

Rural Restructuring: Local Sustainable Solutions to the Rural Challenge

Caroline Creamer, NIRSA, NUI Maynooth

Dr. Karen Keaveney, Queen's University Belfast

Dr. Brendan O'Keeffe, Mary Immaculate College

Dr. Neale Blair, University of Ulster

John Driscoll, Director, ICLRD

ICLRD Conference, The Blackwater Learning Centre

8th May 2009



INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR
LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Promoting best practices in spatial planning and economic development.

Presentation Outline

1. ICLRD – An Introduction
2. Rural Development: Setting the Context
3. Background to Study
4. The Study
5. Rural Restructuring
6. Potentiality and the Micro-Region



1. The ICLRD

- Dynamic and decentralised network
 - cross-border, cross-campus, cross-disciplinary
- Working together since 2003; Legally incorporated in 2006
- 5 Partner Institutes plus increasing number of affiliates
- An all-island platform
 - capacity building on spatial planning & local and regional development.
- Aims to build strategic planning capacity through:
 - fundamental and applied research
 - fostering collaboration among key stakeholders
 - advising policy-makers and practitioners
 - training public/private sector practitioners in best practice



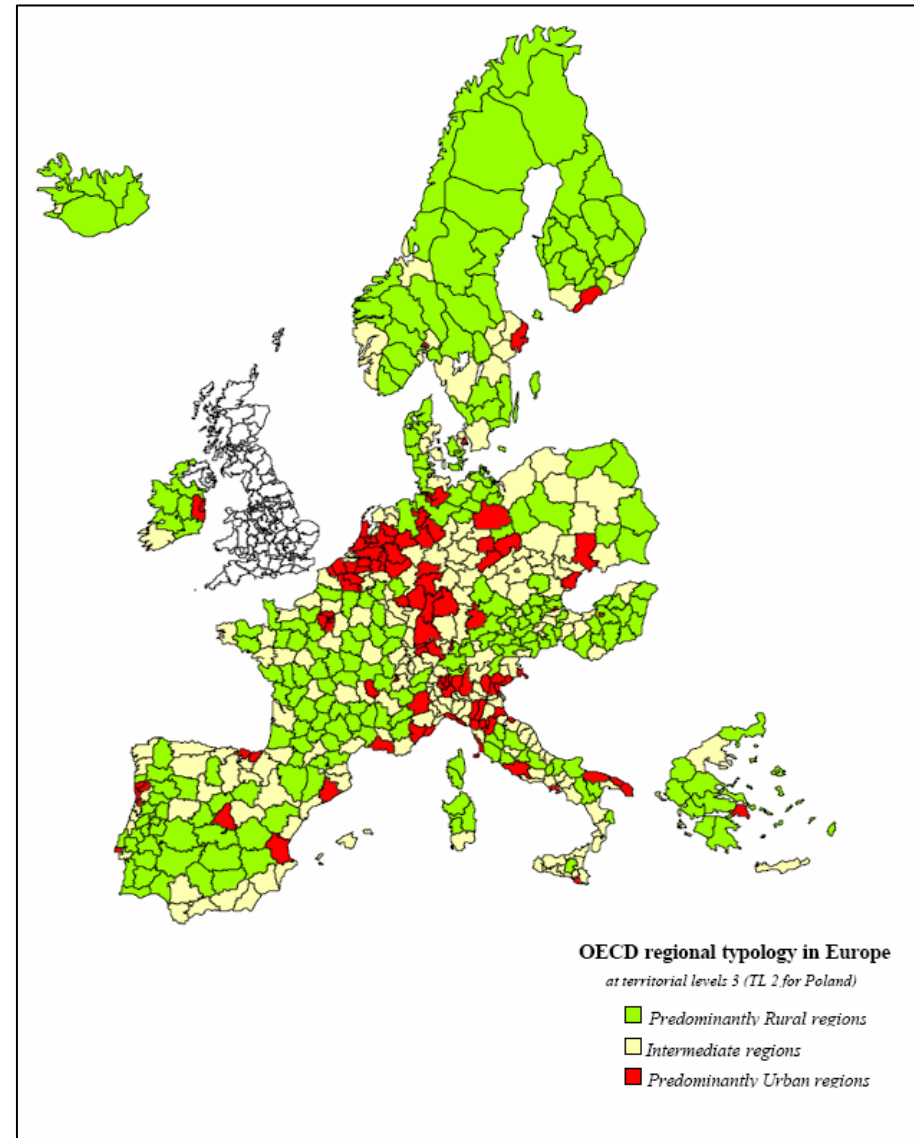
The Partner Institutes

- NUI Maynooth
- University of Ulster
- Centre for Cross Border Studies
- Athlone Institute of Technology
- Institute for International Urban Development



2. Rural Development: European Context

OECD Rural Typology



2. Rural Development: European Context

- Agriculture a core EU Policy since 1950s
 - direct payments to farmers: based on production
- 1980s characterised as time of 'rural crisis'
- Changing policy focus: McSharry Reforms in 1992
 - rural development is no longer co-determinous with agricultural policy
 - promotion economic diversification
 - introduction of LEADER initiative
- Many EU reports on future of the rural in response to the 'rural crisis'
 - EU White Paper *Growth, Competitiveness and Employment: The challenges and ways forward into the 21st Century* (1993)
 - Cork Declaration (1996)
 - *European Spatial Development Perspective* (1999)
 - Lisbon Agenda 2000 (refocused in 2005)
 - Gothenburg Agenda 2001 (now the EU Sustainability Development Strategy)
 - *Community strategic guidelines for rural development*
 - European Territorial Cooperation Agenda 2007-2013
 - Rural Development Programme 2007-2013

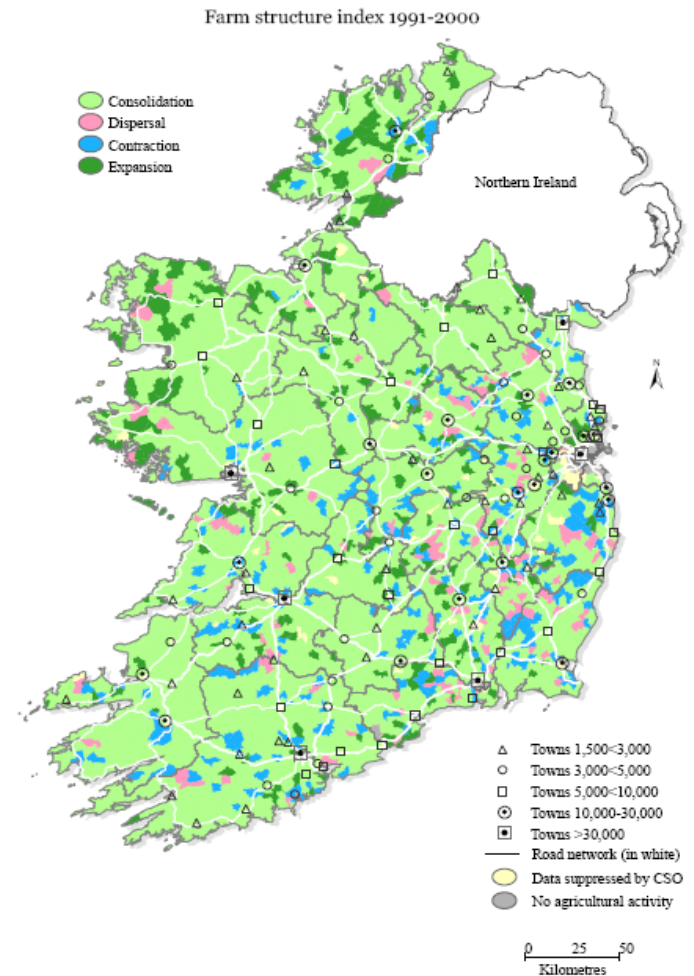
Growing recognition that rural areas – and their balanced development – are an important policy area in their own right



2. Rural Development: Irish Context

- Rural experiencing a wide range of challenges since the early 1980s: a 'rural crisis'
 - decline in agriculture
 - limited no. of other employment options
 - loss of / poor access to services
 - brain drain
 - poor infrastructure (poor connectivity)
 - weak urban fabric
- ESDP feeds into national spatial strategies – RDS & NSS
 - advocate the economic diversification and renewal of villages and dispersed rural communities
- Changing make-up of rural areas
 - no longer homogenous

'How' people live in the countryside is equally as important as 'who' lives in the countryside (ICLRD, 2006).



(Source: Crowley *et al*, 2008)



2. Rural Development: Policy Integration

Community Strategic Guidelines for Rural Development

- Key message:
Emphasis on sustainability and growth and jobs through integrated approaches; this includes
 - increasing competitiveness
 - improving the environment and countryside
 - improving the quality of life in rural areas (incl. diversification, creating employment opportunities)
 - building local capacity (incl. improved governance and endogenous development potential)

Border Midlands West (BMW) Region's Foresight Report, *New Challenges, New Opportunities 2005-2025*

- Key message:
innovative ways need to be found to embrace major global challenges such as the changing prospects of agriculture and rural economies



2. Rural Development: Diversification

Areas in which economic diversification is encouraged:

- SME development
- Tourism
- Childcare
- Cultural heritage
- Environmental protection
- Health care
- Teleworking
- Arts & crafts
- Green economy
- Education, cultural and linguistic development.

Call for high-skill jobs in rural areas

(Source: Irish Times, 23 April 2005)

Long live local stimulus (Source: Irish Times, 24 April 2009)

Government to set up action group for developing green enterprise

(Source: Irish Times, 23 October 2008)

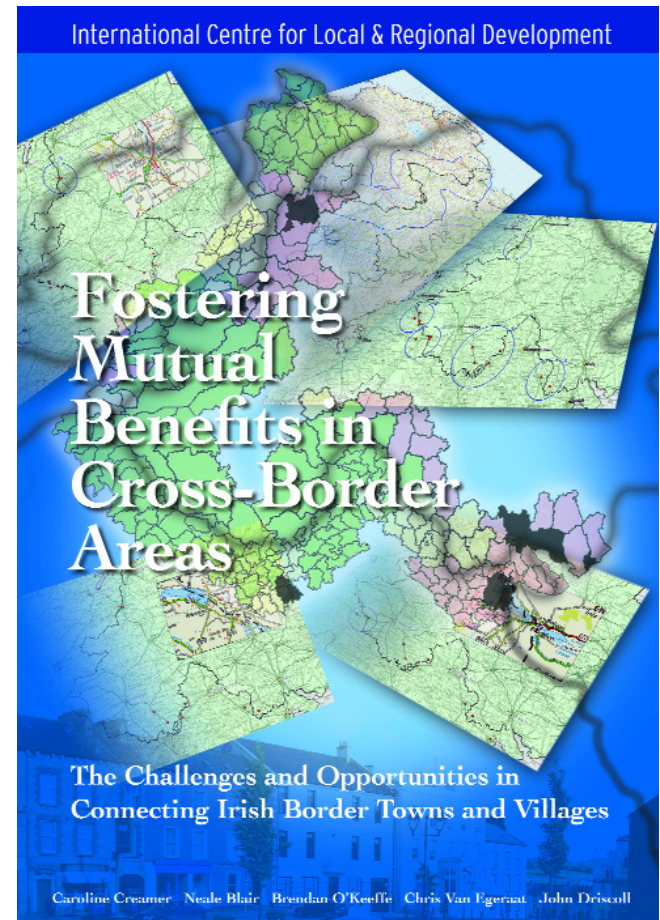
IFA says 8,000 'green collar' jobs possible

(Source: Irish Times, 21 January 2009)



3. Background to ICLRD Study

- Rural regeneration ongoing across the island of Ireland since the onset of the 'rural crisis' in the late 1980s.
- Number of communities successful; others less so.
- Focus on rural restructuring – stemming from findings / recommendations from previous work
- Particularly relevant in this current economic climate



3. Competitive Advantage is Local

The importance of 'local/micro-regions':

“...enduring competitive advantages in a global economy lie increasingly in local things – knowledge, relationships, motivation – that distant rivals cannot match”.

Michael Porter, Harvard Business Review

Nov-Dec 1998.

- More recent commentators noting the contribution of the 'local' to rural economy
 - local branding & marketing using local knowledge (Barnham, 2003)
 - role of networks/ clusters (Porter, 2002, 2004; Steiner & Ali, 2006)
 - new role for rural spaces (Teagasc – e.g. Heneghan)
- Practical examples include PoMo (Finland) and Proder (Spain)
- So what of the island of Ireland context?



3. Study Objectives

With an emphasis on the potentiality of rural areas and asset-based development

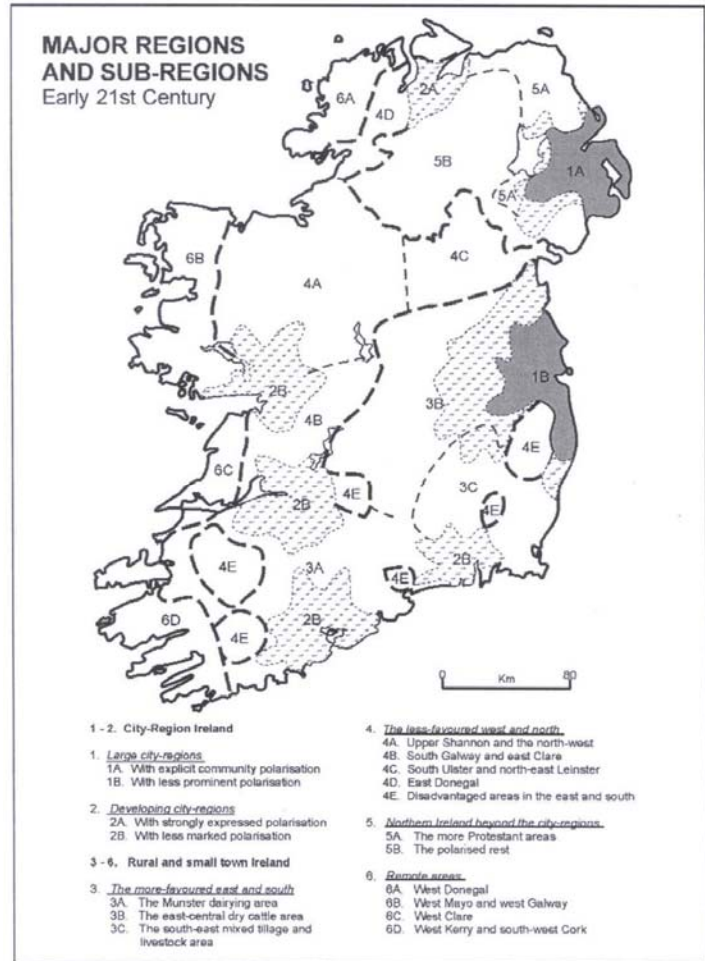
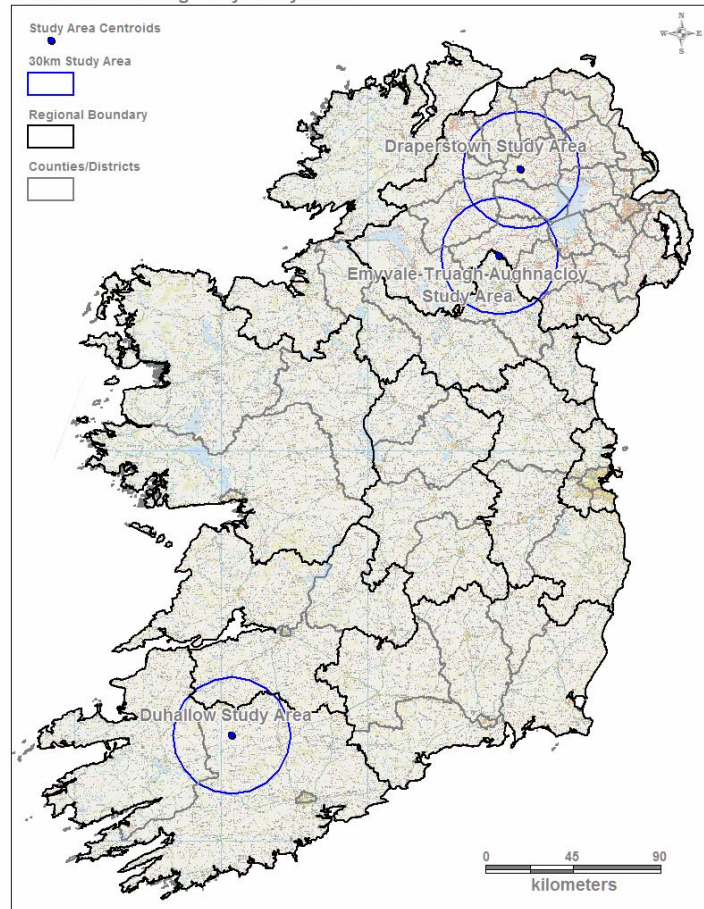
- Determine role of rural restructuring in balanced spatial development
- Determine if the identified challenges to rural restructuring are the same North, South and in the Border region
- Ascertain whether there is a set formula or set of processes for overcoming these barriers / challenges to sustainable rural development
- Examine if the rural development interventions that have taken place to date have impacted positively on wider regional disparities
- Consider potential role for asset-based / local endogenous development in rural restructuring
- Consider if policy harmonisation on a North-South basis would improve opportunities for rural diversification.

Timing of research opportune – coinciding with RDS ‘Review’; NSS ‘Refresh’; and Review of RPGs.



4. The Case Study Area

Rural Restructuring - Key Study Areas



(Source: Horner, 2000)



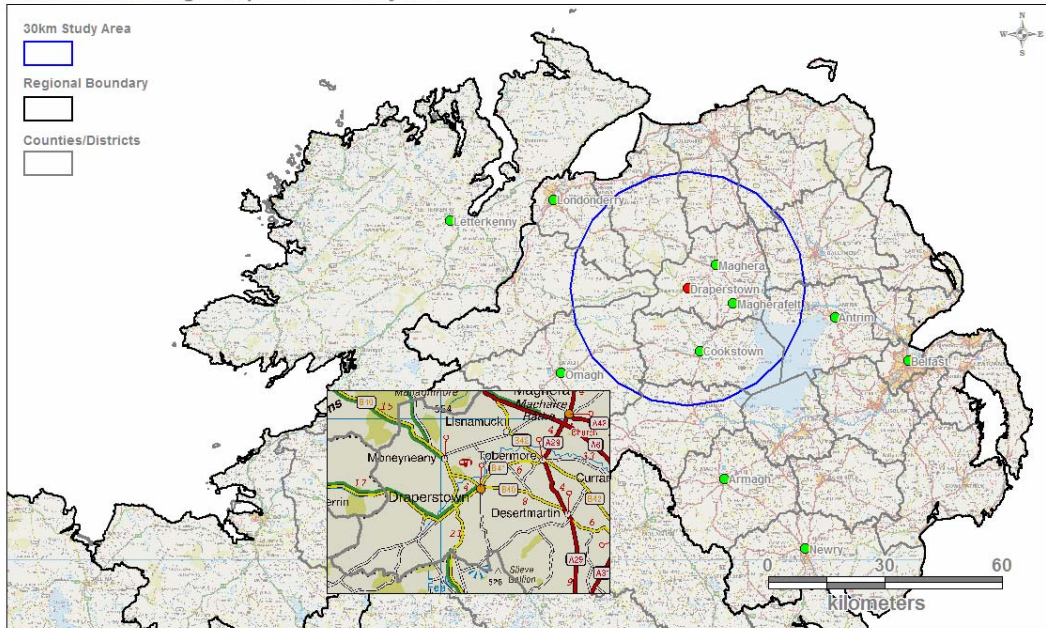
4. The Study: Draperstown

- Area with dependence on agriculture & manufacturing
- 1980s – period of decline
- High unemployment & out-migration

Response

- Emergence of *Workspace*
- Bottom-up approach
- Emphasis on economic-led community development (but also social)
- Supporting micro-scale entrepreneurship
- Endogenous approach – playing to local strengths
- Profits reinvested

Rural Restructuring - Draperstown Study Area



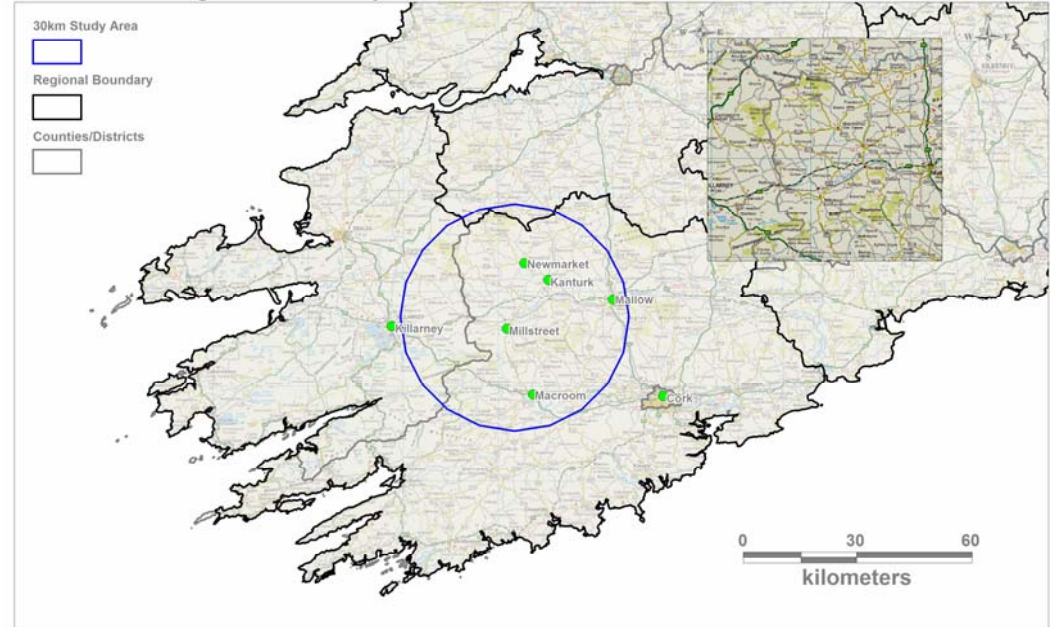
4. The Study: Duhallow

- High dependence on agriculture, manufacturing & construction
- Legacy rural decline – 1970s & 1980s

Response

- IRD Duhallow – LEADER & Local Development Company
- Bottom-up / integrated approach
- Endogenous development – natural resources & cultural heritage
- Emphasis on community development / local ownership
- Importance of funding
- Networked – nationally & internationally

Rural Restructuring - Duhallow Study Area





Rural

Disappointed



Connectivity

**Natural
Landscape**



**Small-scale
Farming**



SMES



**Reliance on
Construction**



INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR
LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Promoting best practices in spatial planning and economic development.

4. Common Emerging Challenges

- **Rural development policy**
 - Potential disconnect between national policy and local needs
- **Approaches to local rural development**
 - Bottom-up partnership approach successful in addressing local challenges
 - But need to clarify thinking on what constitutes rural development (versus supports)
- **The urban-rural relationship**
 - Challenges and opportunities are not all unique to rural areas
 - Common processes occurring in rural and urban areas
- **Local planning policy**
 - Either facilitating economic diversification or acting as a barrier
- **Future sustainability of local-based initiatives**
 - Challenges of funding availability into the future
 - Securing stakeholder buy-in, particularly from the top-down



5. Rural Restructuring

Contemporary rural change is distinguished by two characteristics. The first is pace and persistence of change.... The second is the totality and interconnectivity of change.

(Woods, 2007)

- Need to embrace rural change
- Involves economic restructuring, agricultural restructuring – the diversification into new services

PLUS

Recognition that urban and rural places are interdependent

- challenges are common to urban and rural areas
- town role to play as ‘anchor’ within rural hinterland

- Need to include the rural as an integral element of *Equitable Spatial Development*
- Necessitates *Top-Down Development with Bottom-Up Regeneration*



6. Untapping the Potentiality

Local Asset Base = Countryside Capital

- **Social capital**
 - Address through collaborative working and consensus-building and partnership
 - Need for skills strategy with spatial focus – and based on / addressing local needs
- **Entrepreneurialism**
 - Need to pro-actively promote economic diversification and encourage an entrepreneurial spirit within the community e.g. micro-enterprises (clustering)
 - With adequate supports put in place by central government to support (see below)
- **Knowledge economy**
 - Opportunities for successful development attained through economic diversification
 - Need to **define**, embrace and expand the knowledge economy
 - Not only the *what*, but also the *how*
- **Spatial planning**
 - Growth secured through managed restructuring
 - Will enhance the natural environment and built heritage of rural areas
 - Need for bottom-up approach with top-down framework and supports – requires comprehensive stakeholder involvement rather than selected interests



6. Strategies & Processes for Promoting Sustainable Rural Development

- **An Integrated approach**
 - Quality physical and social infrastructure
 - Invest in social capital
- **Governance**
 - Partnership builds on the integrated approach to development
 - Horizontal and vertical interfacing between the community and statutory sectors
 - Local capacity and territorial integrity
- **Human Resources**
 - Training
 - Development of human capital
- **Networking & Collaboration**
 - Promotion business clusters/networks
 - Well-devised, flexible strategy in place



6. The Micro-Region

- Moving from area-based to inter-locality model
- Using a multi-scalar approach
- Acknowledging natural hinterlands

The concept of the 'Micro-Region' is appropriate as a way to

- (i) identify the importance of local capacity and the identity and territorial integrity of places and communities**
- (ii) approach bottom-up local economic development that can form part of the wider region's growth**
- (iii) 'fit' within national, top-down structures**

•Needing an integrated plan

- with a clear strategy
- structure to reflect strategy



Thank You!

www.iclrd.org



INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR
LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Promoting best practices in spatial planning and economic development.