

National Urban Policy of Ireland

Introduction

In Ireland the degree of urbanisation is low. The principal component of urban policy is the promotion of urban renewal and redevelopment.

Compared to other parts of Europe, Ireland is very sparsely populated. Dublin with 1 million inhabitants has a very large percentage of the republic's population of 3.6 million. In Ireland, where rural and small town values are cherished, large scale urbanisation has been an unintended by-product of economic growth and modernisation. During the 1990s and the early 2000s, Ireland experienced unprecedented social, economic and demographic change which has been taking place in the absence of any pro-active, coherent urban policy. The result is a wide range of national programmes.

Description

To create order in the country's urban policy, Urban Renewal Schemes were introduced in Ireland in October 1985. In 1986, areas were designated in each of the five cities; Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford. The core objectives of Urban Renewal schemes were to promote urban renewal and redevelopment by promoting investment by the private sector in construction and reconstruction of buildings in designated inner city areas. The Urban Renewal Scheme was later extended to include areas in many of Ireland's major towns. The new Urban Renewal Scheme of 1999, which benefits 5 cities and 38 towns, represents a more targeted approach to the award of urban renewal incentives.

Since joining the European Union in 1973 Ireland has received over EUR 17 billion in EU Structural and Cohesion Funds support to end 2003. Under the current programming period 2000-2006, Ireland receives EUR 3.35 billion from the Structural Funds. The Cohesion Fund contributed EUR 586m to Ireland during the period 2000-2003. With the strengthening of export market growth, GDP has rebounded to 4 1/4 percent in 2004.

Current Themes

The National Development Plan, the largest investment plan ever drawn up for Ireland, sets out the plan for economic and social development over a six year period, 2000-2006. The Plan lays the foundation for future development in the country via multi-annual investment in five key areas, the five major towns and cities in Ireland:

- **Spatial development:** The government prepared a National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020, aiming to secure a better and more rational spatial development pattern. The strategy is based on a more balanced position of the Greater Dublin Area (four local authority areas comprising the Dublin urban region) in relation to other regions. Another focus is the designation of 13 gateway and 11 hub cities. "Gateways" provide the necessary scale of services, population and infrastructure to increase the economic attractiveness of every region of the country in addition to Dublin. "Hub" towns are then expected to provide a link between the gateways and rural areas and to have a strategic role in the development of the immediate areas around them.
- **Cooperation:** Cities develop and maintain in cooperation with local authorities, relevant Departments, agencies and other relevant institutions, targeted and integrated urban renewal programmes. These programmes aim at the economic, social and sustainable regeneration of such areas.
- **Infrastructure:** City programmes and plans include a large number of strategic infrastructure projects, which will do much to facilitate intra-urban movement and improve the quality of life.

Organisation

The Ministry of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government coordinates urban policy at the national level:

- The National Development Plan, NDP, has three Interregional Operation Programmes, two multi-sectoral Regional Operational Programmes and the Peace Programme. The NDP includes only publicly funded programmes.
- The Regional Operational Programmes cover a wide range of initiatives at the regional and local level. Regional areas are designated by order of the Ministry of the Environment, with the consent of the Minister for Finance under the Urban Renewal Act, 1986.
- The New Urban Renewal scheme is based on the concept of Integrated Area Plans, IAPs, prepared by local authorities.
- The Urban Renewal programmes are provided through the regional Operational Programmes of the NDP and a wide array of tax-led renewal schemes.

Special Features

- Urban policy is mainly directed towards the five major cities. The Five Major Initiatives to support the revitalisation of core areas in the cities Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford are also aimed at the wider urban area.
- Urban Improvements Measures are made available to local authorities for environmental upgrading and streetscape improvements. The aim is to improve the physical environment of towns in order to attract and sustain an enterprise base.
- The Living Over The Shop Scheme, LOTS, was introduced in 2001 in the five major cities to secure investment to tackle the problem of vacant storey space over commercial premises in certain streets.
- The Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, SSPPR, 1995-1999 and Peace II Operational Programme 2000-2004 were designed to reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society and to promote urban and rural regeneration.
- The Integrated Area Urban Renewal Scheme has provided tax relief incentives in certain deprived areas. This tax relief is available for owner-occupier and rented residential accommodation situated within a part of an Integrated Plan area.

Contact info

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Press and Information Office

Publication date : 21/12/2005

Links : <http://www.environ.ie/en/>

Source http://www.eukn.org/eukn/themes/Urban_Policy/irish-urban-policy_1107.html

European Urban Knowledge Network

The European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN) shares knowledge and experience on tackling urban issues. Sixteen EU Member States, EURO CITIES, the URBACT Programme and the European Commission participate in this European initiative. The EUKN Secretariat is housed at Nicis Institute in The Hague.

“The lack of community engagement in European cities is amazing”

11-12-2008

Cities all over the world are struggling and many of the large, upscale projects that have been so prevalent during the past 20 years are suffering from financial difficulties. However, according to Fred Kent, president of the US-based ‘**Project for Public Spaces**’ (PPS), there

is no need for despair. He believes the answer for cities in this period of economic decline is an increased focus on a new approach that **PPS** calls 'placemaking'. Kent claims that a placemaking approach to development can form a cost-effective alternative to boosterist urban schemes. Placemaking is a process that taps into the talents and skills of the people in a community and their ability to understand their neighbourhoods as the basis for making changes to that place. **PPS** predicts a renaissance of community organising and placemaking in the upcoming years not only because of budgetary constraints of cities but also because of a desire by people in communities to live in more sustainable, livelier and more people-friendly cities. For over 30 years, **PPS** staff have been travelling around the world spreading this message and training professionals and people from many different backgrounds to use a placemaking approach. Now might be the time for **PPS**'s approach to really become the way that people plan cities around the world.

What exactly is placemaking according to Project for Public Spaces?

"Placemaking is not a new way of doing design. It is a process that allows people in a community to develop a vision for a place themselves. Governments cannot do placemaking. Design firms cannot do placemaking, and engineering firms cannot do placemaking either. Only people can."

What is the general importance of placemaking?

"When we started **PPS** in 1975, there were few, if any cities in the United States that was functioning very well from a public space perspective. That is why we started 'Project for Public Spaces' here in New York. Amazing people such as **Jane Jacobs**, **William Whyte** and **Margaret Mead** influenced our work a great deal. Like them, we observed how people tried to use the public spaces in their communities, but we also saw that the way that spaces were designed did not support what people were trying to do in them. In some places, ledges were too high for people to sit comfortably on them, bus shelters didn't protect people from the weather or allow people to know when the bus would arrive, fountains were designed so that people couldn't touch the water are a few examples. Public spaces seemed to be designed more for the magazines than they were for people. In response to this, **PPS** developed a relatively simple approach to planning public spaces that is focused on tapping into the intuitive qualities, knowledge and skills that people have. Using this approach we have been successful at creating public spaces that are comfortable and pleasant places to spend time in."

Why do you think placemaking is especially important for cities today?

"When a placemaking process is used successfully, and people share their skills, knowledge and experiences with others, communities and people start to thrive and the result is public spaces that draw people out into their community, instead of being indoors and isolated. By contrast, when the focus is solely on doing large-scale developments and design projects, a sense of place is often a lost. Placemaking is about getting back to the basics. It's about creating a creative and entrepreneurial spirit by engaging communities. In these times of economic decline such an approach is both economically and socially more viable."

What are the basic tools and ingredients of your placemaking approach?

"Over the years we have set up many different types of training programmes and publications that describe how placemaking can be used in different situations.. We have for example developed a 'placegame', as part of a workshop where participants go out to a particular public space and evaluate that space in terms of its accessibility, comfort and image, the way that it is used, and sociability. Workshop participants evaluate what they like about the space, what they do not like about it, and what they would do in the short and the long term to change it. The placemaking workshop can take as little as three hours or it can take several

days to evaluate a large area. It makes professionals realise how much people in communities know and how they can support the vision that results. Together they can create a vision for creating a good place. Our staff of over 25 people conducts workshops and training programs all over the world.”

What is the state of placemaking in Europe in your eyes?

“Actually, I was absolutely amazed by the lack of community engagement all over Europe. In Eastern Europe it has been used more frequently, but we found that, in Western Europe, professionals have less experience in involving people in communities successfully. It seems like they do not trust the community process and that it can result in both good ideas and better public spaces. In some ways, that the different professions have each become their own audiences. Instead of building an agenda around a particular community’s vision, they develop an agenda and then try to implement it which sometimes works but often it doesn’t. Sometimes different professions such as architects, planners or transportation engineers or politicians or government agencies compete because they have different ideas about what should be done or how they should do things and it can become a battle between disciplines. And because they are so focused on their own discipline, they become isolated from what the community really thinks and do not work in the interest of the community. And what is very disturbing is that many badly designed spaces that no one uses are being copied all over the world.”

What is your magic trick to be able to involve the community and really work for the people?

"Because a placemaking process is centred around a particular place, we always work through local activists and the stakeholders around that space. And we have total confidence that the people around a space know it the best. Actually, we have a lot more confidence in the people than in the professionals simply because professionals are defined by their discipline and not by the work they do for the community. The 'magic trick' is simply to spend time observing and evaluating how a space is used and to facilitate a process where people in a community also evaluate the space and develop a vision and then to translate their ideas into a workable program for the design and management of the space. Our work is about helping people to figure out what their future is. We are the happiest if local communities do not even remember we were there...”

EUKN, Simone Pekelsma

Source - http://www.eukn.org/eukn/news/2008/12/interview-fred-kent_1013.html

For more information about placemaking, please visit

Placemaking for Communities | Project for Public Spaces (PPS)

<http://www.pps.org/>

About EUKN

The European Urban Knowledge Network facilitates the exchange of demand-driven knowledge and experience on urban issues. EUKN supports policy makers and practitioners across Europe in developing effective urban policy and to promote the vitality of Europe’s towns and cities. 16 EU Member States, EUROCITIES, the URBACT Programme and the European Commission participate in EUKN.

E-library

The main component of EUKN is its on-line database, the European urban e-library. To ensure the constant availability of comprehensive, detailed, relevant and up-to-date knowledge, each of the 16 Member States has established a National Focal Point. The National Focal Point is responsible for collecting relevant knowledge at national level and

making it available to EUKN. EURO CITIES, the network of major European cities, different DGs within the European Commission and associated networks of researchers and practitioners also provide EUKN with knowledge. In this way, EUKN links existing local, regional, national and European networks on urban policy.

Available knowledge and experience on EUKN.org

The EUKN e-library currently provides knowledge on six urban policy areas:

- social inclusion & integration;
- housing;
- transport & infrastructure;
- urban environment;
- economy, knowledge & employment;
- security & crime prevention
- skills & capacity building.

The e-library contains four types of documents:

- descriptions of best or proven practices;
- summaries of practical research;
- descriptions of successful policies;
- descriptions of relevant networks.

The EUKN e-library offers demand-driven knowledge. Feedback from EUKN users is essential. *Please share your comments, questions and suggestions with us.*

EUKN Secretariat

The EUKN Secretariat is responsible for the day-to-day management of EUKN and the maintenance of the EUKN website. The EUKN Secretariat is housed at the Nicis Institute in The Hague, the Netherlands. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our staff.

EUKN's definition of urban policy

All EUKN partners have jointly formulated a common definition of urban policy.

"Urban policy is multidisciplinary and constantly adjusting itself to new demands. Cities as focus of modern society are socially, culturally and economically dynamic entities. Successful urban policy integrates multiple domains: Relevant domains are labour market, spatial planning, housing, environmental sustainability, safety, mobility, economy, culture, and social inclusion policies.

The main focus of effective urban policy is life and functions in urban areas. Effective management of urban policy is marked by good governance. Increased citizen and civil society participation, as well as cooperation between local authorities and municipalities are an indispensable part of urban policy. The main challenges posed by urban policy are to create cities that are inclusive, attractive, safe and offer opportunities for all."

Source - <http://www.eukn.org/eukn/abouteukn/index.html>

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<http://www.eukn.org/eukn/>

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