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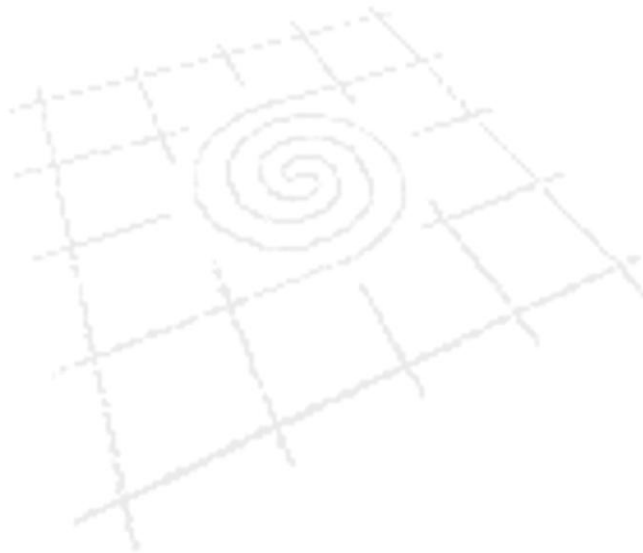
NUI MAYNOOTH  
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## Coordinating the Spatial Impacts of Sectoral Policies?

### Practices of and Potentials for Strategic Spatial Planning in the Dublin City-region

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# **Coordinating the Spatial Impacts of Sectoral Policies? Practices of and Potentials for Strategic Spatial Planning in the Dublin City-region**

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## **1. Introduction**

Strategic spatial planning is distinguished by a concern to provide a framework for the coordination of sectoral policies and in particular of the spatial impact of those policies. From this perspective planning policy and practice may be seen as a central element of cross-sectoral spatial governance within an increasingly complex and fragmented governance context. This paper presents an empirical case study of practices of policy coordination in spatial planning in the Dublin city-region over the period from the 1990s to the present. It identifies the policy coordination ambitions of and potentials of spatial strategies at regional and local scales of governance but also points to significant shortcomings and constraints on effective policy coordination in practice. The analysis in this paper draws on qualitative interviews conducted by the author in 2008 and 2009<sup>1</sup>.

## **2. Spatial Planning and Policy Coordination: A Review of the Literature Review**

A claim to provide a focus for the coordination of the spatial impacts of other sectoral policies is recognised as a defining feature of strategic spatial planning, differentiating it in particular from more traditional forms of planning practice focussed on land-use regulation and development control (CEC, 1997, Adams et al. 2006, Cullingworth and Nadin 2006). For some authors, the coordination of the activities of state, semi-state, private and civil society actors is considered to be a central objective of strategic spatial planning, not just a means to an end (Healey et al. 2002). The European Spatial Development Perspective places significant emphasis on the coordination of sectoral policies as an application of the ESDP itself. Under the framework of the more recent Territorial Agenda of the European Union, 'territorial policy integration' is identified as a key policy priority in EU policy-making, inviting comparisons with the long-established and legally recognised concept of 'environmental policy integration' (Schout & Jordan, 2007). It is argued that concerns for the spatial distribution of resources and opportunities, or for the character and identity of particular places may provide a basis for coordination across policy sectors (Healey et al. 2002, Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 2006, Walsh, J. 2009). Policy coordination focussed on conceptual issues of territorial equity and place quality may thus lead to an alignment of sectoral policies, strategic goals and long-term perspectives within a specific spatial context.

Harris and Hooper (2004) point to a pragmatic interest in coordination across policy sectors as one of the most significant drivers of a shift towards spatial strategy-making in Wales. Reviewing the spatial content of a range of existing public sector policy statements, they identify a significant role for a spatial planning strategy (in this case the Wales Spatial Plan) to coordinate and make explicit

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<sup>1</sup> See Walsh, C. Chapter 4 forthcoming for further details on the research design and methodology employed.

the spatial aspects of public policy, which may be underdeveloped or implicit in existing sectoral policies. They further identify a role for spatial strategies to highlight inconsistencies in the spatial implementation of sectoral policies, potentially leading to their resolution. Significantly, they argue that heightened spatial awareness of the effects of public policies 'necessarily demands that questions of distribution, differential policy impact and spatial equity are addressed' (2004, 165). From this perspective, spatial planning policy is directly associated with normative concerns for spatial justice and the articulation of policy objectives concerning the spatial distribution of resources and opportunities. Dabinett (2010) further notes that key concepts of spatial justice employed in European spatial policy hide significant contradictions in the values underpinning the policy debates and discourses through which they are produced. In this way, spatial planning policies may paradoxically serve to obfuscate rather than clarify the equity and justice implications of spatial and sectoral policies.

The normative policy objectives of the ESDP are framed in terms of an articulation of concepts of balanced and sustainable development that seek to balance overarching European policy objectives of economic competitiveness, social cohesion and environmental protection (Committee for Spatial Development, 1999, Albrechts et al. 2003). The more recent concept of territorial cohesion has been viewed as the spatial expression of a European model of society based on principles of social democracy and social justice (Faludi 2007). The discourse of territorial cohesion may, however, also be interpreted in terms of an articulation of the role of 'territorial diversity' and 'territorial assets' in economic competitiveness (CEC 2008, 3, Schout & Jordan 2007, Dabinett, 2010). A number of studies, however, have pointed to the potential of the concept of sustainable development to provide a discursive framework for policy coordination, even in cases where the concept is not specifically defined (Drummond and Marsden, 1999, Steurer, 2007, Walsh 2009). From this perspective, fluid concepts such as sustainable development or territorial cohesion may be viewed as 'framing devices' facilitating debate and providing a common language for discussion, through an identification of the need for coordination across social, economic and environmental policies (see also Hajer, 1995). Salet et al. (2003a, xiii) identify three distinct but interrelated dimensions of coordination in spatial planning practice:

- *Spatial*: to ensure consistency across the different levels and scales of policy-making and implementation;
- *Functional*: the linking of land-uses and activities and their complex interactions: e.g. housing, transport infrastructure, health and education facilities;
- *Sectoral*: between public, semi-state, private and voluntary sectors.

This interpretation of coordination usefully addresses both the process and substantive aspects of planning policy and practice. The capacity for spatial planning to provide a framework for coordination across public and private actors in a spatial development context remains a considerable challenge and is subject to significant academic debate. In the UK context initiatives promoting cross-sectoral coordination through strategic spatial planning are strongly identified with the emergence of new forms of governance (Vigar et al. 2000, Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 2006, Allmendinger and Haughton, 2007, Haughton et al. 2010). Here, the 'new spatial planning' is perceived to play an active role in the development of new forms of formal and informal

coordination across policy sectors. Counsell et al. (2006) however, found that departmental and organisational boundaries continue to present significant barriers to policy integration in the case of each of the devolved UK administrations. Interviews with national and local government officials indicated particularly poor levels of integration between social policy sectors, including education and skills, health, social exclusion and culture and spatial planning.

Priemus (1999) in an analysis of policy coordination in spatial planning policy in the Netherlands, notes that three 'sectoral' government departments in addition to the ministry with the official responsibility for preparing spatial plans, have produced spatial strategies outlining the spatial implications of their own sectoral policies and strategic visions. Rather than providing a basis for policy integration however, the four spatial strategies differ significantly in their substantive content, perhaps indicating an emergent *politics of scope* in the domain of spatial planning. He suggests, however, that the articulation of the spatial implications of sectoral policies at the national level by four government departments may represent an important step in developing policy dialogue and public debate on spatial planning in the Netherlands (Priemus, 1999, 584).

Kaufmann and Sager (2006) examine the coordination of local policies for urban development and public transportation across four Swiss cities and report strongly divergent trajectories. Whereas in Bern, transportation and land-use planning constitute one cohesive policy domain, coordination between transportation and urban development was more effective twenty-five years ago in Geneva and Lausanne than at present. In explanation, they point to differences in institutional and political structures as well as factors relating to the morphology of urban areas. They suggest that cities with a higher level of direct democratic participation may have less potential for integrated policy making at the metropolitan scale due to a dominance of local and neighbourhood scale quality of life issues.

In a review of the coordination of infrastructure delivery in the context of Local Development Frameworks in England, Baker and Hincks (2009) identify significant gaps between policy expectations and current practices. They identify the role of governance cultures in determining the potential for cross-sectoral policy coordination and point to the need for an ongoing process of 'culture change' among local planning authorities and delivery partners (see also Shaw and Lord, 2007). Tewdwr-Jones et al. (2006), however, point to a significant disconnect at the local scale in the UK between parallel processes of emergent spatial planning, local government modernisation and reform and the introduction of partnership-based community strategies, all of which seek to improve policy coordination and integration across sectors. Allmendinger and Haughton (2007) similarly contend that initiatives aimed at achieving cross-sectoral policy coordination or integration are not neutral policy devices but entail a particular redefinition of the boundaries, parameters and strategic scope of policy issues which may themselves be highly contested among a range of sectoral coalitions and institutional actors (2007, 1482). Reporting on a study of the 'Thames Gateway' project in the UK, they further suggest that strategic spatial planning may lead to increased opportunities for engagement and policy coordination in informal institutional contexts, characterised by 'soft spaces' and 'fuzzy boundaries' rather than the strongly hierarchical spaces and rigidly defined boundaries of the statutory planning system (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2009). Vigar (2009) further identifies the role of informal policy networks in the process of aligning public sector policy agendas in the post-devolution Scotland. Specifically he traces differences in the

capacity of spatial planning to act as a focus for policy integration in the Glasgow-Clyde Valley and Edinburgh-Lothian city-regions, to differences in institutional and governance cultures.

Concluding a comparative study of metropolitan governance and spatial planning in European city-regions, Salet et al. (2003b, 377) identify metropolitan coordination as a 'process of learning' rather than the product of formal territorial structures of government. They contend that solutions to problems of coordination and strategic spatial planning are found in new methods of 'organising connectivity', establishing connections between different spheres of action (ibid. 377). They further note, however, that formal institutional arrangements may serve to facilitate or constrain strategic policy and coordination initiatives. Significantly it is argued that informal strategies of coordination may supplement and reinforce formal structures of metropolitan governance.

The increased proliferation of alternative or informal modes of governance in theory and practice has, led to concerns regarding the democratic implications of new governance arrangements. The legitimisation of informal relationships between state actors and the business sector may lead to new forms of elitism and reduce the transparency and accountability of political decision-making (Elander & Blanc, 2000, Healey et al. 2002, Stoker, 1998). Some commentators, however, have also pointed to the potential for increased stakeholder participation and engagement through new forms of governance that emphasise deliberative and consensus-based modes of decision-making. A normative perspective focussed on the potential of new or alternatives forms of participative governance has served to inform the development of communicative planning theory and the promotion of collaborative planning in practice (Healey, 2006; Innes & Booher, 1999).

A fragmentation of governance tasks and activities across a wide range of public and private sector agencies is recognised as a characteristic feature of recent shifts in the practice of governance (Peters, 1996, Healey et al. 1997, Healey et al. 2002). Rhodes (1997) has conceptualised the implications of recent shifts in governance practice in terms of the emergence of a *differentiated polity*. The concept of a differentiated polity serves to challenge traditional perspectives on state-society relations, where the state is viewed as unitary actor. By contrast, in the context of a differentiated polity, governance occurs in multiple institutional arenas, differentiated from each other in terms of their strategies, discourses and practices.

Allmendinger & Haughton (2007) following Castells (1977) and Harvey (1990) similarly refer to the a *politics of scope* in spatial planning where the range of different sectors and interests involved in a territorial structure or policy network is contested in practice. In particular, they contend that government initiatives that seek to pursue more holistic or integrated approaches to strategy-making should not be seen as neutral policy devices, but involve 'often heated debates about the differing values and priorities of differing sectoral coalitions and indeed the different professional and lobby groupings which are involved as they struggle for legitimacy, influence and resources'. In an analysis of the politics of recent Labour Party government in the UK, Allmendinger & Tewdwr-Jones (2006, 4) point to differentiation in political emphases by policy sector and inherent and unresolved tensions over ideology and policy.

The concept of a differentiated polity, characterised by tensions and contestation among a multiplicity of institutional arenas of governance is particularly relevant in the context of the analysis of the emerging role of spatial planning strategies in territorial governance and policy integration at

a range of spatial scales. In this context, spatial planning strategies may perform a significant policy coordination function, with a focus on the spatial impact of sectoral policies and the diverse qualities of places and territories (Kidd, 2007, Schout & Jordan, 2007, Vigar, 2009, Davoudi & Strange, 2009).

### **3. Provisions for Policy Coordination in Spatial Planning Policy in Ireland**

The increased complexity of socio-economic and governance relations has led to a recognition of the need for coordination across policy sectors and between public agencies as well as between public, private and civil society stakeholders (DELG 1996, OECD 2008). Government strategies and policy statements are thus increasingly required to communicate policy concepts and ideas to wider audiences beyond traditional administrative boundaries and institutional domains. Within this context, statements of policy and governance strategy, including spatial planning strategies must be recognised as serving institutional capacity building functions, providing frameworks for engagement across a range of policy discourses and institutional arenas. The emergence of strategic spatial planning in Ireland may be placed within the context of a broader shift towards long-term, strategic and cross-sectoral policy-making from the 1990s to the present. A number of structural and institutional constraints have traditionally served to limit the capacity for strategic long-term policy-making and ‘policy-thinking’ in Ireland, including a focus on short-term political priorities and a fragmentation and specialisation of activities among sub-sections and agencies of individual departments (Boyle et al. 2002). A number of initiatives, developed in particular following the introduction of a Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) for the civil service in 1994 have explicitly sought to increase this strategic policy-making capacity (Boyle & Fleming, 2000). A key element of the SMI comprised the introduction of ‘Strategy Statements’ for all government departments, including the identification of strategic goals and long-term policy objectives and the management of cross-departmental issues and cross-functional linkages within departments (Boyle & Fleming, 2000, Taylor, 2005, 113). The preparation of National Development Plans, initiated as a response to EU requirements in relation to the provision of Structural Funds has perhaps more significantly, served to provide an integrated policy framework for strategic decision-making in relation to public investment (see O’ Leary, 2003, Walsh, 2007, 2009, Counsell & Lloyd, 2009).

The 2000 Planning and Development Act itself placed considerable emphasis on the integration of planning with other (sectoral) policies. Planning authorities are required to ascertain and have regard to other sectoral policies when carrying out their functions (Scannell, 2006, 38). In making Development Plans, planning authorities are obliged to consult with providers of energy, telecommunications, transport and other related infrastructure and of education, health, policing and other services. Planning authorities must take whatever measures it considers necessary to consult and obtain the long-term plans of providers of energy, telecommunications, transport and any other relevant infrastructure and of education, health and policing and other services for the area of the planning authority. These bodies must provide information (ibid. 2006, 46-47).

Ministerial guidelines on development plans (DoEHLG, 2007a) elaborate further on the linkages between development plans and relevant ‘plans, strategies and programmes at national, regional and local levels’. In addition to occupying a position within a ‘vertical’ hierarchy of spatial plans, development plans are to be ‘informed horizontally’ by a range of sectoral policies and strategies at

a variety of spatial scales (DoEHLG, 2007a, 11). Examples listed of relevant plans at the national scale include the National Development Plan 2007 – 2013, the national sustainable development strategy and the plans and programmes of government and semi-state bodies such as the National Roads Authority, CIE and Forfas. Relevant regional scale strategies include Waste Management Plans and River Basin and Water Quality Management Plans. The River Basin Management Plan for the Eastern River Basin District (ERBD) may become particularly relevant to spatial planning policy for the Greater Dublin Area and adjoining regions in future years, given its (proposed) strong spatial content and frame of reference. City and County Development Board Strategies are identified as of particular relevance at the local scale. Formal policy guidance on the procedural aspects of planning policy, including the preparation of Development Plans and the development management process, have been complemented by a series of guidelines outlining substantive aspects of spatial planning policy.

The concept of ‘sustainable neighbourhoods’ has been applied and developed in this context, providing a discursive policy framework for promoting the development of an integrated approach to spatial planning at the local scale (see Raco, 2005). This approach places significant emphasis on the conservation of energy and resources through a promotion of settlements that aim to minimise commuting distances and maximise the potential for more ‘sustainable’ modes of transport including public transport, cycling and walking. This approach to spatial planning, however, also emphasises the role of spatial planning strategies in providing a framework for coordination in relation to the planning and provision of social and community infrastructure and services in areas of new residential development.

The National Spatial Strategy explicitly places the concept of strategic spatial planning within a sustainable development policy framework. The specific implications of sustainable development for spatial planning policy and practice are outlined in terms of seven principles:

- Maximising access to and encouraging use of public transport, cycling and walking;
- Developing sustainable urban and rural settlement patterns and communities to reduce distance from employment, services and leisure facilities and to make better use of existing and future investments in public services, including public transport;
- Promoting cost-effective provision of public services like roads, drainage, waste management facilities, lighting, public amenities and schools;
- Contributing to the evolution of socially integrated communities in both urban and rural areas;
- Minimising the consumption of non-renewable resources like soils, groundwater and agricultural land;
- Avoiding adverse impacts on environmental features such as landscapes, habitats and protected species, river catchments, the maritime environment and the cultural heritage;
- Ensuring that construction design is of a high quality and appropriate to the scale and context of its surroundings.

*Source: Adapted from DoELG (2002, 13).*

Among other policy provisions, the NSS introduced an evaluation framework in relation to the location of new residential development in urban areas, with particular emphasis on the place quality and the infrastructure and amenity requirements of new development (DoELG 2002, 103). The NSS also outlined a hierarchy of access to social infrastructure, complementing the introduction of a settlement hierarchy of Gateways, Hubs, other towns, villages and rural settlements and indicating the range of social infrastructure that should be available at each level from the household to the city (2002, 113).

A report on housing policy and practice by the National Economic and Social Council subsequently endorsed the approach to planning for new residential communities outlined in the National Spatial Strategy and related policy statements and further identified the characteristics of a 'sustainable neighbourhood' including the provision of essential facilities within walking distance of new homes (NESC, 2004, see also DoEHLG, 2009). The concept of sustainable neighbourhoods and the integrated approach to spatial planning policy and practice became further embedded in national policy discourse with the publication of a statement on housing policy, entitled 'Delivering Homes: Sustaining Communities' (DoEHLG, 2007b), which is considered to provide an integrated approach to housing and planning policy (see DoEHLG 2009). A specific definition of sustainable neighbourhoods included in this statement of housing policy identifies the integrated provision of physical and social infrastructure as a key objective of a strategic, sustainable development driven approach to residential development:

Sustainable neighbourhoods are areas where an efficient use of land, high quality design, and effective integration in the provision of physical and social infrastructure combine to create places people want to live in (DoEHLG 2007b, 26).

Guidelines for planning authorities on 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas' provide the most comprehensive and explicit statement to date on the role of spatial planning policy and the planning process in the providing for 'sustainable neighbourhoods' (DoEHLG 2009). Planning objectives at the neighbourhood scale are classified under four themes:

- Provision of community facilities;
- Efficient use of resources;
- Amenity/quality of life issues;
- Conservation of the built and natural environment.

*Source: Adapted from DoEHLG (2009, 25).*

Planning authorities are specifically advised to provide for schools, community centres, retail development, childcare facilities and healthcare facilities in areas of new residential development, taking into account existing provision 'within the wider community'. Specific guidelines for planning authorities on the provision of childcare facilities and schools provide further direction and clarification on the role of planning policy in these particular areas.

Spatial planning policy statements introduced since the 1990s in Ireland and associated legislation have placed significant emphasis on the integration of planning with other sectoral policies. The scale and pace of spatial development in the Dublin city-region in the Celtic Tiger period has further



highlighted the need for spatial, functional and sectoral coordination in relation to the provision of infrastructure and services to serve the needs of new and existing communities, while presenting particular challenges in relation to the capacity of the planning system to effectively steer spatial development patterns. The narrow range of functions and limited financial and decision-making autonomy of Local and Regional Authorities in Ireland significantly restricts the potential for cross-sectoral policy coordination at local and regional scales.

Sections 4-6 below examine the capacity of the Regional Authorities and regional scale spatial strategies within the Greater Dublin Area to provide a framework for coordination in relation to land-use planning, economic development, infrastructure provision and environmental management. Section 7 subsequently focuses on the coordination capacity of City/County Development Plans (CDPs) and examines the extent to which recent developments in spatial planning practice point to an emerging policy coordination role for CDPs. Section 8 examines a number of regional-scale sector-specific policy coordination initiatives, operating outside of formal regional governance structures and identifies a potential for regional-scale spatial planning strategies in terms of cross-sectoral policy coordination.

#### **4. Regional Reports – Identifying a Potential role for Regional Authorities?**

The legislation establishing Regional Authorities<sup>2</sup>, which came into effect in 1994, identified a specific role for the Regional Authorities in relation to the coordination of public service provision. The Regional Authorities were required to ‘keep under review the provision of public services in or relating to or affecting the region’ with a view to identifying possibilities for improvement in the coordination of service provision (DRA, 1996, 26). Reflecting this policy coordination remit, the operational committee of each Regional Authority includes senior representatives from a wide range of public sector bodies with direct and indirect roles in service provision. The Managers of each constituent Local Authority are also included in the membership of the operational committees, indicating the intended strategic governance function of the Regional Authorities in relation to the functions of Local Authorities. The Regional Reports produced by each Regional Authority in 1996 set out the potential policy coordination role of the regional structures specifically in relation to the provision of public services by Local Authorities and other public sector agencies. The Dublin Regional Report, in particular, identified itself as an ‘important first step’ in an on-going process of review of public service provision within the Dublin Region (DRA, 1996, 26).

The Dublin and Mid-East Regional Reports, however, both identified a lack of standardisation or consistency of regional boundaries among public service providers as a very significant obstacle to effective coordination (DRA, 1996; MERA, 1996). A study undertaken by the DRA in 1995, made specific recommendations regarding the alignment of the geographical structures of state and semi-state agencies to the boundaries of the Regional Authorities (DRA, 1995). Significantly the study noted that central government intervention would be required in order to address this issue. The DRA itself did not have sufficient authority to require the public sector agencies to adapt their geographical structures. It was also noted that the time horizons adopted by the strategic plans of

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<sup>2</sup> Local Government Act, 1991 (Regional Authority) (Establishment) Order, 1993

different agencies often differed, constraining opportunities for synchronisation. This observation suggests a view of strategic planning as a discontinuous process, where plans are made at regular intervals, rather than a continuous process of review and evaluation where the potential for synchronisation would be increased. The operation of public sector agencies according to specific statutory duties, objectives and priorities was identified as a further barrier to coordination in the Dublin Regional Report. More significantly, however, the Regional Report found that the increasingly competitive environment within which public sector agencies operate, leads to distrust among public sector agencies and a situation where the corporate plans of individual agencies are closely guarded rather than transparent and accountable. Competition for central government funding, potential duplication of responsibilities and service provision roles and a shift towards an increasingly market-oriented model of public service provision may be identified as key drivers leading to the perception of an increasingly competitive operational environment for public sector agencies (OECD 2008). In the period since the production of the initial Regional Reports a number of the public sector agencies involved have become public or private limited companies. The privatisation and liberalisation of the telecommunications sector, in particular, has significantly reduced the potential for state-directed policy and operational coordination initiatives in this sector.

The lack of a formal regional policy framework was identified as a significant obstacle to coordination by the DRA. It was argued that such a formal strategy would facilitate knowledge exchange and lead to a shift in focus towards long-term priorities and objectives (DRA, 1996, 35). The Dublin Regional Report, further, identified a role for the DRA at both strategic and operational levels. At a strategic level, the report outlined potential for the development of an integrated regional perspective, responding to regional needs and requirements. At an operational level, a role for the Regional Authority was envisaged in terms of facilitating agreement on practicalities including staff and resource allocation and engagement in collaborative ventures involving synergies between agencies. Significantly the Regional Report noted a 'general reluctance to co-ordinate' and indicated that the DRA would seek to encourage participation in 'modest, low risk collaborative ventures' with the objective of developing relations of trust and the institutional capacity required to support further opportunities for coordination (DRA, 1996, 43). The Mid-East Regional Report identified a potential 'brokerage' role for the Mid-East Regional Authority, involving a concerted effort by the authority to influence the direction of strategies adopted by agencies in the Mid-East Region'. The Report further notes, however, that even this modest role is constrained by a lack of resources and the non-conformity of regional boundaries (MERA, 1996, 152). It is evident from the language of the Regional Reports that the capacity of the Regional Authorities to act as a focus for policy coordination or direction in relation to the provision of public services is significantly constrained due to a lack of formal powers to ensure compliance with policy initiatives and strategies.

The policy coordination role envisaged for Regional Authorities may be interpreted in terms of a shift from a traditional hierarchical mode of governance to an alternative model characterised by multi-level network governance (Figures 1 and 2). Figure 1 illustrates a traditional-hierarchical model characterised by strong hierarchical links between the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) and Local Authorities and predominantly weak hierarchical links between other central government departments, Local Authorities and public sector agencies. The

traditional-hierarchical model is also defined by an absence of effective links between government departments at the national scale and among neighbouring Local Authorities at the local scale.

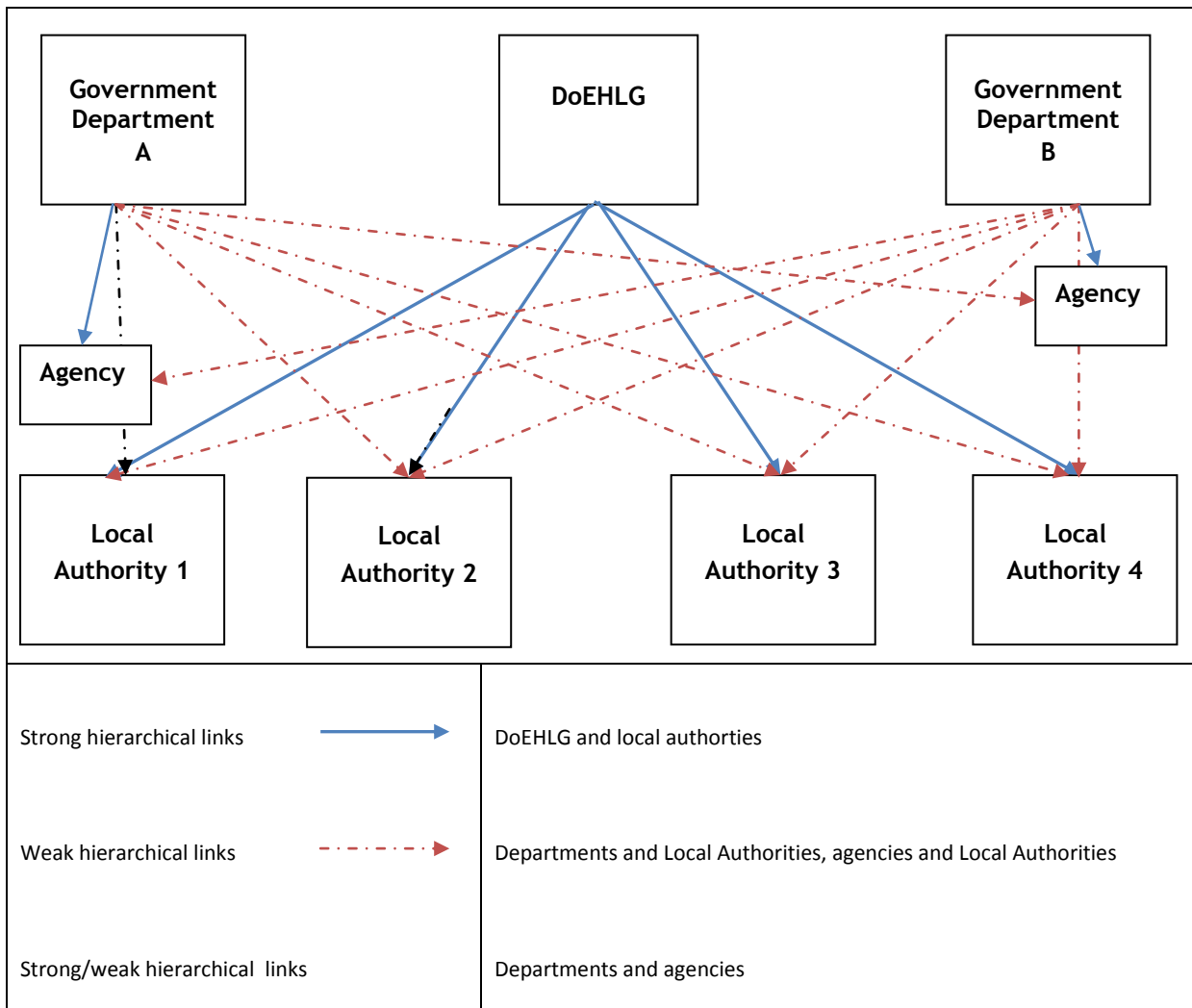


Figure 1: Schematic Diagram of Governance Relations: Traditional-Hierarchical Structures

Source: analysis by the author.

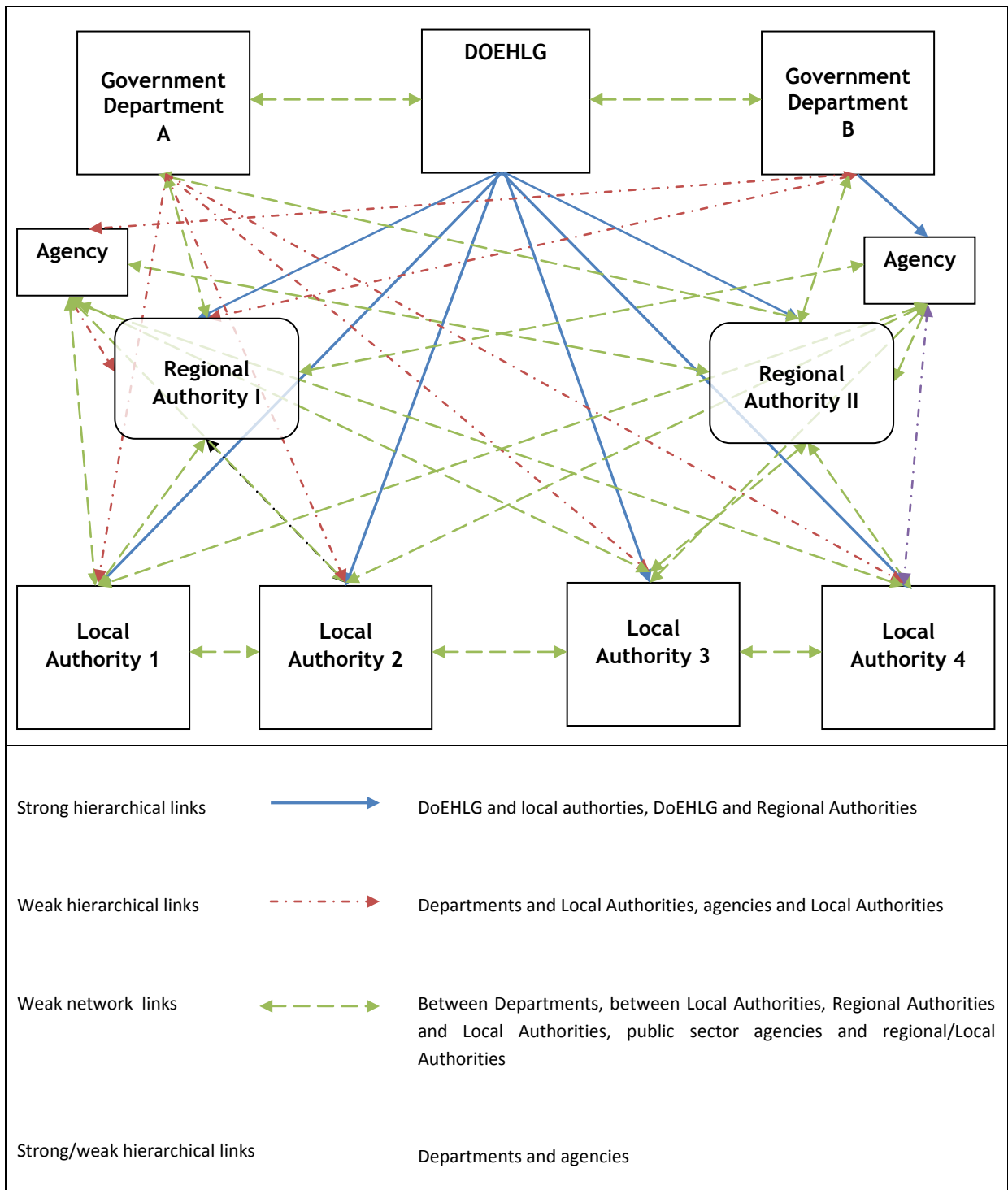


Figure 2: Schematic Diagram of Governance Relations: Multi-Level Network Structures<sup>3</sup>

Source: Analysis by the author

<sup>3</sup> For ease of interpretation, direct links between government departments and local authorities are shown with respect to Government Department A only, while direct links between government departments and public sector agencies are shown in the case of Government Department B only.

The Dublin Regional Report did include proposals for a new regional-scale spatial planning policy framework, which led to preparation of Strategic Planning Guidelines from 1997. The strategic planning framework proposed in the Dublin Regional Report, explicitly identified and outlined the potential cross-sectoral policy coordination role of such a spatial planning strategy. This was characterised in terms of ‘a more comprehensive and complex form of spatial planning’. Specifically it was envisaged that the proposed ‘Strategic Regional Plan’ would address social, economic and environmental issues in addition to physical or land-use planning issues.

Thematic policy areas identified for incorporation within the regional strategy included the administration of European Union regional policy, environmental sustainability issues and social exclusion issues. Each of these thematic policy areas represented complex cross-sectoral policy domains requiring significant levels of horizontal coordination between policy actors and institutional arenas. The thematic policy areas of regional development and environmental sustainability were also framed within a multi-level governance context. This multi-level governance framework presented the potential for the development of direct links and responsibilities in relation to the application of European Union policy initiatives and environmental directives in addition to the forging of a regional scale of governance between central government and the Local Authorities in Ireland (DRA, 1996, 62). As discussed below the Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area (Brady Shipman Martin et al. 1999) did not have the capacity to address the wider cross-sectoral policy coordination issues outlined in the Dublin Regional Report but did nevertheless represent a significant shift towards a new form of strategic spatial planning at the regional scale in an Irish context.

## **5. The Coordination Objectives and Capacity of the Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area**

The Strategic Planning Guidelines (BSM et al 1999) sought to address a range of cross-sectoral policy coordination issues with the objective of providing an integrated sustainable development strategy or vision for the Greater Dublin Area. The stated objectives of the SPGs process were to:

- Addresses the established needs of the present;
- Provides for anticipated trends in population and economic activity to 2011;
- Manages the resources of the area in a sustainable way;
- Offers an environmental vision of the future.

*Source: Adapted from BSM et al. (1999, 3).*

Specific sectoral policy areas identified addressed in the SPGs include housing, transportation, sanitary services infrastructure, social and economic infrastructure and amenity heritage and recreation. The SPGs identified the existing stock of infrastructure or resources in each case and outlined areas where additional investment may be required. Key sectoral areas outside of the direct control or influence of the Local Authorities in the Greater Dublin Area included transportation,

healthcare, education, telecommunications infrastructure and energy supply. The spatial strategy of the SPGs identified the desired spatial distribution and expected scale of spatial development over the twelve year period of the guidelines (1999-2011). This spatial strategy in itself had very significant implications for the future actions and strategic plans of other public sector agencies in terms of infrastructure and service provision and community development.

In addition to the principal settlement strategy component, however, the SPGs included a list of 48 recommendations, 30 of which explicitly addressed specific sectoral and policy coordination issues. In particular the recommendations stress the need for the strategic planning of, and investment in, physical, social and economic infrastructure to support anticipated levels of population growth and spatial development. The recommendations also outline measures to reduce demand for travel by private motor car and to facilitate a shift towards more sustainable modes of transportation. Recommendations relating to Development Plans, planning policy and legislation indicate a number of measures to ensure a more efficient processing of planning applications and accordance of special status for strategic infrastructure projects. A number of the recommendations relating to planning policy and legislation anticipated key innovative elements of subsequent spatial planning legislation including the concept of Strategic Development Zones (referred to as Accelerated Planning Schemes in the SPGs Recommendations) and the 2006 Strategic Infrastructure Act (read National Strategic Projects). As the preparation of the SPGs coincided with the preparation of the 2000 Planning and Development Act, it is probable that some of the recommendations reflected wider debates on the changes in the planning system at the time.

While many of the recommendations relating to transportation planning have been adopted, at a strategic level, by the Dublin Transportation Office (DTO) a number of the recommendations relating to social and community infrastructure provision, housing and employment continue to be recognised as areas requiring enhanced levels of coordination or legislative change. Since December 2009, the functions and responsibilities of the DTO have been subsumed within a newly established National Transport Authority (NTA). The implications of this shift in institutional structures for coordination between spatial planning and transportation policies are unclear, although the NTA transportation strategies and Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area are legally required to have regard to each other.

An interview<sup>4</sup> with the lead planning consultant responsible for drafting the 1999 SPGs reveals that the inclusion of the list of policy recommendations within the SPGs was strongly contested at the time of the preparation with opposing views expressed by the various policy and official stakeholders involved:

The Managers didn't want the report ... to contain a whole lot of recommendations. They wanted a simple strategy and then this table of the distribution of housing and then this would feed down into the development plans and they would then deliver those houses or not and they would zone land and so on accordingly, but from a lot of what we were doing there were a whole lot of other things coming out requiring recommendations..., they were in the main text in the first drafts... there were people who wanted them dropped out of it completely. (R1)

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<sup>4</sup> In this paper interviews are identified alphanumerically. The prefix indicates the role or position of the interviewee: R = regional policy stakeholder, L = local policy stakeholder, N = national policy stakeholder.

This extract indicates that the Managers of the Local Authorities sought to restrict the scope of the SPGs to a 'simple' spatial strategy and table of housing distribution, while the spatial planning officials and others represented on the technical committee favoured the inclusion of the recommendations which went beyond the land-use planning and settlement strategy implications of the SPGs. While the recommendations were included as part of the main text in initial drafts, they were placed in an appendix in the final document. The same interviewee notes that extensive consultation with public sector agencies formed a key part of the preparation of the SPGs. It is noted, however that the level of interest or engagement showed by the agencies varied significantly and that in some cases the full potential significance of SPGs did not become apparent until after they were published:

We had quite a lot of discussions with transport people; the DTO with CIE... with various departments of the Local Authorities and with other agencies ... Some of them took a stronger interest than others ... in some instances the penny didn't begin to drop until after the Guidelines were published (R1)

This realisation of the significance of the SPGs following their publication is illustrated in the case of the health agencies responsible for the provision of a healthcare services and infrastructure, including hospitals. Although the SPGs did not identify the specific level of capital investment or additional service provision that would be required the demographic projections spatial strategy of the SPGs led the health agencies to recognise the need for new hospitals to be provided in the course of the 12 year period of the SPGs. It is evident that the strategic long-term horizon of the spatial planning strategy represented a challenge to the thinking and investment plans of the health agencies at the time:

I met them [the health agencies] and they began to see that this was going to have to be a major input into their decision-making in the future. The hardest pill from their point of view was that they would have to take decisions on major future hospitals based on this ... they would have to build new hospitals and the location of these hospitals would be heavily influenced by this and they just didn't want to think about new hospitals (R1)

It is further argued that the level of engagement from sectoral agencies depended significantly on personal dynamics to a greater extent than institutional issues. A recognition or 'vision' of the need for new approaches and of the SPGs as an opportunity for change are identified as key elements for positive engagement at this early stage in the regional strategy-making process. The realisation of a need for change identified here points to the 'path-shaping' potential of strategy-making processes:

I would say it was almost to a personal extent, depending on who came or who you met in a Department, some of them were very defensive of the current situation and their performance or lack of performance. Some had the vision that things needed to change and this was one of the opportunities to change things.... on the other hand there were other people who were pushing for change (R1)

The former Dublin City Manager, however, points to the limited capacity of the SPGs to adequately address the functional and institutional coordination issues surrounding the relationship between land-use and transportation. It is argued that a Dublin Transport Authority with the legal powers to ensure compliance and adequately deal with areas of tension and conflict was the only means to

resolving the politically and institutionally sensitive issues relating to the integration of land-use and transportation planning. As noted above the capacity of the nascent NTA to provide this strong leadership role is as yet untested:

[T]he area I was most concerned about were the transport authorities. Were the guidelines good enough to deal with that relationship? No, no. They never were and they never were going to be. My own belief was that the Dublin Transportation Authority [see below] was the only answer to that ... it was the only way you could integrate the two things; planning and land-use. There are all kinds of tensions and conflicts involved there and the only way to resolve them is to have a structure that has the legal status to do that (L1).

The SPGs may not have had the governance capacity to significantly influence the investment decisions and spatial policies of sectoral agencies and government departments. They did, however, serve to signal the potential for regional-scale spatial strategies to provide a strategic policy framework for the development of cross-sectoral policy coordination in relation to infrastructure provision and investment. As a consequence the SPGs led other public sector agencies to begin to recognise the significance of the spatial dimension, perhaps more significantly, the need for a long-term strategic perspective in relation to infrastructure provision and service delivery, informed by evidence-based projections of population growth and spatial development. The SPGs thus represented an important step in a process of institutional capacity-building through the development of cross-sectoral policy networks and dialogue between public sector agencies in relation to the implications of future spatial development patterns for policy coordination and infrastructure provision.

## **6. Regional Planning Guidelines: The Contested Scope of Spatial Planning Strategies**

Following on from the SPGs model, the 2004 Regional Planning Guidelines (DRA & MERA 2004) sought to provide a framework for cross-sectoral policy coordination, in addition to articulating a regional-scale spatial strategy, framed in the context of the National Spatial Strategy and a review of the SPGs. The structure of the RPGs document, produced in 2004, differed significantly from the 1999 SPGs, however, reflecting the incorporation of the RPGs within the formal institutional and legislative structures of the statutory planning system. Specifically, the RPGs were required to contain two distinct elements, identified as Part A and Part B, respectively:

- Part A – the Strategy element: a synthesis of the “big picture” socio-economic development issues and opportunities in the region; and how these are to be addressed, building on previous exercises, such as the city and county development board strategies in the region, existing development plans, and preparatory work for the National Development Plan 2000-2006 mid-term review and the NSS.
- Part B – the Regional Planning Guideline element: to provide more detailed guidance for development plans at county and city level as well as land use and transportation strategies. This guidance will involve setting out broad physical planning frameworks in



areas such as settlement and transport to addressing the “big picture” development issues in the region.

(Source: DoELG, 2003, 10).

It was envisaged that the socio-economic strategy would inform the substantive content of the spatial strategy while the proposed spatial strategy would simultaneously guide the spatial aspects and anticipated infrastructure requirements of the socio-economic strategy. Part A of the Regional Planning Guidelines was intended as an update of the Regional Reports produced in 1996 (DoELG, 2003).

Part A of the RPGs thus includes a review of public service provision within the GDA. A thematic approach, similar to that of the 1996 Dublin Regional Report was adopted. The review describes the status of existing infrastructure and current and proposed infrastructure and service provision projects under the headings of transportation, water supply and wastewater facilities, waste management, energy and communications networks, education, healthcare, retail and other community facilities and environment and amenities. The review did not however address the issue of coordination of public service provision or the future infrastructure and service provision requirements arising from projected patterns and trends of demographic, socio-economic and spatial change over the period of the RPGs strategy. The review also failed to evaluate progress made since the 1996 Regional Reports or assess the potential for improving coordination between public sector agencies. The RPGs did, however, include a list of recommendations as an appendix addressing a range of land-use planning and sectoral coordination issues, although the majority of recommendations were copied directly or restated with minor modifications from the SPGs document (DRA & MERA, 2004, 184-193).

In the course of the preparation of the RPGs it was contended that the Strategies for Economic, Social and Cultural Development prepared by each of the City/County Development Boards (CDBs) in 2002 should provide a key input for Part A of the RPGs document. The CDB strategies sought to articulate an integrated policy framework providing a broad vision of socio-economic issues at the county level, developed through extensive consultation and collaboration among a wide range of public sector and community stakeholders. The potential for the CDB strategies to inform the development of a cross-sectoral strategy-making initiative at the regional scale was indicated in the policy guidance on preparing RPGs, produced by the DoELG (DoELG 2003, 10). The role of the CDB strategies was disputed, however, by the Local Authority Managers on the RPGs Steering Committee and the project team responsible for drafting the guidelines. The Directors of Community and Enterprise, with executive responsibility for the CDBs in each Local Authority were not included on either the Steering Committee or Technical Committee responsible for the preparation of the RPGs for the Greater Dublin Area:

[T]he Directors of Community and Enterprise believed their legislation gave them an overarching commentary on the RPGs and the Managers didn't believe that... In some of the regions outside of Dublin and the Mid-East the Directors of Community and Enterprise were on either the technical working group or the steering committee but they weren't on any of the committees in Dublin. There was a lot of dissatisfaction about that... (R2).

Following the publication of drafts of Part A and Part B by the RPGs Project Office, and a team of consultants respectively, the three County Development Boards of the Mid-East Region made a joint submission to the process, including a total of 48 specific recommendations (County Development Boards of the Mid-East Region, 2003). This joint submission sought to challenge the strategic content and policy scope of the draft RPGs and, in particular, argued that the strategies for economic, social and cultural development prepared by the CDBs in 2002 should provide a key input for Part A of the RPGs.

The joint submission from the CDBs of the Mid-East Region states that any potential conflict between the policies or objectives of County/City Development Board strategies and the Regional Planning Guidelines would 'create an environment of uncertainty in local government' as Local Authorities are required to have regard to the CDB strategies in the adoption of their Corporate Plans<sup>5</sup> under the 2001 Local Government Act. In fact, the potential for policy conflict and uncertainty is overstated in the submission from the County Development Boards, as the Local Government Act stipulates that Local Authorities are required to have regard to the CDB strategies but does not require compliance with the strategies. This does not, however, undermine the contention that the CDB strategies should provide a key input to Part A of the RPGs. Figure 3 below indicates the relationship between the CBD strategies and the Regional Planning Guidelines as envisaged by the Mid-East Region County Development Boards.

The submission identified a lack of 'strong strategic direction' in Part A of the draft RPGs<sup>6</sup> and in particular its failure to take into account the vision statements contained in the CDB strategies. It is also contended that the relationship between current government policy and the strategic direction of the region was not clearly identified or developed. It is argued that the draft strategy did not take full account of other sectoral policies, outside of the National Spatial Strategy, including policy on transport, education, housing, social inclusion, health and community development. The joint submission of the CDBs of the Mid-East Region also argued that the draft of Part A failed to include a clear perspective on the coordination of public service delivery although it was required to do so, under the initial legislation setting out the parameters for the Regional Reports (County Development Boards of the Mid-East Region, 2003, 4).

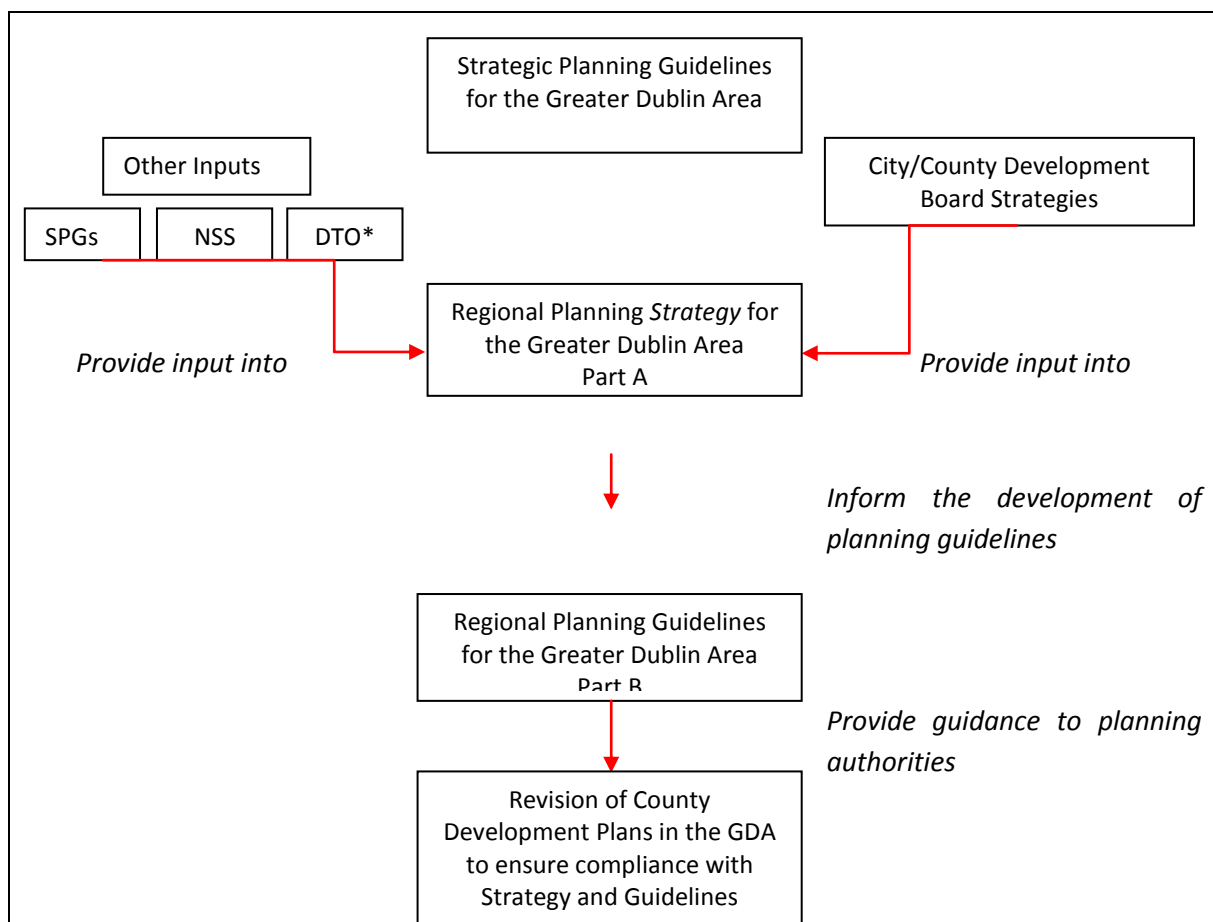
In relation to Part B, the submission argued that it suffered from a lack of clarity in relation to overall strategic objectives and goals, due to the weak strategic direction of Part A. It is also contended that the spatial strategy outlined, informed by a 'sustainable development scenario' focussed predominately on transportation aspects of sustainability to the neglect of other aspects of sustainability. It is further argued that the draft RPGs failed to adequately address rural development issues or inter-regional issues affecting the more peripheral parts of the Mid-East Region, due to a focus on Dublin city (ibid. 5).

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<sup>5</sup> Strategic statements of policy, covering all areas of service provision of the Local Authority, required to be prepared and adopted following the election of Local Authority councillors (Government of Ireland (2001) *Local Government Act, 2001 (no. 37)*, Dublin: Government Publications, available at <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2001/acts.html>, accessed 10/08/2009).

<sup>6</sup> A copy of Part A of the draft RPGs, prepared by the Regional Planning Guidelines Office in 2003 was not available to the current study.

In general the joint submission sought to broaden the scope of the draft RPGs to reflect issues of social inclusion, the social and economic sustainability of rural areas and the implication of national government sectoral policies on the future development of the region. The submission was also highly critical of a perceived lack of ‘strategic direction’ in both Parts A and B of the draft RPGs. The submission pointed towards a potential role for the Regional Planning Guidelines as a regional-scale strategic policy document, providing a framework for cross-sectoral policy coordination.



\* DTO refers to Dublin Transportation Office (2001) A Platform for Change, Dublin: The Stationary Office.

Figure 3: The Relationship between County Development Board Strategies and the Regional Planning Guidelines from the Perspective of the Mid-East Region CDBs

Source: Adapted from County Development Boards of the Mid-East Region (2003, 2)

This perspective contrasts strongly with the approach taken by the Regional Planning Guidelines Project Office to the preparation of RPGs. The ‘Issues Paper’ published by the project office refers to the preparation of the Regional Planning Guidelines as a review of the existing Strategic Planning Guidelines and defines the objective of the Regional Planning Guidelines as setting a 10-12 year strategic policy for the consideration of Local Authorities in the preparation of the Development

Plans. A narrow definition of 'strategic' is provided, focussed on the spatial coordination of the planning functions of the constituent Local Authorities and the implementation of the NSS:

"Strategic" refers to those policy directions which transcend the boundaries of individual planning authorities and which relate to the role of the region in delivering the National Spatial Strategy. These strategic policies will in turn be translated into policies and objectives in City and County Development Plans (Regional Planning Guidelines Project Office, 2003, 8).

The DoEHLG sought to advise Local Authorities in relation to the 'implementation' of the RPGs through City/County Development Plans (DoEHLG, 2005). The official emphasis of RPGs implementation was placed on the settlement strategy component of the RPGs and specifically, issues within the control of Local Authorities, indicating that the potential cross-sectoral policy coordination role of the RPGs was viewed as of less significance. The final draft of the Regional Planning Guidelines, published in July 2004, did address a number the recommendations contained in the submission from the Mid-East Region CDBs and included the vision statement of each of the CDBs within Part A of the document. The CDB and Regional Planning Guidelines processes continued, however, to constitute two separate policy domains with limited integration. The Local Authority Managers saw the RPGs as a 'higher level policy', in contrast to the perceived 'community' emphasis of the CDB strategies:

The two were going in parallel kind of worlds but they weren't meeting and they wanted their community base to over-arch with what the Guidelines were doing and ... the Managers would have felt the guidelines were kind of a higher level policy that you couldn't possibly have so much community based information in it (R2).

The tension between the CDBs and the Local Authority Managers over the scope of the RPGs strategic spatial planning process during the preparation of the RPGs for the Greater Dublin Area reflects the extent to which the Regional Planning Guidelines process and the CDBs both constituted new and emerging institutional arenas. The objectives of both the RPGs and the CDBs included the development of coordinated strategies for social and economic development, based on the development of collaborative governance practices among a wide range of public sector actors. It may be argued that the CDBs were engaged in a process of establishing their specific role within a wider framework of local governance and that the Regional Planning Guidelines process presented an opportunity to assert the relevance of CDB strategies to the process of regional scale strategy-making. In practice the CDB strategies and RPGs were competing for legitimacy and governance capacity among similar networks of institutional and policy actors. The potential for establishing synergistic linkages between the two processes was not realised. Current legislative proposals associated with the introduction of a Dublin regional mayor envisage the establishment of a single development board for the Dublin Region, replacing the existing four CDBs within the region (Sheridan, 2010). If implemented, the establishment of a regional development board under the auspices of a directly elected Mayor could significantly enhance the capacity for cross-sectoral policy coordination within the Dublin Region. These proposals, however, relate to the Dublin Region only and fail to recognise the wider city-regional perspective, which the S/RPGs have sought to promote and develop, through inclusion of the Local Authorities of the Mid-East Region in the process of strategic spatial planning.

The RPGs for the Greater Dublin Area and the other six regions were required to be reviewed in 2010. The formal review process was commenced in 2009 with the publication of ‘issues papers’ outlining key issues for each region over the period from 2010 to 2022 for which the revised RPGs would apply. Following a period of public consultation, a draft of the revised RPGs was produced, for submission to the members of the Regional Authorities for consideration in late 2009, subsequent to which the draft RPGs would be placed on display to facilitate a second round of public consultation in early 2010<sup>7</sup>.

The contents of the draft 2010 RPGs are characterised by a notable shift in emphasis towards economic development concerns reflecting the shift in the economic context at a national and regional level in the post Celtic Tiger period. It is stated that this change in ‘economic growth, employment levels and Government finances is the most critical issue in preparing the updated RPGS for 2010-2022. It is argued that RPGs need to take a ‘more focused approach to planning for future growth’ to achieve an alignment between the location of future development and investment in public infrastructure and services (DRA & MERA, 2010, 14). The integration of land-use and transportation investment and decision-making, the provision of water services, broadband telecommunications infrastructure, climate change mitigation and adaptation and flood risk management are further identified as ‘key planning and development issues’ for the GDA. The structure of the 2010 RPGs reflects a cross-sectoral thematic approach with individual chapters devoted to specific implications of the RPGs settlement strategy for infrastructure provision and environmental management concerns (Table 1). The incorporation of a regional economic strategy and the attention to green infrastructure concerns represent particularly innovative aspects of the 2010 RPGs.

At the joint meeting of the Dublin and Mid-East Regional Authorities in December 2009, convened to review the draft of the revised RPGs prepared by the regional planning staff, a total of 44 individual motions were proposed by members, seeking amendments to the draft. The subject matter of the motions concerned all aspects of the draft, from the status of individual towns as growth centres, to the equitable distribution of employment, access to natural heritage sites, rural tourism and climate change. It is significant to note, however that all motions were tabled by a total of nine councillors, all members of the Mid-East Regional Authority. The total combined membership of the two Regional Authorities is 51 (30 members of DRA and 21 of MERA). The majority of motions were tabled by groups of councillors, 11 by a group of five councillors, all members of Meath County Council, while two members of Kildare County Council were responsible for 30 motions. The remaining three motions were proposed by two members of Wicklow County Council. The membership of Dublin Regional Authority, in contrast, did not table any motions. This difference in the approach to the RPGs process by the political membership of the two Regional Authorities may reflect a perception that the counties of the Mid-East Region had more to gain or lose from the designation of development centres and potential adjustments to the boundary of the Metropolitan Area.

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<sup>7</sup> Reference in this paper to the contents of the 2010 RPGs refers to the consultation draft of the 2010-2022 revised RPGs for the Greater, available from 11<sup>th</sup> January 2010.

| Chapter | Title   | Strategic Policy Function  |
|---------|---|--|
| 1       | Introduction and Context                          | Places RPGs in context of other government policies and current spatial development challenges and opportunities   |
| 2       | Regional Strategy Vision                          | Outlines the vision and broad policy objectives of the RPGs  |
| 3       | Economic Development Strategy                     | Outlines economic development challenges and opportunities, specific to the Dublin city-region   |
| 4       | Settlement Strategy, Population and Housing       | Details the specifics of the settlement strategy component of the RPGs   |
| 5       | Rural Development                                 | Outlines the particular challenges facing rural areas and the implications of spatial planning policy  |
| 6       | Physical Infrastructure                           | Outlines current and proposed physical infrastructure plans and their implications for spatial planning policy   |
| 7       | Green Infrastructure, Heritage and Environment    | Outlines the relationship between the RPGs settlement strategy and policies for the preservation of the environment  |
| 8       | Social Infrastructure and Sustainable Communities | Outlines the social infrastructure provision implications of spatial planning policy and the role of spatial planning in the creation of 'sustainable communities' |
| 9       | Regional Flood Risk Appraisal                     | Outlines the implications of the RPGs settlement strategy and related policies for future flood risk   |
| 10      | Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation         | Details specific quantitative indicators for monitoring implementation and areas for priority investment   |

*Table 1: Chapter Structure and Contents of Draft 2010 Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area*

*Source: DRA & MERA (2010, iii-iv)*

A number of motions, however, also sought to insert specific objectives relating to rural development, perhaps reflecting a perception that the RPGs were primarily concerned with urban growth and related policy issues. With respect to 22 of the motions proposed, the Directors of the Regional Authorities recommended no change to the draft document, while changes of greater or lesser significance were recommended with respect to the remaining 22 motions. It may be concluded that a number of members of the Mid-East Regional Authority engaged substantively with the key spatial development and thematic issues addressed by the 2010 RPGs, reflecting a recognition of the broader strategic policy-making role of the 2010 RPGs beyond narrow land-use planning concerns.

The Regional Planning Guidelines Officer responsible for the drafting of the 2010 RPGs identifies the development of a spatially coordinated approach to policy-making and public investment as a core element of the RPGs. The identification of coordination in terms of public expenditure as well as policy-making as a central objective of the RPGs highlights the need for explicit connections between the policy objectives in the RPGs and specific resource allocation mechanisms within Local Authorities, central government departments and public sector agencies:

At its core it is trying to get a much stronger joined-up thinking and spending in how we move a long, that needs do add up, that you are getting people in the same places as transport and the water services investment plans match what the RPGs are trying to do (R3).

It is argued, however, that the level of engagement from many of the bodies represented on the steering committee of the RPGs is limited. In particular, it is noted that the enterprise development agencies operate in the context of a national policy agenda, limiting capacity for policy coordination or decision-making at a regional scale:

There are a whole load of bodies represented on the RPG steering committee. Outside of the DTO [Dublin Transportation Office], I don't know how many of them actually take any context of the stuff they are presented with or think about it in any serious way... The IDA [Industrial Development Authority] and Enterprise Ireland – there are regional people there... but they have their own agenda and they don't see it been phenomenally influenced by what the RPGs are doing. They are singing from a national hymn sheet and they operate on that basis (R3).

It is noted, however, that the central government Department of Transport has been an active participant in the 2010 RPG review process, reflecting an increased emphasis on land-use policy and transport and land-use-policy integration within the transport policy domain:

The Department of Transport – there has been a change of mindset there. They are engaging particularly with the review. They are stepping forward and asking to be involved whereas before we were lucky to get them to attend. They are seeing the relevance of how the whole land-use policy is much higher on their agenda than it has been in a long time (R3)

The Director of the Mid-East Regional Authority, however, points to the limited governance capacity of the Regional Authorities as a policy coordination bodies without direct control of resources for investment or decision-making powers. It is further noted that the participation by individual Local Authorities in the strategic work of the Regional Authorities is voluntary as Local Authorities are not required to comply with the RPGs or other strategic policy frameworks:

Regional Authorities have plans to coordinate but we don't have a huge resource base, staffing structure or resources. We are a coordinating authority, a policy coordinating body... It is a voluntary power to coordinate but how that is defined locally is up to each region. If a county or group of counties decide they don't particularly want to coordinate on policy, it can't be given to them from on high (R4).

It is argued that the coordination work of the Regional Authorities is not supported by the current institutional structure of the regional and local government system but dependent on the commitment of individual actors to the strategic planning and policy coordination processes:

You do get that sense that we are all running around at this mid-level trying to coordinate... It is like spinning plates and in general we are keeping everything going, keeping everybody talking to each other, building those links. It is in spite of the structures we are in rather than because of them. It is because of the genuine commitment of all the people in the councils, the Regional Authorities and the DTO to try and make everything work. We are not being helped by the system we are working with and that is a huge problem I think. (R3)

Significantly, the RPGs are described as a means of 'lobbying' central government to provide infrastructure and services to support spatial development within the GDA but also a means of aligning the decision-making of Local Authorities to conform to the investment plans of central government:

It's a lobbying document in many ways to central government about how to spend money but also directing the councils to tie in to where that money is going to be spent. It is trying to create that link between what the councils are doing on the ground and other bodies are doing around them (R3).

The Director of the Mid-East Regional Authority argues that the RPGs function as shared strategy agreed among the Local Authorities which can provide a basis for coordination with other sectoral bodies. From this perspective the spatial coordination capacity of the RPGs provides a framework for sectoral coordination with agencies, external to the local and regional government system:

[I]t just gives them a framework to work together on a plan that was actually agreed by all regions and that gives the chance for Regional Authorities, Local Authorities to go to the enterprise and development agencies with an organised plan and tell them this is how we are planning our region. We want to coordinate with you in the provision of your public assistance with our public assistance in terms of jobs, infrastructure and all that (R4).

A Local Authority official, however, points to a lack of awareness on the part of sectoral agencies of the RPGs or the spatial planning responsibilities of Local Authorities. He indicates, however, that Local Authority officials and spatial planners similarly may not be aware of other policy agendas such as health management which also attempt to reach across traditional institutional and policy boundaries.

A lot of the other big agencies don't seem to be aware of the significance or importance of the spatial planning responsibilities we have or even the Regional Authority spatial planning guidelines. We have a sense they aren't plugged into that no more than we are not plugged into the issues around health management... I think there is a huge lack of awareness there... There is a consultation process there but they tend to ignore it (L7).



## 7. The Policy Coordination Role and Potential of City/County Development Plans

The relationship between City/County Development Plans (CDPs) and other plans and policies is addressed in the guidelines for planning authorities on the preparation of CDPs published by the DoEHLG in 2007. It is stated CDPs should be ‘informed horizontally’ by a range of national, regional and local policies, strategies and capital investment programmes (DoEHLG, 2007a, 10-11, Figure 4 below). DoEHLG policy thus identifies the extent to which CDPs should be prepared within the policy context and parameters of a sectoral policies produced at national, regional and local scales of governance.

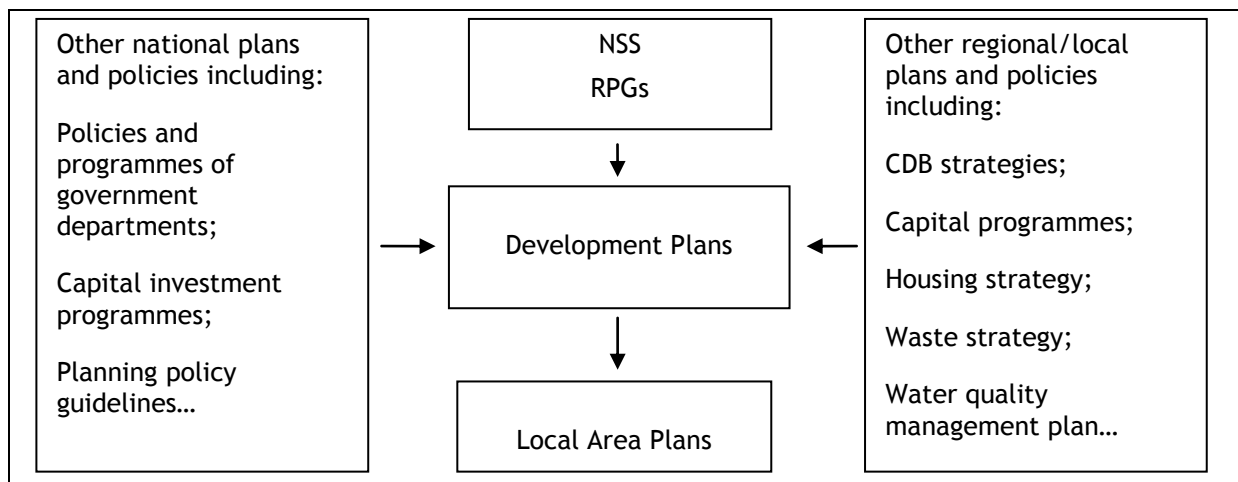


Figure 4: Relationship between City/County Development Plans and Other Plans and Policies

Source: Adapted from DoEHLG (2007a, 10).

It may be noted that the specific plans and policies identified within the DoEHLG policy guidance are those that fall under remit of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government itself, indicating the extent to which policy-making continues to be formulated within the context and parameters of sector-specific institutional and administrative structures. The 2000 Planning and Development Act also specifies a requirement for planning authorities to ascertain and have regard to other sectoral policies. These legislative provisions and policy guidelines do not, however, specify a particular policy coordination role for CDPs themselves, although it is noted in the DoEHLG guidelines that ‘good development plans will inform policies at regional and national level’ (DoEHLG, 2007a, 3).

The interview extracts discussed below point to a significant shift in the status and function of CDPs since the late 1990s in particular, indicating that CDPs are increasingly recognised as strategic policy documents within the Local Authority institutional context. The interviews, however, also point to significant obstacles and challenges to the adoption of cross-sectoral coordinated approaches,

particularly in relation to coordination with other public sector agencies where Local Authorities have limited direct influence.

A senior planning advisor within the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government outlines the impact of recent legislative and policy changes on spatial planning at the local scale in terms of the creation of a 'new vision', specifically associated with the challenge of policy coordination. The extent to which the strategic role and function of development plans at the local level has changed in terms of a transition from land-use planning to 'spatial planning' is highlighted:

In some cases it has created a new vision, a new purpose for development planning at local level... a call to action in relation to coordination... they're utterly different things in their outlook emboldened somewhat by a greater and longer term vision... pointing up the new challenges and the interconnections between planning in its traditional sense ... land-use and moving into spatial planning and the connections between what we are doing in the physical realm and the economic and other areas (N1)

The role of the National Spatial Strategy, 2000 Planning and Development Act, DoEHLG planning policy guidelines and the County Development Board structures, are specifically identified as drivers of this shift towards a strategic role for City/County Development Plans, where the CDP is viewed as a corporate policy document. Legislative and policy change are thus identified as the drivers of change rather than a pragmatic recognition of the potential benefits and opportunities of policy coordination at the local scale:

the new breed of development plans the NSS might inspire and the 2000 planning Act requires that are guided by a whole raft of new publications from the department and I suppose the parallel influence of the CDB structures, I think is going to overtime push planning into a broader more expansive view of things... setting the Development Plan as the corporate policy document... for Local Authorities bringing all the different elements together (N1)

The emergence of a strategic policy coordination role for CDPs is recognised as a long-term process, however, although it is argued that there is significant potential for coordination across functional areas within Local Authorities:

I think planning at local level still struggles to make those connections. But yet Local Authorities I think have tremendous capacity... They have funding priorities and mechanisms and a capacity to bring things together whether it is housing, services, facilities through to education along with economic development, tourism development, heritage (N1)

A second DoEHLG official, in direct response to a question on the strategic role of CDPs equates 'strategic' with cross-boundary issues. Regional planning strategies are viewed as the appropriate scale for addressing issues of spatial coordination across Local Authority boundaries. From this perspective, the role of CDPs in cross-sectoral policy coordination is viewed as limited with the possible exception of transportation infrastructure issues:

Obviously they are primarily designed within their own administrative boundaries. You do have the RPGs for the cross-boundary issues (N2)

Leaving aside transport infrastructure, I think that is relatively limited – [the policy coordination role of CDPs] (N2)

This narrow association of 'strategic' spatial planning with issues of spatial coordination across Local Authority boundaries reflects the interpretation of strategic policy employed in the preparation of the 2004 RPGs, as identified above, and points to an enduring perception of spatial plans positioned within the context of a vertically integrated statutory planning system but with limited interaction with the policies and plans of other sectoral areas. Senior planning officials in two Local Authorities within the Dublin city-region, however, point to a significant transformation in the function and status of County Development Plans. They point to a repositioning of the development plan within the policy framework and governance structures of the Local Authority:

Our new county development plan is functioning more as a blueprint for how development should happen in the county... a mechanism for delivery of economic development... It is much more of a strategy document than plans of old would have been. Now there is a strategy for settlement, a strategy for economic development, a strategy for tourism. It's very much more a broadly encompassing document. It has a better status (L4).

[Previous County Development Plans] were never really very strategic nor were they specific. They were quite non-descript type documents which had sometimes aspirational and loose policies which effectively didn't really make a significant impact, whereas now the development plan is certainly a crucial tool... It is as an important document certainly and I think that it has been elevated quite significantly by the changes that have taken place in the 2000 Act and I think certainly it will become more powerful, I think as we move forward (L3).

Rather than operating in isolation from other policy areas within local government, there are indications that the policies contained within the County Development Plan have a wider relevance across departments and policy domains, particularly in relation to infrastructure provision in areas of new development:

In previous years the County Development Plan would be seen as something that this section [the planning department] implements. There is more of awareness among Housing, among Environment, among Community and Enterprise that it is also their document; that they need to implement particular sections of it. So that in a way it is more of a strategy document for the Council. (L4).

One senior Local Authority official working in Fingal County Council contends, however, that CDPs always sought to address issues of cross-sectoral and functional coordination. It is argued that whereas CDPs traditionally identified priorities and objectives for coordination more recent strategies contain a greater level of detail in terms of the specific areas involved:

[I]t has always been there... but probably not brought to the fore as much... the old 1963 Act... zoning, utilities, transportation, amenities. They were what your Development Plan was to provide for. Even at that time it was bringing forward the policies... saying what were the transportation priorities and how are they to be addressed? They were being addressed but not in great detail, and mainly as high level objectives whereas now they are specifying them that little bit more (L2)

The relationship between the CDP and other local government sectoral policies is viewed as one of interaction, where sectoral policies influence the preparation of the CDP and are then subsequently influenced by the CDP itself:

It's a two way process. The various policies feed in to the Development Plan process but then the Development Plan itself dictates back to the other policies so they are framed against the background of the Development Plan. It's almost a chicken and egg situation. It's an interactive process; the policies feed into the process (L2).

A senior planner in Dublin City Council points to a shift towards a more interactive mode of working in the context of preparing CDPs, based on roundtable discussions rather than the direct incorporation of existing policy documents within the framework of the Development Plan as would have happened in previous years:

Earlier in my career what would have happened would have been a report would have come over which was the roads programme or the drainage programme and it would have just been incorporated into the Development Plan and now there is a lot more verbal interaction... (R2)

A senior planner in Louth County Council notes that the CDP is 'all-embracing', encompassing all sectoral areas within the Local Authority. A pragmatic rationale for coordination is outlined in terms of the infrastructure requirements arising from the zoning and subsequent development of land.

[T]he Development Plan, whereas the planning department takes the lead in its preparation, it obviously is all-embracing. It ties into every interest in the Local Authority. If you take sanitary, for example piped services, all of that has to tie in with the Development Plan, because if you zone land for development, you have to look and see what provision you have to make so that development can be serviced. It's a cross-fertilisation issue (L3).

The same interviewee further points to consultation and coordination with the County Development Board as well other sectoral areas of the Local Authority. Coordination and 'integrated thinking' are here seen as specific legislative requirements of the 2000 Planning and Development Act, indicating the significance of formal legislative provisions:

The Act quite specifically says that we must liaise closely with the County Development Board and the CDB has its own strategy in terms of community development and enterprise promotion and our Development Plan will reflect that. So, yeah it does assist and it is a requirement that we would have that level of integrated thinking and coordination between the various sections of the Local Authority (L3).

A senior Local Authority official with responsibility for community and enterprise development in Meath County Council identifies the CDP as the 'key strategic document' and 'framework plan' for the county. It is further noted that as a reserved function of the members of the Local Authority, the CDP reflects the 'vision' of the elected members, following consultation with other stakeholders, including the County Development Board:

That is the key strategic document. That is the framework plan for the development of the county going forward. That is the vision of the councillors; the elected members who make the plan; it is a reserved function, but obviously following consultation. There

would have been consultation with the County Development Board as well, when the plan went on draft display; the County Development Board would then have made a submission to it as well. That's the framework plan for the county, that's what it is. (L5)

The same interviewee further specifies the interactive nature of the CDP preparation process, based on cross-sectoral coordination with the planning department of the Local Authority taking a lead role:

We'll come up with our plan... that will look at everything from the provision of schools, social infrastructure, physical infrastructure, public transport, heritage, conservation, culture... The planning department take the lead role there but... there is in-house consultation across all directorates, all departments within council, so they would sit down around the table (L5).

A senior planner in Fingal County Council, however, points to significant obstacles to effective policy coordination between the local agencies and other public sector agencies. In this context, the role of the Local Authority is limited to the facilitation of other agencies. The Local Authority has no direct influence on the infrastructure investment plans of other agencies, limiting the capacity for functional coordination of spatial and sectoral plans:

Where it gets difficult is that we don't provide the public transport, so all we can do is cajole and influence and try and produce land-use policies which are consistent with where we see the public transport system going... We try and facilitate and liaise with the Department of Education and transport providers to ensure facilities are provided which are consistent with our land-use proposals but at the end of the day we don't provide them and all we can do is facilitate (L6).

A senior Local Authority official also working in Fingal County Council argues that the CDP has very limited status or influence outside of the Local Authority context. Although Local Authorities represent the formal structures of local government, it is argued that the budgets available to other agencies including government departments within the geographical area of a Local Authority may be significantly larger.

The policy of the Development Plan is still seen as a creature of the Local Authority and that is only one agency and a relatively small agency in comparison with the budgets that the Education and Health and other Departments would hold in an area... (L7).

## **8. Sector-Specific Regional Scale Policy Coordination Initiatives**

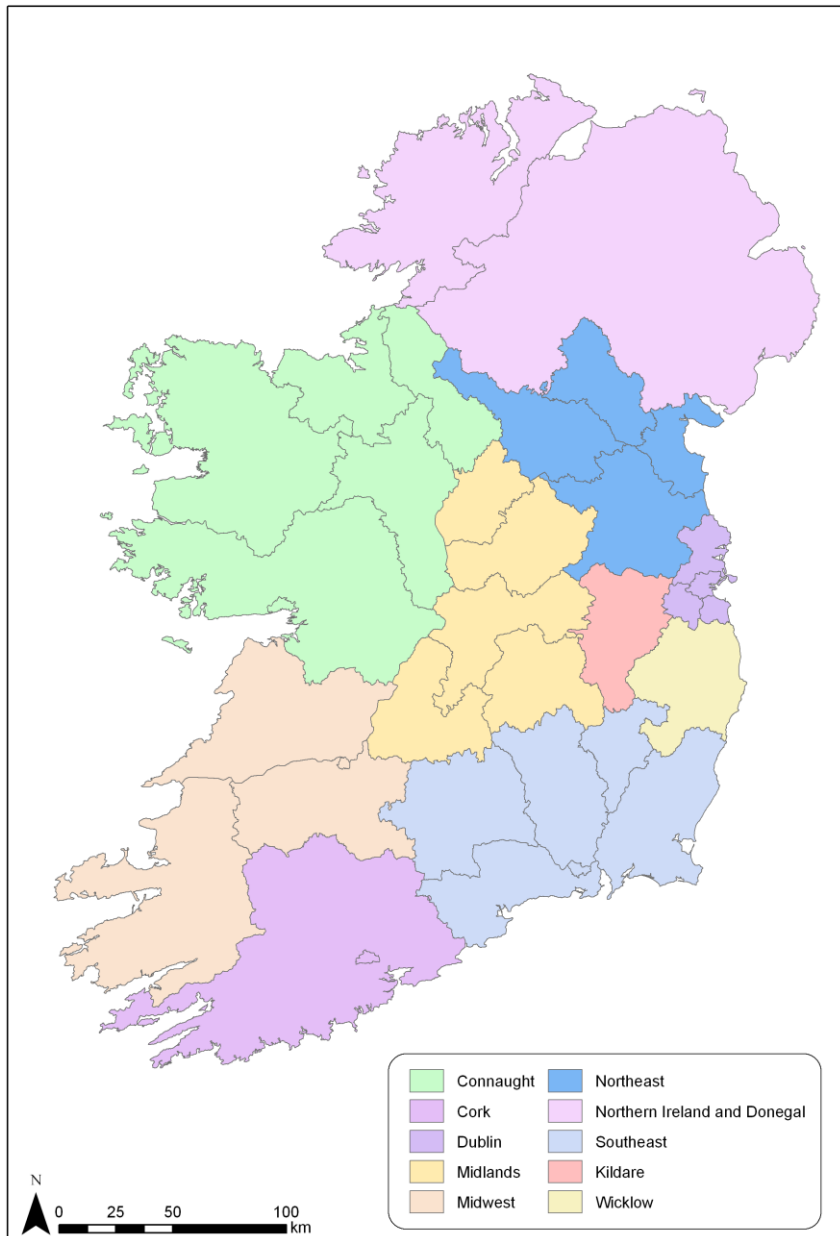
A number of interviewees pointed to the importance of regional-scale policy coordination initiatives taking place outside of the formal Regional Authority structures. A small number of examples of sector-specific regional scale policy initiatives are discussed, here, indicating the complexity and diversity of regional governance arrangements in practice and the potential policy coordination role for the statutory Regional Authorities and regional-scale spatial planning strategies.

For the purposes of waste management infrastructure provision and policy coordination, new regional governance structures were introduced, following a major revision of waste management legislation in 1996. Draft regional plans were subsequently published between 1997 and 1999. The

regionalisation of waste management in Ireland, however, occurred independently of the introduction of statutory Regional Authorities in 1994. A regional approach was advocated by central government, but Local Authorities could determine whether or not to coordinate with neighbouring Local Authorities for the purposes of waste management (Boyle, 2002, Davies 2008). Seven regional groupings were formed comprising 31 of 34 Local Authorities. Both Kildare and Wicklow opted to remain outside of any regional structure while Donegal joined with Northern Ireland in the preparation of a cross-border plan at a later date (Boyle, 2002, 183). Only in the case of the Dublin and Southeast Regions do the boundaries of the waste management regions coincide with those of the Regional Authorities (Figure 5).

Some of the proposals contained within the waste management plans proved politically contentious, however, and in particular, those relating to the location of large-scale incineration projects. As a consequence a number of Local Authorities either rejected the draft plans in their entirety or accepted them subject to major modifications only. Subsequently, the Minister for the Environment and Local Government introduced a legislative change, removing waste management policy from the control of the elected members of Local Authorities by redefining waste management as an executive function rather than a reserved function of the elected members. Following this, all waste management plans were adopted in 2001. In this case, the implementation of regional plans was only achieved through direct intervention from central government. This direct intervention was criticised, however, as a significant erosion of local democracy (see Boyle 2002, Davies, 2008). The current Waste Management Plan for the Dublin Region (2005-2010), explicitly identifies the role of the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area in providing a key element of the strategic policy context for waste management and notes that while the Local Authorities of the Mid-East Region are included within different regional groupings for waste management purposes, the preparation of the waste management plan for the Dublin region followed consultation with the Kildare, Meath and Wicklow Local Authorities (Dublin City Council et al. 2005).

In relation to water supply, Dublin City Council was appointed by the DoEHLG to lead carry out studies into the future provision of water supply for the seven Local Authorities of the Greater Dublin Area. The area, for which the studies were carried out and policies have been developed, does not, however, extend to the full geographical area of the Dublin and Mid-East Regions (Figure 6). This area is termed the Dublin Region (Water Supply Area) leading to potential confusion in relation to the spatial extent of the Dublin Region as defined for different thematic policy purposes (Dublin City Council, 2008).



*Figure 5: Regional Boundaries for the Purposes of Waste Management*

*Source: adapted from Boyle (2002, 184), mapping by the author.*

*Ordnance Survey Ireland boundary data. Ordnance Survey Ireland Permit No. MP009006 © Government of Ireland.*

A Local Authority official points to the preparation of a regional water services investment plan as an area of significant coordination among Local Authorities, occurring outside of formal regional

governance structures. It is argued that direct engagement between officials and decision-makers at Local Authority level provides for a more interactive means of coordination:

We have briefing sessions for all the seven Local Authorities that serve the Dublin region for water services purposes. We brief each of the Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) of each of the councils rather than coordinate at Regional Authority level... It's a far more interactive process rather than just having representatives on the Regional Authority determining it. It actually fed in through the SPC process into the various Councils (L2).



Figure 6: Dublin Region (Water Supply Area)

Source: Dublin City Council (2008, 1)

For the purposes of water quality monitoring, River Basin Districts have been established at a regional level, introducing a further regional-scale unit of spatial differentiation (Figure 7). Required for the purposes of implementing the EU Water Framework Directive, the River Basin Districts were created for the purposes of promoting an approach to the management of water resources specifically focused on individual river catchments.





Figure 7: The Eastern River Basin District

Source: Eastern River Basin District (2009, 2)

The current Eastern River Basin District (ERBD) Management Plan (2009-2015), however, identifies the need for coordination with County Developments, Local Area Plans and Regional Planning Guidelines while the DoEHLG guidelines on preparing CDPs identify the River Basin District Management Plans among the list of plans which should ‘horizontally’ inform the CDP preparation process (ERBD 2009, DoEHLG 2007a). A potential role for Regional Authorities and Regional Planning Guidelines may be identified in terms of identifying specific areas for policy coordination and interaction across the range of sector-specific regional strategies, even where the Regional Authorities do not have a direct policy-making role or spatial boundaries do not conform to those of the statutory regions.

## 9. Conclusions

This paper has examined recent developments in spatial planning policy and related policy areas which have sought to strengthen the capacity of spatial plans to provide a focus for coordination and integration with other sectoral policies. At the regional scale, Regional Reports produced in the mid-1990s identified significant obstacles to coordination between public sector agencies involved in the provision of infrastructure and services in the Dublin and Mid-East Regions. In particular, the reports pointed to an incompatibility of regional boundaries among public sector agencies and an institutional environment characterised by narrowly defined competencies, duties and responsibilities in the context of competition between agencies for resources and policy influence as specific challenges, limiting the potential for effective policy coordination across policy sectors at the regional scale. The reports did, however, point to a potentially significant role for the Regional Authorities in relation to the coordination of infrastructure and services provision.

The Strategic Planning Guidelines and subsequent Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area have further identified the potential for spatial planning strategies to function as frameworks for policy coordination at the regional scale. The Strategic Planning Guidelines represented the start of a process whereby public sector agencies began to recognise the implications of anticipated future patterns of spatial development for the planning and provision of infrastructure and services. In particular the SPGs provided a basis for ongoing dialogue and strategic policy coordination in relation to the land-use and transportation planning, although it is apparent that the SPGs and related transportation policy strategies have not had sufficient governance capacity to ensure the alignment of spatial development patterns with strategic transportation corridors in practice.

The observation that engagement with public sector agencies in the preparation of the SPGs was dependent, to a large extent, on personal dynamics rather than formal or informal institutional relations indicates the significance of strategic thinking and vision among a small group of key actors at the institutional emergence of a shift towards strategic spatial planning. The potential for the emergence of a strategic approach to spatial planning at the regional scale with the capacity to reach across policy sectors was dependent on the existence of a governance culture, conducive to the development of institutional capacity and long-term strategic planning.

The preparation of the 2004 Regional Planning Guidelines saw the further embedding of the process of regional-scale spatial planning within the formal structures of the planning policy system and represented an opportunity to develop and strengthen the link between spatial planning policy and practice and the coordination of public service infrastructure provision. In practice, however, the extent to which the preparation of the RPGs facilitated the identification and development of a strategic approach to infrastructure and service provision was limited, in part, due to a narrow interpretation of the role and strategic function of the RPGs within a specifically planning policy context. The draft of the 2010 Regional Planning Guidelines indicates, however, a strong focus on policy coordination and functional integration in relation to infrastructure provision, economic development, and environmental management.

At the local scale, it is evident that City/County Development Plans are beginning to play a more central role in policy coordination across the sectoral departments of individual Local Authorities.

CDPs are increasingly perceived as strategic policy documents with significant potential to provide a framework for articulating the settlement strategy, economic development and service provision policy objectives of the Local Authority. It is evident, however, that capacity of Local Authority spatial plans to provide a basis for effective coordination with other public sector agencies with infrastructure provision responsibilities remains significantly limited. It may be surmised that policy coordination potential of CDPs is in part related to their capacity to reduce uncertainty in relation to the spatial distribution and scale of development over the period of the plan. It may also be noted, however, that the capacity of Local and Regional Authorities to influence the investment decisions of other public sector agencies in relation to infrastructure provision may be influenced by an enduring approach to decision-making and public service provision dominated by vertical inter-linkages within specific policy sectors rather than horizontal linkages across policy sectors at local or regional scales.

While a number of sector-specific policy areas, outside of spatial planning, have begun to adopt regional-scale strategies, there is a marked absence of standardisation and consistency of regional boundaries. These sector specific strategies constitute relatively informal or voluntary agreements with a pragmatic focus on service delivery. As a consequence they present limited opportunities for cross-sectoral policy coordination and may be associated with democratic deficits in relation to political accountability and transparency of decision-making (Salet et al. 2003b).

In some cases, however, the introduction of spatially explicit regional strategies marks a significant departure from traditional sectoral approaches to policy-making and established spatial imaginaries based exclusively on national or county boundaries. The River Basin District Management Plans, in particular, indicate the potential of strategies based on functional approaches to spatial differentiation. In other cases, however, the precise rationale for the introduction of regional structures with geographical boundaries that differ from those of the statutory Regional Authorities is unclear. A key policy coordination and information exchange role for Regional Authorities may become increasingly evident, however, given the complexity and fragmented nature of current formal and informal local and regional governance arrangements, particularly in relation to the possibly unforeseen spatial impacts of sectoral policies which operate outside of explicit spatial strategies.

The preparation of strategic spatial plans in the Dublin city-region has been characterised by successive efforts to broaden the scope of spatial planning, particularly in relation to the capacity of spatial strategies to influence the provision of infrastructure and the delivery of public services. There is evidence that regional and local scale spatial plans are beginning to perform a cross-sectoral policy coordination function. In some cases, it is apparent that public sector agencies have begun to recognise the implications of anticipated patterns of spatial development and demographic growth for future investment in infrastructure and services within the context of their own sectoral areas. City/County Development Plans are, in some cases, recognised as strategic policy documents with implications across the sectoral departments of Local Authorities, indicating a significantly enhanced status and strategic policy coordination for spatial planning within the institutional context of individual Local Authorities.

It is also evident, however, that the governance capacity of policy coordination initiatives at both regional and local scales continues to be constrained in practice by aspects of existing institutional

structures and governance cultures. The limited functions of both local and Regional Authorities and an associated disconnect between the objectives of spatial planning strategies and mechanisms for resource allocation produces uncertainty in relation to the capacity of Local and Regional Authorities to ensure the provision of infrastructure and services investment in areas identified for urban expansion or regeneration. An institutional environment characterised by competition between public sector agencies, a narrow definition of competencies and responsibilities and a fragmentation of policy-making and service delivery functions further serves to restrict the capacity of statutory spatial strategies to provide an effective framework for policy coordination.

It is apparent, however, that in the context of a shift towards the development of strategic approaches to spatial planning and policy-making, the dynamics of personal interaction among a small network of key individuals may be critical to the development of a strategic vision and institutional capacity for cross-sectoral strategy-making. The complexity of regional governance structures and fragmentation of institutional responsibilities and executive functions, characteristic of a differentiated polity context, may, however, serve to further strengthen the rationale for the adoption of the adoption of integrated cross-sectoral spatial planning strategies. It may be argued, however, that the capacity for spatial planning strategies to perform this policy coordination function is strongly dependent on their capacity to guide the spatial distribution and scale of development over the period of the plan.

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