



EXPLORING WHY PEOPLE FEEL THE WAY THEY DO ABOUT GARRYOWEN

Background

Garryowen is an established community, located on the southern outskirts of Limerick city. Quite a few Garryowen community members belong to second and third generation families from the area. The Garryowen community is comprised of large urban housing estates with a population of just over 3,300 people (CSO, 2011).

The historical roots of Garryowen centre on local industries such as basket-making, lace production and breweries. These industries remain a source of pride in the area. However, since these industries are no longer in the area, residents largely leave the community to seek employment.

In recent years the area has seen large demographic changes that have been having an impact on the community's sense of itself. Despite the changes and challenges faced by the community, Garryowen maintains a strong sense of community pride, an area that this Citizen Authored Brief provides greater insight into.

What is this brief about?

The research presented in this brief is the result of a Citizen Researcher Training Programme run in collaboration between local residents and researchers from the National University of Ireland Galway, as a part of the 3-Cities Project. The 3-Cities Project focuses on children and youth, older people and people with disabilities and their participation in their communities and cities.

This brief examines the main question identified by the Garryowen Citizen Researcher team: *"Why do people feel the way they do about Garryowen?"* Different perspectives of people living in Garryowen were collected by the Research Team to gain greater insight into the Garryowen community. The research, and this brief, assist in fostering a greater awareness and understanding of what helps children and youth, older people and people with disabilities to participate more in their communities. In the context of a community that has been experiencing change, as is the case of Garryowen in Limerick, this is particularly relevant.

As researchers, we wanted to hear more about different people's opinions of different groups in Garryowen, particularly older and younger people. We also explored topics such as the sense of community pride in Garryowen, how much the community has changed, and how this change shaped people's experiences of living in Garryowen.

The backgrounds and individual profiles of the citizen researchers are diverse, as are their motivations for participating in the research process. A combination of factors motivated local residents to become involved in the training. This included a desire to understand the community through its places and people, and how and why places have developed positively and negatively. Local residents also expressed an interest in acquiring research skills while being involved in a research project. In addition to contributing to the project's focus on collaborating with residents to produce relevant research, there are a number of other important reasons why the 3-Cities Project team wanted to work with citizen researchers. These included: to provide local children and youth, older people and people with disabilities with a direct way to contribute to the research; to promote engagement with community issues at grass-roots level; to help make sure that the 3-Cities Project is relevant to the lives of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities; and to harness the insights of local residents on what it is like to live in their community.

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What the researchers did

The research presented in this brief was developed by three citizen researchers from Garryowen who worked in collaboration with two researchers from the *3-Cities Project*.

The Citizen Researcher Training Programme involved attending three workshops. Workshops covered the main stages of research, from developing a research question, to designing a research study, to collecting data and, finally, to interpreting and reporting what was found. Key issues around how to conduct research in an ethical manner were also covered.

Citizen-Led Research

The citizen-led research presented here is part of a range of research activities conducted by the *3-Cities Project* team in Garryowen¹. The *3-Cities Project* research involved a Collaborative Forum with key community stakeholders and with local children and youth, older people and people with disabilities. Forum participants identified important topics around taking part in the community that ought to be researched. In Garryowen these topics included:

- Exploring the sense of pride in Garryowen
- Exploring change and the impact of processes of change in Garryowen.

In addition to guiding other research activities as a part of the *3-Cities Project* in Garryowen, a primary research question was identified by the citizen researchers, leading to completion of two distinct projects. Firstly, citizen researchers developed and facilitated a community focus group. Secondly, they captured greater insight through the use of a photo survey project in the community.

The *3-Cities* project focuses on Galway, Limerick and Dublin. The project aims to engage in a collaborative process to re-imagine services and communities to maximise participation for children and youth, older people, and people with disabilities in their localities and cities.

Project 1: Focus Group to explore “Why do people feel the way they do about Garryowen?”

The aim of this project emerged principally from an interest among the citizen researchers in gaining greater insight into the community from other groups of people. This could help to reveal different views of the community.

The research took the form of a focus group. The citizen researchers developed the focus group questions and led the group facilitation.

Project 2: Use of photography to explore “Why do people feel the way they do about Garryowen?”

Citizen researchers took photos in order to capture the information needed. When they had taken the photos, they reflected as a group on what the visual data signified. They also discussed how change was represented in the photos (referred to as ‘photo elicitation’ in research).

The citizen researchers used the photos to capture and explore the things that they were proud about in Garryowen and things that they associated with change in the community. This helped them to answer the primary research question.

¹ The *3-Cities Project* includes dedicated focus groups with service providers and residents in the area representing the relevant groups of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities. Other methods entailed discussion of themes in a collaborative forum and in-depth data collection using Service Use and Lifecourse interviewing.



In their own words: what we found out

Project 1: Focus Group

The focus group showed us how much has changed in Garryowen, especially between older people and younger people.

We were able to see how some people have different opinions of Garryowen and how some people want it to get better. We also saw how there are some people who don't share an interest in the community, sometimes resulting in harm to the community.

"I learned things I didn't know. I never really understood things. But now I know more about what Garryowen was like"

(Focus Group Participant)

Through hearing different people's experiences of growing up and living in Garryowen we gained new insights into the community and how it has been shaped.

"There's no storytelling. We don't meet them [older people]; all new people are moving in with their own stories"

(Focus Group Participant)

The focus group showed that the people who took part were interested in the history of Garryowen, yet they didn't know a lot about it. We found out that because there are new people moving into the area and also with some older people passing away, we don't get a chance to hear about or share experiences of Garryowen. The lack of meeting places or events also has an effect on how we share community experiences.

We noticed that there was a difference in a sense of pride from the older people and younger people at the focus group. The older people had more positive memories and this gave them a strong sense of pride compared to the feelings of pride expressed by the young people.

"Older people have a totally different view of Garryowen. They've such a sense of pride of Garryowen. We don't have that community anymore here"

(Focus Group Participant)

Project 2: Use of Photography

To help add context to the focus group, and to look deeper into the research question, we captured the community through photographs.

We took photos that we felt were linked to the idea of why people feel the way they do about Garryowen. We kept in mind the idea of pride and change, which also featured strongly in the focus group.

The material that we collected shows photos that we felt told a story about Garryowen. We selected the photos that we felt honestly represented our own thoughts of Garryowen and that help answer the research question. We have described each of the photos as outlined below:



Figure 1. Front wall of residence, Garryowen.

"Somebody spray-painted 'fuck the law' because the guards took their horses so I think it's such a bad image, like. People walk into Garryowen and they're here to see the church whatever, whatever and they see 'fuck the law' written on the wall. That's a bad image of Garryowen, so I don't like this part of Garryowen people who seem to think it's very funny. It's still there like we still haven't taken it down."

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Figure 2. Geraldine's FC Club House, Garryowen.



"This one of Geraldine's, it's the soccer club but like ... it's so surrounded like you can't get into it or do anything ... it's so closed off except bar a certain time when people are training. So like if they opened something or put something in there that we could go to as well cos it's a nice ground like and it's really central to Garryowen. But ah, yeah if they did something that'd be great cos it's a nice area. It's the nice part like, it's nice, there's a field and everyone knows where it is."

Figure 3. The Shrine, Garryowen.



"The shrine is a very good place; it's a nice image like. It shows the community's very strongly religious. I felt we were focussing too much on the negative when there is positive in Garryowen. There's positive things happening so they should be highlighted really, it shouldn't all just be bad. There isn't all bad things in Garryowen; the shrine is great."

"It should be like that for the well [St. Patrick's Well] but it's not, and I think that's because the well has no protective, anything around it. People are just allowed freely walk in there's no bars, there's just a wall and you can hop over the wall cos the wall's tiny. But this one has a gate, it has railings but not too high that you blocked out, but that people know not to go in. It's just a real nice place, it's pretty, it's clean, it's tidy like, it's a really good contrast to the well, which is not clean, not tidy."

Figure 4. St. Patrick's Well, Garryowen.



"This one is of the Well. The St Patrick's Well down at the very end and it just shows like the vandalism that's on it like, it's awful, it's a pity really. People go in there signing their names thinking they're great but it's actually a holy shrine, you're supposed to have respect for it you know. And it's just awful, it's an eyesore like, to go down there and say oh look lovely well, oh no wait, names! And like inside as well it's coloured and dark; it's rotten. And it's just a pity really that people think it's okay to spray paint there. They broke the cameras so there's no video surveillance there anymore cos they knew they were watching them, so they broke 'em, no point in replacing them; they'll just break them again. It's a waste of money."



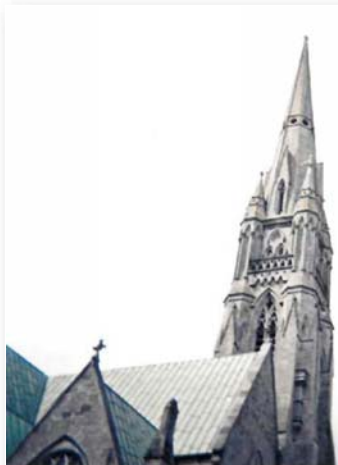
Figure 5. Kilmurry Court, Garryowen.

"This is a gate, beside Kilmurry, it's beside an Alzheimer's Centre, everyone used to always go in there and do loads of bad things there! And people used to climb over the wall into the Alzheimer's place so they had to be closed off, they're there about 2 years. The gate was always there, but there used to be a hole there. It was there so everyone used to go in through the hole. No one goes in there anymore."



Figure 6. St. John's Cathedral, Garryowen.

"The Cathedral and that's not really a bad thing, that's pride. But loads of people still go there, so it's historical and people are proud of it. You can see it from all over Limerick. The saying goes 'If you're ever lost in Limerick then look for the spire.' You can see it for ages."



These photos show places in Garryowen that represent areas of pride, such as the Shrine, St. John's Cathedral and Geraldine's FC. The photos also show the change experienced in Garryowen. Change also featured in our Focus Group. This change is linked to the different experiences of younger people and older people of living in Garryowen. These changes include a lack of services and facilities, particularly for younger people. Changes to the population are reflected too. These have an effect on the history and sense of community.

Figure 7. The Steps, Garryowen.

"They are the steps. No one really goes up there as much as they used to. I was never like allowed up there when I was small because there was so much glass up there and you wouldn't want to meet the wrong person up there. It did get better... I would [feel nervous] when I was young, like not any more. I wouldn't walk up there like, and especially if it was dark!"



The group discussion of these visual materials resulted in a greater awareness of the possibilities for enhancing relationships between generations in Garryowen. A genuine interest in building on and developing such a connection was clear from our research projects. What we have found suggests that a lack of collective interaction is often connected to social divides in the community. Particularly for younger people, there are concerns over safety and not fitting in an urban space marked by social problems such as drug use, under-age drinking and violence.

Figure 8. The Alley, Garryowen.

"The alley next to the shop, beside the track. It's not scary, it's not that dangerous most of the time. We always walk through to get to our nana's house which is like by that field. But you wouldn't want to like go through there at night, I never go through there at night. It used to be really covered in rubbish. Once there was a woman and she used to always change her baby in there cos she had nowhere else to go. There's things thrown into those bushes... People come and drink there, they go to the alley cos they get away with stuff."



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Conclusion and Recommendations

- The community in Garryowen still has a sense of pride, despite facing changes and challenges in the community.
- There is a need to establish a group for young people and older people, which would allow the different age groups to share experiences of the community.
- Community members need to have a venue / facility where they can meet to hear about and learn from different people's experiences.
- Increased community participation is needed to keep Garryowen clean; e.g. working with the Youth Club to focus on regular community clean-ups in areas such as The Well.

Research Team

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Project Lifecourse

The 3-Cities Project marks the first major programme of work undertaken by Project Lifecourse. Project Lifecourse is funded by The Atlantic Philanthropies and represents Ireland's most visible contribution to the growing international field of life course studies by combining and harnessing existing strengths and international networks from across the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre (CFRC), the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology (ICSG), and the Centre for Disability Law and Policy (CDLP).

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