Performance of planning systems and responses to dispersed urban growth at the regional level.

A comparison of approaches in France and Ireland over the period 1990 - 2006

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## University College Dublin

# Performance of planning systems and responses to dispersed urban growth at the regional level. A comparison of approaches in France and Ireland over the period 1990 – 2006

Flora Orsini [a] and Brendan Williams [a,b,*]

[a] UCD Urban Institute Ireland
[b] UCD School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Policy

## Abstract

Land use and its regulation is an essential component of national economic development policy. Recent growth experience presents realities of emerging development patterns differing substantially from international best practice as represented by the European Spatial Development Perspective (1999). In particular many areas are experiencing a more dispersed pattern of development into previously undeveloped fringe or peri-urban areas. The negative externalities associated with sprawl are recognised as reducing individual well-being and are often inequitable in terms of their geographic spread. Potential measures to create a more positive environmental context including urban containment and improved public transport have been identified as policy aspirations. However localised development pressure and inadequate governance and management structures often negate such policies. Robust evidence based research on existing development trends and its implications are therefore essential in assisting in the development and management of effective policies for sustainable urban development. University College Dublin (UCD) is carrying out international policy based research on alternative planning and development policies based upon selected case studies including Dublin. The work is related to ongoing work at UCD which examines the issues surrounding the outward spread of urban development and sprawl patterns of housing development activity as experienced in recent years in Ireland, France and other regions in Europe. The purpose of this paper is to compare how rapid urbanisation and city sprawl is dealt with in Ireland and France incorporating results from structured interviews with planning and policy making officials. The policy responses are examined in two contrasted planning systems, one of them quite recent (Ireland) and the other (France) which is based on a longer tradition of planning management by a central state.

**Keywords:** *Urban sprawl; urban policy; planning; development; regions; Ireland; France.*

## 1. Introduction

*1.1 Urbanisation and Sprawl*

There is a wide ranging debate ongoing on these issues internationally with various interests and political perspectives represented. Those against sprawl and in favour of regulation tend to argue from the wider environmental and transport perspectives with an obvious focus on travel and energy emission minimisation (Williams and Sheils, 2002). These arguments state that provision of a wide variety of public services including mass transit options can only be realistically delivered by a

managed development process (Nechyba and Walsh, 2004). This involves the use of scarce public investment resources in their most efficient manner and supports internal and external accessibility which is a key factor in economic competitiveness and achieving environmentally sustainable development.

Proponents of dispersed development focus on the individual's right to private property and evidence of consumer preference for larger dwellings in green field settings. Arguments often include examples of economically successful fast growing urban regions of USA versus a lack of economic growth in more regulated European development markets (Rusk, 1999). Such arguments challenge energy/environmental concerns and presume cheap energy costs can be maintained and developed in the future. This debate which is strong in the US also appears conditioned by the particular racial and political issues which are stronger in these city regions than elsewhere (Squire, 2002). The argument then moves from a managerial or economic focus to a political one of whether a system should push inhabitants to live with, and within, groups or neighbourhoods which they may not wish to choose (Sassen, 2001).

Other city regions particularly throughout Europe have not yet experienced social polarisation to the same extent and broadly accept a consensus that the continued economic and social contribution of major urban/city areas remains vital to general/national development aims (World Bank, 2003). Acceptance of forms of regional development management and regulation, while subject to challenge, often follows.

Over the 15 years until 2006 and 2007, Ireland experienced an unprecedented demographic and economic growth, accompanied by an increased demand for consumption of goods, services and housing (Williams, 2000). Added to a previous preference for rural life and affordability difficulties in city centres, this has led to a widening of the Commuting Belt (McCarthy, 2001). The task of providing enough land to match the demand for housing and organising the city on a functional and sustainable pattern has become the main current challenge for planners in the Greater Dublin Area. By comparison, the economic and demographic growth in France over the same period of approximately 15 years was much lower after the three decades of economic and demographic expansion following World War II.

Following a review of the urban sprawl phenomenon and a description of the main relevant features in the Irish and French planning systems, the examples of the Greater Dublin Area in Ireland and the Aix-Marseille urban area in France are examined in order to compare and contrast both metropolitan areas in their attempts to address the issue of managed urban development. These examples are illustrated by two case studies, one on Fingal County in the Greater Dublin Area, and the other one on three communes from the Aix-Marseille metropolitan area: Gignac, Veloux and Saint-Maximin.

*1.2. Emergence of urban sprawl*

Urban sprawl has occurred mainly in Northern America and in Europe from the 1950s onwards. Explanations for this phenomenon have been numerous and the causes are very complex, but the main driving factors cited include the purchasing power of households, the higher prices of housing in city centres and the new mobility opportunities given by car possession (Richardson and Bae, 2004). An individual preference for own-family houses is also noted (Duany et al., 2000; Gilham, 2002).

Public powers tend to be concerned at the phenomenon and try to limit it because of the economic, social and environmental consequences of sprawl on their territories. Low densities do not permit the

organisation of an efficient public transport system and encourage the increasing use of private car for commuting, shopping and leisure activities.

This can have important consequences on road traffic and security, creating congestion and an increased rate of car accidents and pollution. The cost of congestion is important for households and firms, pollution and accidents can also be seen as a major cost to the community. Today, children who are too young to drive, the elderly who are too old to drive and those who are physically incapable of driving are consigned to a life of being transported everywhere by others (Gehl and Gemzoe, 2000). Furthermore, the increasing cost of transport is placed on households and enterprises. If we take into consideration the fact that some of the most remote households have moved to the peri-urban fringe because they could not afford to purchase housing closer to the city centre or employment centres, they would be very vulnerable if a major crisis in petrol prices were to occur.

On the environmental dimension, the spatial expansion of the city provokes a greater consumption of natural and agricultural space, which can be considered as a non renewable resource. Through the increase in car use, it also generates local and global pollutions. The pace of urbanisation can also threaten some natural resources like water quality, since the infrastructure and particularly water supply, sewage and waste management do not immediately follow the production of settlements. It also contributes to a uniformity of landscapes and often a loss of natural habitats and ultimately biodiversity. For these different reasons, public authorities have implemented policies in order to tackle urban sprawl and to organise functionally the urban growth and the spatial distribution of housing and employment.

*1.3. Recent development trends and policies in Ireland and France*

Following sustained economic growth, urban expansion in Ireland began later than in the rest of Europe. This is due to natural positive in-migration from other parts of Ireland, or other countries, and the reduction of the size of the average household. This has provoked a recent and very significant sprawl around Dublin, enlarging the commuter belt up to 90 km from its city centre (Williams and Sheils, 2002, 2007).Moreover the new employment sectors have also moved to the emerging edge cities or business parks in the suburbs. This development occurred in the nineties when no strategic policy was in place to provide a guiding framework or controls. The first planning strategy introduced at the regional level, the Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area dates from 1999. Since then, the planning system has been reformed by the Planning and Development Act in 2000 and sustainable development has taken a more important role during these years in Irish public policy.

According to the document 'Sustainable Development, A Strategy for Ireland' published in 1997, sustainable development in the context of spatial planning should include:

1   Encouraging careful location of residential, commercial and industrial uses,
2   Planning and making effective use of existing developed urban areas,
3   Integrated strategic, economic and social planning.

However, whether these sustainable development principles were implemented by local authorities, or vigorously encouraged by central government, is open to argument.

Achieving sustainable planning and development is the objective of the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) (2002) and the regional Planning Guidelines (RPG), but local authorities may not be satisfied by this strategy especially if it means they should minimise development in their functional area with future revenue or financial implications.

In France, local government can raise taxes on housing or on enterprises located in their territory. Of course, they also have greater costs taking care of the new inhabitants and firms. In Ireland, local authorities have less financial independence and a greater dependence on central government. However, the developed communes also have more independent financial resources.

Half the population of France was still living in rural areas in 1950. By 2006 rural dwellers represented 24% of the population. Urban growth, nourished by the baby-boom, the rural exodus and immigration, increased during the period from the 1950s until the 1980s. Complex factors can explain that this growth, rapidly taking place in peri-urban fringes, resulted in a spatial extension of agglomerations out of proportion to the increase in population. Until the late 1990s, no global strategy at the level of the agglomerations was implemented, except for the Paris region. In the period up to 1982 the planning authority was the Prefect, that is the representative of the State at local level, and after the Acts of 1982 planning permissions were given by the Municipal Council. Some sector specific public policies influencing urban sprawl were also implemented by the central government, such as initiatives relating to transportation infrastructure, housing policies supporting low-income households and residential purchase schemes and planning tools facilitating own-family house developments.

During the 1980s two important Acts were adopted to protect the most vulnerable areas – the Mountain and Coastal Zones. These laws aim to limit urbanisation in these particular areas. The main political change occurred in the late 1990s with the introduction of three Acts: the Guidance Act on Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development of the Territory (1999) and the Act on Reinforcement and Simplification of Communal Cooperation (1999). These give a way of reorganising local government and taking the metropolitan level into account. The Act on Urban Solidarity and Renewal (2000) creates new planning documents with a reinforced hierarchy and supports territorial coherence and policy integration. It explicitly mentions the limitation of urban sprawl as one of its objectives. It is too early at present to assess these policies since the patterns they are supposed to create cannot be seen in the short term.

The Paris region is an exception. Urban growth was historically very concentrated and intensive in this region. As well, the political, economic and cultural imperatives were to balance national development and avoiding the development of a dominant Paris in a French Desert (Gravier, 1947). To avoid urban sprawl emanating from Paris, a Master Plan on Development and Urbanism for the Paris Region was written by the state administration (i.e. the representatives at the regional level of the central government). It created 5 new towns 30 km from Paris, trying to achieve a polycentric pattern of development. In the meantime it organised a network of public rail transport on radial ways out or to Paris. From 1982 to 1999 population increased by 8.7% and spatial urban extension by 17.5%. By comparison, between 1960 and 2000 the Montpellier agglomeration's population has doubled, from 200,000 to 400,000 inhabitants and the spatial extension of the built-up area has increased tenfold (1,000ha to 10,000 ha) (Montpellier Agglomération, 2006). It seems that even if the Master Plans did not completely reach their objectives, they contributed to a reduction of the intensity of urban sprawl in Paris region.

Table 1 – Some macroeconomic figures on Ireland and France

| | GDP Growth 1995-2006 | GDP/capita in PPS in 2004, % of EU average | Unemployment rate | Population (Million) | Population growth | Urban population |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| France | +26.4% | 111% | 9% (2nd quarter 2006) | 62.9 | 2.77% between 1999-2004 | 80% |
| Ireland | +100% | 139% of EU average (<70% in the late 80s) | 4.24% (CSO, May 2005) rising to above 10% in 2009. | 4.2 (2006) | 8.1% between 2002-2006 | 60% |

### 1.3.1. Densities in residential areas

Living density is much differentiated through Europe, from a core in the North West with high densities of population, and more peripheral regions including Ireland and the South West or Central part of France, where lower densities exist. A common trend is one where population continues to expand and the size of the average household reduces. Therefore it seems inevitably necessary to provide more housing for people, in order to avoid side effects on prices and living standards. Consequently, the upsurge in reduced densities leads to greater land consumption. Urban densities are therefore at the core of the planning problems when facing urban sprawl. As in many major European cities, the issue of residential urban density first concerned hygiene problems and the living conditions in urban areas. Very significant densities were reached (up to 740 persons ha$^{-1}$ or 74,000 persons km$^{-2}$. For example in Paris current population density is 20,330 persons km$^{-2}$ (Guerois, 2003) while in Ireland densities are lower.

From the beginning of the last century, large numbers of people moved to the 'Garden Suburbs' as a solution to overcrowding and unfit housing in many city areas internationally. In line with this policy trend by 1919, the Local Government Board, under the Irish Housing Act, allowed for a maximum of 30 dwellings per hectare outside central urban areas. This standard soon became a general development norm in Ireland.

The current suburbs in Ireland have often c. 21 dwellings per hectare. In the late 1980s the need for urban regeneration and more sustainable development policy objectives encouraged the planning authorities to encourage increased density which was reflected in the publication of new policy guidelines- Circular Letter PD 4/98 addressed to the local authorities reviewing their Development Plans, and outlined the advantages and benefits of increased densities for planning purposes. (MacCabe,1999).

One of the greatest challenges facing Irish planners was the need to manage recent exceptional demographic and economic growth (rural to urban migration mainly, but also commuters purchasing housing more and more remote from the city centre). Infrastructure has not been built at the same rate as housing, and pressures such as traffic congestion, water and drainage requirements and a lack of schools etc. soon become acute. The population has grown by 8.2% between 2002 and 2006, according to the Preliminary Report on the Census 2006, and whether this expansion has always been met by the appropriate level of facilities and services in new settlement areas is questionable at best.

Despite major urban growth occurring in Ireland, the State remains one of the most rural countries in Europe with around 40% of the population living in rural areas (around 20% in France).

The importance of rural population can be explained from examining cultural factors. Indeed the historic image of the city could be portrayed as a picture of dereliction, slums, poverty and epidemics, pollution, corruption, when the countryside by comparison is often favourably compared as offering purity, nature, safety, place, social life (Plater-Zyberk, 2000).

To conclude, urban sprawl had occurred in both countries (Ireland and France) at least a decade before the launch of the first planning strategies that were supposed to tackle it. These strategies have appeared at the end of the nineties (excepting the Paris region) and are only beginning to be implemented. This response, it can be argued, may be too late in that development trends underway are difficult to reverse.

**2. A comparison of the Two Planning Systems**

*2.1. The French Planning System*

France has been traditionally regarded as a centralised state. The planning system has been designed to reflect this. Every construction or heavy modification of a building requires authorisation. This was a function of the representative of central state in the Département, known as Préfet. Since 1982 and the first Acts on Decentralization most of the planning capacities have been transferred to local authorities. Now Guiding Laws are edited by the central government, imposing the same rules and methods all over France, and are implemented by the Local Authorities. At the end of the procedure, the ultimate planning authorisation is delivered by the Mayor of a city/village. Therefore, before examining the French planning system in detail, the local government system will be examined, especially the different local authorities that are involved in planning. A general and well documented review of the French Planning System can be found in the EU Compendium (2000) of spatial planning systems and policies.

The French administrative divisions exist on four levels: the State, the 'Région', the 'Département', and the 'Commune' (Municipality).

The increasing communal cooperation can take several forms, from associations where several communes having common interests work together, including for example, wastewater, water supply, waste management or primary schools. An association uses the contributions of the Communes, but does not have ready access to its own resources. There are more official and integrated organisations, which take the form of the Communal joint authorities. In this scenario, several communes can decide to be bound together, and to create the Inter-communal Council. The Inter-communal Council is composed by delegates from each commune, therefore retaining a degree of representation for each commune. When such a joint authority is created, some competences must be transferred, some others are optional. These joint authorities have their own tax resources, and can have a tax in common for all the communes.

The first purpose of such a system is to counteract development problems including dispersal caused by the very small size of the French Communes. Secondly, there is an advantage in obtaining more coherence in the management of certain issues, including, for example waste, water, schools, employment zones etc. Finally, this system helps to reinforce solidarity through fiscal integration and

to reach economy of scale savings. The number of such alliances is increasing since the Act on 'Reinforcement and Simplification of Communal Cooperation' in 1999. A variety of such alliances under this Act covers 88% of the communes and 84% of the population.

In the majority of cases, planning power is at municipal level, which produces the PLU (Local Urban Plan), zoning development areas for housing, employment, conservation or agriculture. Theoretically, documents are voted on by the whole Municipal Council, with examples of difficulties such as in Paris occurring especially if political coalitions are involved. Nonetheless, the authority of the mayor remains very important. The mayor is elected by the Council, but the Councillors are elected through a list vote.[1]

The Mayor is always the leader of the list vote that wins the majority vote. Therefore it can be assumed that the election of the Mayor is ultimately personal preference based, depending on his or her personality, especially in smaller towns and villages where political policies may remain secondary. The Mayor is usually the driving force of the village/town, and in relation to planning matters, makes the main policy decisions. This particular role in the French political landscape may suggest that the municipal elections are, with the election of the President of the Republic, the most important ones.

In the main agglomerations, the inter-communal level can produce a document - SCoT (Plan for Territorial Coherence). This gives a framework to the PLU, zoning land at the agglomeration's scale. The SCoT is not as precise as a PLU (which zones every parcel of land), but rather provides strong direction in structuring the territories. Therefore there may be a degree of interpretation required as regards the limits of its zoning, except when exceptional natural sites' protection is at stake. A SCOT perimeter can gather several joint authorities. The main Acts associated with the French planning system may be described as follows:

1   Town Planning Law Code and the Environment Law Code
2   Acts on Decentralization 1982 or Deferre Laws
3   Act on Mountain Areas 1985
4   Act on Coastal Zone 1986
5   Guiding Act on Spatial Planning and Development of the Territory 1995 or Pasqua Law
6   Guiding Act on Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development of the Territory 1999 or Voynet Law
7   Act on Reinforcement and Simplification of Communal Cooperation 1999 or Chevénement Law
8   Act on Urban Solidarity and Renewal 2000 or Gayssot Law

*2.1.1. French Planning Documents*

One of the main purposes of the French planning system is to tackle urban sprawl in the suburbs of the biggest cities, and on the coastlines. Urban sprawl in France is not driven by a significant demographic increase, but more by a reduction in the size of households, high rents in certain locations and people's preferences and their ability to act on them. The most common form of urban development is concentric settlements of individual houses surrounding existing towns.

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[1] Party-list proportional representation systems are a family of voting systems used in multiple-winner elections (e.g. elections to parliament), emphasising proportional representation. In these systems, parties make lists of candidates to be elected, and seats get allocated to each party in proportion to the number of votes the party receives.

The system created by the Act on Urban Solidarity and Renewal is to make the planning process more coherent and to develop a spatial strategy at the scale of the agglomeration. It also seeks to avoid the undesirable physical connection between various urban regions. This concept of a vision for one global territory is put forward by the Project of Sustainable Development, which ultimately introduces a PLU or SCoT statement.

*Local Urban Plan:* One of the primary responsibilities of the Commune is planning policy. It is responsible for the preparation and application of the local urban plan called 'Plan Local d'Urbanisme' or PLU. It provides an analytical approach based on the demographic and economic expectations which indicate the needs for economic development, agriculture, environment, social housing equilibrium, transport, equipment and services. It also provides a general approach in how to provide a robust framework for development and urban growth patterns. A third use involves land use zoning, the location of buildings and the way in which structures are incorporated into the landscape. When a business or member of the public has a development proposal within the Commune's administrative area, it must refer to this Plan and obtain authorisation from the Mayor, which will not be given if the project is not consistent with the PLU. In this regard, the municipal council retains a fundamental power and is at the core of the French planning system. State control is limited to the legality of the procedure, and of the rules adopted by the municipal council. It does not, however, make a decision on the proposed development. Numerous laws and necessary consideration of framework plans, such as the SCoT and PLU, prevent this from happening.

Before the Act on Urban Solidarity and Renewal was implemented, municipal planning was directed by the POS or land use plan. Each is established for an unlimited period of time and there is no statutory obligation for reviewing them regularly.
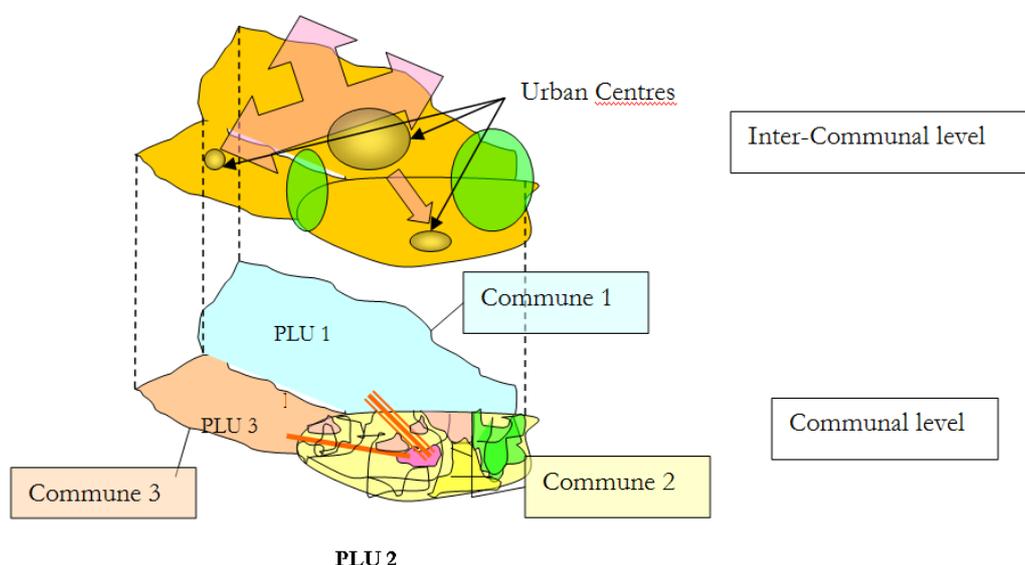


Figure 2 – Levels in French planning

*SCoT – Plan for Territorial Coherence:* Its principal purpose is to be used by urban communes, on a basis that effectively and coherently influences the issues of economic development, environmental protection, transportation and spatial organisation. It usually covers the territory of several

Communes, where its overall purpose is to bring together the Communes of a particular functional urban area. However, the political framework and relationships presented by such an alliance does not always work effectively. The SCoT provides direction for the spatial organisation and the restructuring of urban spaces, determining the main equilibriums between urban spaces and agricultural or rural land. It can also influence significant development projects, particularly those connected with transportation. It is not compulsorily required to include a land use map, but usually would include this information in order to illustrate a spatial strategy. It is prepared by the delegates of the municipal councils (with the technical help of local urban agencies). Therefore, planning responsibilities lie with locally elected representatives. Since the PLU must be consistent with the existing SCoT, this usually necessitates long and difficult negotiations between the political delegates of the municipalities. The demographic, but also economic and political weight, of the central city often influences the final result of these negotiations.

## 3. Local Authority Tools used in active land use control and in implementing and managing development projects

Planning documents are not the only tools a local authority uses to implement its projects. It also requires land to constitute land reserves for housing, economic development, leisure or tourism, public infrastructure, protection and the enhancement of the built and natural environment. Land acquisition can happen through one of the following procedures:

1  Compulsory purchase order preceded by a statement of the public interest.
2  The value of the land is fixed by an agreement between the parties or by a judge, establishing the value on its effective use, or possibly on the appreciation due to development.
3  The local authority may buy it through a pre-emption order, then at full market price - or by using a procedure of negotiating prices which can be quite long and difficult.

### 3.1. The Irish Planning System

Ireland can be regarded also as a centralised state and the local authorities are less numerous than in France and have less powers. Ireland has 8 regional authorities, 29 County Councils and 5 City Councils (Cork, Dublin, Galway, Limerick, and Waterford), which have a degree of competence in planning and spatial development. The Dublin Regional Authority is the regional authority responsible for the former Dublin County and city area, i.e. Dublin City, Counties Fingal, South Dublin and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown. These Counties, plus Counties Kildare, Meath and Wicklow (Mid-East Regional Authority) compose the Greater Dublin Area.

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government established the first National Spatial Strategy (NSS) for the period 2002-2020, and on this basis the regional administration wrote the Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG) for the Greater Dublin Area (2004-2016) translating the vision of the NSS for the GDA area. This document followed the Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area, which were published in 1999 and reviewed in 2000. A full hierarchy list of Planning and Development documents is included in Figure 3.

The County Councils are required to make a County Development Plan every six years to indicate and direct land use development in their relevant administrative area. Councillors are locally elected people, and are therefore quite close to the local population, which can lead to pressure on the politician from land owners wishing to reap the benefits of rezoned land and the resultant upsurge in value. (For example in Fingal the average population per councillor is 8,333 persons, which allows

close relationships between electors and elected). Nevertheless the County Development Plan is intended to be consistent with the RPG and the NSS, the governing planning strategies used to achieve sustainable development. The County Development Plan is written internally by the staff of the County Council, on the behalf of the County Manager. The County Manager is the civil servant responsible of the County Council Administration. It is proposed to the examination and vote of the Councillors. Since it is one of the limited responsibilities they have, they are usually very involved in the design or the review of the County Development Plan.

The proximity between Councillors and private owners or developers can lead to very acute pressure on the political system. The proximity can lead to accusations of prioritisation of the interests in the development industry. Mr. Justice Quirke, in McEvoy and Smith *v.* Meath County Council (2002), found that the strategic planning guidelines are flawed, that local authorities do not have the wherewithal to interpret what 'local' means and that this should be re-examined.

This case highlighted the absence of an enforcement mechanism to oblige a local authority to implement any or all of the Strategic Planning Guidelines. In this case, Meath County Council were found to have not abided by the Strategic Planning Guidelines as they had permitted a significant amount of development outside the designated growth centres of Navan and Drogheda and had rezoned a considerable amount of additional land for residential development under its 2001 County Development Plan. Towns including Dunboyne, Clonee and Ratoath which are not designated as 'growth centres' under the SPG, were targeted for significant residential development.
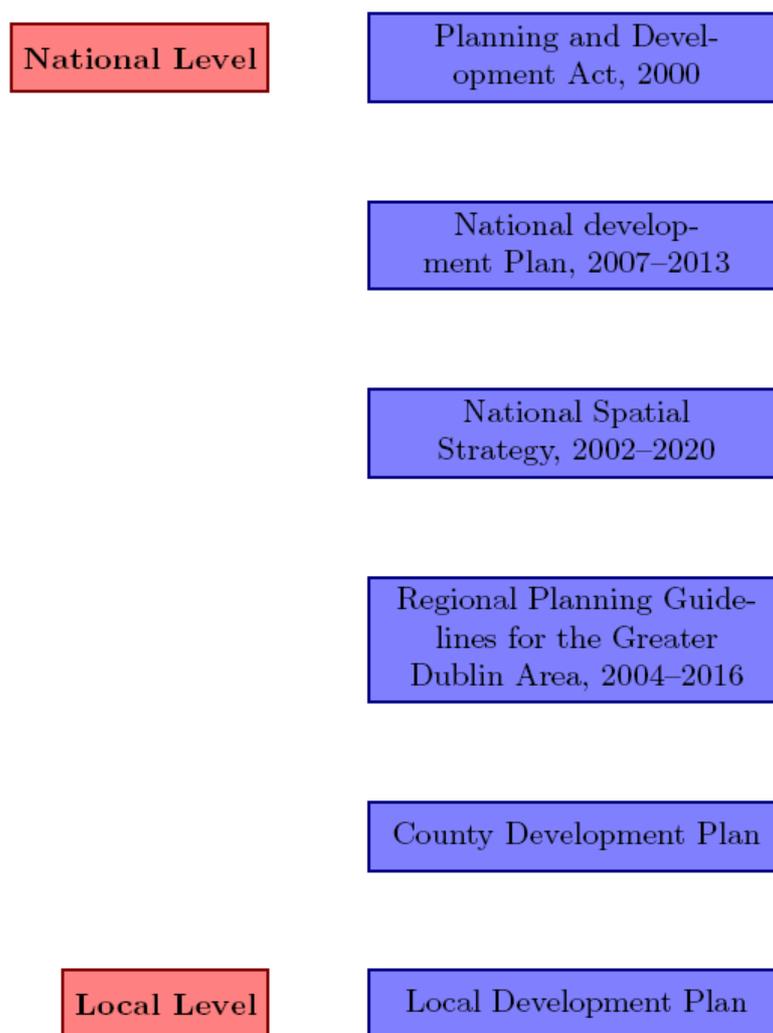
Figure 3 – The hierarchy of planning and development documents for Ireland

In some cases, elected members of the Council have been alleged to receive corrupt payment from developers to vote in their interest. These behaviours have been made public by the Tribunal of Inquiry into Certain Planning Matters and Payments which is continuing in inquiring since the late 1990s. The hearings are in public,[2] It has published interim reports, even though such matters are very difficult to prove.

For example, recently, the former Government press secretary Frank Dunlop was jailed for 18 months and fined €30,000 for corruption after admitting to charges of making payments to councillors to rezone land around Dublin for lucrative development deals (The Irish Independent, 27 May 2009). While attending Court, Mr. Dunlop admitted that in 1992 and again in 1997 he was given cash on behalf of landowners and in return payments were paid to induce politicians to vote in favour of zoning 108 acres at Carrickmines, south Dublin, for industrial and residential use, as part of the Dublin Development Plan.

One of the most important responsibilities of the County Council is to write a Local Area Plan, which provides further details on the way a piece of land should be developed (this concerns issues such as development density, infrastructure and services, type of land use such as dwellings offices etc.). The

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[2] Allowing one of the authors (Dr. Brendan Williams) to attend

Local Area Plan can often act as a context for developers who will be in a position to develop land on their basis.

The economic transformation of Dublin has presented many challenges, particularly with regard to spatial planning and transportation and there is now a growing awareness of the need to co-ordinate these developments at the level of the Greater Dublin Area. In recent years, significant advances have been made in addressing these issues, in particular within the context of the Regional Planning Guidelines and a transportation strategy (2000-2016) for the Greater Dublin Area.

*3.2. Regional Structures*

The Dublin Regional Authority (DRA) is one of eight Authorities established by the Government under the Local Government Act 1991 (Regional Authority Establishment Orders 1993). The regional authorities perform a useful function in assisting with sustainable development practices.

The DRA consists of a Board of 30 elected representatives, nominated from the four Dublin local authorities operating within the region. At present, the DRA is composed of 14 members from Dublin City Council (DCC), 6 from South Dublin County Council (SDCC) - currently including one additional member from the Committee of the Regions - and 5 each from Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council (DLRCC) and Fingal County Council (FCC). The members of the Regional Authority meet in session once a month.

The main functions of the Regional Authority are:

1   To promote co-ordination and, where appropriate, co-operation, joint action, joint arrangements, agreements, communication or consultation between local authorities or other public authorities in the region or between such authorities of other regions.
2   To promote co-ordination, consistency and compatibility with programmes, plans policies, proposals or objectives of the Government or any Minister of the Government.

*3.2.1. Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG)*

The RPGs for the Greater Dublin Area are prepared for the Dublin Regional Authority and the Mid-East Regional Authority. The purpose of this document is to promote an efficient and resourceful approach to regional planning. The current RPGs were adopted by the Dublin and Mid-East Regional Authorities on the 8th of July 2004 and cover the Councils of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, Dublin City, Fingal and South Dublin in the Dublin Region and Kildare, Meath and Wicklow in the Mid-East Region. Prior to the adoption of the Regional Planning Guidelines, the 7 Councils and the 2 Regions, in association with the Department of Environment and Local Government, had prepared a non-statutory regional planning guidance document, The Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area were published in 1999. The current RPGs are updated through a series of reports as required by Implementation Guidelines. These Reports cover a wide range of topics such as Population and Housing Updates, National and Regional Economy, Waste and Water Infrastructure, Environment and Heritage, Social Inclusion. (Source: Dublin Regional Authority website 2009).

Revised RPGs are required to be in place 6 years from the date of adoption. Where a period of six years has elapsed, planning authorities are no longer obliged to have regard to them. The main issues included in the National Spatial Strategy and the Regional Planning Guidelines are as follows:

*Main issues from the National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020:* The NSS proposes an objective of 'balanced regional development', trying to strengthen areas and places in a structured way to balance

Dublin's further growth. They focus on areas that have a sufficient critical mass. They support Dublin having a pivotal role (consolidating the population without further spatial extension), try to secure the role of the identified Gateways and Hubs, reinforce the links between Dublin and Belfast by developing the East Coast Corridor and by improving the transport system. The NSS is intended to be implemented through Regional Planning Guidelines.

*Critical issues from the Regional Planning Guidelines of the Greater Dublin Area 2004-2016:* It is the responsibility of the RPGs to implement the NSS and provide objectives of sustainable development by targeting reduced building in Hinterland Areas, achieving a more compact city, increasing the attractiveness of public transport etc. They provide a number of quantitative objectives for the various counties located in the GDA and attempt to ensure that enough housing is provided for in the most appropriate locations.

*3.3. Similarities and differences*

The approach is very different in France and Ireland where the planning authority is the local authority, delegating some powers to the political system (County Councils). Since 1982 the planning powers in France lie with the Mayor who can choose to delegate this power to a bigger administrative/political structure.

Table 2 – Hierarchy of planning documents in Ireland and France

| Ireland | | France | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Central Government* | *Local Authorities* | *Central Government* | *Local Authorities* |
| NSS | | DTA | SDRIF |
| RPG | | | SCOT |
| | Local Development Plan | | PLU |
| | Local Area Plan | | Plan d'Aménagement de Zone |

The main challenge of Irish spatial policy is viewed as achieving the idea of regional balanced development, allowing the Dublin area to continue growing in order to drive the nation's economy forward but keeping this growth under control. Spatial policy also has to manage the population growth which, with the reduction in average household size, contributes to a very high demand for housing mainly in the places surrounding Dublin.

In both systems, to varying degrees, when agricultural land is zoned for development it immediately acquires a greater financial value, which usually entices the landowner to sell it rather than continue its agricultural activity. The appreciation of the land goes directly to the private owner, except for some taxes to the government. The local authority in each country had no way to retain any of the value it contributes to creating although it can apply conditions when it grants permission for development to proceed. These conditions may require the payment of financial contributions to the Council towards providing the infrastructure needed for a new settlement. The issue of land appreciation highlights the issue of local benefits coming from a development strategy and tends to increase pressure on the political system, provoking some cases of corruption among the local councillors.

**4. Case Studies in Regional Approaches**

*4.1. Aix-Marseille metropolitan region*

*4.1.1. Département 'Bouches-du-Rhone'*

Aix-Marseille metropolis is a 'conurbation', joining the two historical urban cores of this region. Marseille is surrounded by coastal mountains and humid zones such as the Camargue, shaping the patterns of urbanisation and the communication corridors.

The Aix-Marseille metropolitan area has evolving boundaries. The French Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) provides two boundary definitions: the first one (agglomeration) is based on the continuity of the built-up area, and the second one (urban area) on the intensity of commuting. The Communes are part of the urban area when at least 40% of their working population has a job in the central employment pole or the communes directly attracted by it. We will mainly use the second definition in relation to this region.

The Aix-Marseille urban area accounted for 1.5 million inhabitants in 1999, which means it grew by 21% since 1968. After a demographic decrease during the 1980s, the growth rate was 0.46% per year during the 1990s. During the 1980s and 90s, the residential increase took place mainly outside Marseille, in the other cities of the urban area or in the peri-urban fringes. People wanted to be located closer to their work, and from an economic point of view, Marseille underwent a very severe population decline during the 1980s due to the disappearance of most of its industrial activities and the crisis in Marseille's Port. On the contrary, the Aix-en-Provence area, where high-tech sectors have emerged, is on a trend of growth and prosperity becoming a very attractive development centre in the area.

Covering an area of 2830 km$^2$, Marseille has an average density of 536 inhabitants km$^2$. Rural areas continue to exist, especially in the Eastern part of the urban area and around Aix-en-Provence. These spaces are either agricultural (with vineyards and fruits and vegetable production) or are forested, predominantly with pine trees.

At the Département level, it has been estimated that 70,000 ha have been consumed for urbanisation during the period 1968-1999, representing a growth of 200% in space consumption whilst the population had increased only by 147% (Draft Directive Territoriale d'Aménagement, 2005).

There has been no spatial planning on a metropolitan area scale since a State report in 1970. The two major cities, Marseille and Aix-en-Provence, have not cooperated in this domain to date and in 2006 Marseille Provence Métropole was preparing its own SCoT, whilst the Agglomeration Community of Aix is working on its own, less advanced project.

The territory of the urban area of Marseille-Aix is contrasting, with different dynamics existing among the various territories. Even if it does not experience important demographic growth, the breakdown of the population inside the urban area is changing very quickly. The population of the Aix area has doubled since 1962, accounting for 22% of the urban area's inhabitants (Insee, 2003).

*4.1.2. Planning Documents*

The Act on Spatial Planning and Development of the Territory (1995) introduced a new form of guidance document, the Territorial Planning Directive or DTA, which was established by the

representatives of the central government on strategic areas for the country. In the Département of Aix-en-Provence and Marseille such a DTA was prepared by the local representatives of the State, where the municipalities were invited to participate in its research. The local planning documents are required to be consistent with the new DTA and the State administration encountered some difficulties during the procedure, mainly various issues associated with the coastal management zone.

The remit of the DTA covers the whole Département, with a population of 1.8 million inhabitants. Its objectives are to focus on the development of metropolitan functions of Marseille, the management and supply of businesses between the various development poles, the improvement of transportation and housing policies, the containment of urban sprawl and the protection and enhancement of environmental landscapes.

*4.2. Metropolitan governance*

The central State (DATAR) and its representatives in the Département have played a very important role in the urban area. The State has planned all the major highways serving the region, making it a crossing between an East-West, Italy-Spain corridor and a North-South linkage connecting the Mediterranean shores to the rest of France, mainly Paris. Marseille and Aix-en-Provence are also connected to the high-speed railway network (TGV), reducing the travel time to Paris to 3 hours (the distance being 800 km).

The State also invested in high-tech technology in the Aix-en-Provence area during the 1960s and now a new project, a nuclear power research centre (ITER) is being constructed just north of Aix-en-Provence. This sector is now the main economic driver for the region.

Since the Decentralisation Laws in the early 1980s, spatial planning powers were delegated locally to the Communes. Because of the lack of cooperation between the communes, no alternative authority has taken over the task of implementing a strategic spatial vision for the metropolitan area.

The ambition of the State's representatives is now 'to amalgamate all the energies to create a single, large, ambitious project for the metropolitan area' (Motte, 2003). During the 1990s, despite the weakening of the State's influence, all the major initiatives that attempted to try and increase metropolitan cooperation came from State agencies or ministries. There were very few initiatives coming from the local political or employers' network.

Aix-en-Provence and Marseille have been rivals ever since the Middle-Ages and the contemporary local political history does not show any sign of changing. There is, for example, still no efficient rail link between the two cities for daily commuting. People have to use the motorway, saturated at peak hours, or use a public bus service. This is the result of the lack of cooperation between Aix and Marseille and the high priority given to the car during the years of investment in infrastructure for the metropolitan area. Similarly, Marseille has abandoned its tram network, which was one of the most developed in Europe during the 1950s, and is now trying with much difficulty to reintroduce it to the city.

The lack of cooperation has sometimes been motivated by political disagreements, in particular between communist communes and their neighbours, either socialists or from the right-wing. The desire to stay autonomous has led to competition between the territories and the communes for development and employment. The spatial segregation has also been exacerbated by urban sprawl and the policies in favour of the private motorcar as a primary means of transport. Since more modest

households do not have the same opportunity of mobility compared to their wealthier counterparts, they are often confined within the boundaries of their own districts.

Strong competition between regions has also led to the waste of resources. Traditionally, each city has wanted its own facilities, including for example, retail centres, music halls, libraries etc. These facilities have sometimes undergone financial collapse due to very low visitor numbers and usage. Local Authorities could not agree on planning major developments on the urban territory either. In considering long-term strategies, the process became even more complex and difficult. Problems concerning the cooperation between regions have delayed the creation of an institution able to deal with spatial strategy and the ability to reduce the sprawl of urban areas.

However, the legal framework of planning changed in the late 1990s and early 2000s, with compulsory laws requiring the establishment of a strategy for agglomeration. Central to this process is the use of financial incentives for increased inter-communal cooperation. This has not removed all competition, but at least some of the communes now consider the advantages of cooperation. The decision making mechanism in these assemblies reassures mayors, even if their political weight is diluted in these bigger structures. This can be interpreted as the beginning of increasing cooperation, which is quite new in the area. However, the political process has not matured enough to work on a metropolitan level. Marseille Provence Métropole and the Agglomeration of Aix will probably wait for their SCoT to be completed in order to have objectives and solidified direction before negotiating their common future. It is feared that while they hesitate and are slowly persuaded to cooperate, the important decisions concerning strategic planning and investment for the future are not being taken, or worse still, taken poorly. The worry is that the time lost could permanently damage the dynamics of both regions and their chances to reach a balanced and sustainable development may be lost.

### 4.3. Case Study: The three communes from Aix-Marseille urban area

This section will illustrate the evolution of the Aix-Marseilles territory by using threes examples from the metropolitan area. These communes have experienced very significant urban sprawl since the 1970s, and this pattern has had serious consequences for the communes and the services provided by the local councils (Courtois, 2004).

One of these communes (Gignac) is situated in the northern outskirts of Marseille, another one closer to Aix-en-Provence (Velaux), and the last one on the Eastern fringe of the urban area (Saint-Maximin). These three communes have been chosen because they have experienced very strong demographic growth since 1960 (sometimes more than a 10% increase in population per year, compared to the growth of the global area: 21% between 1968 and 1999) and now account for between 8,000 and 12,000 inhabitants each.

The creation of these new population centres has been quite different. Gignac has anchored its centre with two big urban projects organised by the commune itself, Velaux has spread through settlements of detached houses and in Saint-Maximin houses are more dispersed, leading to a form of 'moth-eating' of the green space. The densities of the communes are comprised of between 15 and 30 inhabitants ha$^{-1}$, which is ten times lower than the densities of the historical centres. This prevents the towns from efficiently organising services and establishing new infrastructure for the new urbanised areas. In fact, the town centres, with the main services (public administrations, Post Offices, health care, retails, schools etc.) are emptying, the inhabitants of the suburban towns are now mainly using their cars for their trips, bypassing historical centres. It is now becoming more difficult to access the old centres than to drive to the new employment, retail or leisure zones.

These new urbanised zones have emerged due to the proximity of highways or high speed roads, facilitating commuting to employment zones. The patterns of urbanisation clearly show a lack of integration of the new inhabitants with the urban centres and the social life they can offer. Furthermore, it seems that the turnover in these newly built areas is very high. Between each Census (i.e. ten years) at least 25% of the population left the new communes. The growth in the population, due to very important in-migration factors should not hide the fact that the number of out-migrants is also very high, making the construction of a permanent social urban life very difficult, while at the same time leading to a weakening of social capital in these areas. Diversity, both in the distribution of age profile and social classes, is decreasing in these three towns. Consequently, this is leading to a more and more homogeneous social landscape, which is characterised by 40-59 year old employees commuting to either Aix-en-Provence or Marseille.

Such a sprawl of commuter settlements has the same damaging consequences for the environment as those cited for Fingal County. However, in this fragile Mediterranean environment, it is also one of the main causes of forest fire in this area. Intrusion into forest spaces and the upsurge of individual houses in pine forests have led to increased numbers of visitors and therefore the risk of fire outbreaks during the summer months have also increased. Each year important forest areas disappear as an indirect consequence of urban sprawl.

The attractiveness of both the economic and residential use of an urban area depends on the supply of services and environmental quality. Aix-Marseille has such potential but if it is to be realised, it needs a strong political will to organise the provision of these services at a metropolitan scale. For that to happen, the former divisions and mistrust between the various municipalities would need to decrease. This is a *sine qua non* condition to success.

### 4.4. Case Study: The Greater Dublin Region

The National Spatial Strategy considers that the evolution of Dublin's region both economically and demographically is one of the main challenges facing the Country. A consolidation of the Dublin agglomeration linked with a regionally balanced development as is. One means of consolidating the city is to increase the residential densities in transport corridors. This issue lies at the core of urban planning and will influence the future evolution of development patterns around Dublin.

### 4.4.1. Planning documents

Up until 1993, a single Development Plan applied to the whole of Dublin County. Since the disbandment of Dublin County as a single administrative area, and the creation of South Dublin, Fingal, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown and Dublin City Councils, each Local Authority was required to review the Development plan for its own territory. Fingal County Council, for example, launched a County Development Plan in 1999 and again in 2005. Even though the Commuting Belt extends up to 90 km from Dublin City Centre, and exceeds the boundaries of GDA, each local authority is still regarded as the relevant territorial unit for planning. The Regional Planning Guidelines are written for the Greater Dublin Area, and the NSS provides detailed policy guidance for the Mid-East and Dublin Regions.

The Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG) provide a framework for the preparation of County Development Plans, which concern the form of development (if any) appropriate for certain locations. They provide objectives for sustainable patterns of development, therefore avoiding sprawl and houses in the open countryside, linking planning for residential use and transport infrastructure. A

copy of the guidelines for the Dublin region from the National Spatial Strategy (DOE, 2002), used by permission, is shown in Figure 4.

*4.4.2. National Spatial Strategy - Dublin and Mid-East Regions*

The National Spatial Strategy supports the Dublin Regional Authority in limiting the extent of the city and proposes that development should take place in close proximity to national transport corridors. These routes bypass the Wicklow Mountains and mean that most parts which are remote from national transport should have limited development. This scheme suggests that most new housing should be provided for inside Dublin County and that the population is intended to be concentrated in this location.

The NSS emphasises the need for efficient national transport corridors and to link the various economic poles throughout the State to Dublin. However, such provisions also encourage more people to move to the GDA or Outer Leinster and commute to Dublin from more remote places than they previously had done.
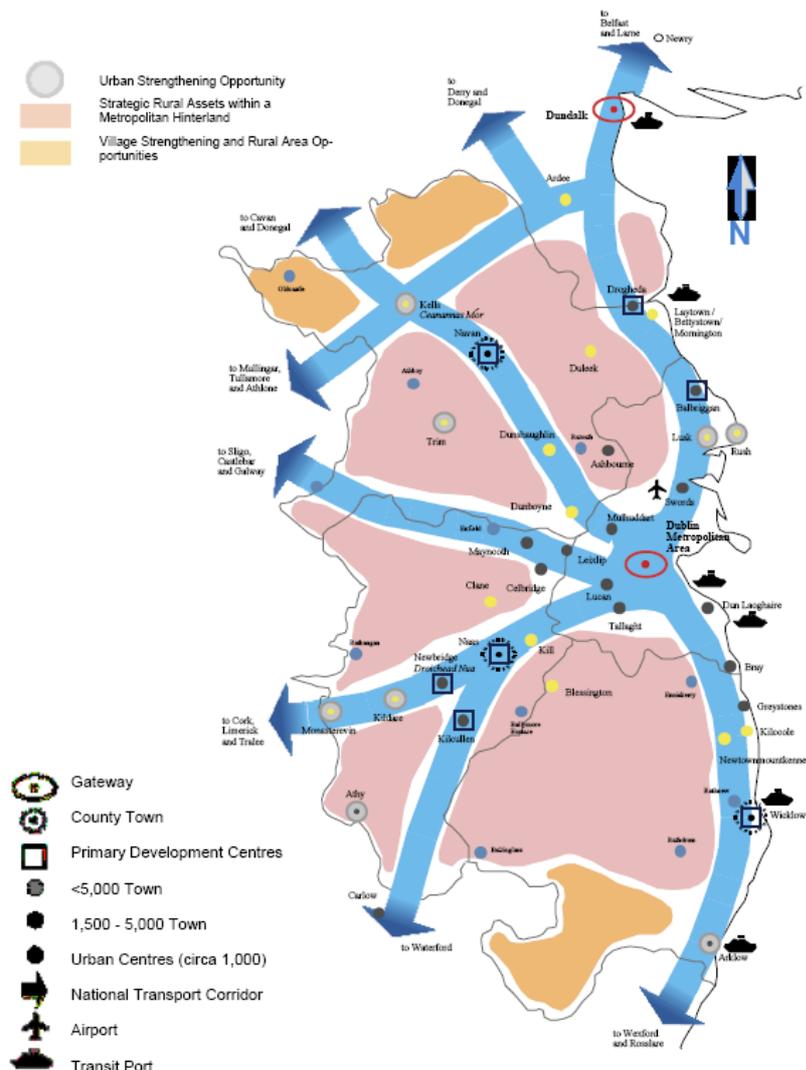


Figure 4 –  NSS Guidelines Dublin region 2002

*4.4.3. Housing development in the GDA*

The core policy of the NSS is to promote sustainable development. It is designed to reduce urban sprawl and prevent excessive commuting. The RPGs also indicate some quantitative objectives for the production of new housing for each Local Authority until 2016. These objectives are based on an estimation of the population's growth for each County and try to offer a matching supply in order to avoid unsustainable development patterns.

However, housing costs and affordability is a problem. Indeed, shown in Figure 5 (a) and (b), even if the growth of housing supply did not match demand during this critical growth period. This demand is a result of a reduction of the average household size, inwards migration from other counties, or countries, and the fact that some housing remained vacant, are used as pied-a-terre, second-home, or waiting for rehabilitation or destruction. The demand is such that the prices for new houses in the Dublin areas increased by 272% (in constant prices) between 1996 and 2005 (DoEHLG housing statistics). This has been followed by a major price collapse in 2008/2009 with the bottom of the market difficult to predict. Figure 5 (a) shows the evolution of population in the counties composing the GDA from 1996 to 2006. Despite the policies implemented, the main percentage growth occurs far from the city in more and more remote parts of the GDA. This, as presented above, led to increased commuting distances, and as a result unsustainable development patterns as seen in Figure 5 (a) and (b).
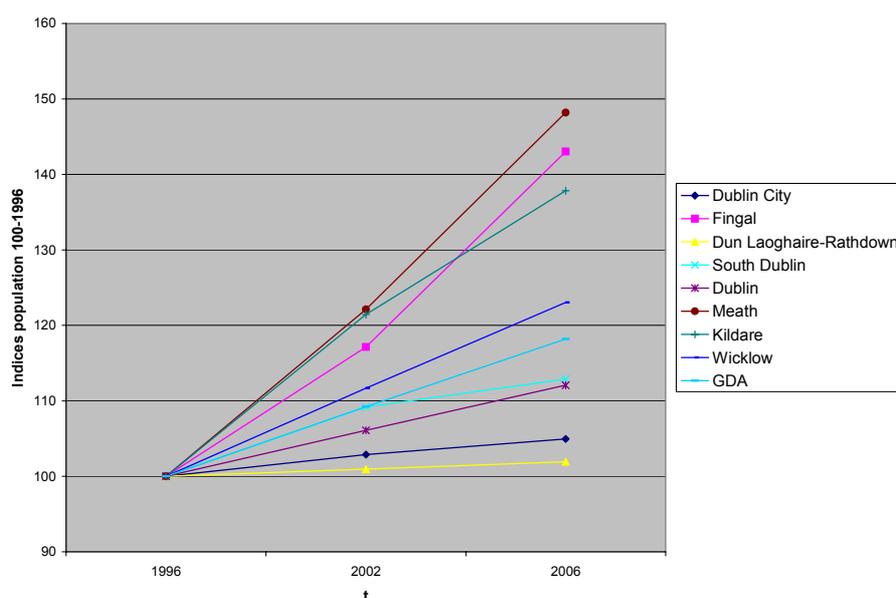


Figure 5 (a) – Evolution of indices of population for the counties of the Greater Dublin Area, 1996 – 2006.
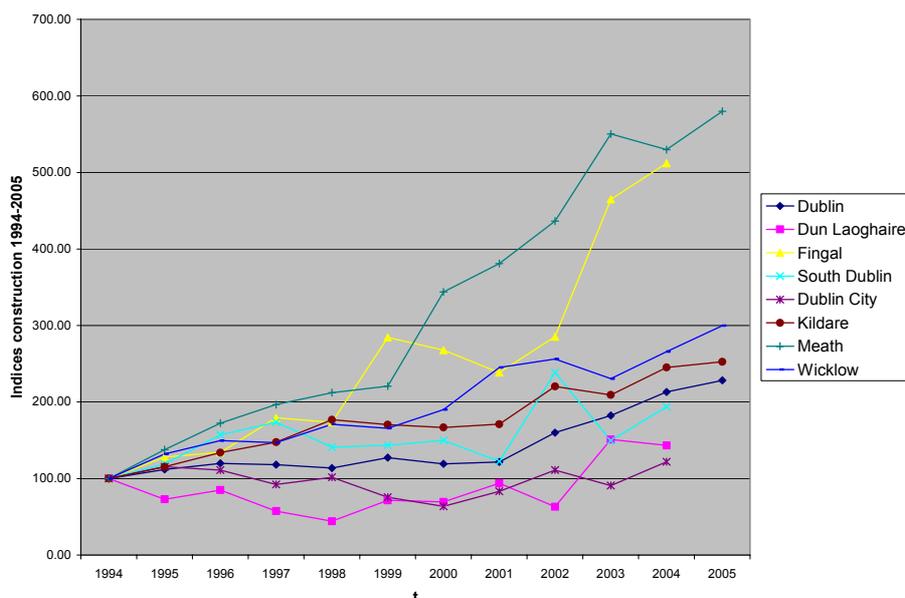
Figure 5 (b) – Indices of new housing construction in the Greater Dublin Area, 1994 – 2005.

### 4.4.4. Local Authority Level: Fingal

*Planning issues:* Fingal County was formed on 01 January 1994 after the division of Dublin County and Dún Laoghaire Corporation into 4 entities: Fingal, Dún Laoghaire/Rathdown, South Dublin and Dublin City. It is therefore a very recent County administration which in 1999 released the first Fingal County Development Plan, which replaced the then-existing Dublin County Development Plan 1993. Subsequently, a reviewed Development Plan was published in 2005. A draft version of the Fingal County Development Plan is due to be released in 2009 for adoption in 2011.

Fingal is situated in North County Dublin, and accounts for a large amount of major infrastructure and enterprise, most of which is organised around Dublin International Airport. The presence of this economic nucleus allows Fingal County Council access to a significant degree of economic opportunities. Moreover, it is situated on the East Coast Economic Corridor, which plays a very important role in Dublin's development as a cross-border link leading to the Belfast employment and economic zone. Moreover, the corridor runs along the coast, which is also an attraction for development, particularly residential dwellings. This major development corridor intersects Fingal County.

The County functions with an administration which is lead by the County Manager. The majority of decisions on zoning and development plan issues are taken by the Councillors by majority voting procedures. The Manager has a very important role; quite unusual compared to the way the French administration functions. He is selected by a national commission and cannot be refused or dismissed by the local Councillors. He is responsible for a large range of activities within the local Council, and among these tasks is the signature of planning authorisation for strategic planning documents, including the County Development Plan. Despite the central importance of the Development Plan in the future spatial shape of the country, the County Council indicate a lack of resources for making decisions and ensuring implementation as their budget and staff resources are limited.

*Fingal Development Plan 2005-2011:* The Fingal County Development Plan has to respond to the challenges faced by the County, among them significant demographic growth. However due to its

proximity to Dublin City and availability of green-field development land it has the fastest growing population in Ireland. The preliminary report of Census 2006 released on 20 July 2006 confirms that the population of Fingal had increased by 22.1% since 2002 to reach 240,000 inhabitants. Managing this growth on a partially rural and coastal territory is a challenge faced by the Council's, administration and Councillors.

The Fingal County Development Plan 2005-2011 was prepared over a period of 18 months, following the requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2000, and places a significant emphasis on public participation. Local Area Plans (formerly known as Action Area Plans) are also used by Councils to facilitate and provide a strategic framework for development purposes. The Local Area Plan usually focuses on a particular area within the administrative area of the county, and provides landowners and prospective developers with direction and constraints for potential development proposals. The Local Area Plan, for example, may include specific development densities (in most cases an upper density limit), layout and design requirements, public transport and road infrastructure, community facilities, open spaces and recreational facilities etc. While usually considered as the primary strategic planning document for an area, they can also complement other existing studies and reports for an area, which have been prepared by the Planning Authority (for example, the South Fingal Planning Study, the Strategic Development Zone Planning Scheme for Hansfield, Integrated Area Plans for Balbriggan and the Revitalising Areas through Planning Investment and Development (RAPID)[3] (Fingal Development Plan, 2005). Examples of LAPs in Fingal County include the Kinsealy LAP 2006 – 2012 and the Portmarnock LAP 2006 – 2012.

The Fingal County Development Plan must be prepared in accordance with the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area. The RPGs attempt to restrict the development of dispersed housing in the rural areas, by imposing strict residential criteria (an example of such criteria would be an application for planning permission for a dwelling in the countryside had to provide evidence that the future occupier has lived at least ten years in the area prior to permission being granted.).

*The Irish Planning System – Recent trends:* The GDA's situation is characterised by an emphasis on strong economic and demographic growth. This fragmented growth pattern leads to the phenomenon of urban sprawl that the region is currently experiencing. The relevant legislation for planning functions is the Planning and Development Act 2000 (including subsequent amendments). By the time of its enactment in 2000, most of the uncontrolled and unsustainable urban sprawl had already occurred, and furthermore had become the norm for the citizens, developers and politicians in the GDA. Consequently, it has become more difficult to reverse negative development trends that are now considered, rightly or wrongly, as part of everyday life.

*Policy issues arising:* The dispersed form of urban development in Dublin is a consequence of rapid expansion of urban development in an often spatially inappropriate manner. Such dispersed urban growth, characterised by single use and low-density development can be viewed as a wasteful use of land and infrastructure resources. An analysis of existing local and regional governmental structures impacting upon the region's economic development indicates a need for reorganisation of such structures based upon an analysis of the requirements of the Functional Urban Region of Dublin. This

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[3] The RAPID programme is overseen by the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs with national monitoring of the programme undertaken by Pobal. The Blanchardstown RAPID is the only designated disadvantaged area in Fingal. The Fingal Development Board is responsible for hearing regular reports on RAPID through the Social Inclusion Measures Committee and offers the support necessary to assist in its implementation.

could include an analysis of both the formal local government structures and the equally important linkages of local government, industry and community interests which shape the future of the urban region. The past experience of horizontal co-operative systems in Ireland has seen a largely fragmented decision-making process emerging. It is therefore suggested that there is a need for an integrated and co-ordinated approach. The consultation paper *New Institutional Arrangements for Land Use and Transport in the Greater Dublin Area* (DOELG, 2001) provided recognition of the need for key structural changes in the urban management processes for the Dublin area. Existing arrangements, involving the sharing of administrative and executive powers over several layers of central and local government creates overlapping responsibilities. This is often characterised by competing or conflicting interests and an inadequate implementation capacity. The document envisaged the creation of a strategic level authority with responsibilities for linking transportation policy with planning and land-use. A more recent attempt to build on elements of these policy issues has seen proposals forwarded for an elected mayor in 2009.

This growing dominance of the Dublin Region has placed particular pressures on urban land markets and is clearly shown in the emerging constraints on development including problems of accessibility, infrastructure constraints and housing shortages. This situation has resulted in surges of development both at the edge of existing settlements and in sprawl type patterns at locations connected to Dublin by the region's arterial road network.

The general issue of housing and settlement patterns was also examined by the NESC report on Housing in Ireland: Performance and Policy (2004). This report characterised the Irish housing system as dynamic but unstable with problems in terms of the uncertainty and variability in land supply. The weak supply response in areas where demand was highest, such as Dublin in the late 1990s, was identified as a factor causing sprawl type development. The strong supply response which occurred later is described as poor in quality in urban development terms. As with previous studies the report noted the absence of integration between housing, land use and transportation strategies within the Greater Dublin Area.

Future urban development trends are likely to be linked to progress in infrastructure improvement which results in shifting urban development market trends. The consolidation of existing urban areas with development along principal transportation corridors is now commencing. This represents a refinement of the extensive sprawl type patterns of development experienced in recent times when commuting patterns up to 100 km from city-based employment developed and was facilitated by improvements in the radial road networks near major urban centres. Development based upon improved access is seen particularly in Outer Leinster, which has the benefit of proximity to the major employment zones at edge city locations surrounding Dublin on the M50 Motorway.

Critical issues arising from this debate include:

1   The capacity of current planning and development organisational structures to manage the development of the city-region on a functional urban scale?
2   The choice of best practice national or international models in local and regional governmental structures to deal with the management of rapid development in city-regions?
3   The fostering of a willingness within existing structures to accept multi-level partnerships and collaboration or alternatively the introduction of new structures.

## 5. Comparative Planning Systems: Conclusion

It seems that in both countries the planning systems and the way in which they function are deeply linked with the way in which Local Authorities traditionally worked with Central Government. In

both cases, a need for more spatial coherence and a long-term strategy has been emphasised by stakeholders and expressed in the rules or laws governing planning (National Spatial Strategy, Act on Urban Solidarity and Renewal). Furthermore, Central Government has delegated, even if it is through completely different systems, the power of zoning land for development to Local Authorities (County or City Councils in Ireland and Municipal Councils in France). In both cases this responsibility and resulting decisions have a major impact on all development activities and become the subject of political power.

In both countries, local elected politicians are submitted to local pressures and interests, and experience difficulties in attempting to satisfy the common good on a metropolitan scale. To counterbalance this problem, the Irish administration produces framework documents (such as Regional Planning Guidelines). Subsequent County Development Plans are intended to be consistent with these guidelines.

In France, having tried with limited success to establish Joint Authorities, the Central Government used incentives to encourage communes to cooperate together in order to work on a common development strategy. It is hoped that this will create institutions on the level of the metropolitan areas, which will be able to take the opportunity of working on planning issues and to produce a coherent spatial strategy. This assumes that the several communes will develop a strong common interest. However, this has yet to happen, as we observe in the Aix-Marseille example.

Even if there are common issues identified in the two metropolitan areas (Dublin and Aix-Marseilles), it should not be forgotten that there are also very significant structural differences. The main difference being the GDA's rapid economic and demographic growth compared to slower development experienced in Aix-Marseille. In both cases the local elected officials have planning power but the local government systems are very different. The planning system is much more restrictive in France than in Ireland. There is also a cultural difference in the way people consider life in the city, which leads to a much more marked preference for individual housing in the countryside or suburbs in Ireland rather than apartment life which is more acceptable in French city centres.

Each system has tried to deal with its national preferences, but in both cases policy directions are still unclear. For example, the French system has not only taken the direction of larger local authority structures, it also produces framework documents which direct the spatial policies. Central government in both jurisdictions should ensure that Local Authorities are having adequate regard to these documents, but often lacks the means to do so. Also, the Prefect has to negotiate many issues in the Département as has his/her counterpart in the Irish ministry, and important region/city planning documents can be overlooked.

To conclude, the emergence and encouragement of sustainable development concepts in both countries is accepted policy. Increased public awareness of environmental damage through the experience of past urban development could lead to an increased understanding of how to deal properly with these issues in the future. This should motivate elected politicians with responsibilities in planning and development issues as well as central government to act more efficiently in this area. The need for strong political will from central, regional and local government has been identified as critical to a more strategic approach in managing urban growth. In order to experience such change, the involvement of local authorities and their organisational capacity to implement change is essential. This is because even if the central or regional government is strong in terms of aspiring to sustainable development and strict and active in terms of implementing its framework documents, no perceivable difference will be felt until the same attitude and active involvement is evident at local authority level.

**Acknowledgements**

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