Regions Magazine

TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF ALL-ISLAND SPATIAL DATABASES

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their own city. We therefore designed a programme with a standard presentation form each city, plus an overview of the project, which was delivered in all five cities during November/December 2005.

In Melbourne external funding only permitted international presentations from Newcastle, Tampere and Dortmund, but in the four EU cities all five cases were presented. In each case an event was held over a half day or slightly longer, either introduced by a local city representative or with a response to the findings at the end. This did mean that the team spent around a month on the road, showing that dissemination is something that takes time to do properly.

- Melbourne 8th November 2005
- Tampere 22nd November 2005
- Newcastle 28th November 2005
- Dublin 2nd December 2005
- Dortmund 7th December 2005

After the Dortmund event, an additional one-day policy conference was organised on 8th December in Berlin, in partnership with Leibniz *Institut fuer Regionalentwicklung und Strukturplanung* (IRS) and held at the regional offices of North Rhine Westfalia in Berlin. This brought in guest speakers – Prof. Jeremy Howells, Prof. Robert Hassink and Prof. Ulf Matthiessen, and the CRITICAL results were presented in the form of cross cutting themes on competitiveness, cosmopolitanism, social cohesion and governance.

Policy-makers guide: eight steps to building an 'intelligent' city-region.

The main policy conclusions which we reached in the project are in the form of eight lessons for policymakers wishing to develop a stronger culture of learning in cities.

The eight recommendations are as follows. Cities with a culture of learning should:

- Have an ability to value and make effective use of local knowledge and institutions without being trapped by the past.
- Be open to external ideas with an ability to synthesise knowledge from outside and inside.
- Be willing to invest in experimentation and to learn from both success and failure

- Encourage collaboration and be open and inclusive to knowledge and ideas from all parts of the community
- Promote learning towards shared visions
- Develop foresight in order to respond effectively to crisis and with an ability to generate a sense of urgency and avoid complacency
- Constantly reflective and building neutral places of dissent and discussion
- Encouraging key individuals both leaders and champions as well as moderators/communicators and boundary spanners as part of teams.

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TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF ALL-ISLAND SPATIAL DATABASES

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The All-Island Spatial Databases Working Group

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

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

Introduction

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

There are marked similarities between the two strategies in respect of their purposes and guiding principles, as well as their proposed mechanism of spatial development. Reflecting European Spatial Development Perspective principles, both strategies aim to promote spatially balanced, environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive economic growth. The mechanisms or policy options chosen by the two strategies are also broadly similar, and there is an explicit recognition of the need to take account of the cross-border dimension.

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

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

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

All-Ireland Spatial Planning Framework

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

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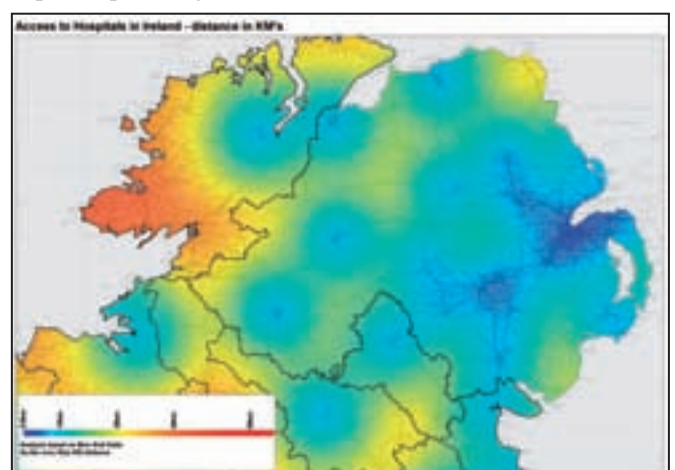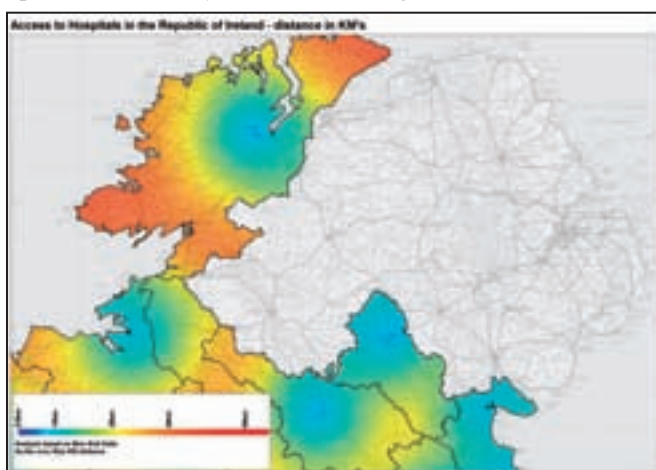

Fig. 1 A cross-border perspective produces a more rounded view of real service provision.

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

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

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

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

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

Fig. 2 The report on all Ireland spatial planning.

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

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

Illustrating the Technical Challenges – Two Pilot Projects

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

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

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

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

An illustration of the importance of using all-island data

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

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

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

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

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

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

Priority Indicators for Spatial Planning in the Republic of Ireland

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

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

NEWS AND REVIEWS

Welcome back to work! I hope you have enjoyed your summer holiday, cleared up your mind and read the books you always wanted to read. This year I stayed over for holiday in Ticino (Italian-speaking Switzerland), where you can find pretty towns like Lugano, Locarno and Ascona. I took a lot of books with me, but only read a few of them because the swimming pool, mountains and Ticinese street life turned out to take most of my attention. When, in turn, you don't have any new books in stock, you might consider to read the work Paul Benneworth is reviewing in this issue or the best seller I am reading at the moment, namely Charles Landry's *The Art of City Making* (2006, Earthscan, London). Besides Paul's book review you will find information on the UK Evaluation Society Yorkshire and Humber and JUNIUS, the Junior Network for International Urban Studies. And as always: when you have anything news to tell or when you would like to write a conference report or book review for *Regions*, please contact me at g.j.hospers@utwente.nl. Happy reading!

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UK EVALUATION SOCIETY YORKSHIRE AND HUMBER NETWORK: A CROSS-DISCIPLINARY CROSS-SECTOR REGIONAL NETWORK

The UK Evaluation Society (UKES) was founded in 1994. The society exists to promote and improve the theory, practice, understanding and utilisation of evaluation and its contribution to public knowledge, and to promote cross-sector and cross-disciplinary dialogue and debate. In recent years the UKES has supported the formation of regional networks. Most areas of the United Kingdom now have an active evaluation network allied to the society.

The Yorkshire and Humber regional network was launched in 2005. Our programme of events started in January 2006. The network's seminar sessions have included presentations on high profile evaluations (e.g. New Deal for Communities), workshops on evaluation methodologies and talks from key figures in the evaluation profession such as Prof. Ray Pawson. The network is broadly based. We have members from academia, private sector consultancies, the voluntary and community sectors, public sector commissioners of evaluation, and evaluation users. The network is free to join and open to members and non-members of the UKES. It is run and administrated by a steering group of people who give their time voluntarily.

Engagement in evaluation cuts across many academic disciplines. Our regional network draws in specialists in economic development, community development, criminal justice, health, and social care. The cross-sector, cross-disciplinary nature of the network creates a unique space for interaction and dialogue that would be difficult to create in more homogeneous professions. Despite the diversity, an 'evaluation community' appears to exist, fostered by a sense of shared issues, and, most of the time, also a common language.

The success of the network in its first year has demonstrated a latent demand for regionally based activity of this nature. Part of the reason for this demand is likely to be the lack of professional development opportunities for evaluators currently available. Evaluation is often not seen as a profession in its own right and evaluators frequently have to draw on generic training and professional development options. There are no specific qualifications needed to be an evaluator and there is no recognised career path leading into evaluation. In addition, network members, particularly commissioners of evaluation, frequently work in organisations where they are the only evaluation specialist or part of a small team of researchers and evaluators. The network provides a chance to be part of a professional community that may be unavailable in the workplace.

One of our key challenges for the forthcoming year will be to strengthen our links to other organisations active in the region. Many members of bodies such as the Regional Studies Association are engaged either full time or part time in evaluation or closely related areas of research, so there is clearly potential in establishing closer working relationships and organising events that all our members could benefit from. This could involve holding joint events in future or just ensuring that our network members are aware of the activities of other organisations.

As we are in our second year now, our aim is to maintain our momentum and develop activities that are relevant, useful and of interest to our members. If you want to join the network, or have ideas about evaluation related events or training that you would like to see, please send an email to bea.jefferson@yorkshire-forward.com and I will add you to our email list. If you would like to know more about the UKES's other regional networks, please see the UKES website: www.evaluation.org.uk.

JUNIUS (JUNIOR NETWORK FOR INTERNATIONAL URBAN STUDIES)

JUNIUS (Junior Network for International Urban Studies) is an informal network aiming to contribute to the ongoing urban studies on particularly European contexts. The main objective of the network is to enable PhD candidates as well as junior researchers who are interested in urban issues to get into or keep in touch with colleagues who are working on similar domains. In addition to facilitating such an interaction between young scholars, JUNIUS has the objective of enabling the mutual exchange of knowledge, experiences, ideas, and observations among its members in order to contribute to their ongoing research. Moreover, JUNIUS envisages to organise scientific activities and to encourage collaborative research and publications with the objective of supporting junior researchers in having a better access to and visibility in the scientific community. For further information, please pay a visit to the JUNIUS website: http://www.eurajunius.org/.