



TIPPERARY
INSTITUTE

Involving the Citizen - the Irish context

IPI Conference

October 2008

Introduction

- This issue is about local governance
 - We'll have a look at that and what it might mean
- The Irish planning system has many *theoretical* opportunities for citizen involvement – in all its aspects
 - Plan-making
 - Development management
 - Enforcement
- We'll focus on the Development Plan
- The process can be considered as one involving decision-making and decision-taking
 - We'll have a look at both and their implications

Governance

“Governance concerns the state’s ability to serve the citizens. It refers to the **rules, processes, and behaviour** by which **interests** are articulated, **resources** are managed, and **power** is exercised in society. The way **public functions** are carried out, **public resources** are managed and public **regulatory powers** are exercised is the major issue to be addressed in that context.”

Handbook on promoting good governance in EC development and co-operation

Effective Local Governance

- This occurs where ‘**meaningful** authority [is] devolved to local units of governance that are **accessible** and **accountable** to the local citizenry, who enjoy full political rights and liberty’ (Blair).
- Beetham argues that local governance has the potential to democratise because of its greater capacity for *responsiveness* and *representativeness*.

The system does not help accessibility

- Has a legislative focus that is heavy in regulatory detail
- Is strongly influenced by national and regional policies
- Traditionally is very expert led
- Involves very high levels of interpretation because of the policy + licence model that it incorporates and the way the law is stated....
 - The proper planning and sustainable development *including* the development plan policies
- Is judicial and adversarial in nature
 - Present evidence to a 'judge'
 - Appeal the judge's decision if unacceptable
- Communication tends to be uni-directional
 - Largely in writing
 - Dialogue, if any, is often stilted and curtailed
- Important to note that this is about the *system* and not about the *people who run it*

Accountability

- Decisions without consequence do not create accountability
- Accountability uses a variety of processes
 - Free, fair and frequent elections
 - Considered and reflective
 - Representation
 - Responsiveness
 - Interest group engagement
- Development management probably does not facilitate engagement – but plan-making does; and local plan making does even more so.

If the structure of the system does not promote accessibility and accountabilitythen the way it is implemented becomes crucial

Participating and Consulting

ME

YOU

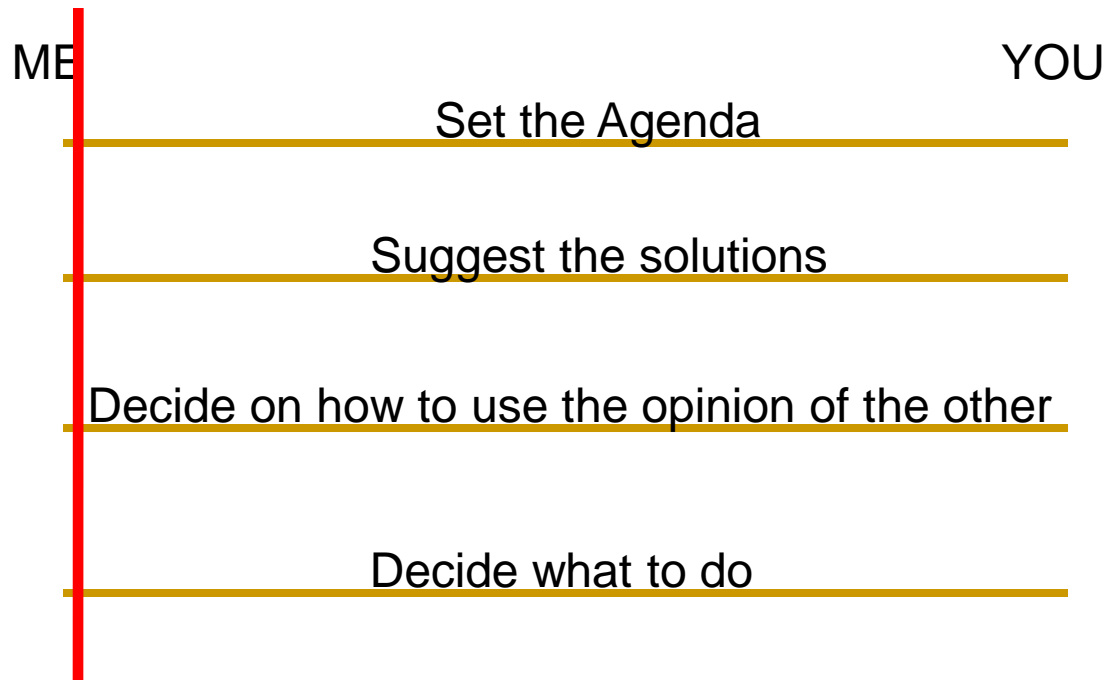
Set the Agenda

Suggest the solutions

Decide on how to use the opinion of the other

Decide what to do

Participating and Consulting



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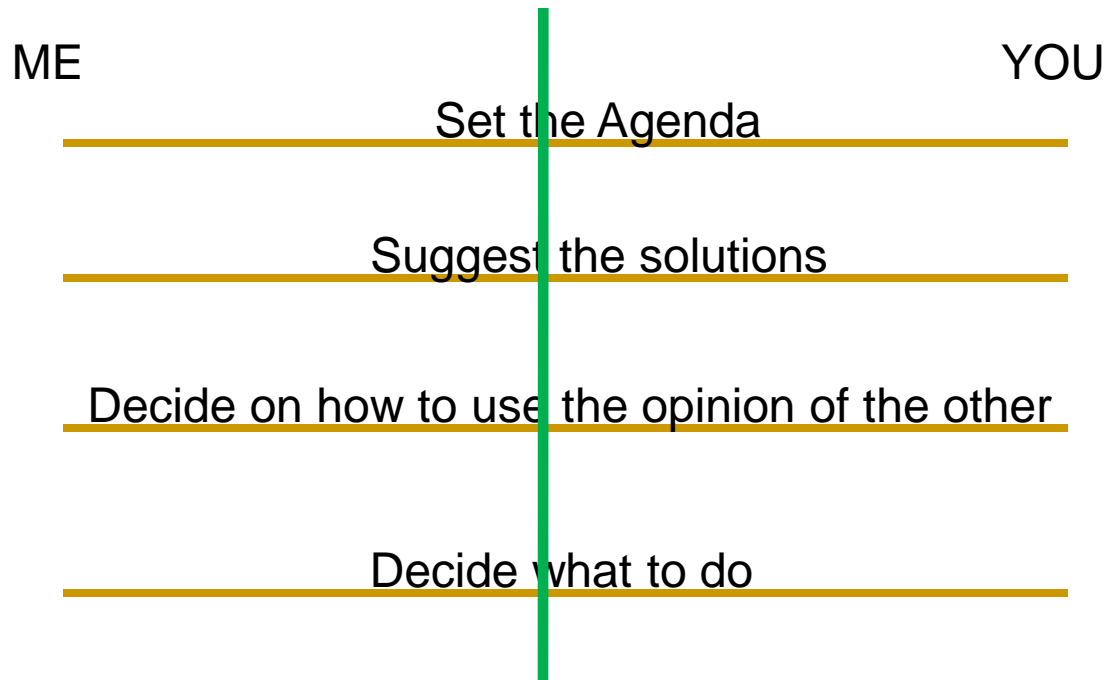
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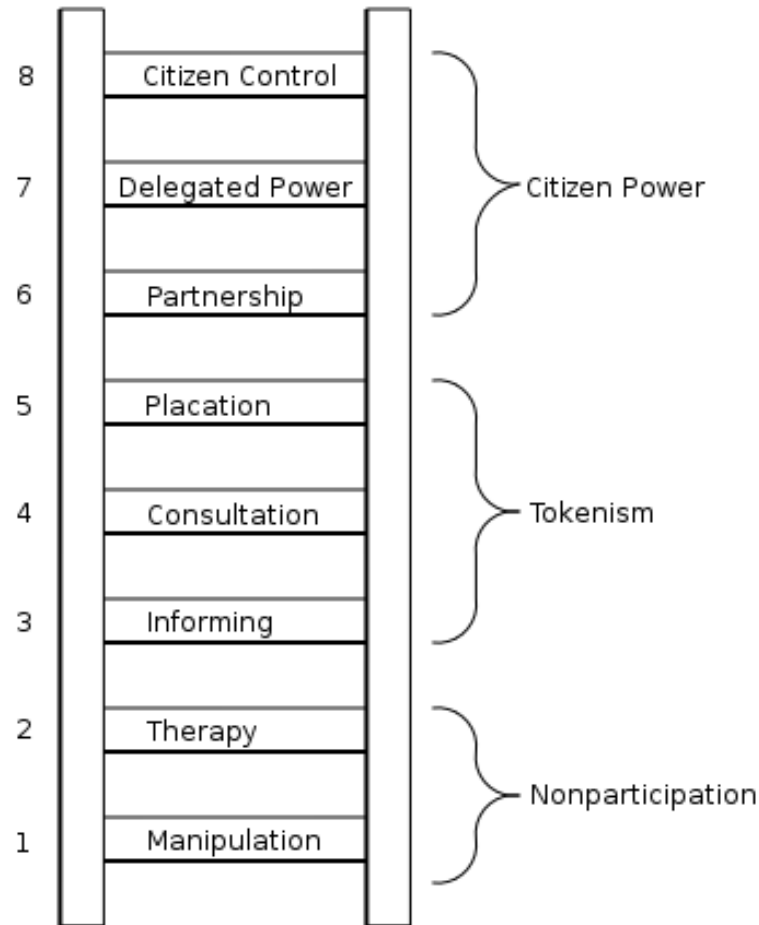
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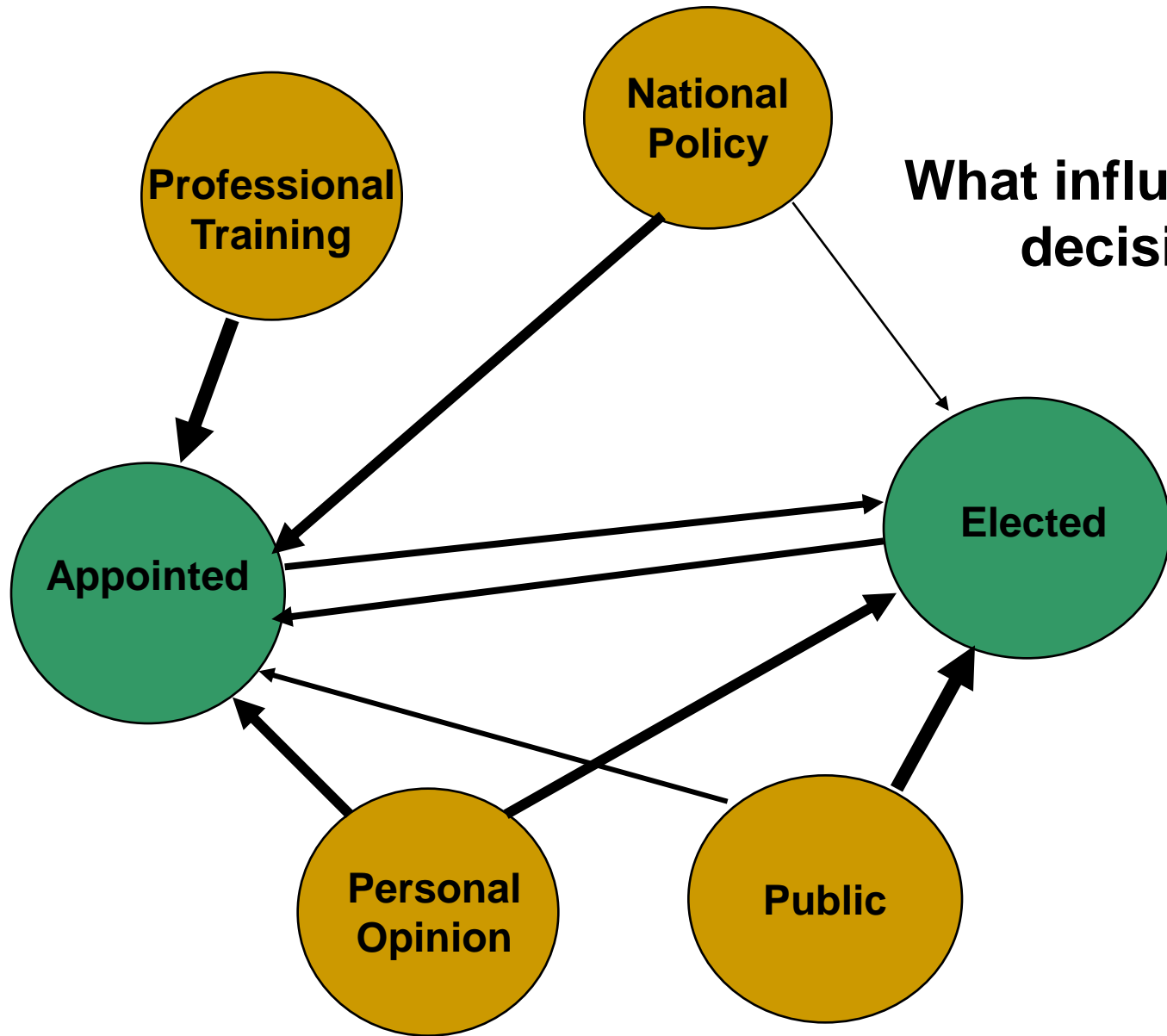
Participating and Consulting



Ladder of Participation



Sherry
Arnstein



What influences the decisions?

A view of the process

- The development plan process can be seen as a combination of public **decision-making** and **decision-taking**
- Decision-making is the participatory accessible part
 - Dialogue; collaboration; consultation; opinion-forming; influencing;
- Decision-taking
 - Exercise of authority; exercise of power; allocation of resources; exercise of oversight and evaluation; imposition of regulation
- Crucial elements
 - The quality of the **decision-making** process
 - The attention paid by the **decision-takers** to the **decision-making process outcomes**

Implications for decision-making



- Good methods
- Good intentions
- Good procedures

Some decision-*making* methods

- Public meeting
- Newsletter
- Press
- Radio
- Notices
- Post or hand delivered
- Community leaders
- Word of mouth
- Steering group
- Specific models – PFR, VDS, etc
- Organisations
- School and children
- Web site
- The ‘shop’
- House meetings
- Community census
- Focus groups
- Research groups
- Feedback of outcomes



A few of the less good ones.....

How about the public meeting?

- Who is willing to speak at the public meeting?
- Who even attends?
- Who invites them?
- What capacity do people have to engage in complex decision-making processes?
- What other approaches are used to make sure that their voices are heard?
- When decisions are reached whose decisions are they?
- The top table
 - They talk at you and you talk at them

But sure we sent them all a letter!!!!

- Who responds to the written word?
 - Impaired vision
 - Dyslexia
 - Marginal literacy
 - No literacy
- Who can access the web?
 - No computer
 - No capacity
 - No interest
- Communication needs to meet the needs of those being communicated with – not those communicating!!


The proposals may be viewed..

- The public notice
- Hitchhikers Guide Syndrome
 - Who will travel
 - Who can travel
 - Who will understand
 - Who will know how to respond
 - Who will feel mad if you say that they could have?

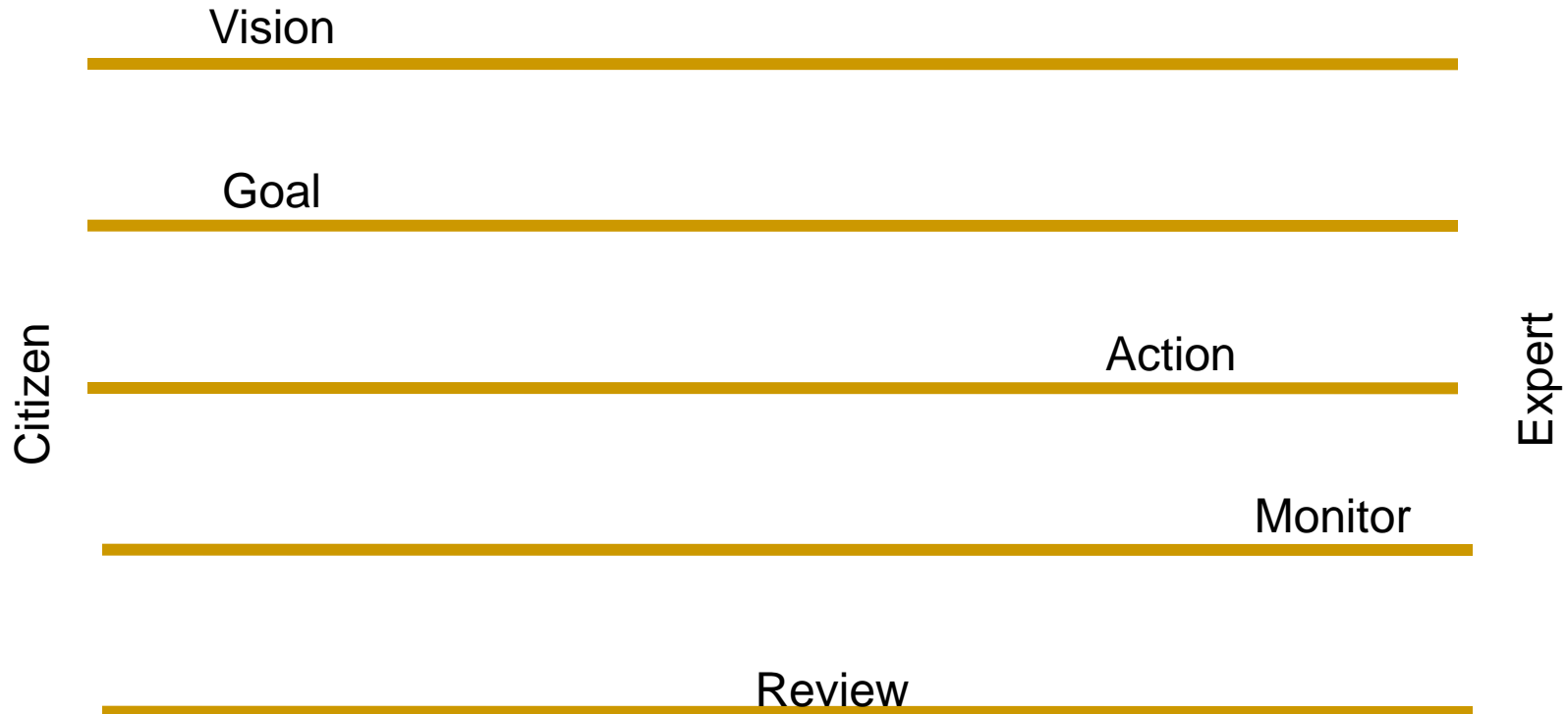
Implications for decision-taking

- Putting a participatory/collaborative /consultative process in place implies certain undertakings
- The undertakings include -
 - Serious consideration of the outcomes of the decision-making process
 - Communication of the outcome
 - Explanation of the reasons behind the outcome
 - In the Irish context the implementation by the licensing system of the intentions of the policy-makers (the decision-takers in this model)
- It is not, of course, a guarantee that participation equates to every participants' views prevailing

Intentions and Procedures

- How do we respond to the outcome of consultations?
 - Defend the original proposal?
 - Stimulus to further consideration?
- How/Do we explain the decision taken?
- How/Do we communicate with those that have made submissions?
- To what extent do we seek the help of those bodies that are directly engaged with communities? 

The citizen and the expert



Conclusion

- The Irish planning system provides significant potential opportunity for participation in all key areas
 - Policy
 - Development Management
 - Enforcement
- The policy-making aspect is an underused opportunity
- Real participation, however, has significant implications for the way in which its participants see and implement their various roles
- If participation is to be anything except tokenistic then the processes of participation must be supported and the outcomes of participation processes must be taken seriously

Conclusion

- Such an approach poses challenges to
 - Elected members
 - Experts including planners
 - Those participating and especially those purporting to represent a community opinion
- If such challenges are not addressed it may be better to accept that participation is ineffective and revert to a representative, technocratic model of decision-making

- International project on collaborative planning
- Good materials developed
- Available free to all at

<http://www.oamk.fi/luova/hankkeita/entracop/>

Planning and Development Act 2000

- 18.(6). A planning authority may enter into an arrangement with any suitably qualified person or local community group for the preparation, or the carrying out of any aspect of the preparation, of a local area plan.

