Irish Urbanisation: Trends, Actions and Policy Challenges

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Abstract
This Working Paper focuses upon aspects of Ireland’s recent urbanisation processes and outcomes. In particular, the Working Paper examines the realities of recent urban change and contrasts those outcomes with the aspirations of the National Spatial Strategy, 2002-2020. Ireland does not have an explicit, comprehensive urban policy; such urban related policies as do exist are threaded through a wide diversity of national programmes and implemented by a variety of agencies, not always well coordinated. Over three quarters of the total growth of population between 1996 and 2002 was accommodated within urban areas, distributed across all urban size categories. Much of the rural population growth was recorded within the hinterlands of Dublin, the other cities and the major towns. Looked at in terms of ‘Functional Areas’ just under fifty percent of all population increase occurred within the functional region of Dublin. Section 2 of the Working Paper briefly examines recent changes in the policy environment within which recent urban growth has taken place. The major policy context has been set down in the National Development Plan, 2000-2006 where implementation is increasingly reliant on private and partnership initiatives. The major catalyst for urban change has been the continuation of a wide array of tax-led urban renewal incentives, which it is estimated will lead to an investment in excess of €4.0 billion during their lifetime. While such schemes have greatly revitalised the various urban centres, there is evidence of growing concern that such approaches to urban renewal have done little to improve conditions for the poor and the less able in society. The Working Paper also outlines the key urban implications of the National Spatial Strategy, 2002-2020 but questions must remain as to the practicality of such a strategy in the absence of significant new Government initiatives to drive the implementation of the strategy. Investments in infrastructure and the role of the EU are also covered. This Working Paper concludes with a call for a revitalised, comprehensive urban policy to help manage Ireland’s urbanisation process more effectively, including vastly improved urban data, greater investment in urban research and the formulation and implementation of evidenced based urban policies.¹


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Introduction:
Since the early 1990s the Republic of Ireland (henceforth Ireland) has undergone a major transformation. Between 1993 and 2001 the annual real growth of the economy at 8.0 percent per annum was more than double the average recorded over the previous three decades. The population of the State increased by eight percent in the six years 1996 and 2002, as the country prospered and as in-migration replaced emigration. The 2002 population of 3,917,336 was the highest recorded for the country since 1871. Employment estimates indicate that between 1995 and early 2003 the number of people at work increased by 43.6 percent and the number employed in early 2003 at 1,772,000 was significantly above levels ever recorded in the history of the State. Many policy developments contributed to this unprecedented period of growth, most especially the success of Ireland in attracting foreign direct investment (OECD, 1999).

Much of the growth during the 1990s, and especially since 1996, has been an urban or an urban focussed phenomenon. Between 1996 and 2002 the population of the State increased by 291,000 persons, of whom some 77.7 percent resided in aggregate urban areas, ie: urban settlements of 1,500 persons or over. In contrast, the aggregate rural population has remained almost static and its share of total population has declined to 40.4 percent of total population, inclusive of a large and increasing number of urban- based workers who have opted to live in the countryside. Table 1 provides a succinct overview of the settlement structure and the performance of its various components in the six years 1996-2002.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dublin City and Suburbs</td>
<td>952,692</td>
<td>1,004,614</td>
<td>+ 51,922</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Major Cities &amp; Suburbs</td>
<td>360,609</td>
<td>386,136</td>
<td>+ 25,527</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towns 10,000 and Over</td>
<td>423,356</td>
<td>496,163</td>
<td>+ 72,807</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towns 5,000 to 9,999</td>
<td>201,967</td>
<td>233,939</td>
<td>+ 31,972</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towns 3,000 to 4,999</td>
<td>82,294</td>
<td>99,473</td>
<td>+ 17,179</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towns 1,500 to 2,999</td>
<td>101,277</td>
<td>113,957</td>
<td>+ 12,680</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towns 1,000 to 1,499</td>
<td>71,878</td>
<td>79,462</td>
<td>+ 7,584</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towns 500 to 999</td>
<td>96,749</td>
<td>104,602</td>
<td>+ 7,853</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villages under 500</td>
<td>82,919</td>
<td>98,126</td>
<td>+ 15,207</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remainder of Country</td>
<td>1,252,346</td>
<td>1,300,731</td>
<td>+ 48,385</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>33.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,626,087</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,917,203</strong></td>
<td><strong>+291,116</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The built-up area of Dublin, as defined in Table 1, accounted for just over one quarter of the population of the State in 2002. The overwhelming dominance of Dublin within the Irish
settlement system is shown by the fact that its population in 2002 was almost as large as that of all other cities and towns of 5,000 population or over within the State.

While the total share of population resident in Dublin and the four other cities declined slightly between 1996 and 2002, there was an increase in the share of population living in the smaller and medium sized towns, particularly in towns of 5,000 to 10,000 population whose combined growth of almost 105,000 exceeded the total growth in the built-up areas of the five cities including Dublin.

Table 1 also shows that one third of the population resided outside towns and villages in 2002. While the rural share of total population had declined slightly, there had been a significant increase in the total number of rural residents between 1996 and 2002. It is important to note that there have been significant changes in the composition of the Irish rural population over time, with recent decades witnessing a decline of farming occupations and a growth of ‘urban generated’ households and second or holiday home residents. The issue of urban generated housing in rural areas remains a contentious planning and a vibrant political issue. Rural values remain very important within Irish society and there has been an increased emphasis on rural policies in recent years, (Kenny, 2003; DOEHLG, 2004). However, Figure 1 illustrates that the growth of rural population in the years 1996 – 2002 took place substantially within the hinterlands of the cities and major towns.

This Working Paper is focussed on the performance of the Irish urban system with a particular focus on the continuing and increasing dominance of Dublin and its region at a time when key components of the recently published National Spatial Strategy, 2002-2020 (henceforth NSS) await implementation, (DOELG, 2002).

**Metropolitan Dominance:**

Since the establishment of an independent Irish state in 1922, there have been numerous reports and recommendations aimed at limiting the relative size and role of Dublin or attempting to strengthen the national effectiveness of centres and places relative to the capital city. One of the most important was the 1969 report on Regional Studies in Ireland, which recommended a national urban strategy based on a hierarchical network of ‘development centres’. Those recommendations, together with others dealing with aspects of development policy and administrative reform, went largely un-implemented, (for an overview see: Bannon and Greer, 1998). As a consequence, the role of Dublin was strengthened over time, both in respect of domestic and international affairs, (Bannon, 2000a). In the absence of counter magnets, it is widely accepted that Dublin “continues to perform at the international level as a driver of national development” (NSS 2002, p.78). In the absence of some effective

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2 See appendix 1
spatial strategy for the balanced development of the country, Dublin and the Greater Dublin Area (henceforth GDA) has come to increasingly dominate the urban landscape of the State.

While Table 1 above examined the overall settlement structure of the State in respect of ‘Census’ cities and towns, Table 2 redistributes the population in terms of Functional Areas as defined in the National Spatial Strategy. The concept of Functional Areas is meaningful in the case of Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Galway and it is especially useful in determining the true extent and importance of Dublin and its functional region within the Irish economy and society. In Table 2 the NSS data has been brought forward to 2002 to highlight the changes throughout the State during the period of rapid growth from 1996 to 2002.

The Dublin functional area contained a population of 1,657,330 or 42.3 percent of the total population of the State in 2002. More significantly, the Dublin Functional Area accounted for 49.2 percent of the total increase in population between 1996 and 2002. Dublin was the only Functional Area to significantly increase its share of total population.

**Table 2: Population Change by Functional Areas, 1996-2002**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functional Area</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Population Increase</th>
<th>Share of Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dublin</td>
<td>1,514,016</td>
<td>1,657,330</td>
<td>143,314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cork</td>
<td>420,510</td>
<td>448,181</td>
<td>27,671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limerick/Ennis/MW</td>
<td>296,920</td>
<td>319,032</td>
<td>22,112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galway</td>
<td>188,854</td>
<td>208,826</td>
<td>19,972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterford/Tipp South/Wexford</td>
<td>236,835</td>
<td>254,851</td>
<td>18,016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donegal/Derry</td>
<td>129,994</td>
<td>137,383</td>
<td>7,389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sligo/Leitinn</td>
<td>87,458</td>
<td>90,549</td>
<td>3,091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayo Triangle</td>
<td>111,524</td>
<td>117,428</td>
<td>5,904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerry</td>
<td>126,130</td>
<td>132,424</td>
<td>6,294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Midlands</td>
<td>238,699</td>
<td>260,151</td>
<td>21,452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Border Areas</td>
<td>103,095</td>
<td>107,982</td>
<td>4,887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Midlands</td>
<td>172,052</td>
<td>183,199</td>
<td>11,147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>3,626,087</td>
<td>3,917,336</td>
<td>291,249</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Functional Areas as defined in the NSS Public Consultation Paper *Indications for the Way Ahead;* Data for 1996 taken from the NSS and for 2002 from *Census of Population, 2002.*

The strong growth of Dublin is a reflection of the region’s role both within Ireland and as a European capital city, and its position as a prime location for foreign Direct Investment during a period of unusually rapid economic growth. The share of population resident in all other eleven Functional Areas either remained almost constant or suffered small relative declines. There is evidence from the Census data that at least some of the growth of population in areas contiguous to the Dublin Functional Area has arisen as consequence of long-distance commuting to Dublin, as workers seek more affordable housing at ever increasing distances.
from their place of work in Dublin. Other factors, such as lifestyle choices, may also be at
work here.

Taking Tables 2 and 3 together, one of the important causes of concern has been the very
poor performance of the intermediate sized cities – Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford –
which together accounted for a small share of the total population growth between 1996 and
2000. In fact the collective share of total population in these four cities actually declined
marginally even during this period of national expansion, despite their designation as
these cities, Galway, a strong educational, tourism and shopping centre, is something of an
exception, with its share of the population of Connacht-Ulster increasing consistently from
25.0 percent in 1971 to 29.4 percent in 2002. None of these cities have achieved the critical
mass to challenge the dominance of Dublin nationally or even within their own regions in
many respects.

Table 3 further details the growth performance of the five Irish cities and the eleven largest
towns in the State between 1996 and 2002. This Table shows that the Dublin NUTS II region,
the core of the Dublin Functional Area and the Greater Dublin Area, increased by 6.1 percent
or by 64,557 persons.

Table 3: Large Urban Areas and Centres, 1996 – 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City/Town</th>
<th>1996</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>Population Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublin Region*</td>
<td>1,058,264</td>
<td>1,122,821</td>
<td>64,557</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cork + Suburbs</td>
<td>179,954</td>
<td>186,239</td>
<td>6,285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limerick + Suburbs</td>
<td>79,137</td>
<td>86,998</td>
<td>7,861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galway City</td>
<td>57,363</td>
<td>66,163</td>
<td>8,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterford</td>
<td>44,155</td>
<td>46,736</td>
<td>2,581</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dundalk</td>
<td>30,195</td>
<td>32,505</td>
<td>2,310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drogheda</td>
<td>25,282</td>
<td>31,020</td>
<td>5,738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bray</td>
<td>27,923</td>
<td>30,951</td>
<td>3,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ennis</td>
<td>17,726</td>
<td>22,051</td>
<td>4,325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tralee</td>
<td>19,950</td>
<td>21,987</td>
<td>2,037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilkenny</td>
<td>18,696</td>
<td>20,735</td>
<td>2,039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sligo</td>
<td>18,509</td>
<td>19,417</td>
<td>1,226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navan</td>
<td>12,810</td>
<td>19,417</td>
<td>6,607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlow</td>
<td>14,979</td>
<td>18,487</td>
<td>3,508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naas</td>
<td>14,074</td>
<td>18,288</td>
<td>4,214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wexford</td>
<td>15,862</td>
<td>17,235</td>
<td>1,373</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Dublin is defined as the NUTS III Dublin Region including the City and the counties of Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown, Fingal & South Dublin. Towns are inclusive of their suburbs.

While some of the other urban centres shown in Table 3 had higher growth rates than the Dublin region’s figure, the total increase in the other four cities together with the eleven towns of over 17,000 population in 2002 was 61,932 or just 95.9 per cent of the Dublin Region’s population increase. Significantly, five of these eleven towns are located within the Dublin Functional Area discussed above. Dublin continues to dominate the urban pattern of Ireland and to overwhelm the settlement structure of its region to a quite extraordinary degree, in terms of demography, employment and enterprise, (BSM et al., 1999).

While there is much that could be done to regulate the growth of Dublin, with possible benefit to its international role, policy makers equate growth with development and are reluctant to put any restraints on the growth of the city and its region (Bannon, 2000b). In many respects, the increasing dominance of Dublin during the 1990s mirrors the situation in some of the new Member States of the EU, where the capital cities attracted almost all overseas investment and growth to the detriment of smaller centres. Only now are these countries commencing the tasks of promoting regional institutions and regional development and putting in place policies to create a more balanced urban structure. As in Ireland, issues such as diseconomies of metropolitan growth or relative over-centralisation have not been adequately researched nor properly addressed.

While Dublin is a relatively small city by European or international standards, its dominance within the State lies at the heart of debates on settlement strategy and regional policy. Given the primate-style dominance of Dublin and its region, there is little attention given to the themes of the European Spatial Development Perspective, such as inter-urban, urban-rural or rural-urban co-operation or collaboration. While Dublin has been successfully promoted as a location for foreign investment, there has been attention given to the necessity to invest in the development of the critical mass of counter magnets, notably the other Gateways set out in the NDP, 2000-2006.

The Administrative Context for Urban Policy:
Reference has been made to the centralised nature of Irish administration, one of the reasons for the dominance and sustained growth of the capital city region. Commercial, financial, political and administrative power is vested in a large number of Dublin located or Dublin controlled institutions.

The principal tier of administration in Ireland is that of the national government, which is the locus of policy development and financial control. The fifteen departments of Central Government administer funds in accordance with their respective responsibilities. The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, (henceforth DOEHLG), has overall responsibility for environmental and spatial planning matters, excluding transport. A number of sections within the DOEHLG deal with aspects of urban policy – urban renewal,
planning and the National Spatial Strategy – but there is no over-arching urban policy unit or focus within the Department. Likewise, there is no Minister with exclusive responsibility for urban policy. The central tier of government is supported by a large number of uni-functional State Boards and Regulatory Authorities whose remit is usually State-wide, transcending both urban and rural boundaries.

A total of eight statutory Regional Authorities perform a co-ordinating role in respect of their constituent local authorities. They also advise on and have a role in monitoring EU funding within their regions and they have also been given a role in the implementation of the National Spatial Strategy at regional level through their Regional Planning Guidelines, now in draft form. Since 2000 these eight regions (NUTS III) have been complemented by the division of the State into two NUTS II Regional Assembly Areas - a Border, Midland and Western region which retains Objective I status under EU regulations and a Southern and Eastern region which has the status of Objective I in Transition. The major function of the Regional Assemblies is to oversee the implementation of the Regional Operational Programmes of the National Development Plan, 2000-2006 (henceforth: NDP). The Dublin Functional Area dominated one NUTS II region and impinges on the other. A separate NUTS II region for Dublin would give a great deal more meaning to the other two regions.

The principal unit of local government is the 34 County and City Councils – the main-line local authorities. The County and City Councils generally operate through a number of broad functional headings, including housing and building, roads, water supply and sewerage, development incentives and controls, environmental protection and recreation and amenities. The White Paper on Better Local Government (DOE, 1996) has begun a process of reforming the local government system with the establishment of ‘strategic policy committees’ and the creation of a network of County and City Development Boards. While County and City councils remain heavily dependent on central government for much of their funding, there is now an accelerating trend towards having local authorities charge for services and a new system of development levies is likely to generate significant local funds. Below the County and City councils, there exists a network of urban district and town councils whose operations now generally nest within the 34 main-line local authorities. Dublin City Council, the largest local authority, frequently is sometimes aggrieved that it has to operate and run the capital city within the same framework and with the same powers as the smaller councils. Given that central government is based within Dublin, there is sometimes a desire by Ministers to involve themselves in the affairs of the city. The Irish local government system is based on a series of historical divisions of the territory, many of which transcend modern urban or regional realities.

As has been stated above, Ireland is characterised by its very high level of centralised administrative control, with limited institutional development at the regional level, and an
extensive network of local authorities which have a limited range of functions, lack adequate local resources and are strictly controlled by central government, (Bannon and Greer, 1998; Callanan and Keogan, 2003). Sub-national units of government are strictly controlled and closely monitored by the relevant central government or agency.

During the mid 1990’s there was evidence pointing to the emergence of a period of strong economic growth, (Bannon and Greer, 1998). These early shoots of growth flowered into a phase of unprecedented expansion, commonly referred to as the *Celtic Tiger* phenomenon. The scale of growth was such as to create a discontinuity with much of Ireland’s previous experience. A change of government in mid 1997 led to changes in political ideologies and to different economic and social priorities. While many of the initiatives operating in 1997 have continued, emphasis may often have changed, while implementation procedures and delivery mechanisms may have been refocused. Economic development has been substantially driven by foreign direct investment, with a relatively weak performance by the indigenous sector, despite efforts to promote local development, including those set out in the *Better Local Government* White Paper (DOE, 1996).

Policy developments relating to urbanisation during most of the 1990’s were strongly influenced by the EU funded *Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development, 1994-1999*, implemented in tandem with a range of other EU programmes and initiatives, (Bannon and Greer, 1998). In contrast, the *Irish National Development Plan, 2000-2006* relies heavily on national resources to fund its proposed €51.5 Billion development programme. Under the *Community Support Framework, 2000-2006*, the contribution from ‘Community Participation’ has been set at €3,172 million, with a further € 567 million earmarked for Ireland from the Cohesion Fund between 2000 and 2004. Domestic policy has an increasing reliant on its own resources, with an emphasis on privatisation and market approaches to economic development and social provision. These include the adoption of public-private partnership approaches for a wide range of major projects.

Strictly speaking, Ireland does not have an urban policy per se. Rather, in respect of the physical environment, the approach is essentially national, with the regional, urban and rural policy components being viewed as part of an integrated whole and each adopting an appropriate emphasis. Responsibility for environmental, planning and urban policy rests primarily with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government whose mission is to “promote sustainable development and improve the quality of life through protection of the environment and heritage, infrastructure provision, balanced regional development and good local government”. Other Departments of Government also play a role in relation to urban policy, notably the Departments of Finance, Transport, Enterprise, Trade and Employment and Arts, Sport and Tourism, together with their operational agencies. While planners and those involved in urban development activity might have wished for such a
strong coherent urban focus to have been continued and built upon in the *National Development Plan, 2000-2006*, the government chose to thread support for urban themes through a range of programmes operating from a number of government departments. At the same time, there have been many continuities of relevance to urban issues, most notably, the continuing work of the Dublin Transportation Office, the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Roads Authority.

Major statements relating to planning and having a relevance to urban policy include the White Paper on local government reform (DOE, 1996), the national strategy for sustainability (DOE, 1997), the *Planning and Development Act, 2000* and the National Spatial Strategy (DOELG, 2002). All these policy documents apply to the State as appropriate, while policy documents such as guidelines for retail planning (DOELG, 2000) or increasing densities (DOELG, 1999; DEGW, 2000) apply particularly to urban regions.

The single most important action programme relating to urban policy for much of the last ten years has been the focus on urban renewal. The initial emphasis was on EU and Exchequer funding of urban renewal projects, most notably the Urban and Village Renewal Sub-Programme of the OP LURD programme from 1994 up to 2000. Under the Sub-Programme, payments totalling €145 million had been made, including payments in respect of the Temple Bar Cultural Project. In the six years of operation that programme supported “major initiatives” in run down areas of the five cities, as well as improvements to the physical environment of 105 towns across the State. The Sub-programme, with the aid of funding from FEOGA, enabled improvements to be made to 684 villages to underpin their future and involved “general amenity improvements (and) the development of focal points/meeting places.” Some 157 conservation projects or phases of projects were assisted and the development of the Temple Bar Cultural Quarter was completed.

The enactment of the *Urban Renewal Act, 1986* and the associated Finance legislation to the establishment of the Customs House Docks Development Authority in Dublin and to the introduction of tax-based incentives to promote urban renewal in designated parts of the five cities, later extended “to cover over 100 designated areas in 35 urban centres,” (Bannon & Greer, 1988, p. 203). From a rather slow and somewhat confused start, the tax-led approach has become the leading component of urban renewal policy. In 1986 the Department of the Environment commissioned a major review of the operation of the urban renewal process. That review recommended that for the future the designation of areas for renewal should be undertaken with the context of carefully prepared Integrated Area Plans which would provide the framework for the renewal process, (KPMG et. al., 1986). Such Integrated Areas Plans should reflect the specific needs of areas, be cross-sectoral in approach integrating the developing of “a diverse range of sectors and groups”, involve local communities and set measurable targets upon which to base monitoring and evaluation, (KPMG, 1986, p.141. The
concept of IAPs embraced the physical, economic and social aspects of renewal within an integrated framework.

The tax-led approach was strengthened by the introduction of the *Urban Renewal Act, 1998* and the *Town Renewal Act, 2000*. For the most part, urban renewal investment has been in residential developments, affecting a wide range of urban places throughout the State. The largest urban renewal undertaking in the State is the rejuvenation of the 526 ha. area of the designated Dublin Docklands. This project includes the former Custom House Docks Development site and is being carried out by the Dublin Docklands Development Authority. Section 4 of this report will examine the urban renewal programme in some detail and it will also outline details of a number of other complementary renewal activities.

The various urban regeneration programmes have transformed the image of Irish cities and towns. Tax-led incentives have resulted in a huge inflow of investment into all significant urban centres. However there are limitations to tax-led programmes which on their own lead to property rather than societal or community renewal. There are also questions as to the desirable or practical balance to achieve between redevelopment and refurbishment or conservation. While there was a substantative review of the urban renewal programme in 1996, (KPMG, 1996), no formal reassessment of the programme has been undertaken since that date, despite its expanding influence and importance. Of equal concern is the absence of an overarching urban policy within which the role of tax-led urban renewal could be contextualised and evaluated.

**The State of the Cities:**

The very rapid economic growth experienced by Ireland, and especially in its cities, has meant that cities have become prosperous and have been in a position to fulfil long-standing development objectives. At a time of prosperity, the availability and expansion of tax-based urban renewal incentives has led to a quite massive property boom in the cities and in most significant towns. This has been especially true in Dublin where the new development has served to rid the city of its sizeable legacy of obsolescent buildings and derelict sites. Both cities and towns have witnessed the emergence of a buoyant market in apartment construction, a demand fuelled by the growth of new households, particularly one and two person households, in what has become an increasingly secular society. The economic prosperity has also driven a demand for rapid growth in both the office and industrial property markets, notably in and around Dublin. While growth has been widespread across the urban system, Dublin has been the principal beneficiary of the ‘Celtic Tiger’ growth. Dublin has developed and is promoted as the Irish location where “the global economy comes down to earth.”

The cities, most especially Dublin, find themselves in a somewhat invidious position. On the one hand, in the absence of a strong local financial base, they have been heavily dependent on a grant from central government to cover much of the expenditure. They are part of the national network of local authorities even though their role and importance may greatly differ from that of the average local authority. At the same time, the must play an international role for which they have much less autonomy than most of their counterparts across the EU.

In Dublin and other cities, the scale of rapid growth and its consequences had been largely unforeseen. Decades of economic stagnation had resulted in a lack of adequate investment in infrastructure and the failure to proceed with many worthy and essential projects. The arrival of a largely unexpected economic boom was to give rise to critical capacity problems, particularly in the case of Dublin and most notably in the fields of housing supply, road capacity and the inadequacy of public transport infrastructures (see DRA, 2004). Rising house prices have forced people to locate farther and farther away from city centres, thereby compounding the transportation challenge. As will be seen below, many significant infrastructure projects are now coming on stream, but the supply-led approach to housing policy together with an unregulated land market continues to give rise to problems, especially for first-time buyers.

A tax driven and property led renewal programme can be expected to generate ‘place prosperity’ rather than ‘people prosperity.’ There is also a good deal of evidence that some renewal initiatives have led to social displacement and to community fragmentation. In relation to property-led renewal, Punch argues that this kind of renewal “tends to encourage speculative activity, producing a high proportion of large-scale buildings for high-grade uses. Although this may well engender rapid physical development and prove lucrative for well-placed landowners and developers, the outcome for poorer inner city communities and the local infrastructure of small businesses, services, facilities and amenities that sustain them may not be so favourable” (Punch, 2001, p.49).

There is also a view that the expected “community gain” from the Integrated Area Plan procedure for the urban renewal schemes, as discussed above, has not materialised locally nor has it impacted on the people most directly affected by the new developments, as had been anticipated. Communities complain that projects are sometimes over-scaled and that community involvement in the implementation processes has been very limited. All too often, new development and redevelopment tends to take place at the expense of the heritage and the traditional urban character. There is increasing evidence of concern the entrepreneurial approach to urban renewal is in conflict with the needs of communities and the weaker sections of urban society......“the potential of the entrepreneurial approach to enable planners to implement the social dimensions of planning schemes is compromised by a pro-
development local authority corporate vision at the managerial level” (McGuirk and MacLaran, 2001).

Significant pockets of relative poverty are to be found within the cities and in many of the towns across the country. While good work has been underway in refurbishing some of the public housing stock, especially older blocks of flats, much remains to be done especially in regard to older local authority estates. All the cities are experiencing serious problems with drug related crime and abuse, problems compounded by the financial restraints on social programmes.

While much of the urban renewal work is to be commended in itself, it is not adequately addressing the social problems within the cities. Problems of homelessness are increasing and, while the nature of homelessness has changed over the time, the numbers on the housing waiting lists have been increasing steadily (Threshold, 2002).

In 2001 the government established a programme aimed at revitalising areas by planning, investment and development- RAPID. The RAPID programme has been designed to bring about “better coordination and closer integration in the delivery of services” in some forty-five city and town areas of disadvantage. Community based Area Implementation Teams were established and plans have been drawn up and submitted to address the needs of each of the areas. The costs and the implementation of these plans were to be borne by the various government departments and agencies and front-loaded under the National Development Plan. In the absence of an over-all evaluation of the programme, it is difficult to say what has been achieved or how actions under the programme have related to the various local plans.

In the case of the Traveller Community, Ireland’s most visible minority, only twenty-two percent of the estimated housing need has been met and in the case of the four Dublin local authorities only 194 units have been provided out of an estimated need for 1,057 residential units.

Recent National Urban Policy Initiatives:

The period since 1997 has been an exciting one in terms of policy developments relating to national, regional and local development, planning and the environment. The drivers of these policy advances included the needs arising from the rapid growth of the economy, the culmination of initiatives commenced earlier and the impact of EU directives and influences, notably the report of the Potsdam 1999 meeting of the European Spatial Development Perspective. As was stated in Section 1 above, while most policy changes are national in scope, their impact is greatest in respect of cities and towns since this is where most people live; these are the locale for almost all major developments and it is in and around cities and towns that problems of land use change and competition are most intense and complex.
This section of the Working Paper examines in some depth at four categories of policy advances of relevance to contemporary urban conditions. These include new and comprehensive planning and development legislation, an extensive array of urban renewal activity and supports, the formulation of a national spatial strategy and a range of urban infrastructural projects now coming on stream. Each of these four elements is dealt with below.

**The Planning and Development Act, 2000:**

*The Planning and Development Act, 2000* can be seen as an updating of the original 1963 act and a consolidation of that and subsequent legislation relating to planning. But the act is also a major deepening and strengthening of the role and potential of the planning system for Irish society. There is a strong emphasis on the principles of sustainable development and best practice in relation to the wide canvas of planning as adopted in the act. Some of the many changes introduced through this act include statutory provisions for the making and implementation of *Ministerial Guidelines and Directives, Regional Planning Guidelines and Local Area Plans*, for all types of areas be they urban or rural areas or rur-urban localities. Part IV of the act deals extensively with the protection and enhancement of the architectural heritage, including the making of *Architectural Conservation Areas and Areas of Special Planning Control*. In conjunction with the recently published *National Spatial Strategy, 2002-2020*, the act lays the frame work for a hierarchy of plans from local to national and affecting all parts of the State.

Perhaps the most significant innovation within the legislation is contained in Part V of the act dealing with *Housing Supply*. Under this section local authorities have been required to prepare, implement and review housing strategies to meet the housing needs of their administrative areas. In turn, the housing strategy becomes an integral part of the development plan, where provision has to be provided for the implementation of the housing requirements. It may be that the requirement to properly calculate the housing need of an area will in turn bring an intellectual rigour to many of the development plans.

In an effort to counter social segregation and the development of large one-class housing estates, Section 96 of the act made provision for a percentage of the lands in housing and mixed use developments to be made available for “social and affordable” housing. In many of the *Housing Strategies* this allocation was set at, or near, twenty percent of the site area, the maximum allowable. This provision has been relaxed in the *Planning and Development Act, 2002*, whereby a local authority Manager may agree to accept a cash payment, based on the existing use value of the site, or a land transfer off-site in the same jurisdiction in lieu of the social and affordable requirement in specific sites or cases. While the 2002 act requires that a number of factors should be taken into account, including the need to counteract undue segregation, the net effect of the amending legislation may be to reduce the level of social
integration envisaged in Part V of the 2000 act, (Grist, 2003). Significantly, Dublin city council, which has exhausted its housing land supply, is insisting on the Part V mechanism to meet the requirements of its Housing Strategy. Implementation of Part V of the act, together with improved supports for voluntary housing societies and associations, should improve conditions for the homeless and the very poor in society.

Other provisions of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 deal with enforcement, planning and other appeals, environmental impact assessment, the acquisition of land, amenities and compensation issues. The act also makes provision for Strategic Development Zones, which can be used to facilitate commercial and industrial development or to provide for major residential development, notably at Adamstown in west Dublin. Overall, the act has modernised the Irish planning system and, together with the related Statutory Instruments and Regulations, it facilitates higher standards of development and it expands the social purpose of planning for urban areas.

**Urban Regeneration Initiatives:**
Provisions under the Urban Renewal Acts, 1986 and 1998 and the Town Renewal Act, 2000, together with the related financial legislation, permit the granting of tax incentives to promote urban and town renewal in specific approved circumstances. In some cases these incentives operated in parallel with EU and Exchequer grant assistance in centre city renewal programmes, but since the late 1990’s, tax based renewal schemes have become operational in the cities and in many towns throughout the State. As stated above, a review of the workings of the urban renewal schemes was undertaken in 1996. This review recommended that areas to be designated for future renewal should be based on Integrated Area Plans, (KPMG, 1996). Integrated Area Plans have been prepared to identify those areas within cities and towns in need of urban regeneration and to define the physical, economic and social needs of these areas within their wider urban context.

In February 1999, the Minister responsible for Urban Renewal announced that areas within the five cities and 38 large towns had been approved for inclusion under the 1999 Urban Renewal Scheme. Approvals were in the context of their Integrated Area Plans and developments had to conform to the Departmental Guidelines, with owner-occupiers and investors eligible to avail of significant tax allowances. Incentives apply to both residential and commercial developments within approved renewal schemes.

A broadly similar Town Renewal Scheme was introduced in July 2000, under which a further one hundred towns became eligible for tax-led incentives on the basis of their approved Town Renewal Plans. A third scheme of tax-based urban renewal incentives was introduced in April 2001. The Living Over the Shop Scheme designated 13,000 metres of streets in parts of the
five cities where tax incentives could be availed of in an effort to stimulate renewal and an intensification of use. In the case of residential developments, the scheme allowed owner-occupiers and investors or lessors to claim 100 percent of the eligible refurbishment or necessary new-build costs against tax on total income. The Living Over the Shop scheme also allowed some additional incentives for “associated commercial development”. Civic authorities, especially in the major cities, have played a crucial role in the implementation of renewal schemes and the opportunities to develop important civic improvements, as at Smithfield in Dublin, Patrick Street in Cork and the riverside treatment in Limerick.

It is projected that the three tax-based renewal schemes, which are to run until the end of June 2006, subject to certain conditions, could generate a total investment of the order of €4.0 billion during their lifetime, see Table 4.

Table 4: Level of Investment in Urban Renewal Schemes by Stage of Development, €millions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Scheme</th>
<th>Completed</th>
<th>Work in Progress</th>
<th>Planning Stage</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban Renewal</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>1,611</td>
<td>2,804</td>
<td>4,896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town renewal</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Over the Shop</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>1,718</td>
<td>3,170</td>
<td>5,439</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data as of 31-12-03 for the Urban and Town Renewal Schemes and 30-06-03 for the LOTS scheme. Information supplied by the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government.

By the end of December 2003 the level of investment in projects completed or in progress was €2,269 million. The three components of the scheme involve a total of 1,734 projects, of which 489 (28.2 percent) have been completed and a further 415 (23.9 percent) were under construction. While both the Urban and the Town renewal schemes have attracted large scale investment, take-up under the Living Over the Shop initiative has been disappointing, due to a large number of complex issues, including patterns of ownership rights, problems with obtaining clear title, security, building regulation requirements and lack of an adequate level of income to avail of tax benefits.

In Bannon and Greer (1998) it was stated that “it is the Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development 1994-1999 which has had the greatest impact on the development, and in some cases the redevelopment, of the larger urban centres.” Expenditure on urban and village renewal projects under this programme amounted to some €146.7 million. Drawing on this success, subsequent policy initiatives have focussed strongly on urban regeneration and renewal initiatives. In general, these initiatives are now diffused across a wide range of programmes and the emphasis has shifted strongly away from grant supports in favour of tax-based incentives. The remainder of this section outlines the principal
urban renewal schemes now in operation, as well as reference to a number of other initiatives where assistance to urban or village renewal may be considered in special circumstances.

As part of the two Regional Operational Programmes under the National Development Plan 2000-2006, an Urban and Village Measure was included as part of the Local Infrastructure Sub-Programmes. This Measure is administered by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and implemented by the local authorities in each region. As part of the implementation procedures, the local authorities were required, with the involvement of local communities, to draw up framework action plans to be implemented during the currency of the National Development Plan. It was envisaged that investment of the order of €158 million would be made under this Measure between 2000 and 2006, with the contribution from the ERDF being just in excess of €68 million. The programme is being implemented in both Regional Assembly regions by the local authorities in accordance with Guidelines issued by the Department of the Environment and Local Government (DOELG, 2001).

While the initiatives discussed above constitute the major urban regeneration approaches currently in operation, a number of other programmes contain measures which directly or indirectly assist urban and village renewal.

The EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland, 200-2004 contains a number of community and tourism related measures where town or village renewal schemes throughout the six Border counties may receive assistance as part of wider development objectives.

Under the URBAN Community Initiative, 2000-2006 the Dublin working–class suburb of Ballyfermot and including the older neighbourhood of Ballyfermot and the newer area of Cherry Orchard, is to receive an investment of €11.4 million aimed at the physical, economic and social improvement of the area and its facilities.

The Dublin Docklands Development Authority, which is responsible for the rejuvenation of some 526 ha. of the former docks area has a sophisticated mix of policies for the renewal of their area, including development incentives, infrastructure supports, conservation and social housing initiatives (Drudy, 1999; Bartley and Treadwell Shine, 2003). The scale of this mixed-use development on a ‘brown-field’ inner city site is unparalleled in the State, and the quality of the urban design is setting new standards.

The Department of Finance has in place a blanket Rural Renewal Scheme which provides tax-based incentives for approved residential and commercial development in the designated Upper Shannon area and inclusive of the towns and villages throughout the area.
Likewise, both the LEADER Community Initiative and the CLAR *Programme for Revitalising Rural Areas* allow for funding support for “village enhancement schemes” and “local authority housing estate enhancement schemes” as part of an overall improvement of rural environment and quality of life considerations.

A range of Community Development initiatives operated by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs can also transcend the rural/urban divide, while the RAPID programme which aims at “revitalising areas by planning, investment and development” has targeted twenty-five urban areas and twenty provincial towns where Area Implementation Teams have been put in place to draw up plans “to address the needs of the area.” While the inter departmental and inter agency coordinating groups have been established, and Dublin has set up a social inclusion task-force, it is difficult to assess the overall impact of RAPID in the absence of a formal evaluation. An examination of the “progress reports” of the various local RAPID groups suggests that progress towards implementation has been varied and the impact to date often limited. On 2\(^{nd}\) February 2004, the Minister responsible announced that “a dedicated fund of €4.5 million has been set aside for capital expenditure for the RAPID programme to support such small-scale projects,” (Dail Debates, 02-02-04). It is proposed that such investments will also be co-funded by the relevant national agency. Research by Coogan questions the extent of additional investment provided under the programme or the degree to which it has facilitated community participation or local ownership of the programme (Coogan, 2003).

Urban renewal has become a key component of many strands of Irish development policy. It had long been evident that virtually all cities and towns contained an important heritage of buildings and areas that were in urgent need of new investment. Such investment was also necessary if the towns were to modernise and to become attractive for enterprise investment and tourism development. Initiatives commenced under the *Urban Renewal Act, 1986* have increased momentum during the economic boom of the later half of the 1990’s, although concern arises as to the emphasis on new-build rather than renovation and rehabilitation, while tax-led initiatives do not readily lend themselves to dealing with issues such as social and community integration. It is a cause of concern that, with the exception of Cork city, the take up of the *Living Over the Shop Scheme* has been disappointing. From a planning perspective, there is concern that the various urban regeneration incentives do not place a higher emphasis on the conservation and that the widespread emphasis on ‘new build’ is radically altering the traditional character, the individuality of Irish towns and cities and their social and community mix.
The National Spatial Strategy, 2002-2020:

The European Spatial Development Perspective (EU, 1999) had called for Member States to produce ‘national spatial development reports’, and in Dublin, the ESRI in its early 1999 review of national investment priorities called for the implementation of a “nodal strategy which will have the best chance of promoting balanced and sustainable regional development” (Fitz Gerald, 1999). This call was further taken up in the Government’s National Development Plan, 2000-2006 in which it argued for the “promotion over the period of the Plan of a small number of additional regional Gateways (urban growth centres) to complement the existing Gateways and to drive development throughout both Regions” (Government of Ireland, 1999). The NDP also called for a “National Spatial Strategy is to be completed within two years.”

In November 1999 the government “mandated the Department of the Environment and Local Government, (henceforth: the DOELG), to prepare a National Spatial Strategy” having regard to the context set out in the National Development Plan, 2000-2006. A Spatial Planning Unit was established within the Department to undertake the work, assisted by a Technical Working Group and an Expert Advisory Group. Cross-departmental involvement was secured “through a Steering Group representative of the relevant government departments” and the use of a consultative process “across a wide spectrum involving the social partners, local and regional authorities and many different interest groups both North and South”. In addition, a team of consultants was appointed to assist with a total of approximately 30 research tasks and covering topics such as population, household formation and the Irish urban and rural systems (Spatial Planning Unit, 2000).

The National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020, (henceforth: the NSS), was released on 28th November 2002 (DEOLG, 2002). Having reviewed the key development trends within Ireland and their spatial consequences, the NSS report addressed the likely future trends under a number of alternative scenarios. Thus the population of the state could increase from 3,787,000 in 2000 to between 4,391,000 and 5,013,000 in 2020. On the basis of recent trends, “up to four-fifths of the population growth in the State could take place in or in areas adjoining the Greater Dublin Area over the next twenty years” (NSS, 2002). The number of cars on the Irish roads could double between 1996 and 2016. The number of households could increase from a 1996 baseline of 1.123 million to a 2020 estimate of 1.889 to 2.083 million. Such a level of household growth would represent an increase of between 68.2 and 85.5 percent over the period, with the share of the national housing stock located in the Greater Dublin Area increasing from 38.8 percent in 1996 up to 44.4 percent of total in 2020 were current trends to continue.

Having regard to the need for balanced regional development in the interests of economic efficiency, improved quality of life and to secure proper planning for settlement development,
the NSS proposed a major modification of current development trends. The aim of the strategy is to secure a better and more rational future spatial pattern based on the following five elements of spatial structure and their policy roles as set out in Table 5:

The Strategy designated a total of nine Gateways, including Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford which had been designated in the National Development Plan, 2000-2006; these are described in the Strategy as ‘existing Gateways’ while a further four new Gateways have been designated including Dundalk, Sligo, Letterkenny and the ‘linked Gateway of Athlone/Mullingar/Tullamore in the midlands. It is envisaged that the Dundalk and Letterkenny Gateways would have close co-operation with border towns within Northern Ireland, see Figure 2.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spatial Element</th>
<th>Future Roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A more efficient Greater Dublin Area.</td>
<td>The Greater Dublin Area’s vital national role is secured in terms of improved mobility, urban design quality, social mix, international and regional connections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Gateways in other Regions.</td>
<td>Balanced national growth and development are secured with the support of a small number of nationally significant centres, whose location and scale support the achievement of the type of critical mass necessary to sustain strong levels of job growth in the regions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hubs.</td>
<td>Balanced patterns of growth are supported by towns that link the capabilities of the gateways to other areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County and other town structure.</td>
<td>Balanced patterns of growth are supported by towns that capitalise on local and regional roles and are also linked to the roles of the gateways and development hubs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vibrant and diversified rural areas.</td>
<td>Rural areas benefit from enhanced employment options and from development of their local resource potential.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of eleven towns received designation as Hubs, most of these being located in the relatively underdeveloped areas of the country and designed to stimulate growth in these regions. While the NSS does not provide precise future populations for the ‘new Gateways’ or for the proposed Hubs, the given characteristics of gateways include populations of the order of 100,000, wide ranges of primary and secondary education as well as a third level facility, large clusters of modern industry, a regional hospital, theatres and a focal point for transport and communications etc. Hubs are described as having a population within the range of 20-40,000, a good mix of medium and larger businesses, a local and/or regional hospital, good amenities and an effective transportation system. Table 6 provides indicative figures of the scale of change envisaged in the NSS for the five ‘existing Gateways’ – a scale necessary if the current national patterns of population, housing and employment are to be significantly changed in the years ahead.

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3 See appendix 2
Table 6: Possible Population Growth of 'Existing Gateways', 000s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greater Dublin Area</td>
<td>1,535</td>
<td>1,938</td>
<td>2,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cork</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limerick</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galway</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterford</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,386</td>
<td>2,877</td>
<td>3,294</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data is for the Gateways and their surrounding catchment areas. See NSS page 49.

Such a scale of future growth and its redistribution could bring about a very different future geography of the country. In launching the strategy, the Taoiseach/Prime Minister stated that “the strategy marks a new stage in our maturity and development as a nation, as we plan for the future development of our country… The Strategy will act in three ways: It will bring a better spread of job opportunities… It will bring a better quality of life… It will bring better places to live in”.

As for the future of the NSS, much depends on the continued commitment to implementation and the effectiveness of the policies to deliver it over the period up to 2020. The implementation of the National Development Plan, 2000-2006 is considered as a first step in the development of the original Gateways, as is the implementation of land-use/transportation frameworks for Cork (Atkins, 2001), Limerick (Colin Buchanan and Partners, 2001) and the other cities. However, the growth performance of these cities between 1996 and 2002, as seen in Table 1 above, is hardly reassuring.

The NSS report places an emphasis on various forms of partnership and cooperation, both public and private. There is also an emphasis on central/regional/local coordination and collaboration. Regional planning Guidelines are being prepared for the regions, and revised in the case of the Greater Dublin Area to “translate the overall national approach of the NSS into policies at regional and local levels.” The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government places particular attention on the widespread adoption of the processes of the NSS.

According to the NSS report all “relevant public sector policies and programmes will have to be consistent with the NSS and will be required to demonstrate that consistency”. A Cabinet Sub-Committee on Housing, Infrastructure and Public Private Partnerships has been charged with monitoring the implementation of the strategy, while Government departments and agencies were “to put structures and mechanisms in place to support the NSS and ensure that it is embedded in their policies and programmes.” The DOEHLG stresses the importance
of the interdepartmental committee and the necessity of having all relevant agencies of Government committed to and actively supporting the strategy.

It had been anticipated that any future programme of government office relocation would be tailored to support the rapid development of the designated Gateways as key nodes in the regional development strategies. In the event a government announcement of December 2003 stated that over 10,000 public service jobs would be relocated to a total of fifty-three locations in twenty-five counties. Approximately fifty percent of these posts are scheduled to relocate to towns within the Greater Dublin area and the immediately adjacent counties, with few jobs earmarked for the Gateways apart from the ‘linked Gateway’ of Athlone-Mullingar-Tullamore in the Midlands region. While the government has stated that the proposed relocations are consistent with the NSS strategy, it remains unclear as to how this could be so. While the government appears determined to implement this ‘decentralisation’ initiative, there has been strong opposition to the proposed relocations, particularly from senior staff, on a range of efficiency, economic and social grounds. If this programme proves successful, it is likely to further enhance the dominance of Dublin and the east of the country as a business and enterprise location.

Since the publication of the National Spatial Strategy much of the media attention and commentary has focussed on the question of Gateways and Hubs – were too many nominated? Can they be delivered? What policies will be enacted to support these designations? In particular, will industrial location policies follow the strategy? What of service industry location policies? Can the designated Gateways achieve their growth targets and expanded role without the injection of public sector decentralisation? Will the essential hard strategic choices be made or will populism and localism win out? Regional Planning Guidelines have now been drafted for each of the eight Regional Authority areas inter-alia to give effect to the National Spatial Strategy at regional level, but to date few concrete or significant investment steps have been taken to give effect to the NSS designations.

**Major Urban Infrastructural Projects:**
Reference has been made to the problems generated by rapid growth in circumstances where the physical infrastructure was inadequate to service the increased demand. This was especially the case in relation to almost all facets of transportation infrastructure by the mid 1990’s. A number of major projects are now nearing completion which should alleviate many of the current difficulties in Dublin as well as in other cities, after years of discussion, financial and legal difficulties and political indecision and delays.

The construction of a forty-one km. C-ring motorway around Dublin is nearing completion. This motorway was recommended in the *Dublin Transportation Study* of 1972 and the first completed section was opened in 1991.
Following the completion of the *Dublin Transportation Initiative* and the publication of its final report in 1995, the Government established, the Dublin Transportation Office to coordinate transport policy for the Dublin city region and to produce a practicable set of recommendations for new transportation infrastructure and complementary measures to manage projected growth (DTO, 2001). The DTO is working to a vision of Dublin as “a civilised, vibrant city... a place where people live, work and relax and enjoy their leisure time... accessible to all...” In addition to its traffic management role, the DTO is responsible for the implementation of the Dublin light rail project, the LUAS, the introduction of bus lanes and Quality Bus Corridors (QBCs), cycle ways and pedestrian routes. The two LUAS light rail lines from the southern suburbs are due to be completed by mid 2004. To-date, some nine QBCs are in operation. The DTO strategy document *A Platform for Change* sets out the plans for bus, light rail, metro and traffic management between 2001 and 2016. Initially the DTO operated under the aegis of the Department of the Environment but now operates under the Ministry of Transport.

In an effort to remove heavy goods traffic from the streets of Dublin, a 5.6 km. Dublin Port Tunnel is under construction at an estimated cost of €685 million. The tunnel, which extends from the Dublin port to the M1 motorway and C-ring near to the airport, is due for completion in late 2004.

When fully in operation, these developments should facilitate easier movement within and around Dublin and they should contribute to an enhancement of the city and the quality of life of the citizens and visitors alike.

The 2001 *Cork Area Strategic Plan* (Atkins, 2001) proposes an investment programme of €2,015 billion in infrastructure development, the creation of an integrated transport system and environmental improvements for the development and expansion of the metropolitan area between 2001 and 2021. Broadly similar long-term strategies are being developed for the Limerick area (Colin Buchanan and Partners, 2001) and for other cities and major towns.

Another crucial infrastructural investment programme essential for quality of life and expansion has been large-scale modernisation of the wastewater treatment facilities provided in all the cities and major towns in recent years.

Many of the programmes discussed above were significantly assisted by various EU funding contributions. Whether many or all of these investments would have proceeded at all without EU support is debatable. What is without doubt is that they would not have been put in place in anything like the same time-frame.
The Impact of EU Policies:
There can be little doubt that the overwhelming majority of Irish people would regard the impact of EU Membership as being positive and beneficial in many respects. EU Membership, its policies, its influences and its supports have all assisted in Ireland’s modernisation and transformation over the thirty years since joining the EEC in 1973. However, there are relatively few or reliable quantifiable indicators to measure the full impact of EU Membership or the influence of many of its policies.

In the Irish case there is coordination between the National Development Plan and the Community Support Framework for Ireland. Thus, the CSF may be seen as an agreed subset of the wider programme of investment and development as set out in the National Development Plan. Both are implemented through Operational Programmes which deal with Economic and Social Infrastructure, the Productive Sector, Human Resources and Regional Development which transcend exclusively urban or rural or even regional concerns in many instances.

It can be argued that there are four means by which European policy impacts on Ireland, including the cities. The first way in which policy affects Ireland is through the transposition of EU Directives into Irish law, especially Directives dealing with issues of social policy, environment and health and safety. Of particular relevance to urban planning are the Directives on Environmental Impact Assessment, Habitats and Strategic Environmental Assessment. These EU Directives are not place specific; however they can have a very important impact in metropolitan and urban areas, since it is there that population and employment are concentrated and that environments may be both precious and under particular pressure. It is estimated by Clinch that a total of €18,256 million has been proposed under the National Development Plan, 2000-2006 to cover the costs of “some key environmental elements”, including many to meet the requirements of EU Directives.

A second strand of EU influence comes through direct action on the ground in Ireland. Examples relevant to this chapter include Urban Pilot projects notably in Cork city and the work of URBAN I Community Initiative which involved a €28 million contribution from the ERDF and ESF funds towards the improvement of two disadvantaged areas in Dublin and the north-side of Cork city. The Irish designated area for URBAN II, 2000-2006 is the Ballyfermot-Cherry Orchard area of Dublin, where a planned investment of €11.420 million is 50.0 percent co-funded through the ERDF. Even the EAGGF fund in 1994-1999 contributed just over €16 million to village renewal as part of the Structural Funds. Other Community Initiatives, such as LEADER, INTERREG and PEACE deal with a range of largely non urban issues, but can have a variety of urban and village applications.
Looking forward, the EU proposal to establish a *Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment*, with its emphasis on sustainable urban transport, design and construction and the creation of management systems for urban sustainability, may prove a catalyst to strengthen urban policy and to further improve urban conditions.

The EU *Structural Funds* are undoubtedly the most visible and the best-known form of EU policy influence throughout Ireland, including the cities and towns. Since Ireland constituted a single NUTS II, Objective I region up to the end of 1999, Dublin and the other cities could all benefit from co-financed investment. The *Community Support Framework, 1994-1999* approved a CSF investment programme of €14,576 million of which €5,620 was to be contributed from the Structural Funds, principally the ERDF. While the Irish *National Development Plan, 200-2006* has set out an investment programme of €51,536 million over the seven years of the programme, the *Community Support Programme, 200-2006* relates only to €7,002 million of the NDP with EU “transitional support” being set at €3,172 million and diminishing in the years up to 2006. One directly relevant component of the CSF 1994-1999 was the Local Urban and Rural Priority and the *Urban and Village Renewal Sub-Programme* which invested €146.7 million in a wide array of city, town and village projects.

Structural funding has contributed significantly to Ireland and it is estimated that the “cumulative effect of the CSF is to rise GNP by between 2.5 and 3% by 1998-1999 (Fitz Gerald, 1998). The structural funds have enabled rapid progress to be made in respect of urban transport and infrastructures, as well as assisting in the skilling and re-skilling of the labour force and enabling the unemployed to avail of the opportunities offered by the boom of the late 1990s. In addition, State Aid payments to industry made between 1995 and 2002 amounted to €2,444 million, of which a total of €1,137 million, or 46.5 percent, was invested in the Greater Dublin Area.

Another important source of productive funding for Ireland has been the *Cohesion Fund* which between 1993 and 2002 contributed €1,997 million towards the costs of various infrastructural projects. These have included major wastewater treatment works for the cities of Dublin, Cork and Limerick, as well as port improvement works at Dublin, Cork and Waterford. The Cohesion Fund has also been used in the construction costs of the Dublin C-ring motorway and it has contributed to the funding of numerous urban by-passes throughout the country. The Cohesion Funding expires in 2004 with a scheduled expenditure of €263 million for the years 2003-2004. Without this scale of capital expenditure many of these important infrastructural projects would not have been possible.

Finally, the impact of the EU and its policies on Ireland and on its urban residents is positively influenced by a vast array of networks, information flows, exchanges and research funding initiatives.
Conclusion:
This Working Paper has examined the processes of urban change in Ireland since the mid-1990’s, a period of rapid growth and unprecedented social and economic change. This growth has fuelled the continued expansion of Dublin and the increasing dominance of Dublin in terms of population, economic activity and the urban system. Even those Gateways outside Dublin, and designated in the National Development Plan, 2000-2006, have performed modestly at best.

Developments relevant to urban policy include the enactment of a comprehensive and up-to-date Planning and Development Act, 2000 which makes provision for a hierarchy of planning structures and which attempts to develop the economic and social roles of planning. The principal component of urban policy operating in recent years has been the various urban renewal programmes, including the urban and village renewal supports provided through the regional Operational Programmes of the NDP and a wide array of tax-led renewal incentives, principally the urban and town renewal schemes operated by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and which may generate an investment of around €4 billion during their life time. But there is evidence of a policy polarisation, particularly in the case of Dublin, between the entrepreneurial approaches to renewal and more community and locally based collaborative models of urban regeneration. City programmes and plans include a large number of strategic infrastructure projects, which will do much to facilitate intra urban movement and improve the quality of life. The EU has played a significant and multi-faceted role in these and many other strategic policies, which have helped to develop and to modernise the country.

Strictly speaking, Ireland does not have an urban policy per se at present; rather, urban policy is threaded through a wide range of national programmes and implemented by a confusion of routes and agencies. For the future, Ireland needs a much more explicit and coherent overarching and proactive urban policy. Such an urban policy should give priority to better defining the roles of different levels of urban places and to ensure that these roles are supported and enhanced with efficiency and effectively. The role of cities outside Dublin, as well as other designated Gateways, must be discussed and implemented with regard to issues of critical mass and the generation of both urban and agglomeration economies. Urban policy needs to come to terms with the thorny issues of urban land provision, the costs of such land and the recapture and social investment of the windfall profits from land transactions, inclusive of meeting the costs of servicing the land and the provision of infrastructure. An urban policy should provide the framework for the rational implementation, monitoring and evaluation of urban renewal, particularly after 2006.

An Irish urban policy should be based on the principles of the European Spatial Development Perspective, a programme to which Ireland has already signed up.
Within such a context, the focus should be on enlightened urbanism and the efficient use of space, including intensification where appropriate. Issues of importance in the physical domain include sustainable development, conservation, heritage protection, rehabilitation and urban containment. Sprawl and unplanned urban encroachment needs to be replaced by the development of inter-urban and urban-rural relationships and networking. But urban policy is not just physical; an enlightened urban policy must be inclusive, reflecting a set of values “with the benefits of growth being reinvested to help the economically disadvantaged” in terms of housing for the disadvantaged and the support of empowerment of individuals and communities.

But Irish policy makers must also see the economic role of cities in society as the centres of culture, innovation, education, research and the arts. Cities and towns are the bedrock upon which the Irish economy has been built. Good, enlightened planning of cities and towns is central to national competitiveness now and in the future.

The National Spatial Strategy, 2002-2020, is major initiative; the strategy provides a route map for the long-term development of Ireland, its cities, towns, villages and rural areas. Since the year 2000 rural policy has been coherently enunciated under the auspices of a number of government ministries. There is an urgent need for a clear well developed over-arching urban policy to deal with the physical, economic, social and environment problems of cities and major towns, where half of the population live and where the vast majority of people actually work. The challenge of implementing the National Spatial Strategy is just beginning; it calls for clear, well-researched thinking on urban policy within the framework of the NSS.

In a society where rural and small town values are cherished, rapid, large-scale urbanisation has been something of an unintended or even an undesired by-product of economic growth and modernisation. In such circumstances, large-scale urban and metropolitan growth has been viewed as an inevitability and it has taken place in the absence of any pro-active, coherent urban policy. This report has also shown that where there have been policy initiatives, as in the case of urban renewal, there has been limited attention either to evaluation or to review. There has been little or no debate or discussion as to the true role of cities in the development of the cultural, social, artistic, innovative or even the economic life of Ireland. In part, this lack of attention to urban issues arises from an absence of reliable, up to-date data on virtually all aspects of the urbanisation and urban development processes. Too much of Irish urban decision-making has been made in the absence of reliable, policy focussed research. Strong, proactive urban policy-making should be driven by evidence-based research. In turn, such research calls for vastly enhanced data provision and much greater analytical resource allocation. Enlightened urban policy making depends on good research; in turn, good research is dependent on adequate resource allocation and the provision of effective structures to ensure proper research utilisation.
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