LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Your guide to the location and strength of cross-border collaboration

The future belongs to those who collaborate\(^1\). However despite the scale of investment in cross-border co-operation we still do not have an overall picture of the spread or the strength of collaborative arrangements developed on the island. Understanding the formal and informal linkages within each distinct sub-region—and the organisations that promote such linkages—is key to realising the economic and social benefits that accompany our new era of Peace.

Border Ireland (www.borderireland.info) is a comprehensive database which integrates information on activities focused upon cross-border cooperation, the organisations which carry these out and the outputs from the activities. With EU Interreg funding the Centre for Cross Border Studies in partnership with the Institute for International Urban Development and the National Institute for Spatial and Regional Analysis (NIRSA) is integrating a spatial mapping programme into the Border Ireland database to visualize information on cross-border co-operation. This paper uses some of this mapping expertise to provide an overall picture of where collaborating organisations are located, where they choose to target their cross-border activities and to show the patterns of cross-border collaboration that have developed.

Location of organisations

Figure 1 shows the geographical spread of the 1463 organisations who have managed cross-border co-operation activities across the island between 1982 and 2006. Darker colours represent counties with higher numbers of collaborating organisations and vice versa.

Figure 1. Location of organisations involved in cross-border cooperation (at County level).
The figures show the concentration of organisations in Antrim and Dublin with 564 organisations or 38% of the total. The high numbers in Antrim can be explained by the location of all of the North’s government departments and agencies in Belfast as well as the presence in the city of many community development organisations. To illustrate the importance of the latter 271 of the 627 activities run by organisations based in County Antrim come from community development projects funded under the Peace programmes. With regard to government departments a further 109 of the 627 activities come from INTERREG I and II programmes which was largely orchestrated by central government departments and agencies from both sides of the border. The importance of government organisations is shown by the situation on the other side of the border where Dublin, nowhere near the Southern Border Counties, is the county with the largest share of co-operating organisations. The importance of even a single organisation to a county’s share can be seen in County Londonderry/Derry where 21% of the total activities have been managed by Co-operation and Working Together (CAWT), a partnership of Health Boards and Trusts in the border region.

There are some spatial patterns worth noting. The counties in the northwest region (Londonderry/Derry, Donegal and Tyrone) have a high share (23%) of organisations. The east border region also figures strongly with Down and Louth both featuring well. The lowest counties are the Central Border ones with the exception of Fermanagh. In Northern Ireland Armagh lags well behind in the crude count of organisations but this masks the contribution made by the Centre of Cross Border Studies, the North/South Ministerial Council and the Armagh Monaghan Digital Corridor – three initiatives (not-for profit, government and private sector) focused on sustained cross-border co-operation.

One pattern which distinguishes the Southern Border Counties from the North is the prevalence of co-operation led by local authorities. In Donegal 22% of the total cross-border activities are managed by the County Council, County Enterprise Board and County Library. This same pattern is even more marked when it comes to counties with the lower shares, like Cavan and Leitrim. In the latter the County Council, County Enterprise Boards (CEB) and Vocational Education Colleges (VEC) had a hand in 44% of all activities, while in the former the local authorities managed almost 63% of the total. Given the role of the Southern County Councils in back-to-back roads and environmental infrastructure projects under the earlier INTERREG I and II and Peace I programmes then this pattern serves to highlight the lower levels of ‘real’ cross-border activities led by these counties. Take Donegal for example. Of its 53 activities run by local authorities, only 17 have a truly cross-border element mostly from the post-2000 period. Before that only support for ERNACT, the Lough Foyle ferry initiative and a project creating an index of the Ordnance Survey memoirs for the nine counties of Ulster stand out as ‘truly’ cross-border in any way. The Local Authorities on both sides of the border now have a new strategic importance under the Peace III programme (2007-2013) as they are tasked with working in partnership with local people to develop local Peace and Reconciliation Action Plans. This focus on local authority led co-operation is a change which is not welcomed by all.
Seventy-seven organisations managed co-operative activities outside the EU denoted funding region (i.e. Northern Ireland and the six border counties) or Dublin. A number of counties take the lead in this work notably Cork, Limerick and Wicklow which have well-established organisations in the peace-building field which crop up in all bar the INTERREG-funding programmes. Cork has the North/South Cross-Community Scheme, Limerick the Irish Peace Institute and Wicklow both the Glencree Centre for Reconciliation and the 80:20 Educating and Acting Together for a Better World. From these four organisations have come over 25 funded activities. The Reconciliation Fund and the Peace programmes have been crucial for these counties involvement in cross-border cooperation with almost 50% of all activities being funded by those programmes.

**Figure 2. Location of organisations who work on cross-border economic co-operation**

Using Border Ireland it is also possible to examine the distribution of organisations who co-operation in different sectors (See Figure 2 opposite). For example, there is a misconception that cross-border economic activity is confined to the Dublin –Belfast axis. While the concentration is indeed on organisations based on the eastern side of the island, anchored by the main cities, Figure 2 below shows that such activity is by no means confined to this region.
**Location of activities**

Perhaps more importantly Border Ireland allows us to look at where co-operation actually takes place. This is done by aggregating the numbers of cross-border activities which happen within each county. Figure 3 below shows where co-operation is targeted on the island between 1982 and 2006 revealing the North West region counties such as Donegal in the South and Londonderry/Derry, Tyrone and Fermanagh in the North as the region where co-operation is most intense. This is not surprising in that Co. Donegal is only attached to the rest of the Republic of Ireland by a territorial isthmus nine kilometers wide, rendering it necessary for some journeys to the east and southeast of the Republic to pass through Northern Ireland.

The lower level of activity in Antrim is somewhat surprising given that it is the leading county for organisations who manage cross-border activities. (Antrim was not a target county for early INTERREG funding but it does, as expected, have a higher share of Peace II activities.) This raises the question of how counties pick which areas for their partnerships or for targeting with their cross-border activities. In other words do Donegal and Tyrone always look to each other and what of Armagh and Monaghan or Fermanagh and Leitrim? Are there ‘border corridors’ within the wider Border region?
Location: Patterns of cross-border linkages

There has been some research into the spatial dimensions of cross-border cooperation but from either sectoral surveys or limited numbers. An evaluation of Peace I Measures 3.1 and 3.4 showed the numbers of linkages for each county from 809 funding approvals. It revealed 1136 linkages overall and showed some clear patterns. For example, Monaghan made one third of its linkages with Armagh, the share in the opposite direction being one quarter. Londonderry/Derry made 52% of its linkages with Donegal, while Fermanagh looked to Monaghan for 24% of its and Louth made 43% of its with Down. While Antrim was the county which made the most linkages it was the second lowest county in North with which links were made.

Figures 4 and 5 are an initial attempt at showing the cross border linkages between organisations based on one side of the border and their co-operative activities in the other jurisdiction. The data comes with certain caveats but breaks new ground in helping us understand the patterns of co-operation.

**Figure 4. Cross-border linkages led by Southern-based organisations**
Border Ireland documents 6064 linkages across the border within the EU-denoted funding area over the twenty-five year period from 1982–2007. Overall, co-operation is three times more likely to originate in the North (4539 Northern led activities compared to 1525 Southern led activities) with Northern counties tending to make more links than have links made with them while the opposite is true in the Southern Border region. This suggests that the search for partners and the propensity to cooperate are that bit more strong North of the Border than South.

The patterns are quite similar to the earlier limited surveys. There are strong patterns of neighbouring counties co-operating such as Fermanagh and Leitrim, Armagh and Monaghan, Down and Louth and Donegal and Derry. In Northern Ireland Tyrone is an interesting case in that it is prepared to seek partnerships with Donegal, Monaghan and Sligo and it is also the Northern County which has the highest number of linkages made by Southern based organisations. Looking at the southern counties Donegal appears to be the most proactive in seeking out cross-border linkages and is also the County with which most Northern organisations establish partnerships. Again, Antrim has both the highest number of activities and linkages made but is the county with the lowest number of links made with it. Graphs for individual counties are available on request.
The figures suggest that there is still huge scope for developing new linkages across disciplines and locations which do not have historic links. The next step is to look at how these collaborations can operate effectively and efficiently so that co-operation is not simply working side by side but bringing together organisations and people with different backgrounds fashioning the “collision of thought that creates creative genius”.

For further details or to request graphs of collaboration on individual Counties please contact:

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1 *Collaboration: Transforming the way business works* is an Economist Intelligence Unit white paper, sponsored by Cisco Systems.

