

# **‘Tough Love’: Local Cross-Border Cooperation faces the challenge of sustainability**

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Local area-based cross-border cooperation has been on-going in Ireland since before the ‘Troubles’, albeit much of this on an informal basis – a case of neighbour helping neighbour. Since the mid-1990s much of this community-led cooperation has been formalised in the context of EU funding programmes to support the Northern Irish peace process and emerging national and regional spatial strategies. Under such programmes and strategies, its focus has been on economic and social development goals, rather than on social objectives only. Today cross-border cooperation on the island of Ireland, and particularly in the Border region, finds itself at a crossroads. For projects and partnerships that wish to remain in existence, and continue to receive funding, the emphasis now is on demonstrating their long-term sustainable nature. This ‘tough love’ approach to cross-border cooperation is increasingly being adopted by both government and EU funding agencies. Furthermore, these agencies’ emphasis is leaning more towards large-scale, partnership-led projects, and there is a danger that this will potentially exclude the community sector. As a result, many cross-border groups find themselves entering their final phase of operation – that is, unless they widen their stakeholder base, build on their areas’ strengths and ‘potentiality’, engage in spatial planning processes and ensure that real partnership, dialogue and communication takes place between all stakeholders.

The cross-border fit of both national and regional policy is becoming of increasing importance in both jurisdictions in Ireland. This is particularly evident through the close relationship of public policy with spatial planning, and is encouraged in the context of the *European Spatial Development Perspective* (ESDP), the *National Spatial Strategy* (NSS) in the Republic of Ireland and *Regional Development Strategy* (RDS) in Northern Ireland, along with associated planning guidelines.

In the Irish Border region there is the challenge both of a border separating the two jurisdictions, and of securing positive growth in frontier villages and towns affected by depressed economic conditions. In this article, we outline the work of the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) in considering the current connectivity and future potentiality that exists in a number of small cross-border towns and villages located in close proximity to each other. The three case study areas highlighted here are<sup>1</sup>:

- Lifford-Strabane (Donegal-Tyrone border)
- Kiltyclogher-Cashel (Scribbagh)-Garrison-Rossinver (Leitrim-Fermanagh border)
- Clones-Rosslea-Newtownbutler-Lisnaskea (Monaghan-Fermanagh border)

This research project commenced in the summer of 2007 and will conclude in mid-2008. While a number of cross-border initiatives and linkages are in place in each of the three case study areas, the article focuses on the work of one of the key stakeholder bodies established in each of these cross-border communities with the specific remit of redressing the socio-economic and cultural disconnect that has resulted from partition and the ‘Troubles’. It discusses the rationale behind cross-border cooperation in such areas, reviews cooperation in each of them and concludes with some actions necessary for sustaining cross-border cooperation.

## **Why cooperate?**

Each border area faces unique challenges, including retardation of trade, disruption of natural hinterlands and back-to-back policy development. For more than eight decades, the ‘border corridor’ has been hampered in its development by back-to-back policies in each jurisdiction, with the result that no policy assessment or coordination took place on an inter-jurisdictional basis.

Often the best way to address Border region issues is through inter-jurisdictional cooperation that results in a mix of 'hard' and 'soft' mutual benefits:

- Economic: the pooling of resources and developing of economies of scale;
- Social: capacity building within communities, training and mentoring;
- Physical: enhancing the physical environment.

For the island as a whole, the significant benefits which could accrue from engagement in cross-border cooperation include the enhancement of community cohesion, improved marketing of the border region, support for the Northern peace process, opportunities for economic development and the development of the physical environment.

There are three distinct phases to the development of the Irish Border region: pre-1970s; 1970s to mid-1990s; and mid-1990s to the present day.

Partition in 1921 had varying impacts on communities and towns along the Border. In many areas, citizens continued to cross the Border to shop, to socialise, to farm and to work, and the pattern of daily life was often not greatly affected. However the negative impacts of partition were clearly manifest at many levels. Harvey et al (2005) regard Clones as the Southern town that was most adversely affected by the Border<sup>2</sup>. Customs barriers and price differentials from 1924 onwards saw Clones lose much of its trade to towns in the North. Ireland's entry into the European Monetary System (EMS) in 1979 ended the link between the punt and sterling, leading to constant fluctuations between the two currencies. These factors, together with the severing of cross-border rail connections in the late 1950s, adversely affected cross-border interaction in economic, political and social terms. The onset of the 'Troubles' and ensuing road closures in the early 1970s further inhibited the development of the region, and has left sizeable challenges for those seeking to promote cross-border collaboration.

During the 'Troubles' era – the early seventies to the mid-nineties – the Border as a barrier to socio-economic development became even more difficult to surmount. During this period the region was characterised by continuing peripherality from Dublin and Belfast; a lack of joined-up action on spatial planning; an infrastructure deficit; the decline of traditional economic activities such as farming and clothing and textiles; high unemployment and under-employment; and low educational attainment. Border towns and villages were cut off from their natural trading and retailing hinterlands. The region was also characterised by increased sectarian tensions caused by the Northern Ireland conflict. To address this, the 1990s witnessed a mushrooming in the number of both formal and informal cross-border networks as part of the emerging peace process. This was assisted by generous EU and other largely overseas funding through organisations like the International Fund for Ireland and the EU Peace and INTERREG programmes.

Since the mid-nineties, local border communities have striven to build on existing cross-border linkages - and forge new ones – with varying degrees of success. Now local stakeholders face the additional challenges of competing within a changing political landscape brought about by devolution in Northern Ireland, the cessation or reduction of funding, and securing buy-in from a wider range of stakeholders, such as local government and the business community. A key question now facing Border towns and villages is: should they rely on past economic success as an inspiration for future economic development, or should they seek to construct a new future for themselves based on other potential growth areas such as sustainable tourism?

### **Three faces of cooperation**

While it is believed that much of the cross-border cooperation and collaboration taking place in the Border region is community-led, this is not always the case. A review of the Border Ireland

website<sup>3</sup>, for example, clearly highlights that cooperation takes many forms, involves partnerships of various sizes and make-up, has various objectives, covers different timeframes, and uses a variety of delivery methods. Increasingly the private sector and local government are engaging in the process of cross-border cooperation as key stakeholders – and in some instances are actually the instigators of, or key drivers behind, a particular project or partnership. In the section below these different forms of cooperation are explored through evidence from the three case study areas.

### ***Lifford-Strabane***

Prior to partition, both Lifford and Strabane were considered a single entity<sup>4</sup>, a single community. Strabane was a significant market town and one of the main shopping and industrial employment centres in the region. However, a combination of the railway closing in 1954, the impact of the Northern Ireland conflict, and the effects of general economic decline and globalisation had a devastating effect on these co-located towns. For example, Strabane town centre was hit hard by 'Troubles'-related bombings and other violence, and major industries, notably textiles and food processing, experienced a steep decline. By the late 1970s the town's male unemployment rate exceeded 35%<sup>5</sup>. In Lifford the situation was similar, with the conflict next door bringing about economic decline and employment loss in this Donegal county town. Interestingly, Lifford was unable to take advantage of the decline of Strabane as a retail centre as customers turned to other towns in both Donegal and Northern Ireland.

Both towns are now experiencing a change in their fortunes. The population level is growing steadily and both towns have benefited from major regeneration and economic development initiatives, with the employment base shifting more towards professional services. Both towns are also located in close proximity to the proposed 'Gateway' of Letterkenny-Derry/Londonderry and, if capitalised on correctly, this could create many growth opportunities for both of them. In effect, this Border area is once again being considered a single entity. A key constituent in this success has been the commitment of a group of local businesspeople who came together in 1993 and, with the encouragement of John Hume (then the local MP and MEP), established the **Strabane-Lifford Development Commission (SLDC)** with the overall objective of improving the towns and their surrounds through tourism, quality product development and physical renewal. The Commission was established as an European Economic Interest Grouping (EEIG)<sup>6</sup>, a strategic decision to ensure it was in a position to apply for EU regional funding. The SLDC is, in effect, the marriage of two bodies established with the specific purpose of availing of EEIG status: the Lifford Commission and the Strabane Commission. By establishing itself in this way, both towns were able to address their own priorities until such time as it was possible for them to undertake joint initiatives.

In 1993, when the SLDC was being established, the local border crossing was still heavily fortified. Despite the strategic position of the two towns – a good location for distribution companies and businesses serving the North-West – economic prospects were bleak. There was no inward investment taking place. Both towns were characterised by a lot of dereliction and were, in development terms, 'sleep-walking'. Intimidation and extortion were wide-scale and a dissident republican movement was active, particularly in Strabane. The negative experiences of one area inevitably impacted on the other. In Donegal, Lifford was considered a 'dark place' where nothing was happening socially or economically. This image persisted to the point that Donegal County Council was rumoured to be considering moving its headquarters out of the town.

At the same time as the SLDC was established, the regeneration of the towns of Lifford and Strabane was adopted as a flagship project for the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) when it was established in the late 1980s. It is now widely acknowledged that the IFI took a risk in adopting Lifford-Strabane as a flagship, but that it was the right organisation for the SLDC to enter into

partnership with at that time. The IFI became fully committed to the success of the Commission, adopting a very flexible approach to the initiatives it supported on the ground.

From 1993 to 2006, the SLDC generated funding of €25m for both 'hard' and 'soft' projects. Examples of the types of initiatives the Commission has involved itself with include:

#### *Lifford*

- the development of the Finn Valley Enterprise Park;
- the development of social housing (with Habinteg Housing Association);

#### *Strabane*

- the restoration of part of the Strabane Canal;
- a series of environmental improvements;

#### *Both*

- the Wider Horizons Programme (with IFI) which aimed to improve the employability of young people from disadvantaged areas between the ages of 16-28 years through training and work experience;
- the Centre without Walls Programme, the objective of which was to re-engage women in the workforce through IT training and upskilling;
- Border Reach, a community arts initiative including 'Let the Dance Begin', a grouping of 30ft high statues symbolising music and dance;
- Outward Bound Programme with a focus on addressing tensions between youth in the area through photography and music; and
- Mind your Tongue, which explored ethnic diversity in the area.

People interviewed by the ICLRD researchers were generally of the opinion that the regeneration of both Lifford and Strabane would have taken much longer if the SLDC had not been established. It has been able to engage in initiatives that Donegal County Council and Strabane District Council would never have been able to 'get off the ground'. The Commission's non-political status has been a key factor in this, as has been its ability to engage with a wide range of stakeholders. The Councils have, however, been very supportive of the work of the Commission through cash contributions and providing office space. Their commitment, in turn, has been crucial in leveraging further support and buy-in, particularly from the business community.

More recently, the SLDC has begun getting involved in initiatives outside Strabane and Lifford<sup>7</sup>: for example, the restoration of an old Church of Ireland hall in Convoy in County Donegal using an international labour force, and the refurbishment of the old mill in Convoy as a craft centre. With its current funding running out, the SLDC is considering its future and investigating whether it can unlock further funding. Given that it was initially established for a two year period 15 years ago, one might be right in thinking that we haven't heard the last from this grouping just yet.

#### ***Kiltyclogher-Cashel(Scribbagh)-Garrison-Rossinver***

This grouping of small rural villages and townlands, each with a population of 250-400 people, is situated in North Leitrim-West Fermanagh, with their natural hinterlands stretching across the Border. These remote and peripheral settlements have experienced mixed fortunes over the past 40 years. The road closures of the 'Troubles' resulted in their economic decline and physical separation, the end result being that this area now lags seriously behind in its development compared to other rural communities that were not divided in such a manner. For example, the village of Kiltyclogher in County Leitrim would have been a thriving village prior to the conflict, with eight shops and seven public houses. However, during the 'Troubles' all roads leading into Kiltyclogher from the North were closed and this resulted in the disruption of natural trading patterns as well as social disconnects. The population of the region is ageing and unemployment

remains high. Agriculture is the dominant activity but its development is constrained by poor land quality and the age profile of farmers.

There is little industrial employment, with many residents working in manufacturing and commerce in the larger neighbouring towns, such as Manorbhamilton and Enniskillen. Access to the area is poor, given that it is served solely by secondary roads. Public transport is limited and dependent upon an irregular Rural Lift <sup>8</sup>service.

The viability of rural communities like these along the Irish Border has become precarious. This is the result of many factors: out-migration, depletion of human resources, persistent structural weaknesses in the rural economy, and the severance of economic, social and cultural connections by nearly 30 years of conflict. Even the coming of relative peace and the growing funds being made available for cross-border cooperation had, by the end of the 1990s, done little to improve the fortunes of this cluster of rural communities. In response, the **KiltyCashel Project** was established in 2001 when representatives from two local groups – the Kiltyclogher Community Council and the Cashel Community Association in County Fermanagh - came together to form a cross-border committee. Now this once natural hinterland is slowly beginning to put the Troubles behind it and focus on its future. There has been little open discussion between both communities on the impact of the Troubles on their communities<sup>9</sup> - instead the emphasis has been on new opportunities and moving forward.

Funded under the EU Peace II programme, the KiltyCashel Project is a cross-border, cross-community initiative that is entirely community-led. While the funding has been important in helping both communities re-establish old linkages and develop new ones, the collaborative process is largely driven by the strong community spirit that exists in both Kiltyclogher and Cashel. The community representatives are passionate about their work and are committed to reinvigorating both villages and their surrounding communities. But where such passion exists, there is also the risk of burn-out. This is particularly an issue for these small Border villages, which have a small population base and a very small number of players involved in cross-border collaboration.

A key focus of the KiltyCashel Project's work is the socio-economic revitalisation of the cross-border area. This includes:

- increasing the employability of the people in the area through the provision of training programmes such as ECDL;
- providing capacity-building training and rolling out courses on starting small businesses (sometimes in association with Leitrim Partnership);
- establishing a jobs club for local men and women to assist them in returning to the workforce;
- bringing together and supporting local clubs (such as Active Age);
- developing a womens network and associated activities; and
- building bridges between the 'lost generation', that is those who have missed out on not knowing each other on a cross-border basis because of the 'Troubles'..

Both community associations are also involved in their own particular activities, but given the communities' close proximity to each other, these invariably result in cross-border benefits. For example, the Kiltyclogher Community Council, with the assistance of the Leitrim Led Taskforce, secured monies from the UK-based environmental organisation, Groundwork, under its 'Changing Places, Transforming Communities'<sup>10</sup> initiative, to develop a children's educational allotment and playground on county council-owned land. This space is not only used by children from the Kiltyclogher area but also by those from neighbouring areas across the border.

The success of the KiltyCashel Project to date has largely been attributed to its emphasis on complementarity rather than duplication. Each community provides, or takes responsibility for, a

different range of services and activities. The project has also identified with the emerging sustainable communities agenda by considering the potential of a number of long-term initiatives focusing on local employment, work-life balance and quality of life issues. However, despite these successes, significant social and economic challenges remain in this area, the response to which may be hampered by a new, more limited funding environment which jeopardises the survival and sustainability of community-based organisations. Given the much more restrictive guidelines for funding programmes such as EU Peace III (2007-2013), this looks like being the KiltyCashel Project's toughest trial yet.

### ***Clones-Rosslea-Newtownbutler-Lisnaskea***

Historically strong economically, this grouping of small towns and established rural settlements has suffered greatly as a result on the 'Troubles' and nearly 30 years of cross-border road closures. During the 1980s and 1990s both Clones and Lisnaskea experienced significant factory closures, high unemployment, and a general economic decline. With populations of approximately 300 and 950 persons respectively, Rosslea and Newtownbutler are small, well-established rural settlements in south Fermanagh located close to Clones across the Border. Around Rosslea, agriculture is the dominant economic activity; with the village facing considerable difficulties in adjusting to the decline in traditional farming.

Attempts have been made locally to promote economic diversification, as evidenced by the establishment of Enterprise Centres in Rosslea, Clones and Lisnaskea. Manufacturing, construction and retail are the main employers in Newtownbutler. However, these are particularly vulnerable to economic restructuring and global downturn. Lisnaskea functions as a retail, health, education, employment and service centre for its rural hinterland, and contains some significant manufacturing enterprises such as Lisnaskea Stainless Steel Fabrication. Clones has a similar profile, with manufacturing and commerce as the main sectors of employment. The coming of peace and the re-opening of border roads has paid some dividends, with both Clones and Lisnaskea now beginning to attract back customers from their natural cross-border hinterlands. However, both towns remain economically depressed, with an unemployment rate well above the respective regional and national averages. Given this area's proximity to the larger urban centres of Enniskillen and Monaghan, which draw in trade and population, cross-border connectivity is recognised as an important issue in building critical mass and generating economies of scale.

Cross-border local government links do exist in the Border region (e.g. in tourism and the arts) but the degree of cooperation varies. This is largely attributed to the lack of formal, matching local government structures that can engage in dialogue. However in recent years local government councillors and officials in the Clones-Lisnaskea area have invested time and resources into promoting cross-border cooperation, an initiative that culminated in the establishment of the ***Clones-Erne East Partnership*** in 2002. Established as a collaboration between Fermanagh District Council, Monaghan County Council and Clones Town Council, the Partnership's primary objective has been "to provide a mechanism to work together on issues of commonality to achieve more effective solutions on a cross-border basis"<sup>11</sup>.

As a legal entity, the Partnership has been able to apply for funding and to act as an intermediary for projects promoted by other organisations which fit within the Partnership's overall strategy. In 2004 the Partnership published a strategic plan for the economic, social, cultural and environmental re-generation of its catchment area. The plan was formulated through an extensive consultation process, which engaged community and voluntary groups, local businesses, state bodies and various interest groups on both sides of the Border. The plan is underpinned by agreed targets, and it identifies key strategic partners, such as Chambers of Commerce, local business associations and community groups for the implementation of specific actions and projects (such as a recently delivered IT support programme for small businesses). The

Partnership maintains strong linkages with bottom-up organisations, particularly the Clones Community Forum, thereby ensuring that it is process-orientated as well as task-orientated.

The Clones-Erne East Partnership has already been successful in delivering and coordinating a number of projects, including:

- The establishment of a Shadow Youth Partnership to engage second-level students in community development projects;
- The development of a local website and the publication of a newsletter, highlighting and showcasing the strengths and potentiality of the area, the work of community groups, innovations in business and progress on cross-border cooperation; and
- The provision of technical support to local groups, community associations and leaders in brokering resources, enhancing public service provision and improving local infrastructure and amenities.

One of the Partnership's most striking initiatives is known locally as the 'Chairs Project'. This has involved the placing of sandstone chairs in prominent locations in each of the towns and villages in the Clones-Erne East Area. Each chair contains a time capsule, with essays written by local schoolchildren. The Partnership has thus engaged children from both traditions and from both sides of the border in compiling material for this innovative project. Moreover, the unveiling of the various chairs has provided occasions for cross-community and cross-border interaction and celebration. The Partnership has also been active in the promotion of rural tourism, as evidenced by the development of a walkway and fishing stands at Aghdrumsee, Co. Fermanagh, and its members share the sense of local optimism that has emerged from the recent Irish government pledge to re-open the Ulster Canal as far as Clones – a development for which the Partnership has lobbied.

The Clones-Erne East Partnership represents a very important step forward for this area, not just in terms of cross-border collaboration, but also as an example of collaborative cross-border governance by local authorities. In this way, the Partnership represents an innovative approach to territorial planning and local decision-making. Its initiation by the local government sector represents a shift away from exclusively hierarchical approaches, with agencies acting in isolation, to a new more collaborative system of local governance, which is based on inter-agency information-sharing, networking and collaboration. However, as with the other models presented, the Partnership's future is uncertain. But unlike the other stakeholder bodies profiled, this is not due to the changing funding environment; rather it is due to the time-break that is occurring between the conclusion of one funding programme and the start of the next.

## **Sustaining the cooperation**

Cross-border linkages between community and voluntary groups and between local government agencies have gained considerable momentum over recent years, and are increasingly based on agreed and strategic multi-annual work plans, and a high degree of local ownership. The stakeholder base is also being widened to include local government agencies, elected representatives, local development partnerships, tourism bodies and community groups. This greater collaboration has been largely attributed to the three EU-funded cross-border networks of local authorities and social partners: the East Border Region<sup>12</sup>, the Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) and the North West Region Cross Border Group. In addition, the Monaghan-based Border Action – as a so-called EU Intermediary Funding Body – plays a valuable role in enabling and facilitating bottom-up development and partnership building. Where partnerships include such a wide range of local stakeholders, the potential exists for them to increase regional and national linkages to promote the territorial competitiveness of their catchment areas. However inter-business networking between small Border towns such as Clones and Lisnaskea and Lifford and Strabane has not emerged to any considerable extent. Variations in prices, the operation of

two currencies and perceived competition between small towns and their traders and business interests have tended to promote the interests of individual towns rather than the potential collective commercial strengths of the towns and villages on a cross-border basis. Addressing these economic and business cooperation issues remains a challenge.

While the time is right for many local areas in Ireland, North and South, to move away from funding programmes and demonstrate self-sustainability, this is not yet the case for the Border region. While EU funding programmes in particular have assisted Border communities to develop economically and socially, neighbouring areas, especially in Northern Ireland, have also moved forward through equivalent funding supports. The result is that these small Border towns and villages, relative to other locations, remain in a disadvantaged position. Sustained government financial and policy support is thus an essential factor in their long-term viability, although how likely this is to happen remains an open question.

As these case study insights reveal, current collaborative structures in the Border region involve local community leaders, volunteers and some entrepreneurs emerging as the main protagonists and co-ordinators. Partnership processes are leading to increased inter-community and cross-community contacts and networking, and these processes have brought about increased levels of social capital in border communities. In planning for future cross-border collaboration, it is important to sustain and build on the levels of social capital that have been fostered in this way, and to complement them by greater institutional and financial support from central government. While increased investment in large-scale infrastructural projects is always important to promote economic competitiveness, it is equally crucial to support small-scale and area-based collaborative approaches.

A recurring theme of interviews in these Border towns and villages is the need to develop the natural and cultural locale through, for example, sustainable tourism product development. But in order to capitalise on this potential, three further areas which need investment are road and infrastructure improvements, ICT connectivity and cross-border and cross-community collaborative governance along the lines of the Clones-Erne East Partnership.

## **Conclusion**

Each of these case study areas faces unique challenges - for example, the economic and skills base in Kiltyclogher-Garrison is very different to that of Lifford-Strabane. However, common issues exist, ranging from the in-migration of workers from Eastern Europe and their associated impact on an area's social structure, to the pressures of residential development and the potential for smaller settlements to become dormitory towns for larger urban centres.

These three studies demonstrate how different structures and players will become involved in cross-border cooperation based on local circumstances: in Lifford-Strabane it was the business-led Strabane-Lifford Development Commission; in Kiltyclogher-Cashel it was the community-led KiltyCashel Project; and in Clones-Lisnaskea it was the local authority-led Clones-Erne East Partnership.

In his excellent 2007 *Audit of Community Development in the Cross Border Region*<sup>13</sup>, Brian Harvey notes that community development has generally followed a path of 'contact-coordination-cooperation.' The support of cross-border funding programmes has encouraged creative institutional structures between cross-border groups that Harvey characterises into three types with deepening levels of engagement: twin pairs, twin pairs with a coordinating committee, and 'transboundary'. The Strabane-Lifford Development Commission and the KiltyCashel project fall into Harvey's first two categories respectively. The Clones-Erne East Partnership takes on a rather



different structure in that it is a network among three local authorities with linkages to local and cross-border community and business groups.

The context for future cross-border programmes is changing. With the Northern Ireland peace process moving forward, cross-border projects will increasingly reflect the *normal* challenges of inter-jurisdictional planning and coordination that can be found in other EU border regions and elsewhere. These include overcoming a lack of coherent and consistent government policies across different sectors on each side of the Border. The new INTERREG IV programme will require increased cross-border cooperation among local authorities in the areas of enterprise, tourism, infrastructure and services, and it is hoped that this will also bring about greater consistency across the sectors in *each* jurisdiction.

Another driving force for cooperation will be the emerging fiscal constraints on both sides of the Border, with the South facing into serious funding shortfalls as the economic boom conditions of recent years come to an end. Central and local funding authorities will need to find creative ways to finance and maintain local services, thus strengthening the case for inter-jurisdictional cooperation in order to provide these services in areas with a potential cross-border catchment.

Together the three case studies offer some key lessons for future cross-border programmes:

- The quality and impact of local development programmes, and particularly cross-border projects, are directly linked to the level of involvement between local authorities and local business and community networks. This means that as local government takes on a larger role in cross-border cooperation, it will have to develop structures that involve and leverage the social and financial capital of these networks.
- Introducing area-based planning on a cross-border basis, including ‘visioning’ tools and non-statutory spatial planning processes, can help to link sectoral programmes and services that have a spatial impact. This will also help cross-border small towns and villages to position themselves within the larger cross-border economy and infrastructure network without compromising their jurisdictional competencies.
- Cross-border small towns and villages increasingly recognise the need to work in partnership to deliver integrated solutions so as to ensure their economic and social viability. This necessitates moving from focussing on the immediate to adopting a longer-term developmental approach to cooperation.

While these three models of local cross-border cooperation do not prescribe how cross-border alliances should be rolled out, who should be involved or what areas they should cover, they do highlight that there are many reasons to engage in cross-border cooperation and many ways of doing it. The most important conclusion is that these examples demonstrate the necessity of building on an identified local need and having that need at the core of the collaborative process.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper reports on the research findings from the Lifford-Strabane; Kiltyclogher-Cashel(Scribbagh)-Garrison-Rossinver; and Clones-Rosslea-Newtownbutler-Lisnaskea, which is part of a wider ICLRD research project that also includes Blacklion-Belcoo-Glenfarne and Castleblayney-Crossmaglen. This research programme is being jointly funded by the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) and the Irish Government.

<sup>2</sup> Harvey B, Kelly A, McGearty S, Murray S (2005), *The Emerald Curtain: The Social Impact of the Irish Border*. Carrickmacross: Triskele Community Training and Development

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.borderireland.info/>

<sup>4</sup> There are old records in the Lifford Courthouse which refer to Strabane District Number 1 (i.e. Strabane town) and Strabane District Number 2 (i.e. Lifford).

<sup>5</sup> See “Strabane to receive further State aid” in Irish Times, 4 April 1978

<sup>6</sup> As outlined in Council Regulation (EEC) No 2137/85 of 25 July 1985, a European Economic interest Grouping (EEIG) must have at least two members from different member states, its activities must be related

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to economic activities of its members, and it must result in better outcomes than if the members were acting alone (see <http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/126015.htm>).

<sup>7</sup> The terms of reference of the Strabane-Lifford Development Commission have been rewritten to facilitate this widening of its' catchment area. The Directors were of the opinion that the catchment of Lifford and Strabane had become too small so it was increased to include 'near-about's' such as Convoy.

<sup>8</sup> Rural Lift is a demand-responsive community transport project serving West Cavan and North Leitrim. While it can carry passengers across the Border, it cannot stop and collect people once it has crossed the Border into Northern Ireland.

<sup>9</sup> One possible reason for why these conversations are not thought necessary is that there was still movement between both villages during the Troubles.

<sup>10</sup> A £60million programme supported by the Millennium Commission.

<sup>11</sup> See p.13 of the Clones Erne East Area Strategy, a document produced by Daly & Associates on behalf of the Partnership and published in May 2004.

<sup>12</sup> While the East Border Region Committee does not cover any of the three case study areas highlighted in this paper, it does encompass the Castblayney-Crossmaglen area which is part of ICLRD's wider study.

<sup>13</sup> Harvey, B (2007), *Audit of Community Development in the Cross Border Region* (unpublished), Cross Border Centre for Community Development, Dundalk Institute of Technology