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## **LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE TRANSPORT PROVISION ON THE ISLAND OF IRELAND – POLITICAL OBSERVATIONS**

**Summary.** The paper delineates the core issues surrounding political, socio-economic, and territorial implications on a number of transport issues on the island of Ireland by looking at the record of transport in the early 20th century, concentrating on the disintegration of the rail network, and its effect on local population, as this was the foremost method of transport during this period. An amalgamation of interviews and open-ended questionnaires directed towards politicians painted a vivid picture of the core principals influencing their parties' policies in relation to transport on the island. Participant observation of an overt nature was incorporated to investigate the views of those who feel they have suffered as a result of the neglected border region, along with the other areas of the northwest, and the policies of their political representatives. The data also reinforced the notion that other arguments also portrayed that security reasons in the latter half of the century in the north contributed to the problem. The paper looks at the discourse of political stagnation to motivation over the last century and the political manifestations that have created this tidal shift. A preliminary questionnaire survey was conducted to explore a number of key issues such as (a) island's troubled past and the land transport infrastructure, (b) reasons why the railway and road networks in the proximity of the border counties have become so stagnant, (c) perceived impacts of devolution and the peace process on transport on the island, and (f) possibilities of stronger cooperation and cohesion between the north and the south in relation to transport.

## **LEKCJE TRANSPORTU ZAOPATRZENIOWEGO NA WYSPIE IRLANDIA – OBSERWACJE POLITYCZNE**

**Streszczenie.** Artykuł określa sedno sprawy dotyczącej politycznych, socjoekonomicznych oraz terytorialnych implikacji w wielu kwestiach transportu na wyspie Irlandia przez oglądanie nagrań transportu we wczesnych latach dwudziestego stulecia, przy skoncentrowaniu się na dezintegracji sieci kolei i jej wpływu na lokalną ludność, jako że był to główny środek transportu w tym okresie. Połączenie wywiadów i otwartych ankiet skierowanych wprost do polityków stworzyło jaskrawy obraz głównych wpływów członków partii politycznych na transport na wyspie. Obserwacje jawnego charakteru uczestników zostały włączone do badania poglądów tych, którzy czuli, że ucierpieli w rezultacie zaniedbania pogranicza regionu, wzdłuż innych obszarów

północnego zachodu, i polityki przedstawicieli politycznych. Dane również wzmocniły pojęcie, że inne argumenty także zobrazowały powody bezpieczeństwa w połowie wieku na północy, przyczyniając się do zagadnienia. Artykuł unaocznia relację politycznej stagnacji z motywacją w poprzednim wieku oraz manifestacje polityczne, które wykreowały to przesunięcie pływów. Wstępne badanie ankietowe zostało przeprowadzone, by zbadać liczbę kluczowych kwestii, takich jak: (a) burzliwa przeszłość wyspy oraz infrastruktura transportu lądowego, (b) powody tego, że kolej oraz sieć dróg w sąsiedztwie granic państwa zaczęły tak popadać w stagnację, (c) postrzeganie skutków degeneracji oraz procesów pokojowych w transporcie na wyspie oraz (f) możliwości ściślejszej współpracy oraz większej spójności relacji transportu północy i południa.

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The study is a provocative and contentious confrontation to the past conduct of governmental institutions in Britain and Ireland ultimately responsible for all aspects of politics and law making on the island. Transport has as a result of this been severely influenced in the past, however with a rejuvenated system now in place in the north, combined with improved relations between the two jurisdictions on the island, transport infrastructure is improving, and will continue to develop for the benefit of all the people on the island. This paper is therefore an undeviating and meaningful challenge to the issue. As such, it is hoped that this research can be utilised to shed light on an area of transport that is both complex and controversial but which has a substantial impact on the everyday lives of many citizens both north and south of the border – in summary an issue of ‘territorial logic’. There are a number of countries where there have been partitions partly on sectarian and political lines (e.g. India, former Yugoslavia, Lebanon, old Germany, Cyprus).

Infrastructures within the island may appear to be bewildering due to the complex nature of the island’s long and varied political character. In the past, the most reliable and common transport method was the rail network. Pre-partition, in Ireland the transport network was extensive, however due to diverse reasons, a peculiar disintegration of the rail and road infrastructure became evident (especially around the border region) throughout the remainder of the century. Due to the political stability that is currently in place, after a long period of the troubles, a number of changes have been implemented, most notably that of the peace process and devolution in the north. Little investigation has clarified the effect that devolution has had on the island’s transport system, whether it is detrimental or beneficial compared to the central governments’ previous systematic approach to transport. The north of the island has become the most recent part of the UK to adopt devolution, and although its model is loosely based on those of Scotland and Wales, it embodies a very unique situation in that the political, religious and cultural values of all those who live there must be taken into consideration. The unique situation is that Britain and Ireland both contribute to the transport infrastructure due to its political and geographic idiosyncrasy.

In recent times due to historic cross border relations in terms of business, policing etc., a greater call for transport cooperation has been heard. A famous writer spoke of the eighteenth century Irish road system [1]: “For a country so far behind us as Ireland to have got suddenly so much in front of us in the article of roads, is a spectacle that cannot fail to strike the British traveller exceedingly.” Less than forty years later Alexander Nimmo in 1880 reinforces this statement [2]: “The roads of Ireland are confessedly the finest in Europe, in this respect she vastly excels England.”

To properly comprehend the character of Ireland during the period when railways first came to the forefront, followed by its sudden ruin, one must understand the island’s complex politics during and previous to these years. Another writer Edward Carr [3] explains that several attempts by the British to colonise Ireland over various centuries eventually began to take grasp as a result of the Plantation of Ulster which took place in the northern Irish province of Ulster during the early 17<sup>th</sup> century in the reign of James I of England.

Following many years of conflict between England and Ireland, Baker [4] explains that the period of war between the Irish and the British from 1916 to 1920 caused little disruption to the railways, however when the Irish civil war broke out, anti-treaty forces had a thorough understanding of how cutting communications would disrupt control in Dublin. Casserly [5] makes a critical point, implying that the partition resulted in the breakdown of many railway lines at the border. However, he finds it surprising that many lines in the Republic still remain and regard the railways as essential to the needs of the community. The position in the south at this time was substantially less positive than that of the north in relation to the economy of the Free State. The 'hungry thirties' witnessed something which was not uncommon in Ireland's history, that being mass emigration, most common in the west, ultimately leading to the mass closure of the 'western corridor' railway network, ranging the entire west coast of Ireland [6]. In the 1940s, the Taoiseach, Eamon DeValera and Winston Churchill struck up an increasingly aggressive foreign policy to each other [7]. The conflict came to a head with the outbreak of World War 2.

During the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century a general wind down of railways took place across the UK with a number of closures appearing imminent especially following the rise in usage of cars and buses and the eventual development of motorways. Hillman and Whalley [8] explain that the reasons behind the Beeching Report of 1963 (which recommended a major British Rail closure programme) was that the existing rail network was uneconomical to maintain. The decline in rail usage began to emerge in the 50s with a fall of 33% of rail users between 1953 and 1960 [9, 10]. The British Railways in 1961 initiated a number of studies into the railways operations and finances. It is during the period from 1945-1960 that a huge scaling down of rail along the border counties was witnessed [11]. The question still remains as to why this took place on such a large scale. Following World War 2, Germany was 'partitioned' as such, into East and West Germany, control falling between the western allies on the west and the Soviet Union in the east [12], until the reunification of the country in 1990. The harmful effects on the transport infrastructure are argued by explaining how those in control of East-German railways went to great lengths to avoid West Berlin, building diversionary routes in place of the previously used lines [13].

In contrast to the treatment of the border in Ireland, the EU is based upon the principles of co-operation and reciprocal understanding between regions devised by borders [14-16]. In a partitioned country where devolution exists (i.e. where power from the main governmental source is broken down to regional governments), little is known about the effect, that this has on that country's transport systems, whether it is detrimental or beneficial compared to the previous governments systematic approach to transport. On the British Isles, the concept of devolution/decentralisation has been pursued by the 'new labour' government since 1997, however the period since has been marked by unevenness and lack of symmetry in relation to transport throughout the various regions [17]. The inhabitants of the UK (60 million) are split between 83% England, 9% Scotland, 5% Wales and only 3% NI, with Scotland and NI being granted full legislative powers unlike Wales who have only secondary legislative powers. Docherty [18] states that recent devolution in the north has still to acquire a sense of itself in terms of full legislative powers due to the suspension of the devolved government and so the actual effect of devolution in relation to transport has still to be properly determined. Consequently, he explains that from the year 2000, the Scottish Executive has encountered various problems for various reasons. In an effort to contest these problems, the Scottish Executive introduced appraisal economics to compare the benefits and costs of infrastructure investment projects [19]. This came in the guise of Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) which incorporated its criticisms within the realms of the environment, safety, economy integration, and accessibility. However STAG did not escape appraisal itself as many complained that the qualitative assessment process often laid to unclear results.

In NI, the road and rail networks are under state ownership. The Department for Regional Development is responsible for these and other areas. The 'Regional Development Strategy for NI 2025' acted as a generic mother document to the 'Regional Transportation Strategy for NI 2002-2012', all under the banner of the 'Shaping Our Future' strategy [20]. In the Regional Development Strategy 2025, Gregory Campbell MP, DUP Minister for Regional Development 2001, outlines the general essence of the strategy. He refers to how the future development of the economy will be

determined hugely by infrastructural decisions, especially in relation to the transport network, which is critical to improve accessibility and mobility, and dealing with the problems of social exclusion. The report goes on to explain that this will be obtainable by tailoring the needs of the unique settlement patterns in the province with emphasis on accessibility, moving people and goods rather than vehicles, and reducing the actual need to travel by reinforcing the economic fabric of specific towns/hubs, diluting dependency on Belfast. For further details refer to [21-23].

The implementation of the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) is through three transport plans; the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP), the Regional Strategic Transport Network (RSTN), the Transport Plan (TP), and the Sub-Regional Transport Plan (SRTP). These plans have been created to develop transportation in NI, after many years of under investment and aid in creating a more sustainable infrastructure, which will boost the economy and sustain the local environment. The BMTP implements the proposals of the RTS for the BMA (Belfast Metropolitan Area) only. This was due to the current congestion problem in Belfast city centre and the effect that this was having on the economy of Belfast and NI. The RSTN Transport Plan proposes several methods of reducing car usage. According to the Department for Regional Development [24], the plan details measures of improving rail and bus services in the north and deals with transportation throughout the rest of NI (Regional Transport Strategy for Northern Ireland 2002-2012). This strategy recognises the years of under investment in transport in the province, and its stratagem contains a £3500 million investment plan for the 10 year period. In comparison to other EU countries, the UK exchequer has traditionally invested a very low amount of money into their Transport infrastructures, the remarkably low consistency of investment in NI, in comparison to the other UK countries [18].

In the Republic of Ireland, the Minister for Transport, acting through the Department of Transport, is responsible for the state's road network, rail network, public transport, airports and several other areas. The rail network is also state owned and operated and the public transport is mainly managed by a statutory corporation, C oras Iompair  ireann, and its subsidiaries, Bus  atha Cliath (Dublin Bus), Bus  ireann (Irish Bus), and Iarn od  ireann (Irish Rail). The most significant infrastructural plan in recent history within the south, was presented in the guise of the strategy [25]. The implementation of the strategy has an increasing influence on policies and programmes across a number of government departments and agencies. The existing gateways of Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford are strategically located. Derry has been identified in the RDS for NI as a regional city for the North-West, including Donegal. Transport 21 is made up of two investment programmes – a national programme and a programme for the Greater Dublin area. It is complementary to other Government initiatives such as the Rural Transport Programme and the Sustainable Travel and Transport Plan. As a result of the solid strategies now in place in the two jurisdictions, specifically the RDS and its daughter document the RTS in the north, and the NSS, and subsequent Transport 21 framework in the south, the prospect of a closer infrastructural relationship now appears inimitably imminent for the benefit of all on the island [26].

Cross border co-operation on the island of Ireland has formally been in practice since the setting up of the north-south ministerial council at the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, however all-island infrastructural institutions have only begun to take structure in the form of the Republic of Ireland's national strategy [25], and the North's regional strategy [24]. According to these reports, the vision for the all-island economy is one where all citizens throughout the island will gain from access to better markets, higher quality public services, economic growth and reductions in regional disparities. This inter-jurisdictional co-operation is reported to be essential to achieve the added value and economic competitiveness necessary for the island.

Three of the nine designated gateways are located in the border region. The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) anticipates enhanced planning co-operation to facilitate the critical mass necessary for the success of the gateways in border areas. Both cross-border and island of Ireland perspectives loom large in the NSS. However it is argued [27] that spatial strategy does not need to be comprehensive in its coverage of territorial relationships and issues which cannot be resolved for political reasons can be left aside for future consideration. Both spatial strategies were agreed in Europe and demonstrated by the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) which was agreed in Potsdam in 1999. Based on the two spatial strategies and the key border interfaces, the Dublin/Belfast and Derry/Letterkenny

corridors as well as the Dundalk/Sligo corridor including links to Armagh, Cavan, Monaghan, Enniskillen and Omagh potentially benefit from strategic planning cooperation.

## 2. STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS AND PARTICIPANT OBSERVATIONS

Open ended questionnaires and in-depth interviews were carried out to extract the views, principles and policies of the major parties on the island concerning transport. A key part of the research comprised of a first-hand encounter with various stakeholders at a meeting called the Cross Border Negotiating Change Forum which took place on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March 2008 at Everglades Hotel, Derry/Londonderry to counter major infrastructural problems in the Northwest. The various groups that were represented included political parties north and south, Sinn Fein, UUP, the Independents, SDLP, DUP, Fine Gael and Fianna Fail. Although 66 people were in attendance the following were the key stakeholders: (1) Raymond McCartney – SF, MLA, (2) Mary Bradley – SDLP, MLA, (3) Paul Callaghan – Mark Durkan’s office, (4) Joanne McDaid - SF Political Advisor, (5) Sally Quinn, Down Strand Women’s Group, (6) Helen Quigley – SDLP, (7) Sheila McWilliams, Roe Valley Women’s Network, (8) Ian McGarvey – Ind. Donegal County Council, (9) Mary McKinney- Merville and District Family Resource Centre. The in-depth interview was carried out at Stormont with Raymond McCartney MLA of Sinn Fein (the largest nationalist party in the north), whilst the open ended questionnaires were answered thoroughly by Clive McFarland of the DUP (the largest unionist party in the north), Cllr. Ian James Parsley of the Alliance Party (the largest cross community party in the north), and Joe McHugh TD of Fine Gael (the second largest party in the south). The following stakeholders answered the in-depth interviews/open-ended questionnaires: (1) Clive Mc Farland – DUP, (2) Joseph Mc Hugh – Fine Gael, (3) Ian J. Parsley – Alliance, and (4) Raymond Mc Cartney – Sinn Fein.

To discuss the issues regarding the strategic planning in the north and south of the border, the question of ‘what is your party’s immediate and long term plans on improving transport in either the northern/southern or both of the jurisdictions?’ was raised. McFarland strongly indicated that the DUP concentrate their efforts north of the border - stating that internal rail and road networks were more important than trans-national infrastructure improvements. McCartney (SF) advocates that an all-island approach should be taken, whilst welcoming southern investment in the north, on such projects as the Derry-Aughnacloy dual-carriageway, upgrading the entire A5, from the Irish border near Aughnacloy, via Omagh and Strabane, to Derry. Parsley suggested that Alliance feel that road building is not a great priority, instead wishing to concentrate investment on public transport with a light rail system in the northern province’s capital (Belfast), and surrounding areas whilst promoting the maintenance and enhancement of the Belfast-Derry railway line. McHugh conveyed concern over Parsley’s view of ‘concentration’ stating that Fine Gael fear that the north-west region (which has been historically and traditionally neglected by London and Dublin), will continue to be ignored while investment would continue to be pumped into motorways strengthening the east coast, - projects which generally lack study and planning.

To reveal the priorities of the public in public transport, a further question of ‘which method(s) of public transport in particular do you believe the public want improvements in most, in each of the jurisdictions and why?’ was directed. McFarland (DUP) indicated that rural and urban needs must be met in NI, acknowledging improvements in the Belfast bus fleets, and the needs of rail passengers on the Belfast-Larne, and Belfast-Derry line. Parsley (Alliance) specifies that a light rail/tram system for Greater Belfast, reflecting that of Greater Dublin, would benefit the capital hugely. McHugh (FG) succinctly indicates that the rail line from Coleraine to Derry needs to be upgraded, with an extension towards the south, whilst a direct line from Derry to Dublin should also be looked at, as it would have massive benefits for the Northwest. McCartney (SF) reaffirms the beliefs of McFarland and Parsley in adopting rapid transport for buses and trams in the city which should be efficient and dedicated, and promotes an ‘off roads and onto rail’ long term plan, at the same time wishing to witness regional balancing plans in the south which Transport 21 somewhat lacks.

In order to explore the rail and road disintegration at the border, the respondents were asked 'for what reason(s) do they believe there have been extensive road and rail closures at the border since the partition'. McCartney (SF) suggested that the closures at the border were an attempt by the Stormont totalitarian Government to further 'partition' infrastructure on the island to encourage the identity of NI as a separate one from that of the rest of the island. McHugh's (FG) view for the south of the border fortifies McCartney's opinion that politics is directly responsible referring to partition as the main cause of infrastructural problems in the past stating "partitionist policy was the death knell for the border counties".

McFarland (DUP) disagreed with McHugh and McCartney declaring that during the 'troubles', road closures had to be implemented by the Stormont Government, to prevent the escape of 'terrorists' into the south. Parsley of the Alliance party reinforces all of these opinions, stating lack of political will in the North and refusal to link economies with the south, along with genuine security problems from 1956-62 and 1970 onwards determined the closures.

Regarding the commitment to cross border transport infrastructure development the question of 'does your party believe in a cross border transport infrastructure to some extent, considering the inclusion in the Good Friday Agreement of cross border infrastructural developments, and so what are your party's plans to encourage this?' was raised. Parsley (Alliance) stated that an 'all-island' approach should be adopted in order to strengthen economic corridors specifically between Belfast and Dublin, linking ports and airports into the public transport and high-quality road system, and also looking to the suburbs and outlying urban areas (and industrial sites) too. McCartney (SF) explained that as Sinn Fein are completely dedicated to the all-island 'architecture' of the Good Friday Agreement, emphasis should be placed on making the north-south ministerial council more cohesive and efficient, removing any negative impacts in order to invigorate future transport planning. McHugh (FG) supports the Good Friday Agreement's annex that calls for an integrated transport system along the border, and feels that the Good Friday Agreement tries to reduce the imbalances, which are currently clear for all to see, however, concern was expressed that cross border co-operation will only take place between Dublin and Belfast along the East Coast, and once again, the North-West, i.e. Belfast and Derry/Donagall will be neglected. McFarland (DUP) admits that there is a natural economic and social need for coordinated transport between the two jurisdictions declaring that "roads won't magically stop once they reach the border".

Regarding the effects the external forces have such as the EU had on land transport infrastructure in the northern/southern or both of their jurisdictions, and whether they believe that there is potential for better funding for transport in Ireland, north and south, McCartney (SF) explained that the peace process, has allowed a northern Assembly to be put into place and therefore legitimise government claims for EU investment, whilst arguing that while the north remains within the UK, Objective 3 status within the EU, prohibits it receiving funding to the extent the Objective 1 status in the south does. McHugh (FG) implied mixed views of the EU: "Ireland has one of the best records of implementing EU rules, regulations and directives, which is not something we should be proud of", although in terms of funding, the Interreg funds given by the EU have helped build roads (and the government should continue to tap this resource), as well as the cross border funding, such as peace I, II, and III initiatives which have helped the relationships between the two jurisdictions. Parsley (Alliance) appears to not recognise any great benefits of the EU, to any part of the island expressing that the north should perhaps rely on internal forms of taxation in the form of tolls etc. McFarland (DUP), recognised that EU funding had provided major investment for the larger scale schemes in the two jurisdictions, and that the DUP were open to working with the ROI on certain schemes for the 'mutual benefit of both countries'.

In relation to the effects of the peace process, the respondents were asked to express their belief on the evolution and the peace process have brought about generally in terms of land transport in either the northern, southern or both jurisdictions. McFarland (DUP) suggests that as a result of devolution that came about following the cessation of the 'terrorist campaign in Northern Ireland' the RDS was able to be formed and therefore put a local stamp on transport and infrastructure here. Parsley (Alliance) on the other hand believes that the peace process has had a huge indirect affect, particularly since peace in Ireland was central to the Republic's economic success, which in turn has enabled vast

investment from the tax take in infrastructure. McHugh (FF) indicates that the devolution of power to Stormont has been a welcome boost to everyone here on the island and has ensured that decisions are made in the best interests of people here and not by those in Westminster, and with continued investment and joined up thinking in terms of advancement of transport strategies, the island of Ireland will be able to have a first class transport system. McCartney (SF) suggests that over the past 15 years a more all-island approach has been adopted across all sections which is a direct result of the north south dimension which underpins the Good Friday Agreement, and that the economy can only benefit from this; "For instance the business community understand the limitations of the north... the economy should be organised on an all island basis and create a better transport infrastructure in which goods can be carried".

A final question of 'does your party foresee improvements to land transport in relation to traditionally neglected area of the island such as the northwest and the west, and what action does your party intend on taking in relation to this?' was asked. McFarland explicitly assesses this problem quite apathetically stating that: "possible improvements in parts of the ROI is a matter for those who represent that country (ROI) and not for the DUP".

McCartney (SF) believes that improvements should be firstly directed at encouraging the decision to enhance the Derry-Belfast line whilst further linkage should be adopted to Letterkenny (Co. Donegal), in the southern jurisdiction, along with a general emphasis being on improving public transport in rural areas. McHugh fiercely argues that the neglect of the northwest by both Governments is immoral, pointing out that connectivity issues, such as roads, rail, gas and broadband which are taken for granted in the rest of the country are nearly completely ignored in the northwest, whilst advocating that investment from both Dublin and Stormont should and will be fought for on this issue. In complete contrast the Alliance party's judgement is that: "the North West does not yet constitute a major economic corridor in itself" arguing that the initial focus has to be on the Greater Belfast region to turn this into a genuine 'world city'.

The key actions from the meeting included SF and SDLP actively pushing cross-border (northwest) infrastructure programme to the top of the agenda at assembly level and will secure involvement of other parties for this. Mary McKinney (Merville and District Family Resource Centre) drew reference to the rural transport schemes in the south and suggested that an all-island transport policy should be adopted. Sally Quinn (Down Strand Women's Group) expressed her concern that the public transport in rural areas were so bad that the plans for free bus passes for the elderly were of no use to many as bus stops were possibly as much as an hour from their homes. Sheila McWilliams (Roe Valley Women's Network) reinforced this concern stating that in many parts of the Foyle district bus provisions are atrocious and in Magilligan, the only afternoon/evening bus runs to Derry at 5.30 pm. Sinn Fein Derry MLA Raymond McCartney spoke of how local representatives need to make a greater effort in lobbying for funding for roads and rail, by creating 'political mass', and getting the communities and businesses involved in decision making, to express a 'wish-list' of the people. He also recognised the efforts of support from grass root levels in lifting restrictions on the Derry-Belfast railway line.

Mark Durkan's (leader of the SDLP) representative, Paul Callaghan spoke of how a cross border consensus needed to be more strategic in terms of project investment, suggesting an all-island transport body to discuss and plan long term investment programmes. He also emphasised that funding resources were not being used to their full potential, suggesting that the EU's Trans-European funds should be tapped in the north to mirror EU funded successes such as the Cork-Dublin roads in the South. Sinn Fein and the SDLP would actively back investment in roads and rail, garnering grass root level support. All parties would attempt to secure EU funding for roads and rail.

Perhaps one of the most significant decisions made at the forum was based on an idea put forward by Joanna Boyd (Derry City Council). Boyd referred to how the 13 border councils lacked organisation and communication and suggested that a chairing/over-arching body should be put in place to control decisions made by the councils in relation to each other.

Maeve McLaughlin (Sinn Fein) expressed fears that if another body was put in place it might suffer the same 'ignorance' from the Governments that other cross border bodies had, and that 'examination and enhancement' of the other cross border groups should be emphasised. However Support from

Diane Greer (Cross Border Women's Health Network), David McClarity (UUP), and Helen Quigley (SDLP), resulted in plans to pursue the idea. David McClarity (UUP) did however state that the slowness of administration at this early stage of Government in NI might fragment progress. Paul Callaghan (Mark Durkan's office) explained that the north-south ministerial council's aims in relation to transport have not been fully implemented as a constitutional requirement. He suggested that as it is 'unfinished business' a stronger north-south constitutional body needs to be set up in order to tackle Infrastructural issues as soon as possible.

### 3. THE QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

A number of closed ended questions were developed for various members of the public on the island of Ireland, which would be split up into the three categories of (i) border, (ii) the north, and (iii) the south for the purposes of comparison and identification of trends. The number of respondents for this stage of the data collection totalled 73 people, around 20 people in each region on average (not every questions is answered by every respondent as will be seen in the charts later in this section). For the border region people were selected due to their close living proximity to the border on each side, ranging from Newry and Dundalk on the far eastern corner through other towns, in south Armagh, Monaghan, Fermanagh, Tyrone, Derry/Londonderry and Donegal to the north western tip of Merville. The northern region's respondents ranged from those who lived further away from the border, mainly Belfast, but included Lisburn and those who lived in towns such as Newtownabbey and Ballymena. The southern region's respondents included those from a variety of areas again further away from the border, such as Dublin city, but mostly made up of people who lived within Co. Cork and Co. Mayo.

The authors are aware of the relatively small sample size of these interviews, however, it should be noted that the work is based on preliminary pilot observations and is a first of its kind in a very critical geography.

The first question was in relation to transport disintegration at the border in the period following the partition of the island in 1922 up until recent times, and the public's perception of why it happened. A vast amount of those in the border region appear to be within the understanding that disintegration took place for political reasons, whether this be the actual political affair of partition, or the politically motivated policies of Stormont in the period following partition. Most of those in the southern region again recognise politics to be the main reason for disintegration, most likely referring to the event of partition. In the northern region, the highest proportion of respondents believed security to be the main reason for transport disintegration comparing to only 15% of those in the south and border. A balanced amount in all three regions selected social and economic reasons, ranging from 10-35%, which most likely recognises emigration patterns and the lack of investment in the economy, leading to rail closures. On the whole, the majority of respondents selected politics, with a mixed but practically balanced amount selecting economics, social, and security reasons.

To illustrates the levels of content/discontent in relation to how the respondents in each region felt about the state of land transport in their particular region the question of (How would you describe the state of land transport infrastructure (rail and roads) in the jurisdiction of the island you live in generally?) was raised. It appears that a general pattern of discontent can be seen here, as the vast majority of those, answered within the bracket of 'very poor to average'. The southern and border regions each have a significant amount of people (25-30%) that selected 'very poor', perhaps demonstrating the lack of satisfaction in rural areas, as that is where the majority of those that selected 'very poor' reside.

Regarding the question of "when was the last time you remember significant improvements made to the road or rail network in the general area you live in", although levels of contentment appear to be quite low on the whole in reference to land transport on the island, most in each region (45-60%) acknowledge that significant roadwork has been done in their area within this past 2 years. However a considerable number in the south (30%) have stated that work in their particular area has 'never' been done in their lifetime. This is a provocative statistic which refers to the traditionally neglected areas of the northwest and west (Donegal to Mayo).



The reasoning behind crossing the border for each of the regions was also questioned. The border region's responses give a vast amount for 'socialising' on either side of the border, which would perhaps suggest a need for public transport. In the south a significant amount of people (just under half) selected that they do not cross the border to the north at all. Again a large proportion of the people that fit within this category, live on the west coast, which is notorious for its lack of infrastructure linkage to the border.

The question of 'where do you believe the land transport to be better?' was intended to identify where each of the regions felt the land transport was the best, however due to the depiction in the last question that many actually do not cross the border at all, public opinion in this case may be strongly inconsistent with fact. The general response for the three regions to this question is somewhat mutual as those in the south reached a 50/50 verdict and those in the north felt that the north was the best by 55% to 45%. Those at the border who may be in the best position to evaluate decided (by 60%) that the south was the best. As the south was traditionally the worst in the case of roads, only benefiting this past 20 years from EU funding, public thinking for those not regularly crossing the border may still contain the old traditional thinking, explaining the lack of decisiveness from the northern and southern regions to this question.

The question of 'should rail and road improvements were made would you be more likely to cross the border?' was expected to achieve an indication of whether or not stronger infrastructural linkage at the border would make respondents more likely to cross it. Those in the north answered exactly in the middle whereas the southern and border regions selected their answers more decisively with 65% at the border saying 'yes' and 70% in the south saying 'no'. The majority (70%) at the border being encouraged at the prospect of border improvement is perhaps due to years of neglect in these generally rural areas which would now if improved provide a network of escaping the proximities of their area without time wastage, etc. The choice of those in the south suggests that nearly 100 years of seclusion from the north especially for those on the west coast, has emerged a cultural of disinterest and even if infrastructural needs were reinstated, the north is a lot closer to the south than some parts of the south to the north. The time consummation of travelling may be considered a constraint.

To discover the amount of faith that was in the political parties of today to bring about much needed improvements, the question of 'have the political parties ensured your faith in improvements?' was asked. Interestingly the border region's answers were exactly balanced in relation to this question, whereas the south was slightly more in doubt (60% Yes, 40% No), with the north a bit more in belief of improvements brought on by the parties (65% Yes, 35% No). Those in the north may be currently feeling a stronger sense of political democracy (due to devolution) than those in the south, and therefore appreciating their representative parties, with those recently elected representatives actively pursuing improvements across all the sectors, in comparison to years of the central British Government's policies which would have been more alienated to the demands of society.

The question of 'which political party in particular do you think has brought about improvements in transport more than the others?' illustrated the respondents' feelings in connection to which party they think has achieved the most, or are most likely to bring about more development in terms of land transport on the island, (and not to who their allegiance is). Those at the border, who are traditionally nationalist, feel that Sinn Fein are most likely to have achieved or brought about development by a clear majority, whilst also recognising to an extent the work of Fianna Fail (25%) in the south. In the north, once again Sinn Fein share the majority with the DUP. In the south Fianna Fail contain the obvious majority. The occurrence of the three parties achieving the majorities Fianna Fail, Sinn Fein and the DUP can be explained by the fact that in the north the current Minister for Regional Development is Conor Murphy of Sinn Fein, whilst the two previous were Peter Robinson and Gregory Campbell of the DUP who have all been active in bringing about unprecedented improvements following devolution. In the south, Fianna Fail have been in a huge proportion of tenure over this past 80 years, being active in pursuing development and putting EU funding to noticeable use more so than any other party. A large proportion of people on the island (ranging 10-25%), and more so in the south, feel that none of the parties have brought about transport development, again reinstating the dissatisfaction of those in rural areas and the traditionally neglected areas in the west.

In relation to the three main sources of transport, bus, rail and road, a further question (“which transport mode in particular would you like to see improvements in?”) was asked to determine how the respondents in each of the regions feel that priority should lie in bringing about improvements. At the border, the respondents selected that both road and rail were as important as each other (50/50), suggesting that both lie at the heart of neglect, and perhaps reflecting the likelihood of those of that region to travel long distances by train. In the north, a clear majority of respondents selected roads, as where improvements should be made, more so reflecting the lack of support for rail, which however did get backing from those in the north-west coast, where recent debate has been centred concerning closing the only other significant railway line in the north. In the south, once again most have shown support for road improvement (55%) with rail improvements coming in close behind with 45%. In this case nearly all those from the west coast selected rail showing the interest for plans to begin the reinstatement of the ‘western corridor’ railway line that was dismantled in the last century, annexing their infrastructure.

For the question of ‘Do you believe that accesses to public transport for your needs are realistically met?’ it appeared clear that a vast majority (80%) of respondents at the border are unhappy with the standard of public transport, as the slight majority in the north are. The respondents from the south reached a mutual decision of 50/50. Government funded public transport has not been very successful to consider the needs of those from that area it appears.

The source of so many politically historic occasions in Ireland over the past century has in many cases been based more on the motivation of the cultural/religious/political beliefs of those on the island than anything else, and by conducting this particular survey we can identify to an extent the political thinking of people in each of the regions. The border (a traditionally nationalist area) did not provide surprises with most stating they held nationalist beliefs while the other 20% did not wish to be associated with either way of thinking, and no unionist respondents from this region. The north gave a slight majority of unionist thinkers, trailed closely by nationalists, while the least amount did not consider themselves politically minded. In the south a huge majority considered themselves nationalist, whilst also interestingly containing the largest proportion of the three regions to select ‘not political’ (30%), which more than likely indicates the lack of interest in politics due to in a secure, stable system of government in place, in comparison to the polarising effect of nationalism/unionism in the north, which demands philosophical decisiveness.

#### 4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The transport infrastructure (in the ROI and NI) in today’s world is quite different (in contrast to the start of the century), to that of any other country in the western civilised world. This is of particular relevance as civilisations and countries are constantly altering to suit the balance of politics in that era, whether that be ideological, religious or financial, and with this the country’s general infrastructure will be affected; the question is to what extent and why. The influence of Irish history has had a colossal impact on politics within the island. Due to the reasonably recent phenomenon of the peace process, devolution has allowed all the parties in the north to contribute to the government in the north across all the sectors, and encourage development in each, to a scale never before witnessed. As a direct result of devolution the RDS in the north was implemented, ultimately marking a developmental period of tidal proportions in the realm of transport, allowing funding from the British Exchequer to be allocated internally. On the other hand, the EU influence and mass fund in the southern jurisdiction (as an Objective 1 State) to allow immense improvements in roads in particular, whilst specifying the interest and investment from the south towards the north to sustain an economical equilibrium on the island.

Greater cohesion between the two jurisdictions in relation to land transport infrastructure is being taken very seriously and is in fact in the process of being implemented. The paper has depicted the enormity of planning for transport on an all-island basis in the NSS and in a less overt yet obvious extent in the RDS. This conviction is strengthened as all the stakeholders/politicians demonstrated their support for linkages across the border, whilst the participatory observation resulted in a surmise

that active political participation in developing the transport infrastructure in traditionally weakened areas such as the west and northwest of Ireland (which include parts of both jurisdictions) was being treated sincerely. However the research also conveyed concerns over the possible lack of interest that may occur in these traditionally ignored parts of the island veering towards an overhaul of resources on the transport infrastructure of the eastern coast of the island, spurred by governmental ambition and negligence, and ultimately preserving the stagnicity of the past.

The following recommendations can be drawn for the future of transport infrastructural planning on the island. (i) Greater Support should be given at government level in the south to reconstruct the roads on the west of the island, which for so long have been ignored; (ii) Proper implementation of the cross border aspects of the Good Friday Agreement should take place immediately asserting an efficient and well organised structure in order to tackle land transport planning on an all-island basis; (iii) Stronger efforts should be made to encourage a more cohesive transport infrastructure between the two jurisdictions for the immediate benefit of those on the northwest of the island; (iv) Modifications are needed in regards to the regional urban/rural balance of land transport in both the north and the south.

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### **Appendix A: Acronyms used in the paper**

DRDNI: Department for Regional Development of Northern Ireland  
DUP: Democratic Unionist Party  
EC: European Community  
ESDP: European Spatial Development Perspective  
EU: European Union  
FF: Fianna Fáil  
FG: Fine Gael  
MLA: Member of the Legislative Assembly  
MP: Member of Parliament  
NI: Northern Ireland  
NSS: National Spatial Strategy  
PM: Prime Minister  
RDS: Regional Development Strategy  
ROI: Republic of Ireland  
RTE: Radio Telefís Éireann  
RTS: Regional Transport Strategy  
SDLP: Socialist Democratic and Labour Party  
SF: Sinn Féin  
STAG: Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance  
TD: Teachta Dála, member of lower house of Irish Parliament, Dáil Éireann  
UK: The United Kingdom  
UUP: Ulster Unionist Party

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