

International Centre for Local and Regional Development

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**Achieving Balanced Regional Development: Dynamic  
Regions, Spatial Strategies and Collaboration  
Report of Fourth Annual Conference**

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22-23 January 2009, Radisson SAS Hotel, Letterkenny

“Most regions must now compete at a global level for growth and investment. What is required is a new way of looking at how we develop, particularly in the short term. It is a challenge to plan for the future in a way which will allow us to compete internationally”.

- ***Minister Conor Murphy MP MLA, Department for Regional Development, Northern Ireland***

“The reality we must all face is that we are operating within an all-island economy and so we have to start thinking in those terms. We are stronger when we work together - we can achieve more through collaboration than competition”.

- ***Minister Michael Kitt, Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government, Ireland***

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## PART I: INTRODUCTION

This year's conference theme was *Achieving Balanced Regional Development: Dynamic Regions, Spatial Strategies and Collaboration*. It considered the impact of spatial strategies and designated growth centres - such as Gateways - on balanced regional and local development.

Attended by 130 delegates representing government departments, regional development agencies, local planning authorities, private consultants, academics, cross-border networks, border communities and locally elected officials, the fourth annual ICLRD conference reinforced the importance of local and regional development to the economic, social, cultural and environmental growth of the island of Ireland. There is growing support for, and recognition of the mutual benefits of, all-island collaboration; and, in line with this, in developing and supporting the growth of dynamic regions.



### ACHIEVING BALANCED REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT: DYNAMIC REGIONS, SPATIAL STRATEGIES AND COLLABORATION



Both spatial strategies on the island of Ireland are currently being 'reviewed' or 'refreshed' and this conference offered an opportunity to learn more about emerging collaboration between the two strategies and jurisdictions. Day 1 focused on the potential learning emerging from: EU territorial cohesion policies and

international experiences from the State of Maryland and Germany to encourage balanced regional growth; and on spatial planning experiences of neighbouring administrations – namely Scotland, Wales and England.



Day 2 considered the concept of the designated gateways; including those that cross borders and jurisdictions – the Northwest Gateway, the Newry-Dundalk Twin City, the Atlantic Gateway and the Cork Gateway. Furthermore, the Department for Regional Development, Northern Ireland and the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government, Ireland discussed the opportunities that are emerging for inter-jurisdictional cooperation and the role of gateways and regions within and between the respective spatial strategies.

## ICLRD and InterTradeIreland - Who we are

The International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) is a North-South-U.S. partnership which was established to explore and expand the contribution that spatial planning and the development of physical, social and economic infrastructures can make to improve the lives of people on the island of Ireland and elsewhere. The ICLRD has developed out of a unique collaboration between academics and spatial planning specialists from the National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA) at National University of Ireland Maynooth, the School of the Built Environment at University of Ulster, Athlone Institute of

Technology, the Centre for Cross-Border Studies in Armagh, and the Institute for International Urban Development in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

InterTradelreland, the Trade and Business Development Body, is one of the six North-South bodies established under the 1998 Belfast Agreement. By building effective business relationships, it helps strengthen individual businesses and promotes the value of growth sectors to make the island of Ireland more competitive in a global economy. Its key strategic objective is to enhance the global competitiveness of the all-island economy to the mutual benefit of both jurisdictions. This is to be achieved through the creation of knowledge-intensive all-island trade and business development programmes.

The ICLRD is pleased to continue its collaboration with InterTradelreland, with its sponsorship of the Day 2's session on *Achieving Balanced Regional Development - Learning from Each Other*.



*The ICLRD Partners and Associates*

## **PART II: COLLABORATIVE FRAMEWORKS AND SPATIAL STRATEGIES – EU AND US PERSPECTIVES**

In welcoming delegates to the North-West of the island of Ireland, **Mr. Feargal McCormack**, Chairman of the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD), noted that there are a number of cross-border policy initiatives that are due to be launched in the coming months; namely the non-statutory all-island collaborative framework for spatial planning, the Northwest Gateway Initiative

and an ICLRD report on the Newry-Dundalk Twin City Region. The launching of these three-initiatives will represent significant milestones in cross-border and regional cooperation on the island of Ireland.

Chaired by **Professor Peter Roberts**, Professor of Sustainable Spatial Development, Leeds University, this opening session of the conference focused on the issue of collaborative frameworks and spatial strategies, with a particular emphasis on experiences and perspectives from the E.U. and U.S.



The first speaker of the day, **Mr. Gabor Novotny**, DG Regio: Urban Development & Territorial Cohesion, European Commission outlined the motives behind the preparation and publication of the *Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion*

and why, for a number of member states (incl. Ireland), territorial cohesion has become equated with balanced regional development. He noted that territorial cohesion has the potential to lead to the harmonious development of new geographies – varying regions with distinct settlement patterns – while, at the same time, addressing issues of accessibility and peripherality. Increasingly, the territorial impacts of the sectoral policies of member states within the E.U. will have to be considered in more depth – including, is there a need for better and more cooperation? if so, who should be involved? how can access to services be improved? and what implications has this for the urban-rural relationship?

Within the U.S., it is at state level that land-use issues are considered. The State of Maryland, for example, consists of 23 counties and 157 municipalities. In 1997, the State introduced smart growth policies



which, as outlined by **Professor Gerrit Knapp**, Executive Director, National Center for Smart Growth, University of Maryland, covered priority funding areas, rural legacies, brownfield developments and job creation. The package was incentive-led rather than regulation-based. When first introduced, the policies generated a lot of excitement; with the Kennedy School, Harvard University declaring it an innovative programme. However, research by the National Center for Smart Growth in 2000 has found that the scheme was not operating as well as it should have been; that a lot of development was still taking place outside of the designated priority areas. This demonstrates the tensions that can exist between state and local policy – irrespective of the innovativeness of that policy – and the on-going challenge of implementing policies as was originally envisaged – in this case, targeting development to specific areas.

Returning to Europe, **Dr. Rupert Kawka**, Project Coordinator, Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning, Germany spoke of the spatial disparities that exist throughout Germany – particularly along an East/West divide. He posed the question: is balanced development possible at a regional level? It was suggested that going forward, there would need to be a compromise between growth and regional balance and that urban-rural

partnerships would play a key role in the achievement of balanced development.

It is not only larger urban centres that have specific / key functions to play but rather there is a role for settlements of varying sizes.



Rural growth areas in Germany, for example, which are mainly located in the west of Germany, make a strong contribution to national growth. Supra-regional partnerships are being piloted; with one such partnership involving 30 projects across 7 regions. Such partnerships are created by the regions themselves (bottom-up with an emphasis on mutual responsibility) and are examples of theory and practice coming together successfully. They have led to the formation of transport corridors, regional chains of added-value, and regional identities. Furthermore, it has generated a data-base of evidence which can, going forward, be used to establish regional plans and support cross-border cooperation.



Attention then turned to the experiences of the UK administrations. **Mr. Grant Duncan**, Head – Sustainable Futures Division, Strategic Policy Unit, Welsh Assembly Government, noted the many challenges facing Wales: these included a

large number of small settlements, climate change and the perception of peripherality. Unlike its counterparts, spatial planning in Wales is overseen by the Minister for Finance who, in turn, is updated regularly on various themes (such as health) by Spatial Plan Ministers for each sub-region. In addition, and recognising that people do not live their lives by boundaries, spatial mapping is based on ‘fuzzy boundaries’ that are under-pinned by data and which link areas of need with areas of opportunity. Spatial planning for Wales is, therefore, directed by the principle of integration; whereby spatial plans are linked to community strategies.



In Scotland, the issues of space and territory are central to spatial planning; with Scotland having a wonderful selection of ‘spaces’.

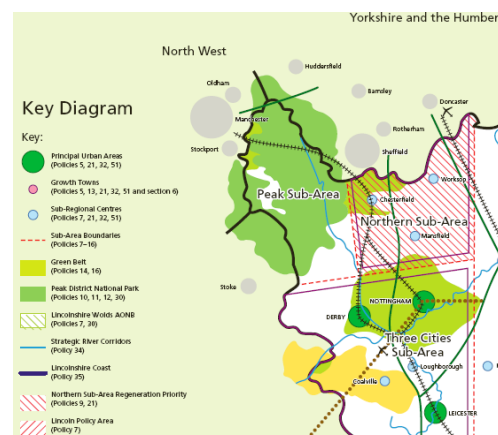
**Mr. Jim McKinnon**, Director for the Built Environment,

Scottish Executive noted that there has been a generational change in thinking around planning: in the 1950s emphasis was on employment while today, emphasis is on finding the right place to live.

Key issues today include housing provision (location of supply v. demand), IT, climate change and encouraging greater engagement by the business community in all spatial matters. It is increasingly being recognised that spatial planning must respect culture and where people actually want to live. There is, according to Mr. McKinnon, a fine balance between vision and hallucination! The challenges being faced by the various administrations are becoming more acute and all spatial plans, irrespective of scale, must respond to these trials.



**Mr. Steve Quartermain**, Chief Planning Officer, Department for Communities and Local Government noted that England is divided into nine regions, with each having its own spatial framework. These frameworks, in turn, guide the preparation of local development plans – thus ensuring there is alignment between spatial plans and community strategies. As with Wales and Scotland, the challenges facing England going forward include climate change, housing distribution versus need, access to services and employment. In the current economic climate, there will be greater onus on spatial frameworks to be flexible so that they can adapt to changing regional and local needs. To facilitate this, increasing focus is being placed on the delivery of plans through multi-area agreements and local area agreements.



*From Quartermain’s “Spatial Planning in England”*

In recapping on the proceedings of this initial session, **Professor Peter Roberts** concluded that the spatial planning

agenda, and the challenges and opportunities it is responding to, are continuously changing. The principle of subsidiarity is growing in importance and relevance – in line with the increasing need for clarity on what can be achieved and the growing emphasis being placed on the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of social and economic development programmes. Both policy-makers and practitioners must continue to ‘keep their eye on the ball’; thus enhancing quality of life for all citizens of our cities, towns, villages and countryside.

### Questions and Answers

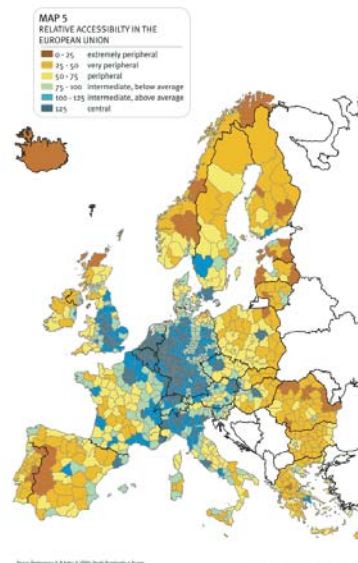
**Professor Michael Cuddy**, NUI Galway emphasised the growing need to refocus on the objectives of spatial planning and questioned if it were possible to implement cohesive policies at the local / micro-level. He noted that while Germany has been successful in implementing and promoting the concept of ‘functional regions’, Ireland has singularly failed at bringing about a strategic spatial plan. While the *National Spatial Strategy* (NSS) has now been in place for six years, it has not been, in his opinion, implemented – and without such a balanced development base, functional regions will not be achievable in Ireland.

**Professor Cliff Hague**, Heriot-Watt University (Edinburgh) asked how important would euro-benchmarking be to the process of developing functional regions?

Continuing on the theme of functional regions, **Cllr. Stephen Huggett**, Fermanagh District Council asked are constitutional boundaries a problem when developing functional regions?

Responding to these initial comments and questions, **Dr. Rupert Kawka** noted that developing the concept of functional regions in Germany is a joint project

between state and federal governments; without state support, such an initiative would not be possible.



*From Mackinnon's "Spatial Planning at the National Level: Scotland's Experience"*

The boundaries put in place are evidence-based (using commuter catchment areas for example) – rather than random lines on a map; they are metropolitan regions. Eleven such metro-regions have been designated in Germany – and often the boundaries of these functional areas go beyond the state. Building on this, **Mr. Grant Duncan** noted that fuzzy boundaries can be difficult to administer and, as a result, it is essential that positive dialogue takes place between and across administrative scales. Cohesion cannot be achieved from the top-down according to **Mr. Gabor Novotny**; rather the bottom-up approach is essential – and this is recognised and supported by the European Commission. The challenge arises from the fact that implementation is more difficult than the vision. In the case of Scotland, for example, **Mr. Jim McKinnon** noted that balanced development is very difficult to achieve – this is largely due to the nature of the landscape rather than any issue with the policies in place. Benchmarking is, therefore, important in working towards



the achievement of balanced regional development – but only if it has a focus and purpose. We must be clear about what we are benchmarking; and of course, where spatial planning sits within this.

In drawing the Q&A session to a close, **Mr. Steve Quartermain** noted that we shouldn't be preparing city-region or functional-region plans; but rather we should be engaging in city-region or functional region planning!

### **PART III: COLLABORATIVE FRAMEWORKS AND SPATIAL STRATEGIES – AN ALL-ISLAND PERSPECTIVE**

Chaired by **Mr. Andy Pollak**, Director, Centre for Cross Border Studies, this session turns its attention to collaborative frameworks and spatial strategies for the island of Ireland. In the context of the changing economic climate – not only on the island of Ireland but globally – it is becoming of increasing importance that both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland collaborate on a wider range of issues.



Emphasising this point further, **Minister Michael Kitt**, Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) noted that the size of the island could be a disadvantage but it also has the potential to operate to the advantage of all. Being a small island allows for flexible and adaptable responses to be applied to the challenges faced. The growing emphasis on evidence-informed development

provides a sound basis for future development; and through spatial planning, there is growing emphasis on the need for a shared vision. This in turn translates into the promotion of collaboration over competition. And this is why the non-statutory Framework for Collaborative Spatial Strategies is so important. In line with the preparation of the Framework, the *National Spatial Strategy* (NSS) for Ireland is being 'refreshed' and the *Regional Planning Guidelines* (RPGs) are being reviewed.

Successful countries and regions have competitive cities at their core; lying behind which are strong rural environs. In the context of Ireland, the development of our rural hinterlands is recognised as playing a key role in supporting the growth of our towns and cities – and this will be reflected in the NSS 'refresh'.

An interesting scheme amidst these various reviews is the Developing Areas Initiative under which 48 areas under development pressure have been identified and will be targeted for investment. This investment will focus on both hard and soft infrastructures and the timescale for their provision is currently being decided. Such positive developments and interactions between various stakeholders provide a shared and agreed approach to local and regional development; it further embeds collaboration and coordination for the good of the regions, as well as both jurisdictions and the overall growth of the island's economy.

**Minister Conor Murphy**, Department for Regional Development (DRD) reported that over the past twelve months, both departments (DRD and DoEHLG) have been working together to ensure joined-up spatial planning going forward. The joint Framework, when published, will look at the island and its sub-regions in their entirety (rather than adhering to the tradition of back-to-back development).

The Framework is centred around 14 interconnected themes – including spatial planning and tourism – and considers the growth of the island not only on a North-South and East-West basis but also in a European context.



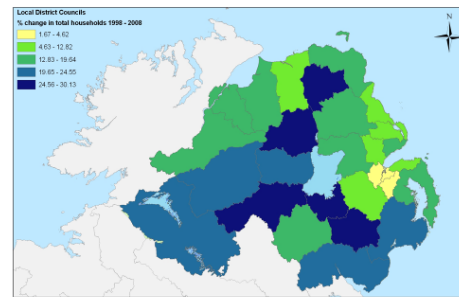
On a cross-border basis, the North West Gateway Initiative and the Newry-Dundalk Twin City Project are leading the way to making cross-border policy development and planning more effective; of finding better ways to implement development through co-operation; and to identifying infrastructure and investment gaps for priority action.

In parallel with the preparation of the Framework document, a major review of the *Regional Development Strategy* (RDS) has commenced. This provides a unique opportunity to adapt to the changing needs of the region; the focus of the review including economic development and its drivers, rural development (incl. border areas), and spatial development (both North/South and East/West). The review of the RDS is being driven by an evidence base that will demonstrate trends and issues; for example a regional audit of people and skills.

Northern Ireland is a small region of about 1.75 million people competing in a global economy. And while its cities are small by international standards, its population is increasing and is youthful and vibrant with much to contribute to this society now and in the future.

But, in some respects, Northern Ireland still has much to improve on. While basic reading, maths, and scientific literacy are on a par with or about the OECD average, 24% of working age people in the region has no qualifications.

The various strategies referred to have a role to play in building on this region's strengths and addressing its deficits. Through such strategies, we need a clear high level vision for Northern Ireland, while at the same time recognising the need for all-Island collaboration; particularly in terms of spatial planning which can enable change rather than constrain it.



Source: Compiled from Northern Ireland Housing Statistics - Department for Social Development

From Thompson's "Review of the RDS"

### Questions and Answers

In the final Q&A session of Day 1, all speakers from the afternoon sessions were invited to take a seat on the panel by Mr. Andy Pollak. Questions were then invited from the floor on all issues covered in the afternoon's proceedings.

**Ms. Linda Andersson**, Skane (Sweden) asked both government Ministers to comment on the extent to which issues such as tax and currency differentials have been taken into account in preparing the all-island Framework.

In response, both **Minister Murphy and Kitt** noted that the practicalities of the border has meant that the Irish Border region has suffered heavily in the past but

both jurisdictions are now working closely together to address this. An ongoing challenge is that Northern Ireland does not have control over its own tax affairs; this is still administered through Westminster. Despite this, there has been great cooperation around the areas of agriculture, education, trade union movements and energy. And there are clear intentions to build on this going forward. **Mr. Andy Pollak** noted that there is a strong case to be made for developing a fully functional all-island economy. And in this regard, the island of Ireland could learn from the experiences of the Oresund region; in particular the Oresund University Network.



Concerns were raised that a lot of emphasis is being put by both governments on the Newry-Dundalk corridor and the Northwest. Yet there is a whole other border sub-region in need of attention – the central border area. Both **Cllr. Pat Treanor** and **Fr. Sean Nolan** – both from County Monaghan – listed many of the losses suffered by the central border area in the past forty or so years – infrastructure disinvestment, loss of inward investment, closure of hospitals and other services, etc.

Acknowledging the plight of border communities and the previous imbalances in regional development, both **Minister Murphy and Kitt** highlighted that things are changing; that investment is being targeted at the central border area (for example, the upgrade and realignment of the N2-A5, Monaghan-Derry road; investment in the designated hub towns) but that it will take time for this sub-region to catch up with the others. The support of the E.U., and more recently Public-Private-Partnerships (PPPs), in facilitating large-scale infrastructure projects over the past decade was acknowledged. However, in the current economic climate, and in the attempts to shift PPPs from road infrastructure projects only to include programmes related to health and education service provision, it is becoming increasingly difficult to establish such partnerships. And this is putting increasing strain on already stretched exchequer funds.



From Thompson’s “Review of the RDS”

**Mr. Gerard McGivern**, Newry & Mourne District Council asked the panel if they had any suggestions as to how the private sector could be persuaded to engage more in the spatial planning debate. He asked if it was reasonable to be speaking of integrating economic, spatial and community planning in the absence of private sector buy-in?

In response, **Mr. Grant Duncan** noted that for the private sector, opportunity cost and timing are important factors that influence engagement or not. Also, the private sector is a diverse sector – and the challenge for the community and public sectors is knowing who to speak to on specific projects. **Mr. Steve Quartermain** also noted the importance of trying to get the privatised utility companies involved. **Mr. Jim McKinnon** stated that before contacting the private sector, one should be very clear on what questions they want answered. Once this has been determined, the most effective way of engaging with the private sector is through breakfast meetings.

**Ms. Ann Doherty** asked the panel if they had any suggestions as to how the decline of population from large cities, such as Belfast, can be most effectively addressed?

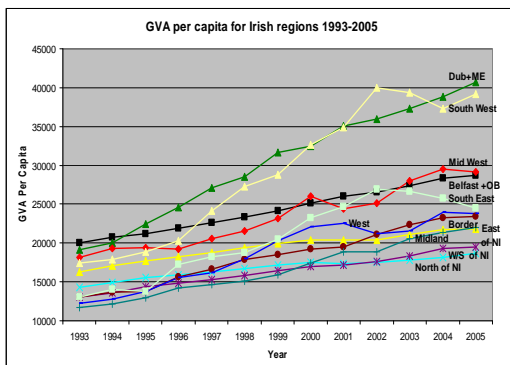
**Minister Conor Murphy** noted that as the driver for the North, Belfast city must remain a vibrant centre. Evidence points to the growing commuter pattern surrounding the city and this is a challenge going forward – and it is a challenge that the RDS Review will be looking at. But there is no easy solution to this challenge – as picked up on by **Dr. Rupert Kawka**. While cities are the backbone of the economy, all cities have their problems – congestion, social disadvantage, etc. And for each city, the approach to addressing these challenges is different.

**PART IV: ACHIEVING BALANCED REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT – LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER**

Chaired by **Mr. Eoin Magennis**, Policy Research Manager, InterTradeIreland, the objective of this session, the first of Day 2,

was to consider the growing opportunities for cooperation, North and South.

**Mr. Niall Cussen**, Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) highlighted some of the achievements in spatial development in recent years. These included the growth of the Irish economy, upgrades and new developments in infrastructure, the designation of gateways and hubs, and investment in the sustainable development of cities and rural communities. More recently, the *National Spatial Strategy* (NSS) has been undergoing a 'refresh' – thus allowing policy to respond to the economic downturn and the emerging and ongoing challenges of delivering policy across administrative and political boundaries. Increasing emphasis is being placed on harnessing the potential of areas and promoting the concept of both city-regions and rural-urban partnerships. Together, this will lead to more sustainable forms of development.



*From Cussen's Presentation on Refreshing the NSS and the Framework for Collaboration'*

In parallel with the NSS 'refresh', a major review of the *Regional Development Strategy* (RDS) for Northern Ireland is taking place. That both strategies are being revisited in tandem provides a great opportunity for strengthening collaborative actions and adopting a common approach to spatial planning policies at an all-island level.

Ongoing developments which will improve the roll-out of strategic spatial planning

include the forthcoming Planning Bill, the *White Paper on the Reform of Local Government* and the Developing Areas Initiative as outlined yesterday by Minister Kitt.

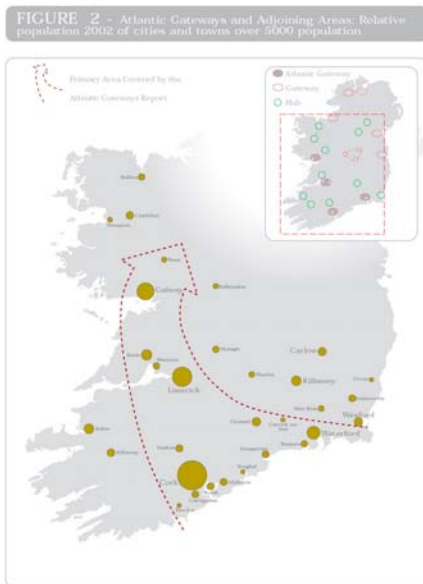


Speaking on the *Regional Development Strategy* (RDS), **Mr. Mike Thompson**, Department for Regional Development (DRD) noted that the focus of this fundamental review is to learn lessons from the past eight years, to consider the impacts of the Review of Public Administration (RPA) and the changing economic climate and its implications for the pace and location of future development. Other issues to be taken into consideration include the growing but ageing profile of the region's population, the location of housing and services, the growing commuter belt surrounding Belfast and (London)Derry, and the potential of the region's natural and built heritage. Between 2007 and 2017, it is expected that the economy of Northern Ireland will continue to grow; albeit at a much slower rate than previously experienced. The challenge will be achieving balanced regional development that is not car-dependent. Recent figures for Northern Ireland demonstrate that while greenhouse gas emissions are down for most sectors, they are up 44% for the transport sector.

The revised RDS will be evidence-based; through various studies and public consultation exercises. When completed (in draft), the RDS will feed into the spending review scheduled for winter 2009. Increasingly, the importance of North-South and East-West linkages are

being recognised and accepted by all sectors. And again, such linkages – both internal and external – will feature strongly in the revised RDS.

The discussion then turned to the sub-regional level, with a focus on a number of the designated gateways. **Mr. Brian Callanan**, Planning Officer with Shannon Development presented on the Atlantic Gateway which recognises the potential for connection between a number of cities - Waterford, Cork, Limerick, Galway - along the Atlantic coastline; emphasising a cumulative (over individual) potential. Using a night sky image, he demonstrated the extent to which imbalanced regional development has taken place – with the eastern seaboard experiencing most of the growth.



*From Callanan's presentation on Atlantic Gateway*

Focusing on the concepts of connectivity, cooperation and competition, development potential, critical mass and polycentricity, and economic space, the Atlantic Gateway aims to provide an alternative to the eastern seaboard going forward. Using a 45minute travel time around the gateway, it has a population of 1,107,000 (compared to 1,424,000 for

Dublin). As well as critical mass, the gateway benefits from the establishment of the Atlantic University Alliance. Going forward, increasing emphasis needs to be placed on infrastructure provision and improvements – thus increasing connectivity and opening up the region.

Moving to the nearby Cork Gateway, **Mr. Kevin Terry**, Director of Planning and Development, Cork City Council noted that as the State's second city, Cork has the potential to accelerate its growth by developing its already diversified and strong economic base. Emphasis is being placed on integrating land-use and transport; with the belief that this, in turn, will lead to jobs growth. The development of Cork as a gateway is closely aligned to the Cork Area Strategy Plan (2001) and the South Docks Local Area Plan (2008). While the Gateway Innovation Fund (GIF) has been shelved for the foreseeable future due to the economic downturn, proposals are in place upon economic recovery to develop docklands and the port area. In the meantime, monies available will be targeted to improving regional and national infrastructures.



*From Terry's "The Role of the Cork Gateway"*

In the context of developing an island of Ireland economy, the cross-border gateways are becoming of increasing importance. Speaking on the Newry-Dundalk Gateway, **Mr. Tom McCall**, Chief Executive, Newry & Mourne District

Council and **Mr. Conn Murray**, County Manager, Louth County Council noted the ideal location of this gateway on the eastern seaboard and acknowledged the impact of infrastructure investment (for example, the A1 / M1) on harnessing the potential and heightening the significance of this gateway. Working together, this cross-border sub-region has presented a united voice on a number of burning local issues – crime, deprivation, health, etc. The gateway still faces a number of challenges going forward: the attractiveness of the cities of Dublin and Belfast, that both Newry and Dundalk are located in different jurisdictions with different currencies, tax regimes and local government make-up, and the transferability of academic qualifications. On a more positive note, this sub-region is entrepreneurial, has a number of niche economic opportunities, an outstanding natural environment and a number of agencies are working more closely together to develop common data-sets and ensure joined-up planning.



*From McCall and Murray's Sustainable Development of Newry-Dundalk Gateway*

Going forward, the gateway is engaging in a number of strategic cross-border projects. These include:

- Dundalk 2020 – involving Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI)

and focusing on energy efficiencies;

- Cross-Border International Services Zone – providing opportunities for tertiary employment;
- Geo-tourism – centred around Slieve Gullion and Carlingford 2012; and
- The regeneration of both Newry and Dundalk.

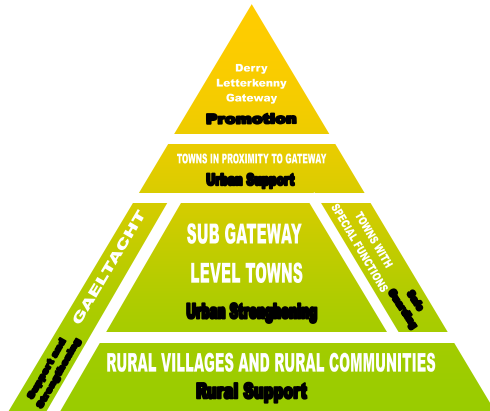
These initiatives are being progressed in a bottom-up manner; involving local government and business leaders.

Working cross-border necessitates the alignment of local initiatives and priorities to larger government policies and the willingness to engage – voluntarily – in inter-jurisdictional cooperation.

Moving westwards, **Mr. Michael McLoone**, County Manager, Donegal County Council and **Mr. John Meehan**, Deputy Town Clerk, Derry City Council presented the North West Gateway of (London) Derry-Letterkenny. This is a sub-region with a high dependency on state transfers and which is experiencing an increase in unemployment as a result of the global economic downturn. The development of this gateway is being influenced not only by the *National Spatial Strategy (NSS)* 'refresh' and *Regional Development Strategy* review but also by the review of the *Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs)*. Not only should this result in urban strengthening but also in the emergence of a much needed rural development strategy and in the realignment of investment strategies, North and South. There exists huge potential for joint analysis, action and investment along this gateway corridor; the effect of which would be better coordination of services.

The RDS must promote the growth of (London) Derry, an area with high growth potential – and when finally adopted, the North West Gateway Initiative (produced by both Governments) must sit comfortably within the NSS and RDS. In

support of this, a skills audit needs to be carried out and third level programmes available in the region need to refocus on emerging growth areas.



*From McLoone's Spatial Development Strategy for County Donegal*

Other priority projects include the Kelvin Communications Project, a joint tourism development strategy, health and education, electricity and gas networks and the promotion of renewable energies. Other national agencies also need to begin working more closely together in the joint marketing and branding of this region as a place to do business and live. This includes IDA Ireland and Invest NI.

There are fears that we may end up with too many boards, plans, strategies and frameworks (for example, local Councils, County Development Boards, ILEX, North West Region Cross Border Group, etc.) – a scenario that could have detrimental impacts for the management of growth in a structured way. There is, therefore, a strong case to be made for cross-border gateways having a joint strategy board established to agree on an overarching vision and to oversee its implementation.

## **PART V: DYNAMIC REGIONS – CAPITALISING ON STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

This session, chaired by **Mr. Brendan Bartley**, Deputy Director, NIRSA, NUI Maynooth, involved delegates attending one of a number of parallel sessions; the topics of which impact on the achievement of balanced regional development.

Following the parallel sessions (as outlined below), delegates reconvened in plenary session where the Chair of each discussion group tabled a question to the panel; membership of which included a number of the morning's speakers.

The question and answer session, as it relates to each focus group, is outlined at the end of the report of each parallel session.

### **Parallel Session 1: Dynamic Regions and the Role of the Private Sector**

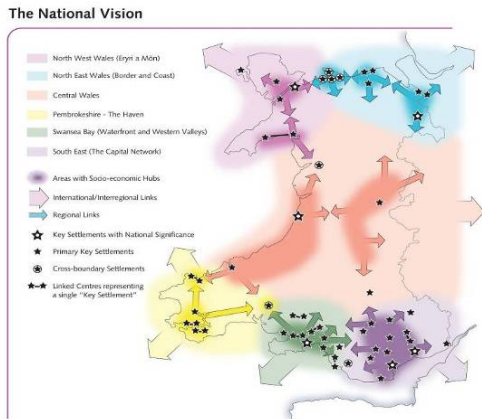
*Chair: Maria Ginnity, Forfas*

*Rapporteur: Dr. Declan Curran, NIRSA, NUI Maynooth*

The discussion began with a consideration of the key drivers of dynamic regions, and the role of the private sector in this process. The example of Lund (in the province of Scania in the south of Sweden) was cited, where affordable housing has become a problem due to large population growth. It is felt in Lund that the private sector does have a significant role to play in housing provision but that this must be achieved without inducing overheating in the local economy. It was generally agreed that there is a need to get the private sector to develop parcels of less lucrative land, as well as inducing the private sector to develop in disadvantaged former industry towns. Incentives may be required to achieve this, as the private sector may not initially view these locations as appealing. It was also noted that in South West Wales structural funds



have been instrumental in encouraging public-private partnerships. By way of clarification, the private sector was deemed to be broader than just property developers, and to include a range of actors such as financial institutions, retail outlets and international firms.



From Duncan's "P, P, F: The Wales Spatial Plan"

The discussion then turned to the issue of the requirements of the private sector to successfully partake in regional development. It was felt that, above all, the private sector needs certainty. Aspects of this certainty involve the need for more effective strategic decision making; less bureaucratic obstacles; a more focused, specific, public-private collaboration; and strong political leadership. The International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) in Dublin was cited as an example of the key ingredients of public-private collaboration. Its inception was characterised by strong private sector leadership coupled with equally strong political will at the highest governmental level.

A further example put forward was that of Lund, Sweden and its success in cultivating a successful ICT cluster. Partnership between foreign and indigenous private firms, the public sector, and the University of Lund has ensured that knowledge is retained by local small companies in the

region<sup>1</sup>. Two questions then arose: i) how was the clustering process initiated? (ii) is the cluster sustainable? Rather than being a designated area, or subject to special incentives, it was the university that initially attracted companies to the region. The cluster is sustained by connectivity, such as the presence of an international airport within 30 minutes and the Oresund Bridge connecting the Scania region and Copenhagen. This ensures that if the university provides the knowledge, there is accessibility to the rest of the world from this location. While the ICT sector is constantly changing location due to outsourcing, the Lund example suggests that once the infrastructure is present and the small firms generate innovations, larger foreign firms will retain their presence in the region.

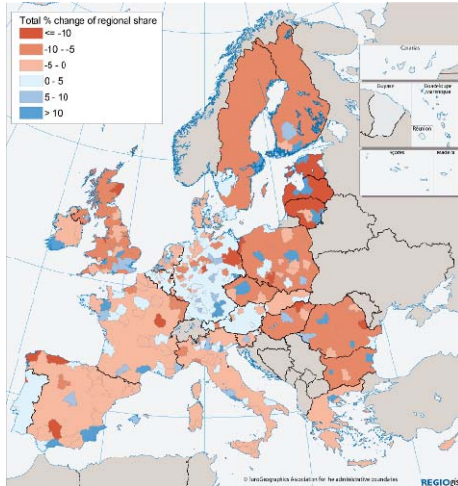


It was felt that rather than targeting the current perceived growth areas and having similar aims to every other region, regions must identify their own indigenous strengths and "potentialities". In this way, local assets and capabilities can be linked with local potential in order to cultivate links with the private sector. Furthermore,

<sup>1</sup> Scania is one of the fastest growing regions in Sweden – in 2006 the region's GDP grew by 5.8%. See Statistics Sweden ([www.scb.se](http://www.scb.se)) for further regional data.

rather than focussing on individual industrial sectors, a cross-sectoral focus may help the underlying skill-set to evolve.

**Change in the share of GDP of metropolitan and urban regions, 1995-2004**



*From Novotny's "Balanced Regional Development"*

A related issue addressed by the discussion group was that of how to stimulate and identify leadership? It was felt that there are different modes of leadership. While personalities may play an influential role, it is also important that private sector actors appreciate the larger civic role they can play. A number of examples were cited of public-private interaction where all the players are interlinked. This allows new ideas to be raised and percolated, so that one voice emerges which pushes ideas forward. It was also noted that it is important to create one vision or image which all the players subscribe to and is capable of generating excitement.

By way of conclusion, the discussion group identified a number of related questions which warrant further investigation: i) How does the public sector envisage its role in facilitating the private sector involvement in public-private collaborations? ii) How can the public sector ensure that the private sector comes forward and takes an active role in implementing public-private strategies? iii) Effective networking between public and private sectors is the

key to successful public-private collaboration – how can the effectiveness of this networking be optimised?

**Plenary Question and Answer**

Ms. Marie Ginnity, Chair, raised the question:

*As an island, we are good at networking; how can we make it more effective?*

**Mr. Michael McLoone**, County Manager, Donegal County Council noted that 'networking' is the new mantra of government, North and South. But while we are encouraged to network, we have not been supplied with a toolkit to help us ensure that it is 'real', 'effective' and 'efficient'. To date, networking at Executive Level has been ineffective; such forums have become nothing more than talking shops for the most part. Greater consideration is needed, at the public level, of the private (business) model of networking.

**Mr. Niall Cussen**, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) explained that in the current context, networking will become an increasingly significant part of how we cooperate and do business on a transnational, all-island and intra-jurisdictional basis. But for such networks to be effective, all actors will need to become honest brokers with clarity of focus and realistic targets. Building on this, **Mr. Tom McCall**, Chief Executive, Newry & Mourne District Council stated that it will take time to make networks effective; this is not an overnight process. Resources will have to be committed to this process and trust will have to be nurtured.

## **Parallel Session 2: The Role of Regeneration in Achieving Regional Development**

*Chair: Mr. Gerard McCleave, Ilex Urban Regeneration Company*

*Rapporteur: Dr. Cian O'Callaghan, NIRSA, NUI Maynooth*

Despite a diverse range of panellist observations, this panel discussion dovetailed into a consensus around key issues pertaining to regeneration; three key strands (each containing a number of points) were identified. These were:

- Firstly a debate on what constitutes regeneration and how best to go about achieving it in an abstracted sense.
- Secondly, the problems associated with implementing this on the ground.
- And thirdly, what are the key questions that need to be addressed in order to move this agenda forward.

In beginning the discussion the Chair put the question to the panel as to what is regeneration, posing his own view that, in order for the process to be meaningful, it needs to simultaneously address physical, economic, and social decline. The panel shared this view and (to paraphrase one panellist's comments) agreed that people need to be at the core of any regeneration strategy, and that fundamentally the process was worthless if it didn't improve peoples lives. It was suggested, however that this has not always been the case. In international terms, large regeneration projects such as those in preparation for the Beijing Olympics, have resulted in the displacement of communities. Closer to home, it was argued that projects such as New East Manchester regeneration have done little to support the people living in the area. More generally, it was suggested that in the past there has been too much of an emphasis on physical regeneration at the expense of social regeneration; with

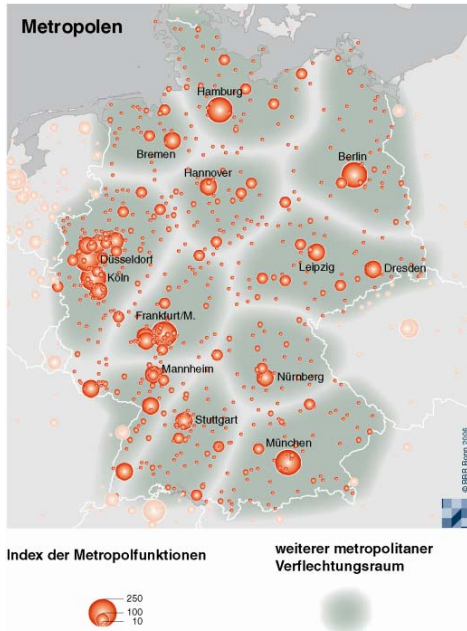
project agencies too quick to demolish large areas of housing in favour of a more nuanced targeting of social problems. As one panellist succinctly put it, social regeneration can never be achieved by merely changing the containers. It was also suggested that there was a need to change both the internal and external perception of areas in order to make them places in which people would want to live.



*From Terry's "Regeneration of Cork City"*

Within this consensus it was acknowledged that in order for regeneration to work there needs to be a single vision agreed upon by all parties. It was, nevertheless, conceded that it is a huge task to deliver on all fronts; to allow participants in the process to retain a single identity and to simultaneously pull towards the same goal. It was suggested that this was extremely difficult in terms of constantly changing funding environments, whereby the whole process may need to fundamentally restructure in order to meet the requirements of the next round of funding, thus delimiting the continuity of projects. This threw up a series of auxiliary problems at the local and regional levels, the most primary of these concerning how to achieve internal buy-in to the schemes at the community level. This point was debated heavily by the panel. One of the panellists pointed out that while it had taken their agency a long time to build a relationship of trust with the local community; once this was achieved the

partnership has been much more fruitful from both perspectives.



Quelle: Laufende Raumbeobachtung des BBR, Erreichbarkeitsmodell des BBR  
 From Kawka's "Achieving Balanced Regional Policy in Germany"

It was argued that while regeneration is necessarily a long-term process, communities need also to see 'quick wins' (for example, revamping a football pitch) for project agencies to instil them with faith in the process. The balancing of these two poles was seen as key to achieving success. It was felt that the Community Planning model was a worthwhile one in terms of building trust with various participants in the process. However, it was also acknowledged that there is a danger in getting the 'usual suspects' around a table, especially where there are issues of trust in relation to allocation of funding and resources. One panellist suggested that in order for people to stay engaged in a process they must feel that they are influencing spending, that this is also a way of getting beyond the micro-politics at the table, and of assuring that resources are spent where they should be. One panellist warned, however, that the concept of community buy-in rests on the assumption that there is a community out there waiting to be engaged. They argued

that, especially in areas characterised by severe disadvantage, for example where the drugs trade is a prevalent, persistent, and pervasive social problem, there may be large sections of the population who in no way wish to engage with a process of regeneration, which could in effect undermine their livelihood.

This was just one exemplar of the problems associated with thinking in terms of a 'one-size-fits-all' formula. While there was certainly general lessons to be learned from gleaning best practice from previous models, panellists were quick to point out that learning the specifics of the problems associated with the area (*specific* environmental problems, *specific* fear of crime, etc.) being regenerated was crucial to the success of any project. Thus, one of the major agendas envisioned was how to capture different experiences and to link these up to the bigger picture in ways that are both reflexive and sensitive to local dynamics and broader recommendations for best practise.



As such, the two major themes that emerged from the discussion were connected, and related to the deployment of policy on different scales and reflexively between top-down and bottom-up

processes. In brief, these centred on (i) how to link up local knowledge with the broader policy picture and (ii) how to link up communities in a meaningful way with the policy process.

### **Plenary Question and Answer**

Dr. Cian O'Callaghan, rapporteur, asked the question:

*Given that on-going and close communication is the key to regeneration, how do citizens engage with government (our politicians) to ensure that what is actually needed on the ground informs policy that then translates to action?*

In response, **Mr. Mike Thompson**, Department for Regional Development noted that there are some very good examples of citizen engagement methods available internationally and regionally (for example, in Maryland, U.S. and in the mid-Ulster region through the auspices of SPAN – Strategic Planning Action Network Project). It is clear that increasing efforts are needed to disseminate good practice among both policy-makers and practitioners to ensure all stakeholders with an interest – vested or not – are included in the decision-making process. **Mr. Tom McCall**, Chief Executive, Newry & Mourne District Council noted that the ongoing Review of Public Administration (RPA) will increase opportunities for citizen engagement in spatial planning from 2011 – largely through the devolution of community planning to the reconstituted 'super-councils'. Building on this, **Mr. Michael McLoone**, County Manager, Donegal County Council argued that citizen engagement is only possible when an initiative is being instigated from the bottom-up; where devolution of power has taken place. This devolution, however, should take place from central to regional government level – thus removing the (risk of) parochial dimension often associated with bottom-up programmes.

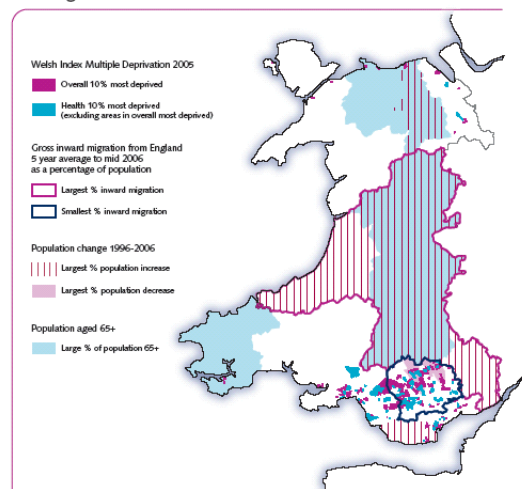
### **Parallel Session 3: Aligning Central and Local Development Policies and Strategies**

*Chair: Dr. Patricia O'Hara, Western Development Commission*

*Rapporteurs: Ms. Caroline Creamer, NIRSA, NUI Maynooth & Mr. Erick Guerra, Institute for International Urban Development, Cambridge, Mass.*

This discussion began with agreement being reached on the key question that this session would like to address: what is the 'ideal' that the island of Ireland should be working towards in terms of policy alignment while taking account of the current economic challenges and the opportunities that this presents?

#### Building Sustainable Communities



*From Duncan's "People, Places, Futures: The Wales Spatial Plan"*

From the outset of the ensuing discussion, there was widespread agreement that while it can be relatively straight-forward to establish the links between various policies and/ or strategies, it is much more difficult to deliver same. This, however, presupposes the existence and/ or publication of the relevant strategies of frameworks. Taking the case of the (London) Derry-Letterkenny Gateway, there is a sense among policy-makers and practitioners in this region that, due to the delay in adopting the North West Gateway Initiative, the development of this cross-

border corridor lies in a vacuum. Without this strategy, and therefore the (adopted) alignment of policy, there are fears that the balanced development of this region will not occur.

The question was then asked: is sustaining an area and sustainable development the same thing? It was felt not. There is an assumption attached to the word 'development'; and that is that it equates with growth. But what if growth is not the answer to the sustainable future of an area? Taking this a step further, and reflecting back on the conference's proceedings, it was felt that the engines of economic change had been discussed (with an emphasis on growth) but primarily in an urban context. So what of rural areas? How should policies be aligned to ensure the sustainable development of the rural environment? And does – or should - such development equate with 'growth'?



It was widely agreed that the current global downturn provides policy-makers and practitioners alike with an opportunity; and that is 'to catch their breath' following a decade of unsustainable growth, to move away from the system of clientalism and to take a long-term perspective on the future growth of our urban centres and rural hinterlands. Taking the Cork Area Strategic Plan (CASP) as an example, population projections were put in place for the period 2001-2006 and these were largely accurate. However, the distribution of the growth experienced – in terms of location - was completely different to what was expected; with most of the growth taking

place in the rural hinterlands rather than in designated city areas.

In moving forward, stronger regional policy is needed to address the competition that exists between neighbouring settlements and within settlements themselves. It was felt that it is not possible to translate national policy directly into local plans and strategies. Instead, there is a need for a regional layer of governance where negotiations and agreements can be reached – thus reflecting the challenges, opportunities and potential of each area in its own right.

At a county/ district level, it is felt that development and local area plans must be increasingly evidence-based (thus reducing the potential impact of parochialism). However, a key challenge remains the length of time it takes to prepare a plan – particularly in Northern Ireland – and the fact that the plan then cannot react fast enough to changes (particularly negative changes). A mechanism is needed which will facilitate plans adapting to changing circumstances – whether they be social, economic, cultural or environmental in focus.

Future policy documents must be more closely aligned to spending budgets and investment strategies. In Northern Ireland, the current budget spend is allocated on a sectoral basis – rather than geographically – and this means it is not as effective as it could be in achieving balanced regional development. On a positive note, the next budget plan will be prepared in 2010 and it is expected that this will have a stronger spatial dimension. Spending in both jurisdictions needs to become more loosely aligned to the spatial strategies.

In recapping on the discussions so far, Dr. O'Hara noted that two main issues had arisen: (i) current thinking on spatial development has an urban bias and this begs the question, if spatial development thinking is city-led, what is the future for

the rural? and (ii) while policy and strategy is easy to prepare and source funding for, their implementation is not; and this, in part, is due to the lack of supports from central government. Central government, it is contended, is spatially unaware. As a result, it is not unusual for communities to have to 'pick up the pieces' and sort out projects themselves; they know what needs to happen.



From Mackinnon's "Spatial Planning at the National Level: Scotland's Experience"

The alignment of central and local government policies and strategies is only possible, then, when open lines of communication are established between all stakeholders at all scales. There needs to be greater emphasis placed on translating strategies into tangible projects which are incentivised and supported by both central and regional government.

#### **Plenary Question and Answer**

Dr. Patricia O'Hara, Chair, asked the panel to comment on the contention that:

*(a) There was an urban bias in the conference proceedings; and that, in the*

*future, increased emphasis needs to be placed on rural issues.*

*(b) We are good at planning and strategising but not good on the implementation side. How can this be addressed when not all agencies are spatially driven?*

**Mr. Michael McLoone**, County Manager, Donegal County Council argued that the current economic downturn provides the rural with many opportunities; particularly in clarifying the nature of its relationship with the urban – not as a support-agent but as an equal partner. The stimulus packages being developed by government to revitalise the economy speak of cross-cutting needs and the importance of collaboration. Rural communities can, going forward, build on this – but first, they must define themselves geographically and at an appropriate scale.



The rural-urban debate is an area that requires further exploration according to **Mr. Mike Thompson**, Department for Regional Development. Key questions in this regard are (i) what is the (inter)relationship between the urban and rural? and (ii) how do/ can they work together? As part of the review of the *Regional Development Strategy* (RDS), the Department is seeking to answer some of these questions. Also, the ICLRD is in the midst of this exploring this issue on an all-island basis. So while this is an area that has not received due attention in the past, this information and strategic deficit is currently being addressed. **Mr. Tom McCall**, Chief Executive, Newry & Mourne

District Council noted the need for rural strategies going forward; that the sustained development of rural communities cannot happen in a vacuum or as the result of spill-over from urban-based development. Rather urban areas should be catalysts for rural development in the context of a wider vision and framework for sustained development.

#### **Parallel Session 4: Transnational Cooperation and Learning from Others**

*Chair: Prof. Cliff Hague, ESPON U.K.*

*Rapporteur: Dr. Delphine Ancien, NIRSA, NUI Maynooth*

The discussion centred on issues of transnational and transborder cooperation and involved a dozen or so participants from diverse backgrounds – ranging from academia to local politics and consulting to community development. The session commenced with a short presentation of a few examples of transnational/transborder cooperation in non-Irish contexts. The case of Sweden was considered in most detail; in particular through the project linking Stockholm to Berlin by train. This project was introduced by members of a local Swedish parliament in Scania and demonstrated Sweden's experience of transnational cooperation, in terms of regional development, as being a positive one. The importance of 'know-how', building expertise over time and well-lubricated mechanisms of transnational cooperation was highlighted by those involved in the decision-making process and the implementation of such projects. It was pointed out that this expertise is something that can - and should be - shared within the wider European context. A participant notably recounted his experience of Romania and emphasised the country's eagerness to learn from countries/ regions that 'know how' to do transborder/ transnational cooperation; and in this context, local authorities in Romania have demonstrated

a strong interest in the Irish experience of transborder cooperation.



The discussion then moved to identifying some issues that emerge when attempting to develop transnational or transborder projects with a local and regional development focus. A major problem that appeared to be common to the experience of various participants was the lack of preparatory work carried out ahead of the implementation of transnational/transborder schemes or projects. There was a common agreement among the group – or at least among those in the group who have some experience of direct involvement in transnational cooperation – that the set-up process of transnational cooperation projects could be much more efficient than it often is if the preparation process was only more thorough. Accordingly, two 'twin propositions' were made in order to improve the set-up process.

- Firstly, the need to look at functional regions in order to plan for local economic development was pointed out (it was noted that this was in line with the major lessons that were being drawn from the conference as a whole).
- Secondly, and in conjunction with the first proposition, it was recommended that we start moving toward common datasets across Europe. It was suggested that data be collected from censuses that ask common questions; and this process should begin at the scale of the island of Ireland. This could, for example,



constitute a pilot project for the harmonisation of national census questions and data.

However, the latter recommendation was met with some scepticism by a couple of people in the group on the grounds that, from both a material and a political perspective, such an initiative – the harmonisation of censuses on the island of Ireland between the Republic and the United Kingdom – would be very difficult to implement. Additional issues were raised, including some limitations that arise when one goes to a more refined level of data; it was argued that although standards seem to be the same from one dataset to another, in many instances they are not. On the other hand, other participants expressed more optimism regarding the possibility of harmonisation. Some cited the work that has already been done toward matching datasets between Northern Ireland and the Republic; in particular through the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) within the National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA) at the National University of Ireland Maynooth (NUIM).

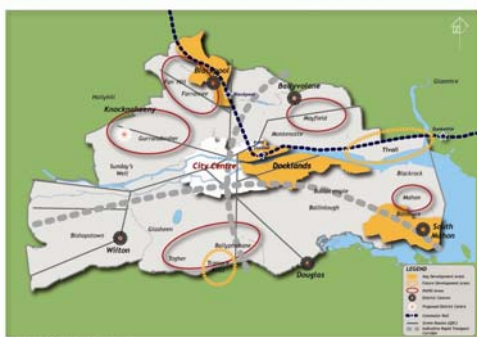


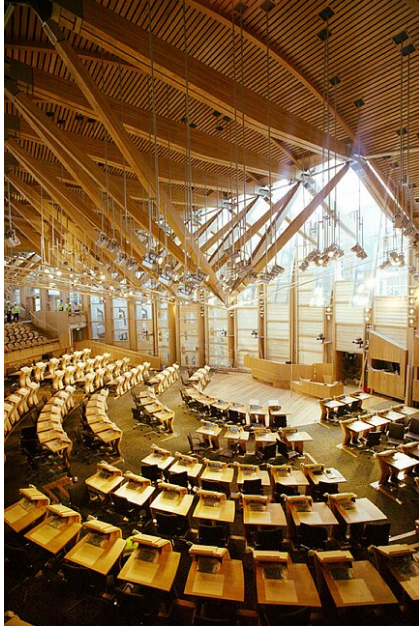
Figure 2.3 Development Strategy  
*Terry's presentation "Key Development Areas in Cork City"*

It was also mentioned that Sweden and Denmark, for instance, have common datasets and a lot of data is available for exactly the same indicators in both countries. ESPON's current work on territorial indicators at the European scale was also brought up, as a step towards a possible harmonisation of datasets across

Europe - even though it was acknowledged that the problem of definitions of standards for data collection at the national levels would remain. A participant noted that chances are that what will emerge from ESPON's work will be a short list of key indicators around which European Union (EU) member-states could work; something that would be welcomed by DG Regio.

The idea of moving away from the objective of a very large range of indicators to focus on a narrower set of key indicators was well received by those in the discussion group who were more sceptical of the possibility of harmonisation of datasets. This was seen as a good step toward better transborder/ transnational collaboration - echoing the plea of a couple of participants for the necessity to invest in strengthening governance arrangements and structures. It was claimed that, at the moment, a lot of partnerships are based on loose arrangements and that there is a need to build solid governance arrangements between territorial partners to ensure the coherence and the continuity of trans-territorial cooperation. It was highlighted that this was very relevant in the case of Ireland, where corruption was blamed as a limitation to the building of strong long-term transnational arrangements. Corruption and clientelism in Ireland – it was highlighted – needs to be eradicated, or, at least mitigated, in order to obtain European aid to fund transborder projects. The EU was presented as a key partner in the design and implementation of such projects. Nevertheless, it was also argued that a major problem with the governance of EU-funded transnational/ transborder projects is that "the process tends to take over," and smaller stakeholder groups are often reluctant to become involved in the process because of the bureaucratic and accounting heaviness of European funding procedures. This tends to discourage grass-root initiatives when it comes to European funds such as INTERREG, a scheme that has been

popularised across member-states over the past few years; attracting an increasing number of applications and privileging bigger, more strategic development projects nowadays.



From Mackinnon

When time came to conclude the discussion and to select a couple of key issues to be addressed at the plenary session, the group rapidly came to agree on the following points (i) the need to build up a limited number of common indicators to be used by EU member-states when preparing the collection of data at the national scale; and (ii) the creation of a common census for the island of Ireland as a whole. The process could be seen as a pilot, and, if successful, be expanded to broader scales later on, including the European scale eventually.

**Plenary Question and Answer**

Prof. Cliff Hague, Chair, asked the panel to respond to the contention that:

*A short list of key spatial euro-indicators needs to be put in place around spatial development and that this could be started through a series of pilot exercises; for*

*example, an all-island census for the island of Ireland.*

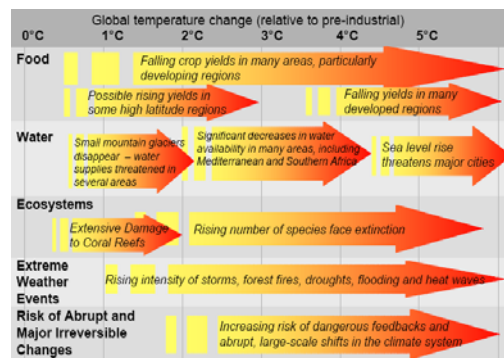
In response, **Mr. Niall Cussen**, Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) stated that we have many tick-box exercises in place; possibly too many. For these to be effective, they need to become more substantive and focused.

**Parallel Session 5: Evidence-Informed Planning and Indicators**

*Chair: Mr. Justin Gleeson, All-Island Research Observatory, NUI Maynooth*

*Rapporteur: Dr. Karen Keaveney, Queens University Belfast*

The key question discussed as part of this discussion was: what role has evidence-informed planning to play in the wider spatial planning debate? There was widespread agreement among the discussants that there is a growing awareness of the need for evidence-informed spatial planning – and this involves identifying (i) baseline data on indicators for ongoing monitoring (rather than snapshots) and (ii) areas of need for soft and hard infrastructure.

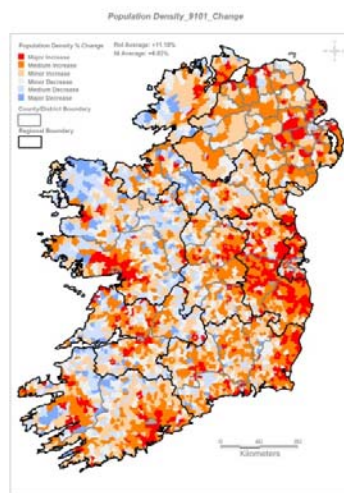


Quartermain's Presentation 'A Focus on Climate Change'

Considering the issue of indicators in depth, it was felt that critical indicators for Irish regional planning should be multi-scale and cross-comparative – thus allowing comparative analysis at a

European, national, regional and local level. Desirable critical indicators would include access to services, commuting patterns at different scales, urban dependence on multi-national corporations (MNCs) and urban functionality.

Access to such data, however, can be an issue; for while quite a lot of data is available, people/ groups are not always aware of its existence – for example, POWCAR.



A further challenge is selecting indicators that are appropriate and both regularly produced and made available. At this point in the discussion, the Chair gave a brief demonstration of the 'Geographical Profiling Tool'. Developed by the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO), this tool uses Live Register data and displays this data at different scales and for a large range of variables. It is hoped that this will come on stream shortly and be available for both Northern Ireland and the Republic – though, of course, this is dependent on it being feasible to match data for both jurisdictions.

While there is no set list of key data that regional authorities, for example, are required to produce, it is now timely to draw up a list of key indicators which could flow into the annual reporting of local and

regional authorities. There is a huge amount of data gathering taking place; but going forward, there is a need to draw these together in order to create/ identify indicators.

The Dublin partnerships, for example, are currently gathering information on data that is difficult to obtain to show local authorities (i) that it is necessary and (ii) to persuade people to share the data. The employment survey carried out by Forfas has been geo-coded – and this will be a valuable data source going forward. Similarly, Donegal CEB is currently undertaking a cultural/ community/ amenity audit in the border region and this is being geo-coded. There is a strong case to be made for such data to be made available to organisations such as ICLRD or AIRO.

This kind of data gathering needs to be carried out by everyone (public, private, community agencies) without fear of approaching the various data holding agencies. Contributions such as these have the potential to greatly add to the development of quality of life indicators. To date the only data being used for this is that which is publicly available through the Census of Population (for both Ireland and Northern Ireland); but issues of cross-border compatibility and comparability arise here.

The discussion then turned to the issue of cross-border data and the types of data that is considered important in carrying out cross-border analysis. Such data includes, for example, information on nationality of people involved in community and migration work. This type of data was considered particularly important as it facilitates an analysis of community and diversity spread across borders. In terms of where data can be sourced, it was pointed out that community organisations are heavily reliant on Census data – both from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) for Ireland and the Northern Ireland

Neighbourhood Information Service (NINIS) for Northern Ireland - but always separately because of matching difficulties.

Access to spatial data is a particularly important issue; for example in the Border Regional Authority (BRA) where the regional plan is currently under review. While each Local Authority in Ireland has individual OSI licenses, there is difficulty in obtaining usage of these licenses for the BRA - despite the fact that the Authority is an amalgamation of a number of local authorities. The BRA is further challenged by having very limited resources and being unable to afford to run in-house GIS. Yet, data for travel, access to services, etc. in the border area is vital to its workings. These challenges, while faced by all regional authorities, are most acute in the Border region – because of the issues with data compatibility and comparability.

For travel to work data, for example, the related question in the Census is not helpful – it only asks where in the Republic of Ireland the respondent works.

The access issue is particularly important for the central border area – the most disadvantaged of the three sub-border regions. Key questions for the BRA include:

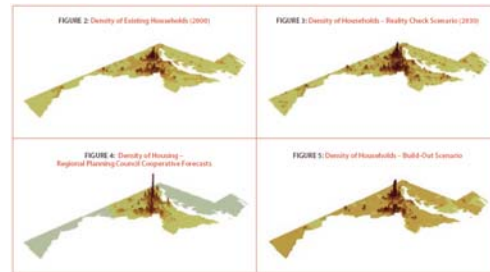
- How accessible is this sub-region?
- Where is the population in this sub-region located? and where will further growth occur?

It is hoped that the aforementioned geographical profiling tool will assist in providing answers to these questions.

Going forward, there is a need for information on age-structure; and to overlay this with services – this could be very powerful.

But has, however, been some good work carried out recently on cross-border accessibility. The Strategic Investment Board (SIB) for Northern Ireland has obtained the entire road network for the island of Ireland and has geo-coded a range of services (GPs, schools, etc.) – they are

now in a position to analyse catchments island-wide.



*Knapp's Household Density Scenarios for Maryland*

By 2010, data for 2006 will be meaningless. In terms of setting priorities, it should be possible to source data annually for key indicators. But in this regard, key issues emerging include:

- The reliability of census data;
- Overlaps within infrastructure data;
- The human-centric focus of data.

AIRO, for example is trying to address these issues and disseminate data while taking away the hard work for people. Elaborating on AIRO, this is an all-island resource that is housed within the National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA) in NUI Maynooth. Its data is collected from varied sources; with the database then being continually updated (as data is released). This data is made available to, and used by, both policy and discussion makers.

In conclusion, the discussants agreed that while there is a wide variety of data available, there needs to be (i) greater access, (ii) more cross-border matching of data, and (iii) greater indicator development – including access to services, functional areas, and local dependency on MNCs.

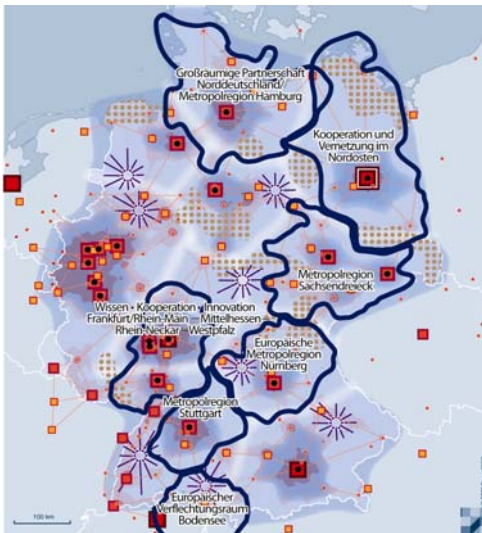
### ***Plenary Questions and Answers***

Mr. Justin Gleeson, Chair, noted that there are wider varieties of data being generated

but access remains an issue. Building on this, the question raised was:

*Is there a need for agreement / could agreement be reached between high-level agencies on access to data and the development of a shared list of spatial indicators?*

Access to data is improving all the time but possibly not at the speed that policy-makers, business representatives or communities would wish. **Mr. Tom McCall**, Chief Executive, Newry & Mourne District Council argued that it will be people asking for this information that makes a change – not legislation. Common data-sets are essential to the development of this island; and to this end, for example, the Councils of Newry & Mourne, Louth and Dundalk are working together to compile their own detailed data-set. This ensures that future policy will be evidence-informed rather than anecdotal in nature. In support of enhanced cross-border collaboration, we need, according to **Mr. Michael McLoone**, County Manager, Donegal County Council real-time data.



*Kawka's Presentation on "Supra-regional Urban-Rural Partnerships"*

## PART VI: CLOSE OF CONFERENCE

In closing the conference, **Professor Francois Vigier**, President, Institute for International Urban Development, asked the question: how do we depict a region? He argued that while data has been accumulated for many different reasons, it is not always used for that purpose. Often data can be manipulated in ways that are not intellectually significant or to introduce bias and provide the answers we want. And how we use data has implications for policy – both in terms of its initial development but also in its implementation.

Professor Vigier noted that the objective of policy is to remedy the deficits of the market economy. Spatially, it strives for equitable solutions through public investments and targeted programmes. In the case of poverty, for example, it has both rural and urban manifestations albeit for different reasons. However, in developing policy to address poverty, its various manifestations and the reasons behind it must be taken into account – it is an issue that cannot be addressed in isolation.

In the context of spatial planning and development, increasing emphasis must be placed on joined-up planning across the island of Ireland. And as demonstrated over the course of this conference, there is much in place can be harnessed and built upon. There are mutual benefits to be gained from collaboration over competition – provided such collaboration involves consultation at the grass-roots level and involves all stakeholders (and in particular those who feel disenfranchised). While statistics have a role to play, the tacit knowledge of local communities is an essential element in the development of policies. As to what the resulting policies will achieve or lead to, a key function of central and regional government going forward is to clearly define what is achievable / what can be gained.



By investing in, and adhering to, spatial strategies in the achievement of balanced regional development, there is much more to be gained than lost for all those involved. The key challenge is how to effectively engage local councillors, officials and constituents in broader discussions (beyond parochialism) on the implications of spatial planning and development on the ground. Therefore, it is at the micro-scale that we will be best able to assess the success (or not) of a plan.

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Our ICLRD annual gatherings are growing in reputation and are now considered as leading forums for debate, networking and cross-learning on the themes of inter-jurisdictional collaboration in spatial planning and local and regional development.

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Full presentations (power point and audio files) from this conference as well as previous conferences are available on our ICLRD website [www.iclrld.org](http://www.iclrld.org).

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