5. Towards Wellbeing for all: Participatory and deliberative dialogue and the Imagining 2050 toolkit.

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Introduction:

Today, I wish to talk to about participatory and deliberative processes to support the embedding of a well-being framework in policy-making and to share future oriented participatory and deliberative tools developed as part of the UCC based, EPA funded Imagining 2050 (I2050) project.[1]

By way of a brief overview, this presentation will begin with a short discussion of participatory and deliberative governance and their connection to the development of well-being approaches (section 1). It will offer a whistle stop tour of forms of public participation before describing the I2050 community engagements (section 2) and outlining a range of tools from the I2050 toolkit (section 3).[2]

Section 1: Towards wellbeing for all – participatory governance and public participation

Increasingly, citizens are playing a more significant part in policy formation through a variety of online and face-to-face consultations and other participatory mechanisms. This is driven both from the 'bottom up', as citizens seek more input to decisions that affect their lives, and from the 'top down', as governments recognise the democratic benefits of involving stakeholders and the public in designing and implementing policy (Fung, 2015). It is also widely acknowledged that meaningful public engagement requires well informed, equal and inclusive processes that recognise that the views and lived experiences of citizens' are a valuable evidence base to inform better and fairer policies (Bussu et al. 2022b).

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[1]   https://www.ucc.ie/en/imagining2050/
[2]   https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/projectsandcentres/imagining2050/
      Imagining2050Toolkit.pdf

One of the most prominent contemporary developments in public policy and administration has been *'the rise of participatory governance innovations that seek to enhance the effectiveness and legitimacy of public agencies and policy making through forms of public involvement and deliberation'* (Bussu et al., 2022b).

In this environment, policymakers may view consultation and dialogue processes as a means to an end, the path to achieving a 'policy product'. However, as Bussu et al. (2022a) remind us, participatory processes are themselves meaningful for engaging actors (stakeholders and/or the wider public) in terms of participatory learning and participatory action. They have a value in co-creating policies that are more informed, more relevant to a given local or national context, more inclusive, more sustainable and as a result more effective to implement and more legitimate. Acknowledging the importance of effective and legitimate policies and policy outcomes, this presentation focuses primarily on the processes of consultation, dialogue and participation rather than on their outputs per se.

A recent NESC report (2022) on embedding of a wellbeing framework in policy-making presents four steps: building a shared consensus; designing a workable framework; implanting, monitoring and reviewing; and integrating and deepening. Overarching these four steps are what the authors term underlying facilitators, one of which is dialogue with stakeholders and the public. It is to this that this presentation turns.

When it comes to dialogue and participation, there is no one-size that fits all. Different forms of participation can be used with different groups, with different objectives and at different stages in a policy cycle and/or wider engagement process. As noted by NESC (2022), consultation is a key element of well-being approaches across all 4 steps. However, it may vary across them. For instance, stakeholder and broader public engagement may both be involved in visioning and consensus building (step 1), but more focus may be placed on expert and stakeholder engagement in the technical aspects of designing a workable framework (step 2). Similarly diverse forms of public engagement may take a targeted approach to address the well-being of certain groups. These may differ in length, objective and format and may take place in varied formats across all steps. More creative forms of consultation and participation may be more appropriate for certain stages. The visioning stage (step 1) may benefit from the use of a diverse range of visual and interactive audio visual engagement tools. They may also be more relevant for and enhance the inclusion of certain targeted groups and communities.

There are many forms of public participation. Ruiz-Villaverde and García-Rubio's (2017) pyramid of public engagement processes ranges from information campaigns, consultation, and discussion at the broader bottom levels to co-design, co-decision, and decision-making forums at the top. Their typology of public participation maps processes according to the numbers of people involved in a forum and their level of participation therein, drawing upon Smith's discussion of wide (quantity of participants) and deep (extent of participant engagement) participation (2009). The wider forms of participation such as information and consultation can be numerous in terms of participants but shallow in terms of opportunities for meaningful engagement, public input and influence.

Recognising the role for the 'pyramid's' lower less active forms in awareness raising, educating, building consensus and the solicitation of views, this presentation focuses on those forms on the 'upper levels' that require more informed, more considered forms of engagement that move beyond the mere aggregation of 'top of the head' preferences. It argues for participants to be more than passive recipients in relatively superficial forms of engagement and to be afforded opportunities to contribute to genuinely discursive processes that require more thoughtful, reflective and considered participation with fellow participants.

Mindful of the Chilvers and Keane's call to *'move from a normative and linear understanding of participation towards conceiving participation as multiple, overlapping, co-created and re-created spaces and practices'* (2020), this presentation acknowledges that participatory practice is itself should be reflexive, responsible to its effects, responsive to the 'distributed agencies' of participation and open to different forms of public participation and their impact on wider issues and wider democratic and economic systems (Chilvers and Keane, 2020).

Having briefly considered participatory forms of public participation, this presentation shares public engagement tools that may supplement existing public participation processes in embedding a well-being framework achieving its cross cutting themes of equality and sustainability, as identified in public participation processes to date (Government of Ireland, 2022).

Section 2: Imagining 2050 community engagements[3]

The I2050 project hosted by the Environmental Research Institute and University College Cork, funded by the Environmental Protection Agency, involved a transdisciplinary consortium of researchers from UCC and Queen's University Belfast that collaborated very closely with and partners, including Think Visual, visual engagement consultants and video production consultants from Brianoval.

Its aim was to develop innovative project approaches to climate dialogues, using forms of participatory and deliberative processes to co-construct visions and pathways for a low carbon and climate resilient society for 2050. Part of its work involved the development of deliberative futures forums, an interactive and future focused model of community engagement that worked with communities to co-create alternative ways to envision and plan for the future (Revez et al. 2021). Its community engagements involved three distinct phases:

1. **A pre-community engagement phase** that recruited members for the deliberative futures workshops through an open public call for participants and snowballing methods. This phase also included initial community engagements that asked members of the community to identify topics of concern to them in the area of climate change, this was done using a survey;

2. **The community engagement phase** that involved deliberative visioning and scenario building workshops over the course of two weekends (3 days). These deliberative futures forums, similar to other deliberative processes such as citizen assemblies, included accessible expert presentations that fed into facilitated discussions in which the participants reflected on what climate change meant for them and their communities using a range of interactive visual tools and techniques. Athlone and Ballincollig were the two communities involved.

3. **The post community engagement phase** involved sharing the recommendations and ideas from the community workshops with the wider community, policy makers, experts and civil society (Revez et al. 2021).

The I2050 forums were open to all but certain groups were also targeted to ensure diversity of participant perspectives, backgrounds and lived experiences.

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[3]   https://www.ucc.ie/en/imagining2050/

Similar to other deliberative democratic innovations (often referred to in the academic literature as mini-publics), they forums were a blend of specialist presentations and small group facilitated discussions. Table 1 provides a short overview of some of the more commonly used forms deliberative forums and the I2050 deliberative futures workshops. Expanding upon futures workshops, that typically involve critique, visioning and implementation, the I2050 project developed what it termed the deliberative futures workshops format that also included information and deliberation in terms of respect, inclusion and justification. Its process blended information, critique, visioning and scenario development, and implementation. This format was deemed the most appropriate in light of the future orientation of the project's research.

Table 1 Overview of deliberative democratic innovations

	Citizens' Juries	Deliberative Opinion Polls	Citizens' Assemblies	Consensus Conferences	I2050 Deliberative Futures workshop
Participants	12-26	100-500	100-160	10-25	12-25
No of meetings	4-5 days	2-3- days	20-30 days	7-8 days	3 days
Selection method	Random selection	Random selection	Random selection	Random selection + self selection	Self selection + targeting
Activities	Information + deliberation	Information + deliberation	Information + deliberation	Information + deliberation	Information, Critique Visioning, scenario development + implementation
Result	Collective position report	Survey opinions	Detailed recommendations	Collective Position report	Community Report with detailed proposals.

Source: I2050 toolkit (Revez et al. 2021).

The community deliberative futures forums and the tools used were underpinned by three guiding principles:

1. **Inclusion** that seeks to ensure a diverse and representative group of participants are recruited to the process;
2. **Equality** that endeavours to ensure all involved have an opportunity to speak and to be listened to with respect. This usually requires trained facilitators.

3.   **Considered Judgement** where participants are invited to question, to justify their positions and to come to recommendations that are fact, future and other oriented (Revez et al. 2021).

They are drawn from theories of participatory and deliberative democracy where, put simply, participatory democrats emphasise the benefits of wide participation, through inclusion, direct engagement and empowerment while deliberative democrats place greater weight on informed, respectful and reason-based discussions (deeper engagement). Both recognise the need for giving citizens and communities a greater role in developing responses to real world problems and also see a role for story-telling, rhetoric and the lived experience of a policy in public engagements (Revez et al. 2021). Participatory and deliberative innovations can play an important role in framing a problem and/or issue; mapping options; and presenting a range of informed policy recommendations (Harris 2021).

Section 3: Future Oriented and deliberative tools for engagement

The tools presented below are not new, some have been around for many decades. What is new is the way in which they are offered as a suite of techniques with which to engage stakeholders, communities and the wider public in discussions that are both future oriented and deliberative. The range of tools presented is neither exhaustive nor prescriptive.

The toolkit describes each tool and how can be used to facilitate public engagement. It also explains the materials, skills and time required and rates each tool's level of difficulty. Clear examples of how each of the tools was used within the I2050 project are provided. However, it is also recognised that organisations may wish to tailor a given tool to meet their engagement objectives, their resources, and the experience and/or expertise of the participants. Links to other materials are embedded within the toolkit by way of additional support to communities or organisations that seek to use a particular tool. A section on online deliberations and the factors that require consideration for such events is also included in the toolkit. It is envisaged that the toolkit will be of use to local community organisations, social enterprise partnership, environmental activists, local decision makers, official agencies and researchers (Revez et al. 2021).

Its creative communicative approach that uses drawing/doodles, storytelling and mapping is well suited to futures thinking that emphasises collective visioning and seeks to enhance trust.

Sense making and story boarding are two specific tools that lend themselves well to futures thinking. Each can be valuable in terms of horizon scanning and dealing with unfamiliar, difficult and unpredictable issues and public perceptions of them.

Sense Making

Sense making may be better suited to a wider form of participation, for example a broad public discussion at the early stage of a public participation event or process. It involves asking participants to choose a picture (from a prepared display of photographs, postcards, magazine/newspaper cut outs etc) that depicts their concerns or priorities on an issue. It invites them to present the image to their fellow participants and discuss why they've chosen it. Once everyone in the group has had the opportunity to share their image, the group is asked to put the pictures aside and deliberate on the meaning of an issue (climate change in the case of the I2050 workshops) in terms of personal community and wider impacts (another framing can also be chosen). The impacts and insights are captured by a notetaker and returned to later by the group for further consideration and refining (Revez et al. 2021). It can be used to raise awareness, scrutinise the existing 'state of play', spot trends, find meaning for uncertain, unpredictable issues, identify knowledge gaps and so forth.

Story boarding

Story boarding, on the other hand, requires deeper engagement and is rated difficult as it requires the preparation of a storyboard template that meets the participation's objective. It is more suited to co-creative, co-decision making events and processes. Breaking a vision into smaller, more detailed elements that consider the relationships between actors and institutions system, and explore trade-offs between policy choices, it can be very effective in refining and developing ideas. The I2050 project used three distinct layers to storyboard the issue of climate change. The first, inner layer identified the communities' main concerns about climate change, the middle layer concentrated on priorities linked to the core concerns and the final, outer layer explored visions of what

the group wished for in the future and actions and strategies to get there (Revez et al. 2021).

Empathy mapping

Empathy mapping, described as a human centred tool, invites participants to 'step into the shoes' of a citizen different from themselves (Revez et al. 2021). The simplicity of its approach belies the power of its impact. In short, it asks people to identify as different current and/or future citizens and to explore how they might be impacted by a given policy issue. This can is usually done as a group activity. In the case of the I2050 project, the topic was climate change, but this tool could be used for a variety of policy or other issues. It could be used to consider what Ireland of the future might look like for certain individuals and has great potential to facilitate intergenerational solidarity. For instance, empathy mapping could be used to ask a current day teenager what does well-being look like in Ireland today to a person over 70 living on the state's old age pension? In turn a pensioner might be asked to consider what well-being looks like in Ireland for a modern day teenager and what it might look like for them in the future when they are retired? Moving us beyond our own world view, it encourages us to be other-regarding, to consider the interests and needs of those of different backgrounds, perspectives and lived experiences both today and into the future. It can be valuable for visioning exercises, building understanding and empathy and as a means of conflict and crisis resolution.

Community Mapping

The final tool, considered by this presentation (more are offered in the toolkit) is community mapping. Members in a community use maps of their area to identify concerns, prioritise concerns, imagine alternative futures and identify and deliberate on pathways to getting their preferred future(s). It has been used for many decades and has proven valuable in working with communities in terms of awareness raising but more significantly harnessing local expertise and experience to co-create possible solutions to wicked policy issues. It has also been shown to empower communities and develop a common understanding of various risks within a community (Revez et al. 2021). It offers another way of engaging a community in a visioning exercise by starting a discussion on what they identify as current issues within their area and can also be a means through which they imagine a variety of alternative futures and pathways to get to them. Finally it can be a tool for evaluation, review and monitoring.

The tools briefly described above are a flavour of future oriented, deliberative techniques to engage the public in participation on a range of policy and

other issues. They do not seek to replace other forms of public participation but endeavour to complement them. Not all will be valuable at all steps in embedding a well-being framework or in stages in a public participation process. Their usefulness will hinge on the wider political context, the objective of the participation event/and or process and the resources available.

Importantly, they and the engagement processes in which they may form a part should be subject to evaluation and where necessary adapted, revised and refined. The toolkit also proposes a participatory evaluation process that includes three methods: feedback board, open ended evaluation and a questionnaire (Revez et al. 2021).

Public participation processes are not without their challenges. For our part, those of us involved in the I2050 community engagements identified the following and are aware that this list itself is neither exhaustive nor definitive (Mullally et al. 2022).

1. Recruitment challenges: achieving diversity and representation can be challenging. It requires serious consideration of factors that both mobilise and facilitate participation. This can involve working with communities and community leaders to recruit participants but also to draw on their expertise on how to develop the event(s) in ways that best facilitate participation in terms of timing, accessibility (physically, linguistically, welcoming/non intimidating space, information etc), provision of childcare, covering of expenses, payment of honoraria etc.1

2. Training and facilitation: Deliberative forums require facilitation and this can require training.

3. The need for sustainable resources and capacity building to promote and support engagement as well as commitment to providing timely and considered responses to the outcomes. (Mullally et al. 2022).

Conclusion:

The processes and tools discussed here are presented with the aim of strengthening current and future dialogue processes, whether with stakeholders, communities, the wider public or targeted groups, for the embedding of a wellbeing framework in policy making.

They are also offered as a contribution to debates on the construction of a political system and policy process that is more participatory, deliberative and committed to long term thinking and planning. As Dryzek and Niemyer (2019) observe there is growing recognition that, as we seek to address 'wicked policy' issues such as climate change 'whole systems of governance – spanning formal institutions, informal networks and civil society – ought to be rendered more deliberative'. A deliberative, future oriented reconstruction of politics and policy development could provide the space for the discussion of public concerns such as the environment, equality, future generations and intergenerational solidarity in ways that move us beyond 'short-termism' and towards wellbeing for all.

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