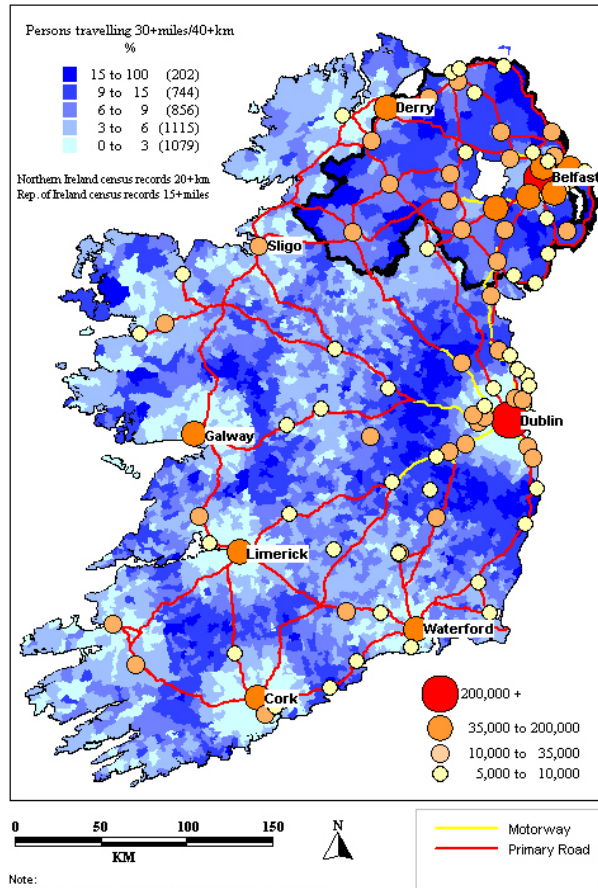


# IMPLEMENTING A FRAMEWORK FOR COLLABORATIVE ACTION : SPATIAL STRATEGIES ON THE ISLAND OF IRELAND

## PROGRESS REPORT

June 2007



Note:  
Northern Ireland data at ward level, census of 2001, persons aged 16-74 in employment travelling to work. Republic of Ireland data at ED level, census of 2001, persons aged 6+ travelling to school or work



“The report commissioned by InterTradeIreland and produced by the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) is a blueprint for the future: from which two governments are taking forward the concept of a shared spatial vision for the entire island of Ireland, for the people of the island.”  
**- Mr Dick Roche TD, Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin**

“This conference marks a move from theorising to implementing collaborative action. The recently published Spatial Strategies Report is welcomed by both governments, and there is a high level of confidence that benefits can be gained from collaborative spatial planning.”  
**- Mr Gerry McGinn, Permanent Secretary for the Department for Regional Development, Belfast**

This report provides an update of current initiatives related to developing a collaborative framework for spatial strategies on the island of Ireland. The report also summarizes key messages and presentations from the November, 2006 conference, *Implementing a Framework for Collaborative Action: Spatial Strategies on the Island of Ireland*. The presentations are available on the ICLR D website, [www.iclrd.org](http://www.iclrd.org).

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## FOREWORD

*Liam Nellis, Chief Executive,  
InterTradeIreland;*  
*John Driscoll, Director, International Centre  
for Local & Regional Development*

There are two spatial strategies on the island of Ireland; the *National Spatial Strategy* (NSS) for Ireland and the *Regional Development Strategy* (RDS) for Northern Ireland. Both strategies acknowledge that the two jurisdictions have mutually interdependent characteristics.

In May 2006, the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) and InterTradeIreland<sup>1</sup> published the research report, *Spatial Strategies on the Island of Ireland: Development of a Framework for Collaborative Action*. This report put forward three ways in which the island of Ireland could proceed in the implementation of its two spatial strategies:

- Continue existing informal arrangements;
- Implement new all-island spatial planning structures; or
- Implement a new framework for collaboration.

The report endorsed the third option because it promotes economic competitiveness, closer integration of spatial planning, and closer alignment between planning and the business sector. This option also supports the involvement of sub-regional networks in the development and implementation such a framework. Their local knowledge and facilitation skills are deemed critical in moving this process forward. The proposal for a collaborative framework received the full support of both governments.

At a conference organised in November 2006 by ICRLD (and sponsored by InterTradeIreland), the Irish Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dick Roche TD and the Permanent Secretary of the Northern Ireland Department of Regional Development, Gerry McGinn, outlined how such a framework might build on the work to date of local authorities, the business sector, and community and voluntary organisations.

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<sup>1</sup> Please see Introduction for further details on ICLR and InterTradeIreland.

The framework will include three key elements:

- Regional and local spatial planning initiatives;
- Highly strategic and targeted investments, and;
- A programme of spatial planning research



**Figure 1:** *Spatial Strategies on the Island of Ireland: Development of a Framework for Collaborative Action*

Since the November conference, there have been a number of key developments. The most significant of these is the return of devolved government to Northern Ireland in May 2007. The implications of this for cross-border collaboration in spatial planning are far-reaching. ***There is not, and has not been, a better time for collaborative action for spatial planning on the island of Ireland.***

On the economic front, the *Comprehensive Study on the All-Island Economy* was published in late 2006. Commissioned by the British and Irish Governments, and written by three of the island's leading economists, this document outlined an agreed agenda for developing stronger all-island co-operation and included findings and recommendations from ICLR/InterTradeIreland report.

Noting that "both Ireland and Northern Ireland are on the cusp of an economic transition", the *Comprehensive Study* called for more joined-up

planning and delivery, particularly in the areas of infrastructure, technology and innovation, labour market and skills, and enterprise and business development. Taking the example of the North West, the report specified a number of areas in which both Governments can collaborate to deliver benefits to that cross-border area. These include the development of business clusters/networks, enhanced energy infrastructure, integrated waste and water systems, and upgrading of the road and air networks. The 'win-win' scenario resulting from such coordinated inter-governmental intervention includes the widening of domestic markets, the efficient and effective delivery of public goods and services, and the promotion of balanced regional development.

In January 2007, the Irish Government published its 2007-2013 National Development Plan (NDP). Entitled *Transforming Ireland – A Better Quality of Life*, this plan “integrates strategic development frameworks for regional development, for rural communities, for all-island co-operation, and for protection of the environment with common economic and social goals”. The plan’s emphasis is on sustainable growth – economic, social and environmental. This is to be achieved through integrated investments which build on the island’s competitive strengths particularly in the areas of infrastructure provision and human capital development. ([www.ndp.ie](http://www.ndp.ie))

The plan dedicates a full chapter (Chapter 5) to all-island collaboration. This “comprehensive statement” on future co-operation is set within the context of the EU’s Lisbon Agenda and, as such, places its emphasis on building the competitive strengths of the island through:

- Employment growth;
- Increasing productivity;
- Building a world-class infrastructure system;
- Promoting social inclusion;
- Promoting entrepreneurship; and
- Developing a knowledge economy.

The fragmentation of natural hinterlands in the Border region has resulted in unbalanced economic growth. This section of the NDP prioritises balanced regional development through projects and initiatives that address the common challenges faced in the areas of infrastructure, trade and enterprise promotion, health, education, environment, and social inclusion. Proposed actions over the lifetime of the NDP include:

- The enhancement of key strategic cross-border routes (including Dublin-Belfast, Dublin-Derry/Letterkenny-Sligo-Enniskillen-Belfast);
- The development of the City of Derry Airport;
- The introduction of an all-island free travel scheme for pensioners;
- The roll-out of an environmental services and protection programme covering such areas as waste management, water supply, and sustainable development strategies;
- The continued roll-out of an all-island energy market;
- The development of cross-border collaborative networks/partnerships in the fields of science & technology; and
- The development of all-island business networks/clusters, and the promotion of a culture of entrepreneurship.

Resources are also to be committed to the development of all-island datasets and thematic mapping which will enhance evidence-based policy and decision-making. Taken together, these significant investments will not only benefit the island of Ireland but will lead to more balanced regional development, enhanced cross-border links, greater policy coherence, and more efficient planning and joined-up delivery of projects.

The NDPs emphasis on infrastructure provision and the development of a knowledge economy has been welcomed by the influential business-led ‘think-tank’, the North/South Roundtable Group (NSRG). The group particularly appreciated the commitment to achieving sustainable and balanced regional development as an essential element in building the island’s competitiveness. The NSRG also recommended that the compatibility of the regulatory regimes in both jurisdictions, together with the opportunities for the joint provision of health and education services, be examined and that detailed comparable datasets be developed.

The Strategic Investment Board Limited (SIB) in Northern Ireland acts as a bridge between the public and private sectors and works with departments and agencies to help them accelerate the delivery of major public-infrastructure projects ([www.sibni.org](http://www.sibni.org)). The Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI) is an evolving investment strategy that contains allocations for the years 2005 to 2008 in the key services areas of education, emergency services, health, water, roads, and waste management. Within

these sectors, there are obvious opportunities for all-island and cross-border synergies. The priorities for the forthcoming ISNI Investment Framework (2007-2013) also have cross-border implications in the areas of: economic growth and competitiveness; a society based on partnership, regional balance, inclusion and mutual respect; and a high quality environment that promotes sustainable development. These priorities will be reflected in six emerging areas of infrastructure investment that include: networks, skills, health, social, environment and productive sectors.

An opportunity exists to link both investment strategies in a way that leverages public and private funds and initiatives. Furthermore, it is increasingly recognized by policy makers and practitioners that in the new funding cycles, opportunities exist to proactively align the respective spatial strategies and investment plans. The National Spatial Strategy and the NDP, through the Gateway Innovation Fund is an example of this alignment.

Linking cross-border spatial planning and investments where synergies and mutual opportunities exist is a driving force behind the recommendations for a collaborative framework. Since the November conference, the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (RoI) and the Department of Regional Development (NI) have been developing a collaborative framework for joined-up spatial planning. While still in development, the framework will build on and strengthen existing co-operation by encouraging:

- Better linkages between spatial planning initiatives and the investment plans of the National Development Plan and Strategic Investment Board;
- Sub-regional strategic planning initiatives such as the Newry-Dundalk Twin City Strategy, the Northwest Gateway and the Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) and;
- The development of better spatial datasets to cover the island of Ireland.

At this stage, it is envisaged that the work of the two Governments will focus on co-operation around practical matters of mutual and complementary interest that are important for the successful implementation of the National Spatial Strategy and the Regional Development Strategy. More specifically, it is likely that the framework will require a dynamic approach to collaboration not only

between the two Governments but between the national and regional/local levels and between the wider public service and the private sector. Successful spatial planning requires the participation of a wide variety of public and private interests and looking at specific complementary elements of the NSS/RDS such as the Northwest Gateway, Newry/Dundalk or the Central Border, there is considerable potential for enhanced collaboration on strategic planning and development between the various levels and sectors. The framework for collaboration will therefore focus on acting as a stimulus in achieving such participation.

Based on feedback from the conference and discussions with stakeholders and funding agencies, ICLRD has identified research programmes and support activities it will undertake during 2007 with core funding received from the International Fund for Ireland (IFI), and the Irish Department of Education and Science, and Irish Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government. These are:

1. Implementing cross-border collaborative frameworks in the Newry/Dundalk sub-region;
2. Identifying best practices in cross-border planning and regeneration in the central border region;
3. Supporting the development of comparable and compatible data for in-depth and joined-up evidenced-based planning and analysis;
4. Developing an atlas of key all-island and cross-border indicators; and
5. Making resources and knowledge available to practitioners and policy-makers.

Taken together, these programmes will address spatial planning and local development along emerging north/south corridors and in the Central Border region, and will support the collaborative framework being developed by both governments and endorsed by the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference.

We look forward to a future of mutual respect, mutual benefits and mutual co-operation.

## PART I: INTRODUCTION

### *ICLRD and InterTradeIreland—Who we are*

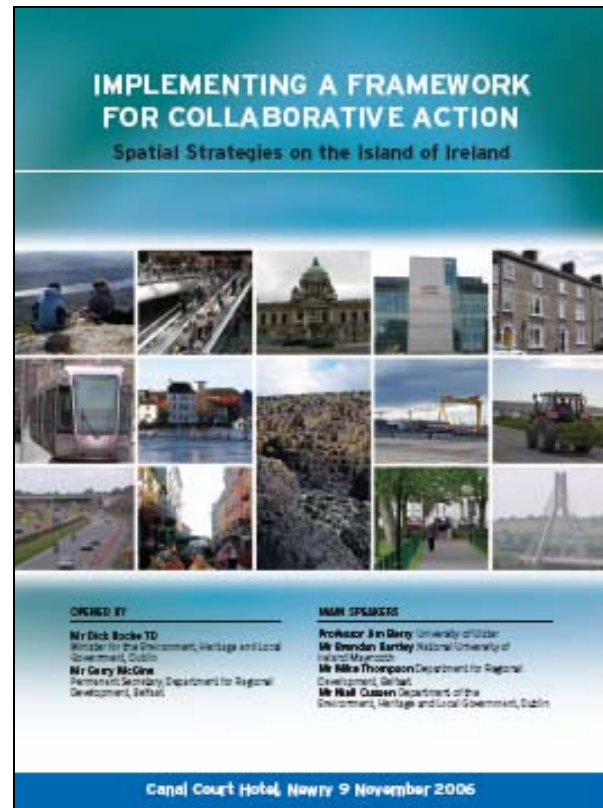
The International Centre for Local and Regional Development is a new North-South-U.S. partnership project to explore and expand the contribution that spatial planning and development of the physical, social and economic infrastructure can make to peace and reconciliation on the Island of Ireland and elsewhere. The ICLR D has developed out of a unique collaboration between academics and spatial planning specialists from the National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA) at National University of Ireland Maynooth, the School of the Built Environment at University of Ulster, Athlone Institute of Technology, the Centre for Cross-Border Studies in Armagh, and the Institute for International Urban Development in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

InterTradeIreland, the Trade and Business Development Body, is one of the six North-South bodies established under the 1998 Belfast Agreement. By building effective business relationships, it helps strengthen individual businesses and promotes the value of growth sectors to make the Island of Ireland more competitive in a global economy. Its key strategic objective for the period 2005-2007 is to enhance the global competitiveness of the all-island economy to the mutual benefit of both jurisdictions. This is to be achieved through the creation of knowledge-intensive all-island trade and business development programmes.

### *Conference Objectives*

On 9 November 2006, InterTradeIreland and the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) jointly hosted a 1-day conference to outline the findings and recommendations of its research report, *Spatial Strategies on the Island of Ireland: Development of a Framework for Collaborative Action*. Recognising the mutually interdependent characteristics of each jurisdiction's respective spatial strategy, the report outlines measures to better align spatial planning, infrastructure and cross-border projects to support long-term economic competitiveness.

Entitled *Implementing a Framework for Collaborative Action: Spatial Strategies on the Island of Ireland*, the conference reviewed the current opportunities and challenges for preparing a collaborative framework.



**Figure 2:** *Implementing a Framework for Collaborative Action, November 2006 Conference Programme*

Conference speakers explored many issues relating to spatial planning on the island, the potential for collaboration and promoting more balanced development. The major points of agreement among the presentations and papers of the various speakers were:

- That more effective co-ordination of spatial planning, public infrastructural investment and wider private investment is needed to secure a stronger economy across the whole island of Ireland;
- That new institutional arrangements such as funding prioritisation mechanisms under the investment plans of both Governments will be essential in securing the high level objectives of their respective spatial strategies;
- That both Governments recognise the long-term economic challenge and that their efforts to secure greater collaboration between planning and infrastructure need to be supported, especially with a dynamic response from the private sector;

- That progress at the Governmental level must be reciprocated and extended at more regional and local levels, embracing the roles of the private and community/voluntary sectors;
- That there is much to be learned from international best practices in implementing cross-border collaborative spatial planning;
- That comparable and compatible datasets are of critical importance in supporting evidenced-based planning and a better understanding of development patterns, trends and their drivers on an all-island basis.
- That collaborative action in spatial planning must be firmly rooted in wider economic strategies, sustainable development and the choices people are making to improve their quality of life.

The conference was attended by 112 delegates representing government departments, regional development agencies, local planning authorities, private consultants, academics, cross-border networks, border communities and elected officials. Those present were left in little doubt that the support for all-island collaboration was at an all-time high and that while its origins may be economic in nature, the social, cultural and environmental benefits would, if properly administered, follow close behind.



**Figure 3:** Over 112 delegates attended the all-island conference in Newry.

### **Welcome Address**

***Cllr Michael Carr, Mayor of Newry & Mourne District Council***

This is a very exciting day for this region and, in choosing Newry City, the conference is in an ideal location to discuss how to implement a cross-border spatial planning agenda. This region boasts an impressive history of cross-border networking,

promoted largely by European funding and by local political initiatives. The work commissioned by Newry and Mourne District Council, Louth County Council, and Dundalk Town Council to develop the 'Twin City Region' presents an opportunity to both facilitate and integrate projects in the strategic planning of the region, and address the particular problems of a border region resulting from a perceived peripheral location on the edges of two centralised jurisdictions.

There remain, however, significant barriers to securing the efficiency of such co-operation:

- Political sensitivity at some levels,
- A mismatch of functions, and
- Different ways of working as well as legislative differences.

Moreover, it is evident, in my view, that much more could be achieved if local efforts were duplicated upwards - right to the central government level.



**Figure 4:** Mayor Carr giving the Welcome Address

The *National Spatial Strategy* (NSS) for the Republic of Ireland and the *Regional Development Strategy* (RDS) for Northern Ireland recognise the importance of pooling the resources and strengths of the cross-border region; and evidence to date would suggest that there are significant practical benefits from closer collaboration and co-operation.

We have been in the business of local cross-border co-operation here for many years and the conference presents a huge opportunity for the co-operation and collaboration to be brought to the level of the island of Ireland and of both governments.

On behalf of Newry and Mourne District Council, and indeed all my colleagues in this region, I welcome you all here today. I look forward to an informative conference...and a long future of successful co-operation.

## PART II: CONTEXTUAL PERSPECTIVES

### Introduction

The conference, *Implementing a Framework for Collaborative Action: Spatial Strategies on the Island of Ireland*, was jointly opened by Dick Roche T.D., Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Dublin), and Gerry McGinn, Permanent Secretary, Department for Regional Development (Belfast). Both noted that a lot of informal cross-border co-operation is taking place but that a step change is needed – and this must be led by both Governments...together!



**Figure 5:** Conference speakers (clockwise from bottom): Gerry McGinn, Dick Roche T.D., Silvia Keckieis, Liam Nellis, John Driscoll, Fergal McCormack, Jim Walsh

Prior to considering the Irish situation, these proceedings will first look to Europe and outline its policy for collaboration, the culmination of which was the publication of the European Spatial Development Perspective in 1999, and more recently, Territorial Cohesion. In his paper, Professor James Walsh also notes the growing importance of the knowledge economy, and argues that a collaborative framework for the island of Ireland should be closely linked with the Lisbon and Gothenburg Agendas. As such, it should address three key issues: (1) sustainable economic growth; (2) greater social cohesion and reduced disparities; and (3) environmental protection.

### *Spatial Strategies on the Island of Ireland: the International Contextual Perspective*

**Prof. James Walsh**

*“Territorial cohesion implies that people or individuals should not be disadvantaged by wherever they happen to live or work in the Union.”*

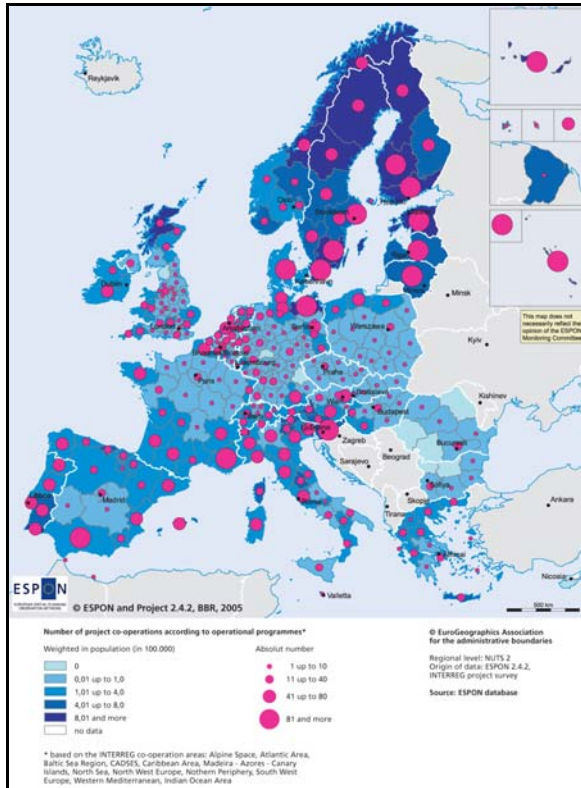
Trans-national collaboration in spatial planning in Europe was triggered with the Single European Act in 1987 and the subsequent decision to create the single market that came into effect in 1993. Together, these actions created a much stronger and competitive European core. Later, a series of studies developed on a voluntary basis by ministers responsible for spatial planning led to the publication of the European Spatial Development Perspective (EDSP) in 1999. While the EDSP provided a perspective rather than the authority for European planning, the objectives are reinforced through the allocation of structural funds and INTERREG programmes that have been supporting cross-border initiatives.

The European Spatial Development Perspective sets out three key objectives:

- Achieve a more balanced urban system by linking towns together through polycentric networks and strengthening the partnerships between urban and rural areas. These are clearly of critical relevance to Ireland.
- Integration of the transport and communication networks to ensure parity of access to infrastructure and knowledge throughout the community. This can help to overcome the tyranny of location so that one would not be disadvantaged by virtue of where one resided.
- Effectively promoting prudent management of the natural and cultural assets and the diversity of the European territory.

In more recent times, the Lisbon Objective and Gothenburg Declaration have helped to bring the question of territorial development into the forefront for the European Commission. The Lisbon Objective has become the key political ambition of the European Union since 2000 with heads of government declaring that the European Union should become the most competitive and dynamic

knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010 and that the EU is capable of sustainable economic growth and greater social cohesion. The Gothenburg Declaration brings the environment into the centre of the debate with a shift from an economic growth-led development perspective to a sustainable development perspective.



**Figure 6: Intensity of INTERREG III B cooperation**  
Source: European Spatial Planning Observatory Network

Coming from the twin concept then of knowledge and environment, the notion of territorial cohesion began to be formulated as a working concept. Territorial Cohesion is about making sectoral policies, which have a spatial impact, more coherent and improving territorial integration and co-operation between regions - whether it be co-operation on a north/south, an east/west, or a local basis.

Implementing territorial cohesion and strategic territorial planning underpins the *National Spatial Strategy* (NSS) in the Republic of Ireland and the *Regional Development Strategy* (RDS) in Northern Ireland, and are vital activities to achieving the broader concept of knowledge and environmentally sustainable development. To make this work we have to recognise the concept called territorial capital, which includes factors such as the location, size, types of resources, the traditions, and the level of

urbanisation, together with the quality of life in a particular locality or region. It also includes intangibles such as institutions, customs, creativity, tradition, commitment to innovation - what Jeremy Rifkin of the Foundation on Economic Trends (FOET) describes as “something nebulous in the air” which distinguishes places from one another and explains why some seem to get on a trajectory and move ahead and others don’t. The good thing about it, of course, is that these are not fixed.

Territorial capital is also shaped by policies and governance structures, some of which are determined locally but also many of which are now very strongly influenced by external forces whether they be global forces or European policy frameworks in a variety of areas.

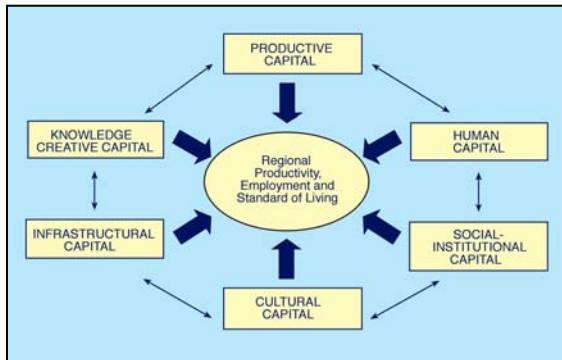
Another crucial thing is the way in which space is organised. Space can be organised in a positive way through spatial strategies or, alternatively, spatial organisation can be inhibited and frustrated by uncoordinated sectoral policies and plans. This is unfortunately some of the history that we’re trying to overcome.

What are the defining characteristics of territorial planning? The geographical context does matter and places are different from one another. These differences should be reflected in the policy frameworks. The thematic integration of sectoral policies is highly desirable and, lastly, all actors at different levels in the system need to be participating in the achievement of these objectives. So there are locational, functional, and institutional issues involved in trying to achieve effective territorial planning.

To link territorial objectives with the Lisbon and Gothenburg declarations, it is important that there are strategies to exploit fully the local potential of the regions; this is the concept that is at the heart of the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Development Strategy. The potential of regions is also influenced by:

- The cultural assets that define regions;
- The integration and connectivity of regions to other places; and
- Governance structures that achieve coherence across and upwards through the system.

A key concept is that cooperation in territorial planning should remain voluntary and guided - sometimes by fuzzy concepts; a classic fuzzy concept in Europe is balanced competitiveness, which keeps everybody on board.



**Figure 7: Bases of regional competitive advantage**  
 Source: Regional Competitiveness: An Elusive yet Key Concept, Michael Kison, Ron Martin and Peter Tyler; Regional Studies, Vol. 38.8, Dec 04

While large investments are absolutely vital, it is important to consider more than bricks and mortar, and roads and railways, and those types of physical infrastructure. Other considerations to achieving a high level of regional competitiveness are the various forms of capital - whether they be knowledge capital, human capital, or cultural capital. We need to diversify investment to take account of things.

Regarding development in Ireland, notwithstanding the commitment of resources that has been made by both governments and the level of thinking that has gone on so far, it's important to recognise that there are different starting positions. There are various levels of development and very different historical legacies between and within both parts of the island. Northern Ireland has a very strong industrial tradition which has been heavily reliant on initiatives with the UK for its markets. It has also been heavily reliant on public sector subsidies. This has been the case for decades and, to some extent, it has provided a high level of shelter from market forces. In the case of the Republic of Ireland, which went through a phase of late industrialisation, the economy is highly globalised, and while having a very strong European focus, it is less well linked to Northern Ireland.

Going forward, there needs to be a greater awareness of the external opportunities outside of the island of Ireland, and how working together can create links to these opportunities. In order to achieve this, more effort must to go into building trust - locally, regionally, trans-nationally. Capacity building activities can help in this regard. The two existing spatial strategies are vital cog-stones in this whole effort, and the fact they have strong political support is vital. Now that the synergies have been identified, the next phase is to move and to invest in achieving these opportunities.

When emphasizing a knowledge-economy, it is important to promote co-operation among universities and all-island research networks so as to build a stronger knowledge base that would provide the basis for economic development into the future.

An essential question is: what will Ireland look like in 20-25 years time? Also, how might we fit into this scenario? This is not about planning for next year or the next five years; it is planning for the long-term and to reflect on what we need to do at this stage...now...to be able to position ourselves for that longer-term future.

***Address by Mr Dick Roche T.D., Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin***

*“Aligning the regional dimension of the next National Development Plan with the National Spatial Strategy will position the strategy at the very heart of capital infrastructure decisions over the next seven years.”*

The population on the entire island is growing at an unprecedented rate. The Republic has just witnessed a net population increase of in excess of 100,000 in twelve months. Northern Ireland has also seen a remarkable rise in its population. Projections show a population of seven million on the island by the year 2021 and thereafter passing that magic figure of eight million that existed before the Great Famine years of the 1840s. However this growth is creating new challenges, North and South, in addressing the unevenness of economic development across the entire island.

Yet there is a different picture from region to region and from region to local level. Areas such as Dublin and Belfast are surging ahead while other areas, comparatively speaking, are not doing so well. This is why we need a spatial strategy; to ensure that the people North, South, East and West - in all parts of the island - enjoy the fruits of success, and to ensure there is more rationality in the development than would otherwise be the case.

We need to be able to base our future strategic investment decisions on robust analysis and on sound logic. There must also be a clear vision about how we want the island as a whole to develop over the next 15-20 years. We get just one opportunity to do the

job right and we have to do it right from the beginning. And we'll only do it right if we co-operate!

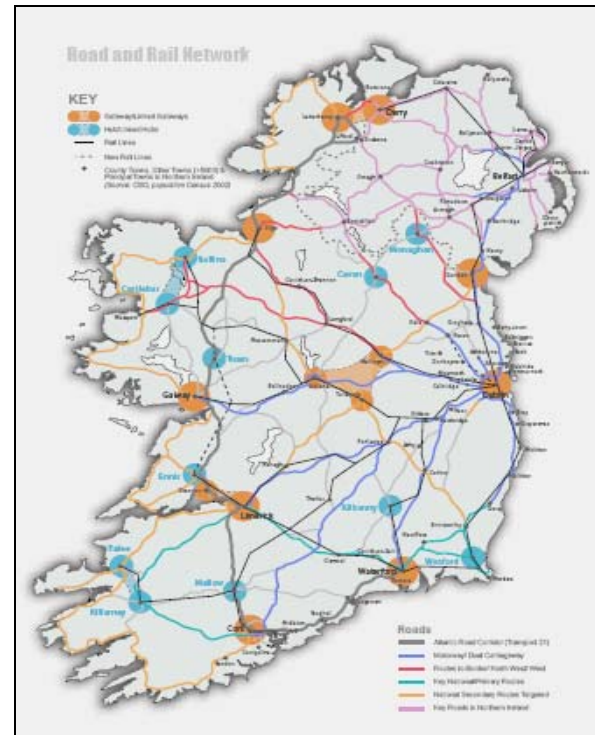
From competitiveness in trade and to the business development perspective, improving the physical environment that supports all-Ireland growth and profitability is an absolute pre-requisite to strengthening the economies of both jurisdictions.

Both governments acknowledge and endorse the potential role and the value of a collaborative spatial framework. This commitment has been reinforced and has been strengthened by the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference. The Conference endorsed the significant potential of effective co-operation on strategic issues for mutual benefit, and in particular on issues such as infrastructure development and spatial planning. This collaboration will enhance the structures and the initiatives currently underway. It will result in better co-ordination of public services. And that makes sense, and will result in maximising the benefits of the very significant infrastructure investment which has been made.

The *National Spatial Strategy* (NSS) is fundamentally about improving the quality of life, about achieving a better balance of development and growth within our country, and putting Ireland's development on a more sustainable path. We won't always have the resources that we have now and we must use them prudently. To develop on the vision of the *National Spatial Strategy*, and to drive forward the development of the gateway cities and the towns designed for development under the Strategy, the Irish Government has been engaged in an unprecedented programme of investment to enhance rail, road, energy, and communications linkages right across the country - north, south, east and west.

Implementation is key to planning initiatives. The Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) that have been in place since 2004 are important in translating the *National Spatial Strategy* into concrete actions. In addition for each of the nine NSS gateway centres, land use and transportation strategies will provide a sound and a strategic context for the acceleration and the consolidation of growth in these pathway areas and in their hinterlands. To further assist central departments, state agencies and planning authorities in this process The Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government, in partnership with Forfás, recently published *Implementing the NSS: Gateway Investment Priorities Study* (August, 2006). This report identifies the most important

interventions needed to support the gateways and move towards the level and the scale of development needed to achieve more balanced regional development and it is important that we build out in an integrated way and in a planned way.



**Figure 8:** Road and Rail Network from the *National Development Plan*. Source: 2007-2013 National Development Plan, Republic of Ireland

Both departments have been involved in the InterTradeIreland research study from the outset, and the work is well advanced in the preparation of a collaborative framework for the two spatial strategies. A platform for collaboration must be put in place. It is significant that the officials from the respective Departments are making a joint presentation today on the high level statutory collaborative framework. This is further evidence of the good links and the co-operation that has been established at central government level.

The reality of it is we all have a stake and a responsibility in moving the process forward. Now is the time to share views, experiences and voice any concerns about gaps that exist. It is only by exploring and testing that potentials can be identified.

The Newry-Dundalk initiative, for example, is of incredible importance on both sides of the border. Newry is a designated centre under the RDS and

Dundalk a gateway town under the NSS. Both are strategically located along the Belfast-Dublin corridor which presents extraordinary opportunities in a cross-border context. The formation of the Newry-Dundalk metropolis is a logical and, I think, an inevitable mechanism to realise the socio-economic potential on both sides of the border. Together with the significant work which is ongoing in the North-West Gateway Initiative these strategies will help demonstrate the practical benefits of closer co-operation and co-ordination between our respective spatial strategies.

**Address by Mr Gerry McGinn, Permanent Secretary for the Department for Regional Development, Belfast**

*“Collaborative action is not just about developing co-operation and trust across borders; the same qualities are necessary for co-operation across organisations and the public and private sectors. Without a shared understanding and trust, it is very difficult to get anything done and certainly to get it done effectively and with speed.”*



**Figure 9: The Newry and Dundalk Initiative**  
Source: Newry-Dundalk – A new perspective on development of the region, Colin Buchanan, 2006

Regional co-operation across borders is not something new or unique to this island - consider what has happened in the border regions of Continental Europe.

The *Regional Development Strategy* for Northern Ireland sets out the spatial framework for future development in the region. It was adopted by the Assembly in 2001, and sets out a 25-year vision to shape and achieve balanced regional development and improve our competitive advantage. The *National Spatial Strategy* for Ireland has similar objectives and both strategies acknowledge that there are important overlaps and synergies between them. It is this relationship which gets our attention today.

It is an exciting time to be living on this island. Changes are happening the like of which we haven't seen before and these changes have dramatic spatial consequences that transcend the border and affect us all. There are important questions to be answered:

- What are the consequences of this growth in population terms?
- What if the trends grow at greater levels than are currently being predicted?
- Where will people live and work?
- What are the consequences of the improvements to our transport infrastructure that open up new opportunities?
- How do we respond to the environmental challenges that face us all?
- How can we develop sustainable policies that transcend the border?
- How do we best invest for our future?

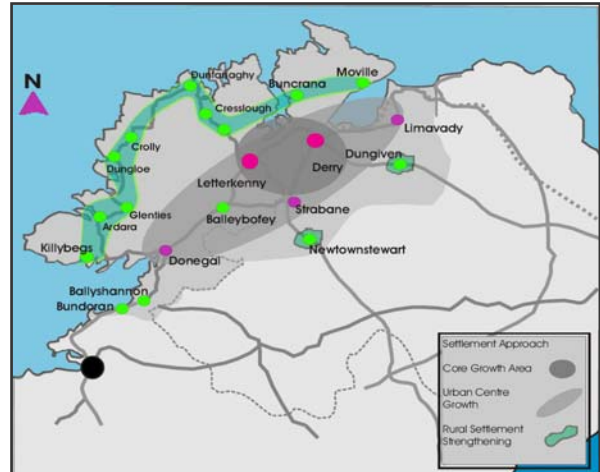
The message is that these issues benefit from a collaborative approach - the challenge is how. Much has already been happening at the local or sub-regional level; where key issues are best understood and where they need to make impact. The following are three examples:

- Twin-city approach for Newry and Dundalk. The local council-led cross-border planning initiative for this area is strongly grounded in

both the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) and the National Spatial Strategy (NSS). It would make a major contribution to economic development within the Dublin-Belfast corridor. It also proposed, for example, very innovative ideas about the potential for a cross-border national park.

The partners fully recognise the scale of the challenges as they take their strategy forward on a wide front: for example they intend to develop a joint strategy for economic development and promotion; develop community cohesion and cultural diversity; make the most of their outstanding landscape; and work for good cross-border partnership in the arrangements needed to support and sustain achievements. The cross-border partners recognise that despite growing co-operation in recent years there are still significant barriers to overcome, including differing capacities and resources to tackle such work on a long-term basis.

- *The North-West Gateway Initiative.* In May, 2006, after the value of collaborative cross-border spatial planning was endorsed in the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference, the two governments agreed to drive forward co-operation in the north-west in the areas of infrastructure projects, health, education, telecommunications services and energy supply. The role of spatial planning is pivotal in providing a framework for this work that is being undertaken with the engagement of the four local councils of Derry, Strabane, Limavady and Donegal, the North-West Region Cross-Border Group and the North-West Chambers of Commerce, all working together.
- *Roads to Opportunity, Unlocking the Potential of the North West* envisages an integrated all-island policy on transportation and makes the case for increased investment within the NSS and the RDS. Developed by the Irish Central Border Area Network along with the North-West Region Cross-Border Group, the follow-up to this report is occurring through regular contact among officials, primarily through cross-border workshops.



**Figure 10: Northwest Region Cross-Border**  
Source: DOEHLG and DRD

There are many other important cross-border projects moving forward. A characteristic of these three examples is that they bring together a wide range of bodies, many of them elected and representative bodies, to deal with crosscutting issues, which have been locally recognised as strategic or spatial in nature and transcending the border.

The *Spatial Strategies* report addresses many of these concerns and provides recommendations on the way forward. A powerful partnership of the public sector, the business sector, and research institutes has proved invaluable in this instance, bringing purpose, drive and strong intellectual capacity to bear on the issues. It sets an example of what can be achieved with this kind of approach to these and to other problems. I would like to thank InterTradeIreland for the foresight to commission this work and those from the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) for the thorough way in which they approached the task of research and report. They interviewed a large number of stakeholders and this adds enormously to the value of the work. I also want to express my sincere thanks to all of the stakeholders for their support.

The Department for Regional Development is committed to playing our part in taking forward the development of a framework for collaborative action between the RDS and the NSS. We firmly believe that this work is vital to us all in steering future development on the island.

## PART III: A FRAMEWORK FOR COLLABORATIVE ACTION

### Introduction

There has been a tradition of ‘back-to-back’ planning in the Border Region – unsurprising, given that each side of the border is governed by a different jurisdiction. This has resulted in unbalanced development with evident infrastructure and communication gaps in the region, particularly around the Northwest. Bridging these gaps requires collaborative planning – and the research report, *Spatial Strategies on the Island of Ireland: Development of a Framework for Collaborative Action* suggests potential ways of addressing these deficiencies.

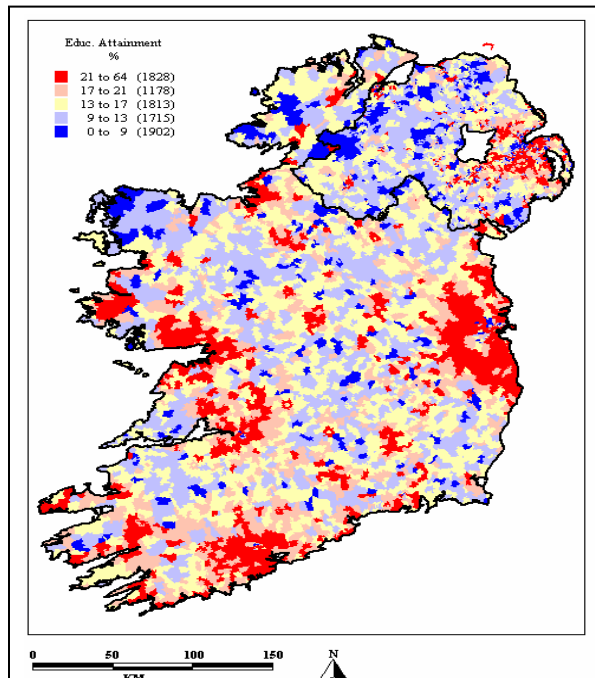
Berry and Bartley outline the findings of the ICLRD/ InterTradeIreland report, arguing for more integrated planning on the island of Ireland through local and regional initiatives, strategic investments and dedicated research. The report envisions a range of benefits, including more strategic investment, and repositioning and re-imagining the island as an innovative and competitive location.

Thompson and Cussen also note that the overall development of Ireland is being hampered by the lack of coordinated planning. And they too point out that this disjuncture can be overcome not just through better planning coordination but also through coordination of infrastructure investment. The governments need to prioritise key projects that have the ability to generate investment across the island and that work on an east-west as well as north-south basis.

### *Implementing a Framework of Collaborative Action: Spatial Strategies on the Island of Ireland*

**Prof. Jim Berry & Mr. Brendan Bartley**

*“The proposed framework offers the advantages of informing future investment; maximising synergies for balanced regional competitiveness and potentially re-imagining the island as a globally innovative location.”*



**Figure 11:** Educational Attainment (Third Level) for Island of Ireland, 2001/2002.

Source: NISRA (2001), CSO (2002); map prepared by NISRA and NCG

Despite the existence of spatial strategies for Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, responding to economic challenges requires a step-change towards greater joined-up planning and cooperation to facilitate strategic infrastructure investment, pooling of resources and services for mutual gain, and accelerating development of key transportation corridors. There are excellent examples in mainland Europe where cross-border collaboration is based on evidence-based actions which are delivering economic advantage and mutual benefits through integrated infrastructure investment programmes. Through looking to Europe, the great potential of the already identified corridors could be harnessed and built upon – and given the cross-border nature of the areas in question, the most effective way to do so is through the development of a collaborative framework.

During the research phase of the *Spatial Strategies* report, a recurring recommendation of the stakeholders interviewed, both North and South, was the need for greater collaboration and joint action. Collaboration is vital to the continued growth of the

island (increasingly being referred to as ‘competitive co-operation’ in mainland Europe) – and we need more of it!

The logic and purpose for a collaborative framework is driven by the priorities of economic competitiveness, environmental stewardship, and growing social needs. It must also lead to mutual advantage. Closer integration of spatial planning, infrastructure, and business growth requires a coherent management approach based on three key strands: (1) a focused range of regional and local spatial planning initiatives; (2) a programme of highly strategic and targeted investments; and, (3) a programme of spatial planning research.

Key findings indicate that both Governments should commit to collaborative planning by building on existing collaborations; building-up engagement between departments; incorporating other departments and interests; and capturing the benefits that will flow from a pro-active collaborative spatial planning and infrastructural development. Given that there are two spatial strategies in existence, both jurisdictions have put in place forward-looking investment programmes. In general, there is a real ‘can-do’ attitude across all the sub-regions and this is the perfect time to develop a collaborative framework.

We just need to look to the examples of the Newry-Dundalk Twin City Initiative, the North West Gateway Project and progress being achieved in the central cross-border area to see the potentials. To capitalise on these potentials, however, requires dynamic leadership, integrated action, and closer alignment between spatial planning and the key stakeholders including the cross-border networks, development agencies and the business community.



**Figure 12:** Conference speakers (clockwise from bottom right): Jim Berry, Silvia Keckeis, Alastair Adair, Brendan Bartley, Caroline Creamer, Niall Cussen, Mike Thompson

### ***Proposed Frameworks for Action: Current steps on Developing the Collaborative Framework***

***Mike Thompson & Niall Cussen***

*“Sustainability is a major challenge for us and the challenges that that brings with it doesn’t recognise man-made borders. It does, however, require a strengthening of the spatial context through joined-up approaches.”*

While Ireland is economically strong at present, the lack of critical mass and large cities in both jurisdictions is impeding growth and competitiveness. Through a framework for collaborative action, the regions on the island would be better equipped to (1) face competition from areas such as North-West Europe for inward investment, and (2) use their complementary assets in positioning the island on a European and world stage.

It is important to note that there is a huge amount of good, strong collaborative work happening on the ground already – primarily through the cross-border networks and agencies. But a question we have to ask is - and this is not meant as a criticism of the aforementioned cross-border initiatives - is it being integrated properly? There is a need to step back from all this work and place it in a wider spatial context. What are the relationships between the new housing developments and health facilities? What is the impact of new roads on peoples’ choices of where they want to live and to work etc?

Developing a framework for collaborative action poses challenges for both governments because:

- There must be a move away from “back-to-back planning” in favour of balanced strategic integrated planning;
- There is a need for better horizontal and vertical integration between planning policies; and
- Any approach must be flexible so as to adapt to changing circumstances and/or priorities.

Both governments have endorsed the proposal to develop a framework for collaborative action, primarily because there is a recognised need for: (1) better integration between spatial planning and infrastructure investment; and (2) an island of Ireland approach to infrastructure investment. The next step is for both governments, with inputs from the

business community and key stakeholders, to agree key spatial planning priorities that have the potential to embed competitiveness and to drive infrastructure investment across the island. There is a window of opportunity for both governments to devise a collaborative framework and that window is now. This is finite and this window will not last.

Three initial priorities have already been identified by both governments for inclusion in a collaborative framework:

- Collaboration in the development and implementation of sub-regional development strategies (e.g. Newry-Dundalk, Northwest Corridor, etc.)
- Agreement on the key spatial development priorities to be reflected in the infrastructure investment agenda (e.g. thematic maps)
- Development of a comprehensive database to facilitate further exercises.



**Figure 13: Functional Areas and Strategic Planning – Removing the Border**  
 Source: RMF, Research and Policy Unit

Some other general priorities include:

- The north-west of the island must be better connected to the rest of the country;
- Development corridors as identified in the existing strategies must be better defined so that they do not become ‘development tunnels’;
- The framework must have a strong east-west dimension – both internally and with the United Kingdom.

These are just some of the concepts and themes that we are deliberating as we try to take forward the development of a spatial strategy for the island of Ireland.

## **PART IV: THE BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE - COMPETITIVENESS THROUGH CROSS-BORDER STRATEGIES**

### ***Introduction***

There is a compelling rationale for cross-border co-operation but it has to be to the mutual advantage of all stakeholders. This session examines the benefits to the private sector of joined-up spatial planning. Growth has tended to be concentrated in the larger urban centres and along development corridors, such as the Dublin-Belfast corridor. Given that this growth is becoming increasingly difficult to secure in the context of increased globalisation and low cost competition, it is important to find a balance between public sector funders, and corporate objectives. New and innovative funding structures and streamlined decision making processes are proving to be as essential as co-ordinated spatial planning.

But growth needs to be balanced and sustainable. 'Back-to-back' development is no longer acceptable. Over thirty years of such planning and development has resulted in both the BMW Region and Northern Ireland performing poorly when measured against other EU regions and US states. Joined-up planning has a key role to play in addressing these deficiencies, together with supporting mechanisms to attract business, trade, and investment in an all-island economy. It is suggested that what is needed includes, for example, the harmonisation of corporation tax across the island, and cross-border collaboration across a variety of scales and levels.

### ***A Financier's Perspective on Spatial Planning and Infrastructure***

***Mr. Henry Elvin***

*"There is a need to create a sustainable economic and social infrastructure fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century."*

Major cities are essential in attracting wealth and investment. The Celtic Tiger has seen the Republic's economy grow at a phenomenal rate with a focusing of wealth around Dublin, whereas Northern Ireland has had a more constrained experience as a consequence of an historic over-reliance on the public sector. With its location and transportation advantages, the Belfast-Dublin corridor is having a

profound effect on the role of land and property prices which in turn is influencing wealth creation.

Northern Ireland's *Regional Development Strategy* has set out a clearly defined "hub, corridor and gateway approach" which has the potential to bring forward improved transportation links within the province. However, with the provision of gateways to the Republic of Ireland and mainland UK, there is a need to strengthen the economic base of Northern Ireland and address the regional imbalance.

The respective roles of the SIB and NDFA have major relevance with respect to implementation of coordinated spatial planning and infrastructure for roads, education, health, waste, water and housing. The role of PPP/PFI was highlighted as potential well-tried initiatives where the risk is passed to the private sector and a higher focus is placed on budgets and timetables in securing delivery of infrastructural projects. Banks will also have a role in delivering a more competitive all-island economy.

Challenges ahead include:

- Achieving the balance between public sector, funder and corporate objectives;
- Innovation in funding structures e.g. bank v. bond, funder equity stakes, development of secondary markets;
- Coordinating approaches to spatial planning and infrastructure between North and South;
- The need to streamline the decision-making process;
- The need to consider capacity constraints in the construction sector;
- The lack of liquidity in current project structures possibly adversely impacting on ability to gain investment rating;
- The full impact of long-term risk not yet apparent in PPP/PFI;
- Current margins reduce the possibility of refinancing in short-term;
- Site selection in certain sectors, for example education;
- Possible use of tariffs, for example road tolls and water rates.

## ***A Developer's Perspective on Spatial Planning and Infrastructure***

***Dr. Gerard O'Hare***

*“To promote the island economy we need the ingredients to make the collaborative framework a success, these include: Institutional structures; Certainty in decision-making; A coherent and shared strategy; and economic and social cohesion.”*

The climate and circumstances needed to encourage the delivery of the collaborative strategy at the all-island level can be characterized by: competitiveness, output, wealth creation, and sustainability. Spatial planning is not enough on its own to make the collaborative framework work. An economic strategy is required, including the harmonisation of corporation tax mechanisms. An economic strategy will also attract business, trade and investment into the all-island economy. Collaboration in the true sense of the word will require a mind set change which the private sector will be willing to embrace.

There have been various political attempts to find a common ground ranging from the Sunningdale Agreement, to the Anglo Irish Agreement, to the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement; and most recently to the St. Andrews Agreement. As a fragmented economy and small society without a cohesive strategy, the big question now is how can Northern Ireland start moving forward in a more effective way?

Answers to the question include: moving from border towns to boom cities; from bandit country to border region; from a multiplicity of disjointed plans to one collaborative plan; from two disconnected agendas to one mutually beneficial agenda.

The Newry context is a relevant case study of the potential inherent in a joined-up approach to planning. Newry illustrates the new polycentric approach to planning and the attempt to link the sub-region into the larger spatial strategies. In this regard the strategic context for the Newry sub-region is seen as essential for the development of the retail hierarchy, cross-border shopping, and the attraction of inward investment through developments such as the Outlet Centre in Banbridge and by key investors such as ING in Dundalk. The planned provision of an appropriate infrastructure base is critical to the economic viability of the sub-region. Examples of

key infrastructure required for successful development of the area include enhancement of its capacity to meet the growing logistics requirements of the sub-region. This requires planning for investment in the sea-port at Warrenpoint, the railway link to Dublin and Belfast, and the broadband/electricity network.

There are two potential sets of policy options; the first is a “do the minimum option” that produces two stagnant isolated economies on the margins of a re-emerging vibrant Europe. The alternative is to proactively construct a thriving and competitive island economy.

### ***Comments from Panellists:***

***Seán Ó Laoire, William Poole, and Michael D’Arcy***

#### ***Seán Ó Laoire***

Dreams and reality can converge through visionary planning. A dream which Ireland is fast losing is the association with quality of life which used to be talked about with pride when referring to Ireland. This too reflects a failure of imagination in planning – the absence of applied visionary thinking. For example, people are being forced out of cities because we don’t imagine cities as good places to be in. At best we retrofit our cities to make them tolerable places in which to live and work. At the same time we know that we need and expect cities to be great centres of energy, ideas and economics. But this cannot be achieved without the quality of life dimension being built in from the outset.

Reflecting on the diminishing quality of the post-Celtic Tiger landscape in Ireland, and the reality that Ireland can actually market its environment, there is a deep concern that the legacy we leave will be conducive to further investment in twenty years time. We need to strive for real sustainability to ensure that the island remains a place that people wish to visit and invest in. We need to take living environments and quality of life to a higher level by actually balancing nature, mankind and cities. It’s an area that we have only started to tackle and it’s a vision that we should not lose sight of as we move in the direction of all-island planning.

#### ***William Poole***

The key messages of the presentations at the session and the overall conference is the need of our governments and politicians to rise to the challenges facing the island economy. Promoting and facilitating

competitiveness is a mandatory element of policy that requires deliberate, informed and concerted efforts. The private sector supports the drive to be competitive and is willing to engage in the necessary collaborations with the public sector to make the island economy a success. The scope for successful public-private partnerships is evident across a wide range of potential initiatives. Grasping the available opportunities will require joined-up planning, targeted deployment of resources and courageous leadership on the part of our policy makers and officials.

### ***Michael D’Arcy***

It is critical to link people, economics and developers. Certain words are not used frequently enough in development plans and even during the conference - “people” is one of them. The other word that doesn’t get enough mention is “employment”. The final missing word that needs to feature more in planning discourse is the term “developer”. There is typically much talk about development without recognition of the key role and difficulties faced by developers. The speakers at the current session had thankfully addressed these deficits.

Any attempt to apply the collaborative framework comes up against two related key questions about its core aim, namely is it about achieving an improved process or is it about getting better results? Does it seek simply to create more interaction between the various departments and key stakeholders, which is important in itself, or does it seek primarily to deliver more and better outputs? Whatever the case, people need to be acknowledged more openly in the plans that are produced for them including the Collaborative Framework. People vote with their feet; they have ideas about where and how they want to live, and there is huge tension between what people want to do and where they want to go and the various plans that are produced by planners.

The second factor required for the Collaborative Framework to be a success is that it must firmly root itself in the wider economic strategies and realities. The absence of economic foundations is reflected in the absence of any reference at the conference to the recent British and Irish Intergovernmental Conference (BIIGC) study on the all-island economy. This important piece of work has limitations but clearly expresses some interesting aspirations. For example, the first sentence about the future vision says; “there must be a vision of an island characterised by a strongly competitive and socially inclusive island economy with strong island-wide

economic clusters whose development is not impaired by the existence of a political border”. Clearly a border that prevents spending and investment from flowing to a destination that is seriously underdeveloped is an economic reality, a real world economic problem that should be addressed.

Real world people issues continually crop up when we seek to plan. Whether we talk about planning for clusters, roads or changes in employment sectors, simple questions arise about people’s fundamental needs. Such questions include:

- What kind of facilities are they going to need?
- What kind of education?
- What kind of support are they going to need in order for their employment to be improved, for their take-home income to be better, for their children to have a prospect of living in the same areas, etc.?

These are the kind of questions that are important for the strategic collaborative framework to move to very quickly so that it becomes a means to an end rather than simply an end in itself. In that discussion, the private sector particularly and developers like Gerard O’Hare have an absolutely fundamental role to play.

## PART V: IMPLEMENTING CROSS-BORDER SPATIAL PLANNING

### Introduction

Cross-border spatial planning is only possible and can only be effective if consideration is given to balanced competitiveness, sustainable economic growth married to social cohesion, environmental considerations, inclusivity, and territorial capital. At the same time, it is essential that the integrity of the territorial unit itself is preserved. To get the ‘mix of ingredients’ right and then blend them together in the right order, we must learn from others. Citing examples from mainland Europe and North America, Keckis and Driscoll describe strategies for inter-jurisdictional collaboration which benefit trade, environmental protection, and transport linkages, as well as spatial planning. They also emphasise the need for a tailor-made approach for each situation.

Returning to the local context, McLoone took a managerial perspective towards closer cooperation, outlining new forms of governance that must be acknowledged for effective cross-border collaboration. There are several imbalances that need to be addressed in the equality of cross-border infrastructure; and while bottom-up thinking is important in this regard, it needs to be aligned to strategic investment planning.

Dr Boomer outlined the proposed Ulster-Connacht Corridor, a “green, sustainable, eco-friendly region” straddling both sides of the border to each others’ advantage, not unlike the Dublin-Belfast Corridor and the North-West Gateway Initiatives. One possible way forward to enabling this region is fostering stakeholder participation through a supported engagement process. The implementation of any cross-border strategy, however, must be substantiated by comparable cross-border data and data sharing. The gathering of such data needs to be co-ordinated on both sides of the border. Progress is already being made in this regard.

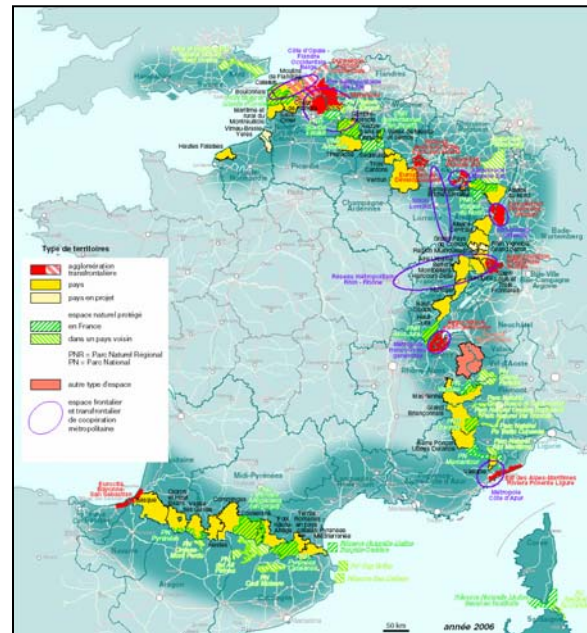
### Learning from Abroad

*Silvia Keckeis and John Driscoll*

*“Each strategy must be unique and tailored to the circumstances of the border region in which it is to be implemented.”*

The European experience with promoting cross-border cooperation and planning dates back to the immediate post-war period when a series of bilateral agreements were entered into, affecting specific regions such as; the Rhine valley, the Franco-Belgian border, and part of the Franco-Swiss border. Since then, and particularly with the evolution of INTERREG, numerous initiatives at various scales have taken place.

Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT) in France has documented numerous initiatives and specialised networks involving border groupings, local government agencies and private enterprises in facilitating cross-border collaboration. MOT, a Paris-based membership organisation, provides operational assistance to its partners and members in the preparation, implementation, and analysis of projects.



**Figure 14 :** Cross-border activities supported by Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière in France.  
Source: Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière

Inter-jurisdictional cooperation among states within the United States, and cross-border collaboration between Canada and the United States, highlights that such collaboration is useful in not only aligning spatial strategies but also increasing trade, protecting the environment, and promoting transport linkages. Such collaboration, however, is only possible when key players are involved from the private sector, civic leaders and government officials from local, state and central levels.

Activity		Collaborative Framework Level		
		National	Sub-regional	Local
Data base and mapping	France and UK			
Information Exchange	Baltic and Northwest Russia			
Cultural and Environmental Preservation	Italy and Switzerland			
Waste management	France and Spain			
Cross-border Metropolitan Area	France, Germany, and Switzerland			
Cross-border Metropolitan Area	France and Switzerland			
Cross-border Metropolitan Area	Belgium and France			
Local Government Cooperative Agreements	France and Germany			

**Figure 15: European Cross-border Collaboration**  
Source: ICLRD

Despite the myriad examples and cross-border strategies that exist, these cannot be transferred from one region to another in their existing format; rather, each strategy must be unique and tailored to the circumstances of the border region in which it is to be implemented.

### ***Institutional Perspectives***

***Mr Michael McLoone***

*“A spatial plan is only as good as the arrangements that are going to be put in place to implement it.”*

Envisaged in this collaborative framework is the participation of business representatives and other stakeholders from civil society in a multitude of inter-institutional and inter-organisational links, networks, forums, partnerships and round-table structures, with a mandate to co-ordinate activities around functional problems that cut across administrative levels and territorial scales.

A territorial approach would require the following key investment priorities:

- Letterkenny, Derry and Sligo gateways to be recognised on the same level as other major

urban centres, therefore requiring the same road access infrastructure;

- Government investing in open access networks through the municipal access networks. For example, there needs to be open access between Derry and Letterkenny;
- The Scottish-Irish gas link to Coolkeeragh should be extended to Letterkenny if, in fact, they are to function within the same energy market;
- The imbalance between the 220kv line in the North and 110kv line in the South also needs to be remedied with an inter-connector.

The practical problem to be faced is the creation of the new governance framework; this would involve government departments working cross-departmentally and inter-sectorally before in fact they begin to work cross-jurisdictionally. For instance, the North-West Group Initiative is one of the key initiatives in the region, and Donegal County Council are working with colleagues in Strabane, Limavady and Derry to look at potential joint investment in future key infrastructure projects.

Donegal County Council has also looked at the roles of government departments if this new governance framework is going to work; as well as the structure and function of local government, North and South. This includes considering the impact which the creation of the super councils will have in terms of matching functions, particularly in relation to development control and development planning.

The Special EU Programmes Body is important in this context. Bottom-up thinking is very important for participation but it needs to be aligned to strategic investment planning, whether that's to do with rural development or major gateways. At the moment €368 million is administered through 56 implementing bodies; 26 local partnerships in the North, 14 intermediate funding bodies, six council and task forces and ten government departments. INTERREG, with a spending of €182 million, has twenty-two implementing bodies and again there are a lot of intermediary funding bodies, three cross-border partnership boards, ten government departments and five other agencies. And this is, quite clearly, very challenging in terms of aligning that kind of relatively small investment (when you are looking at €100 billion in terms of mainstream spending) with how this is aligned in a new framework of governance to underpin strategic thinking and strategic planning priorities.

There is a quite complex network of local development agencies working on both sides of the border. There has been an attempt in the Republic to sort this out through the County Development Boards, a new governance structure which is trying to bring together the private sector, public sector agencies, community interests and local development projects. But incredibly, there is talk at the moment of restructuring that to give separate boards to deal only with local development at county level. And I am not so sure who actually has an overview of the present complex network of institutions that are involved in local development planning.

In Northern Ireland the establishment of the new super councils will have major impacts on local strategy partnerships and regional partnership boards. We will need to rationalise and streamline institutional arrangements that enable bottom-up thinking on rural development, social inclusion agendas, and link to strategic thinking.

To make all this work will not alone require tremendous political leadership, management skills, and organisational abilities that perhaps we haven't been asked to show in the way we have functioned to date. It will also mean, given the imbalance between the €100 billion mainstream spending and the €100 million local development and EU-type funding, having to mainstream most of this work and linking a lot of the local development stuff within these frameworks.

And all of that I think is going to be necessary if strategic joined-up planning is to be achieved. We have surely reached a tremendous milestone with the publication of the *Spatial Strategies* report. It is a wonderful recognition of the all-island mindset change in thinking that is taking place.

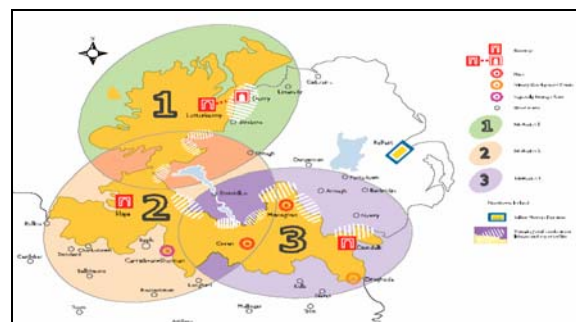
***The Ulster-Connacht Corridor - An example of a regional cross-border initiative***

***Dr. Chris Boomer***

*“The process of preparing the guidelines is as important as their content.”*

The vision of the Ulster-Connacht Corridor was born at a meeting of planners working in the central border area, involving ten local councils from both sides of the border. Recognising the unique elements of this region and the value of its rural quality, and taking account of the emerging need for farm

diversification, a proposal is currently being developed which promotes the growth of the renewable sector in this region. This would involve, for example, remarketing this area as a “green, sustainable, eco-friendly region” focusing on wind energy, wood burning, sustainable building technologies, and ecotourism.



**Figure 16: The three border sub-regions**  
Source: Border Regional Authority, Republic of Ireland

In the context of increasing decentralization, local councils in cross-border areas have to make their own case for future growth and investment. This proposal considers the development of an east-west corridor (Ulster-Connacht) stretching from Louth to Mayo. Within the framework of the *National Spatial Strategy* (ROI) and *Regional Development Strategy* (NI), an opportunity exists to develop plans and programmes that are sustainable and link with the economic, social and environmental policies of neighbouring authorities. Similar to the Dublin-Belfast Corridor and the North-West Gateway Initiatives, the authorities along the western borders can cooperate together to devise non-statutory guidelines for the development of the “Ulster-Connacht Corridor” which, as a region, has distinct characteristics:

- Poorer quality elevated agricultural land subject to high winds but with a strong forestry base;
- A thriving construction industry that goes beyond the building site to include those involved in mineral extraction, manufacture of building materials, and the development of building technologies; and,
- Tourist destinations comprising of extensive lakelands, highlands and Donegal Bay.

The process of preparing the guidelines is as important as their content. The argument is made that fostering stakeholder participation through a supported engagement process, in this instance facilitated by the Irish Central Borders Area Network (ICBAN), will ensure that the guidelines reflect local priorities. After all, it is not planners who implement

a set of guidelines, but the people who live and work in the area and most importantly “buy in” to the guidance.

**All-Island and Cross-Border Data,**

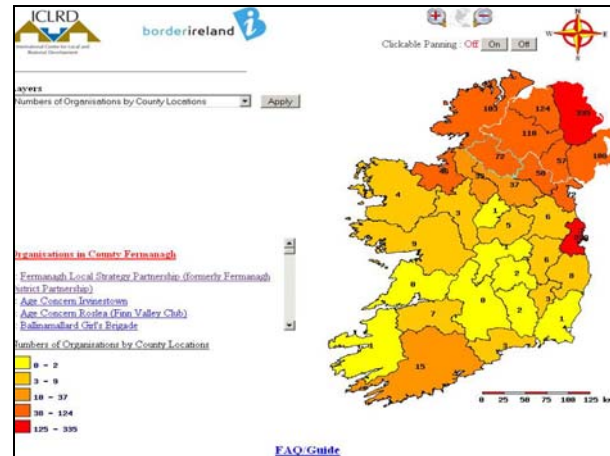
**Prof. Rob Kitchen**

“Just as there has been back-to-back planning with very little cooperation between jurisdictions, so there has been back-to-back data collection.”

Essential to any evidence-based policy initiatives, such as cross-border spatial planning, is extensive and reliable data to underpin analyses and decision-making. To-date, data regarding social, economic, infrastructure, environment and transport issues have not been collected in a coordinated fashion across the island of Ireland.

As a result, data in the North and South are most often generated using different questions, into different units, at different scales. It is therefore difficult to compare and combine data to create cross border or all-island data sets without much data manipulation, and even then the results are relatively suspect. It is little surprise then that all-island maps are rare as they are difficult to prepare even for census data.

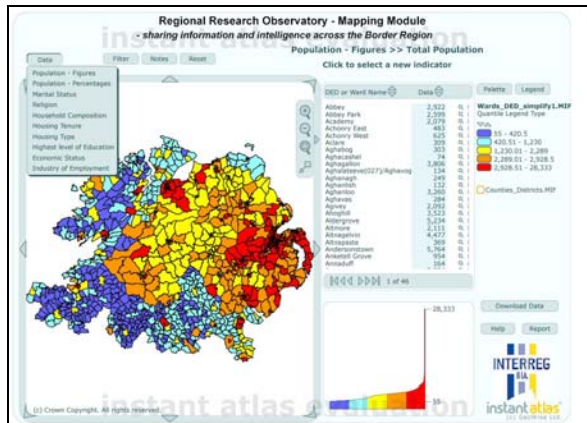
Among others, three projects trying to address the problems of creating cross-border datasets suitable to underpin evidence-based policy making are: the Regional Research Observatory (RRO), Mapping INTERREG and MOSIAC. The further development and extension of such projects is essential to implementing a cross-border spatial planning agenda.



**Figure 18: Mapping Tools.**

Source: ICLRD

Much more than that needs to be done. And to ensure this work happens, the establishment of all-island datasets should be a key area of investment, particularly given its importance in underpinning strategic spatial planning and collaborative frameworks.



**Figure 17: Mapping Tools.**

Source: Regional Research Observatory

Collaborative evidence-based planning requires sound evidence. There are pilot initiatives underway to address fundamental data issues, and these will be referred to shortly, but there is a long way to go yet to resolve some the aforementioned issues and establish meaningful, useful datasets.

## **APPENDIX I: Conference Agenda**

Implementing a Framework for Collaborative Action – Spatial Strategies on the Island of Ireland  
Canal Court Hotel, Newry, 9 November 2006

- 9:35           **Welcome** by Cllr Michael Carr, Mayor of Newry and Mourne District Council
- 9:45           **Introductory Session: Setting the Context for Collaboration**  
*Chair: Feargal McCormack, FPM Chartered Accountants/ICLRD Chairman*  
Mr Dick Roche TD, Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government  
Mr Gerry McGinn, Permanent Secretary, Department of Regional Development
- 10:30           **Plenary Session: Collaborative Framework – Recommendations and Agenda for Action**  
10:30    *Introduction and Contextual Perspective* – Prof James Walsh, Vice President, Innovation and Strategic Initiatives, NUI, Maynooth  
10:45    *Spatial Strategies on the Island of Ireland: Development of Proposals for a Collaborative Approach: Report Findings and Recommendations* – Brendan Bartley, ICLR/D/NUI Maynooth and Prof. Jim Berry, ICLR/D/University of Ulster  
11:15    Refreshments  
11:30    *Proposed Frameworks for Action* – Mike Thompson, Department of Regional Development and David Walsh and Niall Cussen, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government  
12:00    Questions and discussion
- 2:00           **Parallel Afternoon Sessions**
- Session 1: The Role of the Private Sector in Promoting Collaborative Spatial Strategies**  
*Chair: Liam Nellis, Chief Executive, InterTradeIreland*
- Financier's Perspective of Property, Planning and Infrastructure Provision* – Henry Elvin, Head of Corporate and Property Finance, Ulster Bank  
*Developer's Perspective of Spatial Planning and Infrastructure Provision* – Gerard O'Hare, Parker Green Property Development  
*Comments from Panellists and Questions to Speakers* – Sean ÓLaoire, Partner, Murray Ó Laoire Architects; William Poole, IBEC/CBI Joint Business Council; Michael D'Arcy, Principal, D'Arcy Smyth and Associates
- Session 2: Implementing a Cross-Border Spatial Planning Agenda**  
*Chair: Dr Peter Smyth, Former Joint Secretary, North/South Ministerial Council*
- Cross-Border Collaboration, Cases from the European Union and the United States* – John Driscoll, Director, ICLR/D and Silvia Keckeis, Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT)  
*Collaborative Framework for Cross-Border Spatial Planning:*  
- *Institutional Perspective* – Michael McLoone, County Manager, Donegal County Council  
- *Spatial Planning Perspective* – Dr Chris Boomer, Head of Development Plans, Western Divisional Planning Office  
- *All-Island and Cross-Border Data* – Prof. Rob Kitchin, ICLR/D/Director, National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis  
Questions to speakers, discussion and summary of key points
- 4:00           **Closing Session: Setting Priorities for Implementing the Collaborative Framework & Research Agenda**  
*Chair: Prof. Alastair Adair, ICLR/D/Head of School of the Built Environment, University of Ulster*  
Report of chairs and comments from delegates