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Small Connected Towns in Cross-Border Areas: The Mutual Benefits

A programme to support the implementation of cross-border collaborative frameworks

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INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR
LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Promoting best practices in spatial planning and economic development.

Small Connected Towns in Cross-Border Areas: The Mutual Benefits

1. Current practice: review of cross-border cooperation
2. Future directions: what next for cooperation?
3. ICLRD study: Small Connected Towns in Cross-Border Areas – The Mutual Benefits
4. ICLRD study: key messages emerging
5. Sustainability in cooperation: developing potentiality



1. *Current practice: review of cross-border cooperation*

CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

- **Not a new activity...**
 - happening throughout Europe
 - occurs formally and informally
- **... But is a complex process which:**
 - (a) some countries are better at dealing with
 - (b) enhanced on island of Ireland by unique circumstances
- **At policy level, push for greater research into local development and complementary functional areas**
 - * European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP)
 - * Regional Development Strategy (RDS) & National Spatial Strategy (NSS)
 - * Others including ICLRD

Why?

- Emphasis on sustaining rural communities by harnessing their “potentiality”.



1. *Current practice: review of cross-border cooperation*

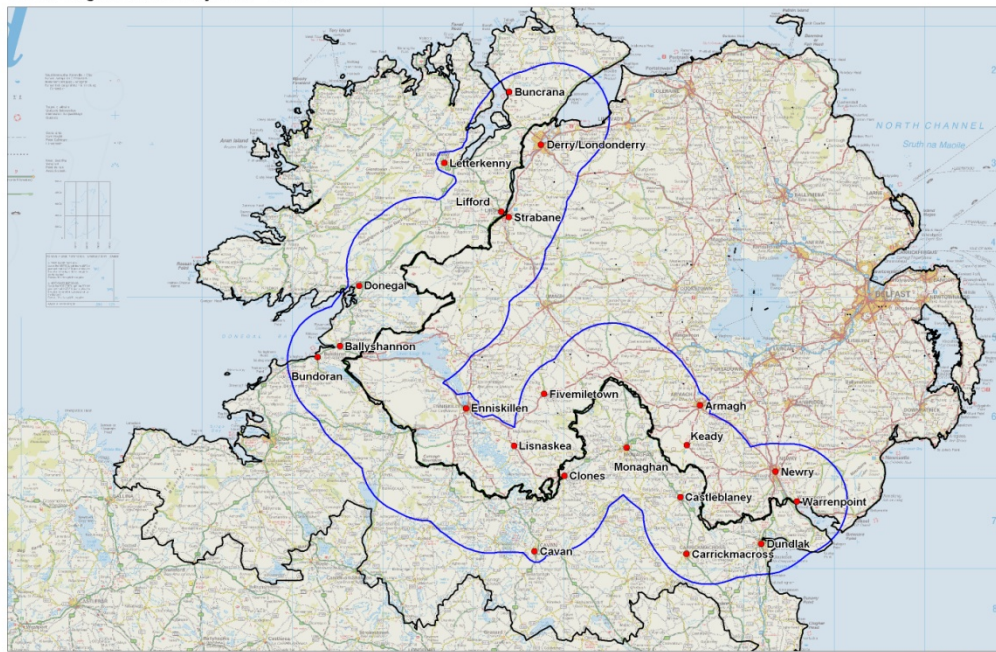
THE IRISH BORDER

- Peripheral
- Low population density
- Lack of joined-up action
- Infrastructure deficit
- Decline traditional economic activities
- The Troubles

RRO Research:

- 15km either side of Border
- 13% population of Island
- OECD Typology: over 60% of this area 'remote'

Border Region 15km Study Area - Towns



1. *Current practice: review of cross-border cooperation*

WHY COOPERATE?

- **Various mutual benefits to cross-border cooperation**
 - Economic: Pooling resources - economies of scale
 - Social: Capacity-building - training
 - Physical: Make areas more attractive to investors
- **Address “generic effects” of borders**
 - retardation of trade
 - disrupting natural hinterlands
 - back-to-back policy development
- **Emerging challenges and issues include:**
 - funding arrangements (emphasis, timeframe, etc.)
 - private sector involvement
 - governance disconnect
 - issue-based nature of projects & partnerships

Question – Competition or cooperation?



2. *Future directions: what next for cooperation?*

AT A CROSSROADS

“Serious questions now arise about its future scope and sustainability” (O’Dowd, 2006)

- Much research on cross-border cooperation to date...
- ...But this has tended to focus on sectors and/or large urban centres

In addition:

- Changing political climate: locally and regionally
- Diminishing flow & changing focus of funds
- Whether to formalise linkages?
- Short-term, funding-dependent nature of projects
- Focus North-South but what of East-West?

Raises questions:

What impact / value for small border towns and villages?

Do they return to historic position or seek to construct new future based on ‘potentiality’?



3. *ICLRD study: Small connected towns in cross-border areas*

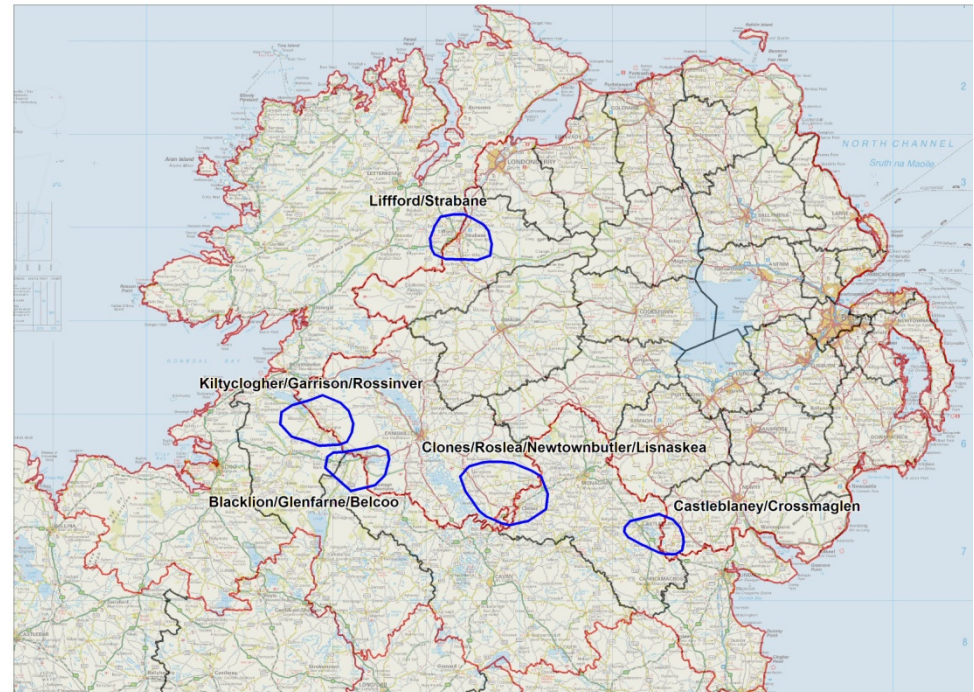
THE STUDY

Key Question:

- What is the current level of connectivity (leading to mutual benefits) and future 'potentiality' between the selected small cross-border connected towns?

AND

- How can this be enhanced through spatial planning?



3. *ICLRD study: Small connected towns in cross-border areas*

RESEARCH ACTIVITY

Phase I

- Emphasis on “*examining the level of connectivity between cross-border connected towns & villages*”
- Through questionnaires & one-to-one interviews



Phase II

- Emphasis on “*making communities border-effective*”
- Through workshops and policy review



*All addressing the **key objectives** of:*

1. Determine nature of relationship linking selected cross-border towns/villages, and if areas are engaging in visioning exercises;
2. Identify factors associated with successful collaboration & potentiality;
3. Identify good practice in cross-border cooperation (local & transnational)



3. *ICLRD study: Small connected towns in cross-border areas*

AN ACTIVE ARENA

- Many examples of cross-border cooperation
- Various foci & objectives
 - ideas developed locally
- Different partnership / network structures
- Varying distances between partners
- Varying timeframes
- Different funders
- Varying impacts

Examples from Case Studies

- Strabane-Lifford Development Commission
- KiltyCashel Project
- HEART
- Breifne
- Clones-Erne East Partnership
- Cross Border Opportunities Project
- Lough MacNea Tourism Initiative
- West Cavan/ Fermanagh Economic Development Project
- CASA



4. *ICLRD study: key messages emerging*

COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION

- I** dentifying mutual benefits for the participants involved
- D** eveloping connectivity on the basis of socio-economic development
- E** mphasing relationship building and understanding of each other
- A** dopting a common sense and strategic approach



4. *ICLRD study: key messages emerging*

TO BE SUCCESSFUL...

- Trust
- Commitment
- Pre-existing relationship
- Motivation
- Dialogue & communication
- Consultation



Added-value of working together...
...rather than working in isolation



4. *ICLRD study: key messages emerging*

BUILDING ON (POTENTIAL) STRENGTHS

- **Community spirit**
 - high level of engagement
 - commitment
 - human resource development
 - personal networks
- **Natural & cultural resources**
 - landscape, lakes, etc.
 - under-exploited to date
- **Connectivity**
 - Gateways & Hubs
 - multi-functional centres
- **Services**
 - meeting local need
 - complementary (rather than duplicate)



4. *ICLRD study: key messages emerging*

EXAMPLES OF COOPERATION IN PRACTICE

- **Lough MacNea Tourism Initiative**
 - Blacklion-Belcoo-Glenfarne area
 - funded under Interreg IIIA
 - strengthening economic base by developing the natural & cultural resources in area (3As)
- **Clones Erne-East Partnership**
 - Clones-Rosslea-Newtownbutler-Lisnaskea area
 - applying to Interreg IIA & PEACE
 - driving force in generation of new & innovative projects to benefit area
- **West Cavan / West Fermanagh Economic Development Project**
 - West Cavan & West Fermanagh
 - funded through the Peace & Reconciliation Programme
 - implement strategic economic development programme to address socio-economic disadvantage in area



4. *ICLRD study: key messages emerging*

IF UNSUCCESSFUL...

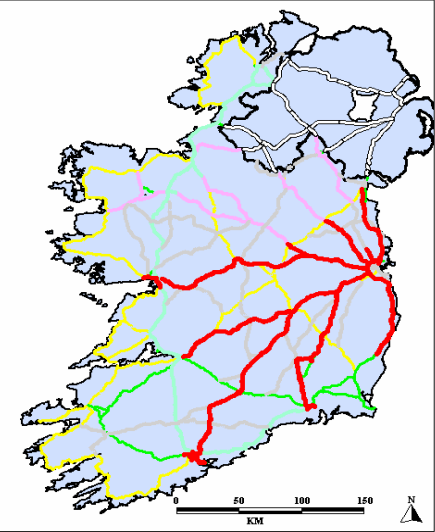
- **Bureaucracy**
- **Lack of trust**
- **Weak agency support**
- **Dialogue failure**
- **Emphasis on funding criteria over mechanisms for addressing local need**
- **Scale of operation**



4. ICLRD study: key messages emerging

HAMPERED BY WEAKNESSES

- **Disconnect: N/S & E/W**
 - Road closures
 - Infrastructure
 - Public services
 - Transport
- **Community viability**
 - Ageing
 - Out-migration
 - Work on the ground: an 'add-on' or priority?
- **Depletion of services**
 - No. of businesses
 - 'Brain-drain'
 - severing economic, social & cultural connections



4. *ICLRD study: key messages emerging*

EXAMPLES OF CHALLENGES FOR COOPERATION

- **Lifford-Strabane**

- Trade & Investment: proximity to North-West Gateway a challenge as competition for public resources, investment, etc.
- Education: nearest second-level school for Lifford in Strabane BUT most teenagers attend Raphoe (12km away)
- Fire Services: nearest fire station for Lifford is Strabane BUT service is provided from Ballybofey (15km away)

- **Kiltyclogher-Cashel/Scribbagh-Garrison-Rossinver**

- Education: teenagers from Kiltyclogher/Rossinver to Manorhamilton while Garrison/Cashel to Belleek --- limits interaction
- Medical: Kiltyclogher/Rossinver to Sligo (49km) while Garrison/Cashel to Enniskillen (47km)
- Public Library: nearest library for Garrison/Cashel is Kiltyclogher (10km) but residents travel to Enniskillen (47km away)



5. *Sustainability in cooperation: developing potentiality*

STRATEGIC FACTORS FOR SUCCESS

- **Collaboration on policy**
 - Multi-stakeholder participation
- **Good infrastructure links**
- **Strong private sector involvement**
- **Supportive political environment**
 - Northern Ireland Peace Process
- **Implementation of spatial planning and sustainable development principles**
- **Long-term funding programmes**
- ***Leading to***
- **Understanding of potentiality**
 - Economic
 - Social / community structures



5. *Sustainability in cooperation: developing potentiality*

STRATEGIC FACTORS FOR SUCCESS

- **Not a 'once off' or 'quick fix'**
- **After key factors introduced continue with:**
 - Bottom-up approach
 - Visioning exercises
 - Streamlined funding bureaucracy
- **Develop a programme exit strategy:**
 - From funding to being self-sustainable
- **Re-inforce connections**
 - Participation in (meaningful) networks involving all stakeholders



5. *Sustainability in cooperation: developing potentiality*

‘POSITIVE SUM’ COOPERATION

- **Outward-looking**
- **Greater connectivity**
- **Reveals existing and new areas of common interest**
- **Existing wealth of human resources**
- **Territorial competitiveness based on ‘potentiality’**



5. Sustainability in cooperation: developing potentiality

'POSITIVE SUM' COOPERATION

