

**THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF
CORK'S CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT**

Synopsis of a Key Theme at the
29th Annual Conference of the
Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies
International Fellows in Urban Studies Program

Cork and Dublin, Ireland
June 1999

May 2001

Dear Reader:

The 29th annual conference of the Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies International Urban Fellows Program (IUFPP), held in Cork and Dublin, Ireland, was an excellent opportunity to observe the Celtic Tiger economic boom at work. As you can glean from the rich program shown in Appendix A to this report, our hosts, IUFPP alumni John O'Donnell, Nicholas Mansergh and Donncha O'Conneide, exposed conference participants to the wide-ranging manifestations of rapid growth, both the good and the not so good.

One such manifestation, the inexorable force of suburbanization and its effects on the central business district (CBD) of the City of Cork, generated a particularly dynamic discussion. Most of the Fellows attending the conference had considerable experience with downtown revitalization in their home cities and were able to draw on this cross-national experience in their analysis of the challenge posed by a threatened CBD, and recommendations to address it. This report summarizes their analysis and recommendations.

Sandra J. Newman
Director
Institute for Policy Studies

Acknowledgments

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The conference would not have been possible without the efforts and dedicated work of the following individuals:

In Ireland:

Nicholas Mansergh
Donncha O' Cinneide
John O'Donnell
Aine O'Driscoll
Mary Cregan
Jessica O'Donnell
Ellie O'Donnell

Urban Fellows:

Matthew Arndt
Anthony Travis
Greta Hettinga

Dr. Sandra Newman, Director
Marsha Schachtel, Coordinator of the
International Urban Fellows

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Background

Meeting in June 1999 in Cork, Ireland, the International Urban Fellows Program of the Johns Hopkins University's Institute for Policy Studies focused a significant part of its attention on issues relating to management of Cork's Central Area. At issue was the ability of the City centre to retain its market share, remain varied and interesting, and avoid overcrowding in the context of Ireland's current boom economy and thereafter.

Challenges

A number of challenges facing Cork's Central Business District (CBD) were discussed and evaluated. These included the following:

- How to maintain the cultural identity of the CBD, in particular, and the City of Cork, in general.
- The long-term viability of the CBD--its role in serving resident consumer needs, the variety and appropriateness of businesses mix in the CBD given its importance to the City, and maintaining its role as a regional commercial center for shopping.
- ❖ Dealing with the impact of changes in planning restrictions, which have increased development of shopping malls in the suburban areas, and evaluating responses to increased suburban competition.
- ❖ Responding to increased traffic congestion, handling the increased need for parking, exploring public transportation options, and facilitating pedestrian use of the CBD.
- ❖ Improving the type, mix, and quality of commercial tenants in the CBD and maintaining sufficient quality.
- ❖ Addressing the limited land area available for the expansion of the CBD, given its placement between the two branches of the Lee River.
- Making the CBD more competitive with the suburban malls.
- Sustaining and increasing the economic investment and values of the CBD, especially as a convenient market place and source of City of Cork revenues.
- Increasing the utilization of the second and third floors above street level businesses in the CBD for mixed uses, especially for residences.

Observations and Recommendations

Acknowledging the significant constraints of limited data and limited detailed analysis possible within the time constraints of the conference, participants were able to identify core issues and possible responses.

There was general agreement that Cork's CBD is in a fragile state. Without significant effort and careful planning, its continued vitality is in danger. Suburban malls are becoming more numerous and are increasing in size. As political and economic pressures to permit more suburban competition for Cork's CBD build, the City must be able to respond to these challenges. Three primary strategies were suggested.

1) Improve Vehicular and Pedestrian Convenience

- Careful planning for facilitating traffic movement within the CBD is necessary to relieve current problems of congestion so consumers who travel to the CBD, on foot and by car, will not experience significantly more obstacles than those patronizing suburban malls where parking can be distant from mall entrances.
- Parking resources should be adapted or increased, probably through more multi-level parking decks, either in the fringes of the CBD or in car parking areas immediately adjacent to its River Lee boundaries, sufficiently close that motorists are willing to use these resources. Subsidies could be used to reduce consumer parking costs to better compete with free parking in suburban malls. Careful evaluation of parking options need to be made within the CBD area, along with design of entrance and exits to parking facilities to reduce congestion. Options for timed parking controls or other parking options should be used within the CBD, recognizing that parking issues are often critical in consumer comparisons between downtown and suburban shopping options.
- Public transportation options should be coordinated to move pedestrians across and along the street system and make access to various parts of the CBD more efficient and attractive. On some of the longer streets and on routes to parking facilities, some form of shuttle service by electric cart might be considered, serving functions similar to that of San Francisco's cable car service. Such attractive vehicles can provide an image of efficiency for the City and its CBD.
- Pedestrian uses could be made easier by considering traffic flows and facilitating shortcuts and access to various portions of the CBD.
- More green spaces are needed to provide respite for pedestrians.

2) Retain and Attract Businesses and Residents

- Accessibility to the CBD for potential customers outside the City needs to be improved, and residential options need to be increased to create a larger population base that can support the businesses within the CBD. Increase efforts to expand the "living over the shop" incentives to increase the resident population in the CBD.
- Incentives are needed to retain critical businesses and develop a broader range of consumer goods in the CBD, such as adjustments to lease terms, and provision of support and signage.

- Pedestrian walkways should be distinguished by specialized street paving, as done in Dublin.
- The scope and types of activities of schools, churches, museums, art galleries, entertainment facilities, and restaurants should be increased and better publicized. For instance, the beer and restaurant facilities of the distillery located within the CBD could be expanded.
- The national and regional government need to give support to existing central city businesses, both to preserve the effectiveness of prior government infrastructure investments in cities, and to balance suburban mall developments being fueled by new government infrastructure investments.

3) Make the CBD “More Like a Mall”

- Some consistency in signage and improved information about businesses located on each block, shown at each end, including joint advertising where appropriate, would aid motorists and pedestrians.
- A frequently updated, widely available brochure and map listing types of commercial options provided and their locations, cross-referenced by location and types of products or services, would be helpful in promoting business offerings.
- Pedestrian shoppers need more opportunities for outdoor and indoor food, entertainment, and meeting places.
- Businesses can be organized to maintain cleanliness of the CBD, increase landscaping, trees and green areas, provide park areas, and better utilize the river banks.
- Businesses need to agree on consistent hours of services so that shoppers can have the same convenience that they have in malls.
- Free parking at malls can be countered by offering subsidized parking in the CBD. Both the businesses and the City government should contribute to parking options at the CBD perimeter and strategic locations downtown.
- Frequently planned special events to draw customers to the area will create a festival atmosphere in a unique historic setting that cannot be equaled by malls.
- Incentives for specific commercial businesses to locate in the CBD should be provided. This would entice major “anchor” businesses that would attract a broad cross-section and large numbers of customers.

The Fellows concluded that in efforts to compete with suburbia, Cork's CBD assets should not be overlooked or lost. Its mix of uses, river front, walkability, bright eclectic colors, and historic structures give it appeal that no cookie-cutter suburban mall can match.

APPENDIX A: CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Thursday, 24 June (evening)

16.00-20.00 Registration/Documentation at North Quay Place, Pope's Quay

19.30-22.00 **Civic Reception** in Vision Centre, St. Peter's Church, North Main Street

Friday, 25 June (morning)

9.00-9.15 Registration/Documentation at Firkin Crane Centre, Shandon

9.15-9.30 **Formal Opening** by Minister of State at the Department of the Environment and Local Government, Dan Wallace, T.D.

THE ECONOMIC CYCLE AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DEVELOPMENT POLICIES IN A 2ND CITY

Chair: J. Higgins, Cork City Manager

9.30-9.55 **Planned Diffusion of Growth:** How effective has Cork's satellite towns policy been? Can it accommodate variations in housing, employment growth in the future?
Nicholas Mansergh, Senior Executive Planner, Cork County Council

9.55-10.20 **Managing Cork's Central Area:** Are central areas counter-cyclical (eg decentralisation, decay in the boom of 1970s, recentralisation starts in 1980s)? How far can the City centre retain its market share, and remain varied and interesting and avoid crowding out in boom conditions?
Pat Ledwidge, Senior Executive Planner, Cork Corporation

10.20-10.45 **Road Investment and a Balanced Transport System:** Can road capacity in a relatively small City keep pace with traffic growth in most circumstances? When does real commitment to a more balanced approach become necessary?
Donncha O'Cinneide, University College, Cork

10.45-11.15 **Discussion**

11.15-11.30 **Coffee**

EUROPEAN FUNDING AND INWARD INVESTMENT

Chair: Michael O'Sullivan, Vice President for Planning, Communications and Development University College, Cork

- 11.30-11.50 **Inward Investment and Sectoral Change in a Small Open SubRegion:** Past and likely future shifts in the size and composition of Cork's industrial base.
Paddy Gallagher, Regional Director, Industrial Development Authority
- 11.50-12.10 **The Role of Objective I and Transition Status:** How should the adjustment from large scale aid for most development programmes to modest, selective EU aid be managed? How will it affect Cork?
Esben Poulsen, DG XVI, European Commission
- 12.10-12.30 **The Threat of Peripherality and Lack of Critical Mass:** Transnational spatial studies suggest the western half of Ireland will be at risk because its cities may be too small and too remote from the centre of an integrated EU market. Are they right, and if so, what can be done about it?
John McAleer, Director, South West Regional Authority
- 12.30-12.50 **Discussion**
- 13.00 Bus to Enterprise Centre, North Mall
Lunch
Hosted by PM Project Management Group

Friday, 25 June (afternoon)

Enterprise Centre, North Mall

(OPTION A)

ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING AND ITS SOCIAL EFFECTS

Chair: Dan Buggy, Assistant City Manager, Cork Corporation

- 14.15-14.30 **Setting the Context: Possible Points of Contact Between US and Irish Approaches**
Sandra J. Newman, Director, Institute for Policy Studies, JHU
- 14.30-14.50 **Repairing the Social Effects of Economic Restructuring:** How far has the growth, the 1990s reincluded groups marginalised by the loss of traditional industry in the 1980s? What measure are being taken to achieve this, and how far are they working?
John O'Callaghan, Chairman, Cork City Partnership.
- 14.50-15.10 **The Contribution of the URBAN Initiative**
Mary O'Halloran, Director Cork URBAN
- 15.10-15.30 **Youth at Risk:** The Young Peoples' Facilities and Services Fund
Margaret Kenneally, Chairperson, Cork Local Development Group

15.30-15.40 **Response:** *George Galster, Wayne State University, Detroit*

15.40-16.15 **Discussion**

(OPTION B)

MEETING ENVIRONMENTAL AND INFRASTRUCTURAL REQUIREMENTS

Chair: Kevin Terry, City Engineer, Cork Corporation

14.15-14.40 **Environmental Pressures:** Trends in air and water quality, effects of current industrial traffic growth, actions being taken, standards likely to be sought by EU.
Ian Maclean, Director (Licensing-and Control), EPA

14.40-15.00 **C02/ Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Future Limits, and the Economic Cycle**
Donal Enright, Principal, Air/Climate Section, Department of the Environment and Local Government

15.00- 15.20 **Economic Growth and Waste Disposal**
Donal Cronin, M.C. O'Sullivan, Consulting Engineers

14.40- 15.00 **Sustainable Disposal of Solid Waste and Wastewater in the Paris-Ile de France Region**
Raymond Delavigne, IAURIF, JHU Fellow

15.40-16.15 **Discussion**

[TWO OPTIONS COME TOGETHER AGAIN]

16.15-18.45 Bus departs North Mall to Apple Computers (stop and short presentation), Hollyhill, Kilbarry, Mayfield, Tunnel, Mahon, Carrigaline to Centre (hotel)

20.00 Bus departs Shandon Court Hotel/North Quay Place for former City Gaol

20.30 **Dinner** at former City Gaol (built 1820, now restored as museum)
Hosted By John F. Supple Limited

23.30 Bus returns to hotels

Saturday, 26 June

Bus tour of W. Cork: **THE FUTURE OF THE RURAL PERIPHERY?**

9.15 Bus departs Shandon Court Hotel/North Quay Place [via Model Farm Road Technology Park]

10.50-11.10 **Coffee** at Rosscarbery (Celtic Ross Hotel)

SUSTAINABLE COASTAL DEVELOPMENT

Chair: Anthony Travis, Birmingham, Chairman IUFA Board

11.10-11.30 **Sustainable Tourism:** Much of West Cork's tourism is physically extensive and has low economic benefits for the local population (eg 2nd homes, holiday home complexes). How far can policies to change this work?

Brendan Kelleher, Chief Planning Officer, Cork County Council

11.30-11.50 **Conflict Resolution and Resource Management in Bantry Bay:** A project involving local interests, UCC and the County Council has been trying to build consensus on how the conflicting claims of aquaculture, fishing, tourism and scenery can be reconciled.

Brendan O'Sullivan, Executive Planner, Cork County Council

11.50 **Discussion**

12.30 Bus departs Rosscarbery

13.00-14.00 Arrive Baltimore. **Lunch** at Baltimore Harbour Hotel

PERIPHERALITY

Chair: Sydney Cheatle, Architect ex-chair, Sherkin Island Development Society

14.00-14.20 **Peripherality and the West Cork Economy:** Growth in Ireland has been based mainly on multinationals, but peripheral areas attract few of these, and mostly assembly type operations. Will this change? Can local resource based activities fill the gap?

Michael Hanley, Director, West Cork Enterprise Board

14.20-14.40 **Islands policy:** West Cork has 7 inhabited islands. Can recent local, national Island plans stem their long run population decline?

Speaker: SJamus [Drisceoil, LEADER II Officer, Irish Islands Federation

14.40-15.00 **Discussion**

15.00-16.00 **Planning tour** of Baltimore - coastal fishing/tourism centre

16.00 Boat to Sherkin Island

16.30-18.00 Walk on Sherkin - Kinish Harbour, Silver Strand

18.30-20.45 **Dinner** at the Islander Restaurant, Sherkin Island. Hosted by Cork County Council

21.15 Boat back to Baltimore

21.30 Bus back to Cork (by 23.15)

Sunday, 27 June

- 9.30-10.45 **Fellows Meeting** (North Quay Place)
- 11.00-12.45 **Walking tour** of City Centre, departs North Quay Place
- 13.00 **Lunch** (Shandon Court Hotel)

OVERCROWDING AND UNDERCROWDING IN THE CENTRAL AREAS OF CITIES (Shandon Court Hotel)

Chair: Marsha Schachtel, Institute for Policy Studies, JHU

- 14.15-14.40 **Growing and Declining Categories of City Centre Residents: The Policy Response**
Ann Bogan, Cork Corporation
- 14.40-15.05 **Where Should Service Sector Growth Go?** How far does the scale of service sector growth and the nature of the demand involved require edge of City sites? Can the transport system cope with that growth, even at or near motorway junctions? How viable are City centre areas or town centres in the City's hinterland as alternatives?
Owen O'Callaghan, O'Callaghan Properties Limited
- 15.05-15.25 **Changing The Trend In The Modal Split:** Improving the alternatives to car use often seems to attract new users to the transport system, rather than persuade existing car drivers to change mode. Are modal split changes only attainable through long term public transport investment and changes in public attitudes, or can shorter term initiatives also be effective?
Kurt Hoppe, Traffic Control Officer, Berne, Switzerland
- 15.25-15.45 **Response:** *George Galster, Wayne State University, Detroit; Daniel Henson, Department of Housing and Community Development, Baltimore*
- 15.45-16.00 **Discussion**
- 16.45 Bus departs Shandon Court Hotel/North Quay Place to Train Station
- 17.30-19.50 Train to Dublin and then bus to Trinity College/Hotels
- 20.15 Check into Trinity College, Evening free

Monday, 28 June

- 8.45-9.15: Registration in Walton Theatre, Arts Building, Trinity College, Dublin

HOUSING DEMAND: PROPERTY MARKETS AND NATIONAL ECONOMIES

Overvalued property markets have helped provoke several recent recessions. How does this overvaluation happen? Is it separable from general overheating of an economy? Can it be anticipated or forestalled? What remedies are available if a property boom is already underway? *This seminar was jointly sponsored with the Economic and Social Research Institute.*

Chair: Brendan Whelan, Director, ESRI

9.15-9.50 **Housing Prices in Ireland in the Late 1990s: Risks and Remedies**
Peter Bacon, Economic Consultant, author of 1998 and 1999 reports to Irish government on house prices

9.50-10.15 **Ireland in the late 1990s, and Britain in the late 1980s: Similarities and Differences**
Annette Hughes, Davy Kelleher MacCarthy, Economic Consultants

10.15-10.40 **Response:** *John Ratcliffe, Head of the Faculty of the Built Environment Dublin Institute of Technology; James Young, Visiting Fellow, University of Ulster, Secretary, European Real Estate Society*

10.40-11.15 **Discussion**

Coffee

Chair: John Fitzgerald, Dublin City Manager

11.30-11.55 **The Decline in Size of Household: How Far Will It Go?** This factor has contributed to alarming projections on future, housing needs and urban growth requirements in several countries. Irish household size is above the European average, so there is more scope for decline.
John Fitzgerald, Economic Social Research Institute

11.55-12.20 **Response:** *Jan van Wessep, Utrecht University, JHU Fellow; Tom Dunne, Head of the Department of Surveying, Dublin Institute of Technology*

12.20-13.00 **Discussion**

13.00-14.00 **Lunch**, Trinity College

14.15-14. **Presentation on Dublin Light Rail Project (LUAS)**
Donal Mangan, LUAS Project Director

14.35-15.0 **Presentation on Dublin Docklands**
Terry Durney, Dublin Docklands Development Authority

- 15.15 Bus leaves Trinity College (Nassau St. Gate) for Tour of Docklands and Financial Services Centre
- 17:30-18.00 **The Temple Bar Urban Pilot Project**
Laura Magahy, Managing Director, Temple Bar Properties Ltd.
- 18.00 **Walk** through Temple Bar, return to Trinity College
- 20.30 **Closing Dinner**
Newman House, St. Stephens Green (within walking distance from TC.D. Hotels)
Hosted by Manor Park Homebuilders Limited

Tuesday, 29 June

- 9.15-10.30 **Fellows Meeting**, Trinity College Arts Building
- 10.45-11.45 Five rapporteurs will summarize key lessons from all sessions
- 11.45-12.15 **Discussion and Preview of Baltimore**
- 12:15 Close

**APPENDIX B:
LIST OF SPEAKERS**

Peter Bacon, author of 1998 report on housing prices
Ann Bogan, Cork Corporation
Sidney Cheatle, Sherkin Island Development Society
Donal Cronin, Consulting Engineer
Terry Durney, Development Director, Dublin Docklands Development Corporation
John Fitzgerald, Economic and Social Research Institute
Patrick Gallagher, Regional Manager, IDA Ireland
George Galster, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI
Michael Hanley, Director, West Cork Enterprise Board
Daniel Henson, Department of Housing and Community Development, Baltimore
Kurt Hoppe, Head of Traffic Inspectorate, Berne
Annette Hughes, DKM, Economic Consultants
Brendan Kelleher, County Planning Officer, Cork County Council
Iain MacClean, Director, EPA
Laura Magahy, Managing Director, Temple Bar Properties
Donal Mangen, Director, LUAS Project
John McAleer, Director, Regional Authority
Davy Kelleher MacCarthy, DKM, Economic Consultants
John O'Callaghan, Cork City Partnership
Owen O'Callaghan, leading Irish Developer
Liam O'Donoghue, Apple Computers
Seamus O'Drisceoil, LEADER II Officer, Irish Islands Federation
Mary O'Halloran, Director, URBAN
Brendan O'Sullivan, Executive Planner, Cork County Council
M.C. O'Sullivan, Consulting Engineer
Esben Poulsen, European Commission, DGXVI, EU
Donal Enright, Principal, Air/Climate Section, Department of the Environment and Local Government
John Ratcliffe, Head of the Faculty of the Built Environment, DIT
Dan Wallace, T.D., Minister of State at the Department of Environment and Local Government

Chairpersons;

John Fitzgerald, City Manager, Dublin
J. J. Higgins, City Manager, Cork
Brendan J. Whelan, Director, Economic and Social Research Institute

**APPENDIX C:
LIST OF ATTENDEES**

Ian Appleton (Scotland), The Appleton Partnership; and Marjorie Appleton
Matthew Arndt (Luxembourg), Consultant, Territoires Conseil Associes
Lueder Bach (Germany), Professor, University of Bayreuth
Jack Bovaird (U.S.), France-Merrick, Baltimore, MD
Jason Byrne (Australia), Water and Rivers Commission, W. Australia
Raymond Delavigne (France), L'Institut d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme de la Région d'Ile-de-France
Lavinia Edmunds, Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies, Baltimore, MD, U.S.
Jack Fisher (U.S.), Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD
Francesco Forte (Italy), Professor, University of Naples; and Maria Forte
George Galster (U.S.), Wayne State University, Detroit, MI; and Nancy Galster
Stanley Gabor (U.S.), Dean, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD; and Marilyn Gabor
Klaus Gartler (Austria), Architect, Graz; and Bozena Gartler
Claude Gaudriault (France), L'Institut d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme de la Région d'Ile-de-France
Tamer Gok (Turkey), Professor, Mersin University
Roland Hahn (Germany), Professor, University of Stuttgart; and Waltraud Hahn
Daniel Henson, (U.S.), Department of Housing and Community Development, Baltimore; and Del Henson
Greta Hettinga (The Netherlands), Community Consultant, Verwey-Jonker Institute, Utrecht
Otto Hetzel (U.S.), Attorney, Washington, D.C.; and Bonnie Hetzel
Kurt Hoppe, Berne (Switzerland) Swiss Institute of Technology; and Margrit Hoppe
Ms. Milena Horcicova (Czech Republic), Ministry of Finance, Prague
Virgil Ioanid (Romania), Technical University, Bucharest; Eva Ioanid, daughter
Alex Jansen (The Netherlands), DHU, Amersfoort
Ms. Vera Kamenicova (Czech Republic), Ministry Regional Development, Prague
Janusz Kot (Poland), Professor, University of Lodz
Andrzej Majer (Poland), Professor, University of Lodz
Nicholas Mansergh (Ireland) Cork County Council
Tadeusz Markowski (Poland), Professor, University of Lodz; and Bozena Markowski
Sandra Newman (U.S.), Interim Director, Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies, Baltimore, MD
Dany Nguyen-Luong (France), L'Institut d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme de la Région d'Ile-de-France
Horia Mihai Nicolescu (Romania), Unify Co. Bucharest
Donncha O'Cinneide (Ireland), Professor, University College, Cork
John O'Donnell (Ireland), City Planning Officer, Cork
Christine Oliver (U.S.), CEO, Chicago Dwellings Association
Constantin Patru (Romania), Construction University
Marsha Schachtel, Senior Fellow, Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies, Baltimore, MD, U.S.
Stanley Sugarman (U.S.), Homewood Realty, Baltimore, MD; and Ethyl Sugarman
Anthony Travis (U.K.), Director, EastWest Tourism Consulting, Chair IUFA