

# Regions

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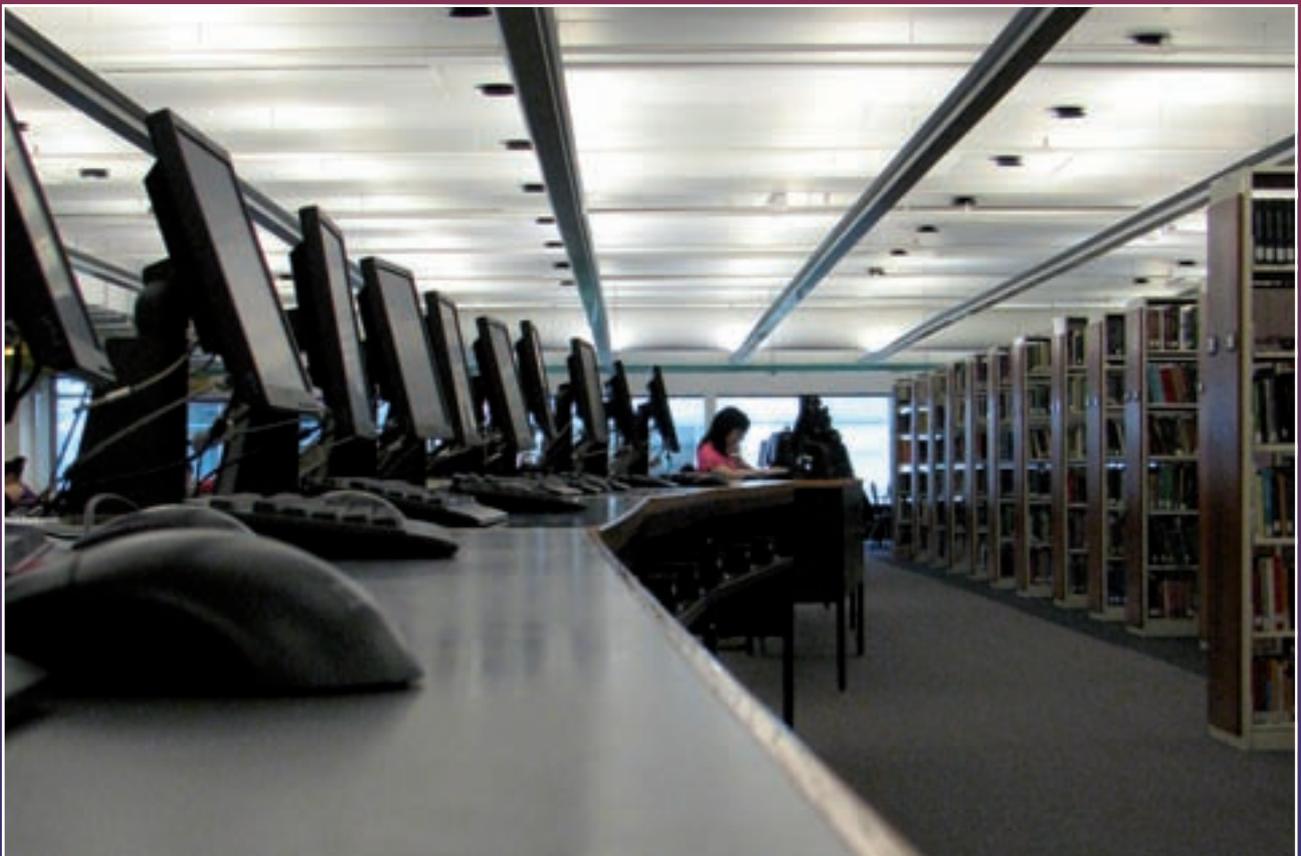
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POLICY AND RESEARCH

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## CITY REGIONS AS INTELLIGENT TERRITORIES: INCLUSION, COMPETITIVENESS AND LEARNING



- Building learning communities in city-regions to capture grass-roots learning processes
- Disseminating learning research to community and policy-maker groups
- Learning arenas in Tampere, Dortmund, Newcastle and Melbourne

## TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF ALL-ISLAND SPATIAL DATABASES

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**The All-Island Spatial Databases Working Group**

The All-Island Spatial Databases Working Group is a working group funded by the Regional Studies Association. The working group was established for the purpose of examining the issues involved in meeting the data requirements of evidence-based collaborative spatial planning on the island of Ireland. The Group comprises members of the RSA (Irish Branch); partners in the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD); associates of both the National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA) and the National Centre for Geocomputation (NCG) based at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth; and the School of the Built Environment, University of Ulster.

The Group hosted two workshops in the first half of 2007 – one at NIRSA and one at the School of the Built Environment. The workshops were attended by 29 and 25 delegates respectively, representing academia, policy-makers, local, regional and central government, and special interest groups. The two workshops had a similar format, starting with a presentation session followed by a discussion session, and both addressed a number of key issues, including: (a) deficiencies in existing common datasets for the island of Ireland; (b) the type, scale and format of potential future key all-island datasets; and (c) the kinds of indicators that might best assist in the development of evidence-based planning.

**Introduction**

In order to deal with the pressures of recent economic and demographic growth, and to provide the basis for balanced regional development, spatial development strategies have been introduced in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland. The Northern Ireland strategy, *Shaping Our Future: the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025* was published in 2001, with the Irish Government's National Spatial Strategy for Ireland (NDP) 2002–2020 appearing the following year.

There are marked similarities between the two strategies in respect of their purposes and guiding principles, as well as their proposed mechanism of spatial development. Reflecting European Spatial Development Perspective principles, both strategies aim to promote spatially balanced, environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive economic growth. The mechanisms or policy options chosen by the two strategies

are also broadly similar, and there is an explicit recognition of the need to take account of the cross-border dimension.

Despite these similarities and consistencies in strategy, there are problems in developing a common or joined-up approach to spatial development. These problems are identified in a recent report on all-island spatial planning (InterTradeIreland, 2006) which sets out a strong case for a collaborative approach, and argues that this can best be achieved by developing a framework to link the two spatial strategies.

One of the key elements of such a framework is identified as a planning research programme, but for such a programme to be successful there is a need for complete, consistent and comparable datasets on key thematic issues. The report's findings have now been taken on board in the Irish Government's NDP 2007–2013, which reaffirms the need for a framework to link spatial planning

North and South, and specifies that:

'the collaborative framework will also be based for the first time on new all-island datasets and thematic mapping which will greatly enhance evidence-based policy and strategic decision-making on an all-island basis' (Government of Ireland, 2007, pp. 98).

**All-Ireland Spatial Planning Framework**

Brendan Bartley (ICLRD/NIRSA), Jim Berry and Neale Blair (both ICLR/University of Ulster) reported that the spatial strategies for the Island of Ireland seek to emulate strategic planning in Europe by:

1. identifying gateways and hubs and their potential links to the EU's economic hotspot, the so-called European Pentagon, as a basis for promoting competitiveness of the country and its regions; and
2. developing horizontal and vertical linkages between regions within the country, as a means of maintaining territorial cohesion.

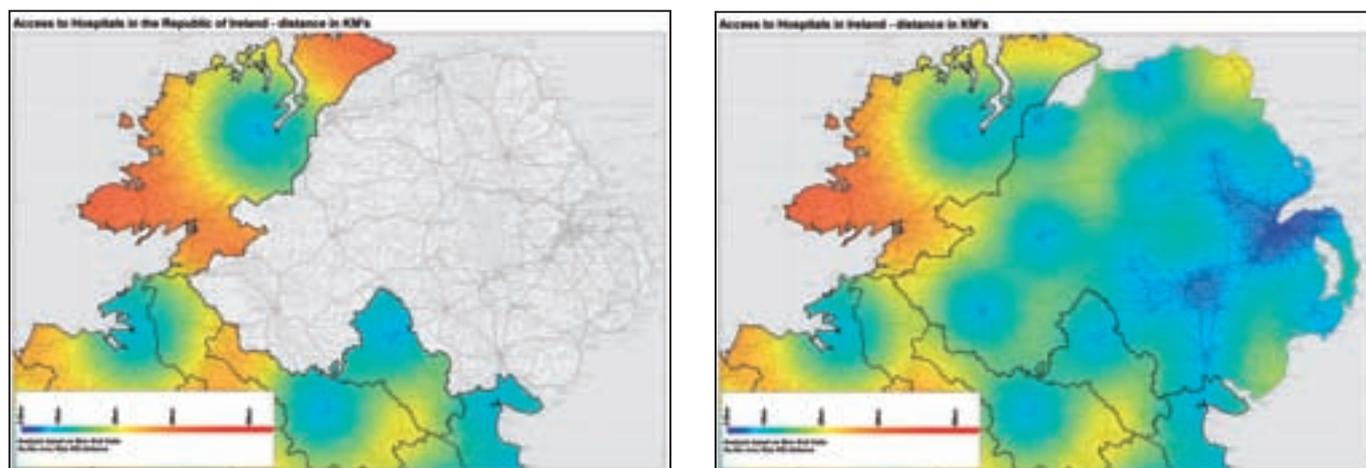


Fig. 1 A cross-border perspective produces a more rounded view of real service provision.

There are clear lessons to be learned from successful examples of regional collaboration throughout Europe that have secured mutual gains for the territories involved. Despite the development of spatial strategies for both jurisdictions, there has been little history of joined-up planning on the island of Ireland to date, and the resultant 'back-to-back' planning continues to have negative implications for competitiveness.

However, a switch to cross-border and all-island collaborative planning is now occurring. Concurrently there is an increasing emphasis on vision planning (as an addition to traditional 'trend planning') and this has raised awareness of the value and importance of evidence-informed decision-making.

The existing spatial strategies provide broad facilitative frameworks for future planning and development, but the onus is now placed on the regions themselves to rise to the challenge of translating these frameworks into envisioned programmes comprised of integrated packages of projects.

In the Republic, the newly published NDP has been closely tied into the National Spatial Strategy (NSS). Also, local authorities are being made increasingly aware that that infrastructure funding and associated development funding from Central Government is dependent on this new approach to planning being pursued.

In the future, local authorities will be rewarded on the basis of their ability to demonstrate consistency with the new planning objectives to 'optimise both local and strategic development poten-

tial' through horizontal integration of local plans within the framework of the prevailing Regional Planning Guidelines that take their lead from the NSS.

Funding will be available for joined-up planning packages but realism and commitment must be demonstrated along with vision, and this can best be verified by solid evidence that supports the planning programme. In effect, this will require the use of appropriate indicators to measure progress and determine linkages – both internal and external.

#### **Illustrating the Technical Challenges – Two Pilot Projects**

Suzanne McLaughlin (Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland) gave an overview of the technical challenges encountered by the MOLAND Spatial Indicators Project. An INTERREG III funded initiative, the Spatial Indicators Project is focusing on existing data and how better use can be made of them in the field of planning, particularly land use planning.

At present the pilot initiative is focussing on Northern Ireland and the Border counties only. MOLAND consists of a land use reference database and ancillary data sets for a common reference year (2000) for both Northern Ireland and the Border Counties.

As well as these data sets, MOLAND uses a modelling tool to explore the consequences of spatial planning and policy decisions, and to monitor and assess where development in urban areas is likely to take place. It is possible that this could provide a helpful platform for preparation of joined-up studies in relation to spatial queries that transcend the geographical limitations of the border.

Issues that need to be taken into consideration when using particular datasets on a cross-border basis include: availability, compatibility, reliability, differing administrative boundaries and planning zones, etc. While a number of these issues can be overcome, there is considerable work involved in this at present.

#### **An illustration of the importance of using all-island data**

Justin Gleeson (ICLRD and NIRSA) discussed some of the challenges in developing one of first cross-border spatial datasets. The Regional Research Observatory (RRO) has also been funded under INTERREG III and has been concerned with the development of an extensive and



*Spatial planning on an island requires understanding the cross-border context.*

reliable databank for the Border counties and the island of Ireland.

The RRO is not intended to be a forecasting or modelling tool like the MOLAND Spatial Indicators Project. Instead, its focus is the development of a profiling toolkit by constructing a quality assured cross-border and all-island spatial databank that is as comprehensive and accessible as possible.

It is anticipated that the RRO will provide spatial planning indicators and a wide array of ancillary data including for various administrative boundaries. There are a number of difficulties that must be addressed in order to generate accurate and reliable all-island datasets, including the different spatial scales at which small area data are made available, different definitions and categorisations of key variables, data synchronicity and continuity.

To date the RRO has merged together a series of all-island datasets based on census data from 2001/02. These datasets have been developed on a 'best-fit' basis, which is a necessary initial step in the development of an accurate and dependable all-island dataset.

#### **Priority Indicators for Spatial Planning in the Republic of Ireland**

For many delegates the presentation of Bruce McCormack (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Republic of Ireland) functioned as timely warning regarding the impending EU Spatial Data Infrastructure Directive. This Directive is to be put into national law within two years and to be implemented by 2018.

The Directive sets standards on how 34 types of data should be collected and, in so doing, it aims to assist in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of environmental and other policies. It will result in a large amount of spatial data which can be seamlessly integrated across the whole of Europe.

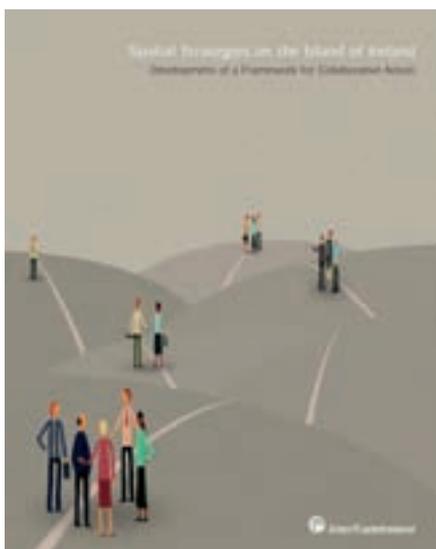


Fig. 2 The report on all Ireland spatial planning.

However, to ensure quality control of the data, the standards set will be rigorously enforced, and only certain data providers will be permitted to upload data to the system. INSPIRE will establish network services to enable the data to be found, accessed and used.

A critical message is that from now onwards researchers and others who collect data should structure the data in ways which are compatible with the emerging INSPIRE standards. In effect, 'if you are not INSPIRE-compatible, you are out'.

As regards data and indicators, the Department is currently in the process of developing a monitoring system for the National Spatial Strategy that will be compatible with the system for the NDP. The idea is to work towards a relatively small number of indicators in which the Department is particularly interested for monitoring purposes. In this respect Bruce discussed his own ideas regarding a list of 14 key data types.

### **Priority Indicators for Spatial Planning in Northern Ireland**

Jim Hetherington and Stephanie Harcourt (Department for Regional Development Northern Ireland) presented ideas on the data priorities in support of all-island spatial planning, from a Northern Ireland perspective. Inspired by the ESDP, the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland (RDS) was the first spatial strategy produced in the two jurisdictions (2001).

One of the challenges was to integrate the planning functions that are distributed over three government departments and deliver joined-up government. The document includes 34 objectives, and in order to monitor the actions designed to deliver these objectives the department came up with 111 indicators, with an additional 15 'Critical Threshold Indicators' that were used for an annual monitoring report.

Five years on, the main lesson is that policy must drive the selection of indicators. In addition, it is important to realise that indicators have different functions including: measuring comparative

spatial performance; managing development; informing policy; appraising and evaluating policy; and monitoring policy outcomes.

The Department for Regional Development recognise scope for strengthening the last area. Recent experience has also demonstrated the benefit of close working relations between planning departments and organisations responsible for data collection.

In relation to the cross-border dimension, a number of comparative indicators were suggested and discussed. The challenges involved in developing indicators for cross-border spatial planning were illustrated through an analysis of the 15 critical threshold indicators. Only 5 of the 15 are directly comparable and have compatible datasets in the two jurisdictions. The 10 other cases potentially pose major problems.

### **Towards an Agreed Set of Priority Indicators**

The lively discussion sessions addressed two main issues: the need for new indicators to inform spatial planning and the challenges involved in developing all-island datasets. As regards the first issue, it is now widely accepted that planning indicators are an integral part of evidence-based policy-making and vision planning. One of the challenges is to identify the most useful set of priority indicators for these purposes.

Following a general discussion on this topic at the first workshop, delegates forwarded their ideas about priority indicators to support cross-border spatial planning. These ideas were combined and categorised in a summary list of 168 potential indicators which formed the basis of the discussion during the second workshop.

Here, the delegates were divided into sub-groups to discuss ideas regarding priority indicators in three domains: economic, environmental and social. The groups reported back during a general discussion, resulting in an initial list of 47 variables. In addition, information regarding availability was recorded for each variable.

The working group is currently in the

process of structuring the initial list and gathering further information regarding the availability of data. The finalised list of variables that may serve as priority indicators will be presented during the final conference (see below).

As regards the technical data issues, apart from the obvious gaps and errors in existing datasets, one of the biggest challenges facing the development of comparable and compatible datasets will prove to be to agree on common definitions for variables/indicators. This applies at all spatial scales – local, regional, national, transnational.

Another issue concerns the geographical units for which data, particularly census data, are made available. In the North, the smallest scale area is the Output Area (OA). The equivalent area in the South is the Electoral Area (EA), but data are not normally and routinely made available for these units. In addition, the EA boundaries are drawn up for convenience in conducting the census, and so they change for one census to the next.

It was argued, therefore, that a new sub-level for analysis, equivalent to the OA, is needed in the South, as the existing alternative boundaries, Electoral Divisions (EDs), are inappropriate for local level analysis. However, it was also pointed out that different output or reporting areas are needed for different purposes, and so an even better solution, wherever possible, would be to produce point-coded data (using grid references) as this would allow complete flexibility for aggregation up to larger scales.

Moving on, one thing that has become clear from the various pilot cross-border data initiatives is that there will be a need for leadership or 'championing' of the development of all-island spatial databases. One possibility mooted was that of the RRO, through its links with NIRSA and the National Centre for Geocomputation (NCG) at NUI Maynooth and beyond, taking on this role. In the meantime the All-Island Spatial Databases Working Group is organising a final conference for the last quarter of 2007.

## **Bibliography**

Details of this conference as well as workshop proceedings and presentations can be accessed on the websites of the RSA- Irish Branch ([www.regionalstudies.ie](http://www.regionalstudies.ie)) and the ICLRD (<http://www.iclrd.org>). Further information on the INSPIRE Directive is available at <http://inspire.jrc.it/>  
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# Regions

THE VOICE OF THE MEMBERSHIP



A central problem for policymakers concerned with urban policy, competitiveness, social exclusion and even sustainability, is what kind of role can cities play in a knowledge-based economy, how can learning be fostered to enhance the fortunes of a city and its city-region, and can we develop models of collective learning that help to address the wider economic and social problems faced by cities?

Across Europe city administrations are identifying knowledge based development as the main plank of economic regeneration, yet there are often severe disjunctions between the knowledge base of the city and the disadvantaged, and increasingly those employed in the knowledge industries are leaving inner urban areas, further increasing polarisation. The policy response is to try to combine strategies to attract additional investment in knowledge intensive activities, with learning strategies targeted at a variety of groups within the city, ranging from small businesses to socially excluded inner city communities.

In this survey, we report the findings from a European Fifth Framework funded project, CRITICAL (City-Regions as Intelligent Territories: Inclusion, Competitiveness & Learning) which explored how cities became the places where people learned, what those people learned about, who was involved in learning and why learning processes were more or less successful. We begin by presenting an outline of the project and the team involved, and the conceptual framework developed within this project. We then present findings from four of the study regions, Melbourne, Tampere, Newcastle and Dortmund, and then explain our dissemination methodology and our findings for policy-makers.



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