodies, programmes are much less effective than those that operate through the community-led approach that has pertained in states such as Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Finland and Austria, amongst others. Moreover, in Kerry, as in most rural counties, local authority members have publicly supported LAGs having decision-making autonomy. Kerry County Council passed motions that both condemned alignment and rejected the establishment of a LCDC. Thus, the findings presented here are consistent with the stand taken by democratically-elected public representatives at county level.

Community-Led Local Development

Over the past twenty-five years, civil society has grown its capacity to deliver local development. Consequently, it has the required foundation and experience to enable it to lead area-based initiatives on a larger scale than LEADER and SICAP (Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme) post-2015. In recognition of the professional capacity of civil society, the European Union has provided a 10% top-up on funds including the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) and ESF (European Social Fund) to member states for the programme period 2015 – 2020, on condition that they deliver EU-funded programmes using a CLLD (Community-Led Local Development) approach. This EU decision has been positively received by advocates of direct and participatory democracy and several member states have availed of the funding top-up. However, as a result of the alignment of local government and local development, Ireland is not

eligible for such funds. Indeed, the trend towards the institutionalisation of community development and the centralisation of decision-making and investment mean that Ireland is becoming something of an outlier among EU member states. While the loss of funds is particularly regrettable, the main loss here has been the de-coupling of community development processes from community development outputs. Although the relationship between civil society and central government has had its ups and downs over recent decades, there had always been an understanding that community and voluntary groups are a vital part of Ireland's social infrastructure and are integral to the delivery of many social services. The alignment process has strained relations between government and civil society. In order to restore trust and to promote a renewed acknowledgement of the 'meitheal' (collective and co-operative action) and CLLD, it is recommended that the structures that have been established as a result of the Local Government (Reform) Act, for as long as they exist, be directed towards providing a link between local action and public policy, rather than having any role in the delivery or oversight of community development.

Economic Diversification

The work of CEDRA and many of the experts cited in literature review (Chapter Two) demonstrates that the current recession and austerity agenda have had a more adverse effect on rural communities than on most urban areas. The data presented show that rural economic development is integral to the ability of civil society organisations to grow their membership and foster social, knowledge and cultural capital. Therefore, there is a symbiotic relationship between the economic and the social. Investment in the rural economy is necessary for community development, while communities that are socially vibrant and have a high-quality natural environment are more likely to attract and sustain investment and generate prosperity. Therefore, it is recommended that the upcoming LEADER Programme be delivered in concert with all area-based initiatives including SICAP, TÚS, the Rural Social Scheme, the National Walks Scheme, EU LIFE, INTERREG projects and all social inclusion programmes, using community-led approaches, so as to enable South Kerry to capitalise on the complementarity between the dimensions of sustainable development – economic, socio-cultural and environmental.

Next Steps

Mary Immaculate College and South Kerry Development Partnership are but two of the members of Rural Alliances. Alliance members have been working together over the past three years to promote rural vibrancy; we have shared experiences, visited one another's projects, formulated policies collectively and worked together to lobby for the implementation and evaluation of those policies. The content of this report includes and reflects observations, learnings and recommendations that have emerged from our collaboration in Rural Alliances. Researching and promoting rural vibrancy have been key objectives of Rural Alliances and this report on South Kerry needs to be seen and advanced in the context of the wider experiences of communities across rural North-West Europe. Therefore, it is imperative that current alliance members continue to share their data and work on rural vibrancy and that they involve others, including other INTERREG-supported clusters, and especially public bodies and policy-makers in translating proposals and policies into action and lived realities for rural citizens. The data and recommendations presented in this report have local application, and must be pursued by SKDP, Kerry County Council and other agencies with a local brief. In addition, the content of this report has national and EU-wide application, and it therefore behoves public bodies, civil servants and national and EU public representatives to respond positively and generously to the wealth of statistical evidence presented here, and to build on and add value to the grassroots action on the part of civil society, so that collectively, and through meaningful partnership and more 'do democracy', we achieve and sustain rural vibrancy.



Appendices



Appendix I



The Vibrancy of Community Organisations in South Kerry

All responses are confidential.

A. Your Community Group

1. Name of Group: _____
2. What are the core activities of your group/ organisation? _____
3. In what year was your group / organisation founded? _____
4. Identify the three most significant achievements of your group / organisation:

B. Group Membership

5. Please complete the following table in respect of **the membership** of this group / organisation:

	1990	2000	2005	Today
Total Number of Members				
<i>Of whom</i>				
Males				
Females				
Aged Under 40				
Aged 41 – 65				
Aged 65+				

6. How does your group recruit members? *Please tick any of the following boxes that apply.*

- ☐ Membership is closed. We do not recruit.
- ☐ We have been lagging behind in recruiting new members
- ☐ Word of Mouth – informally
- ☐ Community and Parish Notices
- ☐ The Media – local papers and radio
- ☐ Public Meetings
- ☐ Exhibitions / Demonstrations
- ☐ Approaches to individuals
- ☐ Other, Please specify _____

If you ticked any of the boxes above, which method have you found to be most successful?

7. Is your group / organisation actively involved in recruiting new members? *(Please tick one of the following)*

- ☐ Yes, to a large extent
- ☐ Yes, to some extent
- ☐ Not Sure / No Comment
- ☐ Not Really
- ☐ Not at all

If yes, how do you do this? _____

C. Community Involvement

8. Does your group / organisation involve the whole community? *(Please tick one of the following)*

- ☐ Yes, to a large extent
- ☐ Yes, to some extent
- ☐ Not Sure / No Comment
- ☐ Not Really
- ☐ Not at all

If yes, how do you do this? _____

9. Does your group / organisation organise meetings that are open for the whole community to participate on a regular basis? *(please tick)*

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, how many such meetings were organised within the past year? _____ meetings

Please estimate the average number of participants per meeting: _____

_____ attendees

10. Does your group / organisation hold an AGM that is open to the public? *(please tick)*

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, how is the AGM advertised? _____

Approximately, how many people attended the AGM? _____

11. How does your group / organisation communicate with local citizens? *(please tick any / all of the following that apply).*

- ☐ Open Invitation to our AGM (Annual General Meeting)
- ☐ Word of Mouth – informally
- ☐ Community and Parish Notices
- ☐ The Media – local papers and radio
- ☐ Public Meetings
- ☐ Exhibitions / Demonstrations
- ☐ Other, Please specify _____

D. Group Activities and Operations

12. Has your group / organisation paid employees?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, how many are in each of the following:

Community Employment: _____

Community Services: _____

RSS: _____

TÚS: _____

Other Scheme: _____

Employed by Our Organisation: _____

13. Please provide a percentage breakdown of your group's / organisation's main income sources for the past year (or the most recent year for which you have data)

	% of Income
Membership Fees	
Local Fundraising and Sponsorship	
South Kerry Development Partnership	
Government Grants	
Other (please specify)	

Total **Income** for 2012 (or most recent year for which figures are available) € _____

Total **Expenditure** for 2012 (or most recent year for which figures are available) € _____

14. Is your group involved in any transnational partnership or exchange? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, with which countries? _____

How is this partnership supported? _____

What have been the main benefits, if any, of transnational partnership? _____

15. Does your group have the following?: (please tick as relevant)

A clear and agreed vision ☐ Yes ☐ No

A documented strategic plan ☐ Yes ☐ No

A recruitment policy / strategy ☐ Yes ☐ No

A Website or Facebook Account ☐ Yes ☐ No

A Constitution or Articles of Association ☐ Yes ☐ No

Procedures in place for the rotation of officers ☐ Yes ☐ No

Mechanisms to recruit new members ☐ Yes ☐ No

16. What are the main issues currently facing your group / organisation?

17. At which sections of the community are the activities of your group / organisation mainly targeted?

18. Do the following social groupings take part in community actions or events organised by your group / organisation ?

(a) migrants, ☐ Yes ☐ No

(b) people with a disability, ☐ Yes ☐ No

(c) older/ retired people, ☐ Yes ☐ No

(d) youth, ☐ Yes ☐ No

(e) newcomers to the community. ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please, name the actions or events in which they are involved: _____

19. Are actions undertaken by your group / organisation to improve the integration and participation of the following social groupings into community activities?

a) migrants, ☐ Yes ☐ No

(b) people with a disability,, ☐ Yes ☐ No

(c) older/ retired people, ☐ Yes ☐ No

(d) youth, ☐ Yes ☐ No

(e) newcomers to the community. ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please, name the actions or events in which they are involved: _____

20. Does your group / organisation provide training courses or information to others?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please provide details _____

21. Does your group / organisation undertake efforts to take part in public decision-making and planning processes?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Please the name the areas in which your group / organisation is active and describe how the group tries to influence decision-making

E. Community and Local Development

22. What are the principal current issues facing your local community?

23. What three words would you use to describe your local community today?

24. How would you describe the impact of recent out-migration on your local community? *Please tick the option below that best describes your experience.*

- ☐ Our community has been devastated.
- ☐ Our community has been badly affected.
- ☐ There has been some impact on our community.
- ☐ We have largely escaped the loss of our young people.

25. How would you rate the impact of South Kerry Partnership on your local community? *Please tick the option below that best describes your experience.*

- ☐ Very Positive – a major force for development
- ☐ Generally Positive – a useful support for development
- ☐ Mixed – sometimes positive, but not always proactive
- ☐ Generally inactive – has not had much impact locally
- ☐ Negative

Please comment: _____

26. Based on your experience of the various programmes operated by South Kerry Development Partnership, please rate how effective or otherwise you have found the following:

	Very Effective	Effective	Mixed	Ineffective	Very Ineffective	Don't Know
LEADER						
LCDP (Local and Community Development Prog.)						
TÚS						
RSS (Rural Social Scheme)						
Collaborat8						
Rural Alliances						

27. In your experience, what have been the main achievements of South Kerry Development Partnership?

28. What do you perceive to be the main strengths of South Kerry Development Partnership?

29. What do you perceive to be the main weaknesses of South Kerry Development Partnership?

30. With respect to supporting community and local development in South Kerry, what recommendations would you make to the following organisations:

Organisation / Agency	Main Recommendations
South Kerry Development Partnership	
Kerry County Council	
Fáilte Ireland	
IDA Ireland	
Enterprise Ireland	
Teagasc	
Kerry Education Service	
HSE (Health Services Executive)	
FÁS / Solas	
Department of Agriculture	

31. As South Kerry Development Partnership begins preparations for its strategic plan 2014 – 2020, on what issues would you like to see the Partnership focus?

For Groups / Organisations that have received support from SKDP

If your group / organisation has received funding or technical support from South Kerry Development Partnership, please complete the following section, so as to give your views on your experiences.

On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is considered very negative, and 10 is considered very positive, please rate each of the following aspects of your dealings with South Kerry Development Partnership.

Please circle the most appropriate score.

<i>Very Negative</i>	The helpfulness of the staff 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	<i>Very Positive</i>
<i>Very Negative</i>	The clarity of the application form 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	<i>Very Positive</i>
<i>Very Negative</i>	The level of paperwork required 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	<i>Very Positive</i>
<i>Very Negative</i>	The transparency of the application process 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	<i>Very Positive</i>
<i>Very Negative</i>	The speed and efficiency with which your application was processed 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	<i>Very Positive</i>
<i>Very Negative</i>	The level of funding received 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	<i>Very Positive</i>
<i>Very Negative</i>	The efficiency of the process for drawing down funding once your project was completed 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	<i>Very Positive</i>

Please comment on your scores:

Community Preceptions of Rural Vibrancy and Local Development

A. About Yourself

All responses are confidential

1. Are you? (please tick) ☐ Male ☐ Female
2. To which of the following age categories do you belong? (please tick)
 - ☐ Under 18 years
 - ☐ 18 to 35 years
 - ☐ 36 to 50 years
 - ☐ 51 to 65 years
 - ☐ Over 65 years
3. Which of the following best describes how long you have lived in South Kerry? (please tick)
 - ☐ At least 50% of my life
 - ☐ 25% to 50% of my life
 - ☐ Less than 25% of my life
4. What is your nationality? _____
5. What is your current employment status? (please tick)
 - ☐ Full-Time Self-Employed
 - ☐ Full-Time Employee
 - ☐ Part-Time Self-Employed
 - ☐ Part-Time Employee
 - ☐ Engaged in Home-Duties / Caring
 - ☐ Student
 - ☐ Unemployed
6. If you are in employment, what is your occupation? _____
7. Are you a member of any community or voluntary group? (please tick) ☐ Yes ☐ No
 If yes, how many hours in a typical week do you devote to voluntary activities? _____ hours
 What group(s) are you a member of? _____
 If no, would you be interested in becoming a member of a local group? ☐ Yes ☐ No
 What is the main factor that prevents you from joining a voluntary organisation?

8. Did you vote in the following elections / referenda ?

2011 Presidential Election	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Cannot Remember
2011 General Election	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Cannot Remember
2009 Local Elections	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Cannot Remember
2012 Children's Referendum	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Cannot Remember
2012 Fiscal Stability Referendum	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Cannot Remember

B. About Your Local Community

9. In the grid below, please tick the box that best corresponds to your opinion about the community in which you currently live.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure / No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
A. Economic Vibrancy	5	4	3	2	1	
People in this community have a good standard of living.						
Most people in this community have decent jobs.						
The local economy is as strong here as in other rural areas.						
Local people are good to support local businesses.						
Local businesses appreciate local custom.						
This locality attracts investment.						
This community produces entrepreneurs and self-starters.						
People with business ideas can get support and advice locally.						
Local middle-income earners can afford to buy a house in this community.						
We have good public services in this community.						
Public Transport Services are sufficient to meet local needs.						
The local policing service is satisfactory.						
Local Government services here are good.						
Local Government provides good value for money.						
Innovation is valued and recognized in the community.						
B. Social Vibrancy						
We have at least one public festival annually that generates a feeling of magic and excitement.						
We have good sports and recreation facilities in this community.						
There are good facilities for meetings locally.						
Citizens are motivated to learn new skills and develop themselves.						
We have good facilities for our young people.						
You see many active, healthy-looking seniors in this locality.						
Schools and education services are excellent.						

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure / No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
	5	4	3	2	1	
This community believes in itself. We think that with enough support, we can do anything.						
Crime is not a problem in this community.						
Anti-social behaviour is not really a problem in this locality.						
For newcomers to the community and those who wish to, there are meaningful opportunities to get involved and make a difference in the community.						
Young adults (age 25-34) consider the community a desirable place to live.						
People greet each other, regardless of whether they know them.						
There are friendly public spaces where a variety of kinds of people feel welcome.						
Citizens are interested in national and international news and current affairs.						
There are opportunities for inclusion and support for those with intellectual disabilities or special needs.						
There are opportunities for inclusion and support for those with physical disabilities.						
Groups with similar interests form alliances and co-operate to achieve goals.						
Citizens are committed to this community—they have a strong sense that they belong here.						
The community has a distinct culture and heritage that is appreciated by the community.						
There are good cultural and arts facilities locally.						
C. Environmental Vibrancy						
For local people, the integrity of the environment is a priority.						
The drinking water is clean and it tastes good.						
There are adequate recycling facilities locally.						
Planning and development are carried out in a sustainable way.						
Buildings are appropriate to the local landscape.						
Local farmers are true guardians of the countryside and farm in an environmentally-friendly manner.						

Name of your Community: _____

C. About Institutions.

10. For each of the following institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it.

	Tend to Trust	Tend not to Trust	Don't Know
The Government	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dáil Éireann	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kerry County Council	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The EU	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The European Commission	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

D. About South Kerry Development Partnership

11. On a scale of one to ten (0 to 10), where **zero indicates you strongly disagree** and **ten indicates you strongly agree**, please state your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements about rural development in South Kerry.

If you are unsure or don't know, please do not circle any number – just skip to the next question.

<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	South Kerry Development Partnership promotes local and rural development.	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
0	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	South Kerry Development Partnership has given local communities a greater sense of pride.	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
0	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	South Kerry Development Partnership fosters entrepreneurship and enterprise development.	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
0	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	South Kerry Development Partnership succeeds in bringing EU funding to our locality.	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
0	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	Rural Development organisations, such as South Kerry Development Partnership should be better funded.	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
0	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	Functions of South Kerry Dev. Partnership should be taken over and administered by Kerry Co. Council.	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
0	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	Kerry County Council should have greater oversight of South Kerry Development Partnership	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
0	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

Completed questionnaires can be returned in person to your interviewer, by e-mail to Brendan.OKeeffe@mic.ul.ie or by post to: Brendan O'Keeffe, Department of Geography, Mary Immaculate College, South Circular Road, Limerick. **All responses are confidential.**

Appendix III

Service Provision in Communities

Services and Amenities identified in the National Spatial Strategy	Killarney	Kenmare	Killorglin	Cahersiveen	Milltown	Waterville	Annascaul	Glenbeigh	Sneem	Beaufort	Castlemaine	Kilgarvan	Cromane	Baile na Sceilge
A. Town Amenities														
Regional Transport Linkages	1	1	1	1										
Second Level School	1	1	1	1										
Adult Education Opportunities	1	1	1	1										
Health Centre	1	1	1	1										
Day Hospital/Clinic	1	1	0	1										
Pharmacy	1	1	1	1										
Community-Based Healthcare Options	1	1	1	1										
Garda Station	1	1	1	1										
Court Services	1	1	1	1										
Enterprise Centre	1	1	1	1										
Training Opportunities	1	1	1	1										
Electoral Area Plans	1	1	1	1										
Sports, Amenity and Play Areas	1	1	1	1										
Cultural Facilities	1	1	1	1										
Seasonal Tourist Office	1	1	1	1										
Range of Retail Shops	1	1	1	1										
Entertainment Services	1	1	1	1										
Town Council / Electoral Area Meetings	1	0	0	0										
County Council Office	1	1	1	1										
Library	1	1	1	1										
Social Welfare Office	1	1	1	1										
Local Development Company	1	1	1	1										
Waste Management Programme	1	1	1	1										
B. Village Level Amenities														
Local Politician	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0
Post Office	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
Indoor Sports' Area	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1
Access to Education Programmes	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Local Childcare	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
Local Eldercare	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Community Alert	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
Garda Presence	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
Enterprise Workshop	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Multi-Purpose Hall	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
Sports Field	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Playground	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Facility for Teenagers / Young People	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1
Tourism, Culture, Heritage Groups	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
C. Village Nuclei Level Amenities														
Shop	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Pub	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Local Community Groups	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Outreach Access to Community Development Officer	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Community Transport	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
Quality Road Infrastructure	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
Local Civic Programmes	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Local Area Plans	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Amenity Area	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
Total Score 2013	46	44	43	44	18	21	15	18	22	15	19	16	12	17
Target Score 2020	46	46	46	46	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23
% Score for 2013	100	95.7	93.5	95.7	78.3	91.3	65.2	78.3	95.7	65.2	82.6	69.6	52.2	73.9

[illegible]

Appendix IV

Social Capital in Communities

	Killarney	Kennmare	Killorglin	Cahersiveen	Milltown	Waterville	Annascaul	Glenbeigh	Sneem	Beaufort	Castlemaine	Kilgarvan	Cromane	Baile na Scailige	Chapeltown	Knightsstown	Faha & Listry	Kilgobnet	Portmagee	Glencar	Lauragh	Toulist	Kells	Barraduff & Headford	Glenflesk	Muckross	Fossa	Derrynane	Castlecove	Spa	Dromid	Clonkeen	Inch	Templenoce	South Kerry (number with)	
Indicators of Social Capital																																				
Area-Based/ Umbrella Group or Community Council	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	22
Parish / Community Plan	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	19
Participated in Village Renewal 07 - 13	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	8
Women's Group / ICA Guild	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	25
Youth Group	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	23
Older People's Group	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	26
Community Childcare Facility	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	18
Parent's Association (school)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	30
Playground	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	12
Social Outlet (excl. pubs)	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	13
Social Housing	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	16
Sheltered Housing	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	4	
Cultural / Heritage Group	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	18
Voluntary Groups receiving state funds in last 3 years	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	18
Estate Management Project / Initiative	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
Community Festival (annually)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	20	
Community Enterprise (Co-Operative)	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	5	
Sourced LEADER funding for a Community Project	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	24	
Recycling Facility	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	25	
Community Conservation / Wildlife Area	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	15
Total Score 2007	17	16	17	19	13	16	12	10	18	12	9	13	9	11	11	12	11	2	14	8	3	2	16	9	6	14	15	10	4	4	11	0	6	9	359	
Target Score 2013	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	681
% Score for 2013	85	80	85	95	65	80	60	50	90	60	45	65	45	55	55	60	55	10	66.7	40	15	10	80	45	30	70	75	50	20	20	20	55	0	30	45	52.7

% of Communities with this group or amenity

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