



Spatial Planning Rural Communities and Rural Restructuring

WORKING PAPER SERIES

In support of the ICLRD Report

***RURAL RESTRUCTURING: LOCAL SUSTAINABLE
SOLUTIONS TO THE RURAL CHALLENGE***

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Working Paper 1

Rural Development, Diversification and Restructuring: opportunities, challenges and potentiality

1.1 Introduction

Rural restructuring that has occurred in Ireland, North and South, has done so in parallel with wider national and global economic transformations which have influenced how the countryside is understood and what its contemporary role is. In light of this, it is apparent that rural communities are now faced with the challenge of economic restructuring and diversification. In the context of the Irish Border, many rural communities also face the additional challenges of being impacted upon by the policies and legislative arrangements of two jurisdictions, of building cross-community relations and the legacy of back-to-back governance.

There is growing recognition that rural areas, and their balanced development, are an important policy area in their own right; and that the current political climate facilitates the development of rural communities on a North, South and cross-border basis. This paper sets the context for the study *Sustainable Rural Development: Spatial Planning, Rural Communities and Rural Restructuring* by examining the changing countryside, economic change and diversification and the transforming policy, global and national contexts. This study is being carried out by the International Centre for Local and Regional Development² (ICLRD) with the support of Irish Government funding.

1.2 Rural Restructuring

Changes within rural areas, particularly those associated with farming and traditional resource-based activities, have led to wider transformations in the role and function of the countryside in society and the economy. Furthermore, and perhaps more pertinent, are the changes that are occurring beyond rural areas which are impacting greatly on the countryside and resulting in uneven development and in differentiated space within a territory that was once perceived as homogenous (Marsden, 1998). The interdependency between countryside and agriculture no longer exists



and there is increasing recognition of wider external transformations that are impacting on rural areas. The spatial distinctiveness of rural places is determined by the particular type of change that is occurring in the countryside; for instance the process of 'recovery' from the decline of an economy that was once solely based on natural / primary resources being perhaps the most significant (Meadowcroft, 2005). Consequently there are now alternative uses of rural spaces where "... there is no longer one single rural space, but rather a multiplicity of social spaces that overlap the same geographical area" (Cloke and Milbourne, 1992:360). This emerging multi-functionality provides major challenges for rural areas going forward; however, it may also present a number of opportunities to respond in unique ways to global economic restructuring at the local level. Although faced with declining traditional economic bases in recent decades, rural areas may be well-positioned to adapt to changing demands given the traditional reliance on small-scale businesses (be it farming or light industry, for example). This requires, however, national frameworks to be in place to support

² A registered charity based in Armagh, Northern Ireland, the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) is a North-South-U.S. partnership. Established in 2006, the Centre explores and expands on the contribution that 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 partner institutes currently include: the National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA) at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth; the School of the Built Environment at the University of Ulster, the Institute for International Urban Development in Cambridge, Massachusetts; the Centre for Cross Border Studies in Armagh; and the Athlone Institute of Technology (see www.iclrd.org).

diversification, ensuring that communities can respond to challenges and 'recover' in the most appropriate way.

The dominant theoretical approach to rural restructuring has been the application of the post-productivist transition model of agriculture. In the productivist era, which spanned the post-World War Two period up to the 1970s and 1980s, rural areas underwent an industrialisation of agricultural practices which relied on intensified production, greater mechanisation, output specialisation and concentration, and reliance on the state protection of prices (Woods, 2005). A range of industrial and service activities grew in conjunction, and often interdependently, with this intensification³. The mid-1980s, however, was a period of the 'farm or rural crisis' in Western Europe. There was an undermining of the productivist representation and moulding of the rural and this was brought about by over-production and 'trade wars' in external export markets. This transition was marked by a changing social composition in rural areas where improvements in accessibility and mobility allowed more urban workers to live in the countryside. Agriculture and other primary and associated activities came under increased pressure as the cornerstone of the rural, particularly with a new rural population, which questioned the validity of farm subsidies (Halfacree, 2006). A number of factors drove the transition of agriculture and rural change including a growth in rural tourism and recreation; rising rates of car ownership; second home ownership and/or retirement to the countryside; large-scale industrial development in rural areas; and counterurbanisation where the countryside began to be viewed as a desirable place to live (Clout, 1998).

There are many types of rural area; ranging from the very remote to the peri-urban (McHugh, 2001). Each type of rural area experiences its own range of challenges: some of which are generic to rural communities and others of which are place-specific. The key generic challenges facing rural areas are growth, jobs and sustainability, all of which have (a) been recognised at a national and regional level, and (b) more recently been elevated as priority goals and objectives in policy guidance emerging from the EU.

1.2.1 Rural Restructuring and the Irish Border

Rural Ireland, particularly those areas not located in close proximity to large urban centres, has been experiencing a wide range of challenges since the early 1980s. This rural crisis included a decline in agriculture, the loss of services, a 'brain-drain' and out-migration, all of which raised questions about the future viability of small and peripheral rural settlements. As with most border areas outside the so-called core or Pentagon⁴ in Europe, the Irish Border region is rural in nature. As a result of the 'border effect' and the ensuing Troubles, it has suffered from decades of back-to-back policy development, lack of inward investment and the decline of its communities – socially, economically and physically. The reversal of this downward spiral can only be achieved through cooperation and collaboration. As noted in the ICLRD report on Module 8 of the Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN's) Joining-up Development Programme, 'Spatial Planning, Community Planning and Rural Development in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland', the themes of cross-border cooperation, regional competitiveness and rural restructuring are inextricably linked.

1.3 Economic Change and Diversification

In the Republic of Ireland there was a 40% decline (60,228 persons) in the number of people working in agriculture from 1991 to 2002, falling by another 8,000 people by 2006. At the

³ Initially, agriculture-related industries and services tended to be small-scale and localised. However, from the 1960s onwards, these tended to become increasingly mechanised, corporate and internationalised, and agri-food entities based on the island of Ireland are now present and competing on global markets.

⁴ The Pentagon refers to the area of high economic development in Europe that is bounded by the five cities of London, Hamburg, München, Milano and Paris (ESOPN, 2006).

same time there were increases in other employment sectors, particularly in the construction sector. The picture for Northern Ireland (in the 2001 Census) is very similar, where only 3% of the population were recorded as working in farming compared with 14% employed in construction industries. This steep decline in agricultural employment reflects a period across the island of Ireland and beyond where the productivist countryside has changed to become more complex and is increasingly determined by external consumer and changing internal demands.

Both European agricultural policy and regional investment policy over past decades have had wide impacts on the scale and nature of the rural economy in Ireland. In 1992 the MacSharry Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Reforms were introduced in order to attempt to change the direction of farming from what was perceived to be unsustainable productivist agriculture that resulted in imbalances between supply and demand. These reforms resulted in the consolidation of quotas and the incentivisation of farmers to engage in alternative and complementary economic activities, including the pursuit of a role as guardians of the countryside. Changes in agricultural policy continued throughout the 1990s; for example through *Agenda 2000* (CEC, 1997) and the decoupling of farming output and income support in the mid-term review of CAP in 2003. These reforms provided for an EU-wide framework for rural development policy taking into account the changing nature of the rural population and the need to look beyond agriculture as the main activity and source of income in the countryside.

Rural economic diversification has occurred as a result of direct and indirect state and EU intervention and subsidisation both of agriculture and of other rural economic activities and services, together with changing consumer demands and internal and external markers. This has resulted in progressive increases in on- and off-farm employment. EU initiatives such as LEADER have been to the fore in supporting rural enterprise development. Small-scale light industries that grew interdependently, for example, have expanded beyond the farm gate becoming involved in, for example, the construction sector. The challenge now is that sectors such as construction and manufacturing are under renewed pressure and their long-term sustainability as a core economic base in the countryside is rapidly contracting. Further diversification is required in most rural areas, particularly those that are located at some distance from major urban settlements and outside commuter belts.



The ongoing desire to live in the countryside that is apparent throughout the island brings both positive and negative potential. A vibrant and active community on the one hand can result in pro-active strategies for diversification; while on the other hand, the need to sustain a relatively large population on a limited economic and infrastructural base poses a number of difficulties.

1.4 Evolving Policy Paradigms

With increasing global and European efforts to provide guidance for sustainable development, there are growing demands on regional and local planning agencies to adhere to international principles and to address the needs of the changing countryside. Within this context this section outlines the international context for rural policy and spatial planning on the island of Ireland by examining the evolving policy paradigms within which rural policy operates.

1.4.1 Spatial Planning

Due to the long-standing interdependency of agriculture with the rural, planning and policy for other countryside issues have often been stunted. Pillar Two of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) made some headway into a policy that accounts for multiple 'rurals' with the introduction of *Agenda 2000* and increased funding for rural development initiatives; for example, through area based initiatives such as the LEADER programmes. The post-productive period has brought new challenges to rural planning where more varied developments are being proposed. However, in some jurisdictions rural planning may be perceived as stopping rather than enabling development by its highly regulatory and restrictive nature, and as such may have negative social impacts. The current entrepreneurial period of planning, with its greater emphasis on partnerships and participation (Bartley, 2007), has attempted to address the complex changes in society as a whole, and is the most appropriate approach to planning for the countryside that has existed to date. In order for rural planning to move forward not only must the complexity of rural change be acknowledged, the role of varied interests and actors giving voice to the new demands on the countryside (Woods, 1998) and the emerging dynamic power relations should also be recognised (Shucksmith, 1994, 2006).

From the 1950s onwards, spatial planning has been characterised by a need to instigate anticipatory planning rather than being "... characterised by ad hoc solutions and timing dictated by crisis" (Graham, 1976:xii-xiii; cited in Lapping, 2006:113). This new era viewed land use planning as an integral part of national economies and a number of countries at the time began to implement systematic policies, such as the identification of hierarchies of settlement for the attraction of different levels of foreign direct investment (FDI). The Republic of Ireland was among the states that sought to adopt such systems and the government was encouraged to do so with expert advice from the World Bank and the United Nations (Bartley, 1999). However, with the increasing emphasis of planning on urban areas and the continued integration of rural and agricultural policy, rural planning had, and continues to have, unclear goals. In the case of Northern Ireland (and the wider U.K.) this resulted in the adoption of restrictive policy and highly regulated planning in the countryside for development other than agriculture-related.

The *European Spatial Development Perspective* (ESDP) represents a spatial strategy for the European Union, and its many provisions and principles have influenced national and regional spatial strategies, not least the *National Spatial Strategy* (NSS) for Ireland and the *Regional Development Strategy* (RDS) for Northern Ireland. Approaching Europe as a diverse territory with regional disparities and differences, the three objectives of the ESDP are:

- the development of a balanced and polycentric urban system and a new urban-rural relationship;
- securing parity of access to infrastructure and knowledge; and
- sustainable development, prudent management and protection of nature and cultural heritage (CEC, 1999:11).

The objective of a polycentric settlement pattern, where there is an attempt to counteract regional imbalance throughout the continent, is a central tenet of European territorial planning. The adoption of polycentricity in planning marks a move beyond traditional conceptual notions of linkages between 'core' and 'periphery'. A focus on the regions rather than on traditional member states, the idea that wealth and economic activity can be less imbalanced, and recognition that the role of the city within its hinterland and surrounding rural areas, all lie at the centre of the polycentric development paradigm.

Within the concept of polycentric development, rural areas are regarded as highly complex, non-homogeneous places, the development of which is increasingly associated with inter-regional connectivity and relationships with urban centres, as well as with the pressures of globalisation and the counter-pressures of localisation. *The Future of Rural Society* (CEC,

1988) and *Europe 2000+* (CEC, 1994) outlined the role of the countryside within the European territory prior to the publication of the ESDP; presenting the rural as having an important function within the urban realm as a buffer between centres, an area for recreation and tourism, and as supporting new populations. Economy, culture, location, social and environmental factors and population density (and the differences within them) all contribute to the experience of people living in these areas and to patterns of settlement and development. The ESDP recognises the new challenges that face rural areas such as, on the one hand, the changing viability of traditional agricultural practices sometimes located in peripheral areas with poor infrastructure and accessibility, and in contrast, places that are experiencing growing pressure from their location close to urban centres. The "... treatment of the city and countryside as a functional, spatial entity with diverse relationships and interdependencies" and the recognition that in "... a polycentric urban system the small and medium-sized towns and their inter-dependencies form important hubs and links, especially in rural areas" (CEC, 1999: 24) are of particular importance for the development of rural areas of all types. An additional challenge to spatial development on the island of Ireland is the presence of an international border. While a number of rural cross-border areas can, and do, function as regional gateways and / or as commercial, service and administrative centres, the reality is that many remain peripheral and underdeveloped. The cause – and effect – of this underdevelopment is manifold, but includes having no clear attributes on which to build / market the area; poor infrastructure, in particular transport and communications; low levels of urbanisation; loss of, and poor accessibility to, services; low employment rates with limited range of employment sectors; and low educational attainment. In addition, where conflict has been a feature of the Border's history, this has tended to frighten away potential investors.

1.4.2 Rural Policy

Similar to much of the Western world, rural policy on the island of Ireland was largely concerned with agriculture until recent decades. The emphasis of rural policy on farming and traditional countryside economies in the past has resulted in the stunted development of frameworks for rural areas. By the 1970s in Ireland, when agriculture began its definite decline and with membership of the European Economic Community (EEC) on the horizon, rural policy widened its parameters to include rural development and the future of communities living outside areas of growing urbanisation. However, it was not until 1999 that a specific document for the future of the countryside was adopted by government in the form of the White Paper for Rural Development: *Ensuring the Future - A Strategy for Rural Development in Ireland* (Department of Agriculture and Food, 1999). This paper called for rural proofing of all government policies and frameworks so that the countryside would be treated as another element of the national economy and society and not as a separate entity reliant on agriculture alone. It also encouraged a vibrant, dispersed settlement pattern and community.

Since the 1970s, and particularly since Ireland and the U.K. joined the EEC (now the European Union) in 1973, the rural agenda has widened; with a number of agencies such as Teagasc (the Irish Agriculture and Food Development Authority) and the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) in the South, and the Rural Development Council (RDC) in the North making significant contributions to national and regional policy for the countryside. In addition, both governments have initiated a number of programmes and schemes in rural areas in order to assist in future social and economic sustainability, such as CLÁR (Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais / Programme for Revitalising Rural Areas) in the Republic of Ireland and the Environment and Countryside project funding in Northern Ireland. Activities that address rural poverty and social exclusion are also being promoted at departmental level. The importance of the countryside to national government in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland was reiterated in 2002 at Ministerial level – albeit in different ways. In the Republic, rural affairs was separated from agriculture with the establishment of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs; while in the North, the brief of the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland (DANI) was widened to include rural

development and this is reflected in the Department's new name, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD).

At an EU level, the recently revisited Lisbon and Goteborg agendas prioritise the goals of growth, competitiveness and job creation, and sustainability respectively. Building on this, the rural development programme for the period 2007-13 has as one of its objectives the improvement of quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy (EC, 2006). There is increasing recognition of the need to address the territory rather than specific sectors; and that each area requires a tailored approach to meet its local challenges. A key goal of the new rural development programme, under which each member state must prepare a broad framework of action, is to turn the challenges facing rural areas into opportunities by developing local infrastructure and human capital which in turn will improve conditions for growth. To this end, Axis 3 – Quality of Life – measures under the Rural Development Programme for Northern Ireland are being delivered through Local Action Groups (LAGs) that are comprised of local councillors and social partners and which are supported by the District and Borough Councils. The councils, organised in clusters, have developed rural strategies for their respective areas and funding has been allocated based on this spatial / territorial approach.

On a cross-border basis, the *European Territorial Cooperation Agenda*, also covering the period 2007-13, promotes cooperation through a partnership of national, regional and local agencies in the areas of:

- SME development
- Tourism
- Environmental protection
- Health care
- Infrastructural development
- Greater accessibility to information and transport networks
- Education, cultural and linguistic development.

Such territorial cooperation, it is argued, will decrease regional disparities by addressing the wider needs of cross-border rural areas and lead to economic dynamism including entrepreneurial and innovative actions.

The common link between these policy guidance documents and programmes for action is the recognition that rural areas offer potential for growth – through amenities and natural resources – which remains largely untapped. The growth and development of rural communities, however, is dependent on the nurturing of the rural-urban relationships, creation of economies of scale, building up the *necessary* critical mass, ensuring value-added and taking cognisance of the uniqueness of each rural community.

1.4.3 The Changing Rural-Urban Relationship

In recent years, there has been a shift from the traditional view of a rural-urban dichotomy to a rural-urban relationship. Under the traditional perspective, rural areas were increasingly dependent on their neighbouring urban centres; with urban governance and policy dictating the role and function of the surrounding peri-urban and rural areas. Policy roll-out was dependent on informal processes, such as the project-based approach, to solve spatial development issues. More recently, technological changes have provided opportunities for rural areas to compete for business investment. In addition, EU and national policy have recognised the value of smaller rural settlements working in partnership with larger urban centres and, to this end, have placed increasing emphasis on



collaboration through local economic development, the promotion of complimentary functional areas and sustaining rural communities by harnessing their potentiality. As a result, policies for towns / cities and the countryside are increasingly being integrated “based on both their spatial and functional interdependencies” (Davoudi & Stead, 2002: 273).

1.4.4 Future Policy

The challenge for rural policy and spatial planning on the island of Ireland is that no policy document exists that comprehensively addresses planning in the countryside. Sectoral policies including those for housing, water quality, and provision of services have been published, with responsibility for the countryside and its associated needs resting with a number of government departments including the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Likewise in Northern Ireland, rural development and planning are functions of three separate government departments; namely Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Department of the Environment and Department for Regional Development. The breakdown of responsibility includes the Department of Environment being responsible for operational planning matters while the Department for Regional Development oversees strategic functions.

Contemporary rural planning policy is now largely directed from the European level, based on objectives for long-term sustainability, and implemented at the regional and local levels. The problem that lies at the centre of rural development policy and associated spatial planning is the uncertain future of the countryside in light of ongoing urbanisation, increased reliance on knowledge-based economies, and the continual need for high quality and efficient food production. The Irish Border adds an additional, challenging layer of need and expectation through the tradition of a relatively large rural population; an ongoing desire to live in the countryside in a wealthy, rapidly urbanising society; and the presence of the Border itself. While the RDS for Northern Ireland, and to a greater extent the NSS for Ireland, provide some clarification on the roles and potential of rural spaces and communities, institutional, governance and policy vacuums persist, particularly at regional and sub-regional levels.

To be successful, the process of rural diversification necessitates stakeholders engaging in the process of strategic spatial planning; where the economic diversification, social process and environmental conservation involves cross-border development and collaborative spatial planning. Collaborative planning is one means of turning these local challenges to opportunities and meeting the objectives of Lisbon, Goteborg, the *European Territorial Cooperation Agenda* and the wider rural development programme; and at a more local level, the aims and objectives of Ireland’s NSS and Northern Ireland’s RDS. This process will involve:

- Developing a vision
- Focusing on people and well as space
- Working in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders
- Promoting capacity building within the communities themselves
- Delivering better governance.

As a process, collaborative spatial planning has an important role to play in addressing and meeting the needs of both urban and rural communities on the island of Ireland. However, both jurisdictions are still engaged in the process of preparing and rolling-out traditional land-use focused county and area/district plans. With the exception of the all-island non-statutory collaboration framework currently being finalised by both governments, the process and focus of collaborative spatial planning is still at a very early stage in its development on the island of Ireland.

1.5 Achieving Sustainable Communities

Although a challenge for Planning Authorities either side of the Border and across the island, achieving sustainable rural communities is an important objective in both rural development and spatial planning policy. The dispersed rural community advocated by the *Rural Development White Paper* (1999) for Ireland and in the RDS (2001) for Northern Ireland, although presenting challenges for environmental sustainability, may in the context of the wider rural Europe provide an alternative model of rural sustainability into the future. With the current uncertainty regarding global and national economies, rural areas may, as mentioned above, be in a strong position to adapt to local economic changes given the tradition of small-scale, flexible businesses.

In addition, the tradition of voluntary organisations acting for and on behalf of rural communities will play an important role in sustainability. Ray (2006: 284) points to the importance of voluntary collective activity, as well as social, cultural / symbolic, and educational capital in the discovery, creation and valorisation of place-specific resources. He draws on the roles of the private and public sector, voluntary associations and educational institutions in this activity. Further analysis by Hite (1999)⁵ highlights that animation and capacity-building actions need considerable periods of time in order to gather momentum, and to penetrate into parts of rural territories that experience the highest levels of deprivation and exclusion. They also confirm the appropriateness of locally-based and accessible interventions and institutional arrangements in targeting latent resources.

1.5.1 Community Development and Rural Restructuring

Development processes in Ireland, North and South, have a long tradition of community enterprise and have been integral in uniting individuals and groups in rural and urban places (O'Connell, 1986). Community-related action by its very nature is supposed to serve both the actors and the beneficiaries, and also benefit those who do not take part in the action, whatever that may be (Zakeri, 1999). Community development can be found in two ways, namely in the voluntary sector associated with community organisations, and secondly economic enterprise, often private but with financial support from rural development programmes. Although the latter form of action's main concern is economic growth, voluntary organisations also play a part in the local rural economy. Pearse (2003) uses the term 'community economy' to describe the interplay of three integral elements that comprise a local economy: public service, private enterprise, and the third sector (or volunteers). This model is highly applicable to rural development and restructuring where that interplay of sectors must be achieved in a balanced manner in order to realise future sustainability. Through community development in rural areas, voluntary bottom-up action provides the potential to pro-actively plan for the local economy, understanding local needs and addressing area-specific challenges.



1.6 Area-Based Approaches and the Potential of the Micro-Region

The ESDP, NSS and the RDS provide evidence of the growing advocacy of generative growth approaches. Richardson (1974) was among the first to make the distinction between competitive and generative growth. The former assumed that the national growth rate was given, and it examines how given increments of growth will be distributed among regions,

⁵ Based on the vanThunen model as a paradigm for rural development, Hite (1999) argues that innovative interventions of this type have the potential to reduce the risks associated with rural economies and redress peripherality and remoteness over time.

with one region invariably gaining at the expense of another. In contrast, generative growth places more emphasis on the regional and micro-regional levels, and treats the national growth rate as the resultant growth rate of individual parts of the state. *Post-Fordist* restructuring, the development of ICT and the emergence of endogenous and neo-endogenous governance structures, as evidenced by LEADER Partnerships, places an onus on regional / county and local actors to pursue policies of territorial resource development; although as the case study papers presented as part of this research illustrate, support from the centre is essential in enabling area-based development to happen, and in particular in enabling and empowering public authorities to contribute to collaborative local governance. Thus, the role of the territory as the space within which resources are located, accessed, organised and manipulated or conserved, assumes an increased significance (Douglas, 1995: 2005).

Lagendijk (1999) is among the commentators who support the notions of territorial differentiation and generative growth. In this context he introduces the concept of sustainable advantage. He cautions actors against engaging in zero-sum inter-territorial competitive games, which can inhibit valuable flows of inter-regional knowledge. Instead, he advocates policies that promote learning discourses, collective strategic management and relational strategies. In practice, inter-partnership networks and inter-territorial and transnational projects help avoid zero-sum games, and they promote the transfer of development skills between and within rural territories. However, competition for scarce resources with other partnerships and with other rural actors, particularly some agricultural interests, can inhibit learning discourses. Thus inter-rural and cross-border collaborations are especially relevant; and the contributions to rural development of area-based approaches and collaborative local governance, including cross-border collaborations, have been well documented (Creamer *et al*, 2008).

As part of an integrated policy mix, local development approaches offer rural areas the advantage of being able to tailor initiatives and interventions to meet specific needs and to unleash the development potential of actual and latent resources. However, exclusively endogenous approaches are unlikely to have sufficient resources to sustain themselves, and in this respect, partnership between the bottom-up and top-down is essential. The state and its local agents have a key role to play in rural development, and need to be spatially-attuned and sensitive in the allocation of public resources. The OECD identifies four types of aid, which public authorities can direct towards rural areas as:

- direct aid (to assist with increasing production capacity)
- indirect aid (removing the barriers towards enterprise development)
- the enhancement of infrastructure
- human resource development.

Drawing on international examples, the Organisation argues that forms of aid need to be integrated and delivered in a co-ordinated manner. Given their track record over three LEADER Programmes, and largely endogenous roots, Northern Ireland's – and in particular Ireland's – cohesive rural development partnerships offer an effective mechanism for aid delivery and co-ordination. In terms of spatially differentiating between rural areas, the OECD recommends that remote rural areas place considerable focus on human resource development in tandem with infrastructure development; with direct aid being more applicable to intermediate rural areas.

1.6.1 The micro-region

The idea that rural places are not homogenous, that we must differentiate rural space(s), and that there are complex actions taking place that now may have more in common with urban spaces than in the past, leads us to the concept of the '*micro-region*'. Below the sub-regional level, bottom-up forces acting within top-down frameworks will shape the future of local, small-scale economies. The idea of the micro-region not only recognises bottom-up

approaches but also addresses geographical identity below the traditional county / district / regional level. It allows for communities to identify themselves within their natural hinterland, which is an aggregate of the wider area. Clearer signals and actions from the centre are required to ensure that all agents of the state subscribe to and promote area-based development and collaborative governance; and while the rhetoric has been evident, follow-through has varied between agencies and across regions.

The pursuit of territorial approaches to rural development is optimised by the formation of collaborative governance structures that enable bottom-up participation and partnership between local actors and the state. While the bottom-up can play the lead role in identifying and articulating local priorities and can untap local knowledge, goodwill and social capital, the top-down has to assume the lead – or enabling – role in the provision of technical knowledge and financial resources. The dispersal of public resources needs to both reflect and promote a spatially differentiated approach, and in this respect policy makers are challenged to depart from traditional approaches that have tended to be spatially blind and to pursue new methods, in line with the principles and objectives of the ESDP. Thus, given the institutional arrangements in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland, the onus in terms of taking the lead in facilitating area-based development lies with central government and the regional authorities in the South and the Northern Ireland Executive.

1.7 Good Practice Insights

This research study proposes to consider what took place between the late 1980s to present day when rural diversification was mooted across a similar range of sectors with the objective of promoting the development of rural economies throughout Europe. While a number of rural communities have been engaging in diversification activities for over twenty years, the promotion of such activities has largely coincided with the introduction of funding programmes to support the development of disadvantaged areas. That the island of Ireland as a whole was classified as 'Objective 1' for funding purposes has meant that substantial funds were made available in support of such activities.

While a number of communities on the island of Ireland have been successful in turning their economies around, others have been less so. This research programme reflects on the learning emerging from two successful and well-established models of rural diversification, one in each jurisdiction of the island (see *Working Papers 3 and 5*). The purpose of this is to consider if or how the identified factors for success can be applied in a cross-border micro-region (see *Working Paper 4*) that has been attempting to reinvent itself for over a decade with mixed success.

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Working Paper 2

Area Profiles

Introduction

“All members of the system are interconnected in a vast and intricate network of relationships. They derive their essential properties and, in fact, their very existence from their relationships. The success of the whole community depends on the success of its individual members, while the success of each member depends on the success of the community as a whole”.

(Madron and Jopling, 2003: 33)

Several commentators (Hines, 2002; Norberg-Hodge, 2005) have articulated to the pressures that globalisation processes have placed on rural economies. They have described how the consequent need for rural areas to diversify their economic base was among the factors that contributed to the emergence of ‘partnership’ as a mechanism to enable the realisation of economic diversification and the overcoming of structural unemployment. They also outlined how the integration of the global economy, which has gathered pace over recent decades, led to the increased mobility of all forms of capital; such that regions and micro-regions (urban and rural) have become vulnerable to capital movement, and have been challenged to be more innovative in valorising local resources so as to gain economic advantage (Ponrouch, 1999). As Philip and Shucksmith observe, “the most common tactical response by local areas to globalisation has been to ‘sell the local to the global’ through local strategies, which compete for inward – or mobile – investment” (2003: 471).

Commenting on rural development strategies, with particular reference to economic aspects, the OECD observes that, “the identification and assessment of resources for economic development should be a starting point” (1995: 40). It goes on to describe how rural areas can avail of a ‘territorial image’, and how this can have a powerful appeal to consumers; especially where linked to such images as specific landscapes, cultural traditions or historic monuments.

In his writings, Moseley (2003) makes it clear that ‘diagnosis’ is the first step in approaching the development of a territory. Citing the UK Rural Development Commission (1994) he describes how such a diagnosis should involve the identification of needs, opportunities, and resources, and that it should include an assessment of social and economic trends and conditions, the resources likely to become available, as well as the areas of greatest needs and disadvantage (2003: 151). Indeed, he recommends that those involved in development undertake on-going ‘health-checks’ on the progress of territorial development and recommends that due attention is paid to hitherto neglected or under-utilised resources. He states that,

“Experience shows that additionality, and in various curious ways the reappraisal and re-evaluating of a local resource, hitherto idle or neglected, tends to have a wider social and cultural effect - increasing or reasserting a sense of local identity and pride of place that itself becomes a latent resource to be exploited in a continuing process of development” (2003: 48).

This thesis is also reflected in the *European Spatial Development Perspective* (ESDP), which recommends that in dealing with under-population and agricultural restructuring, rural areas “diversify their activities by basing their strategies on their own special features and needs... to make the most of their potential”.

Identifying Territorial Resources

Ó Núanáin, (1999) and Cawley and Keane (1999) concur on the significance of territorial resources in shaping and determining the impact of rural development initiatives, and as indicators of development outputs and impacts. Cawley and Keane note that, “development actions must start with the local conditions, as it is out of these that change will occur” (1999: 147). Emphasising contextual conditions for rural development, they hold that the impacts and limitations of actions or projects will depend on:

- where the area is at in terms of factors like the strength and diversity of the local economy, its level of social infrastructure, its institutional capacity and the degree of social cohesion present in the area
- the goals and objectives that are set as part of the proposed development actions.

The former LEADER European Observatory – AEIDL – has done considerable work in seeking to refine and categorise the distinctive elements of territory and the milieu in which development initiatives operate. A strong advocate of area-based development, the Observatory has produced a number of publications and highlighted case studies, advocating how rural territories have successfully capitalised on indigenous resources to achieve sustainable development. This, the Observatory (1999: 5) has termed achieving ‘territorial competitiveness’, which it operationalises as:

- taking the area’s resources into account in a bid for overall coherence
- involving different players and institutions
- integrating business sectors into an innovation dynamic
- co-operating with other areas and linking up with regional, national and European policies as well as with the global context.

Thus, the aim of development is to ensure that the territory has the resources and skills, on an on-going basis, to promote action and to ensure that maximum value is added. As the commentators mentioned previously have argued, these resources and skills need to exist and be developed across sectors and across agents.

AEIDL has sought to categorise the resources and skills in terms of four dimensions of territorial competitiveness (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Dimensions of Territorial Competitiveness

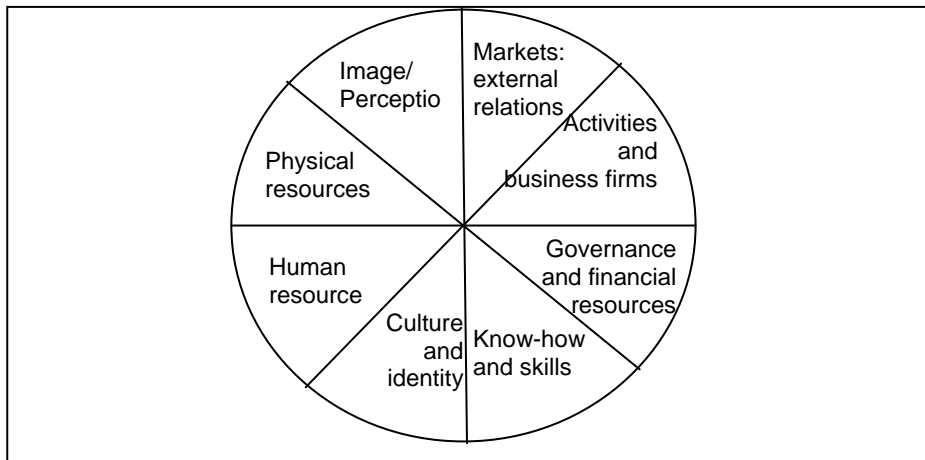
<p><i>Social Competitiveness</i> The ability of players involved to act effectively together on the basis of shared conceptions about a project, and encouraged by co-operation among the various institutional levels</p>	<p><i>Environmental Competitiveness</i> Ability of the players involved to make the most of their environment, by making it a distinctive element of their area, whilst at the same time ensuring that their natural resources and heritage are preserved and revitalised</p>
<p><i>Economic Competitiveness</i> Ability of players involved to create and retain maximum added value in the area by strengthening links between sectors and by turning their combined resources into assets for enhancing the value and distinctiveness of their local products and services</p>	<p><i>Positioning in the Global Context</i> Ability of the players involved to find the area’s role in relation to other areas and to the outside world in general, in such a way as to develop their territorial plan to the full and to ensure its viability within the global context.</p>

(Source: adapted from AEIDL, 1999)

- AEIDL proposes this four-dimensional framework as a starting point from which to assess the competitiveness of a territory; and in respect of the above dimensions of territorial competitiveness, it is necessary to identify and classify the components of

territorial capital. To this end, the Observatory proposes an eight-component model (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1: Eight Components of an Area's Capital



(Source: LEADER European Observatory, 1999: 22)

Each of these components of territorial resources may be defined as:

- *Physical Resources*: natural resources (including typography, soil, flora and fauna, habitats, water), public facilities and infrastructure, historical and architectural heritage
- *Human Resources*: the area's population, demographics, characteristics and social structure
- *Culture and Identity*: the shared values of the players in the area, their interests, attitudes and forms of recognition
- *Know-How and Skills*: including technological mastery and research and development capabilities
- *Governance and Financial Resources*: the strength and dynamics of the area's institutions, citizen participation, decision making processes, access to and management of financial resources (this is addressed specifically in the case study working papers)
- *Activities and business firms*: their structure and degree of geographical concentration
- *Markets and external relations*: including the degree of integration and participation in exchange networks
- The *Image and Perception* of the area, both internally and externally.

This model encompasses the elements of territory presented by Cavazzani (2000) and Moseley (2003) among others. It also has the advantage that it covers the areas of actual and projected activity that are relevant to partnerships, as identified in the earlier literature review. Moreover, it allows for analysis over time, and appears to have sufficient breath to deal with the issues and dynamics that are currently affecting rural communities.

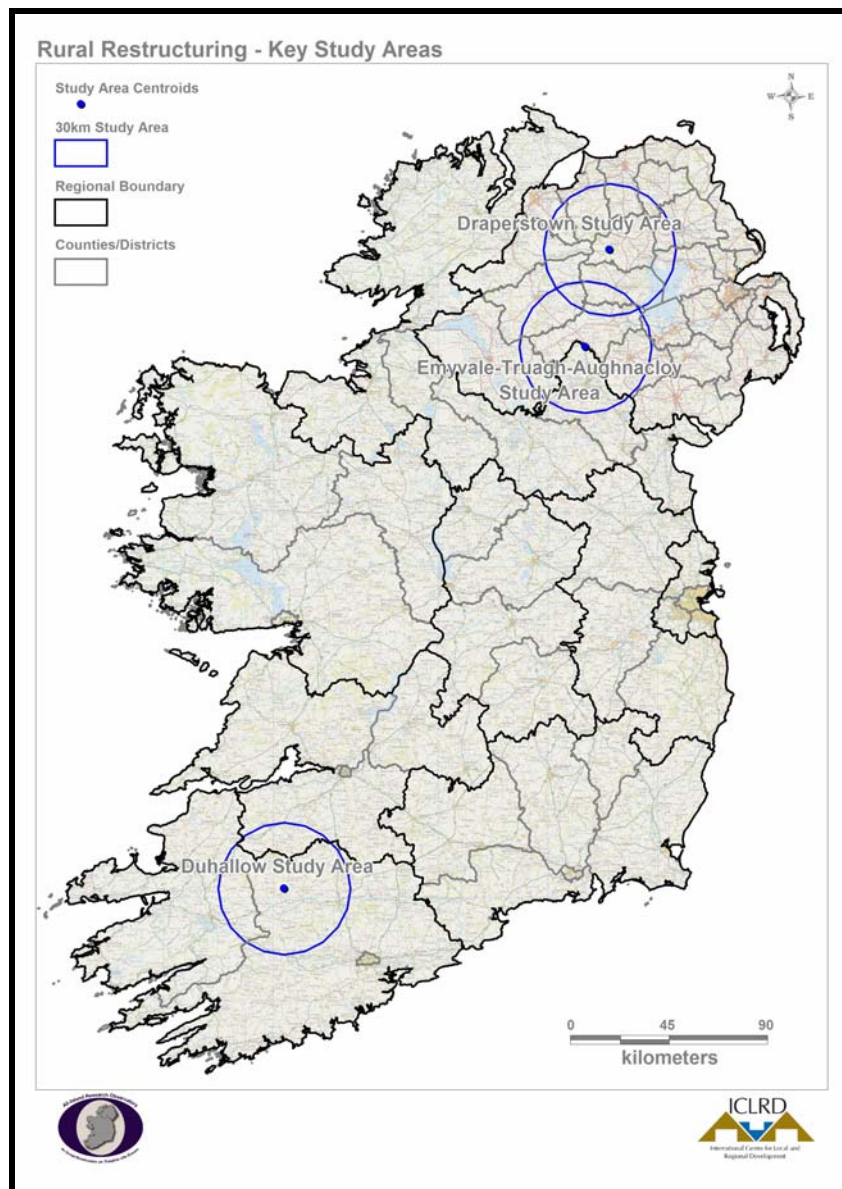
The profiles of the three case study territories presented in this working paper utilise the model elaborated by AEIDL. In addition to encompassing the asset-based approach favoured in rural development literature, this model also emphasises the linkages and integration between elements of territory and their development, and the importance of balance between the dimensions of sustainable development, as is eloquently captured by COMHAR, as follows:

“Sustainable Development must encompass environmental protection, economic development and social development in an integrated manner. Sustainable development is a process in which these three objectives, which can be mutually reinforcing, are addressed on an equal footing. Actions which fail to take account of the need for a harmonious balance between the three objectives may undermine the system as a whole, even if progress is made in one particular area” (2002: 2-3).

The remainder of this Working Paper introduces the three case study areas through which this research programme reflects on what has taken place over the past twenty-to twenty-five years in terms of rural development and economic diversification; the three case study areas being:

- Draperstown, Magherafelt District
- Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy on the North Monaghan / South Tyrone border
- Duhallow, North West Cork / East Kerry (see Figure 2.2)

Figure 2.2: Location of Case Study Areas

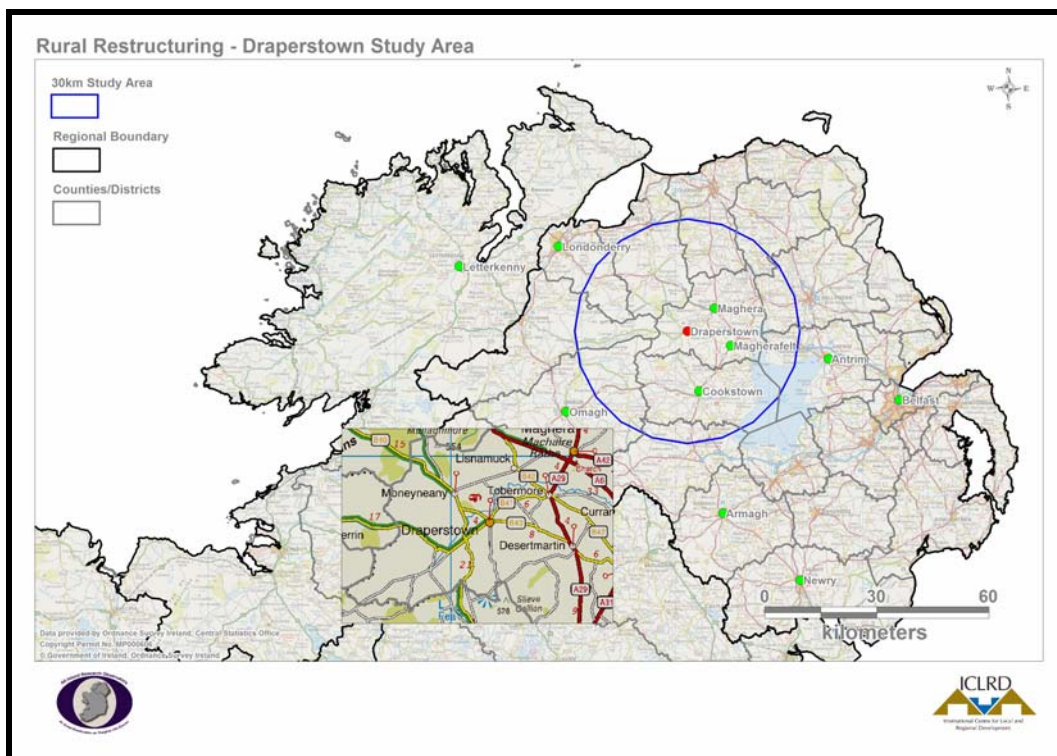


Draperstown

2.1 Introduction

Draperstown is located in County Derry, approximately 12 kilometres northwest of Magherafelt, in the Upper Moyola Valley, and centres on the parish of Ballinascreen. The village is considered one of the most important 'plantation settlements' in the County. As a result it has a number of buildings of architectural significance and a distinctive urban form, resulting in the village core's designation as a Conservation Area – the only such designation in the Magherafelt District Council area. To the west and north of the village are the Sperrin Mountains providing a scenic setting for the village. The surrounding area is predominately rural, relying on construction and small-scale industry for employment. Draperstown is classified as a village under the 2001 Census of Population with a population of 1,638 persons.

Figure 2.3: Draperstown Case Study Area



2.1.1 Human Resources

Draperstown village is located within the Electoral Ward of Draperstown, which is within the Magherafelt District Council area. Located on the periphery of the council area, it is bounded by Cookstown (Lissan and Dunnamore wards), Omagh (Owenkillew ward) and Strabane (Plumbridge ward) District Councils. In the most recent census for Northern Ireland (2001), the Draperstown Electoral Ward experienced a **population decline** of 9%; a fall from 2,704 in 1991 to 2,461 in 2001. This is at odds with an overall population increase in Northern Ireland of 5% and an increase of almost 10% in the Magherafelt area. Population increases in adjacent wards such as Tobermore which rose by 15% (1,802 in 1991 to 2,076 in 2001) may have absorbed some growth in the proximate area. In addition, the location of larger towns such as Magherafelt and Maghera are attracting additional growth, possibly redirecting potential rises in population from the Draperstown area. The fall in population may also be

attributed to restrictive planning regulations in the Sperrin highland area within the village hinterlands.

Despite a decline in population over the period 1991 to 2001, the mean age of population is 33.5 years, which is slightly below the Northern Irish average. Twenty-six percent of the ward is **aged under 16 years** (compared with 23.6% for Northern Ireland) and 15% of the **population are aged 60 or over** (compared with 17.6% for Northern Ireland). Overall, this shows a relatively healthy population profile which may result in future population growth, particularly as the birth rate is currently at 2.55.

Draperstown experienced some **in-migration** in the inter-censal period with 5.7% of the total population comprising new residents. Some of the population decline can be accounted for by a lower, but similar, proportion of people leaving the ward (4.5%). The majority of in-migrants came from elsewhere in the U.K. (137 people) with only 3 coming from outside the U.K. It may be assumed that these numbers will have changed over the 2000s due, for example, to greater mobility from the EU accession states.

2.1.2 Culture and Identity

Draperstown is the site of one of the most important plantation settlements in County Derry. Much of the capital funding it has received in recent years from agencies such as the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) and the Heritage Lottery Fund have contributed to building renovations, conservation and protection. The village core was designated a Conservation Area in 1979 and, as a result of funding and studies such as the Town Heritage Initiative (THI) scheme, some physical improvements have been made to the townscape and urban form; thus resulting in less dereliction and vacancies. The most recent THI study (2006) identified that there is still a lot to be done to improve the overall townscape.

The village and hinterlands are located in the foothills of the Sperrin Mountains giving it a distinct setting and contributing to the area's identity. Under the *Magherafelt Area Plan 2015* (currently in draft), the Sperrins are designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This identifies the area as contributing significantly to amenity and recreation facilities in its wider hinterland. In addition, the AONB designation sets limits on the amount and density of development that can take place in the area. Tourism is an emerging industry and one that has been recognised as having the potential to contribute to the local economy and that can provide a distinct identity for the area.



In the vicinity of Draperstown a number of annual events of national and international importance take place. The Glasgowbury music festival has been held near the village every July since 2000. It is gaining growing recognition beyond the local area, attracting both Northern Irish and international bands, as well as new visitors to the area. The Sperrins Balloon Festival also takes place each year in Draperstown in June. This also draws a wide range of visitors and hot air balloon enthusiasts to the area.

2.1.3 Physical Resources

The landscape of the Draperstown area is dominated by the Sperrin Mountain range, with the village located in the Upper Moyola valley between Slieve Gallion to the southwest and the Sperrin range to northeast. The Moyola River provides an important ecological corridor in the valley and is a distinct feature of the landscape. The designation of the Sperrins as an AONB gives additional protection to the landscape of the area by regulating development

restrictively. As a result, housing and industry has been located in largely clustered development in and around the village. There is some dispersed settlement, as is characteristic of the Northern Irish countryside generally.

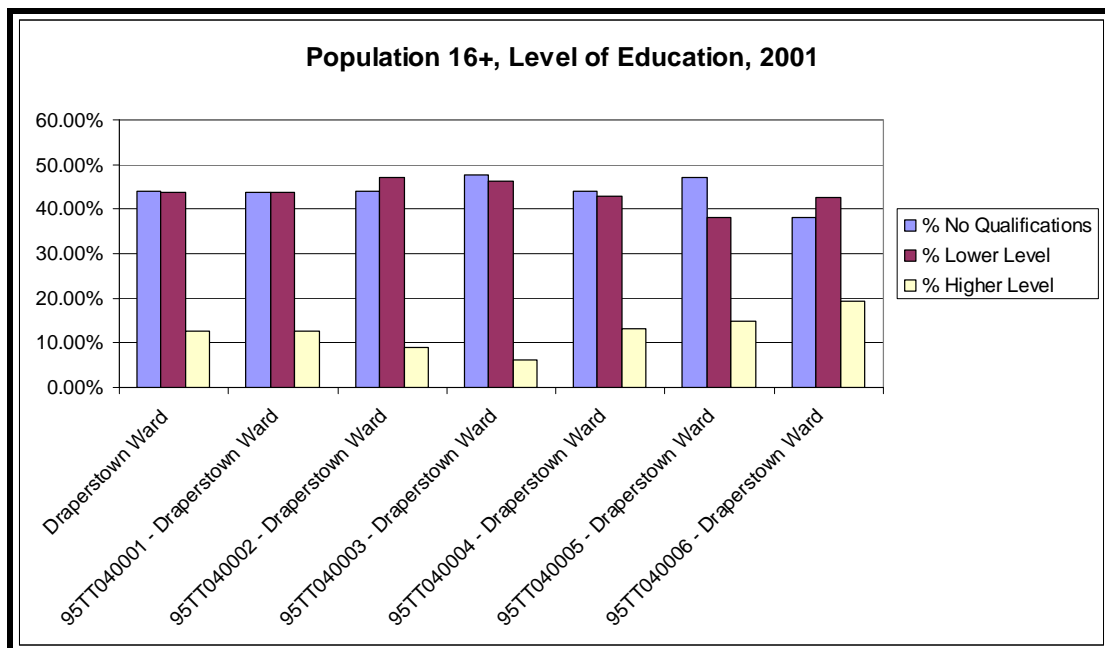
Slieve Gallion is located outside the AONB boundaries but was identified as an Area of High Scenic Value in the Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment in 2000.

2.1.4 Know-How and Skills

The ward of Draperstown has a below average proportion of adults aged 16 to 74 years with a degree level or higher qualifications (12.5%) – the Northern Irish rate is 15.8%. Additionally 63% of residents in the area have no qualifications or a low level of qualifications (see Figure 2.3). In 2007, half of all school leavers went on to higher education and 29% enrolled in further education. The low levels of the population with degree level or higher qualifications may be accounted for by low return rates after attainment. Anecdotal evidence would suggest, however, that return rates have improved in recent years (see Working Paper 3) and given the healthy age profile in the area, the next census in 2011 may yield very different results for education and qualifications.

Workspace, which was established in 1982 to stimulate economic growth in the area and support community development, has provided a number of key skills training initiatives in Draperstown. Over the intervening years, Workspace has contributed significantly to skills and know-how in the area, filling a gap that was identified in the late-1970s/early-1980s. It has taken advantage of a number of national initiatives and programmes in order to address local need and contribute to the local economy; for example, the Start a Business Programme, the WRAISE Programme (Women in Rural Areas into Self-Employment) and the New Deal Programme. Other schemes for individuals include Job Broking, Skills for Carers, Skillsmatch and ICT training.

Figure 2.4: Level of Education Achieved in Draperstown, 2001



The Rural College and Derrynoid Centre is also located in Draperstown and was established in 1992. It provides education and training in rural community development, for the local as well as the wider rural economy of Northern Ireland and the border counties. Core training

provided by the college includes accredited educational programmes to Certificate, Diploma and MSc levels. It offers an outreach part-time programme for the MSc in Rural Development with Queen's University Belfast and the Diploma in Community Development Practice from NUI, Galway.

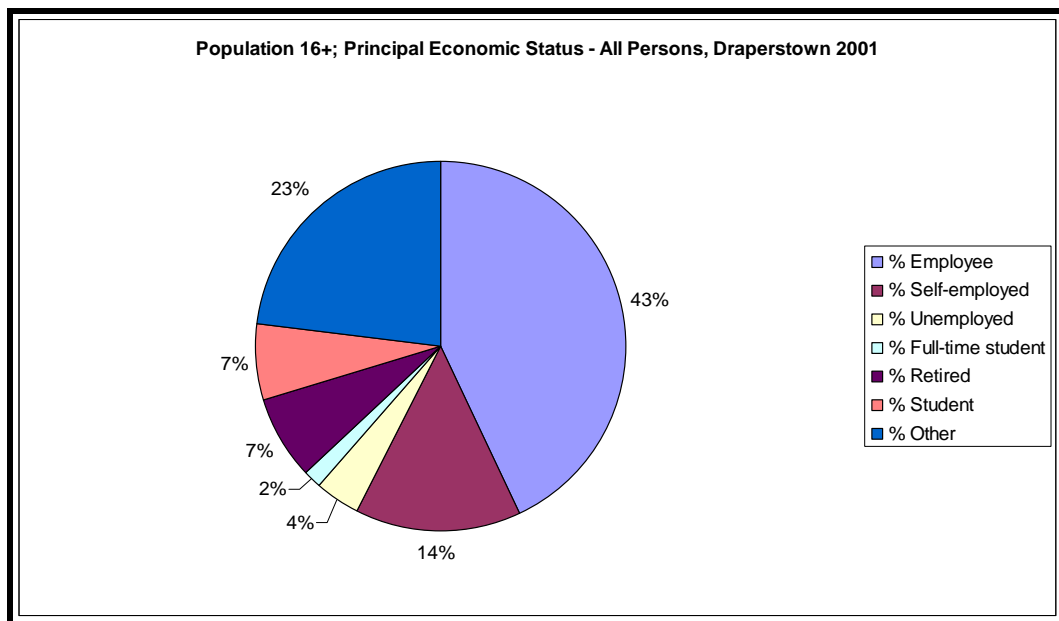
2.1.5 Economic Activities and Business Firms

In the 2001 Census for Northern Ireland, Draperstown's unemployment level of 3.8% compared favourably with the region (3.4% unemployment in mid-Ulster). Of the unemployment rate, just over a third was long-term unemployed (see Figure 2.4).

Manufacturing and mining, quarrying and construction combine to be the most significant source of employment in the area, accounting for 40% of all jobs (20% each). Many of the initiatives established by Workspace have greatly contributed to these employment bases in the area. In addition to providing training for start-up companies in the area, Workspace also assist established businesses.

Agricultural reliance, for such a rural area, is relatively low accounting for just 5.4% of total people employed. In changing economic times, and particularly with the decline in jobs in the manufacturing and construction sectors, Draperstown may be vulnerable in the future.

Figure 2.5: Principal Economic Status in Draperstown, 2001



The long-term investment and support from Workspace should assist these businesses in the future. In addition, the self-reliance that has been evident in the area for a number of decades should remain a positive characteristic in the area.

2.1.6 Markets and External Relations

A number of initiatives administered by Workspace have assisted in expanding individual markets for business. Schemes such as the Tradelinks programme, Be International and KNOW programme have encouraged local businesses to expand their markets. In particular there has been support for cross-border expansion, particularly to the northwest of the island. Much of the assistance in these programmes is provided through one-to-one mentoring.

Workspace itself has expanded its markets; the insulation company, Homeseal, for example, now have a depot in Glasgow and have worked in Dundalk, Co. Louth in conjunction with Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI) while Network Recruitment now offer recruitment services for the whole island, North and South.

2.1.7 Image and Perception

The location of Draperstown in mid-Ulster, in an area of relatively poor agricultural land and at a distance from major urban centres such as Belfast and Derry/Londonderry, has resulted in the need for self-reliance and what locals describe as a 'can-do' attitude. There is strong evidence of an **entrepreneurial** spirit in the area, with a large number of self employment and small-scale industry and business. The need to provide employment and create a stronger economic base drove a number of individuals to establish Workspace in the early 1980s, a time where economic needs were very high and the area was suffering from high levels of emigration. In addition, the Troubles contributed to the stagnant economy in the area.



The area's location in the foothills of the **Sperrins** may have further contributed to the village's sense of isolation in the past but is now identified as a positive feature of the area where a small tourism industry is now emerging. The Sperrins are increasingly pictured in marketing material for the area; particularly since the establishment of Sperrins Tourism Limited.

2.1.8 Governance and Financial Resources

Workspace is the local enterprise agency for the Magherafelt District Council area and was established prior to the availability of EU funds such as LEADER or IFI. The company is limited by guarantee, has over 170 members and is managed by a voluntary board which comprises of the Workspace Chief Executive, local business people and representatives from statutory agencies. Workspace has now been in existence in its current form for 25 years and in that time it has only had two CEOs: Patsy McShane, for the first ten years; and Brian Murray for the past fifteen years. The 170 members of Workspace appoint the Board of Directors through an electoral system for 3-year terms.

The Workspace Group includes Network Personnel, Network Recruitment, Business Results, Energy Initiatives (Homeseal), and the Enterprise Agency. Its initial establishment was funded by local fundraising (GBP£44,000) and a bank loan of GBP£16,000 to acquire 16,000 sq.ft. of disused industrial space in the area. This was purchased to provide workspaces for local business people (hence the name of the group).

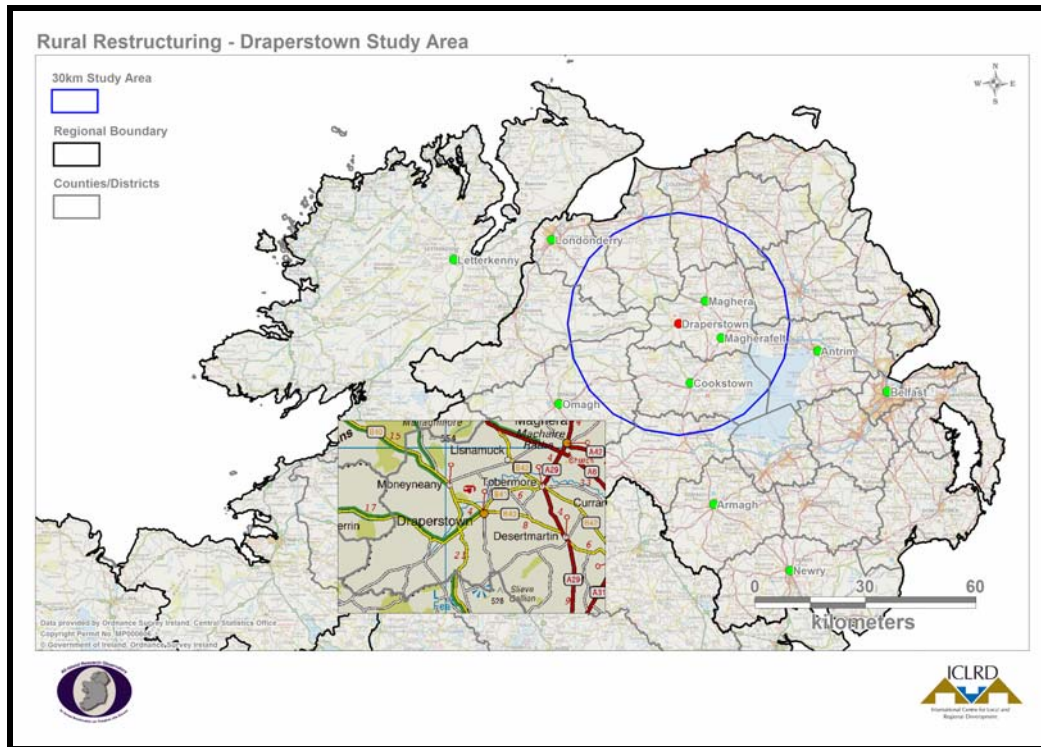
Since the establishment of Workspace, the group has continued to be self-financing by returning profits made from the various businesses into the group to finance social development infrastructure such as the afterschool club and the recreation centre. Only a small proportion of its monies come from EU and Lottery funding or government contracts. The company enjoys its independence; placing its emphasis on making a profit to ensure that Workspace survives and that profits can be reinvested to support local social needs.

Emyvale – Truagh – Aughnacloy

2.2 Introduction

The contiguous villages and parish of Emyvale–Truagh–Aughnacloy are located on the Irish border in the south-west of Ulster; Emyvale and Truagh are situated in north Monaghan, whilst Aughnacloy is in south Tyrone. This natural border hinterland is bisected by the strategic N2/A5 transport corridor linking Dublin to Derry/Londonderry and Donegal. The area is predominantly rural in form with agriculture, together with small-scale industrial activity, being the main industries and sources of local employment. Monaghan Town is ten kilometres to the south of Emyvale, and Aughnacloy eight kilometres to the north. Aughnacloy is classified as a small village or hamlet by the 2001 Northern Ireland Census with a population of 801; Emyvale, the second significant settlement in this area, is of similar size with 700 inhabitants. The community of Truagh is different to Emyvale and Aughnacloy in terms of scale; Truagh being a parish consisting of the smaller rural settlements of Ballyoisin, Carrickroe, Clara and Mullan.

Figure 2.6: Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy Case Study Area



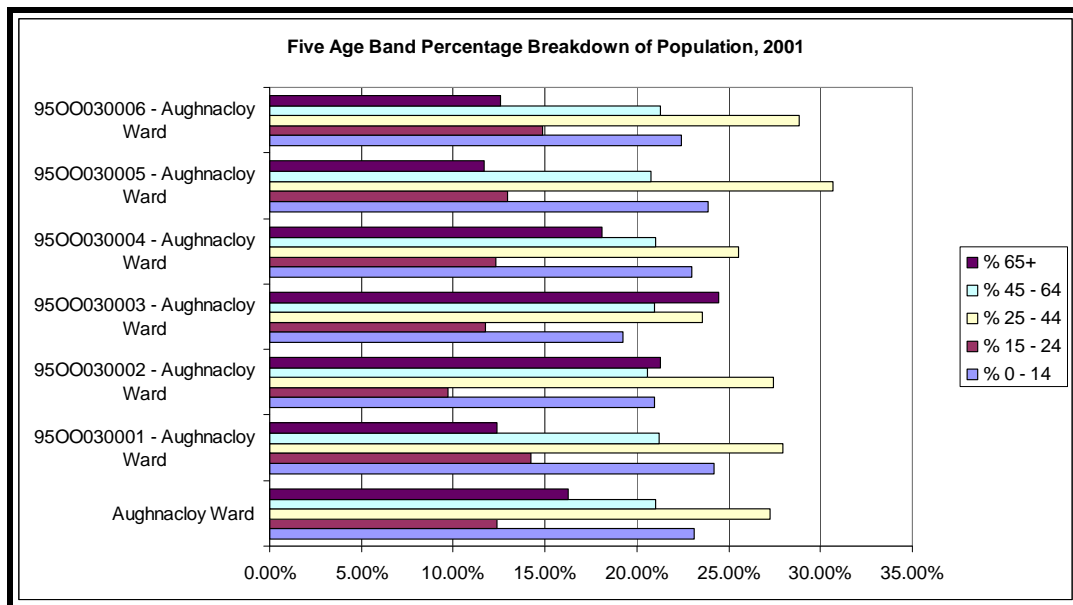
As this area is located on a transnational boundary with critical differences in central and local government organisation there are challenges in the reporting of key statistics. For example, the census frequency varies between Northern Ireland (last census: 2001) and Ireland (last census: 2006), as do the smaller geographical units of data collection. It is anticipated this will be addressed in part when both jurisdictions conduct a census of population in 2011.

2.2.1 Human Resources

Aughnacloy village is set within the electoral ward of Aughnacloy in the local government district of Dungannon and South Tyrone. Growth took place in the ward from 1991 to 2001,

with a **population increase** of 12.6% from 1,818 to 2,047. However, it is unclear how growth was distributed within the ward, and particularly if a population increase occurred in Aughnacloy village or the wider rural area. Over the same period, the population of Northern Ireland increased by 5%, which demonstrates above-average growth for the Aughnacloy ward. This may result from a number of factors – led by the attractiveness of urban living and supported by greater mobility in the Border area following the Peace Process and Belfast Agreement of 1998, and increased commuting distances to major urban centres including Belfast and Dublin. A further population increase of 9.6% occurred in Dungannon and South Tyrone over the period 2001-2006. It is, therefore, highly likely that the population of Aughnacloy ward has also increased during this time; particularly given its proximity to employment opportunities in the construction and manufacturing sectors, and in-migration for agriculture related jobs.

Figure 2.7: Age Profile of Population in Aughnacloy, 2001



Similar to Aughnacloy ward, the area of Emyvale-Truagh also recorded a population increase in the past decade. The six Electoral Divisions (EDs)⁶ of Emyvale-Truagh demonstrated a population increase between 1996 and 2006 from 3,013 persons to 3,443 persons or 14.3%; a rate of growth lower than the national average. The population of this area previously peaked in the 1960s. The decline that followed, most probably associated with the onset of the Northern Ireland ‘Troubles’ and economic restructuring within the Irish state, persisted until the mid-1980s. During this time, the village of Mullan, for example, became known locally as the ‘Deserted Village’.

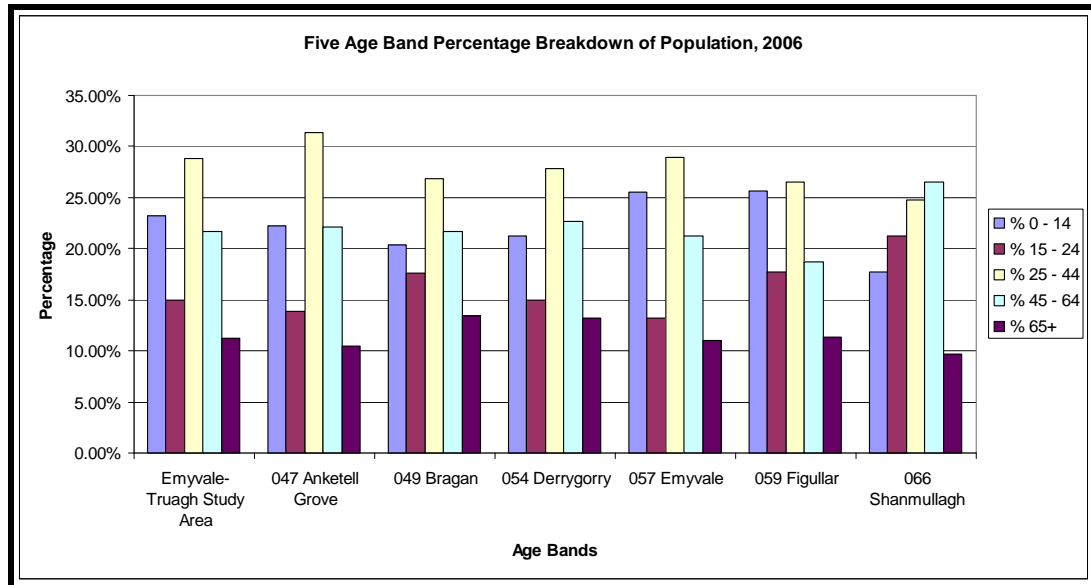
The **demographic profile** of this cross-border area is contributing towards its structural weakness. Returns from the 2001 census show that the population of Aughnacloy village is aging with 26.6% aged 60 and over, whereas in Aughnacloy ward 20.9% are recorded in this same band. Typical reasons for this include proximity to local amenities (shops, café, village hall), and the location of fold and residential home accommodation within settlements rather than open countryside. The percentage of young people (under 16 years) is similar within the village and ward of Aughnacloy with 23.3% and 24.7% respectively.

Throughout this natural border hinterland, **in-migration** has played a significant role in boosting population numbers. Within Aughnacloy 1.1% of the population were from an ethnic

⁶ The six EDs comprising the Emyvale-Truagh area as discussed in this working paper are; Anketell Grove; Bragan; Derrycorry; Emyvale; Figullar; Shanmullagh.

group other than white at the 2001 census, which compares with 0.4% in the same settlement classification band, and 0.8% for all Northern Ireland. In Emyvale-Truagh, as of the last Census (2006) non-Irish nationals constituted 11% of the population in the area, indicating that in-migration has assisted growth.

Figure 2.8: Age Profile of Population in Emyvale-Truagh, 2006



But this is only one of several potential factors that have been put forward to account for the increase in human capital in this border area. Other factors include the ‘Border workers’ (or ‘Frontier workers’) phenomenon and the attractiveness of rural living with the convenience of proximity to larger service centres such as Monaghan Town and Dungannon.

2.2.2 Culture and Identity

While the communities of Emyvale-Truagh in the South and Aughnacloy in the North would have existed as ‘back-to-back’ communities for several decades, they would traditionally have shared a common culture and identify. This was severely fractured during the Troubles – with social networks and relationships, as well as physical links between both settlements, being destroyed.

The community see themselves as having both a positive and negative culture and heritage; the positive being centred on the natural environment and quality of the landscape while the negative relates to the Troubles of the past thirty years. The rurality of this border hinterland, together with its on-going dependence on agriculture, and more recently the agri-food sector, plays a big part in the area’s cultural identity. Up until the 1960s, Aughnacloy would have served as the market town for this cross-border area – fair days were an important part of the calendar.

Throughout the Troubles, there has been little or no interest in the cultural heritage of the area. Yet, this area is very historic; with a number of forts, passage graves. More specifically, it is well known for its Celtic cross, the Bragan Cross and the Old Errigal Graveyard with headstones dating back to the 17th Century. The local culture and heritage has become a



tool for community engagement and local development; with the communities of Truagh and Aughnacloy having come together to establish the Clogher Historical Society to record and document the history and heritage of this border area.

2.2.3 Physical Resources

The landscape of this cross-border hinterland is unique. The rolling drumlins have created a picturesque countryside that, for the most part, remains largely unspoilt. As with many of its surrounding counties, this region has suffered from development pressures from one-off housing; and in 2007, proposals for further countryside development (through favourable zonings) resulted in the Irish Minister for the Environment ‘calling in’ the Monaghan County Development Plan.

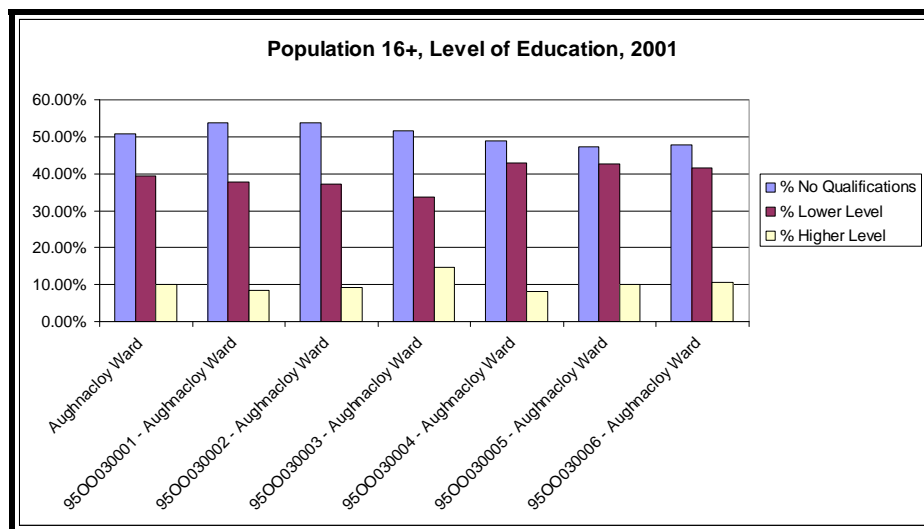
The natural landscape is spotted with Loughs, valleys, mountains and drumlins to name but a few features. Specifically, this border area identifies closely with the River Blackwater, Lough Muckno, Sliabh Beag and the Bragan mountains. The Bragan mountain area is, under the *County Monaghan Development Plan 2007-2013*, designated as a primary amenity; this unique landscape is unspoilt and designated as a nature conservation area where normally exempted development is not permitted.

These natural features are part of the region’s untapped potential going forward. Active intervention is needed both to unleash the potential and safeguard them from over-exploitation.

2.2.4 Know-How and Skills

Several primary and secondary level education facilities exist in the Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy area, and these tend to act as a focal point for community organisation and development. During the Troubles the numbers completing primary education and progressing to secondary-level dipped significantly. This has been attributed to the local road closures and ‘the hassle’ of border patrols. The legacy of early school leaving remains; there is a belief locally that illiteracy rates are high and are inter-generational.

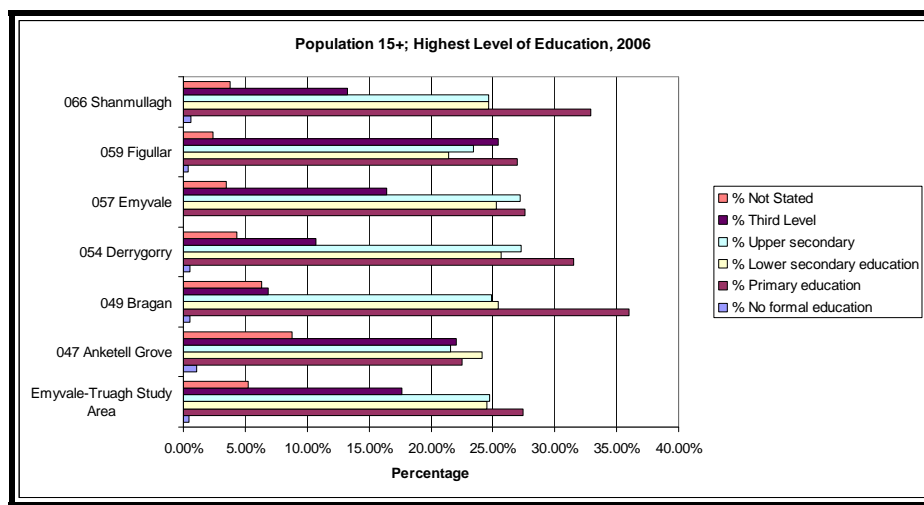
Figure 2.9: Level of Education Achieved in Aughnacloy, 2006



As with other rural areas, the significant challenge for economic development is to promote training opportunities and **prevent out-migration of inhabitants with third level qualifications** (a 'brain drain'). The reliance of the area on small-scale industrial employment and the lack of skilled opportunities have meant that those with third level qualifications do not, for the most part, return to this border area upon completion of their studies.

In Aughnacloy the 2001 census shows the percentage of population with a degree or higher qualification is 10.4%, which is below the Northern Ireland average of 15.8%. Of greater significance, however, is that 51.3% have no qualifications, in comparison with an average of 41.6% for Northern Ireland. Similarly in Emyvale-Truagh, 15.2% of the population have a degree or higher qualification which again is lower than the national average of 18.5%.

Figure 2.10: Level of Education Achieved in Emyvale-Truagh, 2006



Evidence of low skills attainment suggests that this border area will be **exposed to further restructuring** that may take place in the national and global economy affecting sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing. In order to respond to such economic challenges, training must be available in order to develop, within the community, a flexible workforce that can adapt to opportunities, for example farm diversification, tourism, and services. To this end, the Blackwater Valley Community Learning, Cultural, ICT and Peace Centre is providing training in ICT to local individuals and businesses to improve local opportunities. There is a huge interest locally in the roll-out of adult and second-chance education programmes which will benefit the wider region.

2.2.5 Economic Activities and Business Firms

In the 2001 Census for Northern Ireland low unemployment levels were recorded for Aughnacloy village (3%) which compares favourably with other settlements of comparable size (3.3%), and across Northern Ireland (4.1%). These statistics are similar to those for the Emyvale-Truagh area, though for a later year (2006); with 3.7% unemployment which at that time was lower than the County Monaghan employment level of 4.8%.

Agriculture is more important to the Emyvale-Truagh economy than the Aughnacloy ward with 11.7% of jobs in this sector, compared with 9.5%. Dependency on agriculture and mining is also greater in Emyvale-Truagh than for County Monaghan (also 9.5%). This is explained by the large number of small and medium-sized enterprises clustered in this part of County Monaghan that are involved with mushroom growing and poultry farming.

Conversely, the commercial and service sector features less in the Emyvale-Truagh economy (29.5%) than that of County Monaghan (34.1%).

Other statistical highlights are:

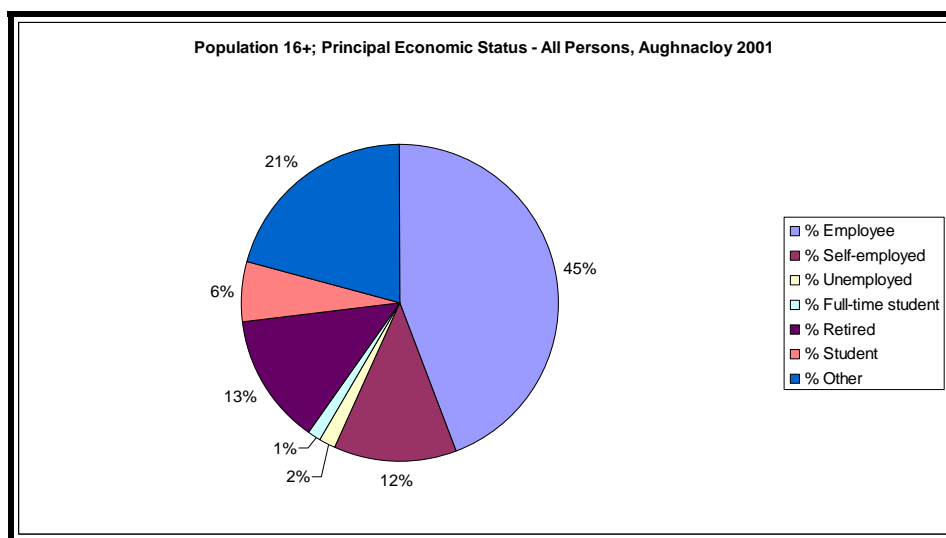
Table 2.2: Occupational Profile Emyvale-Truagh and Monaghan (2006)

	Agriculture and Mining	Manufacturing and Construction	Clerical and Admin	Commercial and Service	Other
Monaghan County	9.5	28.4	18.9	34.1	9.0
Emyvale-Truagh	11.7	26.7	19.4	29.5	12.6

- *Similarity* in the building and construction sector:
 - 8.4% Emyvale-Truagh; 10.9% Aughnacloy ward (2006 Rol census/2001 NI census)
- *Difference* in manufacturing sector:
 - 18.2% Emyvale-Truagh; 23.1% in Aughnacloy ward (2006 Rol census/2001 NI census)
- *Difference* in sales (retail) sector:
 - 10.7% Emyvale-Truagh; 16.5% in Aughnacloy ward (2006 Rol census/2001 NI census)

Industrial employment has relied heavily on **traditional manufacturing** – areas that now see themselves in decline; these include footwear, furniture, poultry, pigs, mushrooms, engineering and building materials. The reform of CAP, together with the downturn in the construction boom, has seen each of these sectors take a dip in terms of output and growth potential. Emerging industries such as the craft sector are also struggling for survival.

Figure 2.11: Principal Economic Status in Aughnacloy, 2001



It is clear that whilst there is a degree of commonality in the economic structure of Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy, at least at ED / Ward level comparison, the economies of this border area are by no means homogenised. The pattern of activity should be further interrogated to

understand the 'pull' of other settlements particularly in service provision and employment creation; analysis of cross-border movement will also assist in understanding the relative strengths of this area.

2.2.6 Markets and External Relations

The Emyvale-Truagh area of this cross-border region is designated under the **CLAR** programme. Initiated by the Irish Government, CLÁR (Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais/ Programme for Revitalising Rural Areas) is an investment programme designed to tackle the problem of depopulation, and the decline and lack of services in rural areas. For this peripheral area of north Monaghan, this designation has facilitated linkages between various development bodies and made available funding for developments such as tertiary road upgrades, and so on. In a border community, the challenge with such designation is that is, rather unnaturally, ceases at the border line – irrespective of natural boundaries or hinterlands.

For this cross-order area, **informal cooperation would be the norm**; this could be joint discussions around an issue (road safety between respective local councils) or a short-term partnership based on a funded project (under PEACE or INTERREG for example). With few formalised cross-border partnerships in this border area with the objective of promoting sustainable development and economic growth, the communities are heavily reliant on two **cross-border networks**; namely the Blackwater Regional Partnership and the Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN). These networks bring together local communities and local government agencies respectively in the implementation of both grassroots and strategic initiatives.

2.2.7 Image and Perception

The location of Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy places it at the periphery of Northern Ireland and Ireland – and therefore from the centre of government in both jurisdictions (i.e. Belfast and Dublin respectively). During the Troubles, no inward or government investment was made in this area – for fear of its subsequent destruction. Because these, and other border communities, had to rely on themselves and adopt a 'can-do' attitude, there is a strong image of this border area as being **entrepreneurial**. The local population are not afraid to take risks and establish their own businesses – irrespective of whether it has proven market potential. In their own words, they are 'grafters'.

The '**Blackwater**' name is increasing being used by this border community to brand and market itself on a cross-border basis. The Blackwater Regional Partnership has, over the past fifteen years, worked with the communities in the wider region to develop initiatives which will put this area 'on the map' and attract both visitors and investors to the region. Walking and rambling clubs in the area have grouped together to develop the 'Blackwater Rambling Programme'. Other local businesses in the area have used variations of local townland or parish names; in Truagh, for example, businesses include **TruWood** (furniture-making) and **Tru-Beginnings** (childcare).



The local population has a strong affinity to the area; they have lived through a lot in the past thirty years – and it is a testament to their strength of character that they have remained committed to the development of this border hinterland.

While interested in **rural tourism** development, it is recognised that, like many of the existing small-scale farm-diversification businesses in the area, this is low-skill, low value-added. As such, there is a wider interest in developing business clusters and encouraging the growth of a 'smart economy'.

2.2.8 Governance and Financial Resources

The communities of Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy have invested a lot of themselves in the promotion and development of cross-border and cross-community relationships in the past decade; building up the capacity of each local community to engage in community development programmes, building trust between committee members and agreeing on their own priority actions. Unlike the other two case study areas, there is not one single organisation 'driving' local development in this cross-border area; rather there is a plethora of local community based development associations whose key focus is on the development of their own communities first and foremostly; with collaborative efforts being assigned a secondary function.

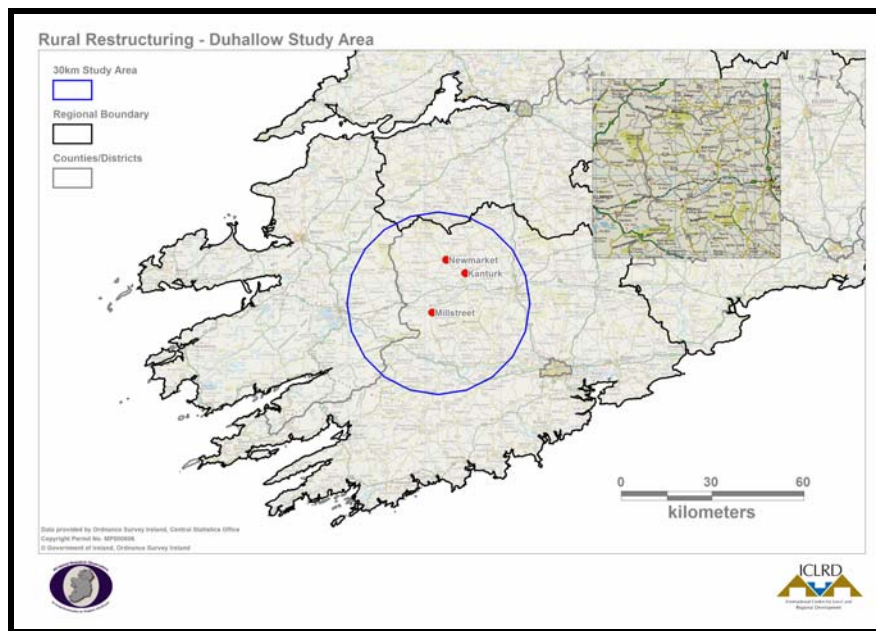
One of this myriad of local associations, however, there is one grouping that is emerging as a 'champion' in terms of recognising the necessity for cross-border and cross-community collaboration; particularly in the past few years whereby the various settlements in this natural cross-border hinterland have been struggling to maintain a local employment and service base. The Truagh Development Association has existed for over twenty years and having first built up its own capacity, it is now focused on cross-border collaboration in a range of areas: youth, elderly, enterprise, peace building and reconciliation, sport, and cultural heritage. The organisation, however, is dependent on various funding programmes to carry out this work - particularly PEACE funding; a reality that the community at large would like to move away from as there is an increasing sense of frustration locally with the bureaucracy attached to such funding.

Duhallow

2.3 Introduction

Duhallow is located in the south-west of Ireland. The bulk (c.80%) of the territory is in the north-west of County Cork, while the remainder is in the east of County Kerry. Duhallow is a predominantly rural area of just over 1,200km², with 93.96% of the population residing in villages and in the open countryside. The area's main towns are Kanturk (pop. 1,915), Millstreet (pop. 1,401), Newmarket (pop. 949) and Rathmore (pop. 611).

Figure 2.12: Duhallow Case Study Area



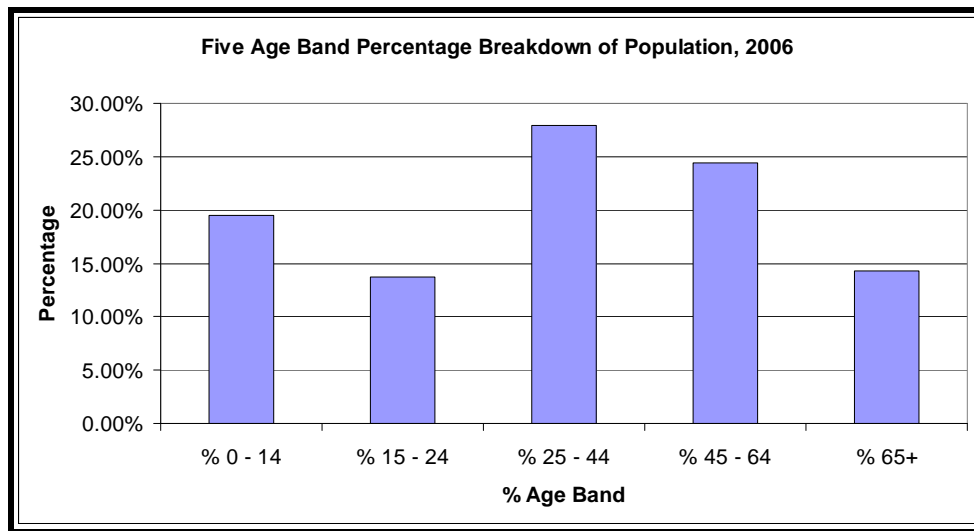
2.3.1 Human Resources

Returns from the most recent Census of Population (2006) show that Duhallow has a total population of 31,630. Duhallow has experienced a net population decline of 10,209 persons or 26.29% since 1926. The late 1980s witnessed a slight upturn in population, and there has been modest growth (+4.59%) since 2002; although this level of growth is about half the average for the state. Between 1991 and 2006, Duhallow's population increased by 1.22%, while that of the state increased by 11.1%, that of County Cork grew by 8.26% and that of County Kerry grew by 14.72%. In the County Cork context, Duhallow emerges as the part of the County that is most affected by depopulation. Relative to other parts of County Kerry, Duhallow's demographic profile is similar to that of peripheral rural areas in the north of the County, while it contrasts starkly with the Tralee – Killarney axis, which has seen its population grow significantly over recent decades.

Persistent **population decline** in centres such as Newmarket and Boherbue are symptomatic of considerable structural weaknesses in their rural hinterlands. The decline in the agriculture sector over a number of decades also had an adverse impact on Kanturk's population. However, its relative proximity to Mallow (20km) and investment in the town on the parts of IRD Duhallow and Cork County Council have made it relatively attractive for persons commuting to and from Mallow and Cork. Were it not for an asylum seeker reception centre, the town of Millstreet would have experienced a 4% loss in population between 1996 and 2006.

As a result of several decades of depopulation and out-migration, the population of Duhallow has aged rapidly. Returns from the 2006 census reveal that the proportion of the Duhallow **population aged over 65 years** of age is almost four percentage points above the national average. The highest concentrations of older people are in the rural parts of Western Duhallow (Knockaclarig, Ballydesmond, Rockchapel, Meelin and Boherbue). In the ED of Clonfert West, which has lost over 19% of its population since 1991, 24% of the population is aged over 65 years of age. There are also high concentrations of older people in Kanturk (20.55% of the population), Newmarket (18%), Millstreet (ED of Coomlogane 20%) and Lismire (17% ED Bawncorss)⁷.

Figure 2.13: Age Profile of Population in Duhallow, 2006



In-migration has been hugely significant in reversing Duhallow's demographic decline. The 2006 census returns show that there were 1,680 non-Irish nationals in Duhallow⁸. Kanturk has a very significant Lithuanian community, while Polish nationals are more prominent in Millstreet and Rathmore (East Kerry). Rathmore also has a significant and growing population of Malaysian nationals, who work in local services and in tourism establishments in Killarney. Ballyhoulihan and Ballydesmond are relatively rural locations, and foreign nationals now represent over 15% of their total populations.

2.3.2 Culture and Identity

Duhallow has rich reservoir of Gaelic culture and traditions, and the Western Duhallow – alias *Sliabh Luachra* – is renowned for its expressions in music, song, dance and poetry. Rurality and farming are very much at the centre of Duhallow's strong and distinctive cultural identity, and the area has five indigenous farmer-owned co-operatives.

Within Duhallow, there are significant areas and features of heritage and archaeological importance. Among these are The Araglin Valley and *Cathair Craobh Dearg*. The Araglin Valley traverses the parishes of Kiskeam, Ballydesmond and Cullen. It has a high concentration of bronze-age archaeological sites, including stone rows, pairs, circles and monoliths. Knocknakilla Stone Circle, near Millstreet, is a national monument and IRD Duhallow has routed the Duhallow Trail and Duhallow Way (visitor and walking routes) to include many of Duhallow's heritage artefacts.

⁷ All of the Duhallow-based locations referred to here are in County Cork.

⁸ This figure excludes those whose nationality was not stated.

IRD Duhallow has publicised the rich archaeological heritage associated with The Paps Mountains south-west of Rathmore. The Paps comprise two peaks, rising to over 690m, each with a cairn on their respective summits. At the foot of The Paps is *Cathair Craobh Dearg* or *The City*, which is reputed to be oldest site of continuous worship in Ireland, dating from 4,000BC.

2.3.3 Physical Resources



Duhallow has a tremendously diverse landscape for an inland of its size. Its topography ranges from the Derrynasaggart Mountains, which adjoin the Killarney National Park Special Area of Conservation, to the bogs and glens of Sliabh Luachra, the valleys of the Blackwater and its tributaries and the fertile soils along its eastern boundary. Duhallow's uplands, and especially its open blanket bogs (much of them uncut) represent very significant habitats, and have among the largest populations of hen harriers in Ireland. Duhallow's high quality natural environment and its relatively unspoilt landscape are among the territory's strongest assets. However, active intervention is needed to safeguard them from exploitation, as particular areas are under threat from fly-tipping, private forestry plantations with poor biodiversity and commercial wind-powered electricity generators. IRD Duhallow has strongly supported the designation and extension of **National Heritage Areas and Special Areas of Conservation**.

2.3.4 Know-How and Skills

IRD Duhallow's interventions over the past fifteen years have contributed very considerably to alleviating educational disadvantage and to increasing the range of education and training opportunities at local level. While the territory exhibits a relatively high rate of progression from second to third level education, the difficulty has been in halting the **out-migration of those with third level qualifications**. The lack of skilled employment opportunities locally has meant that most of those who have left to acquire third level qualifications do not return. Educational attainment levels still lag behind the national and regional averages, and inter-generational educational disadvantage associated with early school leaving continues to be a problem in certain areas. In addition, the range of third-level training programmes available within Duhallow is very limited, and fails to sufficiently address the local demand and socio-economic needs.

The following table shows the degrees of convergence / divergence between levels of educational attainment in Duhallow, Counties Cork and Kerry and the state.

Table 2.3: Percentage of Persons Aged 15 years and Over; Who have Completed Full-time Education, 2006.

	Primary Only	Second Level		Third Level		Not stated	Age Education Ceased	
		Lower Sec.	Higher Sec	Non-degree	Degree/Higher		< or = 15	> or = 20
Duhallow	24.03%	25.30%	28.50%	8.95%	11.32%	1.89	23.47%	14.26%
Co. Cork	15.17%	20.50%	30.13%	12.26%	18.37%	3.58	15.10%	21.15%
Co. Kerry	19.83%	21.75%	28.00%	10.38%	14.19%	5.81	18.55%	21.74%
National	18.04%	20.12%	28.19%	10.57%	18.52%	4.57	17.98%	20.07%

(Source: Census of Population 2006, Central Statistics Office)

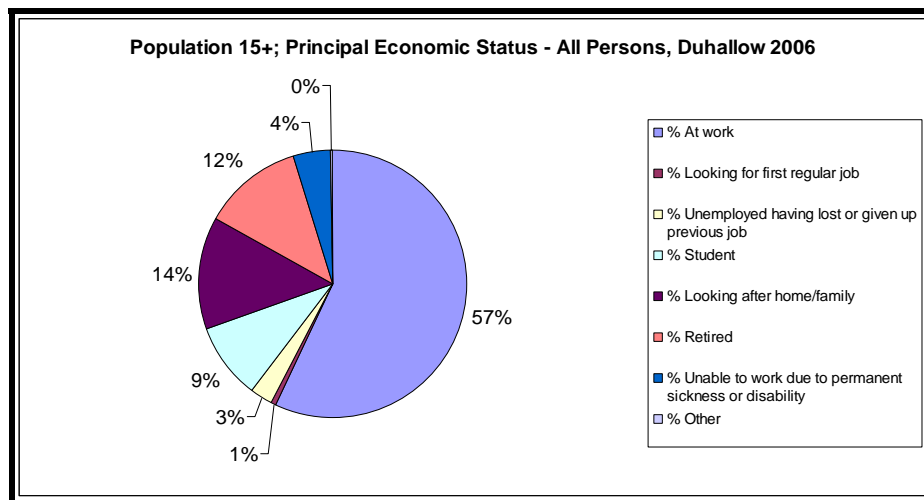
It reveals low levels of educational attainment in Duhallow, and they underscore a need for greater investment in adult and second-chance education programmes locally.

2.3.5 Economic Activities and Business Firms

Duhallow has witnessed an increase in levels of economic activity over the ten years to 2008. In line with regional and national trends, the numbers in employment rose, while unemployment rates fell. While the labour force has grown, the overall rate of participation lags behind that of the state as a whole, and the Dublin and Eastern Regions in particular. **Dependence on agriculture** continues to be a strong feature of Duhallow. Between 1991 and 2006, the rate of participation in Ireland's workforce grew from 62.3% (of persons aged 15+) to 69.6% - a growth rate of 7.3%. In Duhallow, the **rate of participation** in the labour force increased from 45.7% to 57.12% - a growth rate of 11.42%. This growth rate, which exceeds the national average, can be very directly attributed to successive LEADER Programmes. For example, IRD Duhallow has been directly responsible for the creation of almost 1,000 new jobs in Duhallow. In addition, several hundred jobs have been sustained and many enterprises have benefited from contracts to supply LEADER-funded projects.

In cumulative terms, Duhallow has also witnessed an increase in employment and a fall in unemployment in the decade to 2002. The growth in the levels of labour force participation is highest in the west of the territory, on both sides of the county boundary, and in the areas adjoining the N72 national primary route.

Figure 2.14: Principal Economic Status in Duhallow, 2006



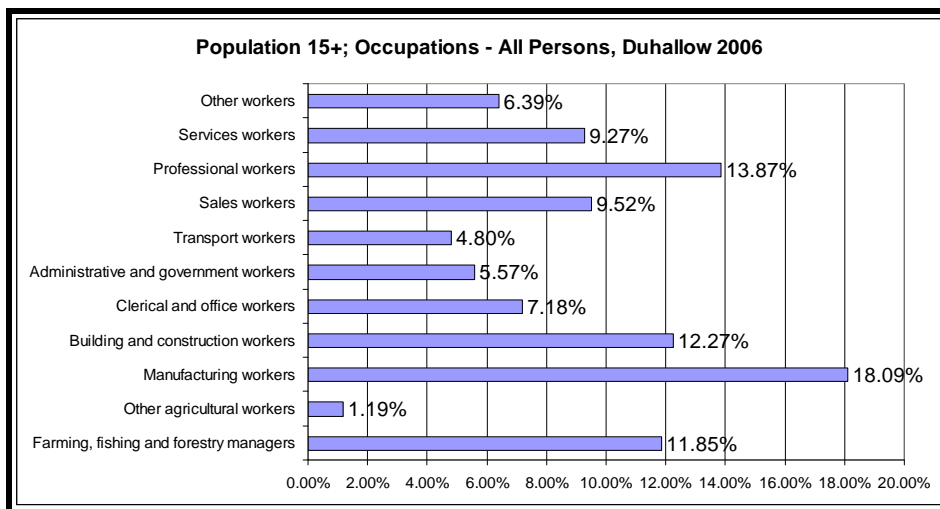
The agriculture sector is a significant component of the economic mix in Duhallow. Here the rate of dependence on agriculture is almost three times the national average⁹ and is double the rate for both Counties Cork and Kerry. This is despite the fact that Duhallow's topography is less conducive towards farming than is the case in most of County Cork. Indeed, it is more reflective of a narrower economic base in the territory than in North Cork generally.

⁹ There were 2,640 farms in Duhallow in 2000 with a total agricultural area used of 92,560 ha, that is 69% of the land mass of 134,110 ha. The average farm size was 35 ha, greater than the State average of 31 ha; with the larger farms being in the more hilly and upland areas of Southern and Western Duhallow. Sixty-two percent of farmers in Duhallow were sole occupation farm holders in 2000, higher than the State average of 56%. The highest levels of 68% or more occur in the centre (from the Boggeragh Mountains north to Boherbue, and north of Newmarket) and east – around Banteer, Bweeng, Donoughmore and Castlemagner

In relative terms, Duhallow has a high dependence on so-called **old-world industries**, namely manufacturing and construction. Conversely, Duhallow underperforms in respect of the services sector and so-called knowledge-economy activities. However, between 2002 and 2006 the rate at which the **service sector grew** was almost three times faster in Duhallow than was the case nationally. This growth in the services sector is directly linked to the positive economic impact of successive LEADER Programmes in Duhallow.

The biggest industrial losses in Duhallow in the past six years have been the closures of Keating's Bakery and *DeRegt* Special Cabling (both in Kanturk), with a consequent loss of 280 jobs between them. There has also been some rationalisation among Duhallow's dairy co-operatives, with a number of creamery stores closing and others down-sizing. The closure of the electronics plant Molex S.A. in 2007, with a loss of 60 jobs represented a considerable blow to Millstreet. The recent economic slump is putting pressure on hauliers, who represent significant employers in Duhallow. The recent downturn in the construction sector is beginning to impact very severely on Duhallow's largest industrial employer – Munster Joinery (workforce of c.1,100); as of January 2009, staff have been placed on a 3-day working week. Meanwhile, other traditional employers such as Cadbury Ireland in Rathmore, ALPS Electric in Millstreet, Packo Milking Systems in Kanturk have remained relatively stable over recent years. Together, these four enterprises account for 43% of all industrial workers in Duhallow – a very high level of dependence on a small number of firms. Duhallow has a particularly **high level of dependence on manufacturing**. LEADER-supported enterprises now account for 21% of all industrial employment in Duhallow, and this figure will continue to grow, as the sustainability of such firms exceeds that of traditional industries.

Figure 2.15: Occupations in Duhallow, 2006



Over the past ten years, the construction sector has experienced the fastest level of growth of any sector in Duhallow. The returns from the 2006 Census of Population show that in Duhallow, 12.49% of the workforce was employed in construction, compared to 9.31% in Cork County and 8.84% nationally¹⁰. The spatial patterns associated with employment in the agriculture and construction sectors in Duhallow underline the need to tackle the persistent structural weaknesses in Duhallow's economic base, particularly in the west and north of the territory. Duhallow's changing economic profile has brought with it an increase in rural to

¹⁰ The areas with the highest proportions of construction workers are Gneeveguilla, Kiskeam, Rockchapel, Ballydesmond, Kanturk and Nadd. However, with the exception of Kanturk, and to a lesser extent, Gneeveguilla, all of these areas have had relatively low levels of house-building over recent years. Thus, rather than being employed in 'local' construction projects, Duhallow's workers are commuting long distances.

urban commuting. Travel to work distances (in km, but not in time) are amongst the longest in the state (Walsh, 2007).

2.3.6 Markets and External Relations

Almost all of Duhallow has been designated under **CLÁR**, the objective of which is to accelerate public sector investment in depopulated and disadvantaged rural areas. Thus, CLÁR designation gives both territories the opportunity to develop linkages with the statutory bodies, and ultimately with the private sector, which as a result of public sector investment in the areas, is more likely to invest there also. Duhallow may be geographically peripheral to Counties Cork and Kerry, but its location puts it at the centre of the South West Region, and gives it the potential to develop linkages in both counties.

IRD Duhallow's participation in collaborative structures with other rural development partnerships has led to a number of joint projects. There is a high level of collaboration between IRD Duhallow and the six other partnerships in County Kerry. This collaboration led to the establishment of 'a county-wide rural transport service. **Inter-partnership collaboration** has contributed to the effectiveness of the local development sector's representation on Kerry County Development Board and sub-committees. Participation in CLÉ (Comhar LEADER na hEireann – the Irish LEADER Network) has strengthened IRD Duhallow's linkages with neighbouring LAGs (Local Action Groups), and has yielded joint projects in tourism product development, marketing and environmental resource management.

2.3.7 Image and Perception

One of the earliest perceptions of Duhallow and its people is that contained in the Weale Report for the House of Commons (1830), which described the people of Duhallow as 'turbulent' and whose 'wickedness had gone unchecked.' More recently, the strength of **Sliabh Luachra traditions** has contributed to a very positive perception of Duhallow; internally and externally.

The '**Duhallow**' name is used by several sporting, cultural and community organisations. This affinity with Duhallow has consistently been strong among the community sector. IRD Duhallow is responsible for the establishment of Duhallow Community Food Services and DART (Duhallow Area Rural Transport). Duhallow brand in every community in the territory. At the approach to every village, one is met with a large green sign with the name of the village and an image with the words 'Duhallow Trail.'



The development of **rural tourism** has contributed to territorial cohesion. IRD Duhallow and Cork-Kerry Tourism work in co-operation to promote tourism in Duhallow based on the area's natural and cultural resources. IRD Duhallow's approach to territorial marketing is based on projecting a healthy and positive image of the territory's ecology and natural habitats. The LAG has sought to cultivate an image of Duhallow as a place of unspoilt natural beauty, where heritage and culture are vibrant. The partnership has supported the development of a number of products under the 'Duhallow' name.

2.3.8 Governance and Financial Resources

IRD Duhallow is the joint LEADER Partnership for the Duhallow area; it has a twenty year track record in rural development, and its structure has evolved over time to become progressively more broadly-based, inclusive and participative. The organisation emerged from the bottom-up, when local entrepreneurs and community leaders came together in the late 1980s to promote locally-based solutions to rural decline, public service cutbacks and the lack of local employment opportunities. This new entity won an ESB-sponsored award for its innovation in local development, and secured technical assistance to employ a manager, Maura Walsh who has remained with IRD Duhallow since the early 1990s. During its formative years, IRD Duhallow focused largely on enterprise creation and development, and succeeded in utilizing resources under the EU LEADER I Community Initiative (1991-1993) to generate over 150 new jobs. The organisation's structure reflected both its endogenous origins and its enterprise orientation; with the Board of Directors - numbering 20 – comprising representatives from community and voluntary groups, six local dairy co-operatives, entrepreneurs and some state agencies. The Board was elected annually from the organisation's membership, which numbered over ninety. Members paid an annual subscription of IR£25 each, while enterprises endowed the organisation with more substantial financial contributions – up to IR£3,000 in some cases. The Board established sub-committees with responsibility for tourism, education and enterprise development.

Today, IRD Duhallow's structure continues to reflect its bottom-up origins, with community leaders and local businesses generating significant social capital. In addition, they have levered considerable resources – over €35m (since 1990) to promote territorial competitiveness. The organisational structure has evolved considerably over time. The advent of the Local Development Programme (1996-1999) provided IRD Duhallow with additional resources, which complementing LEADER II, ensured increased activity in terms of community development. Consequently, a Community Forum was organised in three sub-areas - Western-, South-Eastern- and North-Eastern Duhallow, with each sub-area electing two representatives to the Board of Directors. The Forum has provided a two-way interface between IRD Duhallow and its constituent communities. Fora were also established to work with and represent young people, women, the unemployed, older people and smallholders, and each of these was facilitated to elect representatives to the Board of Directors and / or to a number of sub-committees. Between 1999 and 2008, membership of the Board of Directors was increased to 25 in order to reflect the growing strength of participative democracy in the territory. In addition, the number of sub-committees grew to twelve, and these were organised on a thematic basis. Thus, over 120 people were inputting directly into local development through their participation on the Board and its sub-committees, while a further 4,500 participated through their membership of the affiliated fora and voluntary groups. Top-down inputs were co-ordinated by the formation of a forum of eleven statutory bodies, which rotated their representation on the Board. In order to promote accountability in decision-making each sub-committee agreed a set of multi-annual targets, and the respective sub-committee chairs presented a progress report to the Board every quarter. The governance model proposed by government in 2008 poses challenges in terms of sustaining volunteerism in Duhallow, as representatives of communities of interest (women, youth, cultural organisations, community enterprise) are required to vacate their seats as partnerships are obliged to provide for increased inputs from local government representatives. IRD Duhallow remains committed to enabling volunteers to participate at community level and through its sub-structures. Governance in Duhallow is a central theme and is explored more fully in Working Paper 5.

Postscript

The following table synthesises the key territorial resources of the three case study territories.

Table 2.4: Territorial Resources in Draperstown, Truagh – Aughnacloy and Duhallow

Resources	Draperstown	Truagh – Aughnacloy	Duhallow
Human Resources	Population decline of c.1% per year, High youth dependency.	Population growth similar to all-Island average, Ageing population, In-migration of 'frontier workers.'	Legacy of population decline, Disadvantaged by core-periphery approaches to planning
Culture and Identity	Plantation heritage with distinctive architecture, Musical tradition.	Significant ecclesiastical structures, Strong agri-food sector, Communities overcoming back-to-back existences.	Sliabh Luachra traditions well recognised, Emerging appreciation of ancient heritage features.
Physical Resources	Designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Scenic Landscape.	Drumlin landscape with loughs and valleys, Some development pressures, River Blackwater – a cross border resource.	Varied landscape, Proposed SAC and NHA designations – need to be expedited due to development pressures.
Know How and Skills	Low level of third level qualifications, Training provision locally by Workspace.	Below average educational attainment, Brain Drain, Need for adult training and education.	Below average educational attainment, Brain Drain, Need for adult training and education.
Economic Activities and Business Firms	Below average unemployment, Entrepreneurship tradition, Dependence on manufacturing and construction.	High level of dependence on agriculture, Heavy reliance in construction in Aughnacloy, Several small manufacturing businesses – flexible, but under pressure.	High level of dependence on agriculture, Reliance on manufacturing and construction in west, LEADER-supported job creation very significant.
Markets and External Relations	WORKSPACE a strong driver of connectivity, including cross-border collaboration.	Strengthening cross-border linkages, Recognition of common / shared element of heritage, Participation in institutional cross-border networks.	High level of participation in regional, national and EU networks. Inter-business collaborations.
Image and Perception	Sense of isolation has strengthened identity and resolve for action, Emerging rural tourism sector.	Emerging local branding, Commitment to the smart economy.	Strong inter-community connections with high levels of social capital and clear territorial identity.

The three case study areas exhibit a number of similarities in respect of rural change and restructuring. As the following series of Working Papers (3, 4, 5) demonstrate, each is responding in its own way and each offers lessons and insights for the other.

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Working Paper 3
Case Study: Draperstown

Section 1: People, Place & Skills

The principal focus of this case study is the **Workspace** community enterprise initiative that commenced in 1982, a time of great need in Draperstown both economically and socially. During the Northern Ireland 'Troubles', this small settlement experienced high unemployment and high out-migration and it was largely in response to these issues that the Workspace initiative was born. Having been established in the early 1980s, Workspace has pre-existed the availability of EU and international funding for rural development and reconciliation; such as LEADER or the International Fund for Ireland (IFI). As this model of self-reliance and local fundraising persists, in parallel with the organisation's commercial operations, Workspace expects to remain independent of external funding streams.

Today, the Workspace company is limited by guarantee, has over 170 members the majority of whom are drawn from the local community, and is managed by a voluntary board. In its initial years, the company aspired to acquiring 16,000 sq.ft. of industrial space and raising local employment levels. Currently, it manages 100,000 sq.ft. of office and industrial space (50+ units) across three sites. The Workspace model of rural development embodies a strong local enterprise approach; the cultivation of micro-scale entrepreneurship and innovation; and a proactive, endogenous means to the creation of employment opportunities. Through its initiatives, Workspace contributed towards the District of Magherafelt having, in 2007, one of the lowest levels of unemployment and the highest level of entrepreneurial activity per head of population (company start-up rate) across the 26 District Councils in Northern Ireland. Moreover, the Workspace model provides particular insights for other rural development organisations in respect of business planning, inter-business collaboration and the capacity to raise its own funding through commercial activities.

3.1 Local Development

Draperstown in the 1980s was faced with a significant development challenge due to the changes to agricultural activity resulting from EU agricultural reforms and the economic stagnation associated with the 'Troubles'. The challenges facing this rural community, requiring economic diversification and rural restructuring and development, were not unique to this area or part of the island of Ireland; and in response, a general package of supports were made available through EU and national government policy initiatives and sectoral funding programmes for their redress in the late 1980s / early 1990s.

So what makes Draperstown an interesting case study of rural restructuring? Unlike many rural communities faced by the same challenges, albeit in their own individual settings, Draperstown's response to these challenges has been, and continues to be, the pro-active approach adopted by key local stakeholders – organisations and individuals – in establishing Workspace and promoting **economic-led community development opportunities**. This model of self-help builds from the bottom-up rather than relying on government (top-down) interventions.

3.1.1 An introduction to Draperstown and Workspace

Draperstown is an historic settlement with a strong sense of identity. Founded in 1798 the town is closely linked with the Drapers Company of London who, in 1812, built a planned town in the area - hence 'Draperstown'. Initially, buildings were constructed around the triangular green space in the centre of the village and this has resulted in Draperstown having a "distinctive townscape and historic settlement form"¹¹. Today the town has a strong Gaelic culture and identity, described by contributors to this research programme as "tight knit".

¹¹ *Draft Magherafelt Area Plan 2015*, DoE Planning Service.

Draperstown is third in the settlement hierarchy of Magherafelt local government district in terms of population size; behind the urban centres of Magherafelt and Maghera. Throughout the 1970s little or no development took place in the village; rather businesses were closing down and people were moving out. By the early 1980s, a large number of buildings in the village were lying derelict. Agriculture and manufacturing, the two main enterprises, were in decline. Unemployment was high (22% on average) and the area was experiencing high emigration. This picture of dilapidation and out-migration was being repeated throughout the Magherafelt District. In the late 1970s / early 1980s, the District had no major employers – and those that they did have (agriculture, clothing) were in decline; thus the District, including Draperstown, exhibited a downward economic spiral associated with rural restructuring. In its place, the District placed a heavy dependency on the emerging construction industry as a source of employment and a future ‘driver’ of the local economy – particularly from the mid-1990s onwards; a growth and dependency in part sustained by the Celtic Tiger building boom in the South. In the current economic climate, however, this sector and the rural communities that it supports face many challenges. Draperstown’s experiences of rural economic restructuring and decline are, therefore, very similar to those of the Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy area (see Working Paper 4).

As previously noted, Workspace was established in 1982; largely as a result of a small group of local business people along with a number of educationalists deliberating together on the need to address the high rate of unemployment among the young people living in the area. Initially, the local business community set up a training centre for local people – the Moyola Community Workshop Limited – on the site of an old textiles factory located on the edge of Draperstown village. This initial action was funded by government. While the training programme itself was successful, it was quickly realised that there were no jobs available locally for those who completed the training. In response, the founders of Moyola Community Workshop decided to develop an enterprise centre on the site to encourage new business start-ups. A building on the vacant textiles site, costing STG£60,000, was identified for purchase; with two options available to the group in terms of raising this amount of money: to either borrow the full amount of money required to purchase the site, or raise funds from within the community. In the pragmatic style of self help, and opting for the latter, a public meeting was held to explain the concept which led to £40,000 being raised in six weeks, with the remainder borrowed from a local bank. The building was divided up into small units – similar to incubator units in widespread use today; this was the start of Workspace (Draperstown) Ltd.



3.1.2 Development Objectives

For this rural community, an underpinning concept of rural development has, and continues to be, the transformation of the Draperstown community through self help, determination and entrepreneurship.

Given the business background of the ‘champions’ behind the formation of Workspace, it was not surprising that it was conceived around a **business-oriented model of rural / local development**. The ethos of this imaginative not-for-profit organisation is relatively simple and comprises two intertwined elements. On one part, the various businesses operated by Workspace must generate a **profit** and this, in turn, is part reinvested in the businesses and development of new commercial opportunities, and part committed to local community development programmes. The second element, of equal importance in the underpinning ethos of Workspace, is the provision of **supports** to external business through, for example, training and advice services. In this way, local economic development is not reliant on

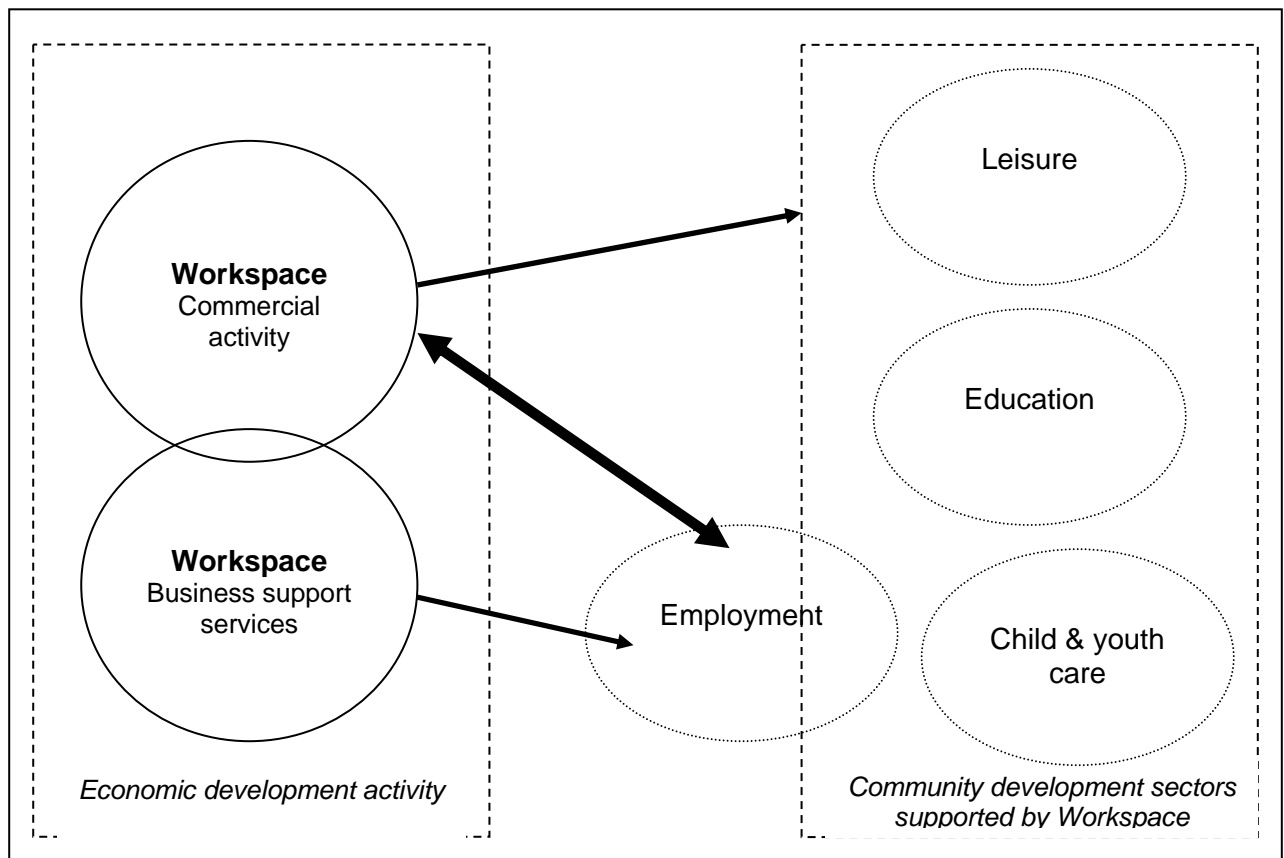
Workspace companies alone but is multi-faceted with business activity balanced across a variety of sectors.

Two key outcomes are anticipated from the actions of Workspace:

- job creation
- the re-energising of a pre-existing self-help mentality within the people of Draperstown.

Together, this leads to the creation of hard and soft infrastructure to the community's benefit. Initially, any funding secured by Workspace was used to support the incubation of new small-scale businesses in the area. This early financial support allowed businesses the capital stability necessary to develop and become established.

Figure 3.1: Workspace Model of Community Development



Today, Workspace is evolving in an organic way. Over the years, it has learnt that certain of its services / products have a 'set' life-cycle and those at the helm must always be looking to the next venture and, in line with this, ensuring that the relevant skills-set is in place. Ideas for new services have generally come from the management, staff and Board of Directors of Workspace. Thus, the organisation continues to be strongly endogenous, rather than looking to external agencies to provide responses to emerging local issues.

3.2 The Urban-Rural Relationship and Approaches to Planning

Draperstown has changed significantly in the past twenty years – physically, socially and economically. The range of services available within Draperstown is in line with that of a tier-five town as defined by the *Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025* (the RDS); although the combined population of the town and its rural catchment area suggest

that the range of services could be expanded. Connections to larger urban centres surrounding Draperstown – for example Magherafelt, Cookstown, Dungannon – are poor both in terms of road quality and public transport. Because of issues of peripherality and poor infrastructure, Draperstown like the rest of the Magherafelt District is seeing little investment from external agencies or businesses. Access to the regional centres of Belfast and Derry by public transport is also restricted.

Socially and economically, the area could have been categorised as depressed in the 1980s. At the same time, however, the community would define itself as having a positive ‘can do’ attitude. There is a tradition within the community of working hard to ensure the survival, and indeed growth of the area. In 1963, for example, the community came together to form Sperrin Metal, a company to provide local employment¹². Similar to Workspace, this initiative was an outworking of the community’s self help spirit; the organisation was originally owned by a large number of small shareholders from the locality.



Going forward, the members of the local community have actively embraced the concept of rural restructuring in an attempt to ensure that the area does not become a ‘dormitory zone’ for surrounding larger urban centres such as Magherafelt and Cookstown.

3.2.1 National and Regional Policy

Under the *Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025* (RDS), rural areas are subject to the following development objectives:

- Supporting the development of a strong, diversified and competitive rural economy served by the Regional Strategic Transport Network (SPG-RNI 1)
- Developing a living and working countryside which recognises the unique rural character of the Region and contributes to a sense of belonging in local rural areas (SPG-RNI 2)
- Promoting the continuing renewal and revitalisation of towns and villages in Rural Northern Ireland (SPG-RNI 3)
- Improving the accessibility of the rural community to employment, services and regional amenities (SPG-RNI 4)
- Managing and enhancing the natural and built heritage in rural areas (SPG-RNI 5).

The RDS does not specifically refer to Draperstown in terms of how this rural settlement should develop or what role it should play within the region as a whole; its scale and stature mitigate against this. Rather, the development of Draperstown would fall under the banner of small town development through pluriactivity – as is the case for Aughnacloy (see Working Paper 4).

The spatial planning approach adopted by the RDS envisages multi-stakeholder involvement in the delivery of these objectives. Rather than being the sole charge of a single department such as the Department for Regional Development (DRD) or Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), this new paradigm – or model – requires the buy-in of all central government departments; as well as vertical linkages with local agencies and, crucially, the community involved.

¹² Sperrin Metal continues to trade successfully, and in 2007 was expanded through the acquisition of Helmsman.

3.2.2 Local Policy

Land use in the Draperstown area is subject to the policy provisions of the draft *Magherafelt Area Plan 2015*. This plan is currently being reviewed through a Public Inquiry. The draft plan describes Draperstown as:

“a local service centre containing a variety of shops and offices, several places of worship, public houses, a visitors centre, livestock market and two schools. The village has a very strong industrial base including industrial estates on the Cahore Road, Tobermore Road (46 unit Business Centre), and Magherafelt Road”.

A central tenet of the draft plan is **protection of the historic building fabric** in Draperstown, a conservation area since 1979, supported by the designation of landscape policy areas. Whilst housing development schemes are ongoing in Draperstown, the draft plan identifies a series of housing land-use policy areas designed to accommodate predicted housing need for the village over the plan period. In addition, c.2 hectares of land have been designated under industrial land use policy within Draperstown for light industry, thereby making provision for continuing development.

A community planning framework exists for the District which covers such issues as business and enterprise, agriculture, community development, regeneration and local needs (for example, youth, women, elderly). This plan, produced by Magherafelt Area Partnership¹³ in 2001 using PEACE monies, has been backed by Magherafelt District Council. However, its strategic vision has been hampered by its need to source funding to roll-out actions. In addition, the delay on a decision regarding the Review of Public Administration (RPA)¹⁴ and the now mixed signals as to what functions will be decentralised¹⁵ all further negate on the Partnership, and therefore community initiatives, being ‘visionary’.

3.3 Education & Enterprise: Mapping Strengths and Deficits

The activities of Workspace since the late 1980s have contributed to improving the micro-region’s economic and social competitiveness. The organisation has been active in the areas of education, training and enterprise development leading to community development opportunities. Progressive investment and growth has occurred through innovative approaches to the challenges of the area, underpinned by a strong self-help ethos in the community. For example, the dearth of childcare facilities was in part addressed by the Draperstown After School Club, which enabled parents to return to employment.

For the past 8-10 years, this area has been increasingly buoyant economically; as previously noted, this economic growth was in part driven by the construction boom and associated ventures. The current downturn is starting to impact on the local construction and transport businesses. The area is witnessing an increasing number of lay-offs (prior to this, the Draperstown area had the highest level of business start-ups in the Magherafelt District; with, as previously noted, the District then having the highest level of start-ups in Northern Ireland). Were it not for the 1000+ locally-based enterprises that have been established in the Magherafelt District Council area, many with the support of Workspace, the situation would be considerably graver¹⁶. The challenge for this area is that while it has a large number of businesses in existence - many of which are award winning in terms of standards

¹³ Magherafelt Area Partnership was established in 1996 by Magherafelt District Council to manage EU funding in the District.

¹⁴ Under the Review of Public Administration (RPA), it is proposed to reduce the number of district / borough councils from twenty-six to eleven by May 2011.

¹⁵ Correct at time that interviews and fieldwork were carried out i.e. in July 2008.

¹⁶ Over the years 2002-2008, Workspace has assisted 691 businesses start trading, with 131 alone in the financial year 2007/08. Together, these employ over 800 people.

of excellence – a large number of these are small-scale and based in sectors that are in decline; such as the aforementioned construction industry. This area needs to consider how it can most effectively move away from its (over-)reliance on a small number of low-tech, low added-value sectors – in particular, construction, light engineering and transport/haulage – so that it can broaden its economic base and generate more sustainable employment opportunities.

Of the three case study areas, Draperstown is unique in having an educational establishment located within its micro-region. Workspace was a founding partner of the Rural College which, as well as providing third-level outreach, is also home to training facilities, a conference centre and overnight accommodation.

3.3.1 Skills Base

The manufacturing base of the local employment sector has resulted in the skills-base of this community being largely 'skilled manual'. This community 'works with its hands'. In addition, through decades of self-help in the form of volunteerism and entrepreneurial activity, Workspace has built up an extensive organisational and managerial skills-set. This includes:

- project management and leadership
- securing local stakeholder buy-in
- forming partnerships / engaging stakeholders.

To date, no formal quantitative skills audit has been carried out for the Draperstown area and while this is something that may happen in the future, it is not regarded by contributors to this case study as a priority action at present; nor has it hampered the growth of the area to date (Source: Focus Group, 17 November 2008). Through the staff and directors of Workspace, there has been and remains a good local knowledge of the skills-set in existence and the employment and skills needs going forward. Where a skills-gap is identified, the community is open to facilitators from outside the area coming in to plug that gap.



Increasingly, there is a 'revaluing' of education taking place locally and nationally. Stronger emphasis is being placed on the achievement of A-levels and third-level education as well as in vocational training streams. Interestingly, it was reported (albeit anecdotally) that a large number of those who leave the area to go to college do return upon completion of their studies.

The aforementioned Rural College, which employs 15 staff directly and a further 40 positions indirectly, provides training and accredited programmes in the area on sustainable rural development; conducted primarily through its links with NUI Galway and Queens University Belfast. Those availing of the courses offered by the Rural College, however, tend not to be local representatives or other stakeholders; rather they are statutory players with an interest in rural development issues. Between 1995, when the Rural College opened, and 2005, over 400 students have undertaken programmes of study, and over 500 people have attended 'creative breaks' hobby courses. Building on this, there is a perception within Draperstown that potential exists to develop adult education and short training programmes which are focused on a local need or issue. As well as improving the skills base of the community itself, such a programme of activities would also benefit the Rural College in terms of raising awareness of it locally, enhancing student numbers using the facility and generating income.

3.3.2 Enterprise Base

Through the successes of deploying a business development (economic-led) model for growth, Workspace has contributed to the local economic and rural development of the wider

Draperstown area. Based on responses from those who participated in this research, the main ways that this has been achieved are:

- the countering of isolation through the provision of integrated services
- replacing a sense of hopelessness (as was prevalent in the 1980s) with confidence, largely being achieved through the community having to do things for themselves
- improved quality of life through access to local employment, access to a wider range of services including childcare, cultural development
- increased levels of volunteerism: there is a strong community spirit in the area but for those who are 'blow-ins', there is still a sense of being poorly integrated.

(Source: Focus Groups, 17 November 2008).

The development / emergence of new businesses under the Workspace banner is not a 'tick box' exercise; rather there must be a demonstrated market for the product and possibly even more importantly, the potential for growth. But this is not to say that detailed background checks are carried out before a new business is launched; often the organisation 'takes a chance' based on its experience, knowledge and understanding of cycles of growth and / or on advice received from external contacts.

Current businesses operated under the Workspace banner include:

- *Ivents*: Based on the company organising an event entitled 'Magherafelt Fights Back', Workspace was then approached by a group in Belfast to organise a similar event there. The emergence of this business was almost accidental; a 'knock-on' effect so to speak. Now in existence for 15 years, the company organises events for public and private sector clients
- *Homeseal*: This company helps to reduce fuel poverty by insulating houses and does so in a commercial way
- *Network Recruitment*: A recruitment-focused business which links back to Workspace's early days of finding employment for the unemployed youth of the area – although now, the brief is more commercial
- *Network Personnel*: This company delivers training and employment initiatives throughout Northern Ireland; in many instances working with the most disadvantaged in society – the homeless, ex-offenders and those with a history of drug and / or alcohol problems. Programmes delivered include Job Broking, Progres2Work and the Work Preparation programme.

The recruitment company, Network Recruitment, provides a commercial service to people seeking temporary and/ or permanent job opportunities. It now has offices in Magherafelt and in Letterkenny (Co. Donegal) and has in itself become a successful business. It assists in the recruitment for a wide range of sectors including accountancy and finance, sales and marketing, and in engineering, construction and manufacturing. Homeseal is an insulation company for homes and businesses. It has now been operating since 1995 and has engaged with a number of state schemes to provide more energy efficient buildings such as the Warm Homes Scheme under the Department of Social Development (DSD) and Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE).

Now employing 37 people, the business is based in Draperstown; and in recent months, it has expanded into Scotland where a further 11 jobs have been created.



Other ways in which Workspace has supported the development of the area includes the provision of enterprise supports (through, for example, business planning advice and mentoring), training when no other providers were serving the area, maintaining a positive outlook at all times, being willing to take risks and establish new businesses in the area, a commitment to keeping new business in the area and, during its period of growth, remaining in the Draperstown area.

As with any consortium of businesses, however, not all established businesses were successful; for example:

- *Flight of the Earls Plantation Centre*: it is felt locally that this development 'was ahead of its time';
- *Community Radio Station*: despite great aspirations around what the station could be used for (programmes, advertising, local history, culture and so on), problems were almost immediate with the station getting an AM/MW band wave - instead of FM.

Irrespective of the lack of success of these projects, lessons were learnt and these shortcomings have equally contributed to the strength and focus of Workspace as it moves forward.

Section 2: Governance and Policy

3.4 Governance and Citizen Participation

The range of stakeholders engaged in the development and governance of Draperstown is impressive – particularly given the size of the area. All sectors of the community have not only given of their own free time to support the viability of the settlement but have also 'put their money where their mouths are'. This local commitment makes up for the lack of regional investment and has gone a long way to redressing the dilapidation resulting from the Troubles.

3.4.1 Regional Governance

Due to the predominant urban orientation in the application of spatial policy, few (if any) statutory agencies are committed to directing investment into Draperstown. Within Magherafelt District itself, the emphasis has been on growing the socio-economic base of Magherafelt and Maghera towns – the largest urban centres in the District. Town partnerships have been established for both these centres; the objective of which is to progress social partnership, promote economic growth and development, protect the local environment and make prudent use of the area's natural resources.

In light of the Review of Public Administration (RPA), and the super-council to be created for this area (the fusion of Magherafelt, Cookstown and Dungannon/ South Tyrone), this has the potential to be a very positive development for this region as all three areas are similar in their make-up.

3.4.2 Local Governance

There is a sense of disconnect between the community of Draperstown and Magherafelt District Council. The perception locally is that the Council's appears to focus more on the urban areas in the district in comparison with the rural. Another perspective is the Council's frugal approach to infrastructure and service expenditure has, as reported at workshops, resulted in decreased levels of debt, which in turn eases the debt burden in terms of rates payments across the district. However, the net result is a low level of funding available to support community development programmes, which workshop evidence would suggest is generally in the form of match funding. It is this sense of disconnect between the local population and local government which, according to the community, in part explains the entrepreneurial spirit that exists in Draperstown and their local determination to improve circumstances endogenously.

The Council is represented on the board of Workspace through two locally-elected Councillors¹⁷ – but there are mixed opinions as to how supportive the Council itself actually is of the organisation and its contribution to the socio-economic development of the District. It is thought that the Council as a whole is currently too geared towards operational activities rather than strategic visioning and planning. In terms of a broader council relationship, it is felt that Magherafelt Council has not done enough for the Draperstown area. For example, it was originally meant to have been the Council that would have built the local recreation centre for the town; the Church sold the Council land necessary to facilitate this development. However, the Council did not provide this facility – rather Workspace did in partnership with St. Colm’s High School and Ballinascreen Parish on the site provided by the Church¹⁸. Nor does the Council support the upkeep of this recently opened facility – again, this function has been taken up by Workspace whereby they are required to pay an annual lease for the land to Magherafelt District Council.



Magherafelt Area Partnership, is held in high regard by the community (in its widest sense) of Draperstown. The Partnership is committed to community development and is recognised as an agency with vision and a joined-up programme of thinking. Through its administration of funding programmes and engagement in community planning, the Partnership has built strong informal relationships with communities throughout the District. Funding streams such as PEACE and LEADER have had an important role to play in the development and restructuring of the District, including Draperstown, to date. Largely administered by the Magherafelt Area Partnership, the funds levered through these sources have been used to support farm diversification initiatives (B&Bs, training programmes, local branding and marketing) and address the issue of local under-employment. Funding has also been secured for the extension of the Rural College. The Partnership has facilitated the recognition and development of previously ‘hidden’ local skills and talents. The relationship between the Partnership and Draperstown is also formal in nature; with the CEO of Workspace being on the board of the Partnership.

Workspace, like LEADER Action Groups (LAGs) in the South, has both filled voids left by shortcomings and gaps in local government operations.

3.5 An Integrated Approach to Rural Development and Restructuring

The commitment of the community of Draperstown to the development of the town is unquestionable. When the town was ‘on its knees’ in the early 1980s, it was the community themselves who raised the finance needed to purchase the old textiles factory for ‘workspace units’. And through keeping people in the area – by providing employment opportunities – other facets of the community benefit; for example, the GAA.

3.5.1 A ‘vision’ of sustainable rural development

The achievement of sustainable rural development is, according to those who live and work in Draperstown, dependent on a number of key factors; these include:

- a shared vision on how the area should develop
- awareness of its ‘potentiality’
- having a ‘champion’ who is willing to bring the community together and push hard for action

¹⁷ The two current councillors represent the Sperrin electoral area on Magherafelt District Council.

¹⁸ The building of the centre was financed by The Big Lottery Fund, local businesses, The Draper’s Company and Ballinascreen parish through local fund-raising.

- being entrepreneurial and willing to take risks (not being hampered by lack of resources or finance)
- recognising the value of education
- ensuring there is an economic element to the plan for the area (that emphasis is not purely on social development).

(Source: Focus Groups, 17 November 2008).

Draperstown sees itself as an area with a culture of entrepreneurship (as highlighted by the establishment of Sperrin Metal by the community in the 1960s). Prior to, and during the Troubles, the community recognised that the local Council could not take the lead in terms of social or economic development in this 'micro-region' (see Working Paper 1). With Workspace as the conduit, the people of Draperstown and its surrounds therefore drew on their own strengths and set about rebuilding their community.

3.5.2 Local Stakeholders and Resources

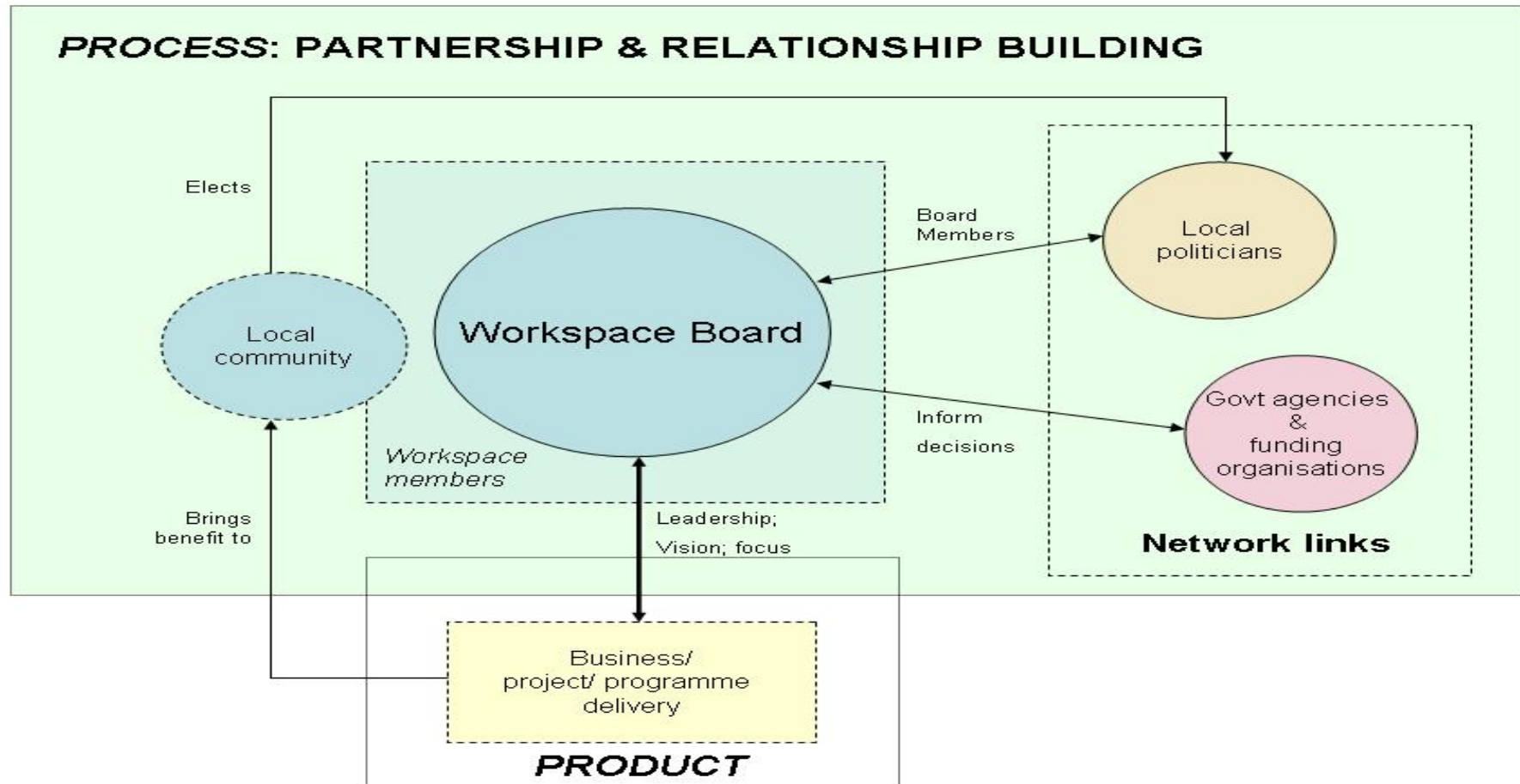
Workspace is managed by a voluntary board of directors drawing on a range of stakeholder interests in the local area and made up from business, academia and the statutory agencies, including locally elected public representatives. This formally constituted ten-person board comprises a Chairman, Vice Chairman and members; the Chief Executive of Workspace is also a member of the board of directors. It is considered by focus group attendees and research interviewees that the success of Workspace is in part due to the emphasis placed on **process** (organisation structure) as well as **product**, or deliverables, as outlined in Figure 3.2 below. This dual approach thus ensures community support and tangible outcomes (Source: Focus Groups, 17 November 2008).

Models similar to Workspace have failed because one or other of these elements has been missing. At the same time, it is important that complex and unwieldy structures do not get in the way of action, and delivery, by the organisation.

The dedication of the sixty-five full-time staff and ten directors of Workspace to the Draperstown area is a further strength behind the success of the organisation. All are committed to making Workspace the best it can be at what it does; the ethos is very much reflective of that of the community at large – 'can-do' and 'self-startedness'.

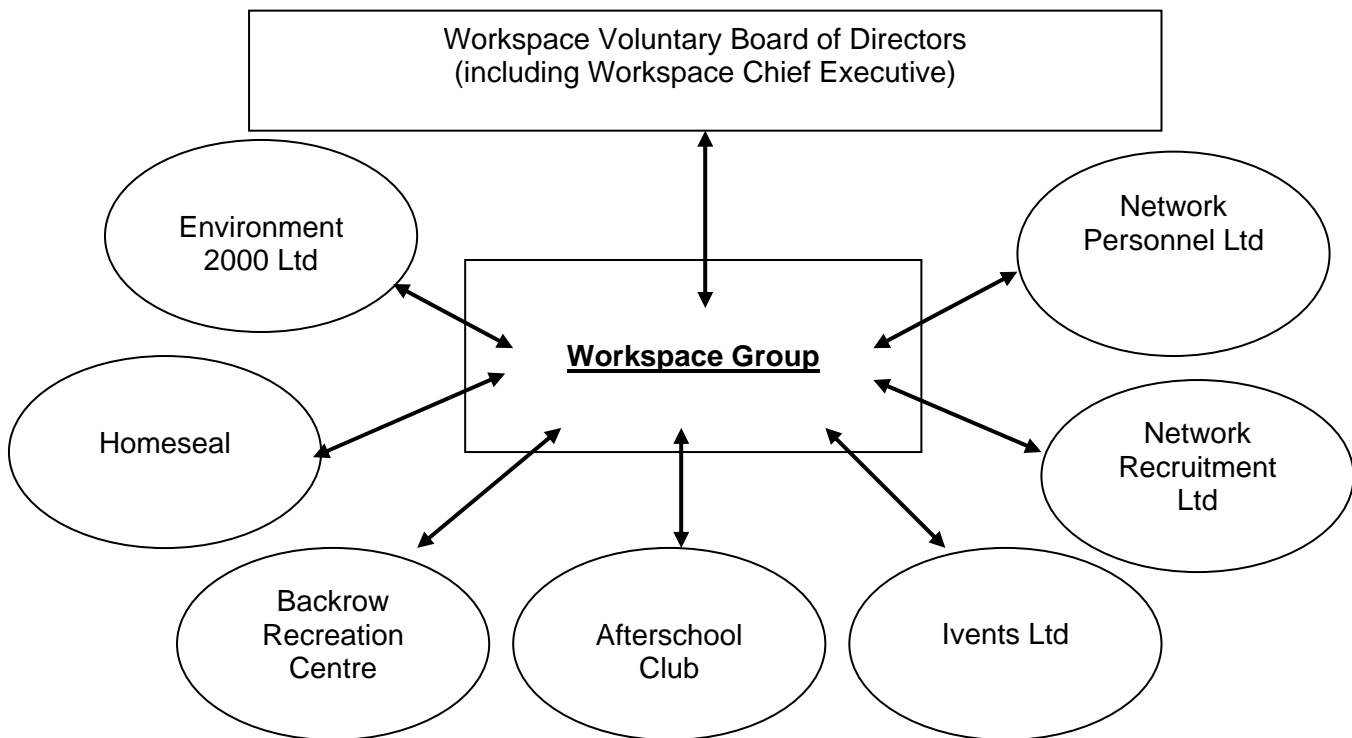
Over its lifetime, Workspace has had two Chief Executives: Patsy McShane and Brian Murray. In the 1980s, the former was considered among the wider community to be a 'local champion'. As the 'driver' of local community development and engagement, and given this individual's business background, it becomes clear why the resulting 'track' of community development adopted by Workspace was economic (and therefore untraditional) in its emphasis. The focus of early community initiatives was on securing the sustainable development of the area; primarily through maintaining the local population. This involved improving 'the lot' of the youth in the area – and it was this early community intervention that led to the establishment of Workspace and the area's somewhat unique economic development approach to community development. The current CEO has followed the economic model mooted since Workspace started in 1982 but has brought it a step further by diversifying into identified 'growth areas' and seizing opportunities as these arise. The emphasis is no longer purely on enterprise, training and recruitment but also on service provision.

Figure 3.2: Process and Product: The Workspace Model



Each of the companies that now exist under the Workspace banner has its own manager and management team (see Figure 3.3.). This team, in turn, reports into the CEO of Workspace and the Board of Directors. More recently, the managers have the potential to be appointed as minority shareholders of Workspaces subsidiary companies; this initiative has assisted with staff retention in the organisation.

Figure 3.3: Organisation of Workspace Activities



There remain, however, some concerns locally that the emphasis of Workspace continues to rest primarily on the economic and physical development of Draperstown and its surrounds; with social issues perceived to be addressed through the 'trickle-down' effect. The micro-region of Draperstown continues to face some serious social issues – and it is expected that this scenario will become worse in the current economic downturn. Yet, these challenges have the potential to become opportunities for Workspace to further invest in the community. The investment by Workspace into the development of a local leisure centre is widely praised within the Draperstown community; it is seen as contributing positively to the health and well-being of the community. There is a desire to see Workspace engage and invest in further community-focused initiatives going forward.

3.6 Inter-County Collaboration

Interviewees expressed the view that other Councils in the mid-Ulster area are much more proactive in terms of how they engage with local communities, businesses and entrepreneurs, citing Cookstown District Council as an example¹. Cookstown Council has heavily invested in the provision of community facilities, improvement schemes for retailers (for example, living

¹ Other models – potentially more appropriate in terms of community development – do exist; for example the Down District model (see: www.downdc.gov.uk).

over the shop), and the provision and development of local infrastructure and amenities. They are also actively lobbying for external investment into the district.

Because Magherafelt District does not directly border the Republic of Ireland, there is no great tradition of cross-border cooperation in this area – either at District level or town / village level. However, under the current funding programmes – PEACE and LEADER (and the council clustering approach outlined in *Working Paper 1*) – the Magherafelt Area Partnership are interested in building cross-border linkages; and it is thought that Draperstown (and Workspace) would make an interesting partner for a rural community in the South who has a similar economic background and is currently seeking an appropriate response to the slowdown in construction.

3.7 Stakeholder Engagement and Agency Responses

In terms of government department support for sustainable rural development and overcoming the challenges associated with rural restructuring, there are concerns that once again, the 'rural' is losing out to the 'urban'. At a general level, for example, it is currently perceived that the Department for Social Development (DSD) has an 'urban ethos' in terms of budget commitments; that the strategy of 'rural proofing' policies has proven ineffective. More specific to Draperstown and its development, the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development's (DARD) funding of the MSC Programme in the Rural College ceases in December 2010; and it remains unclear as to what will happen to this programme at that time.

Within the Draperstown area, there is a sense that the statutory 'champions' of rural development are not addressing the challenges facing the rural at an appropriate pace; and that nobody appears to be accountable to the rural communities that are being negatively affected in this regard. While there have been recent positive developments in response to these concerns – the announcement that a Rural White Paper for Northern Ireland will be published, the launch of the 'Rural Champion' scheme as part of the North's wider Rural Development Programme – the focus group sessions as part of this research programme raised three key questions on the future of rural development and restructuring:

- Who at regional / national level has a vision for the rural?
- Who at a regional / national level is championing the rural?
- What are the approaches to rural governance and rural economic diversification? And can these be improved upon?

Historically, whether real or perceived, government agencies appeared to have viewed local initiatives more as a 'hindrance' and unlikely to succeed; during the field-work for this study it was reported – albeit anecdotally – that the work of community development groups in general was often viewed as interfering with that of the networks and specific initiatives supported by DARD; especially where their respective objectives may have been at odds with each other. Workspace, however, proves this assertion to be wrong. As does other similar initiatives such as the Coalisland Development Association, and the Newry & Mourne Cooperative Enterprises; again, these organisations were established to address significant local needs in the absence of government intervention.

A further government policy – that of 'rural proofing' policy in Northern Ireland – does not, as previously mentioned, appear to be actually implemented at present. With the closure of services, little or no consideration seems to be taken of the consequences of these actions (for example, if a rural school is closed, what distance do the school-going children of this area then have to travel to avail of the nearest school with capacity and how is this journey to be made?).



This centralisation of policy decision-making, and the lack of functional competencies at local government level raise concerns around the future population growth and sustainable development of rural communities throughout Northern Ireland. While RPA may address some of these issues, there are concerns that the reforms will enlarge the size of local government areas in Northern Ireland so as their population levels will become more equivalent to those of English local authority areas – and less in line with the norm among municipal authorities in mainland Europe.

3.7.1 Existing Supports

While there is no formal Chamber of Commerce in existence through which the local businesses network in Draperstown, the business community tend to interact informally. Most members of the business community have a good local reputation for supporting each other and employing local people where possible.

Generally the type of companies in Draperstown would not fall under the heading of ‘sexy businesses’; and therefore, the local perception is that government is not interested in supporting these types of companies. There is also the issue of lack of supports for business start-ups. Currently, Invest NI’s budget for business start-ups is only 4% of their overall budget. In the current economic climate, it is expected that the range and level of support for business development and expansion will get much worse before it gets better.

Section 3: Maximising Opportunity

Workspace has been a key ‘driver’ behind the socio-economic development of Draperstown for the past 25 years. But it was not the only initiative underway in the 1980s and 1990s to improve living and working conditions in the Draperstown area. In the late 1980s, monies were secured from the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) under the CRISP initiative² by the wider community. This led to a series of street improvement schemes being undertaken; for example, the planting of trees, improved pedestrian access. In support of these developments, other funding was secured from the DOE and the Heritage Lottery Fund with Workspace initiating and delivering these schemes.

As its economic ventures have become established and increasingly successful, Workspace has begun to invest more into social development initiatives locally; in recent years, for example, Workspace has supported the after-schools club. More recently, it has covered the capital and running costs of the new leisure centre.

As previously noted, the evolution and development of Workspace has been organic in nature. There was no plan at the start; although today, the company works towards a strategic plan which covers the period 2008-2011. Through its strategic plan, the organisation knows where it wants to go – and everything else flows from this. The key aim of the strategic plan is to continue to make money and increase profits; but behind this lies a further four objectives:

- become a stronger organisation; the largest and best social enterprise in Northern Ireland
- to make Stg£1million profit
- to be carbon neutral (0%)
- to establish a Community Trust for the wider community.

Each of these objectives is measurable – through reviewing accounts, measuring the company’s carbon footprints and transferring a percentage of the profits to the Trust Fund.

² CRISP stands for ‘Community Regeneration and Improvement Special Programme’. Within Draperstown, a grant of Stg£1.126million (of which Stg£363,000 came from DOE) was awarded for the development of a small industrial estate and a tourist and heritage centre.

Currently, Workspace is investigating the various options to establishing a Trust; this will allow the company to give grants to various local individuals/ groups upon application. The hardest to measure will be the growth and standing of the organisation – although it is proposed to measure this through turnover, activity levels and diversity of activity.

GOING FORWARD

3.8 Building on collaborative governance, partnership, local stakeholders

Reflecting on twenty-five years of Workspace in Draperstown, the staff and Board of Directors felt that the organisation was in a position to share the following good practice with other communities challenged by the need for rural restructuring and economic diversification:

- ensure that the right people are involved from the outset. Those involved should have strong leadership skills, be visionary, entrepreneurial and innovative, and be willing to take risks. The Board, when established, should be of a limited size, have a clear mandate and be committed to the area in question. It is helpful if members of the Board reside in or have a connection to the area and also have a good network of contacts, both locally and beyond, which can be tapped into as the need arises
- meet the challenges of the time; address the key issues of the community at that moment in time. It is important therefore to have short-, medium- and long-term objectives
- community buy-in must be secured at the outset
- be original in your thinking and way of working. Because 'no one model fits all', do not lift a model from somewhere else. There is no text book to which you can refer. The community itself must determine what will work best for them
- build a certain degree of flexibility into your core objectives. Put in place a plan or framework to which you can work towards
- understand that a development organisation will not be capable of meeting all the social, economic or physical needs of an area, and therefore should not strive to be "all things to all people"
- know how the funding programmes work and if / how specific programmes can be used 'as a means to an end'. It is important that too much emphasis is NOT put on the importance or necessity of securing EU funding
- not all programmes of action will be successful. Know when to pull out / end a programme
- celebrate the successes; share the experience and good news with others. This necessitates having a good communication strategy in place to disseminate results from projects and programmes, and also to engage with stakeholders who will be more willing to offer support to further initiatives going forward
- outputs: process is important, but less so if there is no product at the end of the initiative
- invest in local people. This can be done in a number of ways; for example, through the provision of training, employing local people. Once up and running, it will be important to re-invest in the community. Again this can take many forms; the establishment of an after-schools club, the provision of community infrastructure such as a club house, a leisure centre, a sports hall, etc.
- through the provision of training, more and more people are in a position to take on leadership roles. The number of 'drivers' is, therefore, increased.

"A weak project or initiative can succeed in terms of tangible, positive outputs if there is a strong working group in support to drive it forward; a strong project or initiative – no matter how good in concept – will, however, fail if the working group is weak."

Source: Research interviewee

Workspace has been ahead of its time in many respects. Through keeping the preverbal ‘ear to the ground’, it has largely been successful in terms of the timing and type of businesses it has established. It has also kept up to date on knowing what funding programmes are available and what monies could be used for. Interestingly, the question was raised as to whether the same risks taken in the 1980s by the people of Draperstown and its surrounds would be taken today? It was thought the answer would be no; largely because of changes over time and the belief that people would have more to lose today than they would have 20+ years ago.

An organisation’s communication strategy will not be right at the outset; it will need to be tweaked as the organisation grows and matures and technology changes. Within the Draperstown community, there is an interest in Workspace now revisiting its strategy so that more people within the community are ‘brought into the information loop’. This could include, for example, newsletters being produced on a regular basis and circulated to all residents and businesses within the local post office catchment area; placing a community notice board in the village (close to the village green or beside the Workspace building); regular updates through the local media including the local press and radio (press releases, community diary section); open forums as part of the A.G.M. whereby ideas and viewpoints from the community as a whole can be harvested; and internet blogs (through the Workspace website).



Workspace continues to have a key role to play in the rural restructuring process; in terms of training, mentoring, assisting local companies – both those under the Workspace banner and those not – in securing new markets and identifying new areas of business growth to which local entrepreneurs could turn their attentions. This will necessitate Workspace adopting a new operational model; a model that is flexible to the global recession and which addresses the needs of the wider Draperstown area.

3.9 The Economy

Magherafelt District has, for the past decade, been very buoyant economically in terms of its growth and investment; with much of this having been in industries that are now in decline – such as construction. As a result, this is now translating into growing unemployment rates as businesses close down or down-size. With the current decline in building programmes, it is expected that this area will have to ‘reinvent’ itself going forward; businesses will have to refocus and engage in new activities if they are to survive the global recession. Workspace is always open to new investment ideas and in light of the current debates centred around climate change and the knowledge economy, the company will be looking for opportunities in these areas; for example, recycling. Plans are also afoot to increase the market share of some of Workspace’s companies, such as Homeseal, in the South and to develop the events management company.



The Draperstown area is heavily dependent on employment in the construction industry at present; but in recent months over 300 people lost their jobs in the locality. If these had all worked for the one company, this loss of jobs would have been much publicised – but this has not been the case. There is a need for greater awareness and acknowledgement among government agencies of the challenges facing small rural communities dependent on agriculture and manufacturing for employment.

The District still has many opportunities on which to turn the economy around; but it also faces many challenges. For too long, the emphasis of government has been on attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to the region – though none to Draperstown or even the wider Magherafelt area – rather than supporting small-scale indigenous business start-ups. Government policy needs to change; with increasing emphasis being placed on local endogenous small to medium sized enterprises.

3.9.1 Economic Diversification

Within the wider local community, there is a strong belief that Workspace must, going forward, continue to engage in social issues and, finances permitting, this should happen to a greater extent than it has to date. Social projects are of critical importance to the local community; these include environmental improvements, walking trails away from traffic, increased supports for local clubs and festivals and provision of crèche facilities.

The community members are aware that a community audit is currently being carried out and that Workspace is engaged in this process. There would be a desire locally for Workspace to commit now to addressing whatever recommendations come out of the final report.

3.9.2 The Knowledge Economy

Given the range of office spaces available in the area, and the presence of broadband infrastructure, scope exists to develop a knowledge economy in this area – albeit on a small scale. To attract companies, it will become necessary to prove that the relevant skills base exists – and this may be the ‘push factor’ for the carrying out of a local skills audit.

3.10 The Role of Human Resources & Social Capital

The entrepreneurial spirit of the community and business community is a key strength of this rural area. Through their ‘can-do’ attitude, the people of Draperstown have survived previous economic down-turns and recessions. With a strong population base and an increasing educational profile, it is certain that the community will survive this global downturn also; its future economic base, however, may be somewhat different.

That Draperstown is already attracting college graduates home is a positive that must be better understood going forward. It will be important to the area to continue to attract young educated people – as this in turn will attract employers. It is only by maintaining its employment base that Draperstown can compete with Magherafelt and Maghera for new business developments.

3.10.1 Education, Skills and Training

There has long been a tradition of training and capacity building within this rural community; it was this ethos that led initially to the establishment of Workspace. In the current climate, training needs will be different. It will be important that organisations such as Workspace work to fill emerging markets – thus improving the community’s skills base and generating local employment opportunities.

CONCLUSION

3.11 Integrating Agency Responses

With the decision now made as to which councils will be joining together under the Review of Public Administration (RPA), there was a strong feeling locally that decisions must now be

made on what range of functions are to be devolved to local government. In addition, members of the local community and members of Workspace expressed the view that it would be important to put steps in place to ensure that the more rural and / or peripheral communities get due attention under the 'Super Councils'. Concerns were expressed that areas such as Dungannon, which is home to a number of segregated communities, will dominate a large proportion of the new larger Council's budget. It is currently unclear as to what the joining together of the councils of Magherafelt, Dungannon and South Tyrone and Cookstown will mean for the number of local councillors representing the area of Draperstown.

There are already concerns that the new 'Super Council' for this area will be falling between two education boards and two health boards. The Education Boards are already reluctant to work in smaller towns and villages; this is not thought to bode well for this area into the future. In addition, the Health Boards are adopting a centralised agenda which in turn means that the number of regional hospitals serving the area is being cut without the promised alternatives, such as extra ambulances, being put in place.

There is a need for better incentives to be put in place to support business start-ups in the more rural districts. Currently, it is not a level playing field between urban and rural centres. This requires greater public sector support for endogenous initiatives and a renewed focus on the 'micro-region' as the arena for sustainable economic and social development. It was strongly expressed that monies should not be handed back to Westminster because they have not been spent on the urban centres. The private sectors 'can do' attitude must be embraced and adopted by local and regional government; emphasis must be placed on 'doing' rather than 'talking about doing'.



3.12 A Sustainable Communities Agenda

Because of the breadth of its activities, it is somewhat difficult to quantify the impact that Workspace has had on the local economy. It has provided local employment and strategic economic advice; it has both engaged in, and led to the development of, good practice; and, it continues to reinvest in the local community.

The Workspace model of community development has transformed the socio-economic landscape of Draperstown over the past 25 years. Successful businesses have been established, unemployment rates fell by almost 20%, quality of life in the area has been improved, community infrastructure has been put in place and local events sponsored. And despite the current economic climate, there is a commitment from Workspace to build on these successes and to continue to invest in the local community. Over the coming years, it will be important, however, for Workspace and the community to work even more closely together so as to 'weather the storm' and to ensure that each understands the needs, challenges and opportunities faced by the community at large.

Working Paper 4

Case Study: Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy

Section 1: People, Place & Skills

4.1 Local Development

For Border communities, such as Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy, the challenges of the 1980s 'rural crisis' were heightened through the presence of the Border, army checkpoints associated with the Northern Ireland Troubles and custom patrols; together these resulted in this natural hinterland being fractured and trading patterns disrupted. It is only since the mid-1990s, with the onset of the Peace Process, that this cross-border area has been able to re-connect socially, economically and culturally.

4.1.1 An introduction to Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy

The cross-border area that is Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy has changed quite significantly over the past ten years. Road blockades and army checkpoints have been replaced by good quality road infrastructure (the N2 / A5 – Dublin to Derry), which in turn has led to increased cross-border cooperation and communication. The opening up of the roads has further provided residents and businesses in this border area with wider choices – both in terms of where they work and where they shop. It has led to an increase in consumer confidence and, in parallel to this, a growth in endogenous business start-ups; mainly micro-enterprises employing less than ten people. In Dungannon & South Tyrone District, for example, the level of unemployment in 2007 was only 1.8% - reflecting the significance of the increase in the number of VAT registered businesses in the District in creating employment but also in absorbing in-migration. Other problems, however, persist; namely the loss of local services such as the local police station in Aughnacloy, the loss of hospital services in both Dungannon and Monaghan, the lack of inward investment to the area – despite its location on the aforementioned key transport corridor – and the decline of agriculture and associated agri-businesses. Neither Emyvale nor Aughnacloy has experienced any significant investment in enterprise development; instead both towns remain dormitory towns for the surrounding larger urban centres (see below). The area of Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy has, up until late 2007, also faced a number of additional challenges; many of which were the result of a changing societal structure – an ageing demographic, continued out-migration of youth and in-migration from Central and Eastern Europe – that paralleled a period of rapid development and wealth creation (albeit imbalanced in terms of distribution). These new challenges included increased anti-social behaviour, cost of living and vulnerability of the elderly, and loss of community spirit and leadership.

As previously noted in Working Paper 2, *Area Profiles*, the typology of this cross-border area would be best described as being structurally weak and marginal. While there is some economic diversification occurring, it is not taking place to such an extent that it generates off-farm employment for large numbers or impacts positively on the local economy. In the current economic climate, this community's attempts at remaining viable through previous economic diversification initiatives – poultry and mushroom farming, furniture making and small scale engineering activities – is under threat. The decline of the construction industry, together with the reduced prices being paid to farmers for their produce, is having a negative impact on the local economy. Businesses are under threat of closure – with many already closed or in the process of winding down. It is estimated, for example, that over 1,200 people have become unemployed in the Dungannon & South Tyrone District over the past 12 months. This economic decline is associated with the recent severe downturn in the economy of the island of Ireland, but also with rural-restructuring and the difficulties faced by rural areas in gaining economic competitiveness.



4.1.2 Development Objectives

For the local communities of Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy, located within the Blackwater Valley, this wider cross-border area is a well-defined 'micro-region'; the development of which should be steered by a cross-border framework or strategy. In respect of the local administrations – Monaghan County Council and Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council – this case study area is not understood to be a 'micro-region' as such; rather they view it as located within a wider structurally weak rural area. For the local administrations and development support agencies, the peripheral location of this cross-border area – in relation to their respective central governments as well as their own administrative boundaries – means that it is difficult to attract investment or generate growth in this area. As a result, and because of its peripheral location, this North Monaghan / South Tyrone area is not experiencing any housing or business-related development pressures.



Within both council areas, there is capacity for further housing development; in line with their respective housing policies and housing strategies. Monaghan County Council, for example, has a presumption for development in the towns, villages and countryside of the North Monaghan area; thus reflecting its rural character, its on-going dependence on agriculture and associated activities and the fact that this area is under less development pressure than other parts of the county. For Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council,

emphasis has been placed on confining development to the towns and villages of the District. The restrictions on housing development in the countryside – through the now revised draft Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 14³ – has led, consequently (albeit anecdotally) to people from the North building homes in the countryside just south of the Border. While no definite figures are yet available on the mobility of home-builders over the past 5 years, it is recognised that this cross-border movement has both direct and indirect costs.

In terms of enterprise development, Monaghan County Council, for example, anticipated increased development throughout the county, including North Monaghan, as a result of the new commercial and industrial zoning introduced in the *County Development Plan 2007-2013*. However, with the downturn in the economy, this has not yet materialised. It would be widely held within this cross-border area that Monaghan Council's policy for light industry is ahead of that of Northern Ireland generally and Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council specifically. Monaghan's policy is considered much more flexible regarding the location of industrial and manufacturing enterprises; largely because the economy has tended to be based on individual entrepreneurship and small-scale businesses. Within Dungannon and South Tyrone, the tendency is to direct investment and growth to the larger settlements located north of Aughnacloy (as promoted in the draft PPS4⁴), thereby compounding the peripherality of this case study area – although others would argue that this is as it should be and reduces leakage.

It is widely regarded that, given the rural nature of this cross-border region, opportunities also exist for enterprise development in the green / sustainable energy sector. However, given the importance of the agri-food sector to this locale, further consideration has to be given to whether / how these sectors – competing for the same natural resources (i.e. land, animal waste) – can sit 'side-by-side'. In addition, concerns are increasingly being voiced as to whether the green or eco-economy is an alternative; for this is a lifestyle choice that not everyone can afford

Going forward, the challenge for Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy, and other peripheral rural communities, is that in the absence of central government funding how do they attract people and investment into the area?

³ Revised through draft Planning Policy Statement 21.

⁴ Draft *Planning Policy Statement 4: Industry, Business and Distribution* promotes the location of enterprises on zoned land in Northern Ireland's towns and villages rather than in the open countryside. It argues for the restriction of rural development in rural areas in the interests of rural amenity.

4.2 The Urban-Rural Relationship and Approaches to Planning

The planning system structures and processes, North and South, are at variance with each other and this stifles opportunities for cross-border collaboration and the development of integrated frameworks and strategies. In saying this, however, it is likely that the Review of Public Administration (RPA) in Northern Ireland – which will result in the number of district councils being reduced from 26 to 11 and the decentralisation of further functions to local government – will bring the working of local government and planning on both sides of the border more in line with each other.

The natural hinterland for this cross-border community does not adhere to lines on a map. Rather, it is cross-border in nature; with a traditional focus having been to the population centres to the north of Emyvale and Truagh. Its urban-rural relationship, therefore, is also informed and directed by its border location.

The urban-rural relationship in this area is not as strong as it possibly should be – given the size of settlements and the range of services they offer. But it is because of these very factors that the relationship is as it is; these rural settlements see themselves as being in competition with surrounding rural and urban settlements for people, jobs, housing, services and social facilities.

4.2.1 National Policy

Both jurisdictions have adopted a spatial strategy – the *Regional Development Strategy* (RDS) for Northern Ireland in 2001 and the *National Spatial Strategy* (NSS) for Ireland in 2002 – the objectives of which are the achievement of balanced regional development⁵. This translates into the potential of each region being harnessed and developed in a sustainable manner. Both strategies – the RDS and the NSS – identify a number of key urban centres which are to act as ‘growth poles’ for the clustering of economic activity; thereby providing a counter-balance to the Belfast Metropolitan Area and the Greater Dublin Area respectively. These growth centres – classified as either Gateways or Hubs – in turn would stimulate the development of the island’s diverse rural areas, each unique and requiring a tailored policy response.

The RDS and NSS also make provision for cross-border connectivity; for example, the Dublin-Belfast Corridor and the North West Gateway (Letterkenny-Derry/Londonderry Link). Such cooperation, as promoted by both strategies, drives regional growth and provides for the development of transport linkages that traverse the Border. In the case of the Central Border area – in which this micro-region falls – such linkages increase the development potential of border towns and villages. Work has been progressing on upgrading the N2, and connectivity to and from Dublin has been greatly enhanced over the past five years. At present, the M1 from Belfast is being extended westward as far as Ballygawley and a major intersection between it and the Dublin – Derry/Londonderry route is planned for near Augher (9km from Aughnacloy).



Neither the RDS nor NSS prescribes a specific role for medium and small towns such as Aughnacloy or Emyvale respectively. The RDS does, however, set out a series of objectives around rural development and employment generation. In the context of rural restructuring, it promotes ‘pluriactivity’, which involves combining farming with off-farm employment or on-farm diversification.

⁵ Both Strategies are currently being revised at present; with the RDS undergoing a full review and the NSS being ‘refreshed’.

4.2.2 Regional Policy

Building on the NSS, the Border *Regional Planning Guidelines* (RPGs) promote the development of strategic radial and linking corridors; including those that operate cross-border. One such proposed strategic 'linking' corridor is that which links the designated 'hubs' of Cavan and Monaghan with Armagh and Belfast.

Because of its geographical position, the Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy area benefits from being in close proximity to a large number of urban centres (see Table 4.1). However, the flip side of this is that this cross-border micro-region lies to the periphery of the vast majority of these centres and, therefore, fails to benefit to any great extent from their inward investment or growth. Nevertheless, according to the local population, each of these centres is important to the sustained growth and development of this rural cross-border area but also the wider Blackwater Valley micro-region.

Table 4.1: Urban Centres and their proximity to Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy

Urban Centre	Population (2001)	Distance from Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy (approx. – in Kms)
Monaghan Town	6,221 (2006)	18 Km
Armagh	14,590	28 Km
Omagh	19,910	34 Km
Dungannon	11,139	21 Km
Cookstown	10,646	38 Km

(Source: CSO, 2006 & NINIS, 2001)

In terms of which of these urban centres is most **significant to the future growth** and development of Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy, three centres were noted:

1. Monaghan town
2. Dungannon
3. Omagh.

In many respects, the identification of Monaghan town as the urban centre most significant to the future development of the Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy area is somewhat surprising. There is no tradition of this micro-region 'looking towards' this small urban centre. That there is a 'shift' in how the town of Monaghan is perceived and viewed locally is widely welcomed; and is attributed by some to the designation of the town as a 'Hub' in 2002 as part of the NSS. Through its hub status, Monaghan town has been designated as a centre of regional growth and service provision; and in addition, has a role in the strengthening of rural communities and their economies. There is a sense, however, within the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government that this hub is underperforming; largely because of the development leakage taking place (that is, development taking place in the surrounding towns and hinterlands such as Carrickmacross).

4.2.3 Local Policy

The *County Monaghan Development Plan 2007-2013* reflects the principles of the RPGs. It provides for the promotion and development of Monaghan as a 'hub town' and as the main residential, retail, service and employment centre in the county. In terms of a settlement hierarchy, the Plan promotes the development of second and third tier towns as retail, service and employment centres and advocates some development of fourth and fifth tier settlements; particularly in terms of residential and retail development. Emyvale falls within this latter category. As noted by ICLRD (2008), the Plan encourages all towns and villages to develop

specialist niche activities or roles that could help distinguish them and thereby promote their development. To this end, the Council has adopted a flexible approach to local economic development in the countryside (rather than 'forcing' SMEs to locate in urban centres).

Within the *Dungannon and South Tyrone Area Plan 2010*, Aughnacloy is recognised as being an important commercial focal point for its extensive rural hinterland. In line with the RDS's objective of supporting the network of service centres based on main towns, small towns and villages in Rural Northern Ireland, the Dungannon and South Tyrone plan supports small-scale developments that 'fit' with the wider development strategy for Aughnacloy. Local identity is important and all new builds are required to be in keeping with the historic built form of Aughnacloy. Furthermore, it is required that development takes place within the settlement limits – thus protecting the open countryside from one-off housing and out-of-scale enterprise developments.

In terms of **access to employment** / commuting patterns, a large proportion of the local population works locally i.e. within the Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy area and its wider surrounds (such as Killybrone). Outside of the immediate micro-region, the main urban centre to which people commute is Monaghan town. Turning to **access to services**, the pattern of movements is much more widespread. Many of the day-to-day services (including banking, retail, post office, petrol/diesel, GP, dentist, pharmacy) would be accessed locally; primarily in Aughnacloy or Monaghan town and to a lesser extent in Emyvale. However, for hospital services or clothes/homewares/hardware/electrical shopping, it becomes necessary to travel to the larger urban centres of Dungannon, Omagh and, to a lesser extent, Cookstown. Interestingly, this supports the anecdotal evidence put forward by the local council officials during initial and follow-up one-to-one interviews – that those settlements to the east of Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy (for example, Caledon and Glaslough) access their services in Armagh while people in the Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy area will tend to travel to Dungannon. This is attributed to geographic proximity rather than the quality of the road infrastructure serving the area (with the road from Aughnacloy to Dungannon being a B-class road whereas the road from Aughnacloy to Armagh is of A-class standard).

4.3 Education & Enterprise: Mapping Strengths and Deficits

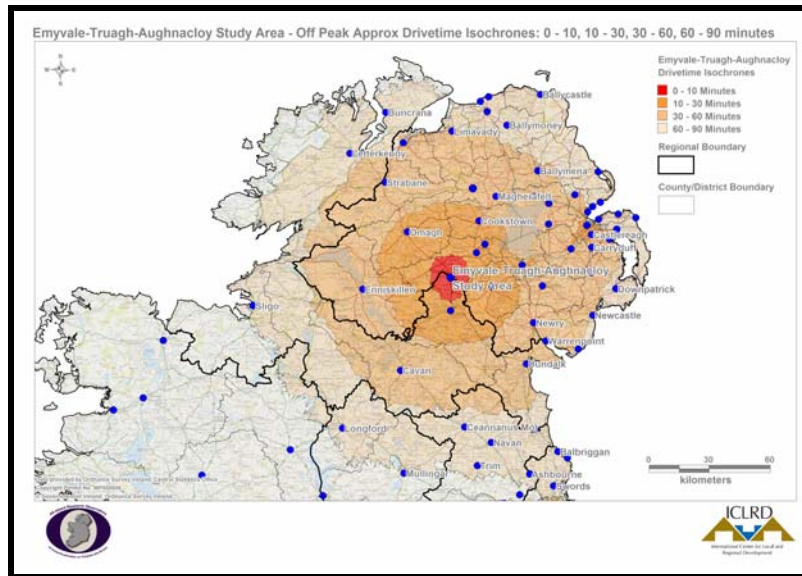
There are no universities located in close proximity to this Border area; instead a small number of Institutes of Technology and Higher Education Centres are located within a 70km radius; namely Dundalk Institute of Technology (65km), Cavan Institute (55km) and the Dungannon Campus of the South West College of Further Education (21km). While a distance of under 70km to the nearest third level institute may not seem excessive, the quality of the roads infrastructure means that two of the institutes are in excess of 45 minutes travelling time from Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy (see Figure 4.1). While distance and connectivity to these three institutes is an issue, the range of courses and qualifications on offer is wide-ranging; these include numeracy and literacy skills, business administration and management, finance, ICT, construction and engineering, health studies, hospitality, catering and tourism, arts and crafts, and health and public safety among others.

Numeracy and literacy skills are particularly important in this micro-region. In 2002, it was estimated by Monaghan County Development Board that at least 25% of the population had basic literacy and numeracy skills problems (CDB, 2002 – see Footnote 11). Similarly, the percentage of working age population in Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council area in 2001 with no qualifications was 45% (Census for Northern Ireland, 2001). Anecdotally, it is thought that the highest proportion of those affected by these lack of skills are located closest to the Border.

For rural enterprise growth and development, there are a number of problems to be overcome – not least of which is the current economic downturn. The problems facing rural enterprises

are largely the same as those facing urban businesses; namely increasing costs, connectivity, under-exploitation of ICT and capacity (Small Business Forum, 2006⁶).

Figure 4.1: Drivetime Isochrones for Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy



In the current economic climate, this rural cross-border community is asking two questions of itself: what skills are most important for the future economic development of this area? and how can these skills be developed?

4.3.1 Skills Base

Within this cross-border micro-region, there is a mixed human resource base in terms of skills and employment potential. Going forward, the wider community recognises the need for greater emphasis to be placed on attracting high value added activity – or the knowledge economy – to the area; and while both Monaghan County Council and Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council, as well as the regional agencies with an economic remit in this area, are committed to attracting higher value-added jobs and a more skilled workforce to their respective counties, supports to grow the relevant social capital to service such enterprises must be put in place.

No inventory currently exists of the skills range within the Blackwater micro-region, including Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy. The carrying out of a skills audit has not been considered to date; local employment for the most part has tended to be low value-added and, as such, did not require a detailed audit of the range of skills available. Rather, employment tended to be sourced locally from the pool available. However, there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that a wide range of skills does exist within this micro-region, many of which are of a higher value-added. This is attributed to the community's engagement in volunteering and cross-border funded programmes; all of which requires management, organisational, financial and an innovative / creative skills-set.

4.3.2 Enterprise Base

Data on the numbers and range of small rural enterprises is limited – not only for this case study area but for the island of Ireland as a whole. Despite this, through contact with local community and business representatives one gets a sense that there is a concentration of

⁶ Small Business Forum (2006): *Small Business is Big Business*.

specific types of industry and enterprise in this area – namely steel fabrication, light engineering and furniture making (with the craft industry beginning to emerge).



While job creation in this Border region is officially the remit of the enterprise agencies within each respective jurisdiction, the local councils are supportive of local job creation. Monaghan County Council, for example, has adopted a proactive approach to job creation through ensuring sufficient serviced land is available as well as adequate infrastructure and facilitating, where possible, business expansion. While it has been hampered over the past number of years by the uncertainty around the Review of Public Administration (RPA), Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council has, as part of its *Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan*, adopted the strategic aims of providing workspace / lands for local business growth and development, ensuring local infrastructure meets business needs, improving access to research and development facilities and increasing access to broadband.

Section 2: Governance & Policy

4.4 Governance and Citizen Participation

The local administrative systems, North and South, are at variance. Councils on both sides of the border have varying functions, are funded differently and elected officials serve different terms of office; this results in it being extremely difficult to match 'like-with-like' (that is, matching council departments with the same or similar remit and matching personnel with the same or similar job description). This discrepancy between functions is one of the main reasons put forward for there not being as much cross-border cooperation as there possibly should have been over the past thirty years between local government structures.

4.4.1 Regional

From a regional perspective, there is a high dependence on cross-border networks such as the Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN), the East Border Network⁷ and the Blackwater Regional Partnership⁸ to facilitate local governance and community participation in cross-border cooperation. The Border Regional Authority for the South – covering the length of the Border – has no equivalent agency with which to liaise in Northern Ireland. Through ICBAN, for example, opportunities exist for the County Managers and Chief Executives of the respective councils to meet and discuss priority issues strategically for the Border region. Elected representatives also have the opportunity to come together and discuss identified needs, challenges and opportunities. Such spaces / forums do not currently exist at a local level.

⁷ Both the Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) and East Border Region cover this cross-border area. These networks are strategic in their focus; their activities are council-driven and council-led with programmes fitting in with wider regional and national policies. Both Networks are in the process of applying to the Special EU Programmes Body for INTERREG IV funding for strategic initiatives in such areas as tourism, health and spatial planning. As a result of the vertical and horizontal coordination of policy with projects, these programmes will be of benefit to the Blackwater Valley micro-region – both directly and indirectly.

⁸ The Blackwater Regional Partnership was founded in 1994 and covers the administrative area of Armagh City and District Council, Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council and Monaghan County Council. Emphasis to date has been placed on integrated rural development and supporting cross-border cooperation; including village renewal, training provision, tourism and environmental initiatives and, for the past few years, the reopening of the Ulster Canal. A new strategy is currently being prepared; this will cover the period 2009-2013. The plan, it is envisaged, will outline what the Partnership will focus on and, through a multi-agency approach, how it will set about achieving its aims.

4.4.2 Local

From the perspective of the local community and businesses, the relationship between the wider community and the respective councils, Monaghan County Council and Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council, is to all intents and purposes fractured; a situation accentuated by the case study's location on the periphery of the Councils' respective jurisdictional boundaries. From the councils' perspective, however, cross-border relations are as strong as they need to be; with officials coming together as and when the need arises. This divergence in viewpoints can be accounted for by the lack of cross-sectoral transparency and information flow on cross-border linkages as they emerge and develop. Across the various sectors consulted, an emerging message is that cross-border development happens by design rather than accident!

4.5 An Integrated Approach to Rural Development and Restructuring

Economic diversification is a growing phenomenon in rural communities throughout the island of Ireland – some successfully, others less so. It is increasingly accepted that steps must be put in place to support those communities dependent on farming and / or small-scale manufacturing but who, for various reasons, may wish to diversify; this includes providing advice on potential areas of diversification and establishing a flexible mentoring programme which is designed with *the specific needs of each particular area* in mind.

4.5.1 A 'vision' of sustainable rural development

For the community of Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy, having a 'real' vision for an area in terms of how it should develop over the medium- to long-term is key to its continued development and long-term viability. To create this vision, it is increasingly recognised that neighbouring communities – irrespective of whether they are cross-border or cross-community in nature – must work together. Throughout the Troubles, both jurisdictions – including the local Councils – tended to work "back-to-back". At district / county administrative level, there was little if any cross-border cooperation or communication. The implications of this can still be seen today in the Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy area – for example, duplication of services and no common policy around signage.



Looking to the future, there is general agreement on both sides of the Border that there is a need for joined-up thinking – whether cross-jurisdictional, cross-community, inter-county / district – as promoted by the LEADER programme and the more recent Rural Development Programme, 2007-13⁹. Through joined-up thinking and cooperation, the economic development of an area, such as Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy, can be pursued in a sustainable manner leading to mutual benefits.

The achievement of sustainable rural development is, according to those who live and work in Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy, dependent on a number of key factors, including:

⁹ The island of Ireland has a total budget of almost €7billion under the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 - €5.7billion in the Republic and £100million in the North. The funding – covered by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the national exchequers – is being allocated across four measures:

- Axis 1: Competitiveness
- Axis 2: Improving the Environment and Countryside
- Axis 3 & Axis 4: Quality of Rural Areas, Diversification of the Rural Economy & LEADER

For the rural counties of Monaghan and Dungannon & South Tyrone, opportunities exist to develop cross-border programmes of action, particularly around Axis 3 and 4. Discussions are already taking place between Magherafelt Area Partnership and Truagh Development Association on potential cross-border projects.

- having a strategic vision on how the area should develop and having clarity around the function of the various stakeholders
- having ‘buy-in’ from a wide range of stakeholders representing central, regional, county and local agencies (i.e. ensuring vertical and horizontal coordination)
- having an awareness of the areas ‘potentiality’
- having a ‘champion’ who is willing to bring the community together and push hard for action
- having an action plan to which the community can work towards (goals, milestones)
- being entrepreneurial and willing to take risks (not being hampered by lack of resources or finance).

(Source: Focus Group – Community & Business Representatives, 22 October 2008)

For Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy, local people have a shared vision, local champions, a strong community (for the most part) and entrepreneurial spirit and buy-in from a number of the key stakeholders. Further commitment is, however, needed from public sector officials and elected representatives, as well as enterprise support agencies, to ensure the balanced and sustainable development of this area – and to ensure that this happens within a cross-border, regional and strategic context.

4.5.2 Local Stakeholders and Resources

There is huge local commitment to the development of the micro-region that is Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy; this is demonstrated through the existence of a number of local development groups within the area – including Truagh Development Association, Carrickroe Development Association, Clara Development Association and Aughnacloy Development Association – and, more recently, the establishment of further associations; for example in Loughans and Aghaloo.



The communities of the Blackwater Valley micro-region have, to date, invested a lot of themselves in the promotion and development of cross-border and cross-community relationships – on both a professional and personal level. This is particularly true of the Truagh Development Association which was established in 1975¹⁰ (see Table 4.2). Initially, this involved building up the capacity of each local community to engage in community development programmes, build trust between committee members and agree on their own priority actions.

Table 4.2: Focus of Community Development in Truagh-Aughnacloy since 1970

Sector	1970-1990	1990-1994	1994-2000	2000-Present
Demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Population in decline; result of Troubles - Mullan village deserted by 1990 - Community groups operating in own domains; little cross-referencing taking place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local businessman buys Mullan village; regeneration begins - Regrouping of Truagh Development Association; theme-based sub-committees established – engaging everyone involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Links between Truagh and Aughnacloy pursued & nurtured - Eight areas of interaction identified (jointly): included elderly, education 	

¹⁰ When first established, the Truagh Development Association would have been a weak community group; volunteers were few and membership therefore overlapped with other organisations. This meant that the Association got involved in a wide range of local initiatives – albeit sometimes in a small capacity. In its early years, the Association was most closely associated with the Truagh Group Water Scheme.

Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High literacy / numeracy issues - New school in Clara to replace 3 existing; but in decline by 1990 - No preschool / childcare facilities until 1980s - School transport scheme established in 1976/77; improved access to education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Truagh Association focusing on education needs in area - Schools in poor condition (disrepair) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Educational Needs Analysis study - ATESSP Project (Aughnacloy Truagh European Studies Schools Project) - Links Dungannon College: adult education courses e.g. Families Learning Together, Womens Own Time - New school in Carrickroe - Links with Manchester Metropolitan University; training in multi-sensory approach to teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opening interim IT Centre (links various education bodies, North & South) - Development and opening of the Blackwater Valley Community Learning, Cultural, ICT and Peace Centre
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Macra carried out profile of community needs - Closure of footwear industry in Mullan in 1980s 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IFA encouraging local community to avail of EU funds - Building links with FAS, Dept. Agriculture, UCD; emphasis on capacity building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disappearance of pig / pork production 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Increasing entrepreneurial activity (construction, furniture, poultry, mushrooms, water)
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regeneration of McCready's Mill (with IFI funding) - Refurbishment of old stone building in Aughnacloy; now home to Aghaloo Credit Union 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Communities examining their areas in terms of needs (halls, schools, infrastructure) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clara Audit (carried out by consultants) - Renaming of McCready's Mill to the McCague Centre - Proposal developed for building of lifelong learning centre - Development of environmental awareness programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Construction of housing at Ballyoisin (total 26 houses in two phases) - Housing also constructed in Clara and Carrickroe; with further plans for more housing in Carrickroe
Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Isolation of people within own religious / cultural milieu; - Closure of Clara Hall due to Troubles; resulting low levels community initiative - ICA facilitated social & cultural gatherings - Establishment of Aughnacloy Historical & Cultural Society - Establishment of Truagh Accordeon Band - Fair Day in Aughnacloy; twice a month – continued throughout the Troubles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sliabh Beagh Partnership established with IFI monies; involving 14 communities (Monaghan, Tyrone, Fermanagh) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Blackwater Valley concerts organised - Establishment of Errigal Heritage Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhanced links with Europe - Number of awards received in recognition of achievements e.g. AIB Better Ireland Award, Marcel Rudlof Award Strasbourg, etc. - Establishment community arts programme with Monaghan Council and Dundalk IT - Decline of Fair Day in Aughnacloy
Sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of St. Mellans GAA park in 1980s a positive step - Glaslough Harriers & Truagh Athletic Club: notable successes; no. all-Ireland medals 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ongoing upgrade on St. Mellan's GAA facilities
Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Truagh Group Water scheme – driven by local volunteers in the 1970s (with local contributions); water connections to houses established - Car parking provided at Ballyoisin church 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extension of rural transport scheme with Bus Eireann -Commencement cross-border childcare project; but no facilities to house playgroup (also limited service) 	
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IFI funding available from 1986 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Growing EU interest in Irish Border 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PEACE I programme commences in 1994; welcomed as agenda broader than that of local government - Initially, emphasis on structural projects (over societal) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Avail of EQUAL Ireland programme; provision of certified training -Opportunities continue under IFI, INTERREG & PEACE

For example, over a decade was spent building and nurturing the Truagh Development Association and its community spirit before thoughts turned to cross-border collaboration. Building on this ground work, and with the emergence of strong leadership in the Truagh area, emphasis over the past fifteen years has been placed on cross-border and cross-community engagement. This has involved breaking down barriers, challenging the persistence of a 'mental border', acknowledging the wrongs of the past on a cross-community basis and building bridges. While fostering good relations, the cross-border communities of Truagh and Aughnacloy have been engaging in cross-border funded programmes – starting with PEACE 1 in 1997 – to demonstrate what can be achieved through collaboration. Initiatives have included the Aughnacloy Truagh European Studies Schools Project (ATESSP) in 1997, Blackwater Valley Broadband Consortium in 2004, the Vital Signs Project in 2005 and the Blackwater Valley Community Learning, Cultural, ICT and Peace Centre which opened in 2007.

The time is now right for other resources and stakeholders – beyond the local development associations – to be committed to this process of nurturing relationships and engaging in joint activities to the benefit of this cross-border micro-region. To this end, the Truagh Development Association has secured funding from (i) Youth Action Northern Ireland to work with COSTA on developing young peoples confidence so that they can contribute to a peaceful society, and (ii) Rural Development Council and International Fund for Ireland (IFI) under the Integrating Communities fund to work with five other local development associations – North and South – on developing joint action plans and engaging in joint activities and training. In addition, funding has been secured by Truagh to work with SAVER NAVER on activities for senior citizens from this cross-border community; including yoga, flower arranging and art classes.

Going forward, it is hoped that the public sector officials and elected representatives, together with the private sector, in both jurisdictions will become more involved in the social and economic development of this cross-border sub-region. The wider community must now build on this existing momentum by turning its attention to the development of a joint action plan, the securing of monies (which are not short-term funding dependent) and the appointment of a cross-border development worker.

4.6 Inter-County / Cross-Border Collaboration

Given the cross-border nature of this micro-region, it is essential to its sustainable growth and development that the communities, businesses and local administrations of Monaghan County Council and Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council work together on social, economic, environmental and cultural issues into the future. The area of North Monaghan, in which the case study area of Emyvale-Truagh is located, is surrounded on three sides by Northern Ireland. Traditionally, the natural hinterland for this border community would have extended into Aughnacloy and surrounding areas.

As noted in *Monaghan 2002-2012: Our People, Our Place*¹¹ the border location of this case study area, together with the Troubles “has impacted negatively on the social, economic and cultural development” of the area and has curtailed investment “particularly in infrastructure and industrial development” (CDB, 2002: 7). This, together with ‘back-to-back’ policy development over the past 80 years has severely stemmed the development of this cross-border area. Newspaper articles from 21 years ago speak of the infrastructure deficits facing this border area and the impacts of cross-border trade on border communities (at this time, like now, the flow was from Ireland to Northern Ireland). Interestingly though, the articles also speak of the creativity and innovativeness of local employers in ‘riding the storm’; Monaghan Mushrooms, for example, branched out from the growing of mushrooms only to the fabrication and erection of mushroom tunnels (*Sunday Tribune*, 14 June 1987).

¹¹ Prepared by the County Development Board (CDB), this document was the integrated strategy for the social, cultural and economic development of County Monaghan.

Given the rural nature of the counties of Monaghan and Tyrone and, as such this cross-border region, and the resulting importance of agriculture and agri-businesses (mushroom and poultry farming) to the local economy, it is unsurprising that inter-county collaboration is strong in this border area. County Monaghan, for example, has developed very close ties at an inter-county level with County Cavan; for example, the counties are grouped together for the administration of health, tourism and the LEADER Programme. In addition, the counties are part of the same Dáil constituency. Businesses are also making connections and investigating how they can make use of end-products being produced locally. Bose¹², for example, is using locally-produced wooden cabinets in the production of loud-speaker systems (*Sunday Business Post*, 30 June 1991).

4.7 Stakeholder Engagement and Agency Responses

Currently, there is a perception locally that when dealing with state and development agencies, the existence of the Border within this natural hinterland is seen as a 'large elephant in the room'. This viewpoint has been exacerbated by the reality of County Monaghan, for example, being slotted "into different regions for different administrative and developmental purposes – North West for Tourism, North East for Health" (CDB, 2002: 7) and both ICBAN and the East Border Region for governance, spatial planning and commercial development. The functions of all these groupings – apart from ICBAN and the East Border Region - continue to cease at the Border. In the current climate – positive in terms of the Peace Process yet negative in terms of the current global economic downturn – this situation must change going forward. The potential of Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy, together with the wider Blackwater Valley micro-region – must be recognised and acknowledged and the relevant agencies should work together so that the 'challenge of the Border' is removed. Agencies must become 'border-effective'.

4.7.1 Existing Supports



There are a number of existing support agencies for rural enterprise development. In the South, these include the County Enterprise Boards, County Development Boards and LEADER groups at a local level and Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland at a regional level (which organisation you go to being dependent on the numbers employed and / or the specialised nature of the business). In the North, support agencies include local enterprise agencies and LEADER groups at the local level and Enterprise Northern Ireland¹³ and Invest NI at a regional level.

Other support agencies (with no financial element) include FAS, Business Innovation Centres (BICs) and Area Partnerships in the South and Area Partnerships in the North.

In support of the work of the County Enterprise Boards and FAS in the South and the Local Enterprise Agencies¹⁴ in the North, agencies such as Enterprise Ireland and Invest NI must, going forward, work off the principal of supporting businesses in a flexible manner which addresses local needs – this includes needs analysis and the development and revising of business plans.

¹² Based in Carrickmacross.

¹³ Enterprise Northern Ireland is the association of all Local enterprise agencies in Northern Ireland.

¹⁴ The Dungannon Local Enterprise Agency is particularly supportive of the engineering, food processing and craft sectors; areas previously identified as constituting emerging 'clusters' or 'concentrations' in the micro-region of Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy. These skills will be invaluable to this region were it to pursue the advancement and promotion of business clusters and networks in these fields.

Section 3: Maximising Opportunity

As noted in the research report, *Fostering Mutual Benefits for Cross-Border Areas* (ICLRD, 2008), “The strategic location of this cross-border ‘cluster’ on the main North-South / East-West road transport corridors¹⁵ provides the area of Truagh-Aughnacloy with many opportunities in terms of its future growth and development” (p.134).

A good infrastructure base is key to the success of any location in terms of enterprise development and economic diversification. For the more rural and peripheral areas on the island of Ireland, isolation is a major challenge facing rural entrepreneurs. While Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy is ideally situated on a key transport corridor, it still struggles to attract investment; this is primarily because it ‘falls between’ two administrations – in this case on a cross-border basis – and its communication networks, namely broadband and ICT facilities, remain weak and underdeveloped. Going forward, these problems will have to be addressed.



But this border area has come a long way in the past twenty years. It has already demonstrated its ability to diversify into new products and markets. The communities of this area have committed themselves to building friendships and, following this, have spent a lot of time looking to the future – and determining what that might look like.

GOING FORWARD

4.8 Building on collaborative governance, partnership, local stakeholders

The generation of critical mass and economies of scale, through collaborative processes, is key to the growth and / or attractiveness of an area in enterprise terms; particularly in the more rural parts of the island of Ireland. Based on existing and emerging business ‘groupings’ in the Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy area, there is a strong case to be made for the promotion of business clusters and networks. As previously noted, there are already small clusters / concentrations of light engineering, steel fabrication and furniture-making businesses in-situ; which, it has been acknowledged, has attracted a number of migrants to the area. To date, this clustering has occurred in a haphazard manner; with the result that each business is operating independently and there is little or no networking taking place.

Often, within any community facing hard decisions about its economic and social base, there is no long-term perspective taken; the focus instead tends to be on the ‘here and now’. Rural communities, for example, often pin their futures on tourism development; with funds secured to develop tourism trails (walks, hikes, lake shore promenades) and heritage centres (Navan Fort, Ulster Folk Museum). But what happens when the funding ends and / or the development partnership ceases to exist? Many of these projects fall into disrepair or the numbers of visitors expected don’t materialise. Historically, not enough consideration was always given to whether a community group or partnership would be capable of running a larger enterprise.

The success of areas like Duhallow (see *Working Paper 5*) cannot be attributed to the grants or funding received. Rather it is attributable to the people involved; their energy, creativity, commitment and willingness to engage with the wider community. Local leadership – whether through individuals such as Fr. Sean Nolan, Truagh Development Association or cross-border

¹⁵ A central point on the Derry-Dublin and Sligo-Enniskillen-Armagh routes.

networks such as the Blackwater Regional Partnership – is a key factor in drawing people together to brainstorm, prepare funding applications and roll out programmes. The presence or absence of such leadership is one of the main reasons why stronger areas are getting stronger (strong leadership) and weaker areas are getting weaker (lack of leadership).

For this cross-border area, which has a large number of development associations (see above) – as well as the additional complexity of being inter-jurisdictional in nature – a key challenge going forward will be uniting each of these associations under a single geographical entity (for example, the Blackwater Valley micro-region) and / or a common framework or plan. It is essential to the successful socio-economic development of this wider area that these groups are working together going forward – through the pooling of resources and the adoption of a common approach to local identified priority issues.

4.9 The Economy

It is important to recognise and acknowledge that many businesses would have been established in the early 1990s and that the skills required at that time were very different to those required in today's workplace. This can be largely attributed to technological developments and advancements, and the increasing complexity of doing business, making linkages and networking to ensure survival.

To facilitate economic diversification, opportunities to develop the skills-base of the micro-region must be developed; this entails the promotion of links to the existing institutes of education within the wider region through improved transport and broadband services and the possibility of developing outreach centres (through, for example, the Blackwater Valley Community Learning, Cultural, ICT and Peace Centre). In developing communications infrastructure, such as broadband services, the barriers of distance – whether between businesses or businesses and other service providers such as education / training institutes – are removed.

4.9.1 Economic Diversification

Building on the areas geographical position and recognising the implications of its scale, population profile and range of services available, a number of proposals were tabled during the course of this research programme on how the Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy area should develop going forward; these included:

- (a) the undertaking of a business audit – this will raise awareness of the type and number of enterprises that exist in the area
- (b) at a cross-border level, the undertaking of a skills / qualifications audit (similar in focus and objective to the workinmeath.ie initiative)
- (c) the development of alternative energy resources; for example wind energy – it was acknowledged that while this would not create large-scale employment opportunities, it would contribute to the reduction of business running costs
- (d) the development of engineering and woodwork skills in the area; with the potential to promote and nurture the 'clustering' of enterprises related to these skill-bases
- (e) the development of business networks whereby successful businesses in the area would provide mentoring supports to start-ups.

Given the size of locally-based enterprises (the majority employing between five and 50 persons), local businesses in the area do not see themselves in competition with each other for the most part; though this appears to be the case at a strategic – rather than local – level. According to representatives of local businesses, there is a willingness and openness – in theory – to sharing ideas and building knowledge so that the business community as a whole benefits. The challenge now is moving from the theory of business clustering to the actual practice and securing the relevant supports (financial, facilitation, mentoring) for this transition.

4.9.2 The Knowledge Economy

Developing the knowledge economy in this cross-border micro-region is dependent on both jurisdictions working together to define what the term 'knowledge economy' actually means for this area and, thereafter, to increase not only the availability of broadband within the area but also the speeds at which it operates. Without this clarity of definition and the relevant infrastructural developments, this rural cross-border community will not be able to successfully diversify into the identified (and perhaps aspirational) growth sectors of services and other high-value added employment.

The M:TEK building, developed as part of the Monaghan-Armagh Virtual Corridor, houses a number of small high added-value businesses (high-tech focus) – each employing 8-10 people; thus demonstrating that there is potential to develop this sector in Monaghan. Going forward, this cross-border region needs to market itself and promote the potentials / opportunities it has to offer to the knowledge economy sector; as well as quality of life factors. In this regard, this region is asking two questions of itself:



- Can we, and how do we, attract high-skilled jobs to the area?
- Can we, and how do we, attract college-graduates to the area?

4.10 The Role of Human Resources & Social Capital

For rural communities, irrespective of whether they are peripheral or cross-jurisdictional, training and capacity building initiatives must be both accessible and targeted to meet the needs of the businesses operational in the area. The timing of delivery must also be flexible; it must meet with the operating hours (or out-of-hours) of the businesses in question.

It is not sufficient for enterprise support agencies to tell an employee or employer that their skill needs would be best met by returning to college (a number of examples to this effect were offered during the focus groups held as part of this research programme). Often, it is highly improbable that the employer will have time to undertake a college course or that the organisation will be able to spare the time of its employees to undertake such courses.

4.10.1 Education, Skills and Training

In the case of this Border community, there is belief locally that agencies such as Invest NI and Enterprise Ireland should be working together to provide joint training courses (with qualifications recognised on both sides of the Border) – and provide suitable grants / incentives – to assist businesses in developing their skills-base. These courses should not just be aimed at developing practical and craft skills (such as building, joinery, engineering) but should also be aimed at day-to-day management and organisational skills.

Skills that have been identified as being important – at both an EU and national level – include: communication, numeracy, ICT, intra-personal (motivation) and inter-personal (teamwork). A number of these skills already exist – or are being provided – within this Border community (see above); albeit possibly not to the standards required or in the timeframe required in today's competitive and global marketplace.



Training in ICT, for example, should be tailored to meet the needs of individual businesses. Greater emphasis should be placed by the training providers on (i) understanding the IT needs/requirements of each specific business and (ii) responding to that need with a tailored

training programme – similar to the Skillsnet Model¹⁶. In addition, where a programme was so tailored, businesses would be more likely to build on this annually and upgrade their systems as new software is developed --- thus ensuring the IT skills-base of this cross-border sub-region is of a high quality.

CONCLUSION

4.11 Integrating Agency Responses

To develop this case study area and its wider micro-region, it is essential that the government agencies whose policies and/or remit impact on this cross-border area come and work together going forward; that the public and private sector cooperate in the promotion of the region; and that the area markets itself as a single entity.

There is currently a lot of interest locally in the branding and marketing of this cross-border area as a 'single entity'. Where other areas have done so, this approach has tended to be very successful; for example the North Pennines National Park (UK), Emilia Romagna (Italy), Tyrol (Austria and Italy) and Rhön (Germany). As well as portraying an area as being accessible – which is vitally important in the context of cross-border investment and trade – the branding of an area can also help in diversifying its employment base by attracting alternative employers to the area.

To date, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has shown very little interest in locating in this Blackwater micro-region (whether North Monaghan or South Tyrone); unsurprising when one considers the geography of this area and that 80% of all FDI into Ireland locates in the Greater Dublin Area. The belief locally is that the future development and growth of this cross-border locale lies in the support and promotion of 'clusters' of indigenous companies and smaller enterprises. And it is in this that the innovativeness of this cross-border community lies; rather than emphasising the need for diversification of activities, this community is promoting the diversification of how existing enterprises operate! As well as having the potential to lead to more sustainable local development, this model is also transferable to other sectors.

Following through on this train of thought, there is a strong case to be made for both Invest NI and Enterprise Ireland, together with the local enterprise support agencies, to encourage employers into this area; with the emphasis being on small-scale manufacturing – thus harnessing existing skills – and services, a growing high-value added sector. Two suggestions have been tabled on how this can be taken forward – with, of course, all relevant stakeholders:

- (i) developing the cluster/networks using the social economy model (whereby micro-enterprises are operated as community businesses rather than private enterprises)
- (ii) developing the clusters/networks using the co-operative movement model (the objective of which was to pool resources and create strength in numbers).

Which if either of these models is an option can only be determined by the businesses themselves following a more detailed scoping exercise.

4.12 A Sustainable Communities Agenda

Successful rural development is dependent on people and on maximising the potential of local resources – not money, although investment is important. Projects must be endogenous – coming from the community – rather than geared towards accessing funding. Emphasis needs to be placed on establishing organisations that can and will work closely with local

¹⁶ Based on a network approach whereby the enterprises involved come together (either sectorally or geographically) to determine what training they need and this is then tailored to meet their needs.

communities; that actions will be based on identified local needs. Increasingly, however, there are some concerns that it is proving easier to get the money rather than the people.



The cross-border area of Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy is committed to the preparation of a joint action plan focused on its future cooperation. As well as giving direction, this will become a tool for securing further buy-in. Having a joint plan in place will unite the communities under a common objective. There is a growing realisation locally that too much effort could be put into securing buy-in and building bridges on a cross-border and cross-community basis – but without any tangible results / outcomes, interest in working together could start to fade.

It is important for those who have already committed to cross-border and cross-community cooperation that things begin to happen on the ground – that the outcomes become tangible (visible) - and that monies are sourced to fund local programmes on the ground in the interim.

With an interest in the marketing and branding of the Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy areas as a single entity, the local communities are keen that such an initiative would promote sustainable local development as its end goal. This means the border communities and businesses and other key stakeholders, such as the regional college in Dungannon, must work together through consensus and partnership and develop the knowledge base of this wider micro-region. This will only be achieved, however, if this local development is (i) driven by a local champion(s) and (ii) takes place within a supportive institutional context – nationally, regionally and locally.

Working Paper 5
Duhallow Working Paper

Section 1: People, Place & Skills

This paper deals specifically with rural restructuring and development in Duhallow. The LEADER Partnership, IRD Duhallow, has been active in the territory since its establishment in 1989, and it has implemented successive LEADER Programmes since 1991 in addition to local development and social inclusion initiatives. IRD Duhallow is firmly a bottom-up organisation, and its membership and activities strongly reflect the local communities. Over the years, IRD Duhallow has expanded and broadened its linkages with other organisations, nationally and across the EU. The presence and sustainability of this dynamic organisation in a relatively small rural development territory represents key learnings in respect of enabling rural communities to deal with the challenges of rural restructuring and promoting sustainable development. Thus, as there is a relatively well-established rural development culture in Duhallow, this paper focuses on the impacts thereof, and it seeks to extract key lessons for other rural territories.

While IRD Duhallow has been largely successful in attaining its stated aims and objectives, the territory faces considerable challenges. The agriculture sector, on which there is considerable local dependence, continues to contract. There is in Duhallow a relatively high level of reliance on traditional manufacturing and construction, and activities in these sectors are witnessing a pronounced downturn since the second half of 2008. Moreover, the territory is challenged to redress the legacy of rural decline and depopulation that continue to affect many communities, particularly in the more peripheral Northern and Western Duhallow. Areas in the east of the territory, for example Donoughmore, Bweeng and Dromahane, are increasingly coming within the commuter belt of Mallow and Cork City, and some development pressures are emerging. Duhallow has a rich stock of natural resources and a strong and distinctive cultural heritage; these resources offer a basis on which to further sustainable rural development.

5.1 Local Development in Duhallow

The area has a strong co-operative and endogenous tradition, which has influenced the model of partnership that has evolved there. Local endogenous efforts led in 1989 to the establishment of IRD Duhallow, which has since evolved to become the integrated local development partnership for the territory. Duhallow's strong sense of identity was cultivated and re-enforced by the area's well-defined geographical boundaries and by the strong cultural traditions associated with the Barony of Duhallow.

5.1.1 An introduction to IRD Duhallow

In the mid-1980s, a number of leading community activists and business people came together and established Duhallow Development. This organisation sought to promote economic development and the creation of employment opportunities. Its members focused on projects such as the development of angling on the River Blackwater and its tributaries and on horse-breeding. They were also involved in lobbying government bodies to ensure the retention of essential public services, including the Mallow to Tralee railway.

In the late 1980s, the IRD Trust (McDonagh, 2001) in association with the then County Development Teams promoted the establishment of local area companies. An IRD company, known as IRD Blackwater was established covering all of North Cork, which included the towns of Mallow and Fermoy. The extent of socio-economic and geographical disparities across such a large territory rendered the organisation ineffective. Consequently, the Duhallow-based members opted to establish their own IRD Company and, in November 1989, with the support of the IRD Trust, they formally established IRD Duhallow. From the outset, IRD Duhallow envisaged an integrated and collaborative approach to development, as reflected in its initial proposal to the IRD Trust, which stated: "Integrated Resource Development is a new concept and provides a unique opportunity for development of local resources, through combining the

efforts of local communities, local authorities, commercial enterprises and state agencies” (cited in Lynch, 1996: 153).

The IRD Trust allocated IR£10,000 (€12,700) to the new company. A further IR£35,000 (€44,440) was raised locally. The founding members invited members of Duhallow Development to join IRD Duhallow, and they were agreeable. This gave IRD Duhallow new linkages with community and voluntary groups. A high degree of involvement by the private sector and the ability to raise funds locally are two of the striking characteristics of IRD Duhallow relative to other partnerships. These resources enabled IRD Duhallow to fund and develop new projects, mainly in the areas of rural tourism and culture. The partnership structure was consolidated when, in 1991, IRD Duhallow was successful in an enterprise and innovation competition sponsored by the Electricity Supply Board (ESB). This enabled IRD Duhallow to recruit a manager and to develop an effective administration system. The manager, Maura Walsh, who was then appointed remains with the company. Many of IRD Duhallow’s founding members went on to serve on the Board of Directors over the following years. Two of them subsequently served as chairs of the Board. IRD Duhallow defined its mission statement as “A Vehicle Promoting Prosperity, Self-Help and Quality of Life – *Saibhreas a Choithú*”.

5.1.2 Development Objectives

IRD Duhallow has operated the LEADER I, LEADER II and LEADER+ Programmes, as well as the Pobal-supported Local Development Social Inclusion Programme, Rural Transport Programme, Equality for Women and Rural Social Scheme, among others. In November 2008, IRD Duhallow was allocated over €10m to implement LEADER to 2013.

The endogenous, bottom-up and localised features of IRD Duhallow’s origins and development remain as very significant determinants of the organisation’s approach to rural development. It continues to place a very strong emphasis on community development and on local ownership of development projects. Its structure has (up to the implementation of government requirements on partnership governance in 2008) been broadened so as to maximise citizen participation and collaborative local governance. Over time, IRD Duhallow has sought to develop linkages with statutory bodies, and inter-agency linkages have been important in contributing to rural development in Duhallow.



5.2 The Urban-Rural Relationship and Approaches to Planning

Duhallow is predominantly a rural territory. It has a population of just over 31,000, and its three largest population centres, Kanturk, Millstreet and Newmarket, have a combined population of 4,500. These three towns function as limited, but important, commercial and service centres for extensive rural catchments. Duhallow has 22 villages and four village nuclei which provide a range of primary level functions, such as a primary school, church, shop and / or pub. A number of villages have lost their post office over the past five years, while the number of shops and creamery / farm stores has drastically reduced in recent times.

Duhallow is positioned between two hubs, as identified by the *National Spatial Strategy* (NSS). The largest of these is the Tralee-Killarney hub, and this is particularly significant for Western Duhallow. The Mallow hub to the east has experienced notable consolidation and population growth over the past decade; although this is in part due to Mallow increasingly becoming a dormitory town for Cork City rather than a driver of regional growth in its own right.

5.2.1 National and Regional Policy

IRD Duhallow contributed to the formulation of *Regional Planning Guidelines* (RPGs) on the part of the South West Regional Authority. It contended that the territory was 'strategically positioned between the Mallow and Tralee-Killarney hubs, and that the development of trans-Duhallow infrastructure would improve connectivity between both hubs. IRD Duhallow placed considerable emphasis on the development and up-grading of the Mallow-Tralee rail corridor, and it articulated the case for the re-opening of stations (for commuter services) at Lombardstown, Rathcoole and Headford. In the interim (since 2001) the frequency and reliability of services on the rail line have improved; but the stations have not re-opened and services such as *Fastrack*, which had been withdrawn, have not been re-instated.

IRD Duhallow has supported the implementation of Ireland's *National Spatial Strategy* (NSS). It organised a seminar, in conjunction with eight other Local Action Groups to put forward recommendations on how the NSS could be implemented for the sustainable development of rural areas. At a local level, the partnership has organised a number of seminars and workshops on spatial planning, and has liaised with officials from Cork County Council in the drafting of local area plans, with a view to promoting rural development as an integral part of spatial planning. IRD Duhallow has had limited success in this regard, and there is a sense of frustration among its board members and community leaders regarding what they perceive as the persistence of trend planning (rather than vision-planning); the disregard for the views of local citizens; and a spatial hierarchy of settlement (see below). They point out that the implementation of spatial planning on the parts of both local authorities, and by Cork County Council in particular, are overly-focused on the urban core and that they emphasise the development of radial routes and corridors around that core (mainly Cork City) - rather than on promoting inter-urban connectivity and polycentric development across the county. The tight timeframe under which planners operate, and the lack of a formalised role for local development partnerships in the planning process, can militate against collaborative planning.

5.2.2 Local Policy

The draft *Kerry County Development Plan 2009-2015* places considerable emphasis on the development of the Tralee-Killarney hub; and Kerry County Council targets increasing the population of the hub area by 11,000 between 2000 and 2020. The Plan envisages the development of a "well connected urban network that is a source of creativity, economic generation, community involvement and cultural value" (2008; 5-7). The hub area includes the towns of Tralee and Killarney, their immediate hinterland and an extensive peri-urban area that extends to Castleisland in the east, Inch in the west, Glenflesk in the south and Ballybunion to the north. Outside this area, which accounts for almost one-third of the surface area of the County, the Council has designated six Primary Functional Areas centred on the towns of An Daingean, Caherciveen, Castleisland, Kenmare, Killorglin and Listowel. Most remaining rural areas are included within one of five 'Local Functional Areas' of which Rathmore (part of the Duhallow area) is one. The Rathmore Local Functional Area is seen as being strongly linked to Killarney, and it is envisaged that Rathmore and Gneeveguilla will benefit from increased connectivity with Killarney.

Kerry County Council's designation of Functional Areas marks a departure from the previous County Development Plan and is directly attributable to the implementation of the NSS. Previously, the Rathmore – Gneeveguilla area had been classified as part of South East Kerry; an extensive rural area that included the Beara Peninsula, the South of Iveragh and most of East Kerry south of Scartaglen. Within this context, a Local Area Plan was adopted in 2007, while Gneeveguilla was included in the South East Kerry Settlements Local Area Plan, adopted in February 2008. Kerry County Council is seeking to promote consolidation of settlement in Gneeveguilla, the maintenance of its rural character and the provision of amenity spaces; although the village plan notes that the local waste water treatment facility lacks the capacity to deal with further housing in the village. The Local Area Plan for Rathmore recognises that the

village serves an extensive rural catchment area on both sides of the county boundary, with a population of approximately 5,000 persons. The plan envisions strengthening Rathmore “as an employment and service centre, commensurate with its function as a distinct town, and as an attractive residential location” (2007: 3).

Cork County Council has long recognised the difficulties caused by peripherality in the north and west of County Cork, including in Duhallow. In 2002, the Council adopted a *North and West Strategic Plan 2002 – 2020*, with a number of key strategic objectives in terms of raising production potential, improving access and infrastructure, enhancing environmental sustainability and promoting access to social, recreational and cultural facilities. There is considerable complementarity between the Council’s strategy and IRD Duhallow’s business plan for the period 2000 – 2006, and both agencies have collaborated in strengthening Duhallow’s village fabric.

In 2005, IRD Duhallow facilitated communities in Duhallow to input into the initial formulation of local area plans, with the result that three village nuclei – Knockaclarig, Cloghoola and Taur – were designated as such for the first time by local government. IRD Duhallow and Cork County Council have availed of CLAR funding to promote village enhancement and improvements to local facilities. Both organisations are proud of their achievements in this respect although, at times, there were administrative difficulties associated with inter-agency co-funding.



While most of the targets in the *North and West Cork Strategic Plan* have already been exceeded, Cork County Council remains cognisant of the need to promote development in Duhallow, and to redress the spatial imbalances between it and other parts of County Cork. The Planning Department reports that it is lenient and facilitative in respect of applications for enterprise development in Duhallow.

The Council has promoted the development of enterprise units in Kanturk and Newmarket, and while these contribute to job creation, there is a sense locally that rurally-located and farm-based enterprises are less favoured by the planning authorities than are enterprises which are located within the designated County Council enterprise units. Thus, sentiments are expressed by people in Duhallow that the County Council is overly-focused on responding to the needs of towns rather than the rural countryside. In any event, there is a clear need to update the *North and West Cork Strategic Plan*, and to revise targets upwards, particularly in the light of Mallow’s role as a hub town under the NSS.

IRD Duhallow interfaces on an on-going basis with Cork and Kerry County Councils. Since its inception, IRD Duhallow has had elected county councillors on its Board of Directors and Working Groups. Generally, councillors have been loyal to the partnership, and some have been proactive in leveraging resources for Duhallow. Councillors who are active community leaders have generally been more positive in contributing to rural development than those who were appointed to the Board of Directors in order to fulfil legal obligations under ‘Better Local Government’. Interfacing between IRD Duhallow and members of the local authorities’ executive has generally been positive, although in recent years, some negative tensions have surfaced, mainly associated with the Cork County Development Board’s involvement in CLAR.

5.3 Education and Enterprise: Mapping Strengths and Deficits

As *Working Paper 2* has shown, Duhallow has a relatively low level of educational attainment and the skill levels of its population are below average in a regional and national context. Recognising these facts, Pobal, in 2006, brought together representatives from IRD Duhallow and County Monaghan Partnership to work on the development of strategies to promote access

to education in a rural setting¹⁷. The ensuing work recommended a renewed focus on preventive education and interventions at primary school level. Such interventions, the project report stated, should be inclusive of parents and of members of the local community so as to tackle inter-generational educational disadvantage.

5.3.1 Skills Base

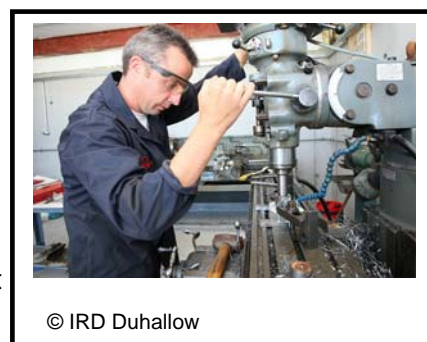
IRD Duhallow has a dedicated Youth and Education Working Group, and the partnership supports a number of community-based and in-school projects that seek to encourage young people to secure an educational qualification and / or to realise their personal development potential. These actions have tended to rely on funding provided by the Partnership itself, and with the exception of Rathmore-based projects¹⁸, there has been little in terms of financial inputs from the relevant agencies, notably the Department of Education and Science and the Health Service Executive (HSE).

In line with its strategic plan, IRD Duhallow has established a dedicated training centre. This has facilitated local access to second-chance education and skills training programmes. IRD Duhallow is registered as a FETAC centre for the delivery of accredited courses up to level 6. It runs a broad range of courses aimed at enhancing the employability of unemployed and under-employed individuals, together with courses that target existing businesses so that staff is enabled to enhance their skills. IRD Duhallow supports training for community and voluntary groups and has organised a number of courses for members of the farming community, aimed at promoting farm diversification. These include bee-keeping, herb growing, rural tourism and environmental awareness.

During the course of LEADER+, IRD Duhallow has provided training opportunities for over 1,600 adults. In line with the theme of IRD Duhallow's LEADER+ Programme - 'making the best use of natural and cultural resources' - the range of courses included programmes aimed at promoting music, the creative arts, traditional culture, ecology and environmentally-friendly farm initiatives. While considerable progress has been made in providing women with progression opportunities, the rate of female participation in the Duhallow labour force remains below the national and regional averages, and additional resources will need to be dedicated to enabling women to up-skill.

5.3.2 Enterprise Base

IRD Duhallow has supported several individuals to establish themselves in self-employment, and it promotes networking among businesses. IRD Duhallow's outputs in terms of job creation have brought about an increase of over 12% in the number of people at work in Duhallow since 2001. IRD Duhallow has also sustained a further 800 jobs, and several enterprises have benefited from contracts they received to supply goods and services to LEADER and local development projects.



IRD Duhallow's first LEADER business plan (1992) identified the significance of agriculture in the Duhallow economy and the need for diversification within it. One of the first sub-committees established by IRD Duhallow was its agriculture sub-committee. In 1993, IRD Duhallow's Agriculture Committee decided to undertake a survey to assess the state and sustainability of agriculture in Duhallow and to put forward recommendations and strategies for the development of the sector. Following the survey's publication, members of the Agriculture Committee set about organising a smallholder support service in Duhallow. However, it was

¹⁷ Monaghan was chosen along with Duhallow, given that both territories have similar educational profiles.

¹⁸ This may be attributed to a combination of factors including IRD Duhallow's ability to lever resources from Kerry-based agencies, the presence of strong community leaders, a vibrant local social action tradition and supports provided by local political representatives.

not until the commencement of the Local Development Programme in 1996 that IRD Duhallow secured the resources to implement its smallholder support programme (Focal Farmer Programme). Since then, IRD Duhallow has employed a development officer to work with low-income farm families. Over 130 families are organised into six groups with between twenty and twenty-five members in each. The groups provide a forum for discussion, the exchange of information between households, the convening of on-farm demonstrations and the organisation of training. In addition, IRD Duhallow subsidises cost-cutting measures on farms and seeks to enable farmers to increase their income accordingly. Members of the smallholder groups receive priority in the allocation of rural tourism funding and a number have diversified into agri-tourism. IRD Duhallow's Focal Farmer Programme also has a strong social dimension and households receive advice on debt / financial management. Families with particular needs, such as bereavement support and counselling, are directed to dedicated in-house services or to external agencies as appropriate. The Focal Farmer Programme has been relatively successful in retaining families in farming; with the main lessons emerging relating to the need to target the entire household (not just the farmer) and to address socio-psychological as well as economic needs.

IRD Duhallow's Job Centre operates on a model that is similar to the Local Employment Service; although its resources are extremely limited and an outreach service is not feasible as a result. The Centre has been successful in placing an average of 50 persons per year in employment since 1997. Key to its effectiveness has been the collaboration between the Employment and Training Officer and other staff in identifying clients and in supporting them. In addition, the Department of Social and Family Affairs (DFSA) has collaborated with IRD Duhallow in targeting clients and has provided co-funding for programmes to assist people to become job-ready.

Since its establishment, IRD Duhallow has promoted the expansion of existing business. It has also assisted the establishment of several new businesses. Many of these new businesses, which were funded under the LEADER+ Programme, emerged from feasibility studies that had been funded under both LEADER I and II. IRD Duhallow contributed to a number of innovative enterprises, including over ten new product developments. The advent of the LDP / LDSIP allowed IRD Duhallow to support a number of long-term unemployed people and other disadvantaged people to establish their own businesses.

The following table quantifies the number of new jobs created by IRD Duhallow in respect of three periods of programme funding.

Table 5.1: Employment Generated by IRD Duhallow

IRD Duhallow Companies		External Enterprise Supports ¹⁹	
Own Staff	14	LEADER I	116
DART & Childcare	8	LEADER II	269
DCFS	10	LEADER+/ NRDP	547
RSS	58	LDP/ LDSIP	35
CE	18		
Warmer Homes	5		
Total	113	Total	967
Total Jobs Created: 1,080			

¹⁹ Figures have been adjusted to report full-time job equivalents only.

The level of job creation is very significant; it has been made possible through:

- undertaking animation and capacity-building actions across all IRD Duhallow's Programmes (not operating LEADER as a stand-alone programme)
- following through with, and providing mentoring for, clients who have availed of training and / or undertaken feasibility studies
- a high level of staff support for entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs
- access to funding (mainly LEADER)
- a willingness on the part of directors to take risks and to personally mentor new businesses.

IRD Duhallow has convened an Enterprise Network, which has organised several workshops and training seminars, and has established a mentor panel to support new business entrants. The Network has secured inputs and supports from FÁS, Enterprise Ireland / Forbairt, the DSFA and the County Enterprise Boards.

The increase in the number of visitor attractions in Duhallow, and a 'spill-over' effect from Killarney, has prompted IRD Duhallow to promote the development of self-catering accommodation in the Duhallow area. IRD Duhallow has stated its opposition to any large-scale holiday village in the territory; preferring instead to promote small-scale single units that would yield complementary incomes for smallholders. This approach has delivered 23 projects, eleven of which are promoted by members of IRD Duhallow's Focal Farmer Programme or dry-stock smallholders. The development of the Duhallow Way as part of a long-distance walking route (part of the Munster Way), and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designation have increased the tourism attractiveness of areas south of Millstreet and Rathmore. These aspects need to be further promoted and exploited through the upcoming LEADER Programme. To date, collaboration with Cork-Kerry Tourism has been fruitful, and through its representative on the Board of Directors, the RTO (Regional Tourism Organisation) has come to place Duhallow further up its list of priorities.



Section 2: Governance and Policy

Thanks to its typography and its strong cultural identity, Duhallow is a well-defined spatial unit. This adherence to the principle of a 'natural area of development' (AEIDL, 1999) has facilitated community development, inter-community networking and the development of local potential. As directors have observed, the area was 'big enough to generate development, yet small enough to ensure that nobody was excluded'.

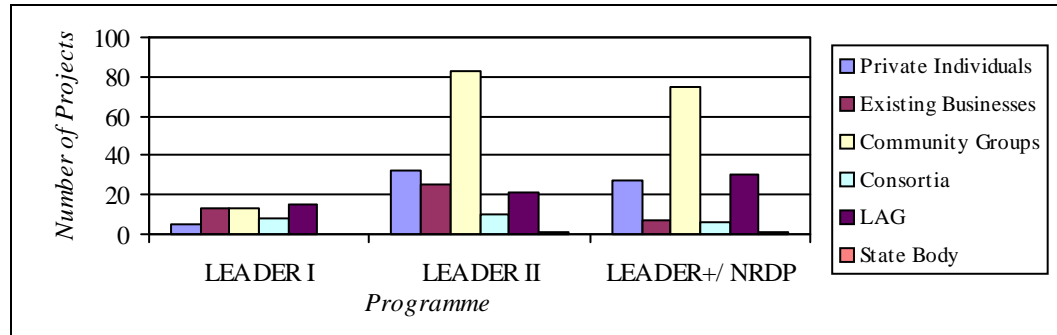
5.4 Governance and Citizen Participation

When IRD Duhallow was established in the late 1980s, the concepts of self-help and collective community action were new to most citizens in Duhallow. The founding members of IRD Duhallow point-out that at the commencement of LEADER I, there were only four active community groups in Duhallow. Lynch (1996) illustrates how IRD Duhallow utilised resources under the first LEADER Programme to animate citizen participation in community development. She reports that IRD Duhallow faced a low-base at the commencement of LEADER I, but that within three years it had contributed to the establishment of over twenty community groups.

Nowadays over 600 people participate in geographically-based community groups throughout Duhallow. IRD Duhallow provides information, training and professional support to these groups on an on-going basis. These groups play a defined role in local decision-making through IRD Duhallow's Community Forum, and their direct representation on the Board of

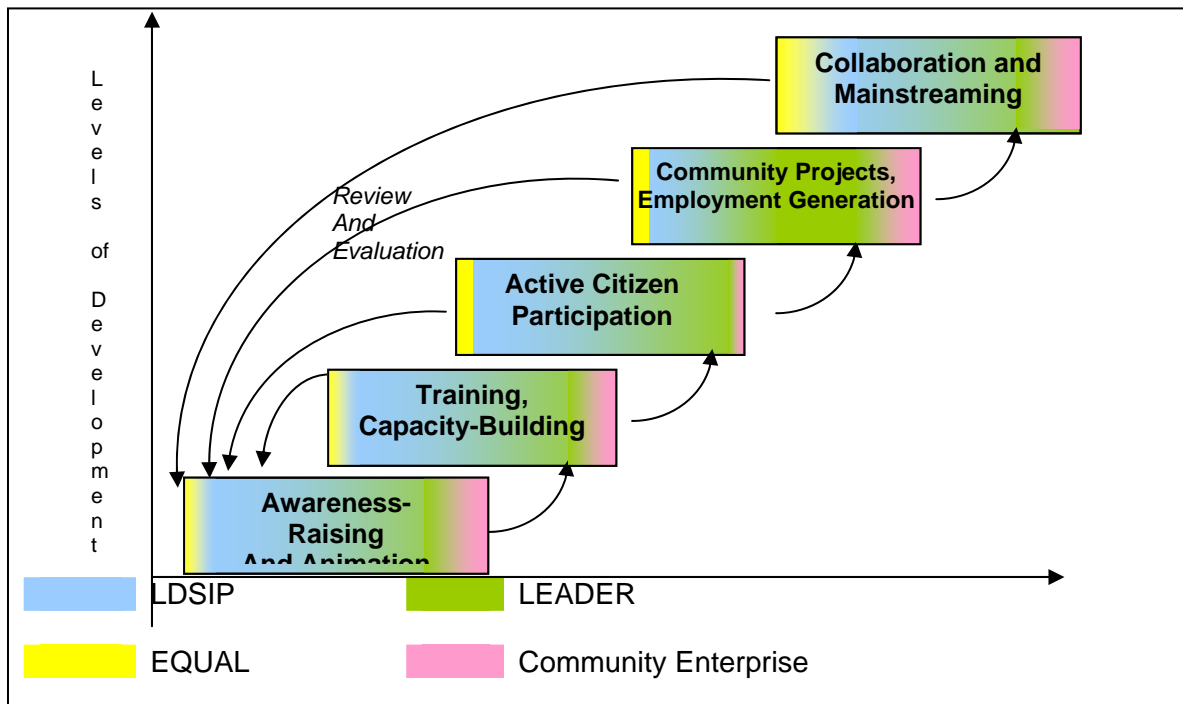
Directors and IRD Duhallow's Community Development Working Group. IRD Duhallow has contributed to strengthening the capacity of community groups to implement projects in their own localities and, as Figure 5.1 shows, the proportion of LEADER Projects implemented by the community and voluntary sector has increased considerably since LEADER I.

Figure 5.1: Profile of IRD Duhallow Project Promoters



As a result of inter-group networking through the Community Forum, a number of training programmes provided by IRD Duhallow and animation actions by IRD Duhallow's community development team, community and voluntary groups progressively embarked on projects that reflected a greater concern with social inclusion and economic development issues. Inter-community networking and the continuous investment in animation, community development and capacity-building have been essential in enabling bottom-up development in Duhallow. Access to the partnership's staff has assisted communities in generating ideas and driving forward with development projects.

Figure 5.2: Development Complementarity in Duhallow



IRD Duhallow has come to define the community development process as a five-stage development process. It emphasises the cyclical, rather than the linear nature of group and

individual progression²⁰. The development schema emphasises integration and complementarity between various programmes, and this remains relevant for 2007 – 2013.

5.4.1 Citizen Participation in Decision-Making

The structure of IRD Duhallow's Board and Sub-Committees has evolved considerably over time. This evolution has contributed to enhancing decision-making processes within the organisation, and has enabled greater numbers of citizens to influence and to participate in local development and decision-making. Moreover, the evolution of the organisational structure and the monitoring mechanisms put in place by the Board reveal some notable learnings on the part of stakeholders in IRD Duhallow. There is a strong consensus in the organisation that having a coherent structure in place has allowed Duhallow to access an increased level and range of resources; particularly funding opportunities that would otherwise not have come to the territory. Directors also agree that the broadening of the organisation's focus "has been good for the board and good for the area...We now incorporate a lot more areas, and are better at filling the gaps". Directors and management point to the importance of investing in the skills of board and working group members. They note the value of induction and training and recognise the need for on-going investment in training of volunteers; and specifically the need to develop and enhance their capacities in local governance.

5.5 An Integrated Approach to Rural Development and Restructuring

The rural development model pursued by IRD Duhallow is based on an integrated approach. This is applied by the formulation of multi-annual business plans, which guide the implementation of actions, regardless of funding sources. Moreover, the Board of Directors has established twelve working groups. These are organised on a thematic (rather than on a programme basis), and have responsibility in areas such as: youth and education, equality, women, community development, enterprise and agriculture. Each working group is chaired by a member of the Board of Directors, and reports directly to it. This model enables over 120 people to participate directly in local decision-making; while a further 4,500 people are members of groups that are affiliated to IRD Duhallow's Community Forum - this being a community-based network that elects six representatives to the Board of Directors on a clustered basis. Thus, there is very profound concern within IRD Duhallow that the current proposals on the governance of LEADER Partnerships will undo many of the achievements that have been made in fostering citizen participation in local decision-making. There is particular concern regarding the role envisaged for local authority executives, and a perception that this may lead to increased expenditure on administrative functions and less on development projects, and may ultimately weaken social capital.

5.6 Inter-County Collaboration

IRD Duhallow and Ballyhoura Development are unique among Irish LEADER Partnerships in that their catchment territories transcend county / administrative boundaries. However, trans-boundary operations are common among LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs) in other EU member states, and in some counties such as Germany they are encouraged as a means of fostering inter-municipal collaboration.

²⁰ IRD Duhallow's experience is that before communities, and in particular disadvantaged communities or individuals can become involved in 'acquiring the know-how of development,' the local development group needs to undertake awareness-raising and animation actions, so as to engage citizens and to ensure local ownership from the very outset. Acquiring skills and know how can take the form of capacity building and / or training (at group / individual levels). The range of areas covered in training needs to reflect local economic, socio-cultural and environmental needs. Access to skills and resources is a pre-requisite for active citizen participation and for the development of projects. As with training, project activities need to encompass all the dimensions of sustainable development. Finally, the development process is sustained by engaging the mainstream and by the development of policy and contextual conditions that are conducive to sustainability and inclusion (IRD Duhallow Local Development Social Inclusion Plan, 2004-2006).

IRD Duhallow interfaces with both Cork and Kerry County Councils on an on-going basis, and officials and elected members interface with one another – mainly through the South West Regional Authority. However, only for IRD Duhallow Board and Working Group meetings and events, councillors from East Kerry (Killarney Electoral Area) and the Kanturk Electoral Area would not otherwise meet one another in any formal capacity outside of political party meetings. Thus, IRD Duhallow is the only mechanism for cross-county collaboration between two electoral areas with a boundary of 30km. Inter-county collaboration between local authority officials is very limited, and there is little evidence of any collaboration in planning or the provision of infrastructure and amenities. Thus, in this respect, the situation differs little from that which pertains between Monaghan County Council and Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council (see *Working Paper 4*).

Recognising the large scale of the county and its extensive internal diversity, Cork County Council took the innovative step in 2006 of convening meetings of Area Committees to which representatives of LEADER Partnerships were invited. Due to resource constraints, however, these committees have not met for a number of months; although there appears to be widespread enthusiasm locally for their re-convening.

5.7 Stakeholder Engagement and Agency Responses

Up to 2005, most of the funds secured by IRD Duhallow originated from EU sources²¹. In order to promote mainstreaming and greater state investment in Duhallow's infrastructure and services, IRD Duhallow has established a state-agency forum; to which eleven statutory bodies have been invited to participate. The forum has elected four representatives to the Board of Directors. It also provides IRD Duhallow with a platform for articulating local needs and issues. IRD Duhallow also uses it to inform the state sector about its rural development work, while the representatives from the various state bodies report that they benefit from the networking opportunities it provides. As with all elements of the current governance arrangements, there is profound concern locally that this forum may no longer be feasible due to regulations put forward by central government.

IRD Duhallow has sought to enhance the territory's infrastructure in order to promote inward investment, stimulate economic development and sustain the population. In 2002, the organisation succeeded in working with the ESB to upgrade the electricity supply to Newmarket and to parts of the CLÁR area. In 2005, IRD Duhallow prepared a plan for the development of broadband infrastructure; as a result of which broadband connectivity has been improved, particularly in southern and eastern Duhallow. Thus, inter-agency collaboration has been important in improving connectivity. In addition, collaboration has delivered social gain, although progress in this respect has been slower than with the development of 'hardware.'

The Duhallow area is peripheral to the catchment territories of most state bodies, and in the current economic climate, agencies are more likely to focus on large population centres than on rural areas. Current performance monitoring systems within the public sector tend not to incentivise inter-agency collaboration, cross-county initiatives, engagement in collaborative governance, vision planning or the targeting of lagging areas. These systems need to change so that public bodies are enabled to be more developmental rather than being deliverers of centrally-defined initiatives.

²¹ The first two LEADER Programmes were funded by the EU, with the exchequer providing a minority contribution. LEADER+ Programme was funded almost equally by the Irish state and the EU. Other programmes implemented by IRD Duhallow, such as the Article VI and Article X Programmes, were funded from the ERDF. Up to 1999, Village Renewal and the LDP were financed through the OPLURD, which was mainly EU-funded. Over 70% of EOCP funds are provided by the European Union. Thus, IRD Duhallow has been successful in attracting to Duhallow funds that originate from the EU.

Section 3: Maximising Opportunity

Looking ahead, the Duhallow micro-region has a lot of achievements on which it can build. There is a strong sense of optimism that despite the current recession, the territory will continue to develop. Community leaders are strongly of the view that the sense of 'hopelessness' that pertained twenty years ago has been replaced by 'optimism and a renewed self-confidence.' There is a belief that opportunities remain to be exploited in the development of Duhallow's cultural and natural resources, and there is a strong commitment to doing so in a sustainable way.

GOING FORWARD

5.8 Building on Collaborative Governance, Partnership and Local Stakeholders

The development of local governance in Duhallow has been one of the most striking changes experienced in the territory over the past decade. Levels of citizen participation in decision-making have increased considerably and inter-community networking has generally replaced inter-community competition. In the Duhallow case this has been achieved by animating and enabling the emergence and development of community groups (geographical and issue-based), and ensuring that communities input directly into the partnership decision-making process, through their participation in broadly-based thematic working groups that are directly linked to the Board of Directors. Based on the experiences of fostering endogenous participation in Duhallow and in a number of other LEADER and local development territories, it is considered essential that governance structures for LEADER Partnerships retain their endogenous ethos while becoming increasingly integrative of state sector inputs into local development.

IRD Duhallow facilitates interfacing between the community and statutory sectors and its contributions in this regard have impacted positively; as manifest in several joint projects. However, a number of individual personalities in some state bodies tend to persist with exogenous approaches. Animating other bodies to embrace community development principles remains a challenge for IRD Duhallow and for local communities.

5.9 The Economy

IRD Duhallow has a well-developed enterprise strategy. Its Board of Directors is strongly focused on enterprise development and is prepared to be innovative and flexible in the interest of promoting business in Duhallow. IRD Duhallow is filling gaps in the current level of service provision to enterprise and it is ensuring that public sector agencies contribute to business development in Duhallow. IRD Duhallow is addressing territorial connectivity and infrastructure and it will also have to address the economic consequences arising from the anticipated contraction of the farming sector.



It is clear that IRD Duhallow has the capacity to expend additional resources on enterprise development, as enterprise development budgets are generally oversubscribed and the number of projects funded is less than the number of applicants. The role of the community sector as an agent of enterprise development looks set to increase. For all new entrants to business, access to support and advice is essential. Therefore, mentoring and inter-business co-operation will require on-going attention. In this context, staff supports need to be maintained and increased.

5.9.1 Economic Diversification

Although IRD Duhallow's achievements in respect of job creation are impressive, the current economic profile of the territory clearly reveals the **need for increased efforts to promote economic diversification**. This need is greatest in the more peripheral west of Duhallow, which has an above average dependence on agriculture and on manufacturing. Educational attainment and skill levels are generally low in Western Duhallow and considerable investment in education and training programmes is essential. While the area faces considerable structural weaknesses, it has a rich heritage which is currently under-utilised.

Duhallow's landscape, and in particular its southern uplands, represent a significant natural resource; and as the uplands are relatively close to Cork City (<40km), there is potential for rural tourism development. Unlike areas in Ireland's Midlands, Duhallow has significant areas of virgin bog and it contains a number of notable wildlife habitats. These are important resources that have tended to be undervalued in the rush towards farm modernisation that characterised the 1970s and 1980s. Fortunately, however, their development potential is now being increasingly recognised.

Duhallow's environment has come under some pressures in recent years. Illegal dumping has been a problem (mostly generated in urban centres outside the territory), while large scale private afforestation has reduced biodiversity in many townlands. The deregulation and privatization of the electricity sector has seen a number of companies acquire land in Duhallow for the purpose of constructing windfarms; and while these can become carbon neutral over time, their location in rural and upland areas can have very consequences. Already two wind farms have been constructed in Duhallow adjacent to a National Heritage Area (NHA), while another has been sited near a proposed Special Area of Conservation (SAC).



5.9.2 The Knowledge Economy

Knowledge economy enterprises represent a very small portion of economic activity in Duhallow and there is clearly a need to expand this sector. Broadband connectivity has been improved and the territory now has the potential to accommodate knowledge economy enterprises. However, the current skills profile suggests otherwise and it will be necessary to upgrade skills if this potential is to be realised.

5.10 The Role of Human Resources and Social Capital

Human resource development has been integral to rural development in Duhallow. The territory is characterised by a high level of social capital and well developed community structures. Enterprise networking is relatively well developed, and most businesses are involved in sharing resources and information with others. Investment in social capital is yielding economic dividends for Duhallow, but the extent of such benefits is difficult to quantify; particularly within the scope of this research project. As already mentioned, it is necessary to promote additional investment in upping skill levels and educational attainment in the territory.

CONCLUSION: IRD DUHALLOW AS A MODEL OF GOOD PRACTICE

Duhallow exhibits a model of rural development which can offer important lessons for other rural territories. It embodies a strong community development approach; and a cohesive bottom-up partnership has emerged that is both a deliverer and co-ordinator of development.

IRD Duhallow is a dynamic organisation with extensive sub-structures, a high level of citizen involvement and the capacity and flexibility to respond to local needs, issues, ideas and development potential. In addition, the organisation has been characterised by committed leadership, with a determined vision for the area. The partnership has pursued an integrated approach to development, whereby economic, socio-cultural and environmental objectives are pursued in tandem. IRD Duhallow operates to multi-annual business plans which are utilised to lever funding and guide inter-agency collaboration. Its robust governance model, strategic visioning and the commitment of key individuals represent the main features it can offer to new and emerging rural development organisations and networks.

5.11 Integrating Agency Responses

One of the main reasons for the emergence of IRD Duhallow was, as one community leader stated, "People were tired of waiting for some top-down solution... they knew they had to do it themselves". To this day, a spirit of self-reliance continues to characterise IRD Duhallow; and while several inter-agency collaborations have delivered benefits for local citizens, there exists a sense at local level that public authorities remain unconvinced of the need for spatial planning and balanced territorial development. Thus, IRD Duhallow has not been shy in articulating the merits of supporting lagging territories and this articulation has, at times, received a cool response.

IRD Duhallow's experience strongly suggests that the model of mainstreaming most appropriate for rural areas is that of 'out-sourcing'; whereby statutory bodies, recognising the adaptability and local knowledge base of development partnerships, confer on them the resources and responsibilities for the delivery of certain services and development projects. However, such a model is contingent on local capacity and territorial integrity.

5.12 A Sustainable Communities' Agenda

The physical and social fabric of communities in Duhallow has been hugely transformed over the past two decades. The provision of new amenities, such as childcare services (Duhallow has, per capita, the highest level of community-based childcare in the state), playgrounds, cultural venues, rural transport services, green spaces, youth facilities and the cultivation of social capital have made Duhallow an attractive place in which to live. This investment in communities is contributing to enabling Duhallow to overcome a legacy of depopulation and rural decline, and many people have over recent years opted to live in Duhallow and commute to Cork, Killarney or Tralee. New enterprises, supported by LEADER, have strengthened the local economic base; although there is a continuing need for further investment to promote the diversification of the local economy.

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Working Paper 6

Untapping the Potential – Signposts for the future

6.1 Introduction

The achievement of sustainable rural development is, according to those who live and work in the three case study areas, dependent on a number of key factors; these include:

- having a strategic vision on how the area should develop and having clarity around the function of the various stakeholders
- having 'buy-in' from a wide range of stakeholders representing central, regional, county and local agencies (i.e. ensuring vertical and horizontal coordination)
- awareness of the area's 'potentiality'
- having a 'champion' who will strive towards uniting the community behind development work and press hard for positive contributions to this work from all stakeholders
- being entrepreneurial and willing to take risks, working beyond perceived barriers such as a lack of resources or finance
- recognising the value of education
- having an action plan to which the community can work towards with goals and milestones
- ensuring there is an economic element to the plan for the area, that emphasis is not solely on social development.

Economic diversification as a means for development is taking place in rural communities throughout the island of Ireland – some successfully, others less so. It is increasingly accepted that a range of mechanisms must be put in place to support those communities dependent on farming and / or small-scale manufacturing but who, for various reasons, may wish to diversify; this includes providing advice on potential areas of diversification and establishing a flexible mentoring programme which is designed with *the specific needs of each particular area* in mind. However, the centralisation of policy decision-making, and the lack of functional competencies at local government level raise concerns around future population growth and sustainable development of rural communities throughout Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Going forward, government policy (at its various scales) needs to change; with increasing emphasis being placed on the promotion of local endogenous small- to medium-sized enterprises. For local development agencies and community associations, adopting a new operational model is becoming increasingly essential; and this model will have to be flexible in responding to the global recession and the changing needs of rural communities.

6.2 Opportunities

Entrepreneurialism

- Rural areas are typically conservative in nature, and economically tend to depend on *established* activities such as agriculture and manufacturing rather than explore *new* opportunities²². The manufacturing base of the local employment sector has resulted in the skills-base of rural communities being largely 'skilled manual'. In addition, through decades of self-help in the form of volunteerism and entrepreneurial activity rural communities have built up an extensive organisational and managerial skills-set including project management and leadership; securing local stakeholder buy-in; and forming partnerships / engaging stakeholders.
- The case studies demonstrate that in order to achieve development there is a need to pro-actively promote economic diversification and encourage an entrepreneurial spirit within the community (see below). And this 'entrepreneurial spirit' of the community and business community is a key strength of many rural areas.

²² New businesses tend to be related to existing sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing and construction; hence the growth in agri-businesses and light engineering for example.

- To bring this forward, there is a strong case to be made for each rural community carrying out a skills audit; thus raising awareness among the communities themselves – together with the various support agencies – of the skills set available and the gaps that need plugging.
- Based on existing and emerging business ‘groupings’ in rural areas, there is a strong case to be made for the promotion of business clusters and networks. These include small clusters / concentrations of light engineering, steel fabrication and furniture-making businesses. To date, such clustering has occurred in a haphazard manner; with the result that each business is operating independently and there is little or no networking taking place. Through a process of facilitation, mentoring and dedicated financial resources, the clustering and joint marketing of these clusters could be promoted to the socio-economic benefit of the areas in question.

The Knowledge Economy

- There is an increasingly strong case to be made for rural areas to consider how they can most effectively move away from their (over-)reliance on a small number of independently operated (and therefore competitive) low-tech, low added-value sectors, in particular, construction, light engineering and transport / haulage. Such a move can broaden their economic base and generate more sustainable employment opportunities.
- There is a ‘revaluing’ of education taking place locally and nationally. Greater emphasis is being placed on the achievement of third-level qualifications as well as in vocational training streams. In addition, further focus needs to be placed on developing adult education and short training programmes which are based on an identified local need or issue.
- Across the three rural case study areas it is considered that opportunities for successful development can be attained through economic diversification. The specific sectors that are targeted will vary from place to place but generally it is understood that there is a need to embrace and expand the knowledge economy. Each rural area, however, must determine and define what it means by the ‘knowledge economy’ and how it can be brought to bear for the benefit of their community.

Role of Social Capital

- The form of rural restructuring advocated in each of the three case studies is focused on deriving benefit not only for the local economy, a capitalist perspective on growth, but crucially also social advancement through community development. This is even more acute in the cross-border context where division and mistrust between the two main ethno-nationalist groupings can be addressed through collaborative working (via consensus and partnership) to unite the communities under a common objective of development.
- Successfully achieving this can, however, be problematic. For example, disconnects have occurred between local businesses operating on the ground and regional / national development agencies, particularly the top-down support offered (or often imposed) by such agencies. This is observed in Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy whereby businesses now do not widely engage in programmes that are sponsored by development agencies. It is important, therefore, that the potential contribution of social capital to rural restructuring meaningfully involves the range of local stakeholders, and is driven forward through visioning, engagement, and complementarity rather than competition and a silo-mentality.

Partnership

- Going forward, there will be an increasing role for local and regional partnerships – principally through local development programmes and initiatives – in the sustained development of rural communities such as Draperstown, Duhallow and Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy. Community, business and statutory agencies will have to become more innovative and creative in their thinking and how they do things.
- Having a ‘real’ vision for an area in terms of how it should develop over the medium- to long-term is key to its continued development and long-term viability. To create this vision, it is increasingly recognised that neighbouring communities must work together.
- Partnerships must pursue a multi-pronged approach; to include the promotion of local enterprise development (generating employment and stemming out-migration); the provision of training and up-skilling opportunities (through direct delivery and collaboration with training bodies); the improvement of connectivity and accessibility; and the facilitation of inter-business networking so as to promote joint ventures and an optimisation of resources.

Role of Spatial Planning in the Micro-Region

- In the short-term, communities must explore and where possible adopt a micro-region perspective to rural restructuring. This can be achieved through a spatial planning approach to development which involves both the physical outcome of development and also the collaboration (partnership; networking; finance) necessary for making this happen. This shift in focus has been brought about by fundamental socio-economic changes such as in communication (road and telecoms) as well as the globalised economy, influencing trade and capital at local, regional, national and international levels. As communities change their perspective from focusing only on individual villages or townlands – the micro *settlement* – and conceive of the micro *region*, it will be possible to change from a constant state of competition, both in business and for scarce resources, to cooperation that builds on critical mass and economies of scale. This approach is necessary to secure the long-term viability of rural areas through complementarity, particularly in light of the centralist policy agenda that exists in Ireland and Northern Ireland which focuses on public service delivery in urban areas. In this way, micro-regions – recognising the importance of the rural-urban inter-relationship – will be better placed to respond to the opportunities that can be derived from urban-based development, such as has been recognised by Duhallow (see below: Quality of Life).
- The planning system structures and processes, North and South, are at variance with each other and this stifles opportunities for cross-border collaboration and the development of integrated frameworks and strategies. It is hoped, however, that the Review of Public Administration (RPA) in Northern Ireland – which will result in a reduction of the number of district councils and the further decentralisation of functions to local government – will make the workings of local government more compatible across the island of Ireland.
- It is further considered that growth secured through managed restructuring will enhance the natural environment and built heritage of rural areas because of the spatial planning approach to development that requires comprehensive stakeholder involvement, rather than selected interests, thereby promoting a sustainable perspective on resources. Critical to this, of course, is the challenge of meaningful engagement by participants in these processes. This approach does not simply ‘happen’ but rather requires *inter alia* leaders with the capacity to communicate effectively and demonstrate knowledge and sympathetic but objective understanding of the areas and sectors involved.

Natural Landscape

- The success of areas of conservation in terms of protecting species is reliant on ecological land use practices in adjoining and intermittent areas; through for example Natura 2000 and the Habitats Directive. Although attempts have been made, for example, to secure Natura 2000 designations for parts of the three case study areas, these have not been realised in full. The promotion of legal protection for significant habitats has tended to be top-down; and to date, there is little evidence of the national authorities engaging in any meaningful partnership with the relevant rural development organisations in promoting the application of Natura 2000.
- Positively, though, awareness-raising actions including those pursued jointly by local government and the rural development organisations have been successful in terms of waste minimisation and the promotion of recycling.
- Each of the three case study areas has parcels of land which constitute significant natural habitats worthy of conservation. Duhallow has a number of upland blanket bogs. Draperstown and its hinterland have many areas of outstanding natural beauty. Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy has notable eskers and drumlins, as well as the extensive Favour Royal Estate which has several hectares of native Irish woodlands. The designation of these and similar areas as 'specially protected', and the implementation therein of dedicated conservation initiatives, requires engagement and commitment on the part of the public authorities, partnership with rural development organisations and, in the case of rural tourism projects, PPPs (Public-Private Partnerships) must be considered.

Quality of Life

- Job creation alone is not sufficient in redressing depopulation and in promoting sustainable communities. Over recent years, local development agencies have placed considerable emphasis on improving the quality of life in their respective territories; recognising that the territory needs to capitalise on the economic and social benefits that can derive from developments in *nearby* urban centres. For example, IRD Duhallow holds that by making Duhallow an attractive place in which to live, many people whose jobs are based in urban centres, including in Cork City, Killarney and Tralee, will opt to live in Duhallow and commute to work. Specifically, IRD Duhallow has invested in the development and expansion of childcare, community playgrounds, sports facilities and other recreational amenities. These elements of community infrastructure, together with the cultivation of social capital, play a significant role in promoting rural regeneration.



6.3 Strategies and Processes for Promoting Sustainable Rural Development

Integrated Approaches

- Common throughout the case study areas is the identification of infrastructure as key to the success of development and economic diversification. Isolation in rural and peripheral areas is an important issue that entrepreneurs must constantly contend with; quality physical infrastructure including quality roads, public transport services and broadband connectivity is a necessity. Education infrastructure is also critically important, but is a particularly contentious issue given the association in the public mindset of primary schools with community / area identity. With a plethora of small

schools competing for pupils and resources decrease it is clear that there are significant challenges ahead in Ireland and Northern Ireland. In Border areas infrastructure will only be delivered through the joint working of public, private and community sectors in both jurisdictions.

- In addition to hard infrastructure it is recognised that soft infrastructure has an equally important role. Success on many occasions is attributable to members of the community getting involved and bringing to projects and initiatives their energy, creativity and commitment. There is a need, then, to invest in social capital of a type where differences in religion, identity and political viewpoint are not compromised but are complementary; serving to support and augment community cohesion rather than being a source of division. In Duhallow, for example, there exists a strong community development approach and a cohesive bottom-up partnership that serves as both deliverer and coordinator of development. In this context, development took place by building on a spirit of self-reliance in the community; it is suggested that many rural areas, because of their nature, do have this spirit to varying degrees.
- Securing tangible outcomes through target setting for the stakeholders involved with both economic and community development is essential for ongoing support of initiatives. The prize is the sustainability of the organisation, deriving greater benefit for the community served. It is recognised, however, that considerable time and effort will be required to reach this stage in the lifecycle of rural restructuring programmes but that the potential rewards more than justify such endeavours.
- Going forward, it will be key that the micro-region develops a strategic vision on how the area should develop and have clarity around the function of each settlement as well as the various stakeholders; and that a socio-economic action plan to which the wider community can work towards over the short- to medium-term – with specified goals and milestones – is put in place.

Governance

- Involving the community is one component in the overarching governance environment that is necessary for restructuring. Partnership is regarded as part of an integrated approach to development. This requires both visioning and commitment, often driven by a small number of key individuals, as demonstrated across all three case study areas. These are people who are able to perceive a gap which can be positively exploited for the benefit of the community, even though this may not be immediately recognised but rather requires perseverance from all stakeholders. The underpinning concept, as experienced in Duhallow and more recently in Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy, is to pool resources and adopt a common approach to locally identified priority areas. Another outcome, as experienced in Duhallow, is the out-sourcing of responsibility and resources by statutory bodies for the delivery of certain services and development projects. However, as noted earlier, this model is contingent on local capacity and territorial integrity.
- Partnership is necessary both horizontally and vertically, interfacing between the community and statutory sectors. As a result, a supportive institutional context –including in the form of funding and policy initiatives – is critical at local, regional and national levels; this is made more acute in cross-border areas with the complexities of the myriad of local, county, regional and national administrative boundaries.



- There is a strong case to be made for the rationalisation of development and support agencies at a local level²³; the current context whereby communities access advice, funding and other supports from varying agencies depending on where they are based, the type of scheme they wish to fund, the potential number of employees, and so on is creating barriers to local socio-economic development.

Human Resources

- Training and development of human capital is another core element for sustainable rural development. This is really about growing the skills base through programmes and courses relevant to the local endogenous development opportunities in the local area. Equally, it is important that the local community has realistic expectations of development opportunities and that by understanding the nature of the area, demographic profile and so on the reach (capacity) of the area is not extended too far.

Networking & Collaboration

- With regard to business growth, several models of development have successfully been applied across the case study areas; for example the promotion of business clusters and networks. It is important that a well-devised strategy is in place to support businesses to exploit the opportunities available to them, but which is sufficiently flexible to respond to changes in market demand as in the Draperstown case study.
- It is demonstrated in Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy that companies want to work in collaboration rather than competition by sharing ideas and building knowledge so that the business community as a whole benefit. This includes, for example, joint marketing initiatives undertaken with a range of stakeholder organisations. The generation of critical mass and economies of scale through such collaborative processes is central to the growth and attractiveness of an area in enterprise terms, and particularly in the more rural parts of the island of Ireland.
- A key message arising from the case studies is that *self-help* is an important aspect of rural restructuring and economic development, working from the bottom-up and focusing on local endogenous potential; but equally *help is also needed* from across the various levels and agencies of government and this must be offered in a coherent, integrated and complementary top-down approach.

²³ This includes the culling and / or amalgamation of agencies where necessary.

Appendix: Interviewee Listing

Draperstown

1. Brian Murray, CEO, Workspace
2. Con Gallagher, Managing Director, Homeseal (Workspace Company)
3. Celine O'Hara, Office Manager, Workspace
4. Margaret Heron, Network Personnel Manager (Workspace Company)
5. Ann McBride, Network Personnel Assistant Manager (Workspace Company)
6. Marion McCloskey, Homeseal General Manager (Workspace Company)
7. Michael Heron, Former Board Member, Workspace
8. Peter Hegarty, Local Businessman
9. Laurence O'Kane, Local Businessman
10. Cllr. Kate Lagan, Magherafelt District Council (and Board of Workspace)
11. Kate Clifford, Rural College & Derrynoid Centre
12. Shane Campbell, Rural College & Derrynoid Centre
13. Chris McCarney, Magherafelt Area Partnership
14. Patsy McShane, Director & Former CEO, Workspace

Emyvale-Truagh-Aughnacloy

15. Fr Sean Nolan, Truagh Development Association
16. Mary Devlin, Truagh Development Association
17. Josie Brady, Truagh Development Association
18. Michael Treanor, Truagh Development Association
19. Fionnuala Cole, Truagh Development Association
20. Eugene McKenna, Truagh Development Association
21. Frank McKenna, Truagh Development Association
22. Marian Dudley, Truagh Development Association
23. Gene Flood, Carrickroe Community Centre
24. Proinsias McKenna, Carrickroe
25. John Joe Connolly, Carrickroe
26. Brian Deary, Carrickroe
27. Maureen Kelly, Emyvale
28. Eamon McMeel, Emyvale
29. Brian McMeel, Emyvale
30. Fiona McConnell, A.W.O.L Paintball & Activity Centre
31. Angela Forde, Mullan
32. Marion Donnelly, Silver Hill Foods, Emyvale
33. Pdraig McGeough, Moy Furniture, Emyvale
34. Adrian Corrigan, CNI Monaghan Ltd., Emyvale
35. Jennifer Lambe, Carisma, Aughnacloy
36. Martin Mullen, Carisma, Aughnacloy
37. Gerard Cullen, County Monaghan Partnership
38. Julie-Ann Spence, Blackwater Regional Partnership
39. Catherine Fox, Blackwater Regional Partnership
40. Kellie McAnenly, Moybridge
41. Wayne Morrow, Businessman (Aughnacloy)
42. Liz Salter, Aughnacloy Development Association
43. Breda Meaney, Aughnacloy Development Association
44. Malcolm Duffey, Aughnacloy Development Association
45. Laura Sally, Aughnacloy
46. Eithne McCord, Aughnacloy
47. Niall McKenna, Supervalu, Aughnacloy
48. Eugene O'Hagan, Killybrone
49. Adge King, Monaghan County Development Board
50. Declan Nelson, County Manager, Monaghan County Council
51. Toirleach Gourley, Planning Dept., Monaghan County Council
52. Adrian Hughes, Planning Dept., Monaghan County Council
53. Cllr. Brian McKenna, Emyvale (Monaghan County Council)

54. Vinny Beggs, Enterprise, Investment & Grants Manager, Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council

Duhallow

55. Maura Walsh, Manager, IRD Duhallow
56. Michael Doyle, Board Member, IRD Duhallow
57. Thomas Hayes, Kerry County Enterprise Board
58. Donal Murphy, Planning Dept., Kerry County Council
59. John Breen, Kerry County Development Board
60. Breda Mulryan, Area Engineer, Kerry County Council
61. Cllr. Tom Fleming, Scartaglen (Kerry County Council)
62. Rochie Holohan, Cork County Enterprise Board
63. Kevin Lynch, Planning Dept., Cork County Council
64. Sharon Corcoran, Cork County Development Board
65. Tom Stritch, Mallow Town Manager
66. Jack Roche, Board Member, IRD Duhallow
67. Noel Dillon, Board Member, IRD Duhallow
68. John Moynihan, Board Member, IRD Duhallow
69. Cormac Collins, Board Member, IRD Duhallow
70. Don Crowley, Board Member, IRD Duhallow
71. Billy Murphy, Board Member, IRD Duhallow
72. Helen O'Sullivan, IRD Duhallow
73. Eileen Linehan, IRD Duhallow
74. Catherine Crowley, IRD Duhallow
75. Colm Crowley, IRD Duhallow

National / Regional

76. Michael Hughes, Director, Rural Community Network
77. Eoin Magennis, Policy Research Manager, *InterTradelreland*
78. Jim Hetherington, Department for Regional Development
79. Niall Cussen, Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government
80. Michael O'Corcora, Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs
81. Susan Scally, Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs
82. Dairearca Ni Neill, Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs
83. Padraig Maguire, Border Regional Authority
84. Paul Donnelly, Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
85. Shane McKinney, Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
86. Gerard Tracey, Department of Agriculture and Rural Development