

## **International Centre for Local and Regional Development**

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### **A CREATIVE RESPONSE: PLACEMAKING AS A PROCESS OF MUTUAL LEARNING, CO-DESIGN AND CONTINUOUS INOVATION**

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## **Introduction**

- Placemaking is a fitting topic for this 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference – ICLRD has done much to develop and apply the fundamentals of the concept and transmit international experience.
- Placemaking is also a basic task for local and regional development – development is much more than the promotion of growth, it is about the stimulation and management of change.
- Such change is best considered as the objective (and outcome) of the development and management of sustainable communities, especially in contested territories.

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## Introduction Cont'd

- And such an approach has been, and still is, of particular importance on the island of Ireland – the peace process over recent years has seen ICLRD make a substantial contribution.
- This brief presentation explores some of the most important elements of placemaking and reflects on ICLRD's contribution to this essential area of activity.

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## Placemaking – Some Basic Ideas

- Placemaking is a concept with a long history, but this history is replete with contested definitions and operational confusions – these difficulties stem from the multiple actors and interests involved.
- It is also evident that placemaking in its simplest form lacks an explicit temporal dimension – the history of an individual place is complex and its future state is often a matter of conjecture or disagreement.
- The temporal is also important in framing the wider debate about placemaking: there is a need to distinguish between the shaping, creating and management of places.
- And these elements should be considered in the context of wider concerns such as sustainable development, social justice and spatial management.

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## Placemaking: Fundamental Elements

- Placemaking implies the adoption of a ‘whole of place – whole of community – whole of time’ agenda; it is a total and comprehensive approach, contrasting with traditional ‘silo’ or fragmented approaches.
- Such an approach suggests the need for a generic agenda and cross-sector, cross –discipline working; this is especially challenging in large unitary nations that lack an advanced system of regional or provincial governance.
- Placemaking also relates to the needs of individual communities – this can be seen as a means of mobilising both ideas and action at a local level; doing things ‘with’ people.
- But these notions are not always readily accepted – this is because, on the one hand, they may challenge the authority of central government and, on the other hand, be beyond the imagination or competence of a local community – confidence building is important.

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## Placemaking and Sustainable Communities

- Sustainable communities are the spatial manifestation of sustainable development – they are place-based and people – centred.
- But many elaborations and applications of sustainable development have failed fully to incorporate the role of place – this can result in sectoral fragmentation and the poor fit of policy to places.
- However, the utilisation of the sustainable communities model allows the application of placemaking in new, evolving and regenerating communities – this is why it is important to distinguish between the creating, shaping and management elements or modes of placemaking.
- It is also essential to recognise and appreciate the dynamic nature of placemaking – if it is a single action at a given point in time, then it is likely to fail; this can be seen in regeneration schemes that are imposed on a place by external organisations.

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## What Makes A Sustainable Community?

- The classic formulation was expressed in the Egan Report published in 2004 and also in the Bristol Accord of 2005.
- These documents identified 8 basic components:
  - ❖ Active, inclusive and safe – tolerant and cohesive
  - ❖ Well run – effective participation, representation and leadership
  - ❖ Environmentally sensitive – considerate of the environment
  - ❖ Well connected – good transport and other links
  - ❖ Thriving – flourishing and diverse local economy and employment
  - ❖ Well served – appropriate and accessible public, private and community services
  - ❖ Well designed and built – quality natural and built environment
  - ❖ Fair for everyone – including those in other communities

and a ninth component that binds the eight together: **PLACEMAKING.**

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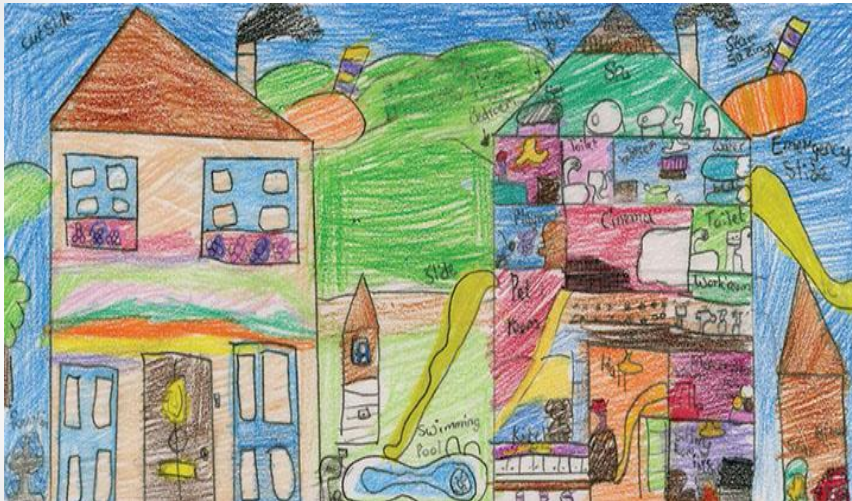
## What Makes a Sustainable Community? Cont'd

- There are also two additional elements of sustainable development that require specific acknowledgement and incorporation in the placemaking agenda:
  - ❖ Intergenerational equity
  - ❖ Intragenerational equity
- And it is essential to remember that this model is not a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to individual places, rather it offers guidance, examples and encouragement.

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## Implementing Placemaking for Sustainable Communities

- Placemaking can happen spontaneously, but normally it requires some form of stimulus – external policy, new funding, direct intervention, a response to a threat or opportunity, or a mix of these.
- Placemaking through management is aimed at ensuring continuous improvement – this avoids the need for regeneration and can provide a focus for community engagement.
- Placemaking as the creation of new places is often a professional-led exercise, but it can provide opportunities for engagement and can help identify future possibilities.

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## Implementing Placemaking for Sustainable Communities

- In both the above cases placemaking's shaping role is deployed – this is a constant element of placemaking that is often undervalued.
- A key challenge is ensuring that the various professions work to a common agenda – this requires generic skills such as visioning, partnership, analysis, leadership and communications.
- Finally, it is essential to promote community ownership of the placemaking 'product' – this can be done through engagement, openness and accountability.

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## ICLRD & Placemaking

- Over the past decade ICLRD has made a considerable number of important contributions to placemaking – some examples:
  - ❖ The Living Together project investigated initiatives and policies to promote sustainable communities in six places (3 in the Republic and 3 in Northern Ireland) – this project made a major contribution to our understanding of the difficulties involved in improving mixed communities and the benefits that flow from successful schemes.
  - ❖ Active skills development for placemaking – the various programmes including Harnessing Diversity for a Shared Future; and the Professional Executive Training and Animation Programme.
  - ❖ Conferences, specialist workshops and information exchanges on many relevant topics and themes.

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## ICLRD & Placemaking Cont'd

- ❖ Establishing a cross-border co-operation agreement between Newry-Mourne and Louth and working on behalf of communities in Ireland and elsewhere.
- ❖ Providing research support for a range of activities, including work with the Housing Executive on Future Places and an emerging project on long-term scenarios.

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## So What Has ICLRD Ever Done For You?

- Apart from peace, prosperity, fresh water, sanitation and the rule of law and order.....simple tasks compared to ICLRD's many achievements.
- It has led mutual learning between North and South and has drawn on international experience of placemaking and sustainable communities in order to promote best practice.
- It has worked with multiple partners to promote learning, conduct research, and develop and apply solutions.
- It has engaged in innovation throughout the past decade – challenging convention, promoting new solutions to knotty problems, bringing organisations together, supporting community cohesion.
- In short, ICLRD performs 'miracles on a shoestring'; it adds considerable value to our understanding of placemaking and supports the provision of the skills necessary to implement it.

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## And Now to the Future: Together Stronger

- Placemaking and the delivery of sustainable communities remains a crucial task in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland – I know this only too well and with ICLRD's help the Housing Executive continues to invest, negotiate, manage and innovate in Northern Ireland's communities, set in the context of Community Planning and collaborative work with partners.
- ICLRD is a massive resource for our work and for all the communities in Ireland – if it didn't exist, you would have to invent it – so look after ICLRD, cherish it and nourish it.
- But it needs to address the age old problem identified by Tim O'Connor "the question of funding loomed large"; and this question is still dominant despite the efforts of many.

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## And Now to the Future: Together Stronger Cont'd

- What ICLRD has always had and continues to enjoy is the support of many organisations and individuals – long may our productive partnership continue, we face challenging times and we need to work together to address difficult issues.
- Finally, I would ask you to join me in celebrating a decade of achievement and pledge support for ICLRD in the future; we are and will remain together stronger, just like some friends of mine who together achieved far more than they would alone.

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**Go raibh maith agat**

**Thank You**

**Diolch yn fawr**

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