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UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Understanding collaboration in the context of a social inclusion, equality and human rights multi-agency alliance.

Claire Kenealy

CARL Research Project
in collaboration with
CESCA (Cork Equal and Sustainable Communities Alliance)

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What is Community-Academic Research Links?
Community Academic Research Links (CARL) is a community engagement initiative provided by University College Cork to support the research needs of community and voluntary groups/ Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). These groups can be grass roots groups, single issue temporary groups, but also structured community organisations. Research for the CSO is carried out free of financial cost by student researchers.

CARL seeks to:

- provide civil society with knowledge and skills through research and education;
- provide their services on an affordable basis;
- promote and support public access to and influence on science and technology;
- create equitable and supportive partnerships with civil society organisations;
- enhance understanding among policymakers and education and research institutions of the research and education needs of civil society, and
- enhance the transferrable skills and knowledge of students, community representatives and researchers (www.livingknowledge.org).

What is a CSO?
We define CSOs as groups who are non-governmental, non-profit, not representing commercial interests, and/or pursuing a common purpose in the public interest. These groups include: trade unions, NGOs, professional associations, charities, grass-roots organisations, organisations that involve citizens in local and municipal life, churches and religious committees, and so on.

Why is this report on the UCC website?
The research agreement between the CSO, student and CARL/University states that the results of the study must be made public through the publication of the final research report on the CARL (UCC) website. CARL is committed to open access, and the free and public dissemination of research results.

How do I reference this report?
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Table of Contents

Contents

Table of Contents iv
Abstract vi
Acknowledgements vii
Glossary of Key Acronyms and Terms viii
List of Tables ix
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 10
1.1 Introduction and Background 10
1.2 Theoretical Approach 12
1.3 Research Aims and Objectives 13
1.4 Research Methodology 13
1.4.1 Data Collection Methods 13
1.4.2 Researcher Reflexivity and Motivation 14
1.5 Structure of the Thesis 14
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW 15
2.1 Introduction 15
2.2 Review Process 15
2.3 Literature Review Findings 16
2.3.1 Development of Third Sector Work in Ireland 17
2.3.2 Development of Partnership and Inter-organisational Collaboration 18
2.2.3 Austerity led Reform and Competition 19
2.2.4 Barriers to Inter-organisational Working 20
2.2.5 Promising Practices 21
2.2.6 Understanding Inter-organisational Working – Activity Theory & Social Capital. 22
2.3 Conclusion 23
CHAPTER 3: THEORY AND METHODOLOGY 25
3.1 Introduction 25
3.2 Researcher Positioning 25
3.3 Research Problems/ Questions 25
3.4 Theoretical Approach 26
3.5 Research Methodology 27
3.6 Research Methods 27
3.7 Ethical Factors 28
3.8 Data Analysis 29

3.9 Research Validity 31
3.10 Limitations of the Research Design 31
3.11 Conclusion 31
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS 33
4.1 Introduction 33
4.2 Theme 1: Strategic Networking versus Tokenism 33
4.2.1 Strategic Networking 33
4.2.2 Informal Networking 35
4.3 Theme 2: Collaboration versus Competition 37
4.3.1 Collaboration Enhanced Through Cooperation in Applying for Funding Applications 37
4.3.2 Collaboration is supported by the Personal Attributes of Members 40
4.3.3 Professional Coordination is Central to Successful Collaboration 42
4.4 Conclusion 43
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION 44
5.1 Introduction 44
5.2 Summary of the Research Approach 44
5.3. Summary of the empirical Research results 45
5.3 Implications for Practice 47
5.4 Final Reflection on the Research Study 49
References 51
Appendix 1 58
Appendix 2 64
Appendix 3 67

Abstract

The overall aim of this community based research (CBR) project is to understand inter-organisational collaboration in the context of a social inclusion, equality and human rights alliance. This research was undertaken in collaboration with Cork Equal and Sustainable Communities Alliance (CESCA), a Civil Society Organisation (CSO) in Cork City and Community Academic Research Links (CARL) in University College Cork (UCC). CESCA is an alliance of eighteen Third Sector groups in Cork City which was established in 2014 to collaborate together to address and enhance equality and inclusion in Cork City. CARL supports research in the community by acting as a support and linkage between CSO's and research students and their research supervisors in UCC.

The research is underpinned by two research questions that derived from CESCA. Firstly the research asks how effective is working together as an alliance as opposed to operating as individual organisations. The second question asks: what are the component parts needed to make an alliance successful. The theoretical underpinning of this research is activity theory (Engestrom 1987), and social capital theory (Bourdieu1992; Putnam 1993, 2001). The research adopted an interpretivist qualitative methodology (Flick 2006). Semi-structured interviews (Strauss and Corbin 1990) and participant observation (Schmuck 1997) were the methods used for data collection. Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006) was the approach adopted for analysis of the data. The research finding are presented as two themes based on contradictions (Engestrom 1987) identified in the data analysis. These are Strategic Networking versus Tokenism, and Collaboration versus Competition.

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I am very grateful for the encouragement, guidance and assistance I received during the research process. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge some of those people.

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I wish to thank my supervisor Dr Martin Galvin who was very generous with his time and advice throughout the process. I learned a lot from Martin and was lucky to have him as my supervisor.

I would especially like to thank my six year old son Frankie who was so very kind and helpful while I was doing my work for 'big school'.

Finally, I would like to thank my nearest and dearest, close friends and family, for encouraging me to go back to the books. I am very lucky to have them and I appreciate how much they care.

Glossary of Key Acronyms and Terms

CARL: Community Active Research Link

CESCA: Cork Equal & Sustainable Communities Alliance

CSO: Civil Society Organisation

UCC: University College Cork

PPN: Public Participation Network

CBPR: Community Based Participatory Research

JPC: Joint Policing Committee

LA: Local Authority

LCDC: Local Community Development Committee

LDC: Local Development Company

LECP: Local Economic and Community Plan

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

List of Tables

Table 1.	Membership of Cork Equal & Sustainable Communities Alliance (CESCA).	Page 11
Table 2.	Literature Review Criteria.	Page 17
Table 3.	Human Rights Advocacy Strategies.	Page 24
Table 4.	The British Educational Research Association Ethical Guidelines	Page 33
Table 5.	Baxters Thematic Analysis for use in Analysing Discourse.	Page 35

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction and Background

The overarching inquiry area of this research project is: understanding collaboration in the context of a social inclusion, equality, and human rights multi-agency alliance. The research goal is to understand collaboration and identify good practice, as well as barriers to effectiveness with regard to this type of inter-agency collaboration within the Third Sector. The research was carried out in partnership with Community-Academic Research Links (CARL) initiative at University College Cork and Cork Equal and Sustainable Communities Alliance (CESCA), a Civil Society Organisation (CSO).

CESCA is an alliance of eighteen civil society groups from the Third Sector in Cork City (see Table 1 below). Organisations are invited to join CESCA if gaps are identified in terms of representation from a particular field in the Third Sector. These groups include well established groups within Cork City, some with over 40 years' experience and most groups established in the 1990's. The alliance was established in 2014 to work together across the equality grounds named in the Equal Status Acts, to better address the areas of equality and inclusion in Cork City. CESCA has been effectively pooling expertise and membership resources since it was established. The group has developed and strengthened over the years. CESCA now organises an Annual Equality Day event in the City, the group are represented on the local Public Participation Network (PPN), and are contributing to the Cork City Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021. CESCA's objective is to develop a collective voice for social inclusion, social justice and advocacy. In addition, it focuses on supporting collective activities and services, and co-leveraging resources. It also focuses on policy change.

The Community-Academic Research Links (CARL) initiative invites Third Sector or Civil Society Organisations to request or suggest areas of research of interest to them. CARL then facilitates the match between the CSO and a student who will carry out the research on their behalf. CARL continues to be part of the research partnership, and provides ongoing support throughout the research process. CESCA made an application to CARL to have a research project carried out.

Table 1.

Membership of Cork Equal and Sustainable Communities Alliance (CESCA)

Ballyphehan / Togher Community Development Project (CDP)	Churchfield Community Trust
Cork Simon Community	Before 5 Family Centre
The Social and Health Education Project (SHEP)	Cork Gay Community Development Company
Disability Federation of Ireland	Framework Films
Health Service Executive (HSE)	LINC Advocating for Lesbian and Bisexual Women In Ireland
Mahon Community Development Project (CDP)	Meitheal Mara
NACS (Irish Immigrant Support and Health Education Project	SHINE (Supporting People Affected by Mental
Traveller Visibility Group (TVG)	Cork YMCA
Northside Community Health Initiative, Cork (NICHE)	MayField CDP Ltd

1.2 Theoretical Approach

The primary theoretical approach for the study is Activity Theory (Engestrom and Sannino, 2010). A distinctive aspect of activity theory that is particularly apt for analysing complex social practices such as inter-organisational collaboration, is that it acknowledges contradictions in activity systems as inevitable (Foot 2014). One of the key propositions of activity theory is that changes within for example collaborative inter-organisational activity systems or otherwise are triggered by multilevel contradictions as they surface in daily settings (Engestrom and Sannino 2010). Activity theory sees contradictions in inter-organisational activity as a source of development; that is participants attempt to change the activity system in order to alleviate tension as it surfaces in disturbances, conflicts and various forms of problems that originate in contradictions. From an activity theory perspective it is this working out of multilevel contradictions that drives change and expansive learning (Engestrom and Sannino 2010).

The primary approach is complimented by Social Capital Theory. Bourdieu (1992) describes social capital as "the collection of resources or potential resources that our durable network of relationships connect us to". Social capital can be seen as investment and use of embedded resources in social relations for expected returns (Linn 1999a, 2000). Social capital deals with three main concepts. The first one is that of a resource. A resource can be anything that helps to get something done or progressed. The second concept is the structure of the network. The structure includes the number of individuals in the social network and the size and quality of network. The third concept is that of the nature of the relationships between those in the social network. The full potential of access to resources within the social network is realised depending on the quality and depth of those relationships. Trust, norms, respect and loyalty are factors in realising the full potential. The suggestion that strength of network and its location lead to better social resources has received confirmation in a number of studies (Cambell et al. 1986; Lin and Dumin 1986).

1.3 Research Aims and Objectives

The research aims to understand collaboration in the context of a social inclusion, equality, and human rights multi-agency alliance. It had the ancillary aim of identifying good practice in this area. The following questions were agreed between CARL, the researcher and the Civil Society Organisation: Cork Equal and Sustainable Communities Alliance (CESCA):

Q1. How effective is working together as an alliance as opposed to operating as individual organisations?

Has it:

- Helped pool expertise and resources? If so, in what ways? How does this happen? What barriers have groups encountered?
- Impacted on services for users? If so, in what ways? How has this happened? What barriers have been encountered?
- Helped to influence policy, whether international, national or local? If so, in what ways? How has this happened? Were there any barriers encountered?
- Helped members to leverage their own work? If so, in what ways? How does this happen?

Q2. In your opinion what are the component parts needed to make an alliance successful?

1.4 Research Methodology

The research followed a Community Based Research (CBR) methodology. The principles of Community Based Research are aligned with the partnership approach of this research (O'Fallon et al. 2000). In Community Based Research the research topic derives from the community. In this case the research was requested by CESCA through the CARL initiative in UCC. A three-way meeting was held between the researcher, the research supervisor and a CESCA research liaison person. Subsequently a research group was formed to co-manage the research with CESCA. The validity of the data was thus enhanced through the participation of those familiar with the research area (Israel et al. 2003). Furthermore, the partnership approach brought together a number of people with different skills and experiences which of course enhanced the research process (Israel et al. 2003). Finally, the relevance of the research for the community was increased through their involvement in the process and contribution to the research findings.

1.4.1 Data Collection Methods

Semi-structured interviews and participant observation were the methods of data collection used in this research. Six members of CESCA were selected for semi-structured interviews using purposive sampling. The sampling for interviews for this research project was determined by identifying key stakeholder groups and individuals. The selection criterion included participant experience of inter-organisational collaboration in the area of social inclusion and human rights. Semi-structured interviews were conducted at various locations chosen by the interviewees. Semi-structured interviews allowed for the interviewee to speak freely and co-construct the interview. The researcher was present at two CESCA meetings and two Annual Equality Day events, where participant observation was used as a method of data collection. The researcher observed

the communication and relationships between CESCA members and between CESCA and the wider community, at the Annual Equality Days.

Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006) was used to analyse data. The researcher selected eight of the nine validity checks or verification procedures suggested by Creswell and Miller (2000) for ensuring the credibility and quality of the research. These are researcher reflexivity, prolonged researcher engagement in the field, triangulation, collaboration with research participants, member checking to assure the authenticity of the research results, thick rich description of the research results, keeping audit trial and peer checking / debriefing (Creswell and Miller 2000). The research adhered to guidelines on data protection, confidentiality and anonymity. The British Educational Research Association (BERA 2011) guidelines and the UCC Code of Research Conduct (2016) were followed carefully. The research *did not* involve interviews with vulnerable persons or service users.

1.4.2 Researcher Reflexivity and Motivation

I choose to carry out this particular research due to a genuine professional and personal interest in this area of research. I have served as a member of An Garda Siochana (AGS) since 1995. During this time I worked in the area of Community Policing and Community Engagement, which afforded me the opportunity to be part of a number of inter-organisational collaborations. This included being a representative on a Regional Advisory Committee for the first National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender - based Violence 2010-2014 (Cosc.ie, 2019). For a number of years I was a member of the Domestic Violence Inter-organisational Group in Cork, and Liaison for Business Watch and Hospital Watch Schemes. I also enjoyed a number of years as an Ethnic Liaison Officer which brought with it opportunities to collaborate with a number of agencies and groups within Cork City and County. I was TUSLA Liaison Manager and the coordinator of the Garda Youth Awards, all providing opportunity to engage and collaborate with various organisations within the community. Currently I am part of a liaison team to a Commission of Investigation. I was delighted to be afforded the opportunity to carry out this piece of research and to develop a deeper understanding of collaboration in the Third Sector in Cork City.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

The research project will comprise of five chapters. The first chapter introduced the research and provided background and an overview of the research. This chapter also outlined the theoretical framework underpinning the study. Chapter Two will provide a literature review examining the social and political context for community and voluntary organisations in Ireland, and studies relating to collaboration, social inclusion and human right alliances. Chapter Three will detail the research methodology, the research approach and the research positioning of the researcher. The research findings will be examined in Chapter Four, and Chapter Five will offer a discussion of the research findings by way of conclusion, and make some recommendations for further consideration.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the relevant literature in relation to inter-organisational collaboration, and in particular Third Sector collaboration and associated history and practices. The research is interested in identifying good practice in inter-organisational collaboration, and also good practice in terms of advocacy by inter-organisational groups. The search and review process is discussed in this chapter. The search finds that little has been written on inter-agency collaboration in Ireland in the specific context of a human rights alliances. The Irish literature tends to be context specific, such as Disability, Child Protection and Child Services, Poverty, Unemployment and Education; rather than focusing on Human Rights or Social Inclusion more broadly. Two relevant theories discussed in the chapter that can help with advancing a broader understanding of the Irish context are Activity Theory and Social Capital.

2.2 Review Process

The procedures used for the initial literature review includes a directed search for peer reviewed articles from international journals, written approximately over the past twenty years. The timeframe was chosen as the goal of the review was to build a picture of contemporary research into this area. Earlier relevant material has also been included. In commencing the literature review it was necessary to identify parameters to restrict the search. Articles were selected using keyword searches in the key databases selected: Academic Search Complete, JSTOR, ERIC, Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA), PsycInfo, SAGE, and International Bibliography of Social Sciences (IBSS).

Search terms included ‘multiagency working’, ‘collaboration’, ‘information sharing’, ‘alliance working’, combined with secondary terms such as ‘social inclusion’, human rights’, ‘effective partnerships’. Government, agency and research centre websites in Ireland and the United Kingdom were searched. Some articles from the USA and New Zealand and Australia were considered on the basis of the transferability of the material to the Irish context. Literature was selected and reviewed if it fell within the criteria in table 2 below.

Table 2. Literature Review Selection Criteria

- Literature focussed on multiagency partnerships in Ireland or the United Kingdom, primarily concerned with areas relevant to equality, social inclusion and/or human rights.
- Was based on published research studies, peer reviewed as far as possible.
- Literature which was specifically recommended by CESCA was also included.
- Had to be as contemporary as possible, published in English later than 1998.

A large portion of the literature referred specifically to children, both in terms of rights and service provision. This literature was used and considered relevant in the context of inter-organisational collaboration among voluntary agencies and between voluntary and statutory agencies. Despite the importance placed on inter-organisational collaboration in contemporary government policy and public service, there was limited research literature that focuses specifically on the evaluation of inter-organisational collaboration in the context of the measured value for the service user. The research literature focuses predominantly on certain models and themes, and evaluations of barriers to inter-organisational working based on these models. The literature tended not to focus on evaluation of good practice in inter-organisational work in general, rather the value being determined by the context. Areas such as Disability, Child Protection and Child Services, Poverty, Unemployment and Education are examples of areas examined separately rather in the general sense of Human Rights or Social Inclusion.

2.3 Literature Review Findings

The key features of inter-organisational alliances which emerged from the literature were:

- The development of partnerships and inter-organisational collaboration in the context of social partnership drawing from national discourse (Walsh et al. 1998; Sabel 1996)
- The establishment and development of new structures at local level as distinct for example from the development of naturally occurring working relationships between agencies. A number of organisations were born as a result of this development.
- Two theoretical approaches to understanding inter-organisational work: Activity Theory and Social Capital.
- The development of promising practices in the areas of inter-organisational collaboration and human rights advocacy.
- The existing barriers to inter-organisational work both nationally and internationally.

2.3.1 Development of Third Sector Work in Ireland

Lee (2003) traces community development in Ireland back to the rise of the co-operative movement over a century ago. According to Lee (2003) the level of civil society activity in the years following independence of the state were notable. This activity included movements by trade unions, women's groups, rural community groups, unemployed workers groups, and groups which are still in existence such as Muintir na Tire and Irish Countrywomen's Association (ICA). These were collectives formed by groups around personal or local concerns, but with a broader context in terms of economic and social issues (Forde 2009). Following independence successive governments favoured state control, and there was little devolution of power at regional or local level. This of course curtailed the space for voices to be heard or for issues to be debated.

The first European Anti-Poverty Programme in the 1970's - informed by the US War on Poverty Programme of the 1960's, prompted a new community development approach to include community participation. This included the employment of community development workers in local communities. Although the change provided much needed resources to communities, these resources also acted as instruments of State policy (Forde 2009).

According to Meade (2009), while the 1980's saw high levels of unemployment, they were also marked by the rise in community development projects seeking to respond to this crisis. There were further European Anti-Poverty Programmes which led to an increase in the number of community development projects, and the beginning of a Community Development Fund. This was the most significant community development programme yet (Meade, 2009). The programme was co-ordinated by the Combat Poverty Agency which advocated for co-ordinated approaches to tackle poverty, through community development projects. The agency had statutory responsibility and accountability to government with regard to its approach. The number of community development projects increased and according to Lee (2003) the projects became concerned with identity based work as well as geographically based projects, mainly located in disadvantaged areas. The Programme for Economic and Social Progress (PESP) in 1991, led to the development of Local Area Partnerships, or Local Development Companies.

It is generally agreed in the literature (Ledwith 2011; Shaw 2011; Forde et al. 2009) that third sector work is defined by values and principles rather than by work practices. According to Meade (2012) these values and principles are very much under threat in Ireland in recent years. According to Ledwith (2011) progress within the third sector is dependent upon ideas of collectively and mutuality. As groups are formed and issues are identified, the outcome of subsequent actions can have the potential to become social movements (Ledwith 2011; Fishkin 2009). Collectivities can form around geographic communities, communities of common interest, or those identifying around common objectives. According to Meade (2009) Ireland has a strong history of collective efforts within the third sector as regards community development. These efforts range from joint decision making in community projects to singular issues becoming public collective issues. One of the reasons for this approach is the realisation that current structures can be the cause of an inequality. By taking a collective approach, structures can be challenged and changes can happen. According to Forde, Kiely and Meade (2009), the changes can be slow and unpredictable if the group is not heard.

According to Ledwith (2011) professionalism gave rise to a new type of practitioner who speaks 'managerial lingo' and is concerned with policy goals such as social inclusion. She believes that "professionalism has silenced us, obscuring our

commitment to act for the common good" (Ledwith 2011: 29). According to Fitzsimons (2010) the emphasis has shifted from community development and associated skills to more managerial skills such as performance management, quantitative recording, evaluation and report writing and project management. These influences can affect the Third Sector and are significant in terms of its future. As Shaw (2011) observes, community development is oftentimes at its best when it attempts to interrogate and negotiate at the interface of two or more competing forces and represent the views and experiences of those who are frequently ignored.

2.3.2 Development of Partnership and Inter-organisational Collaboration

Recently partnership and inter-organisational collaboration has become an explicit focus of Third Sector work. Contemporary inter-organisational work developed in the context of the economic and employment crisis of the 1980's (Walsh et al. 1998; Rourke 2007). The focus of this inter-organisational work was to combat unemployment and poverty. Subsequently specific vulnerable groups were identified and targeted. The establishment in 1991 of Area Based Partnership Companies (ABPC) under the Programme for Economic and Social Progress was the most significant example of State commitment to inter-organisational work (Sabel 1996; Craig et al. 1998). The focus of the initial ABPC's was to address long term unemployment. The terms were expanded to include community development and emerging issues. In 1996 part of the Strategy to integrate local Government and local development saw the introduction of City and County Development Boards (CDB's). Working groups were subsequently established to co-ordinate the implementation of the social inclusion measures of the National Development Plan.

Lloyd et.al, (2001) offers the following loose definition of inter-organisational working:

> *"More than one agency working together in a planned and formal way, rather than simply through informal networking (although the latter may support the development of the former). This can be at strategic or operational level."*
>
> (Lloyd et al. 2001)

Scholarly definitions of collaboration establish several key points. According to Linden (2007):

> *"Collaboration occurs when people from different organisations, produce something through joint effort, resources and decision making, and share ownership of the final product or service."*
>
> (Linden 2007)

Useful though this definition is, Linden does not made it clear that it is possible to collaborate at different levels; for example between members of an alliance, service providers, service users and funders. For Frost (et al.2005), collaboration occurs when services plan together and address issues of overlap, duplication and gaps in service provision towards common outcomes. On a practical level Statham (2011) tells us that "agencies need to accept that inter-organisational working is a learning process, with tensions and difficulties as well as insights and innovations". This is something to be expected where collaboration includes several actors and occurs at different levels.

Models of inter-organisational work and collaboration are defined and understood differently and must be placed within their proper context. Although the above definitions of collaboration are helpful, Himmelman's definition (2002) is particularly apt in the context of my study. For Himmelman, collaboration is:

> *"A process in which organisations exchange information, alter activities, share resources, and enhance each other's capacity for mutual benefit and a common purpose by sharing risks, responsibilities and rewards."*
>
> (Himmelman 2002)

The National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) report (2006) contended that inter-organisational cooperation and coordination at local level are essential to ensure that more coherent services / supports are made available. For example, locally in Cork in the case of CESCA, the Health Service Executive have taken such a lead in funding and supporting the local collaboration. In the EU strategy 'Europe 2020', which is aiming for a sustainable future for Europe, collaboration is identified as an effective means of achieving long-term social and economic growth (European Commission 2019). Recently, inter-organisational working is being heavily promoted in the area of children's services in Ireland through the Minster for Children's office with the establishment of Children's and Young Persons Services Committees in each County (Gov.ie 2019)

2.2.3 Austerity led Reform and Competition

> *"Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted."*
>
> Cameron (1963)

It has been argued by Harvey (2015) that the austerity programme which began in Ireland in 2008 had a profound effect on the voluntary and community sector. During the period 2008-2015, government made cuts in housing and welfare which resulted in those served by community development to suffer most under the austerity programme. The Combat Poverty Agency was dissolved along with other State bodies, mainly social policy agencies. The marginalised and vulnerable groups were left without a voice.

Competition was directly introduced to the Third Sector at this time. The Policy document which ushered in significant change to the Third Sector was *Our Communities: A Framework Policy for Local and Community Development in Ireland* (DECLG 2015). Local Community Development Committees (LCDC's) were formally established in Ireland under Section 36 of the Local Government Reform Act (Government Ireland 2014). LCDC's have responsibility for co-ordination and oversight of publicly funded community development, and local delivery of Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) with POBAl (Pobal, 2016). Community and voluntary organisations are now tied in part to the Local Community Development Committees (LCDC's), which are part of an 'integrated approach to local and community development' (Government of Ireland 2017). The LCDC's are mandated to co-ordinate local funding, including EU community led local development funding 2020-2027. LCDC's bring together a collaboration of local government, civil society, state agencies, and private sector to provide a co-ordinated approach to locally agreed priorities. Local economic and community plans (LECP's) are developed and implemented through the LCDC's (Government of Ireland 2017).

This policy introduced the language of competition such as 'tendering for lots', and excessive reporting and documentation; often overlooking intangible community work that is difficult to document. In addition, as a result of the policy reforms, a managerialist approach has been introduced into the community sector. Meade (2017) argues that in light of this policy framework, the 'effectiveness and efficiency' of community development will be a matter for government, who will dictate the targets and in line with economies. The establishment of SICAP's marked another 're-signification' of Community Development in Ireland, a 'results-driven' agenda with democratic community participation at a loss as a consequence. In short, the policies have fostered a managerial approach and a client relationship between Civil Society Organisations and citizens, and a focus on outcomes and results.

2.2.4 Barriers to Inter-organisational Working

Although a systematic approach to managing inter-organisational work is developing at national level and through the development of policy, there still remains an 'ad hoc' approach to inter-organisational work at local level (Shaw 2011) in Ireland. In 2009 Ireland's Children Act Advisory Board (CAAB) published its report which detailed its review of evidence regarding the effectiveness of inter-organisational work. That review identified several factors that contribute to effective inter-organisational work. In that review, CAAB addressed a series of questions of service providers regarding specific models such as shared assessment. Although it was generally agreed that inter-organisational work was a positive and worthwhile venture, it was found to be difficult to establish robust evidence of measurable improvements for service users as a result of inter-organisational work.

Both EU and Irish policy call for collaboration in order to achieve collective impact (Kania and Kramer 2011). However, although a necessary part of collaboration, policy and infrastructures for collaboration are not in themselves sufficient to ensure successful collaboration (Worrall and Kjaerulf, 2018). Historically tensions have existed between local government and community sector organisations. These tensions sometimes relate to unclear or undefined boundaries and lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities (Azzopardi 2014; Forde 2005). Worrall and Kjaerulf (2018) argue that successful inter-organisational collaboration thus requires greater focus on relationship-building to create better understanding between local stakeholders.

According to the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (2017), Civil Society Organisations have an important role in the EU's democracies: they help:

> "*give a voice to people on issues that matter to them, assist rights holders, monitor government and parliament activities, give advice to policymakers, and hold authorities accountable for their actions".*
>
> EU Fundamental Rights Agency (2017)

However, amendments to the Irish Electoral Acts in 2001 have indirectly placed restrictions on Third Sector lobbying and advocacy in Ireland. The Standards in Public Office Commission interprets and enforces the Electoral Acts. The amendment prohibits any group from accepting donations which assist them in influencing public policy (Irishstatutebook.ie 2019). Most Third Sector organisations are state funded in part or full. There are terms and conditions with funding or grants allocated to

Third Sector groups. These terms and conditions can create barriers for groups both individually collectively from becoming involved in lobbying for equality or human rights issues, and/or changes in policy or legislation. According to Colm O'Gorman of Amnesty International Ireland:

> *"Although the Act was not intended to undermine civil society, its broad wording has clearly been used to silence NGO's working on a range of equality issues……"*

(Amnesty International Ireland 2019)

2.2.5 Promising Practices

In the literature reviewed, 'place-based collaborative leadership' is a promising approach to inter-organisational collaboration which a number of academics have argued is relevant to local government and civil society organisations. This approach refers to community based leaders collectively responding to the needs of their wider community (Chrislip 2002). The term 'place-shaping' (Lyons 2007) posits a notion of leadership of place that can include all actions which serve the common good in the particular place (Hartley 2018).

This type of inter-organisational collaboration was piloted in the United Kingdom. The UK government funded an initiative called 'Total Place'. The future community leaders were described as 'people who engage effectively with peers, communities, the third sector, and with local democratic representatives' (HM Treasury 2010). According to Karina et al. (2014) change in terms of 'who is engaged, how they work together, and how progress happens' were essential components in achieving collective impact (Kania and Kramer 2011).

In the context of inter-organisational working for human rights advocacy, the United Nations Human Rights Office (UNHR) (Office of the High Commissioner 2011) suggests some best practice guidelines. They suggest that human rights advocacy occurs at each level of decision making within an organisation and/or state, and can range from a single meeting to a public discussion, depending on the nature of the issue identified. In table 4 below, seven steps are illustrated as a guide for planning and implementing human rights advocacy strategies through inter-organisational collaboration. Case studies relevant to each of these steps can be found in the literature (Ohchrorg 2019).

Table 3. Human Rights Advocacy Strategies

Step 1 Identification of target audience
Step 2 Coordination of interventions
Step 3 Planning of meetings
Step 4 Message planning
Step 5 Management of meetings
Step 6 Evaluation of outcomes of meetings

Step 7 Consideration of alternative strategies

Seven steps in planning and implementing Human Rights Strategies (Ohchr.org 2019)

A particular best practice example is Cosc or the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence. The Department of Justice and Equality has responsibility for legislation and law reform, crime, security, child and family, courts policy and legal services, garda and policing and prisons and probation. Located within this office is Cosc. Its remit is to co-ordinate cross-government response to gender violence. The primary function of Cosc is to drive the implementation of the Second National Strategy on Domestic Sexual and Gender-Based Violence 2016-2021 and Action Plan (Cosc.ie 2019).

I have experience on this particular inter-organisational group. One of its strenghts is the inclusion of stakeholders who have experienced domestic violence or are the victims of domestic violence themselves, alongside government and non-government organisations and groups throughout the Country offering support and services for domestic violence victims. In addition this inter-organisational group has an Independent Chairperson, aleviating any suggestion of bias or ownership by the Chair. Some of the recommendations for action by various organisations arising from this collaboration, have come to fruition. One such recommendation was that An Garda Siochana establish a dedicated unit in each area to deal with domestic, sexual and gender based violence (Cosc.ie 2019) Divisional Protective Services Units are currently being established Countrywide (Garda 2019).

2.2.6 Understanding Inter-organisational Working – Activity Theory & Social Capital.

Activity Theory (Daniels 2001; Engestorm 1987) has been used by a number of researchers as a theoretical framework for understanding inter-organisational work. In their paper, presented at the British Association for International and Comparative Education (BAICE) Conference at Queens University Belfast, Carlisle et al. (2006) examined the extent to which inter-organisational joined up practice operates in meeting the needs of young people at risk of dropping out of school in Northern Ireland. The paper describes the initial phase of the learning in and from inter-organisational work in the *Multiagency working in Northern Ireland* project. This research forms part of a larger research project. Qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with professionals who were strategically and operationally involved in meeting the needs of the youths. They were interviewed in relation to the role of their organisation, and their engagement with other organisations. The authors argued that activity theory provided a useful framework for the study of inter-organisational work as it helped understand contradictions, experienced as tensions and problems in the research setting. It was found that inter-organisational

collaborations were not working efficiently due to external factors such as lack of resources and structures for such collaboration, and also due to existing tensions.

Social Capital theory has also been used by researchers for understanding inter-organisational work. Putnam (1995) in his book Bowling Alone considered social capital as a set of horizontal relationships between people that form networks and the associated norms and trust. The most substantial contribution of a social network to collaboration is its ability to support partnerships and alliances between organisations (Cross and Parker, 2004). According to Cross and Parker (2004):

> *"Social network analysis can illuminate the effectiveness of such (collaboration) initiatives in terms of information flow, knowledge transfer, and decision making."*
>
> Cross and Parker (2004)

Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society, it is in a sense the glue that holds them together (The World Bank 1999). According to Bourdieu (1992) and Putnam (1993, 2001) social capital theory can be applied at all levels, including governance, practice and individual practitioners.

Social capital theory is concerned with the 'social' aspect of resources and power, and how these are developed in the context of social connections and networking. There are three types of social capital: bonding social capital, bridging social capital and linking social capital. Bonding social capital refers to the connections between individuals or the augmentation of homogeneity (Schuller, Barron and Field 2000). Bridging and linking social capital broadly refers to the development of ties between people from different social networks. Unlike bonding, bridging and linking are developed by exposure to different ideas and perspectives (Woolcock 2001).

Social capital is relevant in terms of understanding the effectiveness of Cork Equal and Sustainable Communities Alliance (CESCA) group. Social capital refers to connections among individuals and social networks. CESCA are a strong network with no obligation to remain together beyond their own desire to do so and driven by the collective desire to improve equality and inclusion in the City. Bonding social capital, which refers to a linkage between members of a network who are similar in some way (Putnam, 2001) has relevance in CESCA in terms of the ties between the members who are part of a network of professionals in the Third Sector in Cork City. The development of CESCA can be described in terms of the bonding between individuals within the CESCA group, which has led to bridging and linkages between the wider organisations or communities of the members.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the relevant literature in relation to inter-organisational collaboration, and in particular Third Sector collaboration and associated history and practices. The review established that little has been written on inter-organisational collaboration in Ireland in the specific context of a human rights alliances. The literature tended not to focus on evaluation of good practice in inter-organisational work in general, rather the value being determined by the specific context. The Literature Review identified areas of good practice, particularly in terms of human rights advocacy which could be applied to

the CESCA collaboration. The literature review has identified two theoretical approaches to understanding inter-organisational work, Activity Theory and Social Capital. These will be discussed further in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The overarching inquiry area of this research project is 'understanding collaboration in the context of a social inclusion, equality and human rights multi-agency alliance. In this chapter I will outline the overall research design for this research project. This will include the chosen theoretical approach, research methodology, the methods for data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, validity, and challenges and limitations of the study.

3.2 Researcher Positioning

As outlined in Chapter one, the researcher has been a practitioner in the Third Sector for a number of years. The orientation taken in the research study is one of practitioner inquiry, which is the systematic investigation into a social phenomenon of which the practitioner is a participant (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1993, p. 3). The researcher choose to carry out this particular research due to genuine professional and personal interest in the area of research. The researcher serves as a member of An Garda Siochana (AGS) since 1995. During this time I spent time in the area of Community Policing and Community Engagement, and this has afforded me the opportunity to be part of a number of inter-organisational collaborations.

As a community based researcher, I am concerned with the interpretations, experiences and knowledge of the community partners involved in the research and thus the underlying ontological approach of the study is interpretivism. The knowledge generated in this research project is linked to interpretations rather than objective facts and thus my epistemological orientation is concerned with the interpretations, experiences and knowledge of the community partners involved in the research collaboration process (Bryman 2012).

3.3 Research Problems/ Questions

The overarching inquiry area which is explored is 'understanding collaboration in the context of a social inclusion, equality and human rights multi-agency alliance'. The research questions originated from CESCA and were submitted to CARL The researcher and research supervisor had meetings with the co-ordinator of CESCA and with members of CESCA where the area of research was discussed and research questions were agreed. The research questions were to act as a guide rather than as definitive questions to be answered. The main aim of the research was to understand collaboration in the context of a social inclusion, equality and human rights multi-agency alliance. The research questions agreed with CESCA are:

Q1. How effective is working together as an alliance as opposed to operating as individual organisations?

Has it:

- Helped pool expertise and resources? If so, in what ways? How does this happen? What barriers have groups encountered?
- Impacted on services for users? If so, in what ways? How has this happened? What barriers have been encountered?

- Helped to influence policy, whether international, national or local? If so, in what ways? How has this happened? Were there any barriers encountered?
- Helped members to leverage their own work? If so, in what ways? How does this happen?

Q2. In your opinion what are the component parts needed to make an alliance successful?

3.4 Theoretical Approach

There are various theoretical approaches underpinning social research methods. All research designs and methodologies have theoretical underpinnings which in turn shape the research methods used, state what constitutes evidence, and define the type of analysis and conclusions which can be drawn (Bryman 2012).

The theoretical framework for the study was developed *reflexively* (Creswell and Miller 2000) in that the researcher did not set out with an exclusive or determined desire to *rigidly* test the application of a particular theory or approach in the research setting. The overall theoretical approach underpinning this study is Activity Theory (Engestrom and Sannino 2010). A distinctive aspect of activity theory that is particularly apt for analysing complex social practices such as inter-organisational collaboration, is that it acknowledges contradictions in activity systems as inevitable (Foot 2014). One of the key propositions of activity theory is that changes within for example collaborative inter-organisational activity systems or otherwise are triggered by multilevel contradictions as they surface in daily settings (Engestrom and Sannino 2010). Contradictions manifest themselves as conflicts, dilemmas, or disturbances. From an activity theory perspective it is this working out of multilevel contradictions that drives change and expansive learning (Engestrom and Sannino 2010). In activity theory contradictions reveal opportunities for innovation or new ways of structuring and enacting the activity. Thus activity theory sees contradictions in inter-organisational activity as a source of development.

According to Engestrom (1987) the primary contradiction in any activity system in capitalism, is that of between ‘use value’ and ‘exchange value’, which pervades all elements of the activity system (Engestrom 1987). In each node of an activity system, tensions arise from the dual construction of everything and everyone as both having inherent value and being an exchangeable commodity within market-based socioeconomic relations (Foot 2014).

In the theory of expansive learning, criteria and yardsticks of learning are built by means of historical analysis aimed at identifying the contradictions or learning challenges that need to be resolved in an activity system (Engestrom and Sannino 2010). The goal is to identify a zone of proximal development that needs to be traversed in order move beyond the existing contradictions, and this calls for effective ways of articulating and depicting the historically possible zone of proximal development. Simply put, zones of proximal development may be understood as spaces of potential radical transformation of the activity system, achievable through resolving and transcending its contradictions (Engestrom and Sannino 2010).

A second theoretical concept underpinning the study is Social Capital. Putnam (2001) discusses ways of maximising the potential of social capital, while minimizing the negatives. He refers to bonding and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital refers to the trust and loyalty which builds between members and within networks of those with common goals.

Bridging refers to linkage with external assets. Bridging in social capital allows for the building of trust and exchange of information between groups representing diverse interests.

Social capital can be seen as investment and use of embedded resources in social relations for expected returns (Linn 1999a 2000). Social capital deals with three main concepts. The first one is that of a resource. A resource can be anything that helps to get something done or progressed. The second concept is the structure of the network. The structure includes the number of individuals in the social network and the size and quality of network. The third concept is that of the nature of the relationships between those in the social network. The full potential of access to resources within the social network is realised depending on the quality and depth of those relationships. Trust, norms, respect and loyalty are factors in realising the full potential. The suggestion that strength of network and its location lead to better social resources has received confirmation in a number of studies (Lin and Dumin 1986). This is relevant to this study in terms of the collaboration between the membership of CESCA, and understanding collaboration in the context of human rights and social inclusion

3.5 Research Methodology

Consistent with interpretivism this dissertation adopts a qualitative methodology. As the research aims to understand the experiences and attitudes of the 'social world', quantitative research would not have be suitable (Flick 2006). In contrast a qualitative methodology allowed me to investigate the attitudes, experiences and beliefs of the participants which is central to the outcome of this study (Flick 2006). The study adopts a broad Community Based Research (CBR) methodology. CBR is a scientific framework for community engaged research. It promotes the inclusion of research participants in the research design and application of the research process. CBR allows for participation and interaction between both the researcher and the participants and allows for the exploration of perceptions and knowledge of all participants (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995).

Overall responsibility for the design and conduct of the research remained with the researcher, albeit working in a participative manner (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995). A group of three representatives from CESCA group members, came together to form a research management group. This group collaborated with the researcher throughout each stage of the research process. These members self-selected during a meeting with the researcher regarding the collaboration. This research management group supported the research process and assisted the researcher in making decisions regarding all aspects of the process. This process involved the participating partners providing input into the pathways of research and furthermore, into the decision making and ownership.

3.6 Research Methods

Research methods are the techniques involved within a study used to collect, investigate and analyse the data (Bryman 2012). The methods for data collection selected for this research project are participant observation and semi-structured interviews.

- Participant Observation

Participant observation was one of the chosen methods for data collection for this research project. This method provided the researcher with opportunities to explore nonverbal expressions of feelings, establish who interacts with whom, and to see how participants communicated with one another. This approach allows the researcher to note the time and emphasis on various activities (Schmuck 1997). The researcher attended two meetings, one at the outset and one towards the end of the research study. The researcher also attended the CESCA Equality Day. This allowed the researcher to observe the interactions and dynamics and the varying depths of knowledge of the group. All participant observation and other notes were typed.

- Semi structured interviews

Semi structured interviews provided this project with a second method of gathering data. Interviewees were chosen through the process of purposive sampling where the sample is chosen for a purpose, in order to access people representative of a given criteria. Sampling includes those person's places, situations that will provide the greatest opportunity to gather the most relevant data about the phenomenon under investigation (Strauss and Corbin 1990).

The sampling for interviews for this research project was determined by identifying key stakeholder groups and individuals. The selection was based on participant's experience of inter-organisational collaboration in the area of social inclusion and human rights. The participants were drawn from membership of the CESCA group. These individuals or groups were chosen based on their specific experience as key stakeholders in the inter-organisational collaboration being studied. The selection was made based on variety of organisation type and service users, taking into account the scope of the organisation within the collaboration, in terms of their policy obligations. Care was taken to ensure an equal mix of males and females. The researcher selected the participants. Six participants from the CESCA organisations participated.

A reflexive approach to interviewing was taken. This involved treating interviewing as a social encounter in which the interviewee is viewed as an active subject and unavoidably engaged in the interactional co-construction of the interviews content (Holstein and Gubrium 2003). Interviews were also an opportunity to clarify participant's testimony on the spot. Here the researcher confirmed their responses were being interpreted correctly (Emerson et al 2011). Interviews were taped and typed verbatim.

3.7 Ethical Factors

The research adhered to guidelines on data protection, confidentiality and anonymity. The British Educational Research Association (BERA 2011) guidelines and the UCC Code of Research Conduct (2016) were followed carefully. The research *did not* involve interviews with vulnerable persons or service users. Informed consent was sought before any participant took part in the research. Participants received a description of the research and were advised of their right to withdraw their consent unconditionally at any stage. A verbal explanation was provided via the telephone before the interviews. Once the interview began further clarification was provided. Original interview materials and all data was password protected, safely stored and protected. Care was taken to make names anonymous and other identifiers in the transcripts, the final research report and all other documentation.

Table 4. The British Educational Research Association (BERA 2011) Ethical Guidelines.

- Consent was sought before any participant took part in the research.
- Participants were provided with a description of the research and advised of their right to withdraw their consent unconditionally at any stage.
- A verbal explanation was provided via the telephone before interviews
- Once the interview began further clarification was provided.
- Original interview data was password protected, safely stored and protected.
- Confidentiality of all participants in this study was ensured. Interview transcripts, were stored safely and protected. Care was taken to make names anonymous and other identifiers in the transcripts, the final research report and all other documentation.

While the research *did not* involve interviews with vulnerable persons or service users, every effort was taken to counteract any potentially negative impacts on the individuals and organisations involved in the research. I had no direct or indirect work relationship with any of the selected participants, and the evidence is that these participants did not feel coerced. In fact all of the participants agreed to participate without hesitation once contacted. I had the sense they wanted to participate because they believed unconditionally that the study would be of benefit to CESCA and the community. All expressed thanks at the opportunity to talk, reflect and exchange insights.

The risks associated with the research were not greater than that which would be experienced in the participant's everyday life. Indeed the study was informed by a desire to support wider social change (Edwards and Mauthner 2002, p. 19) through trying to improve inter-organisational collaboration and contributing to improving the quality of people's daily life in the research setting. Practitioner research is arguably less exploitative than other methodologies in that the researcher has a long term relationship with the research setting and a commitment to improving practice for the benefit of the community being served by the practitioner. The benefits of the research included the active involvement of participants throughout and CESCA in learning from the results of the research.

3.8 Data Analysis

Data was analysed using inductive thematic analysis or "a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun and Clarke 2006, p. 79). According to Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis involves searching across a data set, be that a number of interviews or focus groups, or a range of texts, to find repeated patterns of meaning (Braun and Clarke 2006). This involved a process of *initial coding* involved naming words, lines, and segments of data, and sticking closely to the data (Charmaz 2006). Here the goal was to make the codes fit the data rather than forcing the data to fit them. 'In-vivo codes', or the codes of participants special terms were preserved. These helped to preserve participant's meanings of their views and actions in the coding itself. Following this, *focused coding* used the most significant or frequent initial codes to sort, synthesize, integrate and organize large amounts of data. Focused coding involves "more directed, selective, and conceptual" codes than in-vivo or initial coding. It is used to synthesize and explain larger segments of the data (Charmaz 2006).

Table 5. Thematic Analysis for use in Analysing Discourse adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006).

Step 1: Becoming familiar with the data set
Step 2: Generating initial 'iterative' coding categories
Step 3: Generating themes
Step 4: Reviewing themes (discourses)
Step 5: Defining and naming the themes
Step 6: Locating exemplars.

The initial and focussed coding categories combine to form themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that the development of the themes necessarily involves interpretive work. Accordingly I identified the main themes in the data inductively and analysed the identified themes using theoretical constructs from the Activity Theory and Social Capital.

3.9 Research Validity

The validity of the study was ensured through the internal validity checks or verification procedures suggested by Creswell and Miller (2000). These are researcher reflexivity, prolonged researcher engagement in the field, triangulation, collaboration with research participants, member checking to assure the authenticity of the research results, thick rich description of the research results, keeping audit trial and peer checking / debriefing (Creswell and Miller 2000).

3.10 Limitations of the Research Design

The main methodological limitation of the research design is that I did not interview beneficiaries of the services provided by CESCA members. The primary reason for this is that this was outside the scope of the research agreed with CESCA and CARL during the research agreement process. Their desire was to investigate how CESCA members collaborate and members own perceptions of this. CESCA wished the focus to remain internal and the researcher therefore felt it was important to be faithful to the parameters of the study that was agreed. The perspective of beneficiaries or citizens on CESCA is something that should be explored in a further study and will require more time and resources than available for the current research.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter described the theoretical approach and research methodology used in this research. The methods for data collection and analysis were outlined also. The ethical considerations involved in the research were also detailed. Finally, research validity, and the challenges and limitations of the study were addressed to conclude the chapter. The next chapter will present the findings generated in the research study.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present the research findings of the study entitled 'understanding collaboration in the context of a social inclusion, equality, and human rights multi-agency alliance'. The findings will be presented as two themes based on contradictions identified in the data analysis (Engestrom 1987). As outlined in chapter three data was analysed using thematic analysis. Essentially the interview responses were coded into categories revealing patterns which led to two overarching themes. These are presented as contradictions which emerged during the analysis of data, as follows:

4.2 Theme 1: Strategic Networking versus Tokenism

Meade (2005) argues that to date the efforts of the community and voluntary sector to secure meaningful participation within the state policy making structures have not been successful. In fact it has only amounted to a form of 'tokenism' or participation but no influence or authority in decision making. She argues that the involvement has been counter-productive as a result. This tension and resistance to it was identified in the present study. However, tokenism is resisted or opposed through an inter-organisational discourse of strategic networking. It also appears that the deficit in power identified by Meade (2005) can be ameliorated in part through *strategic networking*. The social capital (Putnam 2001) accruing to participants across bonding social capital and bridging social capital, in particular, would appear to be significant. The building of connections between organisations, which otherwise would likely to be more fragile, is a clear outcome of a high level of strategic networking. Where inter-organisational groups have reached a high level of strategic collaboration underpinned by strong informal networking, their capacity for influence would thus appear to be greatly increased.

4.2.1 Strategic Networking

Through participant observation the researcher observed the CESCA group members interacting on a number of occasions throughout the research process. This included CESCA meetings, CESCA's Annual Equality Conference, CESCA management group meetings and comments on interactions during the interview. The researcher observed communication to be open and honest between members. Various issues were discussed openly at meetings, with generous information flows from all participants at the meeting. Updated or new information is circulated via email between meetings. The researcher found a consistent shared vision of equality, and sense of enthusiasm from members of the group.

In the semi-structured interviews the study participants identified networking in a strategic manner as an important element of inter-organisational working. Firstly, it is seen as important to join an alliance and to act in consort with other organisations. Being part of CESCA is a form of strategic networking for the individual members of CESCA. In turn CESCA as a collective, networks externally on behalf of all of the members. Working together is perceived as more effective than working in isolation on an issue.

> *"CESCA is extremely strategic….It's important to be in CES CA."*
>
> Person B

Person A described it as “wise” being part of CESCA because it is an important umbrella for groups within the alliance and considered it "strategic" for the individual groups because "CESCA has profile". This is very significant in terms of the progress already made by CESCA.

According to Person F:

> *“When you have a group of organisations together like that you have the luxury of being strategic….one organisation on their own are trying to do their day to day business and have limited time and resources to be trying to effect change and equality in the City. You can’t be everything…..in terms of strategy the link with the PPN and development of PURE CORK, CESCA is named as having the equality remit for the City.”*
>
> Person F

CESCA are strategic in planning for change in equality within the City. Their representation on the local Public Participation Network gives the group opportunity to effect changes in policy. Person B spoke of the potential capacity of CESCA to champion and support change towards a more inclusive City:

> *“Part of the CESCA collective are represented on the PPN social inclusion and environmental pillars…..the PPN is a really important part of the democratic process and influencing decision making outside the political structure, CESCA embraced that opportunity….you can see that CESCA members around the table have an informed approach and are not only representing their own organisation but CESCA, that’s a real strength in an approach.”*
>
> Person F

Person F agreed with the fact that CESCA has become an alliance with the potential and capacity to support positive change through the PPN but also at various other tables and high level meetings.

> *"You have an insight of issues which are beyond your own working remit that impact on people in the City……You are getting a lot of information flows around what challenges they face…You find when you are going to address other issues at other fora, that the same issues are coming up so you have a bit of background and are that bit more informed. It allows you to be more engaged at that level."*
>
> Person F

A second element of strategic networking is acting strategically to give the marginalised a voice. Person E spoke about the Equality Day in terms of strategic networking by the group to raise awareness of equality and inclusion issues and to provide a voice for those who may not otherwise have that opportunity.

> *"The equality day we do in December is part of that whole idea of inclusion and bringing voices together because sometimes voices are not heard”.*

Person E

Describing the effectiveness of the collective group Person E said that:

> "*the whole idea of a collective impact particularly in the voluntary and community sector in terms of people working with those on the margins of society, is because their voice is not as strong in terms of influence*."
>
> Person E

Person E described how CESCA gives a voice to those who may not otherwise have the opportunity to have their voice or their concerns raised in these Fora. Person E saw CESCAs unique representation of diverse voices as improving social cohesion and bringing a holistic and inclusive approach to equality within the City.

> *"The important thing about CESCA remit is the inclusive approach but also making the City inclusive, which feeds into the Local Economic and Community Plans. That's important for cohesion because we are a changing City."*
>
> Person E

Another Person D, made a similar point:

> *"An example of this could be an opportunity to influence transport and mobility policy, in terms of consideration for those with a disability."*
>
> Person D

According to Person B co-production with all citizens is an ideal scenario:

> *"ideal scenario in terms of local planning and development would be the involvement of all citizens, meaning every plan takes into consideration all citizens…we are all invested in plans for the future even if we are not directly affected by them…working jointly."*
>
> Person B

4.2.2 Informal Networking

Each of the persons interviewed made reference to informal networking as being an important component of what makes strategic networking work in practice. Through personal interactions information is exchanged, trust is built and knowledge and further ideas are created. Members establish personal connections and communicate informally on a professional level between meetings. This type of networking was referred to as having a 'professional level cup of tea'. Person C spoke of the value of chatting to others after the meetings and commented that it was:

"Vital to have the cup of tea and begin and end something….to have the professional level cup of tea."

Person C

Person B felt that there was value in getting to know other members of the group and developing bonds with others.

CESCA is "a loose alliance of groups providing conversation, support, and a few small projects…informal networking is effective…a bond with other CESCA members."

Person B

Person E described the benefits of being able pick up the phone between meetings and seek advice or information from other CESCA members who had expertise in a particular field. Thus these more informal interactions underpin the development and sharing of new knowledge.

"The informal networking like after the meeting and between meetings is invaluable in terms of progressing your own work more effectively and providing a better overall service ".

Person E

Person D described a recent experience of phoning a colleague from CESCA for advice with regard to a situation which fell within their professional area of expertise. This advice was very helpful and as a result of receiving it, staff members were advised to provide reliable information to service users about another available service. Person B described a similar experience with regard to informal networking and the opportunity for contact with members between meetings.

"I'm more inclined to refer someone to another service when I know the person through CESCA for example and I'm confident of the level of service and I suppose that's important."

Person D

Person A spoke with enthusiasm about the confidence they have in advising staff to make referrals to other service providers known through the CESCA alliance, the reason for this is because there is a trust established and a familiarity with the other service providers.

"Contact with people in organisations is an advantage in networking and they are not nameless faces, the door is open……you get to know the other services and their ethos."

Person A

Person A spoke about the value of informal networking and said that it was sufficient reason in itself to be part of CESCA. Person A places value on the informal support, trust and alliance which has developed among members.

> "*If we haven't done a whole lot, that's fine….we network, that's enough…alliance support and trust between CESCA members".*

Person A

According to Person F the:

> *"Communication processes within CESCA are important as our opportunity is combined".*

Person F

Another general comment made by participants was that through CECSA they have become aware of issues within the City which they would not have otherwise known about.

> *"You have an insight of issues which are beyond your own working remit that impact on people in the City."*

(Person C)

Thus through informal networking members establish personal connections and communicate informally on a professional level between meetings. Information is exchanged, trust is built and knowledge and further ideas are created. Informal networking is central, and an important precursor, to networking strategically.

4.3 Theme 2: Collaboration versus Competition

The study identified a contradiction between the competitive funding process fostered by government and the inter-agency collaborative approach nurtured by CESCA. All of the persons interviewed made reference to the competitive and cyclical pressurised funding context faced by individual CESCA member organisations and the Third Sector in general. Consequentially funding for the operation of CESCA itself is scarce. Funding is a divisive issue amongst organisations, especially in an era of neo-liberal competition. There are two aspects to this outlined below.

4.3.1 Collaboration Enhanced Through Cooperation in Applying for Funding Applications

One of the most important achievements of CESCA has been to ameliorate the deleterious effects of the competitive milieu fostered by government. The general consensus among the group members is the fact that there is cooperation and respect

between members regarding funding information and applications. In turn this has led to a coordinated approach for funding which has prevented large scale duplication of service provision.

"We are united instead of divided in terms of funding applications or competition for funding."

Person E

According to Person E

"A challenge in inter-organisational work is the requirement for competition between agencies for funding…we have not dealt with that in CESCA…while funding is important it is not the be all and end all of CESCA and it hasn't been a factor in terms of competition between members."

Person E

This is backed up by Person F who mentioned that:

"At a very basic level the communication processes in around CESCA have been very useful like we are sharing information all of the time ……if funding streams come down they are shared with everyone."

Person F

Another aspect of funding is that smaller groups may not necessarily be aware of funding streams. According to Person C:

"As a small group we would not always have the knowledge about funding applications so it is helpful to get that support through CESCA".

Person C

According to Person B, there may be opportunities through CECSA to combine services for consortium applications.

"A lot of the applications for funding are becoming consortium".

Person B

The general consensus is that CESCA is united and informed regarding the area of funding. According to Person A:

"We are united instead of divided in terms of funding applications."

Person A

The area of funding has the potential to hinder relationships between third sector groups competing for the same funding. Instead of allowing this to happen, CESCA have united to share information and resources ensuring that communication processes and relationships are strong, and enabling the Third Sector to put the best foot forward.

According to Person C, prior to CESCA there had been a lack of this coordinated approach to equality or inclusion funding or a forum to air concerns about the area of funding. Groups providing similar services may be unaware of what the other groups were doing.

> *"it isn't nice to be competing against community groups for funding, I suppose being in CESCA has given us the opportunity to air these things".*
>
> Person C

> *"at a really basic level the communication processes around CESCA have been very useful like we are sharing information all of the time...if funding streams come down they are shared with everyone".*
>
> Person C

According to Person B, the access to information about funding, and forum to discuss aspects of the various schemes has been very useful.

> *"Access to information about Community Grant Schemes and the difference between setting up a Scheme or not".*
>
> Person B

Person B also mentioned that access to advice and information through informal networking at CECSA can be helpful in terms of being fully informed before making decisions.

> *"Support from HSE through CESCA provided assistance with Early Childhood Alliance, not directly but advantage was gained."*
>
> Person B

Person F mentioned that communication through CECSA has assisted in the development and progress of a coordinated approach to funding.

> *"if there are funding streams coming up you relay that to the organisations…HSE and Cork City and Council were at risk of duplication...we now have a Joined up approach."*
>
> Person F

According to Person D:

> *"Competition for funding can create the wrong kind of atmosphere…streams come down they are shared with everyone."*
>
> Person D

The general consensus among the CESCA collective is that advantage has been gained for the Third Sector in Cork City through the coordinated approach adopted by CESCA in providing and sharing information regarding services and funding. It is evident from the data that the collaboration has resulted in lack of duplication in service provision leading to more efficient service provision.

4.3.2 Collaboration is supported by the Personal Attributes of Members

The second aspect to this theme is the personal qualities of the individual members of CESCA. Firstly is individual member's awareness of the positive group dynamic within CESCA and their desire to reinforce and contribute to this. A combination of having very experienced members with the right personality traits central to making collaboration successful, was a consistent point made. According to person D there is a willingness among members to take any necessary action to improve how CESCA does its business.

> *" there is a great willingness among the membership to learn and to improve services, and ways of working, in any way possible ……..The group dynamics are an important factor in what makes CESCA work well….this is down to the traits of the individual members, we are very lucky in terms of the calibre of who we have."*
>
> Person D

> *"The group dynamics are an important factor in what makes CESCA work well."*
>
> Person D

> *"we are a really tight positive group."*
>
> Person F

The membership also come from well-established organisations in the City. All of the participants in the research mentioned this area of membership in the context of the effectiveness of CECSA as a multiagency collaboration. The membership structure of CESCA was outlined in Chapter One.

Consistency in members is a third factor identified. Person B spoke about the significance of the individual membership in terms of the success of CESCA. Having the same representative from each organisation sitting at the CESCA table at all times is seen as vital.

" I think an important factor is the consistency in membership and the personalities of those within CESCA….the mind-sets are similar and I think we are all focused on the area of equality within the City".

Person B

Person E agreed with this point and said:

"the fact that the representative from the organisation doesn't change provides a consistency, and `I think this makes things work well...it is not the case of organisations sending whoever is available on the day to CESCA meetings or events."

Person E

A fourth factor is management level participation. According to person A, it is useful to have membership from management level, because it means that generally decisions can be made at CESCA meetings without people having to go back and ask their managers.

"membership are at a high level in their own organisation and are experienced in the sector….this makes a difference in terms of making actions happen…..decisions can be made there and then because of who we have at the table."

Person A

Person C also mentioned that members are at:

"decision making level….this makes us more effective."

Person C

The personal traits of the individual members along with their skills and experience seem to be an important sixth factor in what makes the alliance work well. Person F commented about personal attributes of members:

"there is a willingness, openness and humility among members."

Person F

A final important factor is that members have a cooperative style approach with no lead agency and everyone is an equal partner around the table. This did not happen by accident. According to Person F:

"we have worked hard to ensure there are no lead organisations in CESCA and we are all equal partners around the table …and `I think CESCA has done that really well……for me the power of CESCA has been offering all of us the space as a group, to influence as a group, share resources as a group...the organisations in CESCA and in particular the individuals within these

organisations would be committed to collaboration….we are a really tight positive group."

Person F

However, from time to time there are some controversial issues arising which the individual members of CESCA are not be in a position to collectively agree upon due to the constraints placed on them by the ethos or values of the individual organisations they represent at the table. An example of this type of situation is the experience of CESCA membership during a recent referendum, when all members of the group were not in a position to align with a particular stance in relation to the referendum. Much time was devoted to trying to reach a consensus, which was not possible. The experience was somewhat divisive. The research participants argued that it is therefore important for CESCA to be aware of the issues that have the potential to cause divisions, and not to overly dedicate time to them.

"Each organisation has its own remit and its own constitution …we did a lot of work with groups around that …….for a group to join CESCA the first day it's not a matter of their project manager turning up, the board of management have to understand and commit to the grounds of equality…..when CESCA is looking to take a position on a certain thing, maybe not every organisation agrees with that there is a process. We went through this with the referendum, some organisations have different ethos."

Person F

4.3.3 Professional Coordination is Central to Successful Collaboration

Another factor identified by participants was the importance of having professional coordination support in order to ensure that inter-organisational groupings such as CESCA are properly resourced, and have the capacity to operationalise and implement collective decisions on a day-to-day basis. While a coordinator was employed on a part time basis for a short period, CESCA is not directly financed to support the work of the group. This was made possible because of a funding source available through one of the members of CESCA on a short term contract ending in 2018. Currently the coordination is being done on a temporary basis by a staff member in one of the member groups to allow the group to continue working in the absence of a dedicated coordinator. Each participant who was interviewed commented on the need for a dedicated coordinator. According to Person E, there is a requirement for a formal coordinator and support in order for CESCA to run efficiently. The coordinator function is seen as central to building the capacity of the group to operate effectively and implement the decisions of the collective outside of their monthly meetings.

"there is a need for back office support."

Person E

Person A also said that in terms of effectiveness the group require a coordinator.

"We need a full time co-ordinator it worked better with co-ordinating."

Person A

A similar sentiment was expressed by Person B who said:

> “She (previous coordinator) is a loss as a co-ordinator."

Person B

Person F also acknowledged the contribution of the dedicated coordinator to building the group’s capacity and resourcefulness to continue working in the absence of coordination support.

> *“ we were lucky to have a dedicated coordinator for a time, unfortunately the funding stream ended and we had to find another way to manage. It shows our resilience as a group to be in a position to continue despite the ups and downs.”*

Person F

Person C discussed the fact that each member has their own role outside of CESCA and time would not allow for them to coordinate the CECSA group in addition to this.

> *“there is value in having one person coordinating all of the information and arrangement around CESCA, I don’t think it would be possible for any of the members to take on this role along with their own work……it is good to have an independent person doing this”.*

Person C

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the findings of the research. In this chapter two primary themes were outlined. These were 1) Strategic Networking versus Tokenism and 2) Collaboration versus Competition. Strategic networking is in tension with the tokenistic positioning of the third sector in policy development. This was identified as a significant theme during semi-structured interviews and participant observation. The research also identified a contradiction between the competitive funding process fostered by government and the inter-agency collaborative approach nurtured by CESCA. The building of connections between organisations within the CESCA membership, which otherwise would likely to be more fragile, is a clear outcome of a high level of strategic networking. The Social Capital accrued has increased the capacity of this group to influence. These findings will be further discussed and analysed in the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

The overarching inquiry area which is explored in this thesis is 'understanding collaboration in the context of a social inclusion, equality and human rights multi-agency alliance'. In line with the Community Based Research (CBR) orientation of this study, the research questions originated from the community organisation CESCA and were explored in partnership with them. The following research questions were explored:

- How effective is working together as an alliance as opposed to operating as an individual Organisation?
- What are the component parts needed to make an alliance successful?

The empirical analysis identified two themes.

- Theme one is *strategic networking versus tokenism*
- Theme two is *collaboration versus competition*

5.2 Summary of the Research Approach

The primary theoretical approach for the study is Activity Theory (Engestrom and Sannino 2010), which allowed for a specific focus on contradictions in inter-organisational collaboration as a means for innovation and development. From an activity theory perspective it is the working out of multilevel contradictions that drives change (Engestrom and Sannino 2010). The primary approach is complimented by Social Capital Theory or "the collection of resources or potential resources that our durable network of relationships connect us to" (Bourdieu 1992).

The research adopted a qualitative methodology and followed a broad Community Based Research (CBR) approach. CBR allowed for the inclusion of research participants in the research design and application of the research process (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995). Overall responsibility for the design and conduct of the research remained with the researcher, albeit working in a participative manner (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995). A group of three representatives from CESCA came together to form a research management group. This group collaborated with the researcher throughout each stage of the research process. This research management group supported the research process and assisted the researcher in making decisions regarding all aspects of the process.

The methods for data collection selected for this research project were participant observation and semi-structured interviews. The research adhered to guidelines on data protection, confidentiality and anonymity. The British Educational Research Association (BERA 2011) guidelines, in addition to UCC guidelines, were followed carefully. Data was analysed using inductive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006). The validity of the study was ensured through the internal validity checks or verification procedures suggested by Creswell and Miller (2000).

5.3. Summary of the empirical Research results

The theoretical framework, inclusive of the methodological approach outlined above, provided an analytic lens through which to examine the two research questions. Consequently in this section I will discuss the inquiry areas and findings of the results of the empirical analysis in the context of the framework of activity theory (Engestrom 1987) and social capital (Bourdieu 1992). I will specifically discuss the empirical findings by using the concept of contradictions (Engestrom 1987) identified in the inter-organisational setting studied.

Contradictions are historically accumulated structural tensions within and between activity systems that manifest themselves in tensions and conflicts (Engestrom 1987). According to Engestrom (1987) the primary contradiction in any activity system in capitalism is that between use value and exchange value, which pervades all elements of the activity system (Engestrom and Sannino 2010). Conflicts, dilemmas, disturbances and local innovations may be analysed as manifestations of the contradictions (Engestrom and Sannino 2010). The aim of identifying developmental contradictions is to map a zone of proximal development that needs to be traversed in order move beyond the existing contradictions (Engestrom and Sannino 2010). Simply put, zones of proximal development may be understood as spaces of potential radical transformation of the activity system, achievable through resolving and transcending its contradictions.

Activity theory asks the researcher to offer alternatives towards developing an expanded and transformative view of the practice context. I focus on identifying naturally occurring new forms of practice, collective concept formation and conceptual resources in the setting that could address the contradictions identified and potentially aide expansive learning (Engestrom and Sannino 2010).

- Firstly, *tokenistic* participation of organisations in official policy development and decision making is shown to be in contrast with a more inclusive construction of participation as *strategic networking* at the inter-organisational level of CESCA.

The concept of *strategic networking*, identified in the study, has a use value orientation (Engestrom 1987), and could potentially aide expansive learning (Engestrom 1987). This concept is an everyday practice based concept that reflects practitioners own working out of contradictions between competing discourses in the practice setting. The building of connections between organisations, which otherwise would likely to be more fragile, is a clear outcome of a high level of strategic networking. Here, tokenism at the official level is resisted or opposed through an inter-organisational discourse of strategic networking at the civil society organisational level.

The example of CESCA, demonstrates social capital (Putnam 1995) manifesting in the form of a network that fosters collaboration through supporting effective partnerships and alliances between participating organisations, and as described in the literature by Cross and Parker (2004). According to Putnam (1995) social capital refers to features of social organisation such as networks, norms and trust that facilitate action and cooperation for mutual benefit.

The evidence from this study shows that informal networking underpins successful strategic networking. It refers to informal relationships, bonds, trust, mutual support etc. One study participant referred to it as 'having a professional level cup of tea'. The social capital (Putnam 2001) accruing to participants in CESCA across bonding social capital and bridging social capital, in particular, would appear to be significant. Where inter-organisational groups, such as CESCA, have reached a high level of strategic collaboration underpinned by strong informal networking, their capacity for influence would appear to be greatly increased. The data presented here identifies the development of trust between members as an important consequence of informal networking and in understanding successful collaboration. As individuals within CESCA build trust and form bonds, this extends beyond the personal relationship to their organisation and community.

Furthermore, informal networking has the potential to be developed into deeper forms of collaboration. When these relationships are developing through continuous contact there is potential for organisations to use these relationships as social capital (Mandell 1999). The informal contacts such as exchanges of information or advice are important in a number of ways. Primarily, information exchanges result in "blurring of professional and personal relationships" (William 2002). This can deepen relationships and bonds between participants. Further, as individuals within an inter-organisational setting begin to form trusting relationships, they open themselves up to vulnerability, i.e. trust is that willingness to be vulnerable (Leana and Van Burren 1999). This vulnerability, however, is reduced through associability. Associability or the willingness to engage in an action such as trust is essential when trying to form a collaborative atmosphere between groups within an inter-organisational setting (Leana and Van Burren 1999).

In addition, informal networking is representative of "weak ties" which are an important component in building social capital. However, weak ties are strategically significant (Gummer 2001). Most of the literature does not regard weak ties as a form of collaboration, as it refers to loosely connected relationships. On the contrary, the data presented in this research study would suggest that informal networking is a vital component in understanding and enabling successful collaboration.

Meade (2005) argues that to date the efforts of the community and voluntary sector to secure meaningful participation within the state policy making structures have not been successful. In fact it has only amounted to a form of 'tokenism', with their participation but no influence in decision making, and argued that the involvement has been counter-productive as a result. The data within this research, drawing on Putnam's concept of social capital (2001), suggests ways of ameliorating in part this power deficit identified by Meade, through encouraging strategic and informal networking, which can increase the power of the collective to argue for and claim their participation in policy decision making.

- Secondly a government level competitive ethic, grounded in an exchange value orientation, is shown to be in contrast with a collaborative ethic, grounded in a use value orientation, at the civil society inter-organisational level.

The evidence presented in this study demonstrates a perceived competitive atmosphere created by government funding bids in contrast to a collaborative ethic fostered by CESCA. Practitioner's resistance to competition is expressed in the articulation of potential new forms of practice and a different development concept or approach to the official competitive discourse. In contrast to the official competitive discourse, research participants express a very different view of how inter-organisational

work should transpire. Essentially they outline a different or opposing *collaborative* development approach based on their experiential and practice based knowledge. The area of funding has the potential to hinder relationships between third sector groups competing for the same funding. Instead of allowing this to happen, CESCA have united to share information and resources ensuring that communication processes and relationships are strong, and enabling the Third Sector to collaborate.

That is, an environment of competitiveness for funding between voluntary and community groups is ameliorated within the CESCA alliance, which is decisively more collaborative. CESCA shows how third sector work is defined by values and principles rather than by work practices, even if values such as collaboration are under threat in recent years (Meade 2012).

5.3 Implications for Practice

Recommendation A: Further Develop Strategic Networking

Based on evidence identified in this research, strategic networking, and related to this, informal networking, are essential in effective collaboration. A practical recommendation then is that *strategic networking*, as demonstrated by CESCA, be developed and further invested in. The benefits accruing to the state through a deepening of collaboration amongst civil society organisations will more than offset the modest costs involved. Indeed, CECSA have demonstrated how strategic networking prevents a duplication of services, resulting in considerable savings to the state.

The literature is clear that addressing inequality requires a collective approach through which structures can be challenged and change can happen. Ireland has a strong history of collective efforts within the third sector (Meade 2009). Central to this, according to Ledwith (2011), is that progress within the third sector is dependent upon values and ideas of collectively and mutuality. As groups are formed and issues are identified, the outcome of subsequent actions can have the potential to become social movements (Ledwith 2011; Fishkin 2009).

The profile and remit that CESCA has developed should be built upon as a lever to effect further change. CESCA is strategic in its planning for change in equality within the City, and views strategic action as essential in presenting the voice of the marginalised. As an entity it strives to take an informed approach and present a collective informed voice. Indeed, being able to present a collective CESCA view is deeply valued by members and seen as a precursor to working effectively on behalf of those on the margins of society, especially because the voice of the marginalised is not as strong in terms of influence.

Participants identified that working together as an alliance is more effective than working in isolation on an issue. ‘Going beyond your own organisation’ was a concept referred to by the study participants. Through CESCA its members gain insight on issues which are sometimes beyond their own working remit. These ‘information flows’ give them a background on wider issues affecting the city and its people, and allows them to be more informed. In turn, the ability to present an informed view benefits members and those they serve, when they participate in other fora, such as the PPN.

Integral to the enabling of the collective is that inter-organisational co-ordination requires a coordinator function. This merits of this function have been demonstrated locally by CECSA. Indeed the case for coordination has been accepted and promoted elsewhere in government policy. At the statutory level nationally, the Children and Young Persons Services Committees have a national coordinator and each county committee has a dedicated coordinator as a mandated requirement. Similarly, at the civil society organisation level, the academic literature is clear that a coordination function is fundamental to making inter-organisation collaboration work in practice.

Steps to extend the influence of CESCA, and the community and voluntary sector generally, within local government should continue to be developed and explored. In a changing City, CESCA's unique representation of diverse voices across multiple fora contributes to improving social cohesion and bringing a holistic and inclusive approach to achieving equality within the City. Its annual Equality Day raises awareness of equality and inclusion issues and provides a voice for those who may not otherwise have that opportunity. Its collective contribution to the Local Economic and Community Plans is used to advocate for those citizens without a direct voice in that process.

Both EU and Irish policy call for collaboration in order to achieve collective impact (Kania and Kramer, 2011). However, although a necessary part of collaboration, policy and infrastructures for collaboration are not in themselves sufficient to ensure successful collaboration (Worrall and Kjaerulf, 2018). Historically tensions have existed between local government and community sector organisations. These tensions sometimes relate to unclear or undefined boundaries and lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities (Azzopardi 2014; Forde 2005). Worrall and Kjaerulf (2018) argue that successful inter-organisational collaboration thus requires greater focus on relationship-building to create better understanding between local stakeholders.

New patterns of planning and implementation that would effectively facilitate a move from legitimating the official *competitive* perspective to one which emphasises a more *collaborative* and equitable participation are needed. Participation in this way would involve *shared* agenda setting and decision making with the community and voluntary sector via inter-organisational groupings; and crucially occurring early enough in a process to determine priorities and influence deliberation and implementation at all stages.

CESCA has the potential and capacity to support positive change through the PPN but also at various other tables. Practically, a deeper and more strategic involvement could be facilitated through the Public Participation Network's (PPN's) and Joint Policing Committees (JPC's). The capacity of Public Participation Networks as a democratic innovation to engage citizens and civic society should be explored more. For example, currently there is provision within the legislative framework of Joint Policing Committees' to progress issues in the terms of equality and social inclusion, in the context of it being a community safety issue. This is legislated for in section 36 of the Garda Siochana Act 2005 as follows:

> The committee should advise the local authority and Gardaí on how best to function in the context of doing everything possible to improve the safety and quality of life of citizens.
>
> (Garda Siochana Act, 2005)

Recommendation B: Promote Citizen Participation and Frontline Staff Involvement

A second recommendation is for CESCA and its sponsors, to explore ways to increase the involvement and participation of citizens, who are service beneficiaries, in decision making, within CESCA and across other for a. As expressed by one study participant "the ideal scenario in terms of local planning and development would be the involvement of all citizens…working jointly." According to Smith (2005) co–governance innovations tend to give citizens the power to participate during the process of decision making. The term co-governance is described by Smith (2005) as 'the idea that citizens and public authorities in some way 'share political power'. The characteristics associated with co-governance include the following:

> The innovation involves on-going or continuing engagement with influence and decision making power; Citizens are empowered regarding agenda setting, rather than responding to an existing one decided by the public authority.
>
> Smith (2005)

Some broad conclusions were drawn by Smith (2005), following a survey of co-governance innovations. Some of the relevant points are similar to those that could enhance CECSA's form of collaboration. Primarily the provision of a dedicated support staff person for citizens should be considered. This is necessary to nurture and extend citizen participation and promote their robust involvement in CESCA. Care must be taken to avoid forms of citizen selection that decreases the opportunity for broad participation. Indeed stakeholder based participation has been distinguished from citizen based participation (Kahane et al. 2013). Stakeholder participation is more strategic with stakeholder groups claiming different kinds of authority over citizens. The stakeholder view of participation has also been categorised 'as a means' (Parfitt 2004, p. 544), in that participation is used as a tool or means for improving the provision and efficiency of service delivery. Alternatively the citizen view of participation can be equated with participation 'as an end' that seeks to empower and address unequal power relations (ibid, p. 539).

In the literature reviewed, 'place-based collaborative leadership' is a promising approach to inter-organisational collaboration which a number of academics have argued is relevant to local government and civil society organisations. This approach refers to community based leaders collectively responding to the needs of their wider community (Chrislip 2002). The term 'place-shaping' (Lyons 2007) posits a notion of leadership of place that can include all actions which serve the common good in the particular place (Hartley 2018).

Along with the recommendations already outlined above, CESCA could explore the Promising Practices described in Chapter 2.2.5.

5.4 Final Reflection on the Research Study

As a beginning researcher the process has made a significant contribution to my development as an inquirer into the social world. I have realised that research opens up more questions than could have been incorporated into the present study. This study has shown me that there is a need for further research in this area. This could involve examining a number of similar groupings to CESCA in different parts of the country and further afield. I also see the need to develop an academic paper that shares the findings and approach taken in this study with a wider audience. I believe also, that there is a need for the development of a practical resource for CESCA and its member organisations, so that the results of this study can be shared

with them. This could involve a workshop and presentation. Finally, I am grateful to have been afforded the opportunity to undertake this research with CESCA and CARL, and I hope to have done it justice.

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Appendix 1

RESEARCH ETHICS FORM

School of Applied Social Studies

Introduction

In UCC, research ethics is the remit of the University Ethics Committee (UEC). There are three ethics subcommittees under the remit of UEC, one of which is the Social Research Ethics Committee (SREC). This committee (SREC) reviews research proposals submitted by university staff and research-based postgraduate students seeking ethical approval for social research (as distinct from clinical research or research involving animal experimentation). The work of SREC is strongly informed by the UCC Code of Research Conduct (2016). See: https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/research/researchatucc/documents/UCC-CodeofResearchConductV2.111thApril2017.pdf

UEC and SREC seek to ensure that supervisors and researchers are sufficiently supported to undertake research (which may involve human participants) to the highest possible standards and with due regard to the welfare of all concerned.

PLEASE NOTE:

All undergraduate and taught postgraduate students should discuss the ethical implications of what research they are proposing to do with their supervisors and complete this research ethics form for their supervisor prior to any research being conducted involving human subjects. This form should be included as an appendix in the submitted research report, in addition to copies of information sheets, consent forms used, and the research instruments (e.g. questionnaire, interview schedule). It is strongly advised that all students adhere to the guidance on ethical issues provided by their supervisors and consult with supervisors should unanticipated ethical issues arise. Students should ensure that all forms being used to recruit, inform and gain the consent of research subjects as well as the research instruments (e.g. focus group interview schedule / questionnaire) being used have been reviewed by supervisors prior to conducting any primary research / fieldwork. Students should carefully abide by any ethical guidelines for their research provided by their course teams or in their course handbooks, as well as the UCC Code of Research Conduct in their research. See: https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/research/researchatucc/documents/UCC-CodeofResearchConductV2.111thApril2017.pdf

Should disagreements or difficulties arise in relation to ethical issues that cannot be resolved between supervisor and student or course team and student, the assistance of members of the School of Applied Social Studies Research and Ethics Committees can be sought (e.g. Elizabeth Kiely at e.kiely@ucc.ie and Orla O'Donovan at o.odonovan@ucc.ie).

Complete this check list and discuss *with* your supervisor

If your answer falls into any of the shaded boxes, please address each point later on in the form.

		YES	NO	N/A
1	Have you discussed your proposed research and your ethical review with your supervisor?	✓		
2	Do you consider that this project has significant ethical implications?		✓	
3	Will the main research procedures be outlined to potential research participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	✓		
4	Will research participation be voluntary?	✓		
5	Will informed consent be obtained in writing from research participants?	✓		
6	Will you tell research participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason, and (where relevant) omit questionnaire items/ questions to which they do not wish to respond?	✓		
7	Will data be treated with full confidentiality/ anonymity (as appropriate)[1]?	✓		
8	Will data be securely held for a minimum period of ten years after the completion of a research project, in line with the University's *Code of Research Conduct* (2016)?	✓		
9	If results are published, will anonymity be maintained and participants not identified?	✓		
10	Will participants be debriefed at the end of their participation (i.e. will you give them a brief explanation of the study and address any concerns they may have after research participation)?	✓		
11	Will your project involve deliberately misleading participants in any way?		✓	
12	Will research participants include children/ young persons (under 18 years of age)?		✓	
13	If yes to question 12, is your research informed by the UCC *Child Safeguarding Statement*, which sets out the legal requirements under the *Children First Act 2018*: https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/ocla/policies/UCC_Child_Protection_Policy_5April2018-Final.pdf			✓
14	Will your project require you to carry out "relevant work" as defined in the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016?[2]		✓	
15	Do you require official Garda Vetting through UCC before collecting data from children or vulnerable adults? Having Garda Vetting through another body is not sufficient; UCC Garda Vetting is required.		✓	
16	Will research participants include people with learning or communication difficulties?		✓	
17	Will research participants include patients/ service users/ clients?		✓	
18	Will research participants include people in custody?		✓	
19	Will research participants include people engaged in illegal activities (e.g. drug taking, illegal Internet behaviour, crime, etc.)?		✓	

[1] Researchers must ensure the confidentiality of data gathered in the course of the research (i.e. where that data is not already in the public domain). Where appropriate they must ensure privacy or anonymity of human participants. Researchers should not intrude into persons' lives beyond what is required for the purpose of the research.

[2] Relevant work constitutes any work or activity which is carried out by a person, a necessary and regular part of which consists mainly of the person having access to, or contact with, children or vulnerable adults.

20a	Is there a realistic risk of participants experiencing either physical or psychological distress due to research participation?		✓	
20b	Is there a realistic risk of you, as the researcher, experiencing either physical or psychological distress?		✓	
21	If yes to question 20a, has a proposed procedure for linking the participants to an appropriate support, including the name of a contact person, been given?			✓
22	If yes to question 20b, has a proposed procedure/support structure been identified?			
23	Are the research participants also students with whom you have some current/previous connection (class members, friends, tutor, etc.)?			✓
24	Will research participants receive payment/ gifts/ vouchers/ etc. for participating in this study?			✓
25	Are you accessing, collecting or analysing confidential agency documents or case files? If yes, please give details of compliance with the agency's policy on data protection and confidentiality below in your review.			✓
26	If your research is conducted on the internet, does it involve human participants (e.g. through web surveys, social media, accessing or utilising data (information) generated by or about the participant/s; or involve observing human participants in their online interactions/behaviour)? If yes, please review and utilise the UCC policy for conducting Internet Research.			✓

If you did not tick any shaded boxes proceed to Part A and complete the relevant form. If you did tick shaded boxes please proceed directly to Part B and complete the relevant form.

PART A: DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

*Ethical review requires that you **reflect** and seek to **anticipate** ethical issues that may arise, rather than reproduce copious text from existing research proposals into these boxes. Entries should be **concise** and relevant to the point/ question.*

A. Very brief description of your study (15-25 words max.)
[e.g. This is a narrative literature review (desk-based) examining group work interventions with young people on the theme of sexual health]

Text here
This is a qualitative research project aiming to understand the effectiveness of a multiagency alliance and to identify good practice in this area.

B. What is your study about? (Aim and Objectives / Key Research Questions) (100-150 words max.)

The overarching inquiry area of this research project is 'understanding collaboration in the context of a social inclusion, equality, and human rights multi-agency alliance'.

The following questions were agreed between the researcher and the Civil Society Organisation, namely Cork Equal and Sustainable Communities Alliance (CESCA):

Q1. How effective is working together as an alliance as opposed to operating as individual Organisations?

Has it:

- Helped pool expertise and resources? If so, in what ways? How does this happen? What barriers have groups encountered?
- Impacted on services for users? If so, in what ways? How has this happened? What barriers have been encountered?
- Helped to influence policy, whether international, national or local? If so, in what ways? How has this happened? Were there any barriers encountered?
- Helped members to leverage their own work? If so, in what ways? How does this happen?

Q2. In your opinion what are the component parts needed to make an alliance successful?

ext here

C. Concise statement of *anticipated* ethical issues raised by your project. How do you intend to deal with them? For example, your research could be desk-based but may still involve sensitive/ controversial material (100-150 words max.). In relation to any kind of research with human subjects you need to address the issue of **informed consent** and how that will be addressed, **safe data storage** (see page 8 of this document) for the duration of the project and beyond and how you will safeguard the **rights and welfare of research subjects.** If research is being conducted with **any** human subjects, information leaflets, consent forms etc., which have supervisor oversight, should be routinely used.

Consent will be sought before any participant takes part in the research. Written informed consent will be sought. Participants will be provided with a description of the research and advised of their right to withdraw their consent unconditionally at any stage. A verbal explanation will be provided via the telephone before interviews. Once the interviews begin further clarification will be provided. Original interview and all data will password protected, safely stored and protected. Confidentiality of all participants in this study will be ensured. Interview transcripts will be stored safely and protected. Care will be taken to make names anonymous and other identifiers in the transcripts, the final research report and all other documentation. Every effort will be taken to counteract any potentially negative impacts on the individuals and communities involved in the research.

What do I show my supervisor with this form?

1. A copy of your *draft* data collection instrument(s) (interview guide, questionnaire, survey, focus group schedule, etc.).
2. A copy of your information guide for the study.
3. A copy of your information sheet, informed consent form and any other forms used in the research process.

Website links and helpful resources

UCC *Child Protection Policy*	https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/ocla/policies/UCCChildProtectionPolicyFINAL.pdf
UCC *Code of Research Conduct*	https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/research/researchatucc/documents/UCCCodeofResearchConduct.pdf
UCC Student Vetting Policy	https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/studyatucc/undergrads/downloadabledocumentssection/StudentVettingPolicyandProcedure.pdf
IT Support for UCC Students	http://sit.ucc.ie

EU Commission, Responsible Research and Innovation & H2020 RRI Tools Website	https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/h2020-section/responsible-research-innovation http://www.rri-tools.eu /
SREC (Master by Research and PhD students only)	https://www.ucc.ie/en/research/ethics/
Applied Social Studies Staff	http://www.ucc.ie/en/appsoc/staff/

Guidelines on Safe Data Storage

As researchers, it is imperative that we can assure our participants that their data will be stored securely; this is of course particularly important where potentially sensitive personal details are involved. It is not adequate to simply say that the data will be stored safely. Exact detail is required as to the use (and location) of locked cabinets, management of audio files, encryption of laptops, electronic storage and so on. Where possible **physical data** such as survey forms etc. should be converted to electronic format as soon as possible and the originals shredded, however if you must retain physical data then it should be safely stored on premises at UCC or in a locked cabinet in a secure location.

Treating Identifiable Data

1. Data should be converted to anonymous form as soon as is possible, thus opening the possibility of storing the data on OneDrive etc.
2. If data is not anonymised then the UCC IT Department recommend using *Research Data Store OR Departments/Schools own local secure storage, (e.g. UCC NAS, etc.) if this exists.
3. If identifiable data is not stored on *Research Data Store or NAS the researcher must provide a justification for this and must ensure that the laptop or pc on which the data is stored is encrypted and password protected.
4. Applicants should never store research data on a USB and only use an encrypted portable hard drive for short-term storage until data has been anonymised.
5. Applicants must consider how to maintain safe storage of their data beyond the life of their laptop/pc to meet the 10-year requirement in the UCC Code of Research Conduct.
6. All laptops and PCs used to access data must be encrypted and password protected

Treating Anonymised Data

1. If confidential data has been anonymised or if you have public or non-sensitive data, then the UCC-supplied OneDrive for Business through UCC Office 365 or Google Drive through the UCC-supplied G-Suite (formerly Google Apps for Education), can be used for data storage. The **personal** versions of OneDrive and G-Suite **should not** be used to store research data.

If you have questions about these services, please contact UCC IT Helpdesk.

***Research Data Store** provides a network based shared data storage facility for the UCC Research community. It is for active research projects and is not an archive service. A Principal Investigator or Head of Department can request storage (maximum 1TB) for a research project. Research Groups will have access to 1TB of storage and folders can be shared with researchers in either the central or student domains. **This service can be requested by a PI or by a Head of Department on behalf of members of a research team/students.**

To make a request to use Research Data Store, visit http://Servicedesk.ucc.ie and select option 4 (Data Storage and NASAccess). "https://www.ucc.ie/en/it/services/datastore/"

UCC Device Encryption Service	http://www.ucc.ie/en/it/services/encryptionlaptop/	--
UCC Staff IT Services	http://www.ucc.ie/en/it/services/staff/	List of all UCC staff IT services.
HEAnet FileSender	http://www.heanet.ie/services/hosting/filesender	HEAnet FileSender is a way to share large files. It works through your web browser and allows you send encrypted files to any email address in a safe manner.

Appendix 2

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET

Research Title

Understanding collaboration in the context of a social inclusion, equality and human rights multi-agency alliance

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to support CESCA to develop a greater understanding of collaboration in the context of a social inclusion, equality and human rights multi-agency alliance. The research is a participatory research study, which means the research study is being designed and carried out by UCC in partnership with CESCA. This research is a Masters Research Study. The researcher is from the Masters in Voluntary and Community Sector Management at UCC. The study has the permission of CESCA, its Management Group and consent of members. The research questions have been developed by CESCA in consultation with the researcher and research supervisor. The outcomes of the research will include:

- Identification and dissemination of good practice in relation to alliances of equality and human rights organisations
- Understanding how good practice in this area helps an alliance
- Understanding how it helps individual member organisations advance social inclusion more effectively
- Recommendations for CESCA regarding how it can improve its practices

What will the study involve?

Participation in this research will involve participating in a one hour interview with the researcher. Interviews will be audio recorded. The study will involve semi-structured interviews. There are five prepared questions which will be asked of participants during the interview. These questions have been agreed between CESCA and the researcher. The interviews will take place at a convenient locations and times arranged to suit participants. You may be also asked to allow the researchers to observe your participation in meetings and other activities related to CESCA.

Why have you been asked to take part?

You have been asked to participate because of your participation in CESCA, and or because of your knowledge or experience of collaboration in the context of a social inclusion, equality and human rights multi-agency alliance.

What are the risks involved?

There are no risks associated with your participation in the study.

Do you have to take part?

You are under no obligation to take part in this research. Before the interviews takes place each participant will asked to sign an informed consent form which shows their desire to take part in the research. Should you agree to be included, you may also withdraw from the study at any stage without prejudice.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality will be protected, you will not be identified by name within the research and any comments or information provided will not be referenced to you by name. All data will be reported anonymously using pseudonyms.

What will happen to the information which you give?

Data will be stored securely and anonymously in UCC and all results and publications from the project will be presented in a way that ensures no individual participant is identifiable. Data will be securely held for a minimum period of ten years after the completion of a research project in line with the University's Code of Research Conduct. The findings from this research will be presented as part of a Masters dissertation and possibly as a report, conference papers, and other academic publications. This research is carried out in conjunction with the UCC CARL programme (Community Academic Research Links), and a link to the research study will be made available on UCC's CARL web site.

What if there is a problem?

At the end of the interview the researcher will discuss with you how you found the experience, and address any concerns you may have. If there is a problem the researcher will try to ensure that it is resolved to your satisfaction.

Researcher Contact Details

If you have any further questions about the project or clarification of terms contained within this leaflet please do not hesitate to contact the project researchers now or in the future:

Claire Kenealy: Department of Applied Social Studies, UCC: Phone: 087 2832274 or email: 116224422@umail.ucc.ie

Dr. Martin Galvin: College of Business and Law and Community Academic Research Links, UCC. 13 South Mall Cork |tel: +353 21 4658610 |mobile: +353 086 770 8217 martin.galvin@ucc.ie

Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated. Thank you for your kind attention.

Appendix 3

Dear _____

Research Study Recruitment Letter

I am writing to ask you to participate in a research study entitled: Understanding collaboration in the context of a social inclusion, equality and human rights multi- agency alliance. Please review the information leaflet which accompanies this letter for further details about the study.

Participation in the research study may involve being observed as part of your participation in meetings and other activities related to your involvement in CESCA. You may also be asked to participate in a one hour interview with the researcher. Interviews will be audio recorded.

Your participation in the study will contribute greatly to improving understanding of multi- agency collaboration and human rights alliances. The aim of the study is to contribute to improving the quality of community member's daily life and the professional practice of practitioners working on behalf of the community. However you are under no obligation to participate in this study and should you participate, you are free to withdraw at any time.

If you have any questions about the project or clarification of terms contained within the information leaflet please do not hesitate to contact the project researchers,

Best regards,

Claire Kenealy

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