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## Migrant-led Organisations and their Communities: Participation

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*Migrant-led Organisations and their Communities: Participation*

A thesis submitted to the Dublin Institute of Technology in part fulfilment of the requirements for award of Masters (M.A.) in Child, Family and Community Studies

by

**Shirine Beausang**

25<sup>th</sup> September 2009

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**Department of Social Sciences, Dublin Institute of Technology.**



*Declaration*

I hereby certify that the material which is submitted in this thesis towards the award of the **Masters (M.A.) in Child, Family and Community Studies** is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for any academic assessment other than part-fulfilment of the award named above.

*Signature of candidate:*.....

*Date:* .....

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to examine the processes of participation of migrant-led organisations and migrant communities in the Irish ‘intercultural’ sector, and also the broader third sector. The rationale behind this research is to gain an understanding of the types and levels of participation in order to ascertain if inequities exist between the involvement of migrant communities and indigenous Irish people. Participation is assessed in relation to the emergence of barriers to participation, and how involvement is supported and facilitated by the organisations and the intercultural sector in general. This qualitative research utilises a critical ethnography, which integrates aspects of ethnography and critical enquiry in order to identify relationships between power and culture. The conclusions of this report have determined that inequalities exist for migrant-led organisations and communities in terms of their ability to participate in the sector and in the broader third sector. The issues that arose include; funding issues, disparate levels of influence between Irish NGOs and migrant-led organisations, formal participation in networks, a lack of informal connections with indigenous Irish people in government and civil society, and localised conceptions of community. Problems with perceptions and trust permeated these issues. This report recommends a recognition by Pobail of ‘culture as community’, the implementation of the funding recommendations made by the Fitzpatrick Report, the participation of intercultural organisations on funding advisory committees and greater support from funding bodies with application processes.

## **Acknowledgements**

To my supervisor Brian McCarthy for guidance, support and encouragement and to all of the participants who so kindly dedicated time to this research.

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Review of the Literature</b>	<b>5</b>
Participation	
Interculturalism-Ireland's Model of Integration	
The Development of an Intercultural Sector	
Who is Involved in the Intercultural Sector?	
Migrant-led Organisation and Relationships with Irish NGOs	
Migrant Voice	
Networks	
Conceptions of Community	
International Literature	
Funding	
<b>Theoretical Perspectives, Methodology and Methods</b>	
<b>Ethical Considerations</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Presentation of Findings</b>	<b>30</b>
Participation	
Barriers and Facilitators to Participation	
Roles and Organisation Types	
Migrant-led Organisations and Irish NGOs	
Networks	
Funding	
Connections with Local Authorities and the Third Sector	
Immigration Bill	
<b>Discussion</b>	<b>47</b>
Participation	
Roles	
Networks	
Conceptions of Community	
Migrant-led Organisations and Irish NGOs	
Funding	
<b>Conclusion and Recommendations</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Contribution of the Study</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Limitations of the Research</b>	<b>60</b>

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this study is to examine the processes of participation of migrant-led organisations and migrant communities in the Irish ‘intercultural’ sector. The proposed central research question implicit in this study pertains to a broad inductive query regarding how these organisations and communities participate in their own integration sector in Ireland. The rationale behind this research is to gain an understanding of the types and levels of participation to ascertain if inequities exist between the involvement of migrant communities and indigenous Irish people. Participation is assessed in relation to the emergence of barriers to participation, and, how involvement is supported and facilitated by the organisations and the sector in general. These barriers and facilitators to involvement are explored through the examination of various factors that influence participation. These include the types of roles migrant community members have in the intercultural organisations, the levels of influence in terms of funding, policy and access to other sectors, the relationships between migrant-led organisations and Irish founded non-government organisations (NGOs), the relationship between migrant-led organisations and the community, voluntary and statutory sectors, and the perceived advantages and challenges for different organisations in addressing the needs and representing the interests of migrant communities (asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers). Also, issues are assessed concerning organisational funding that affects the participation of new communities, especially in this current economic climate.

The Irish model of integration known as ‘interculturalism’ is defined by *Planning for Diversity: The National Action Plan against Racism, 2005-2008* (NAPR) as ‘a two way process that places duties and obligations on cultural and ethnic minorities and the State to create a more inclusive society’ (2005: 38). In addition to this, interculturalism focuses on policies that promote mutual understanding and respect, equal opportunities and genuine interaction (NAPR, 2005).

The Irish intercultural sector involves a host of organisations whose remits include community development, policy development, rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers, activist migrant-led organisations, national networks and service

provision. Many of these organisations were founded by returned Irish overseas development workers during the 1990s. The leadership of these organisations tends to be that of the white, settled, Irish, majority community (Lentin, 2006). Migrant-led organisations developed in tandem with the advent of in-migration during the years of economic growth. Many of these organisations are considered emergent in relation to the ‘newness’ of their involvement in the intercultural sector. However, this is not necessarily the case as some organisations have been in existence for up to ten years and can be considered as established within the sector. The Irish intercultural sector is more complex and representatively mixed than the use of a simple ethnicised dichotomy of migrant-led and Irish NGO terminology. However, while acknowledging this complexity, this report uses this terminology in order to assess levels of influence and participation of migrants and migrant-led organisations within the Irish system more generally. Of the ten organisations approached, eight granted the researcher an interview. The other two organisations both Irish NGOs refused an interview, one on the basis of a policy of not involving students and the other stated it was on account of the ‘sensitive nature’ of the subject matter. The types of organisations interviewed included two national network community development organisations (one migrant-led and one Irish NGO), one faith-based service provider focussing on the needs of refugees and asylum seekers, two migrant founded and led organisations, one local community development partnership with integration funding, one Irish NGO that concentrates on policy development and the rights of refugees and asylum seekers and a Travellers rights organisation. The Travellers rights organisation was approached because the Travelling Community is an older, indigenous minority ethnic group in Ireland with a history of community development in partnership with settled Irish people. These partnerships have formed a template for the Irish intercultural sector (McVeigh, 2002). This is discussed in the literature review in relation to its background in the development of the contemporary intercultural sector. However, the researcher found that Traveller rights organisation had closer links with the Irish community and voluntary sphere in terms of funding, partnerships and policy than the intercultural organisations under research.

The central query in this research is that of the participation of migrant communities and migrant-led organisations in the Irish intercultural sector and broader civil society. A significant question in the interview process relates to what participation



means to the interviewees? This report utilises their responses to identify the important characteristics of participation that defines this research. A more academically structured understanding of participatory processes will be investigated in the review of the literature. The responses of participants varied some giving personal accounts, others professional evaluations, all were based on an ideological premise.

*For me participation is just a word, but this word we call active participation is people being able to represent themselves, to speak for themselves or being able to articulate their needs and their issues themselves. That's the real participation you can get from people. It's actually involving people, it's getting people in there. It's having them seen and heard.*

(Interviewee 6)

*I believe it's the ability to play an active role in your community and in issues that affect someone, to be able to advocate on those issues, to be able to play and active part in either policies or helping to fashion or change policies. That opportunity given to people enables them to participate.*

(Interviewee 3)

*In the end this organisation should be run by Travellers really, settled people in the end shouldn't be having a massive say in the decisions here, having a controlling say in the decisions here.*

(Interviewee 2)

*Participation should involve the people whose interests we're trying to work for, largely defining the agenda. To do that you need then a lot of formal links with people who have been living here longer to provide an informed input, dialogue and understanding on both parts.*

(Interviewee 4)

The participants' own perceptions of participation are used in this research as a measure to ensure their insights are taken into account in the formation of this report.

This qualitative research utilises a critical ethnography which integrates aspects of ethnography and critical enquiry in order to identify relationships between power and culture (Crotty, 1998). A critical ethnography combined with an interpretive approach allows the participants own perspectives and words to inform the links between power and culture (Sarantakos, 2005). The participants own words and perspectives are presented in the findings chapter and the data is interpreted by the research through emergent patterns of meaning. The researcher uses a process of self-critical reflexivity in interpreting the data in order to maintain awareness of the potential for prejudice as a white, settled Irish person. This approach was also used in the interview process.

The interview process unearthed considerable information regarding the participation of migrant-led organisations and migrant communities in the intercultural sector and also with regards to the Irish third sector. The findings of this research reveal a number of thematic influences that affected their ability to participate. The emergent thematic influences include issues concerning funding and competition for funding, disparate levels of influence between migrant-led organisations and Irish NGOs, participation in formal networks, participation in informal networks, limited connections with the broader voluntary and community sector, local authorities and also localised conceptions of community. Perceptions and trust were also cited as obstacles to participation and inherent in these thematic influences.

## Literature Review

### *Participation*

The perceptions of participation outlined by participants are used to guide conceptions of participation in this research. These are based on what participation means to each interviewee personally, professionally and ideologically. They include ‘active participation’, the ability to play an active role in the community, define agendas, policy formation and the in decisions that affects communities and people. Further conceptualisations of participation and the relationship with civil society and active citizenship are examined in this chapter.

### *Planning for Diversity, the National Action Plan against Racism, 2005 – 2008*

(NAPR) outlines a commitment to ‘participation’ within its intercultural objectives. This commitment involves:

*The enhanced participation of cultural and ethnic minorities in Irish society including a focus on participation at the political level, the policy level and the community level.*

(NAPR, 2005: 145)

A number of expected participatory outcomes are outlined by the NAPR and the two most relevant to this research are:

- The enhanced participation of cultural and ethnic minorities in community and local development.
- The enhanced participation of cultural and ethnic minorities in research and consultative policy forums.

From a human rights perspective, Amnesty International frame processes of participation as crosscutting and composite human rights (2007). Participation as a right is outlined in Article 21 (the right to participate in government, free elections and the voting process) and Article 27 (the right to participate in the social and cultural life of communities) of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (Amnesty

International, 2007). In addition to this, the *United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development, 1986*, emphasises an “active, free and meaningful” facet to participation that encompasses a host of other rights (for example, the right to freedom of expression, association and assembly), and is contingent to a principle of non-discrimination (Amnesty International, 2007).

*People must participate fully in the decisions and processes that shape their lives. Participation involves more than Government's consulting with civil society. It requires equalisation of the opportunities for all to be represented at all levels of the state and its public bodies.*

(Amnesty International, 2007: 126)

Amnesty International (2007) points out that while guidelines for participation exist within some state agencies (for example the Equality Authority or the Office for Social Inclusion), there is a need for a strategized national policy on participation in order to coherently take the views of civil society into account. Similarly, there is an evident lack of funding to promote the participation of marginalized groups through their representative organisations. This is identified by Amnesty International as a dearth of stable funding arrangements to facilitate capacity building and development at local, regional and national levels (2007).

However, the government sponsored ‘Taskforce on Active Citizenship’ makes recommendations in its *Report on Active Citizenship Consultation Process, 2007* for the development of participation policies at community level. The report does not directly define participation as a human right, but it does refer to the rights and responsibilities of citizens and their full involvement in Irish Society (Amnesty International, 2007). The report also highlights concerns of tokenistic engagement between government and civil society with regards to problematic consultation strategies. Amnesty International (2007) describes a number of barriers to participation in consultation strategies. These include, an assumed literacy and proficiency of the english language, a tendency to presume that advocacy organisations represent the views of all community members in consultation arrangements, and also that these organisations have the resources and capacity to ensure the plausible participation and voices of members.

Some conceptual understandings of participation have been explored in the preamble of this research report. Approaching ‘participation’ from a theoretical basis, it has been traditionally linked to the community and social spheres. In recent times, the concept of participation is gaining increasing association with citizenship rights and democratic governance. Gaventa (2004) describes ‘participatory citizenship’ as a process that connects the political with social and community life. The numerous concepts and theories of ‘citizenship’ that exist have been derived from a historically liberal democratic framework. Within this context, citizenship is understood as a collection of legally binding individual rights that are granted or bestowed by the nation state upon its passive inhabitants (Gaventa, 2004). Contemporary concepts of citizenship seek to place this relationship between state and citizen on an enhanced egalitarian level. This situates the role of citizen as a participant who is actively involved in the structures of civil society, and on the basis of ascribed rights and responsibilities. Lister goes further and advocates that ‘participatory citizenship’ should be understood as a human right.

*The right of participation in decision-making in social, economic, cultural and political life should be included in the nexus of basic human rights...Citizenship as participation can be seen as representing an expression of human agency in the political arena, broadly defined; citizenship as rights enables people to act as agents.*

(Lister, 1998: 228)

However, it is important to emphasise that citizenship is a barrier to participation for those who are deemed non-citizens by the State. Non-citizenship places people on the periphery of society excluding them from the rights, responsibilities and social goods enjoyed by citizens. In Ireland, the official integration policy of ‘interculturalism’ formally excludes those who are not permitted the same rights and entitlements as Irish citizens, for example asylum seekers. This negates ‘non-citizens’ from officially being involved in processes of integration through the state negotiated intercultural sphere. Eijorh (2006) warns of the exclusionary consequences from civil society for those who are considered ‘non-citizens’. In *Inclusive citizenship in 21st century*

*Ireland: What prospects for the African immigrant community?* Ejorh makes the following comment:

*There is a traditionally exclusionary tendency within human society to link civic participation to the legal sense of citizenship, an attitude that inevitably shuts out individuals categorised as ‘non-citizens’ from participation in civic life or fails to acknowledge their involvement in the affairs of their society or their contributions to the common good.*

(Ejorh, 2006: 6)

This palpable barrier to participation of ‘non-citizens’ by the nation state curtails their ability to contribute not only on a political level but also more broadly in the social and community life of societies.

In observing invited ‘spaces for participation’, Cornwall (2004) contends that participatory spaces lack neutrality for citizens. Cornwall asserts that these spaces inherently involve, and, are surrounded by existing power relations in society. There is a danger that instead of challenging inequalities, they are replicated in new forms of spatial interactions. In a Foucauldian sense, these participatory spaces consist of boundaries, in which power relations ‘help to shape what is possible within them, and who may enter, with which identities, discourses and interests’ (Gaventa, 2004: 34). The restrictive nature of these boundaries juxtaposes a concept of freedom that is understood as a right to not only participate in a space but to also define and shape the conditions of that space (Hayward, 1998; Gaventa, 2004). In this context, any exploration of a participatory space must take into account how it was created, to whom it is significant, and also the conditions for participation. This research examines the Irish intercultural sector as a site for participatory spaces; one that consists of overlapping power relations amongst stakeholders, and is integrated into a specifically Irish organisational system.

## *Interculturalism – Ireland’s Model of Integration*

### *Planning for Diversity: The National Action Plan against Racism, 2005-2008*

(NAPR) defines integration as ‘a two way process that places duties and obligations on cultural and ethnic minorities and the State to create a more inclusive society’ (2005: 38). The Irish government has adopted an ‘intercultural’ model of integration and cultural diversity in Ireland as a response to high levels of in-migration that occurred from the 1990’s onwards. Implicit in this model are processes of mainstreaming, targeting and benchmarking in public policy in order to promote a more inclusive Irish society for minority groups. Interculturalism is considered an advancement of the traditional rhetoric of multiculturalism. It is conceptually based on:

*A commitment to inclusion by design, not as an add-on or afterthought and based on policies that promote interaction, equality of opportunity, understanding and respect.*

(NAPR, 2005: 27)

‘Interculturalism’ can be understood as an advanced form of hitherto flawed multicultural approaches, which are perceived to have achieved poor results in other countries. This is because the accommodation and respect for difference does not necessarily promote genuine interaction. Watt (2006) purports that ‘multiculturalism’ is merely an ‘add-on’ to existing social systems rather than being fundamentally central and integrated into the structures of mainstream society. This is advocated in an intercultural approach.

Criticisms of an ‘intercultural’ model in Ireland focus on the institutionalisation of integration and immigration issues by the State. Dual roles are employed by the Irish government in what can be identified as a ‘racial state’ (Goldberg, 2002). While on the one hand championing anti-racism or ‘intercultural’ integration strategies, the Nation State equally and categorically seeks to define its territorial borders, constructing the conditions by which ‘non-nationals’ can enter and remain.

R. Lentin & McVeigh (2006) categorise this as State-led racism. They purport that the government simultaneously and hypocritically operates both racist and anti-racist agendas. Identifying this as ‘racism without racism’ R. Lentin & McVeigh (2006)

allude to a State refutation of institutional racism that simultaneously devises racist immigration controls. Also, 'interculturalism' as a strategy for integration is relevant only to those who are entitled to the same rights as Irish citizens; this automatically negates immigrants such as asylum seekers who do not possess this right.

### *The Development of an Intercultural Sector in Ireland*

The contemporary intercultural sector originated from antiracist social movements that were voluntary and activist in nature. The initial premise of activism focussed on anti-racism, the Travelling Community and refugee and asylum seeker issues. Returned overseas development workers and Irish diaspora who identified closely with anti-Irish racism abroad are believed to have founded the first non-governmental organisations, for example the Irish Traveller Movement or Comhlamh (R. Lentin, 2006). The development of a formal, State involved integration sector replaced the original emphasis on anti-racism activism.

A major contributor in the foundation of an anti-racism movement in Ireland was through the formation and development of the Traveller Support Movement and in response to anti-Traveller racism in Ireland. The Traveller Support Movement structurally consisted of a partnership between Traveller and 'settled' members through networks of groups and organisations. A. Lentin (2006) identifies this as a support movement that combines the social partnership model in Ireland with a community development approach. Advocates for the Traveller support movement have worked in partnership with the Irish government and successfully gained an influential role in policy decisions, funding acquisition and the mainstreaming of Travellers issues in public policy. A. Lentin (2006) contends that settled Irish people as employed advocates have largely undertaken representation for the Travelling community in public, policy and funding matters.

Similarly a partnership model was adopted between settled people and Travellers within the Traveller Support Movement. A number of sources believe that this type of partnership approach 'recreates the dependence of Travellers upon 'settled' Irish people who act on their behalf' (McVeigh, 2002, Tannam, 2002, R. Lentin, 2004, A.



Lentin, 2006:199). The central premise behind this concept of dependency is that Travellers due to historically faced discrimination do not have the necessary education or skills to self-represent their own issues. Therefore it is the responsibility of their settled Irish supporters or partners to advocate on their behalf. As a result, Travellers in general do not run their own organisations despite years of experience within the Traveller movement (A. Lentin, 2006). According to McVeigh (2002), the partnership model used in the Traveller Support Movement set a precedent in Irish anti-racism that specified an identifiable space for settled Irish people within the movement.

McVeigh (2002) argues that this model of partnership has extended to the contemporary Irish 'integration' sector. An over-representation of Irish, white, settled people in intercultural organisations and networks has developed in tandem with the arrival of new immigrant communities. R. Lentin makes the following comment:

*Anti-racism in Ireland is still largely orchestrated by well meaning, white, settled Christian Irish people, often in partnership with government departments and statutory agencies.*

(2002: 235)

McVeigh (2002) purports that the partnership model, which informed the work of the Irish Traveller Support Movement, has been ill suited to these new communities. These are migrants and minority ethnic groups who are diverse not only culturally but also in terms of their capacity to participate in this country. For example, rights bestowed by the Irish State such as the right to work vary greatly amongst types of migrants, for example migrant worker, asylum seekers and refugees. Also, the capacity to participate varies in terms of English language abilities, educational background, gender and overall understanding of how the Irish system works. According to McVeigh, this model was never endorsed by migrant communities and has proven to re-enforce power inequalities. McVeigh contends 'the failure to transfer power and resources to minority ethnic people was itself the symbol of partnership' (2002: 221).

The partnership commitments set out during the *European Year of Anti-Racism* (1997) and the response to the *Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community*

(1995) led to the evolution of a State involved anti-racism movement in Ireland. An advent of in-migration to Ireland during the Celtic Tiger broadened the scope of Irish anti-racism to include immigrant, minority ethnic communities. The interim has provided a wealth of immigration, integration and anti-racism initiatives by the Irish government in the form of campaigns, legislation and policy. A fledgling ‘anti-racism’ or more contemporary ‘interculturalism’ sector has evolved in the form of advocacy and policy organisations, information and service provision within the non-government voluntary and community sector. The Department of Integration and wholly government funded intercultural agencies such as the defunct NCCRI have also been key players in this intercultural arena. This development of an intercultural sector has led to job creation. R. Lentin & McVeigh (2006) observe that the majority white, Irish, settled community tends to be over-represented in many of these jobs. R. Lentin & McVeigh (2006) note that the language and rhetoric used is now that of ‘interculturalism’, ‘integration’ and ‘diversity’ rather than a specifically anti-racism or activist format. Ejorh (2006) speaking on behalf of the Africa Centre contends that the integration concerns of immigrants and minority ethnic groups in Ireland are ‘currently dominated and driven by indigenous community-led organisations and groups’ (Ejorh, 2006: 3)

*Who is involved in the Irish ‘intercultural’ sector?*

The ‘intercultural’ sector in Ireland involves a plethora of organisations and networks that can be classified in terms of their objectives as organisations. A typology of this nature would look at these organisations with regards to their roles within the sector and in the support and advocacy of migrant communities. These organisations can be classified as service providers, national policy and rights driven organisations, activist migrant-led organisations, community development organisations and national networks. R. Lentin & McVeigh (2006) have developed a typology of intercultural organisations on the basis of their function and core funding sources. This is generally described as follows:

1. Irish founded non-government organisations such as the Immigrant Council of Ireland, the Irish Refugee Council and Integrating Ireland, funded by the main Philanthropies (One and Atlantic) and European Union Integration Funds.
2. Migrant led organisations, such as the Africa Centre, the New Communities Partnership and AkiDwa, funded through a variety of sources such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, European Integration Funds, Irish Aid, Local Authorities (One-off project based, small grants).
3. State agencies such as the Social Inclusion Unit, the Reception and Integration Agency.
4. Fully State funded organisations involved in integration issues, such as the defunct National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) and the Equality Authority.
5. Church founded asylum seeker and refugee initiatives, for example the Vincentian Refugee Centre.
6. Ireland-wide community development projects funded by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Pobail), such as the Avondhu Blackwater Partnership

Organisations co-operate and liaise in various networks, forums, projects, seminars, meetings, policy submissions and reports. They are simultaneously in competition with each other for funding via the various funding donors. The organisation themselves have advanced in the advent of strategy and policy development at both State and sectoral levels. Likewise, there has been a growth in job creation due to dramatic increases in funding, particularly by the Philanthropic Foundations and the European Union Integration Funds.

#### *Migrant-led Organisations and their relationships with Irish NGOs*

Feldman et al (2005) undertook comprehensive research, which investigated the development of migrant-led civic organisations in the north and south of Ireland and their relationships with the relevant stakeholders in the sector. An understanding of the development, characteristics, roles and purpose of migrant-led organisations is necessary to give an overview of their function in the intercultural sector and their

relationship to their communities. The foundation of migrant-led organisations occurred as a response to the diverse needs of ‘new’ communities, particularly at a time of immense in-migration to Ireland during the Celtic Tiger years. This occurred at community development levels (such as family, social and religious life) and at national levels in order to influence policy, awareness and to improve service provision. The research undertaken by Feldman et al. (2005) observed that the founders of migrant-led organisations tended to have relevant community and organisational experience, education and training in their own countries before establishing organisations in Ireland. This negates assumptions in the sector that staff in migrant-led organisation lack capacity or expertise. In response to the research Feldman (2007) describes the roles of migrant-led organisations as extensive and complex in responding to the often multiple needs of their communities, and, simultaneously representing their communities at local and national levels. Similarly, migrant-led organisations have difficulties generally experienced by community and voluntary organisations such as funding problems, institutional barriers associated with marginalisation, appropriate representativeness and promoting community participation.

According to Feldman et al. (2005), Irish NGOs have been ‘significant sites’ for the participation of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. These have been in two capacities; through employment in lieu of skills and experience attained in their home countries, and, as volunteers, in particular for asylum seekers and refugees who are denied the right to work and whose skills are not recognised by the Irish system. Feldman et al. (2005) assert that as the sector developed many of these migrants left the Irish NGOs to set up their own organisations bringing with them much valued expertise and contacts in migrant communities. In addition, this created further competition for scarce resources. A number of migrant-led organisation members interviewed by Feldman et al. (2005) felt their ideas had been ‘poached’ by the Irish NGOs and this subsequently led to a loss of funding in favour of the larger more established Irish organisations. Scarce resources and the need for continued organisational existence can be attributed to mistrustful and competitive relations between organisations. Feldman et al (2005) contend that these circumstances prevent collaboration amongst organisations and utilises this point to advocate for the provision of dedicated State funding for the organisational development of migrant-

led organisations. Consequently, relationships between migrant-led organisations and Irish NGOs deserve further examination and critique.

Migrant-led organisations' links with Irish NGOs provides fruitful advantages in terms of capacity building, leadership and skills training, links with indigenous Irish and so forth. Also, formal connections with Irish NGOs enable emergent migrant-led organisations to engage on a national level in networks and policy consultations.

Feldman et al. (2005) comment that emergent migrant-led organisations, which forge strong links with established Irish-NGOs in terms of projects, capacity building and alliances tend to be successful in their outcomes and funding acquisition.

Feldman (2007) purports that the research illustrates Irish NGO's recognition of the importance of having equal partnerships with migrant-led organisations, and, likewise the advantages of having links with those who are migrants themselves, have first hand experience and expertise. To have good relationships with the communities that are supported and represented by migrant-led organisation has considerable significance for Irish NGOs. However, adherence to this acknowledgement is not always undertaken in practice. A dichotomy exists 'between achieving something quickly and following through on a principle that is strong but time consuming and resource heavy' (Unknown, cited in Feldman, 2007: 202). In this context, principles of participation and consultation can be overlooked in favour of attaining swift outcomes.

Feldman (2007) asserts that Irish NGO's, which employ a community development style participatory approach, do not always involve communities or organisations at management or board levels despite their organisational philosophy. Similarly, organisations that characteristically do not use participatory approaches such as service providers and policy/advocacy organisations, in practice often do use this method in their work. However, Feldman (2007) notes that organisations, which had the least participatory structures, tended to have very little direct contact with migrant communities. Also, these organisations were the least acquainted with nuances of topical issues involving cultural diversity in the sector.

## *Migrant Voice*

*Developing Migrant Voice in Ireland* (2008), a study commissioned by Atlantic Philanthropies was undertaken to explore the potential for the increased participation of ‘migrant voice’ within the intercultural sector and in the development of immigration and integration policy in Ireland. Migrant voice is defined in this context as ‘the participation and influence of migrant communities on policy formation and implementation’ (Finn, 2008: 3). The findings depict two particular channels for ‘migrant voice’ to influence policy in Ireland; emergent migrant-led organisations and non-government organisations originally founded, developed and led by Irish people. The report points to a number of barriers that prevent ‘migrant voice’ from influencing or participating in policy debates:

- Competition for funding between Migrant-led organisation and Irish NGO’s can potentially prevent co-operation and trust amongst groups.
- Uneven levels of capacity and resources between migrant-led organisation and Irish NGO’s act as a barrier to the influence of migrant groups.
- The marginality and exclusion of vulnerable groups such as refugees and asylum seekers from intercultural policy debates.
- The necessity of Irish NGO’s to continue diversifying participation and representation within their organisations, particularly at a leadership level.
- Migrant-led organisations are perceived by some to overlap much of their work.
- A shortfall in capacity, skills and knowledge of the Irish system are deemed to prevent the participation of migrant-led organisations in an Irish policy context.

Finn (2008) purports that migrant-led organisations in Ireland are emergent based on the relative newness of in-migration into the country and, as a result, limited in their capacity to influence policy. Therefore, they cannot adequately represent the needs and interests of migrant communities within the Irish system. The thread followed in this argument suggests that emergent migrant-led organisations tend to be identity orientated as opposed to thematically based and, as a result, cannot represent the needs and opinions of a diverse range of migrants in Ireland. This is the general viewpoint of the two main philanthropies operating in Ireland and therefore a reason

not to provide a dedicated funding to migrant-led or identity-based groups. On the other hand, migrant-led organisations would challenge this contention and assert that Irish NGO's cannot suitably represent the needs of migrant communities because their leadership and origins are not migrant orientated. Consequently, these organisations do not possess an innate understanding of what it is to be a migrant in Ireland and, therefore, are not a legitimate migrant voice. Finn (2008) purports that some migrant-led organisation leaders regard Irish NGO's as 'gatekeepers' to the intercultural sector. In addition to this, the decision made by the two philanthropies not to fund identity-based organisations has led to a belief by some leaders of migrant-led organisations that funding is allocated on the premise of a racist agenda (Finn, 2008).

Finn (2008) contends that 'representativeness' is important for Irish NGO's in terms of functioning plausibly in a sector dedicated to representing the needs, interests or 'voice' of new immigrant communities. It is contended that Irish NGO's tend to be more established and represent the needs of specific types of migrants such as asylum seekers, refugees and economic migrants rather than identity-based organisations. However, the continuation of Irish NGOs depends on their ability to access their 'beneficiary communities' in order to develop policy strategies. Finn (2008) claims that an over representation of white, Irish people in Irish NGOs has decreased over the years. According to Finn, Irish founded and led organisations have diversified in terms of the representation of stakeholder communities in their membership, boards and leadership, thus, giving the voices of migrants more influence in their organisations.

### *Networks*

Formal networking processes have evolved as a result of the growth of an intercultural sector. This enables coalitions of organisations to actively collaborate in terms of service provision, policy recommendations and submissions. The two main national networks in Ireland are the New Communities Partnership (NCP) and Integrating Ireland. The former is a specifically migrant-led network of 'new community' organisations whose mission is:

*To be an effective network, representing and empowering minority ethnic-led groups, at all levels, in order to influence positive change in policies that impact on their lives.*

(NCP: [www.newcommunities.ie](http://www.newcommunities.ie))

Integrating Ireland is an Irish founded national network of community and voluntary groups working within the intercultural sector. The network operates on the basis of ‘mutual solidarity’ and aims to promote ‘the full participation and rights of migrants, immigrants, refugees and people seeking asylum’ ([www.integratingireland.ie](http://www.integratingireland.ie)). Feldman (2007) suggests that networks and organisations, which exhibit community development type organisational structures, tend to actively promote the engagement, consultation and participation of its groups and members.

R. Lentin (2006) cites the success of migrant-led groups such as AkiDwa in terms of their ability to influence policy on behalf of their female migrant membership. AkiDwa’s resolute networking processes have resulted in high levels of engagement and influence with statutory and non-government organisations. AkiDwa has engaged in strategic alliances with diverse organisations, such as The Equality Authority, The Health Service Executive, Comhlamh, the New Communities Partnership and National Women’s Council of Ireland. This has given voice to issues specific to migrant women and more specifically African women in Ireland, in the areas of sexual discrimination, violence against women, family re-unification and female genital mutilation (FGM).

According to research undertaken by Feldman et al. (2005), organisations that participate in partnerships, networks or affiliations basis tend to have more success in acquiring funds. The rationale for funders is to ‘streamline their own work as well as to encourage the sharing of expertise and long-term stability’ (Feldman, 2007: 204). Also, it is supposed that organisations that collaborate have a broader reach of communities at a reasonable cost to funders. Feldman (2007) purports that migrant-led women’s organisations have benefited in terms of funding through their partnerships with Irish women’s groups. Funding organisations look favourably upon their established participatory structures, networks with other women’s organisations and their ability to address broad range of issues.



### *Conceptions of Community*

Mayo (2000) describes two categories of community; geographically or locality based concepts of community, and communities of shared interests or identity (for example, based on ethnicity or religion). According to Mayo (2000), both of these perceptions of community can present as problematic for the participation of community members. Mayo (2000) criticises traditional assumptions of shared values or uniformity within communities of locality. This can form the basis of potential exclusion for some members, thus 'reinforcing the unity of sameness by marginalizing difference, excluding the other, whether the other is defined in such terms as social class, gender, 'race' or ethnicity' (Mayo, 2000: 39). On the other hand, communities of interest or identity can facilitate difference within or across larger communities. Recognition of these communities capacitates awareness of issues or viewpoints specific to its members, it can also draw attention to power imbalances in the wider community. However, recognition of communities on the basis of identity presents its own challenges. The codification and politicisation of groups can fragment communities and divert attention from broader social justice or class issues.

*Identity politics may be divisive, then, turning inwards, rather than outwards, to challenge the common sources of oppression, which may be shared by different oppressed and exploited groups, across the divides.*

(Gitlin, 1994, cited in Mayo, 2000: 47)

McVeigh (1996) theorises the 'specificity of Irish racism' as related closely to the concept of an Irish 'warmth of community'. Derived from this, are Irish social self-perceptions of being an informal, friendly and closely-knit, community-based society. However, the same 'warmth of community' excludes those who are not identifiable as white, settled, Catholic and Irish. A. Lentin extends this theorisation as a focal point in understanding processes of both Irish racism and anti-racism, where both are 'formative of a uniquely Irish conceptualisation of belongingness' (2004: 150). Lentin (2006), R. Lentin (2006) and R. Lentin & McVeigh (2006) argue that Irish anti-racism or the more contemporaneous intercultural sector has reproduced a similar 'warmth of community'. This operates on solidaristic, partnership type of approach

with white, settled, Irish people acting on behalf of racialised groups (A. Lentin, 2006). The cosiness of individuals and groups within this participatory space has created informal networks of alliances, which have the capacity to influence power relations in the sector.

*It bears the stamp of an Irish anti-racism characterised by white Irish people doing things 'for' black people and other minority ethnic groups. We have to question whether 'anti-racist agendas' are ever agendas against racism unless they are set by those most affected by racism, and whether such actions are actually anti-racist.*

(R. Lentin & McVeigh, 2006:173)

McVeigh (1992) identifies a number of elements that contribute to the formation of a particularly Irish mentality towards racism and anti-racism.

1. Irish contribution to colonialism and overseas missionaries.
2. Irish diaspora experiences and impact of anti-Irish racism.
3. Monocultural assumptions of an Irish society that negates the Irishness or inclusion of other groups, for example, Protestants, Travellers and Black people.
4. Influence of historic sectarianism and anti-Traveller racism on the island.

According to McVeigh (1992) and Lentin (2006) these elements have cultivated Irish understandings and interactions with 'Others'. On one hand Irish experiences of racism abroad resulted in the founding of a fledgling anti-racism movement in Ireland by returned emigrants (for example, the Irish Traveller Support Movement). Similarly, returned development and aid workers from overseas established many Irish non-governmental organisations. These organisations were originally motivated by anti-racist activism and continue today in an intercultural capacity (for example, the Irish Refugee Council, Comhlamh). On the other hand, as a result of these factors, an assumed homogeneity and monoculturalism by the white, settled, Catholic majority has denied the existence of other forms of Irishness and reinforced a wariness of those outside the majority community.

## *International Literature*

Soysal (1994) using the Swedish context asserts that in particular polities the types of participation of ethnic minority groups, their organisational structure and rules of membership correlate with the governance style of that state. In this context, minority ethnic or immigrant groups largely define their agendas in relation to the structural parameters of the host state in order to further their own collective goals. Likewise, even though migrants possess their own organisational traditions and methods, the characteristics of the institutional structures and discourses of the host society are replicated to further their own interaction and participation. (Soysal, 1994; Odmalm, 2004).

*Certain host-society institutions and policies encourage collective identity and organisation, by means of categorisation and the provision of resources to ethnic groups. Migrant organisations, in turn, define their goals, strategies, functions, and level of operation in relation to the existing policies and resources of the host state.*

(Soysal, 1994: 86)

The Swedish government has formally supported the organisation of minority ethnic groups in terms of funding and public policy since the inception of multiculturalism in the 1970s (Odmalm, 2004). As a result, minority or migrant-led organisations have high levels of participation in civil society and as formal partners in the affairs of government. Soysal (1994) describes this longstanding support of formal collective organising by the Swedish State as a natural response in a corporatist regime. The core objectives of these organisations are the promotion of cultural identity, representing the interest and needs of their communities and negotiating as partners with the Swedish government. All minority or migrant-led organisations operating at a national level receive stable funding to cover all their activities.

Odmalm contends that high levels of dependency on the State for funding means that 'organisational life in Sweden is highly regulated and steered from above' (2004: 476). Likewise, migrant or minority-led organisations are expected to adhere to Swedish institutional ideology and incorporate into the formal discourses of Swedish

society. While minority communities have full capacity to influence public policy, however, the high levels of State financial support may impinge upon their ability to operate independently of State sponsored multicultural measures. However, Rex (1994) is willing to overlook this disadvantage of state support, as the funding of minority groups is a necessary component of a functioning democracy.

*It may be misleading to see such activity simply as a State policy of social control. It should be possible in a democratic multi-cultural society to see state funding as a part of the total democratic process through which organisations play an effective role.*

(Rex, 1994: 10)

### *Funding*

*The Development of a Conceptual Framework and Principles to Guide Core Funding for Organisation Representing Migrant Ethnic Groups* (2007) (unpublished) was commissioned by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to assess the need for a dedicated government funding line for migrant-led groups. Informally known as the Fitzpatrick Report it outlined the necessity of a sustained funding structure for migrant-led groups in order to support participation, development and integration into Irish society. The Report highlights the need to provide assistance to migrant communities in a range of areas such as health, social welfare, housing, community development, education, employment and so forth. It acknowledges that very little funding has been provided thus far to address these needs except on a small one-off grant basis. The report advocates the following key recommendations to support migrant communities and their organisations:

- Fair and equal access to funding, through development of leadership and capacity building.
- A dedicated budget stream for capacity building.
- Government departments to take responsibility for funding of migrant groups in addressing the needs of their communities' specific to the remit of each department.

- Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs to establish a dedicated funding stream to enable mainstreaming of migrant-led groups operating within a community development model.
- The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to provide funding for groups representing asylum seekers and refugees.
- Strategies for local government funding.

The Fitzpatrick report highlights a number of difficulties in terms of stable funding acquisition for migrant-led groups. For example, migrant-led groups face difficulties in accessing funding for core activities, as opposed to one off small grants for identified projects. Other elements include pressure on funding groups to demonstrate value for money, a lack of resources and heavy reporting burdens. Similarly, existing funding programmes fail to diversify in addressing the needs of new communities (Brehony, 2007). International literature investigated from countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom and New Zealand cited similar funding difficulties such as inflexibility of funding bodies in terms of guidelines and support, language barriers, poor availability of long-term funding and poor access to information regarding funding and applications (Brehony, 2007). *The Report of the Third North South Intercultural Forum* (2006) in an unpublished conference (in Brehony, 2007) identified further barriers in Ireland. These include complicated application processes, a lack of capacity and inclusion around funding application processes, competition for funds, a lack of information and discrimination in government funding policy (in Brehony, 2007).

According to Integrating Ireland, the prevalent belief amongst Irish NGO's is that migrant-led organisations are distinctly disadvantaged in terms of competition for funding with Irish-led organisations (Brehony, 2007). Both the organisation and the Fitzpatrick Report refer to capacity and experience deficits of new community groups within the Irish context and also potential biases within grant decision-making processes themselves.

*If migrant organisations are to participate in their integration, this will require a change in funding mechanisms to ensure an equitable access to sustained government supports and resources in building on the capacity of minority ethnic organisations to identify, plan and implement policy and service delivery.*

(Brehony, 2007: 8)

#### *Funding – A North/South comparison*

A North-South comparative research in Ireland undertaken by Feldman et al. (2005), identified a number of differences in strategies of public funding provision for migrant-led organisations. Inherent within funding schemes in the North are broad overarching aims driven towards the development of the voluntary and community sector in general. It is considered that Northern funders ‘have longstanding mandates and infrastructures to support developmental work’ (Feldman et al., 2005: 49). As a result, migrant-led organisations can access funding that will capacitate their organisational, operative and administrative development. In contrast, funders in the South provide one off small grants to fund projects or activities related to specific issues such as development education, intercultural activities, and antiracism. In order to qualify for further grants, public funders in the South require migrant-led organisations to demonstrate continual growth to justify spending public finances. Feldman et al. (2005) contend that this expectation is unrealistic in the absence of considerations for the developmental needs of organisations. In addition, to issue specific criteria for grants, public funders in the South tend to align grantmaking remits with current policy concerns. This points to funding criteria, which are unpredictable and changeable with the ebb and flow of policy debates.

*Because of such narrow remits, it is easy for IMELOs (migrant-led organisations) to fall outside them – one of the most common reasons funders give for unsuccessful applications.*

(Feldman et al., 2005: 47)

A marked contrast between funding processes in the North and South is the participation of organisations in funding committees in an advisory capacity. Feldman et al. (2005) contend that this is an important and established practice in the

North that contributes to practices of accountability and transparency. However, in the South the inclusion of the intercultural sector itself on funding boards is generally avoided in order to counteract potential ‘conflicts of interest’. This process of exclusion of organisations can add to an estimation by some that the funding process is an adversarial experience (Feldman et al., 2005).

## **Methodology**

### *Theoretical and Conceptual Framework*

On an epistemological level, the premise of knowledge guiding the theoretical perspectives and hence methodology is constructionism. It can be asserted that this form of epistemology is embedded within qualitative, experiential approaches that rely on subjective meanings generated by people (Crotty, 1998). Constructionism is opposed to forms of objective positivist or post-positivist quantification. Within this paradigm, knowledge is not exclusive to objective discovery but rather it is constructed by meaning generated by people as they interact with each other and the world around them. Interpretivist ontology conveys a world in which reality is socially constructed (Husserl, 1965, Kelliher, 2005). The researchers own background, prior understandings, perspectives, history and conceptual frameworks are embedded in the interpretations of the study (Creswell, 2007). Critics of an interpretivist approach would argue that despite the generation of meaning and an enhanced contextual depth, difficulties arise in relation to the validity, reliability and generalisability of analysed results.

The ethnographic methodology used in this research attempts to grasp the lived worlds and cultural perspectives of immigrant and minority ethnic communities. Similarly and against this backdrop, the roles of settled, Irish people involved in a specifically Irish intercultural sector are examined. Crotty (1998) argues that ethnography can no longer identify with an uncritical, observational type of methodology in which cultures are understood. Instead, a *critical ethnography* is advocated which integrates aspects of critical inquiry and ethnography. This perspective attempts to delineate relationships between power and culture. According

to Crotty, a critical ethnographic methodology 'strives to unmask hegemony and address oppressive forces' (1998: 12). Critical ethnographic methodology used in conjunction with an interpretive approach would attempt to gather meaning from sociocultural conditions as well individuals own perspectives of these dynamics (Sarantakos, 2005).

McDonagh contends that 'racism in academia is endemic' (2000: 243) and recommends that critical and reflexive approaches are implemented to challenge potential prejudices by white, Irish, settled researchers. A self-critical reflexivity presents an opportunity for the researcher to avert the projection of majority perceptions onto diverse cultural contexts (McDonagh, 2000: 242). It can also provide a means to prevent the reinforcement of cultural stereotypes.

### *Methods*

This research uses a qualitative approach in its methodology. The inductive and explorative nature of the research seeks to understand issues for immigrants and minority ethnic groups in terms of their participation in the Irish intercultural sector. The research process took an emergent approach to allow the research design flexibility at the various stages of development and data collection (Creswell, 2007: 39). This method has allowed the gradual generation of theory throughout the course of this research. The main objective of this approach is to gain understanding about the issues from the participants themselves and to address the relevant research to gain further insights (Creswell, 2007).

The research strategy uses an operational plan which includes methods of data collection, sampling and data analysis in order to obtain valid, objective and accurate answers to the research questions (Kumar, 2005). The participants were members (male and female) of advocacy and support organisations where as far as possible an equal number of individuals who consider themselves as culturally Irish and those who identify themselves with other cultures were involved in the interview process. Data relating to the viewpoints of these participants was gathered, with special emphasis on the level of representation and participation that immigrant and minority ethnic individuals and communities have within specific organisations or in the Irish



intercultural sector more generally. The time frame for data collection has been three months, this includes approaching organisations, phone calls and emails, follow-up contacts, making appointments and undertaking interviews.

Snowball sampling was used due to a lack of prior access to potential research participants. Key 'intercultural' organisations were targeted and initial contacts utilised within them to provide a network to other suitable participants. However, it is important to note potential limitations to this method, such as the reliance on networking through contacts potentially renders the research vulnerable to the individual biases of these contacts (Kumar, 2005). Eight semi-structured interviews took place with the participation of an almost equal number of Irish-led and migrant-led organisations to give a balanced perspective. Each interview lasted for approximately one hour. A semi-structured interview technique was used to allow individuals express their own meanings, perspectives and cultural realities in their own terms. The structured aspect to the interview technique allowed the generation of more specific and comparable data between interviewed participants (May, 2001). The interview questions are tightly based on the research questions but at the same time not slavishly followed owing to the unstructured nature of the interview process. The research of the literature facilitated the development of both the research questions and the interview questions.

The interviewees were chosen on the basis of expertise and knowledge of their area, and their capacity to assist in the examination of emerging theories (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Within this framework, roles of individuals varied from communications and information officers, directors, board members and community employment workers. However, this study was unable to secure interviews with volunteers. Unfortunately this has prevented the portrayal of a unique view of participation in this report, on the basis of volunteerism. It is believed however, that the eight interviews have generated enough appropriate research data to effectively identify the issues and generate raw data for analysis. These interviews have been realistically conductible considering the limitations of a Masters research dissertation, for example appropriate time frames and resources.

Raw data was collected through audio tape recording, it was processed and the information was then transcribed. Editing was employed to prevent inaccuracies in classifications, errors and gaps in information (Kumar, 2005). The content of this data was systematically analysed in order to identify, code and categorise the main themes. One month was allocated to data analysis and after the data collection process was completed. A method of fixed qualitative analysis was utilised as data was gathered by means of audiotapes and the overall analysis relied on the content analysis of written transcripts (Sarantakos, 2005).

The transcribed data was examined in relation to the research purpose and looked at in terms of what was said, underlying meanings and emerging themes. Memos and reflections were inserted in the margins. Data was compared for commonalities, recurring themes were noted and categorised. Appropriate codes were assigned to the categorised data. For example, participation was coded as 'part', barriers to participation 'partbar' and so forth. The transcripts were revised with the intention of gleaned further data to identify patterns, themes, consistencies and differences (Sarantakos, 2005). Summary tables or matrices were designed with specific attention to the key themes, for example participation, funding, the community and voluntary sector. The tables included quotations, summarised data, memos, interviewee similarities and differences in relation to the themes. The information was revised and condensed on the basis of the matrices; generalisations were made, ideas were compared and contrasted and tested for validity with the expectation of identifying more abstract information for thematic development (Sarantakos, 2005).

Validity is determined in this research by ensuring the research questions are measuring what they are supposed to measure. That is to say, do the research questions encourage appropriate responses from interviewees to give an overview of processes of participation of migrant-led organisations in the Irish intercultural sector. Are the research questions adequately relevant to acquire enough information concerning barriers and facilitators of participation? 'Validity refers to the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration' (Babbie, 1990; cited in Kumar, 2005: 153). The nature of this research denies the establishment of validity through statistical evidence due to its interpretivist approach. Kumar asserts that in the absence of this form of

substantiation, justification of validity can be made through logical endeavours. A logical connection must be made between the research questions and the objectives set out in the research, or the purpose of the research. The relevance of the findings in relation to the research questions and objectives of the research validates the design of this research. Reliability has been achieved on the basis of consistency amongst responses of interviewees in the findings.

### *Ethical Considerations*

Ethical considerations were taken into account throughout the research process. Culturally sensitive and appropriate access was sought by gaining awareness of the interviewees' cultural backgrounds and researching the organisations beforehand. Interviewees were given letters of informed consent to ensure they were aware of the purpose of the study and their role in the research. Issues concerning confidentiality were respected throughout the research process. Organisations are not identified in the findings or discussion in order to protect the identities of the participants. This research has endeavoured to ensure that all participants were treated respectfully and without harm.

Central to my own research approach was a constant awareness of my privileged position in this society as a well-meaning, white, settled Irish person. This is particularly pertinent considering the subject matter of this research, that is an assessment of power imbalances between Irish NGOs and migrant-led organisations. The importance of this consideration is to avoid bias towards any cultural group partaking in this study. In particular, it was necessary to challenge my own potential for prejudice and to ensure constant awareness of the emergence of possible power imbalances. Consequently, a self-critical methodology permeated the research process to prevent the potential for bias and the projection of stereotypical majority perceptions onto the research.

This research has been conducted ethically, and in adherence to the guiding principles for ethical research of the Dublin Institute of Technology's *Research Ethics Committee*. Principles of academic integrity, honesty and respect for others have

guided this research. The academic writing has sought to avoid plagiarism, bias and discrimination towards any participants or groups involved.

## **Findings**

The core themes in this report have developed in tandem with the emergence of the barriers and facilitators of participation in the interview process. The interview questions have revealed factors affecting participation through each aspect under enquiry. The emergent themes include, disparate levels of influence between migrant-led organisations and Irish NGOs, problems with funding and competition amongst organisations for funding, participation in formal and informal networks, limited links with the broader third sector and local government, localised conceptions of community. According to the interviewees issues concerning trust and perceptions appear to permeate these themes. Significantly, the findings reveal that the obstacles to participation for migrant-led organisations and minority communities appear to be crosscutting and multi-dimensional. In other words these barriers are inextricably interwoven with the core themes.

### *Participation*

Within a broad investigation of processes of participation, an enquiry was made in terms of what participation meant to each interviewee. Follow-up questions were used in some instances, which included being part of things, making decisions and having the power to influence things. The responses were varied, some on a personal basis, others in relation to the type of work their organisation undertakes. All looked at participation on an ideological level. The following are samples of the participant's responses:

*I believe it's the ability to play an active role in your community and in issues that affect someone, to be able to advocate on those issues, to be able to play and active part in either policies or helping to fashion or change policies. That opportunity given to people enables them to participate.*

(Interviewee 3)

Another interviewee, the director of a rights and policy driven Irish NGO made the following statement regarding participation:

*Participation should involve the people whose interests we're trying to work for, largely defining the agenda. To do that you need then a lot of formal links with people who have been living here longer to provide an informed input, dialogue and understanding on both parts.*

(Interviewee 4)

The director of minority-led women's organisation emphasised this conceptualisation of participation:

*For me participation is just a word, but this word we call active participation is people being able to represent themselves, to speak for themselves or being able to articulate their needs and their issues themselves. That's the real participation you can get from people. It's actually involving people, it's getting people in there. It's having them seen and heard.*

(Interviewee 6)

Despite the ideological tone to many of the responses, a number of individuals noted discrepancies between what participation should be as an ideal and how it occurs in real life. For example, an interviewee stated:

*It could mean different things, I'm talking theoretically now, not the way we actually work. We actually work, as I was saying, we have very little direct participation with asylum seekers and refugees and certainly less than in the past, which I think is probably a weakness...A lot of participation has been quite tokenistic, for example you call a meeting to ask for views and people shout out a lot of ideas. A lot of them you can't do anything with... It needs a longer term dialogue than that.*

(Interviewee 4)

This interviewee, a settled Irish person working at a Traveller rights organisation described the following in relation to meaningful participation.

*In the end this organisation should be run by Travellers really, settled people in the end shouldn't be having a massive say in the decisions here, having a controlling say in the decisions here.*

(Interviewee 2)

### *Facilitators and Barriers to Participation*

Central to the examination of participation is the question of how participation takes place for migrant community members and migrant-led organisations within the Irish intercultural sector? Likewise, what are the barriers to participation for these same communities, organisations and their members? Interviewees were asked these questions in a specific manner, and pertaining to their central importance in the research process. The questions concerning the facilitators, enablers and barriers to participation were in relation to the involvement of migrants in the interviewee's own organisations, and also in the wider intercultural, community and voluntary, and statutory sectors.

The main enablers or facilitators to participation of minority-led organisations described by interviewees included capacity building, training for migrant groups in community leadership, community development and facilitation. Both Irish NGO's and more established migrant-led organisations provided this support to emerging migrant-led organisations. Some Irish NGO's offer more direct support in establishing specific emergent migrant-led organisations; for example the New Communities Partnership was founded and incubated under the Irish NGO, Cairde. Practical support for the participation of individual members mentioned by interviewees were financial provision for childcare and transport costs to attend events and meetings. Many organisations provided this support however not all had the financial means to sponsor the participation of members in this manner, particularly the migrant-led organisations. One interviewee, a member of a migrant-led organisation questioned the value of this type of financial support, particularly for Irish NGO's in terms of facilitating participation among refugees and asylum seekers.

*When somebody comes from the hostel they come and sit there for the day and they end up going home with 50 Euro in their pocket. For that person it's not about the interest in going there, it's about the money. What about the impact, there could be hundreds of people and they are not there for the interest of the thing.*

(Interviewee 3)

However, despite the alleged tokenism and financial obstacles some organisations face in providing this type of support, it does facilitate the involvement of individuals who would not otherwise be able to participate; for example, women with young children or members who live outside the greater Dublin area.

Of the obstacles cited, problems concerning funding appeared to generate the most consensus among the interviewees. These include widespread competition for funding between organisations, and also, the lack of dedicated state-funding streams for both migrant-led organisations and Irish NGO's. The Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Pobail) or the Office of the Minister does not provide stable funding for the intercultural sector. Some interviewees believed that a scarcity of funding resources was responsible for the high levels of competition amongst organisations and that this issue could only be remedied through structured State funding. A frequent theme that also arose was the disparate level of influence and ability to generate or secure funding between Irish NGO's and migrant-led communities. This appeared to be a source of frustration for migrant-led organisations that do not have the informal networks with Irish people, the levels of resources to devote time to funding application and also do not qualify for philanthropic assistance because of their identity based agendas.

What has also emerged from the interview process is that a lack of informal networking connections with Irish people and a perception that migrant-led organisations have less knowledge than indigenous Irish people of the formal Irish systems (voluntary, community and statutory). In this sense, barriers to participation include problems with perceptions and trust in the intercultural, community, voluntary and State sectors. One interviewee pointed out that their organisation has been in existence in Ireland for a considerable amount of time but widespread perceptions around the capacity of migrant-led organisations meant that they were overlooked for State or philanthropic funding. In particular, the interviewee believed that in this time they developed themselves technically and in terms of their capacity and expertise. They also forged strong formal networks and links with many indigenous Irish organisations.

*My organisation has been in Ireland now for 8 years, when do you stop being seen as a migrant, as somebody who doesn't understand how to apply for funding for example. It's actually very challenging because it doesn't look like these perceptions will pass.*

(Interviewee 6)

Similarly, a number of interviewees mentioned trust as a major barrier to participation. A lack of informal relationships with indigenous Irish people and also the supposed unfamiliarity of 'new' communities seem to have generated a sense of caution towards migrants and migrant-led organisations. One interviewee spoke about this sense of mistrust by Irish people towards communities they don't know, especially towards emergent organisations without a track record.

*We also raise that whole question too about trust and how people view an application from a community that they don't know. Do they view it differently than if an application comes in from Gerry down the road who ran this group for the last 15 years? If he asks for money to work with new communities will he get because people see his funding track record?*

(Interviewee 1)

Another element that has generated mistrust amongst organisations is a perception by some of the migrant-led organisations that their ideas have been poached in the past by larger Irish NGO's. The organisations have subsequently received funding for these ideas.

*You see you bring up the idea, you want to do something that would impact on the community, somebody jumps on the bandwagon and then wants to take it and then run with it, and, because they are more influential they get huge chunks of money for it and yet will not impact.*

(Interviewee 3)

One interviewee, the director of an Irish NGO advocating nationally for the rights of asylum seekers and refugees, observed structural barriers to their participation in the organisation. The individual believed that few participatory processes existed for asylum seekers and refugees and noted the absence of a community development approach taken by the organisation.



*There are lots of barriers in the way we're structured which is very much around aims, objectives and targets that need to be delivered within time frames. It doesn't leave much space for community development; it isn't really on the agenda of our organisation at the moment.*

(Interviewee 4)

The interviewee went further to discuss structural issues in the wider intercultural arena that generates problems for the participation of migrant communities within their own sector. These mainly pertain to the use of language and organisational structures that imitate the language and structures of Irish style community development or the State.

*I think there are fundamental barriers in the way in which Irish organisations have used language, discussed things and organised meetings. Most Irish organisations don't slow down and think about the way different communities want to participate in meetings. They just plough ahead and say this is the way we're going to do it and then complain when people don't get involved. I think the whole sector is structured in a way that makes it difficult to participate.*

(Interviewee 4)

### *Roles and Organisation Types*

The researcher began each interview with a query concerning the participants' own roles within their organisation, and also the roles of others. These roles include volunteers, paid staff, board of directors, community employment staff and paid staff. Representatives of all of these role types were interviewed in the research process with the exception of volunteers. It is unfortunate that the researcher was unable to secure an interview with this type of participant. The organisations that avail of volunteerism themselves mentioned it was difficult for them to recruit and retain volunteers. This was in itself an obstacle to participation for volunteers, particularly asylum seekers and refugees, and will be discussed further in this chapter. Diverse individuals appeared to contribute in the various roles amongst the organisations. In fact, the interviewees themselves were diverse in terms of their skills, position in their organisations, personal circumstances, gender and also cultural and ethnic

backgrounds. A balanced representation of migrants from various backgrounds and indigenous Irish people were interviewed.

The levels of representativeness of migrant community members and indigenous Irish community members varied in the range of roles within the organisations interviewed. Participation on the board of directors was voluntary and appeared diverse amongst most of the Irish NGO's and also the migrant-led communities. It was generally agreed amongst interviewees that this is a deliberate aim to get an appropriate amount of representation in terms of expertise and ability to contribute to the development of their organisation.

According to the interviewees, participation and representativeness varied amongst type of organisation, for example some were service providers, some mainly policy driven, others based around advocacy and rights and others operated as national networks of intercultural groups. One interviewee, the co-ordinator of a national network with strong participatory structures stated that there are differences in participatory processes used by different types of organisations in the sector. The interviewee commented that those organisations that tend to be more policy or service user focused are more likely to use top-down decision making processes. The interviewee herself advocated the use of a bottom-up community development style of participatory approach, this she believed was not utilised appropriately in these specific types of organisations but recognised their importance to the sector.

### *Migrant-Led Organisations and Irish NGO – An Overview*

The Irish intercultural sector is more complex and representatively mixed than the use of a simple ethnicised dichotomy of migrant-led and Irish NGO terminology. As already stated, while acknowledging this complexity, this report uses this terminology in order to assess levels of influence and participation of migrants and migrant-led organisations within the Irish system more generally. In each of the interviews, an enquiry was made related to the interviewees' perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of migrant-led and Irish NGO organisations in addressing needs and representing or advocating on behalf of minority groups. The general findings

ascertained that Irish NGOs have inside knowledge of the Irish system in terms of language, experience, education and informal networks. On the other hand migrant-led organisations have inside knowledge, access, understandings and cultural expertise of their own communities. One interviewee stated that because of the inside knowledge of Irish NGOs they are able to attract more funding. On the other hand, these organisations lack practical, first-hand awareness of what is going on the lives of migrants and the needs of their communities. An interviewee from a migrant-led organisation made the following comment:

*The advantage is that we have people on the ground. It's easier for people to access us - they come to us and talk to us.*

(Interviewee 3)

Another interviewee described the authenticity of migrant-led voice in representing and advocating on behalf of migrants.

*The first advantage is credibility, if you're talking about the needs of refugees in a refugee led organisation, it has far more credibility and politicians and civil servants are more likely to listen.*

(Interviewee 4)

As already contended, the advantages for Irish NGOs in advocating on behalf of migrant communities is an inside knowledge and involvement in the Irish system. An indigenous knowledge of Irish society and its processes results in formal and informal familiarity. Therefore, Irish NGOs have an enhanced ability to participate in these processes.

*I think maybe sometimes and I don't mean to sound prejudiced but sometimes you might have the contacts more or be able to understand the system more. I would have been in community development before I came here and I would have worked and lived in Finglas, Ballyfermot, Clondalkin. You get to know different places, contacts and connections. Sometimes other people coming in don't have that, they don't know how the system works...it is there in community development, all those connections and networks. If you're outside it's very hard to get in and make inroads.*

(Interviewee 8)

However, the ‘warmth of community’ that can facilitate participation for Irish NGOs can also potentially serve to exclude migrants and migrant-led organisations.

*It is obvious to migrants that doors aren't opened when you don't know what to say, you don't know the lingo that a department wants to hear in their funding application, you don't know informal networks... For minority ethnic-led organisations the lack of informal networks with Irish people can affect their power in relation to advocacy work.*

(Interviewee 1)

### *Networks*

National network organisations operating from a community development approach appear to have a strong participatory emphasis, and, as a result, have established strategies focussing on the facilitation and development of participation of migrant communities and organisations within the intercultural sector. One Irish NGO national network stated:

*When we started networking we prioritised for the last 3 ½ years of the strategic plan engaging with ethnic minority-led organisations, and targeting a lot of our training to support those communities, because we felt we needed to ensure that the organisation had a good balance between support organisations or minority-led organisations. I think now we have achieved that on our board, I mean over 50% maybe even 70% are minorities and represent different community organisations.*

(Interviewee 1)

A migrant-led national network that operates under a similar premise in supporting and developing emerging minority-led organisations, advocates the use of collective networking to ameliorate the participation of migrant-led organisations in policy development, and in consultation on issues that affect them. As described by one interviewee; ‘*the concept of this organisation is to work together as a network, to be able to advocate with a stronger voice* (Interviewee 7)’.

Similarly, a migrant-led women’s organisation that operates with a strong networking focus stressed the importance of ensuring ‘*your voice is being heard, you are being*

*taken seriously*' (Interviewee 6). The interviewee describes how her organisation strategizes this networking process:

*I had to learn how to exploit the environment here. Environments in the form of the organisations which have money that we don't have. For example, they have the money, we have the women.*

(Interviewee, 6)

This interviewee also emphasised the importance of bringing indigenous Irish people and in particular women into her organisation through the networking process. She described this as a vital facet of integration, and also, to increase the influence of her organisation within the Irish system in general.

*We have to work on integration and we have to bring the indigenous women on board. Networking with indigenous women was crucial.*

(Interviewee, 6)

In this sense, participation can be seen as a mutually beneficial two way process that enhances integration among individuals and groups. The meaningful use of networks appears to embody a strong participatory focus through the use of collective action and for the development of communities

### *Funding*

It was agreed amongst all interviewees that funding is the principle issue in terms of participation for all organisations in the intercultural sector. As previously discussed, there is no dedicated funding stream from the State for any of the organisations either migrant-led or Irish NGO. One off grants are provided on a project basis from local authorities and previously from the defunct NCCRI. Funding is not granted for organisational development and day to day activities. The only organisations interviewed in receipt of stable government funding were the Traveller rights organisations under Pobail, and the asylum seeker and refugee drop-in centre under the homeless branch of the Social Inclusion Unit. The main sources of funding vary among the other organisations. The Irish NGO's generally tend to be funded by the

two philanthropic organisations One and Atlantic Philanthropies, and European Integration Funds. The migrant-led organisations tend to receive their core funding from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, European Integration Funds and Irish Aid.

In these current economic difficulties, every organisation interviewed expressed concern for their future financial stability. It is believed that the dismantling of the NCCRI by the government is reflective of its' future commitment to integration policy and also the intercultural sector. It is assumed government budget cuts will affect those organisations that are currently core funded by the State. Similarly, funds from project based grants will be reduced. It is also conceived that the proposals outlined in the Fitzpatrick Report to provide a stable funding stream to emergent migrant-led organisations have been shelved. There are similar problems with the philanthropic organisations as they are now are operating from a decreased pool of funds. The organisations believe that there will be considerable job losses in the coming months.

Interviewees pointed to difficulties faced in acquiring funding for migrant-led organisations. It was contended that Irish NGOs have advantages regarding the attainment of funding because they have the resources and infrastructure to dedicate to the application process. For example, some interviewees asserted that criteria from funding bodies such as Pobail or the European Union Integration funds are overly complicated and rigid.

*EU funding is the most labour intensive in terms of administration and financial management. Because many of the ethnic minority-led organisations or new community groups have less staff and infrastructure they there fore struggle to administer those funds.*

(Interviewee 1)

An interviewee from a migrant-led organisation speaking in relation to the process of acquiring government funds from Pobail commented:

*It's actually very complicated because of the conditions they put into the funding strand, regardless of how much funding you get you end up putting so much work into the process, it's tied with a lot of conditions.*

(Interviewee 6)

The same interviewee stated they received a rare funding strand from Pobail. However, this was not on the basis of integration or intercultural issues but rather on the national networking strength of this organisation.

*It's very complicated, when I approached the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs they told me they have never funded any migrant organisation...Even to get that funding we had to develop a lot of relationships and do a lot of work getting (Irish) people involved so we could present that work. It actually took us five years before we could get that funding but we don't know what will happen after next year because it's coming to an end.*

(Interviewee 6)

An interviewee from a migrant-led organisation argued that the philanthropies lacked transparency in terms of their funding criteria. This is in comparison to other well-known bodies that fund Irish organisations. The interviewee deems these funding organisations to be open and objective when considering applications.

*Philanthropies don't come out with their funding streams like Irish Aid and Joseph Rowntree, they have their funding streams out there on their websites. The philanthropies approach you and not the other way round. There are no criteria - that they tell you anyway.*

(Interviewee 3)

An interviewee from the only migrant-led organisation that has received funding from a philanthropic organisation described the process as complicated. This interviewee believed that her organisation would not have received this funding if it were not for the influence of indigenous Irish people who knew the funders. Also, this migrant-led women's organisation conducts its activities on the basis of a strong networking ethos with other women's groups which has helped them to obtain numerous contacts across the statutory, voluntary, community and intercultural sectors.

*They wouldn't fund you if they don't trust you. Some of our expert group (Board of Directors) knows the funders and so they keep on being told about our organisation, so at long last they agreed to have a meeting. Actually, I think some of the expert group had to meet them face to face before they would*

*give us the funding. It's not easy, it's whom you know, and if you don't know the person, somebody who knows somebody has to push it through.*

(Interviewee 6)

The same interviewee agreed that while on the one hand this situation of 'who you know' has opened many doors for her organisation to participate within the Irish system, it has also been equally as challenging and frustrating. She believed that this informality created an unequal playing field for migrant communities that do not have informal links with funders.

*It has been very frustrating, we are competing with organisations that have people they know in these places you are applying. So do I give to my friend who I know very well or do I give to this stranger from a country that is so corrupt and you know we don't even know if they know about the Irish system.*

(Interviewee 6)

Another interviewee in reference to entitlement to State funding challenged narrow understandings of community as being solely locality based. Instead, this interviewee advocated for a conceptualisation of 'culture as community' whereby networks of migrants across the country can be recognised by the State as specific communities of shared identity or interest.

*In terms of State funding, there is a need to recognise culture as community, not to just have that idea of only funding people who are supporting local activities but to respond to how communities organise themselves. Organisations such as Pobail need to understand the way our communities organise and not say our communities have to organise in a certain way or they can't access funding.*

(Interviewee 1)



### *Connections with Local Authorities, Community and Voluntary Sector*

As previously discussed in this chapter a number of themes involving the broader community, voluntary and statutory sectors have presented barriers to participation for migrant communities. Recurrent observations made by participant's point to issues around trust, perceptions and conceptions of community. One interviewee interestingly states there is a lack of recognition of 'culture as community' in favour of local geographic based communities by the Department of Community, Gaeltacht and Rural Affairs, and subsequently the mainstream community development sector.

*A lot of the informal ways in which things work here, the whole concept of community as being local rather than an understanding of community as being cross-cultural – a lot of organisations face these barriers.*

(Interviewee 1)

Likewise, the lack of a dedicated funding stream from the Community Development Support Unit generates a sense of being outside the mainstream community and voluntary sector. This concept was supported by a number of the interviewees.

*Organisations such as Pobail need to understand the way our communities organise, and aren't saying our communities have to organise in a certain way or they can't access funding.*

(Interviewee 1)

This perception of being an outsider was supported by a number of interviewees. One in particular linked this view with the issue of trust stating that as an outsider and a migrant her organisation is not trusted by indigenous Irish community members.

*When do you stop being seen as a migrant, when do you start being seen as somebody who is part of this community now, rather than as an outsider, it does not look like these perceptions will pass...there is also the whole issues of trust; it's like you're not being trusted, you're still a migrant, so even when it comes to awarding of money you get very little.*

(Interviewee 6)

In terms of relationships with statutory organisations, even though integration initiatives exist in local authorities some interviewees have noted that in reality not every local authority has a streamlined approach towards new communities. This can be advantageous to migrant communities in some areas but in others it can be a source of frustration.

*It varies from place to place, some councils will have integration units and others don't, in some partnerships you may have someone who has a personal dedication to promoting the needs of minority ethnic communities and other partnerships may not have that same commitment.*

(Interviewee 1)

Similarly, one interviewee discussed a lack of engagement with the government via the social partnership- a long established avenue for participation of the mainstream community and voluntary sector in State governance.

*In terms of the Community Development Support Program and why they are not providing funding, that's a question of whether or not we can get ourselves at social partnership tables. You know our organisations really don't have a voice in a lot of those kinds of settings yet.*

(Interviewee 1)

### *Immigration Bill*

Migrant-led organisations and migrant-led networks described a lack of consultation with regards to submissions made to the Oireachtas Committee on the draft *Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill* (2008). One interviewee described being excluded from the preparatory processes undertaken by the Irish-led organisations in relation to amendment recommendations. Migrant-led organisations assert that they received an invitation to attend the Oireachtas Committee submissions meeting only after intensive lobbying, and on a last minute basis. As broad representatives of a large number of migrant communities in Ireland, one migrant-led organisation and one migrant-led network made a joint presentation that largely discussed the negative impact of the proposed Bill on their communities. Of the migrant led organisations and network interviewed, a degree of consternation was expressed over the lack of

representation and participatory processes employed by the Irish-led intercultural organisations and the government.

*We don't see why an invitation was not extended to us. We got in there and we made our presentation, we made it clear to every member of the committee that we are migrants, we have mouths we can speak for ourselves.*

(Interviewee 3)

One interviewee made a hypothetical comparison to the introduction of a draft Immigration Bill in his own country stating he would be uncomfortable speaking on behalf of migrant groups who have a right to represent themselves on issues that affect them before legislators. All people interviewed agreed that the presentation made by migrant-led organisations was successful and positively received by government legislators who have agreed to make up to 700 hundred amendments to the Bill.

The response in relation to this specific issue by the of the director of an Irish NGO that campaigns for the rights of refugees and asylum seekers was the following:

*I think the real problem there was a lack of serious discussion in advance. That was a matter of taking the time to do it properly which none of us did. On the one hand, what would happen is that the migrant-led organisations had the direct experience but what was being asked is what amendments do you want on this Bill. They should have actually talked to people, well we should have taken time to talk to them as well.*

(Interviewee 4)

However, an Irish-led national network with strong participatory and community development approaches did actively work to engage migrant communities in developing policy submissions contingent with the views of various community members. One interviewee stated:

*When the immigration bill was being designed, we didn't just sit there and write our policy response and send it in, we went out and trained our members to understand what it was about to get their input on what they though the issues were. We also worked to train them to be able to do their own submissions. We worked with them then after the Bill came out to understand what was in the Bill so that they could then understand how to lobby in*

*relation to the Bill. And then we encouraged them to have public meetings on the issue and to meet with their representatives.*

(Interviewee 1)

On the other hand, one migrant-led women's organisation stated that the presentation was not fully representative of the needs of all members of the communities as specific gender related issues were not taken into account. The interviewee criticised this oversight highlighting power imbalances within her own community that resulted in the failure to advocate on behalf of migrant women's issues.

*For us as a migrant women-led organisation, issues of gender were not taken into account, if you go through the whole Bill it's very vague, and people have to understand the impact of migration on women and men. It's affects them differently. They don't take into account the gender specific harm that women might experience from her home country before she leaves, and also on the migration journey. They don't think of that.*

(Interviewee 6)

The interview process undertaken for this research has yielded a wealth of information regarding the intercultural sector. As anticipated, considerable information emerged in the findings concerning the central topic of 'participation'. As the researcher intended, the data gathered identified a broad range of factors that affects the participation of migrant groups. The rationale behind this was to attain an overview that would inform other aspects connected to participative processes and reveal barriers to participation. The emergent nature of the research determined that other facets influencing migrant communities' ability to participate gradually became apparent. Emergent thematic influences included; issues concerning funding and competition for funding, disparate levels of influence between migrant-led organisations and Irish NGOs, participation in formal networks, participation in informal networks, limited connections with the broader voluntary and community sector, local authorities and also localised conceptions of community. A number of interviewees also indicated problems around trust and similarly perceptions when discussing obstacles to participation. The findings reveal that inequities exist for migrant-led organisations in terms of their levels of influence in the sector. These

inequalities prevent migrant-led organisations from participating on an equal level with their Irish counterparts.

## **Discussion**

### *Participation*

This research initially intended to broadly assess processes of participation for new communities and migrant-led organisations within the intercultural sector. The interview process of this research has also revealed insights into their ability to participate the broader third sector. The findings have illustrated a number of themes worthy of investigation such as; funding issues, disparate levels of influence between Irish NGO's and migrant-led organisations, formal participation in networks, a lack of informal connections with indigenous Irish people in government and civil society, and localised conceptions of community. Inclusive of these points are problems concerning perceptions and trust, which are believed to create barriers to participation.

The research questions have enquired about the factors that influence the capacity of migrant-led organisations and communities to participate in an Irish intercultural sector. To examine this query comprehensively an assessment must be made regarding barriers to participation, and likewise, steps that various actors in the sector take to support and facilitate participation. These processes are discussed throughout this chapter due to their multidimensional and crosscutting character. Also, the research investigated the meaning of participation to each interviewee in order to ascertain ideological viewpoints, and to glean information on perceptions regarding the authenticity of participatory processes in real life.

The literature outlines the significance of 'participation' in civil society in relation to its' capacity to generate involvement in the political, social and community spheres. *Planning for Diversity, the National Action Plan against Racism, 2005 – 2008* (NAPR) through an intercultural framework outlines government commitment to participation at political, policy and community levels. Amnesty International (2007)

advocates the conception of ‘participation’ as a human right and supports the development of a national Irish strategy for participation in civil society. Likewise, Lister specifically promotes ‘participatory citizenship’ as a necessary human right:

*The right of participation in decision-making in social, economic, cultural and political life should be included in the nexus of basic human rights.*

(1998: 228)

However, Ejorh (2006) notes that there are exclusionary consequences for those whom the nation state considers ‘non-citizens’.

Cornwall (2004) contends that ‘spaces for participation’ implicitly involve existing power relations that occur within other spaces in societies. Unchallenged inequalities and power relations allow participatory spaces to be defined and negotiated by those with greater influence in that space. Power relations operate as boundaries that demarcate who can enter and remain, and under what circumstances. It can be argued that any exploration of a participatory space must take into account how it was created, to whom it is significant and also, the conditions for participation. In consideration of ‘spaces for participation’ the various sectors in civil society involve numerous actors with varying degrees of influence. The intercultural sector itself is significant to a number of stakeholders such as migrants, indigenous Irish people with an interest in integration or anti-racism issues, migrant-led organisations, Irish NGOs, funding bodies and the State and so forth. According to R. Lentin (2006) the original anti-racism and solidarity movements in Ireland were created by returned diaspora and overseas development workers in partnership with racialised groups. State involvement in integration resulted in ‘intercultural’ policies and the development of a sector that established the role of Irish NGOs. Within this conceptualisation of power relations, those with the most ability to influence that space and delineate the boundaries and conditions for participation. In this sense, it can be suggested that the more influential stakeholders in the intercultural sector for example, the State and Irish NGOs have a greater capacity to define and shape the conditions of that space.

## *Roles*

During the interviewee process the researcher asked the interviewees to describe how they participate in their organisations in terms of their own role, and also with regards to the roles of others, for example management, board of directors, paid staff, volunteer and so forth. The interviewees were also asked about the roles of minority-ethnic communities with the intention of gaining an overview of how they participate in the organisations. The interviewees were diverse in terms of their skills, position and cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The representativeness of new community members and the indigenous Irish community varied in the range of roles within the organisations interviewed. Participation on the board of directors was voluntary and appeared diverse amongst most of the organisations in order to have a broad range of expertise on the board, both migrant and indigenous Irish.

According to the findings, levels of representation and participation differed amongst types of organisations in the sector such as service providers, national policy and rights driven organisations, activist migrant-led organisations, community development organisations and national networks. Organisations that rely on networking, community development or have strong participatory strategies tend to have higher levels of participation and representation. It was observed that national policy driven or service provision organisations tend to be less participation orientated and more hierarchical in their decision-making processes. It can be suggested that these organisations don't depend on strong participatory relationships with migrant communities in order to function. For example, service providers operate on a client type of relationship and the policy-focussed organisations work on a national level with consultation groups and statutory bodies.

The typology of intercultural actors developed by R. Lentin & McVeigh (2006) on the basis of their function and core funding sources seems to reflect the findings of this research. This typology classifies organisations as migrant-led, Irish founded non-government organisations, local community development projects, faith-based organisations and State or State funded agencies

## *Networks*

National networks operating from a community development approach tend to have a strong participatory emphasis. Accordingly, many of their activities are designed to facilitate and develop the participation of migrants and their communities. The findings suggest that the use of formal networking amongst organisations enhances the participation and influence of migrant-led organisations in policy development and consultation. This use of collaborative networking increases their ability to participate within the Irish system due to the higher levels of influence of the Irish NGOs in the sector and in government. R. Lentin (2006) cites the success of migrant-led organisations that display a strong networking ethos. These organisations have a higher capacity to influence policy debates in the third sector. Likewise the collective use of national migrant-led networks strengthens migrant voice in policy development.

## *Conceptions of Community (Informal Networks)*

Research questions regarding concepts of community and the relationship between the intercultural sector and the broader Irish community and voluntary sector emerged through the course of this research. At the early stages of the interview process questions evolved from the exclusion of immigrant communities from the 'Community Development Support Programme' funded by the Department of Community, Gaeltacht and Rural Affairs (Pobail). The intercultural organisations believe this generates a sense of being outside the mainstream community and voluntary sectors. A response from one interviewee indicated that the current concept of community used by the State is too local and geographically based and does not address 'culture as community', and, consequently this needs to change to strengthen connections with the voluntary and community sectors. Of the participants interviewed one organisation a Travellers Rights group and the other a Rural Community Development programme received a funding strand under the Community Development Support Programme. Although both work with immigrants, their integration funding is acquired through other sources and neither organisation worked specifically with migrants. Recognition by Pobail of 'culture as community' would acknowledge the non-geographic nature of many communities



that are based on shared interests or identity and potentially provide a funding strand to support their interests and needs. Mayo (2000) asserts that traditional assumptions of shared values or uniformity within locality-based communities has the potential to exclude newcomers. In the Irish context, assumed perceptions of homogeneity has maintained impressions of locality or community as being specifically white, settled, Catholic and Irish.

This perspective can be extended to the assertion made by McVeigh (1996) concerning the 'specificity of Irish Racism' as being related closely to a concept of an Irish 'warmth of community'. Irish self-perceptions of being an informal, friendly, closely-knit and community-based society can marginalize those who do not identify themselves as white, settled, Catholic and Irish. A. Lentin contends this 'warmth of community' is evident in processes of racism and anti-racism in Ireland that are 'formative of a uniquely Irish conceptualisation of belongingness' (2004: 150). An Irish style of community development recreates this same 'warmth of community'. A. Lentin (2006) believes that this approach based on informal networks, solidarity and partnerships largely results in white settled Irish people acting on behalf of marginalized groups. Importantly, the findings have shown that the interviewees believe that a lack informal networks with indigenous Irish people in the third sector and local authorities creates barriers in terms of funding, trust and perceptions.

### *Migrant-led Organisation and Irish NGOs*

Central to this research are questions concerning the relationships between migrant-led organisations and Irish NGOs, and also with the communities they seek to represent. Interviewees were asked what they perceived as advantages and challenges for migrant-led organisations in addressing the needs and supporting the interests of their communities. Likewise, they were asked about the advantages and challenges for organisations that are not migrant-led in addressing the needs, representing and advocating on behalf of immigrant communities. The interviewees agreed that Irish NGOs have inside knowledge, understanding, educational experience and informal networks within the Irish system be they statutory, third sector or civil society in general. Migrant-led organisations have inside knowledge, language, understanding,

access and cultural expertise of their own communities. They also have direct experience of what it is to be an immigrant whether they are economic migrants, asylum seekers or refugees. Interviewees tended to agree that migrant-led organisations had more credibility or authenticity when for example representing the interests of their communities before the government. There was a general consensus amongst interviewees that the Irish NGOs due to their indigenous knowledge and connections (both formal and informal) of the Irish system have an enhanced ability to participate and can more easily attract funding. However, a lack of affiliation and familiarity with these structures in Irish society can potentially exclude migrant-led organisations from enjoying the same ‘warmth of community’ (McVeigh, 1996) as their Irish counterparts.

Research undertaken by Feldman et al (2005) found that competition for scant resources generates mistrust and prevents collaboration amongst organisations. Some of the migrant-led organisation members interviewed by Feldman et al. (2005) felt their ideas had been ‘poached’ by the Irish NGOs and this subsequently led to a loss of funding in favour of the larger more established Irish organisations. Interviewees in this research also alluded to this practice and stated that it generated mistrust and added to the competition for funding. Feldman et al (2005) contend that these circumstances prevent collaboration amongst organisations and utilises this point to advocate for the provision of dedicated State funding for the organisational development of migrant-led organisations. Some participants interviewed in this research agreed that a scarcity of funding resources was responsible for the high levels of competition amongst organisations and that this issue could only be remedied through structured State funding. Also, an unequal ability to generate funding between migrant-led organisations and Irish NGOs was a source of frustration for migrant-led organisations that did not have the same levels of influence or informal networks with Irish people and they do or qualify for philanthropic funding because of their identity based agendas.

However, there are mutual advantages to collaboration between migrant-led and Irish NGOs. The benefits for emergent migrant-led organisations in having links with Irish NGOs include capacity building, skill development, leadership training and connections with indigenous Irish people. Also, formal connections with Irish NGOs

enable emergent migrant-led organisations to engage on a national level in networks and policy consultations. Feldman et al (2005) state that the migrant-led organisations that are involved in these types of collaborations tend to be successful in outcomes and funding. Likewise it is important for Irish NGOs to forge strong connections with migrant communities that they seek to represent, and migrant-led organisations because of their capacity to authentically represent migrant communities.

However, this is not always adhered to in practice. Some Irish NGOs have difficulties in ‘achieving something quickly and following through on a principle that is strong but time consuming and resource heavy’ (Unknown, cited in Feldman, 2007: 202). In other words, the genuine involvement and participation of migrant communities is often overlooked in favour of reaching specific targets. One interviewee (interviewee 4) the director of an Irish NGO advocating nationally for the rights of asylum seekers and refugees observed structural barriers to participation in his organisation. The interviewee attributed this to an organisational focus on objectives and targets that are confined to specific time frames regardless of whether participatory processes are realistically employed. The interviewee stated that these organisational issues as obstacles to participation exist across the sector. This is through the organisations’ use of language and structures that replicate that of an Irish third sector and State. Similarly, the same interviewee commented that many Irish NGOs plough ahead at their own pace without taking into consideration how communities want to participate or organise themselves. Soysal (1994) in observing the Swedish integration system contends that migrant-led organisations tend to adopt the institutional structures and discourses of their host society in order to further their collective goals within that system. It can be argued that in terms of spaces for participation in the intercultural sector the Irish government and Irish NGOs have more influence in defining the conditions of that space. The impetus is on migrant communities and organisations to assimilate into that space in order to further their own agendas. The many barriers to participation for these communities and organisations prevent them from defining the conditions of that space on an equal footing with others.

The lack of collaboration between migrant-led organisations and Irish NGOs concerning submissions on the draft *Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill*

(2008) and their last minute inclusion at the Oireachtas Committee indicates unequal levels of influence of organisations with government bodies. This is particularly pertinent considering the Bill would have a direct effect on the lives of immigrants and the organisations invited to represent their interests were mainly the Irish NGOs. The participants from the migrant-led organisations interviewed expressed frustration that their views and ability to self-represent were only taken in to account at the last minute. An interviewee from an Irish NGO acknowledged that more consultation should have taken place at government level and amongst organisations. However, an Irish-led organisation with strong participatory structures did invest resources to ensure migrant communities participation in submissions. In contrast, an interviewee from a migrant-led women's organisation contended that they were not consulted by their own community on how women would be specifically affected by the Bill. The interviewee noted power imbalances within her own community that prevented this participation from taking place.

### *Funding*

Central to the research is a question of how funding affects the participation of migrant-led organisations and their communities? The absence of a dedicated funding strand from the government prevents many organisations in particular the migrant-led groups from having the capacity to develop their organisations. (Fitzpatrick Report, unpublished, 2007). This sustained funding structure is advocated for migrant-led groups in order to support participation, development and integration into Irish society. This is as opposed to the current small grants system that focuses on short-term projects. The Report highlights the need to provide government assistance to migrant communities in a range of areas such as health, social welfare, housing, community development, education, employment and so forth. The funding that does exist for the organisations interviewed appears to be divided between the philanthropies and European Integration funds for the Irish NGOs and other organisations such as Joseph Rowntree and Irish Aid for the migrant-led organisations. This is with the exception of one migrant-led organisation that received funding from a philanthropic foundation by means of significant endorsement from indigenous Irish colleagues. All organisations expressed concern

for their future in these uncertain economic times as many of the funding organisations are now operating a decreased pool of funds. Likewise, government funding cuts reduces the financial assistance from the one-off project grant system and implies inaction regarding the Fitzpatrick Report.

The findings demonstrated dissatisfaction by some interviewees particularly those from migrant-led organisations concerning over-complicated, time consuming and rigid funding application procedures, for example Pobail and the European Integration Funds. A number of interviewees believed that Irish NGOs were at a distinct advantage in terms of resources, staff and infrastructures to devote time to funding acquisition. Migrant-led organisations on the other hand often spent a high proportion of their time working on applications and meeting the funding criteria required by funding bodies. One interviewee from a migrant-led organisation purported that the philanthropic organisations are unclear about their funding criteria. These organisations choose to approach potential donees rather than displaying their funding conditions in an accessible manner, for example placing their criteria on their website. This interviewee believed that those funders that are willing to fund migrant-led organisations are more approachable and transparent in their approach.

Migrant-led organisations also cited a lack of informal connections with funders as a source of frustration. It was asserted that some Irish people in the sector personally knew funders and this gave them advantages in terms of funding acquisition. This informal system of 'whom you know' or 'whom you trust' creates inequities for groups that do not have the same level of familiarity or funding track record with Irish funders. Similarly, a need to recognise 'culture as community' by the *Department of Community, Gaeltacht and Rural Affairs* was identified by one interviewee as a barrier to funding. Subsequent interviewees supported this concept. The interviewee recommended that an acknowledgement of how migrant communities organise should be taken into account by Pobail, rather than an assumption that activities should be funded on a geographically local basis. The dispersed nature of migrant communities in Ireland prevents their inclusion on the current funding criteria for community activities.

Feldman et al (2005) in a North-South comparative research in Ireland noted distinct differences between public funding practices. Most notably the focus on core operational support and organisational development in the North as opposed to the small short term grant system in the South. This policy in the North of stable funding strands is reflective of the community and voluntary sector in general. A marked contrast between funding processes in the North and South is the participation of organisations in funding committees in an advisory capacity. Feldman et al. (2005) contend that this is an important and established practice in the North that contributes to practices of accountability and transparency. However, in the South the inclusion of the intercultural sector itself on funding boards is generally avoided in order to counteract potential 'conflicts of interest'. This process of exclusion of organisations can add to an estimation by some that the funding process is an adversarial experience (Feldman et al., 2005)

This analysis has assessed processes of participation of migrant-led organisations and migrant communities within the intercultural sector. These include barriers and challenges faced, and the steps taken to enable the participation of new communities. The discussion has assessed migrant-led organisations ability to participate in the Irish third sector. On the basis of the findings and in reference to the literature, the following themes have been examined; funding issues, roles, disparate levels of influence between Irish NGOs and migrant-led organisations, formal participation in networks, a lack of informal connections with indigenous Irish people in government and civil society, and localised conceptions of community. Further concerns cited by participants involve problems with perceptions and trust.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

This conclusions of this research point to an unequal capacity of migrants to participate in the intercultural sector and in the Irish system in general. The recommendations will be outlined through the course of this chapter. In consideration of the intercultural sector as a ‘space for participation’ the Irish NGOs exhibit a greater capacity to define, shape and influence the conditions of that space. These organisations possess advantages in terms of resources, funding, infrastructure and an indigenous knowledge of the Irish system. Therefore it can be contended that unequal power relation infuse this participatory space.

The levels of participation tend to vary amongst type of organisations in the sector. Organisations that actively engage in networking, community development or have strong participatory organisational strategies tend to exhibit higher levels of participation of migrant communities. On the other hand, organisations that don’t depend on strong participatory relationships in their strategies are inclined to have weaker participatory structures, for example service providers with client-based relationships and national policy focussed organisations. This research has identified national networks as having a strong participatory emphasis. Formal networking is effective in increasing the influence of migrant-led organisations in consultation and policy development. Networking has the potential to strengthen migrant voice in policy work particularly the collective use of national migrant-led networks.

Conceptions of community have emerged in this research as influential factors in preventing and enabling the participation of migrant communities and organisations in the community and voluntary sectors. The current concept of localised community used by the State is too geographically based and does not acknowledge ‘culture as community’. This recognition would strengthen formal relationships of migrant-led organisations with the community and voluntary sectors. This research recommends this acknowledgement of ‘culture as community’ alongside local community activities. This would enable these communities to participate in the community and voluntary sector on the basis of their identity and shared interests. Importantly, this would potentially provide a dedicated funding strand from Pobail through the Community Development Support Unit.

Similarly, a lack of informal networking with indigenous Irish people creates barriers to participation in terms of trust, perceptions and funding. This characteristically Irish 'warmth of community' identified by McVeigh (1996) can exclude those who are not recognisable as white, settled, Catholic and Irish or possess self-perceived informal, friendly 'Irish' attributes. This informal system of 'whom you know' can create inequalities and unequal access to resources. Participants from migrant-led organisations cited a lack of informal connections with funders as a source of inequity with their Irish counterparts. It was asserted by some that Irish people know funders and this gives them advantages in funding acquisition. This generates a perception of unequal power relations in the sector.

The practice the North of Ireland concerning the participation of organisations in funding committees on an advisory capacity would improve relations with funders (Feldman et al, 2005). This would also encourage transparency and openness between funders and the organisations. Similarly, a higher level of participation of funders in the applications process would potentially reduce the conception that this is an adversarial process.

Competition for scarce funding resources creates mistrust and prevents the collaboration amongst organisations. An unequal ability to generate funding reinforces frustration and resentment. For example, migrant-led organisations believe some larger more established Irish NGOs who consequently received funding had poached their ideas. It is believed that a dedicated, stable funding strand for organisations would alleviate this competitiveness and promote co-operation between organisation. . This research report proposes the implementation of the recommendations outlined in the Fitzpatrick Report (2006) to ameliorate this situation. Likewise, stable government funding would allow migrant-led organisations to develop their organisational infrastructure and capacity giving them the opportunity to operate on an equal footing with the Irish NGOs.



Feldman et al (2005) in a North-South comparative research in Ireland noted distinct differences between public funding practices. Most notably the focus on core operational support and organisational development in the North as opposed to the small short term grant system in the South. This policy in the North of stable funding strands is reflective of the community and voluntary sector in general. A marked contrast between funding processes in the North and South is the participation of organisations in funding committees in an advisory capacity. Feldman et al. (2005) contend that this is an important and established practice in the North that contributes to practices of accountability and transparency. However, in the South the inclusion of the intercultural sector itself on funding boards is generally avoided in order to counteract potential 'conflicts of interest'. This process of exclusion of organisations can add to an estimation by some that the funding process is an adversarial experience

The conclusions of this report have determined that inequalities exist for migrant-led organisations and communities in terms of their ability to participate with their Irish counterparts in the sector and in the broader third sector. A number of issues arose in the course of this research that created obstacles to participation for migrants. These include; funding issues, disparate levels of influence between Irish NGOs and migrant-led organisations, formal participation in networks, a lack of informal connections with indigenous Irish people in government and civil society, and localised conceptions of community. Problems with perceptions and trust permeated these issues. In summary, this report recommends the recognition by Pobail of 'culture as community', the implementation of the funding recommendations made by the Fitzpatrick Report, the participation of intercultural organisations on funding advisory committees and greater support from funding bodies with application processes.

### **Contribution of the Study**

It is anticipated that this study will benefit individuals and organisations committed to the participation and inclusion of migrant communities in Irish society. The study will potentially broaden the existing body of research available in Ireland and inform future policy developments in the State and society civil. This research has identified a gap in the literature regarding the relationship between migrant-led organisations and the community and voluntary sector. It has also examined how informal networks in Irish society affect the ability of migrant communities to participate.

### **Limitations of the Research**

The limitations of this study include the constraints in time frame and resources in undertaking research at Masters level. As a result, it is difficult to get an appropriately sized and culturally balanced sample of participants. Also, the researcher is not directly involved in the integration sector and may not have a full overview of that sector. Similarly, the researcher did not have contacts within the organisations and had to rely on recommendations made by other through snowball sampling. Furthermore, the researcher was unable to secure interviews with volunteers and has not gathered valuable insights from this particular group. Therefore, asylum seekers and refugees were not interviewed in the course of this research.



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## Appendix 1

### Informed Consent Form

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. The purpose of this study is to research the types and levels of participation that minority ethnic communities have in the organisations or networks that represent or advocate on their behalf. It is hoped that this study will add to current understanding of how this participation takes place in Ireland. This includes barriers to participation and the steps taken by organisations and networks to facilitate this participation.

The interview will be tape recorded and will last for approximately one hour. All of your information, your name and interview responses will be kept confidential. You are not required to answer the questions and you may pass on any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. At any time you can notify the researcher that you would like to stop the interview and your participation in the study.

If you have any other questions about the study please feel free to ask the researcher.

By signing below you agree that you have read and understood the above information, and would be interested in participating in this study.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix 2 - Sample of Interview Questions

- What does participation mean to you? (Follow-up; being part of things, making decisions, power to influence things)
- Are there barriers to participation for new immigrant communities in your organisation or in the sector, if so could you describe these?
- What steps does your organisation take to support and develop participation?
- Could you briefly describe the main aims and activities of your organisation as well as your role within this organisation? Who initially founded your network/organisation?
- Could you briefly describe the roles of others within your organisation? (For example management, board of directors, paid staff, volunteers)
- What are the roles of members of immigrant communities and how do they participate in your organisation?
- In your opinion what are the advantages for minority/immigrant-led organisations in addressing needs and representing or advocating on behalf of minority groups? Also what are the challenges?
- In your opinion, what are the advantages for advocacy groups **that are not** minority/immigrant-led in addressing the needs and representing or advocating on behalf of minority groups? Also, what are the challenges?
- What are the advantages and challenges to participation in a network?
- Could you describe your main sources of funding and how as an organisation did you secure this funding?
- Are you having problems with funding in this economic climate and are you aware of other organisations having similar problems?
- In your opinion, are there issues with funding that affects minority groups participation?
- Could you describe the relationships between migrant-led organisations and Irish NGOs?
- What is the relationship between the intercultural sector and the Irish third sector particularly in relation to dedicated funding strands for minority ethnic groups?
- If there were aspects of your organisation or sector you could change, what would they be?