

E-NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 13, November 2012

Welcome to the thirteenth issue of the Regional Studies Association (RSA) e-newsletter. This e-newsletter serves as a way for the Irish Branch of the Association to highlight conferences, events, publications and other developments of interest in the broad regional policy area. Contact details are included below.

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1. About the Association

The Regional Studies Association is a learned society interested in regional development, policy and research. The Association carries out a range of activities including:

- publishing a journal, newsletter and books;
- organising conferences and other meetings; and
- establishing and maintaining a branch and international section network.

It has an international membership of individuals, corporate organisations and students. The Irish Branch was formed to provide a forum to discuss regional issues in Ireland.

2. RSA News

RSA ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2013

The 2013 RSA Annual International Conference will take place in Tampere, Finland from 5th-8th May 2013. The conference theme is: *Shape and be Shaped: The Future Dynamics of Regional Development*. For further information, please contact Lesa Reynolds lesa.reynolds@regionalstudies.org.

Presentations and plenary sessions from this year's RSA Annual Conference held last May in Delft, The Netherlands can be accessed at: <http://www.regional-studies-assoc.ac.uk/index.asp>.

TEN YEARS ON: REVISITING THE NATIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY

The RSA conference entitled "Ten Years On: Revisiting the National Spatial Strategy", held in Dublin last May, sought to (i) explore the background to the current National Spatial Strategy, (ii) evaluate socio-economic developments in the 10 years since the introduction of the Strategy and (iii) identify the implications of contemporary population, settlement and economic trends. Peter Mehlbye — director of the co-ordination unit for the European Observation Network on Territorial Development and Cohesion — delivered the keynote address. A former member of the NSS advisory committee, Mr Mehlbye argued that spatial strategies in Ireland need to show greater understanding and openness towards European and global strategy, when it comes to growth and jobs. He went on to argue that it is important to consider European perspectives on "a variety of relevant themes" when processing a revisited NSS for Ireland.

All conference papers presented at the conference can be downloaded from <http://www.regional-studies-assoc.ac.uk/international-networks/rsair.asp>. A selection of the papers presented on the day will be published in a forthcoming special issue of the journal *Administration*. See Section 5 of this E-newsletter for a synopsis of three of the papers that will be featured in *Administration*.

3. Upcoming Events



The Irish Branch of the Regional Studies Association, the School of Economics UCC and the South West Regional Authority invite you to

Regional Economic Resilience A One-Day Conference

Millennium Hall, Cork
Friday 22 February 2013, 10.00-17:00

Confirmed Keynote Speakers:

Professor Ron Martin, Professor of Economic Geography, Fellow Cambridge-MIT Institute Research

Dr Adrian Healy, Cardiff School of Planning and Geography and co-ordinator of ESPON-funded leading study into economic resilience of regions in the face of economic crisis.

Registration fee: 50 Euro including lunch.

Online Registration at:

<http://www.bookyourplace.ie>

For conference updates see:

<http://www.regional-studies-assoc.ac.uk/international-networks/rsair.asp>

For further information: chris.vanegeraat@nuim.ie



Institute for Business Development and
Competitiveness, School of Economics



Údarás Réigiúnach an Iar-Dheiscirt
South West Regional Authority

Biographies Keynote Speakers



Professor Ron Martin is Professor of Economic Geography and a Fellow of the Cambridge-MIT Institute and Elected President of St Catharine's College, 2010-2013. He is a Research Associate of the Centre for Business Research attached to the Judge Business School. He is also one of the Team in the Centre for Geographical Economic Research. He holds a Professorial Fellowship at St Catharine's College. Ron's impressive list of distinctions include: The British Academy's 'Thank-Offering to Britain' Senior Research Fellowship; Academician of the Academy of Social Sciences, 2001; Selected by the American Economic Association in 2003 as one of the World's Most Cited Economists; Fellow of the British Academy, 2005.

Ron has written and/or edited over 40 books and published nearly 200 academic articles. His research interests include geographies of work, financial systems, public policy and economic development. His most recent work focuses on the concept of regional economic resilience



Dr. Adrian Healy, Cardiff School of Planning and Geography. Adrian's expertise focuses on innovation and regional economic development, combining knowledge of innovation, education and research initiatives. In this capacity he has worked with local, regional and national authorities in the UK as well as with several of the European Commission Directorate Generals and other Member States.

His experience includes working as an advisor on regional innovation to DG Research advisory groups and as an expert advisor to the ODPM House of Commons Select Committee Inquiry into Regional Disparities in Prosperity in the UK. Adrian is currently co-ordinating an EU ESPON-funded leading study into economic resilience of regions in the face of economic crisis. This includes a case study of the South West Region in Ireland

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THE GLOBAL FORUM FOR CITY
AND REGIONAL RESEARCH,
DEVELOPMENT AND POLICY

REGIONAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION IRISH BRANCH

One Day Conference

New Regional Governance in Ireland: Perspectives And Challenges

Renehan Hall, NUI Maynooth
Monday 21 January 2013, 10.00-17:00

The recently announced *Action Programme for Local Government* includes substantial changes to the organisation of regional government and governance in Ireland. The current eight regional authorities and two regional assemblies will disappear and be replaced by three regional assemblies.. The Irish branch of the RSA invites you to a one-day conference on the theme of “*new regional governance in Ireland: perspectives and challenges*”.

Confirmed speakers:

Mr. Phil Hogan T.D. - Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government

Professor John Tomaney - Professor of Urban and Regional Planning in the Bartlett School of Planning, University College London. (*Speaker sponsored by the National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis*)

Registration fee: 50 Euro including lunch.

Online Registration at:

<http://www.bookyourplace.ie>

For conference updates see:

<http://www.regional-studies-assoc.ac.uk/international-networks/rsair.asp>

For further information: chris.vanegeraat@nuim.ie



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THE GLOBAL FORUM FOR CITY
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DEVELOPMENT AND POLICY

REGIONAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION IRISH BRANCH

New Regional Governance in Ireland

Keynote Speaker



Prof. John Tomaney is Professor of Urban and Regional Planning in the Bartlett School of Planning, University College London. Previously he was Henry Daysh Professor of Regional Development and Director of the Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies (CURDS), Newcastle University. He is an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Geography and Environmental Sciences at Monash University, Melbourne; Visiting Professor in CURDS, Newcastle University; Associate Director of the UK Spatial Economics Research Centre (SERC) and is an Academician of the Academy of Social Science (UK). He is also a Research Fellow of the Smith Institute, London and a Fellow of the Regional Australia Institute. Much of his work has focused on the role of regional institutions in facilitating economic development. He has published widely on this topic and undertaken research for international organisations, governments and NGOs.

GEOGRAPHY CELEBRATES 50 YEARS AT NUI GALWAY WITH PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY SYMPOSIUM

Date: 16 November 2012

Venue: Moore Institute Seminar Room, NUI Galway

The appointment in 1962 of Breandán Mac Aodha as lecturer in geography within the Department of Geology marked the introduction of this academic discipline to NUI Galway. It was soon to be established as an independent department and following recent restructuring it is now aligned with Archaeology to form one of the largest and most vibrant Schools in the College of Arts, Social Sciences & Celtic Studies. Over the course of 50 years, Geography has built a strong reputation for research and teaching excellence. Staffed by a predominantly youthful team that has been recruited from three continents, there is a strong commitment to ensuring all students, currently numbering over 1400 undergraduates and 40 postgraduates, together with several post-doctoral research and teaching fellows, enjoy an engaging and dynamic university experience in terms of teaching, research and civic engagement.

Various members of staff in Geography have built a strong international reputation for excellence in research, with recent successes including EU Framework 7, Marie Curie, INTERREG, EPA, PRTL 4, IRCHSS and Hardiman funded research projects. There are research clusters focusing on: Environmental Change; Geopolitics and Governmentality; Planning and Sustainability; and Rural Studies. To mark the 50th anniversary of the Geography in NUI Galway, these clusters will hold events throughout the academic year 2012-13 that will celebrate the work and scholarship of its students and staff and provide an opportunity for the public to engage with some of the key debates and research in the discipline. The first such event is a symposium showcasing the work of the Planning and Sustainability Cluster and will take place on Friday the 16th of November 2012 in the Moore Institute Seminar Room, near to the Bank of Ireland campus branch. Welcoming this initiative Professor Micheál Ó Cinnéide, acting Head of School of Geography and Archaeology, and leading contributor to this field over many years, stated that members of the public are especially welcome to attend this and related events throughout the year.

The Planning and Sustainability Cluster unites research interests that relate to the analysis of social and environmental problems arising within the context of an increasingly globalised world. Research within this cluster is conducted at a host of scales and involves a wide range of actors and social structures with a special focus on the transformative power of alternative visions that often emerge in the context of resistance movements, urban and regional planning practices or in the formation of sustainable policies and lifestyles; and as a result, analyses require a diverse range of methodological approaches. Thematic and theoretical work within this group remains anchored in a shared belief of the need to critically interrogate policies and representations that contribute to the persistence of non-sustainable social practices.

In the morning researchers in the cluster will present overviews of their current work which spans topical issues such as planning for sustainable food futures, imagining new urban design, marine spatial policy and planning, and exploring questions such as what is the potential of the arts and creativity sector to sustain rural and Gaeltacht communities? What will household washing, eating and energy practices be like in 2050? The day will also include a panel of geographers and planners from around Ireland discussing potential impacts of recent amendments to the local and regional planning regulations in Ireland. In the afternoon new researchers and graduate students researching in Geography in NUI Galway will present overviews of their cutting edge research exploring planning and sustainability topics such as public participation in flood management in Ireland, the planning of eco-villages and alternative forms of settlement in the Irish context and research exploring the relationships between quality of life, standards of living and environmental behavior.

Please see the following website <http://www.nuigalway.ie/geography/research/ps.html> for up-to-date details of the schedule for the day.

RSA ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2013

Date: 5th - 8th May 2013

Venue: University of Tampere, Tampere, Finland

The 2013 RSA Annual International Conference will take place in Tampere, Finland from 5th-8th May 2013. The conference theme is: *Shape and be Shaped: The Future Dynamics of Regional Development*.

For further information, please contact Lesa Reynolds lesa.reynolds@regionalstudies.org.

If you have a submission or suggestion on any upcoming events, seminars, presentations or conferences and would like them to be included in a future edition, please email newsletter@regionalstudies.ie

4. Funding Opportunities

SFI Conferences and Workshops Funding

Science Foundation Ireland's Conference and Workshop Programme supports conferences and workshops which enable Irish research bodies to contribute to international scientific debates, and which encourage industry-informed research and foster academic-industrial collaborations to build competitive advantage for Ireland. Events should focus on topics of timely importance in the broad areas of science, mathematics and engineering.

There are six different award types within the Conference and Workshop Programme, namely Conferences, Exceptional Conferences, Workshops, Academic-Industrial Workshops, Events Raising Public Awareness of Science, Mathematics and Engineering, and Conference Bids. Different award types are eligible for different maximum funding amounts.

Applications may be submitted at any time during the year subject to the following criteria:

- Applications may not be submitted more than 12 months in advance of an event, with the exception of Exceptional Conferences.
- Conference applications must be submitted at least 6 months in advance of the event.
- Workshop applications must be submitted at least 3 months in advance of the event.
- Public Awareness Event applications must be submitted at least 3 months in advance of the event.

Conference Bid applications must be submitted 3 months before the final bid presentation (and not more than 12 months in advance of the final bid presentation).

For further details see: <http://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/open-calls/sfi-conferences-and-workshops/>

If you are aware of, or your organisation is responsible for the administration of, funding opportunities and you would like them to be included in a future edition, please email newsletter@regionalstudies.ie

5. Publications of Interest

- **PUBLISHED PAPERS/WORKING PAPERS**

Title: Shrink Smarter? Planning for Spatial Selectivity in Population Growth in Ireland

Author(s): Gavin Daly and Rob Kitchin, National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis, NUI Maynooth

Date Published: November 2012

Publication details: Administration (forthcoming)

One of the most fundamental but overlooked questions in shaping a national territorial development strategy is how to manage spatial development in regions not selected for new growth. The Irish National Spatial Strategy (NSS) is ostensibly a policy exercise in spatial selectivity where clear choices have been made as to where to target future population growth. The failure of policy to implement the NSS to date can be largely attributed to the difficult political process in practice of identifying 'winners' and 'losers'. In order to achieve the public consensus required for effective implementation, a revised NSS will need to pay greater attention to the residual regions. This will require a greater societal acceptance that population growth cannot occur everywhere and population decline and stagnation may become the normal pathway for some regions. This paper explores planning governance models of how to manage decline, drawing on the emerging international research agenda of 'shrinkage planning' and 'degrowth', and how this might be applied in the Irish context. In so doing, the paper provides policymakers with the genesis of a new conceptual toolbox and open up new research questions as to how to proactively design and accommodate depopulation.

Title: The National Spatial Strategy: Rationale, Process, Performance and Prospects

Author(s): Jim Walsh, Geography Department, NUI Maynooth

Date Published: November 2012

Publication details: Administration (forthcoming)

Ten years after the publication of the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) in 2002 it is timely to reflect on how it was prepared and implemented so that its suitability as a national overarching framework can be assessed. The NSS was a pioneering and innovative project both in terms of process and content. Implementation has resulted in a number of initiatives that will bring long term benefits but overall there have been weaknesses and inconsistencies in the political and administrative commitment. The context for economic development in Ireland now and for the medium term are very different from when the NSS was formulated, in addition the theoretical understanding of regional development processes and of the contribution that strategic spatial planning can make have also changed. This paper concludes that a National Spatial Strategy is still very necessary and that the current NSS requires some revision. This should be guided by up to date spatial analysis conducted at a detailed level, and also take account of current theoretical perspectives on regional development. In addition there is also scope to learn from the experience in regard to implementation over the past decade.

Title: Gateways, hubs, and regional specialisation in the National Spatial Strategy
Author(s): Chris van Egeraat, Proinnsias Breathnach (Department of Geography & National Institute for Regional & Spatial Analysis, National University of Ireland Maynooth) and Declan Curran (DCU Business School)
Date Published: November 2012
Publication details: Administration (forthcoming)

The National Spatial Strategy, launched in 2002, aimed to counteract the continued concentration of employment and population in the Greater Dublin Area through the selective development of a set of regional centres termed “gateways” and a further of urban centres termed “hub”. The objective was that these gateways and hubs would become drivers of regional growth through the creation therein of specialised enterprise bases capable of competing directly in international markets. This paper examines the extent to which progress has been made towards the achievement of this objective, some ten years after the strategy’s introduction.

Title: Perspectives on Ireland’s economic geography: An evaluation of spatial structures
Author(s): David Meredith (Teagasc), Jim Walsh, and Ronan Foley (Geography Department, NUI Maynooth)
Date Published: November 2012
Publication details: Administration (forthcoming)

This paper evaluates two competing visions of Ireland’s spatial structure associated with the National Spatial Strategy. We trace the evolving conceptualisation of economic space that occurred as the strategy was developed and highlight a shift in emphasis from functional areas to polycentric places. Research is presented evaluating which of these two different spatial perspectives more accurately reflects patterns of economic development. An analysis of travel-to-work data produced by the CSO from the 2006 Census of Population is undertaken using the European Regionalisation Algorithm. This research identifies spatial structures that correspond to the spatial vision set out in the National Spatial Strategy. The paper concludes by highlighting critical pieces of research that are required if the strategy is to have relevance to the current challenges confronting the country.

If you wish to have a recently published book/paper listed in this section of future newsletters, please e-mail details formatted as above to newsletter@regionalstudies.ie

6. OVERVIEW OF THE ACTION PROGRAMME FOR EFFECTIVE LOCAL GOVERNMENT

After almost eighteen months of expectation, frustration and indeed criticism, the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government has finally got Government approval for his local government reform statement. Against the backdrop of argument on the rights and wrongs of local property charges, the possible introduction of water charges and a general efficiency drive in local government which has seen savings of over €850 million, the Minister is proposing a surprisingly radical reform programme.

The Action Programme sets out in clear and succinct manner, reforms which, if implemented, will fundamentally alter the local governance environment and will return local government to the core of public service delivery at the local level. While there will be concerns about many of the reforms proposed in the Action Programme, from within local government and across other parts of the public sector, it is also clear that the Programme will bring considerable opportunity to move from an increasingly disaggregated local governance context to one more fitting of a 21st century advanced society. There will be many who will seek to protect their current positions and role at both local and national level. The question now is whether there is the political leadership to deliver a reform programme in order to avoid it becoming another well meaning document with little effect.

The Programme is set out in 6 parts which include:

Part 1: Vision for Local Government in Ireland

Part 2 Local Government Functions-Doing more for the Economy, Enterprise and the Local Community

Part 3: A Local Government System for the 21st Century

Part 4: Local Government Soundly Funded, Working Better, Serving the Community

Part 5: Good Governance, Strong Leadership, Democratic Accountability

Part 6: Taking Matters Forward

A Vision at last?

The Minister sets out an overall vision for local government. He seeks to deliver a system where local government will be the *"main vehicle of governance and public service at local level: Leading economic, social and community development, delivering efficient and good value services, and representing citizens and local communities effectively and accountably"*.

The Action Programme sets out four specific targets which have to be achieved:

- 1) Development of a more self-reliant system of local government which will have less of a dependency-based relationship with central government.
- 2) Enhancing the capacity of local government in promoting economic development and social progress, including the well-being of communities, and supporting job creation efforts and economic recovery generally;
- 3) Improving the credibility of, and levels of confidence generally in, the local government system and thereby positioning it more favourably to undertake a wider role in the future;
- 4) Ensuring that the local government system evolves in a way consistent with and supportive of the overall public service reform agenda and the restoration of the public finances.

The Programme, importantly, is clearly informed by the on-going thinking of the Council of Europe as it develops its policy on local democracy. The Programme also acknowledges the importance of the work of the Local Government Efficiency Review and the completion of the reports on the mergers of Limerick, Tipperary and Waterford. Finally, a critical input to the development of the reform programme is the work of the Local Government and Local Development Steering Group which only recently completed its work. For once, arguably, local government reform is now placed within a relatively well developed understanding of the pressures and challenges confronting local communities, something long called for by commentators.

Achieving his vision will be a challenge. The Action Programme acknowledges the need to re-focus local government, particularly towards economic, social and community development. For too long local authorities have struggled with the label of being only interested in infrastructure, something which has held back the mainstreaming of much social and economic innovation in the system, particularly in the past decade. In addition, and after over ninety years of independence, the penny seems to have finally dropped that local government provides a unique platform on which the general delivery of public services could be based. In making this recognition the Minister has rolled back a long term trend of isolating local government from social and economic development. Doing so now presents the local authorities with a great challenge, that of shifting their focus and culture to become the leaders in public service delivery at the local level. This is critical if the local government system is to expand its range of functions beyond the present narrow remit. There will be many who will not want this to happen but at least, if the reforms are fully implemented, the local authorities now at last will have an opportunity to prove their role in the national context. Specifically the action plan sees a local government system which will have a key role in local economic development. This will include the integration of the enterprise boards already announced by the Government. More fundamentally, the local government system is to be given statutory powers in regard to economic development where they will take the lead role locally. A specific strategic policy committee will be put in place in each authority to ensure that the necessary re-focusing of local government policy to underpin economic development is in place across the country. A key aspect of this will be the integration of spatial planning with economic development planning through a radical revision to the current planning policy framework, something which will be particularly welcomed by local authorities.

Local government is also, on foot of the recommendations of the Local Government and Local Development Steering group, to become central to the planning and oversight of local and community development. A socio-economic committee will be put in place for such planning and oversight of local and community development along with an inter-departmental committee to secure a whole of government approach. A central feature of this work will, in line with current thinking on EU rural development policy, be the preparation of a 5 year City/County Local and Community Plan which in turn will form a part of the reconfigured City/County Development Plan. Such planning will in turn facilitate the alignment of local and community development programme areas with City/County boundaries. This approach will provide a real opportunity to deliver an integrated planning framework from the immediacy of local community based planning in the smallest of communities through to the County level strategic planning that is a necessary feature of competitive, inclusive and sustainable societies.

The Programme envisages an on-going devolution of responsibilities to local government in areas such as the environment, water, foreshore licensing, local/community development, food safety, roads and traffic, housing and energy efficiency. In addition to the devolution of micro

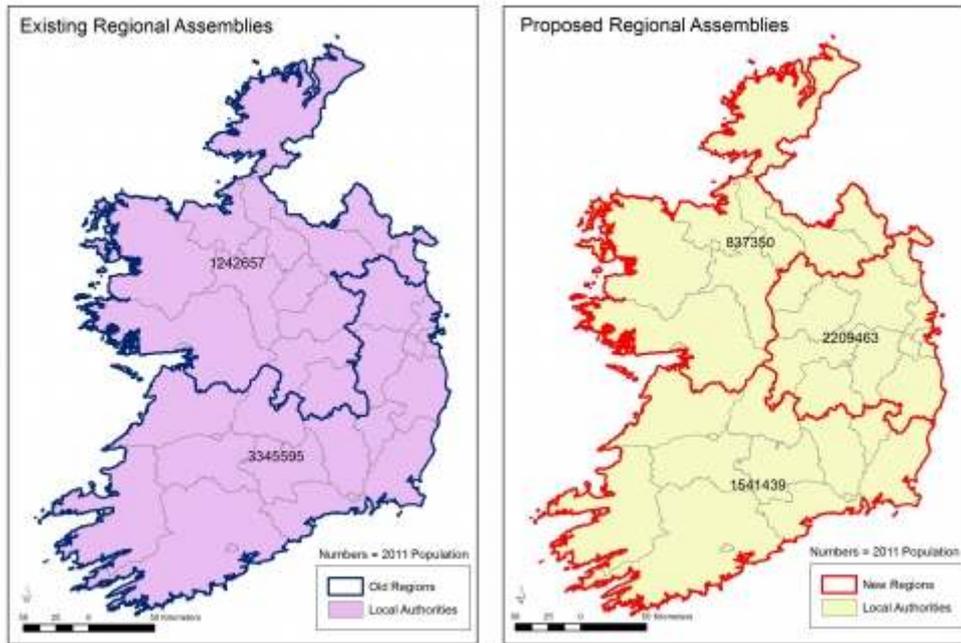
enterprise functions, it is expected that there will be additional devolution of functions from other Government Departments and State Agencies in transport, tourism, sport, management of State property and heritage sites, flood management and relief, and related infrastructure development. Further scope for devolution will be applied as the Programme is implemented. In light of these reforms the role of the county and city development boards will be phased out.

The Structures

One of the on-going debates about local government is that of whether it is appropriate to continue to use a largely 19th century model for a 21st century society. The Programme acknowledges the role which county government plays as an inherent part of Irish identity but in one of the most radical proposals in regard to public service reform generally the focus of local government is towards the municipal level. This is a marked shift away from policy since independence. The Programme in effect is proposing a shift towards a more European model of a district municipality which will centre on the critical role of the town. In doing so the opportunity to radically shake up membership in local government will arise with municipal district members also taking on the role of county councillor. This will see a significant reduction in overall local representation. As a result the Irish local authority system will move towards an even more outlying position in European terms albeit that the municipal focus of membership will be more complementary to European models. Effectively there will be a single administrative/operational system in 31 authorities rather than the 34 authorities as is currently the case. More significantly the municipal districts will allow for greater intra-county service reconfiguration thus opening the potential for further service efficiencies. More significantly and in the context of local government taking on the role of the primary public service platform the opportunity to move towards a shared public service vehicle is now a realistic option. In doing so Ireland can at last begin to catch up on shared services reforms now a norm in other parts of the OECD.

In the case of Dublin there is, appropriately, recognition that reform needs to be treated quite separately from the rest of the local government system. Simplistic solutions will not work in Dublin and it is better to look at international competitive city-regions as models for a future reconfiguration of Dublin. The Minister is proposing to maintain existing arrangements in the Dublin area until after the 2014 election at which point a colloquium of all members in the three Dublin County Councils and the City Council will examine the future governance of Dublin. The number of regional authorities and assemblies will reduce from ten to three with three new regional assemblies, Connacht-Ulster, Southern Region (incl Munster and counties Carlow, Kilkenny and Wexford), and Eastern-Midland (incl the counties of Leinster other than those in the Southern Region). These assemblies will be responsible for regional strategies, certain EU functions and, importantly, the direct oversight of the constituent local authorities.

Figure 1: Existing and Proposed Regional Assemblies



Source: Van Egeraat and Foley (2012) <http://irelandafternama.wordpress.com/2012/10/16/new-regional-assemblies-announced/>

Funding

The Irish local authorities have already undertaken a significant level of internal re-structuring effectively amalgamating town councils into the county councils. In addition, general efficiencies have resulted in a broad reduction of €850 million in day to day spending and the reduction of over 23% of staff. Thus the local government system has made the biggest sectoral contribution to the reduction of administrative costs in the Irish public service. A dedicated Programme Management Office is in place leading a shared services process while a sectoral shared services plan is nearing completion. Notwithstanding this progress it is evident given the general state of the national exchequer that further savings will be called for. As highlighted previously such savings will not come from the simple amalgamation of local authorities. What is required is a whole of government view where the local authority can become the platform through which other public services can be delivered. This thinking is clearly set out in the Programme marking a shift towards understanding the norms of reform in counties with more advanced systems of public management. The key will be to break down the silos which still pertain in Ireland, something which is implicitly acknowledged in the Action Programme.

A further important initiative, again bringing Irish local government into line with other OECD members, is the introduction of nationally based performance indicators which will demonstrate a local authority's overall performance in specific services. This is something which some individual local authorities have sought to apply. The general setting of service standards and the completion of contracts for service delivery across the system, something which could have general application across all of the public service, is a welcome move. On the issue of funding the commitment to introduce a local property tax with built in flexibility for variation at local level is noted. In particular the capacity to target taxes to meet specific local expectations within the municipal structures is suggested providing the opportunity for more flexible funding at local level.

Good Governance

With the capacity to raise own funding comes the added responsibility of being accountable to the local community. The Programme addresses the need for greater effectiveness of the elected members in setting policy and applying oversight to key features of local democracy throughout the OECD. A range of measures are set out. The renewal of corporate governance will be underpinned by a National Oversight and Audit Commission which will include independent appraisal. Regional Oversight will be provided through the new regional assemblies while local audit committees will be given a statutory footing. In line with the Programme for Government a re-balancing of the councillor-manager relationship will take place. This will include a revised role for the County/City Manager, to be named Chief Executive Officer, again something in line with the norms of other local government systems. The two representative bodies, the AMAI and the ACC will merge while a revised local government ethics code will now be incorporated into the national legislative framework which applies across the full public sector. The work of the Mahon Tribunal is acknowledged, with the decision to remove application of Section 140 of the Local Government Act, 2001 to planning decisions. In addition, and acknowledging the reduction of local members, initiatives to enhance public participation and engagement will be undertaken.

Implementation

Much of the Programme will have a short implementation phase given the commitment to implement the reforms before the local government elections in 2014. This means that the legislation required to underpin the post 2014 councils, particularly the new municipal districts is now becoming urgent. A key aspect of the structures will have to be addressed before the end of the year with a Statutory Boundary Commission while an independent implementation oversight group will also have to be put in place. There will be concern that this can be achieved given that there is likely to be some resistance to the proposals in the Reform Programme. This will require considerable political leadership at local, but most particularly, at national level. In a relatively short time it will become evident that the frustrations of the past 18 months, if not decade, can be put aside to be replaced by a sense of optimism that change really is in the offing.

7. Regional Policy: What's New?

LAUNCH OF CREATIVE EDGE PROJECT

The Whitaker Institute for Innovation and Societal Change will launch the Creative Edge project on November the 29th 2012. The project is designed to be an increase in the active participation of local creative organisations and businesses in global markets and equally in their ability to attract and utilise local emerging creative talent in these markets. This Creative Edge is sponsored by the Northern Periphery Programme.

The project will be launched by the award winning Garry Hynes, recently returned from a successful tour of the Druid Tom Murphy plays throughout the US and UK. Druid Theatre company have successfully championed the cause of creative activity in the periphery for the past 30 years. The project launch will be followed by an evening of creative display at NUI Galway.

COMMISSION FOR THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL AREAS

The Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government, Phil Hogan TD, has announced (5.11.2012) that Pat Spillane will be the Chairman of the new Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA). The Commission is established under the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government and will be supported by an Executive led by Prof. Cathal O'Donoghue, Head of the Teagasc Rural Economy and Development Programme in collaboration with officials in the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government and the Western Development Commission for the research and consultation process.

The Commission will involve 3 stages:

- A nationwide consultation of rural stakeholders including employers, unions, farm bodies, community organisation and the public sector
- Research and analysis of economic factors affecting rural areas
- The preparation of a report supporting the medium-term economic development of the Rural Areas for the period to 2025

The Commission has a defined remit and timeframe and its main output will be a report that aims to inform medium term economic development of rural areas for the period to 2025. The report will be short and specific and will take a multi-sectoral approach. The Public Consultation process will include 17 public meetings to be held all over the country in January, March and April of 2013. The full Commission will also meet each month (except March) until October 2013 when it is planned to publish the report. Outside of the public consultation process there will also be a number of individual stakeholder meetings with civil society organisations representing among others, Youth, Farmers, Women, Older people, Academic Institutions and Government Departments and relevant state agencies.

A practical contribution of the Commission will be the recruitment of a group of interns under the Job Bridge programme, who will train with the Commission and get skills in Event Management, Research, Web technology, Media, Administration and Project Management.

For further details see:

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Community/RuralDevelopment/News/MainBody,31400,en.htm>

€1.93 MILLION METROPOLITAN AREA NETWORK (MAN) ACTIVATED IN KILRUSH

The €1.93 million Metropolitan Area Network (MAN) has been activated in Kilrush, County Clare, providing the West Clare town with advanced broadband and telecommunications infrastructure. Kilrush is the first County Clare town where a MAN has been activated since the Government launch of the programme in 2004.

Limerick-based company e|net is manager and operator of the Kilrush MAN and is responsible for offering a variety of products to broadband service providers so they in turn can deliver high speed broadband services to their retail customers throughout the town. There are currently two service providers providing services on the Kilrush MAN. The overall cost of the completed Kilrush MAN is €1.93 million comprising a Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources grant of €1.75 million and 5% contributions (€96,255) each from Clare County Council and Shannon Development, both members of the Shannon Broadband Limited consortium.

Commenting on the significance of the MAN for Kilrush, Dr. Vincent Cunnane, Chief Executive, Shannon Development and Chairman of Shannon Broadband said, "As an early advocator of broadband facilities through our drive to set up the Shannon Broadband initiative, we are delighted to see the activation of the Kilrush MAN and we wish e|net every success with the management of this vital piece of telecoms infrastructure. Ensuring fast, cost effective broadband services is key to attracting inward investment and creating more jobs in the future and this new network sends a clear message to potential investors that Kilrush is at the cutting edge of information technology."

Further information relating to the Metropolitan Area Network (MAN) programme is available from www.E-NET.ie .

Source: Shannondevelopment.ie <http://www.shannondevelopment.ie>

8. Contacting the RSA Newsletter

This is the twelfth e-newsletter of the Irish Branch of the Regional Studies Association. The next E-Newsletter is due for circulation in March 2013.

If you have any queries regarding the newsletter, or any comments, suggestions or submissions for future editions (incl. details on upcoming events, publications of interest, job vacancies), please email chris.vanegeraat@nuim.ie

PLEASE NOTE: the closing date for receipt of submissions is the first day of the month of the next issue.

9. Membership of the RSA

Membership of the Association is open to all individuals and organisations with an interest in the analysis and development of regional policy.

The benefits of membership include nine issues of the international journal *Regional Studies*, four issues of *Regions: The Newsletter of the Regional Studies Association* (overall body), three issues of *Spatial Economic Analysis*, discount on other Routledge publications, access to Association events, and ability to participate in any local branch or section activities.

Membership is based on the calendar year. For the year 2012, membership costs are: Individual £81 (€91); Student £37 (€42); Associate Membership £61 (€69); Corporate £165 (€186). Further details and application forms can be found on the RSA international website: www.regional-studies-assoc.ac.uk.

10. Current Irish Committee Members

The current RSA committee for 2011 are: Chris Van Egeraat (NUIM - Chairman); Patrick Collins (NUI Galway – Hon. Secretary); Micheál Collins (TCD – Hon. Secretary); Edgar Morgenroth (ESRI); David Hogan (Shannon Development); David Meredith (Teagasc); Ronnie O’Toole (NIB); Sean O’Riordain; Philip O’Connor (Dublin Employment Pact); Finbarr Brereton (UCD); Simon Conry (National Transport Authority); Jamie Cudden (Dublin City Council); Celine McHugh (Forfas); Deiric O’Broin (DCU); Damian Thomas (NESC); Brendan Williams (UCD); Declan Curran (DCU); Jim Fitzpatrick; Dieter Kogler (UCD); William O’Gorman (WIT);

The following are the contact details of the Association. We strongly encourage communication by e-mail.

RSA Chairman Chris Van Egeraat: chris.vanegeraat@nuim.ie

RSA Secretary Patrick Collins

11. Joining/Leaving the RSA (Irish Branch) Mailing List

If you wish to have your details added to the RSA mailing list please e-mail chris.vanegeraat@nuim.ie

To have your details removed from the RSA mailing list please e-mail chris.vanegeraat@nuim.ie

The RSA updates its mailing list approximately once every six weeks.

A pdf copy of this newsletter is available on the RSA website at <http://www.regional-studies-assoc.ac.uk/international-networks/rsair.asp>