

**Europeanisation, Adaptation and EU Regional Policy in Ireland:  
Assessing the ‘Goodness of Fit’**

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## INTRODUCTION

Ireland has long been considered a European success story and a state in which the European Union's policies and financial assistance have been judged to be used to good effect. By the late 1990s the 'Celtic Tiger' was frequently cited as an exemplar of how effective use of EU structural and cohesion funding promoted national economic growth and regional and local development. Ireland was seen as a success story relative to the other cohesion states, where the overall level of economic growth and institutional adaptation did not mirror the Irish experience. EU membership was seen as having underpinned Ireland's economic success, although a more nuanced account would need to consider a range of other developments, including amongst other factors a succession of corporatist partnership agreements, budgetary austerity in the late 1980s, an inflow of foreign direct investment, exchange rate stability and the internal market programme, in order to fully understand Ireland's success (O'Donnell 2000; Fitzgerald 2000).

EU funding has brought not only increased resources but has also induced change in Ireland's institutional structures and patterns of governance. Using regional policy as a lens, this article explores Ireland's adaptation to European policy. It looks at the interplay and interactions between the EU and domestic institutional and policy-making structures; focusing particularly on whether the pre-existing structures were amenable to change and whether there was a 'goodness of fit' between EU policy and existing domestic governance structures or resistance to change. It is argued that Ireland has pragmatically learned to adapt its institutional structures in response to European pressures, albeit in a piecemeal manner, and with some resistance to change both at the national and sub-national levels. The article begins by examining the key concepts of Europeanisation, adaptation and learning, followed by a brief discussion on the methodological approach. It then considers the Irish socio-economic and political context, its adaptation to EU membership and the evolution of its policy-making structures in regional policy. These general sections provide the context for a more detailed analysis of the impact of adaptation to EU regional policy in the Mid-West region. The research, by means of social network analysis, examines the patterns of adaptation and institutional and policy learning amongst the main governmental and non-governmental actors in the Mid-West region. The research seeks to determine the degree of 'goodness of fit' between Ireland's existing institutions and policies and the EU's regional policy processes and instruments.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Scholars have analysed the phenomenon of 'Europeanisation' from many perspectives, which can be usefully classified according to Featherstone's four categories (a) as a historical process, (b) a matter of cultural diffusion, (c) a process of institutional adaptation, and (d) the adaptation of policy and policy processes (2003: 5). This categorisation captures both the opening up of traditional state structures to the supranational level and the adaptation of internal processes and systemic features to the exigencies of EU membership. Other theorists such as Ladrech (1994) and Borzel, (2002) assert that the impact of Europeanisation has both economic and socio-political consequences – the former evident in the provision of increased resources through redistribution, the latter evident in the shaping of intra-regional interactions and the improvement of local institutional capacity through the creation of intra, inter and

transregional networks that support development initiatives. For the purposes of this article 'Europeanisation' focuses on what Borzel (2002) describes as 'a process in which domestic policy areas become increasingly subject to European policy-making'. The impact of Europe on governance structures and policy processes varies according to the context and indeed the policy sphere (see Cowles et. al. 2001; Knill 2001; Borzel, 2002). Over time, Europeanisation has come to affect institutions, actors, resources and policy instruments with significant consequences for governments and policy communities.

Europeanisation may be considered to promote learning and adaptation among actors and institutions. Institutional learning has been conceptualised from both sociological and rational choice viewpoints. Proponents of the rational choice perspective such as Tsebelis and Garrett (1996) and Pollack (1996) tend to minimise the role of institutions and focus on the role and motivation of individual actors, depicting institutions merely as intervening variables between actor preferences and policy outcomes. By contrast, sociological institutionalists afford an important role to institutions and assert that institutional factors determine the interests and identities of policy actors (see, Risse et al 2001; Borzel 2001; Paraskevopoulos 2001; Checkel 2001). Credence is also given by sociological institutionalists to the way in which actors are socialised into the norms and rules of the internationalised arena in which they operate.

The learning which results from Europeanisation reflects the complexity of the processes in which domestic preference formation occurs. It is hypothesised that the 'goodness of fit' between national policies and EU policies results in little adaptational pressure whereas a misfit between the EU approach and national structures and policies leads to the need for adaptation and learning. In exemplifying the notion of 'goodness of fit' as crucial intervening variable between Europeanization and domestic policy/institutional change the new institutionalist literature has identified two broadly different mediating mechanisms/logics of domestic institutional and policy change in response to Europeanisation. The 'logic of consequentialism', espoused by the rational choice school, points to the role of redistribution of resources and the differential empowerment of actors at the domestic level and highlights the importance of multiple veto points and existing formal institutions as crucial mediating factors that affect domestic actors' capacity for action, thereby leading to policy learning and institutional change. Sociological institutionalists identify a 'logic of appropriateness' which champions the process of social learning as a fundamental mechanism of domestic change. They identify networks (either epistemic communities, or advocacy and/or issue-specific) and informal institutions (namely political and organisational cultures and social norms) as mediating mechanisms that affect actor preferences leading to the re-conceptualisation of their interests and identities and thus facilitating the learning and socialisation processes.

The social learning process resulting from adaptation is a dynamic process and incorporates elements of both the rational choice and sociological institutionalist perspectives by focusing on strategic interaction between actors, institutions, structures and social norms. Such learning can be depicted by the emergence of new forms of governance such as epistemic/advocacy/issue networks (Rhodes 1997; Adshad 2002) and the identification of social capital with the resultant features of social organisation such as trust, norms and connectedness (Putnam 2000). Using social network analysis to map formal institutional networks and employing interview and questionnaire responses to identify levels of social capital this paper investigates the learning and adaptation which has emerged in Ireland's Mid-West region.

By tracking the patterns of learning and identifying the mechanisms of institutional and policy change in both the national and Mid-West contexts the article serves to underline the intended and unintended consequences of involvement in the EU's multi-level regional policy process. Regional policy offers an appropriate lens through which to analyse the Europeanisation process, as it affected Ireland, because it provides a clear model against which to test the goodness of fit between Ireland's existing institutions and practices and the EU's multi-layered processes and instruments. Furthermore, EU regional policy provided both incentives (in the form of resource gains) and challenges to the system of governance at national and local levels.

## A METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

The research undertaken in this paper involved mapping the national and regional institutional actors in Ireland, by identifying the key players at national, regional and local levels involved in the Mid-West region. The Mid-West region was selected as representing a good case for examination, as the region is seen as dynamic and a leader vis á vis other regions in Ireland, but the impacts of peripherality and poor infrastructure are also feature and impact upon its development. The region has had a strong regional development body – Shannon Development – and has been the only region to have such an agency since the late 1950s. Following identification of the key actors in the region semi-structured interviews were undertaken in the Mid West region, as well as at the national level, between June-September 2002. A total of 18 actors were interviewed in June / July 2002: 14 actors in the region, with a further 4 actors interviewed at the national level. The selection of actors was based on previous knowledge of the actors in the region and identification of additional actors by interviewees. In total some 38 actors were identified by means of this process.

Social Network Analysis (SNA) was then used to examine the relationships between the actors in the area of regional policy.<sup>1</sup> SNA focused on the domestic levels governance in the case study region, whereby all the existing linkages among the actors and between the national, regional and local levels were mapped. From this mapping, adjacency matrices were generated that looked at the relationships between national-regional, regional-regional, and central-central actors. Two types of matrices were derived from the data collected in the questionnaires and interviews. First, a binary matrix was constructed to demonstrate whether connections existed between the actors (0 or 1). Second, a valued matrix in which the intensity of the connections between the actors was valued between 0 (no relationship) and 3 (for a strong relationship). The data was then analysed by means of social network analysis using UCINET 6 software, as well qualitative analysis, from which the conclusions in this research are derived.

The objective of the analysis was to examine the degree of centralization within the policy network in the region, the density of the policy-making network, and the structural equivalence within the network. Qualitative analysis was then employed to examine the existence of fora for discussion in the case study regions, the role of

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<sup>1</sup> Social Network Analysis refers to the mapping and measurement of relationships and flows between people, groups and organisations in a network. For further discussion on this approach see Scott, J. (1999) *Social Network Analysis: a handbook* London: SAGE; Wasseman S (1994) *Social Network Analysis: methods and applications* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Private-Public Partnerships and the private sector, the level of understanding amongst the actors of development issues, the evidence of policy adaptation and institution building, the nature of centre-periphery relations and the distribution of resources within each state, and the existence of social capital at the regional level. All key features in the theoretical framework discussed herein.

## IRISH ECONOMIC GROWTH AND EU REGIONAL POLICY

Ireland has financially benefited enormously from EU membership, with transfers from the EU to Ireland during the mid-1980s and throughout the 1990s having contributed to Ireland's economic growth during this period, as highlighted in table 1. This was reflected across a range of economic data including growth in GDP, personal and public consumption, an increase in industrial production, and an expansion of exports, a reduction in unemployment and the controlling of inflation. As a result of the boom in the Irish economy GDP per head grew from 63.3% of the Community average in 1989, to 76% by 1991, to 106.3 % in 1998, to 115% in 2003. On an infrastructural level the improvement of roads, especially the national primary routes, sewage and water works, plus training projects, are tangible examples of the impact that the structural funds have had in Ireland.

**Table 1: Economic Indicators**

Economic Growth	1990	1996	2001
Real GDP	5.0%	7.3%	7.3%
Manufacturing output	5.0%	8.5%	8.5%
Inflation	3.5%	1.7%	4.8%
Total employment	1,124,000	1,299,000	1,734,000
Unemployment	17.2%	12.3%	4%

*Source:* Central Bank of Ireland, Bulletins, Winter 1990, 1996 and 2001

Receipts from the structural funds have contributed significantly to the GNP and have been equivalent to 5.5% of GNP between 1985 and 1991. Ireland received IR£1.85 billion from the EC, or 7.8% of GNP, following the reform of the structural funds in 1988. In the 1989-93 funding period Ireland was allocated ECU6.667 billion under the Community Support Framework (CSF); although this was reduced to ECU5.620 billion under the 1994-99 CSF. During the 1989-93 funding period the Irish economy expanded at an average rate of 5% per annum with real and nominal convergence being achieved in addition to significant growth in investment (NDP 1994-99). During the 1994-99 funding period GNP growth averaged about 7.5% in real terms (NDP 2000-06).

EU regional funding, however, had an uneven impact in Ireland, as funds were not allocated on a territorial basis and the Eastern part of the country was perceived to have benefited disproportionately from the funding. In an early assessment of the impact of the ERDF, Drudy (1984) noted the low proportion of funding which was allocated to the Designated Areas. Of the IR£226.8 million allocated to Ireland over the period 1975-1981 only 17.6% was earmarked for the designated areas. During the 1989-93 programme period, the overall impact of the funding on Ireland was uneven, with the mid-term review of each of the regions suggesting that the funds were not reducing the disparities between areas. There was also a criticism that the funding did

not support bottom-up initiatives and paid little attention to sustainable development (O'Donnell and Walsh, 1995: 218). Similarly, during the 1994-1999 funding period, the prosperity achieved did not apply equally throughout the country (Minister for Finance, 1998). Because, the Irish government did not use their allocative power to ensure that ERDF and structural funding addressed the regional imbalance within Ireland, it comes as no surprise that the transport, industrial and telecommunications infrastructure of the West of Ireland was significantly less developed than the eastern part of the country.

Table 2 indicates the growth in per capita GVA (Gross Value Added) for each of the eight regions. It illustrates that GVA was highest in the most prosperous Regional Authority areas of Dublin/Mid-East and the South-West and lowest in the South-East, the Midlands and the Border.

**Table 2: Decomposition of Living Standards Growth in Irish Regional Authority Areas 1993-1999 (% p.a)**

	<b>Living Standards (GVA per capita)</b>
Border	+6.6
Midlands	+6.2
West	+7.3
Dublin/Mid-East	+8.3
Mid-West	+7.3
South-East	+5.3
South-West	+8.5
State	+7.7

*Source:* Adapted from O'Leary, 2003

Concern about the unequal territorial impact of EU financial interventions and the continued lack of regional balance in economic and social development has led to the adoption of a regional approach to meeting the distinctive challenges facing the Border, Midlands and West (BMW) and South Eastern regions (which includes the case study region) in the period 2000-06.

## **ADAPTATION TO EU MEMBERSHIP**

In examining Ireland's adaptation to EU membership it is worth noting that it has traditionally been a centralised state with a strong central administration, weak local authorities and a range of state sponsored bodies. In the era before membership of the European Economic Community (and for many years afterwards) policy-making in Ireland was entirely sectoral and all policies were constrained by the uncertainties of the annual budgeting process. There was also a distinct lack of inter-departmental co-ordination as the norm was for government departments to act independently of each other. Chubb (1992) identifies government members, Oireachtas members and senior civil servants as those who share the immediate authority to decide on specific policies with the dominant role and responsibility being taken by the Cabinet. This list accurately identifies the main actors involved in policy-making, prior to and during the early years of EEC membership.

At sub-national government level, functions and responsibilities were extremely limited and while local government structures were clearly delineated if hierarchically contained, the regional administrative structures in existence were more blurred. In the 1970s and 1980s local authority engagement with the Europeanisation process was minimal. Following reform of the structural funds in 1988, local authorities have become more aware of the EU and of its impact on their work - ranging from procurement and tendering to specific EU programmes. The pattern of involvement and contact with Brussels officials is still very sporadic and uneven, with some local authorities far more involved in EU activities and aware of opportunities than other ones. What this suggests is that the national level is not always the barrier to closer involvement in European programmes but that the local level sometimes lacks the ability and administrative capacity to fully engage with European programmes. This is not a uniquely Irish phenomenon. Nevertheless, European added value has become very important for sub-national actors and partnerships. Europeanisation has led to the accumulation of knowledge and strategies by actors at all levels. Civil servants, politicians, NGOs and local actors have all actively engaged in learning and applying the fruits of their learning to improving practices, policies and procedures.

With regard to EU regional policy, the early years of Ireland's membership brought little adaptational pressure (see Laffan and O'Mahony 2003; Laffan 2002; McGowan and Murphy 2003). This, of course, mirrors the situation throughout the European Community with the incipient nature of the EC's regional policy. The state apparatus remained highly centralised, with the Departments of Finance and the Environment acting as the main interlocutors with the European Commission. These departments co-ordinated their activities with local authorities but the interaction was from a top-down perspective. The various reforms of the structural funds accelerated the change in administrative practices and procedures in Ireland. The reforms acted as a catalyst to broaden the range of actors involved in the planning and implementation of structural fund interventions and to change some administrative practices (sometimes in order to maximise the funding opportunities from Brussels). Adaptational pressure increased during the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, with the new fund regulations requiring domestic changes to administrative and planning practices. Successive Irish governments worked with EU officials in DG XVI (Regional Policy) and other Commission services in elaborating the National Development Plans. This process has contributed to stimulating a change in the basis on which intergovernmental relations operate in Ireland as well as changes in the processes and mechanisms for regional policy – thus, a particularly Irish 'logic of consequentialism' can be detected.

The adaptational pressures experienced in Ireland can be classified as medium, since Irish players were actively involved in the design and negotiation of EU regional policy. However, much of the adaptation as and when it has occurred has been in response to demands made by Brussels or in response to fears that EU funding might be jeopardised by failing to adapt to EU policy. Institution building has been manifested in the form of the new regional structures. This is the cumulative outcome of the continuous championing of devolved administration by Brussels. Whatever decentralisation had taken place previously was most evident at the planning and implementation stages of the EU regional policy process. This evolved through the cosmetic regional consultative structures created in 1988, the creation of the regional authorities in 1994 and the regional assemblies in 1999. Adaptation is also evident in the way in which membership of the various operational programme monitoring



committees has gradually expanded to include sub-national actors as well as in the ever-increasing role of sub-national actors in the implementation of structural fund interventions. The process is still inadequate, as a recent evaluation asserts ‘because of the nature of the reporting process, those involved in the Monitoring Committee from the European Commission, from the local democratic structures and from the social partnership pillars find it difficult to engage meaningfully with the process and to contribute effectively in influencing the implementation and progress/performance of the operational programme in the areas which are of critical interest to them’ (Farrell, Grant, Sparks 2003: 159). Thus, networks have expanded and patterns of interest intermediation and representation have altered although not to the complete satisfaction of the actors concerned. In practice, as the case study highlights, networks at the regional level are dominated by a small number of lead actors with high degrees of centralisation.

## **EVOLUTION OF POLICY MAKING STRUCTURES IN REGIONAL POLICY**

### *Regional policy and institutional structures in Ireland*

In Ireland prior to EC membership there was little commitment to regional policy, although it must be added that a number of government strategies and policies since the 1960s did have a regional focus. Economic progress in Ireland did not impact evenly throughout the country and the paradigms informing regional policy in Ireland have varied with the changing economic and political concerns and circumstances. Research and analysis during the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s highlighted the problems which might be solved by planned regional development, but there was little political agreement on what might be done (see Chubb and Lynch 1969; Bannon and Lombard 1996). The period from the mid-1970s through to the late 1980s was characterised by a lack of comprehensive strategies for regional development and an emphasis only on the economic interpretation of development. However, little tangible evidence exists of the political will to adapt structures and administrative practices in a manner which would support balanced regional development. As O’Leary asserts ‘there seems to be little realisation that future national growth will depend more than ever before on growth in regions’ (2003: 30).

Changing Irish attitudes to regional development, as well as EU adaptational pressures, have led to administrative adaptation at the national level and the development of a limited regional tier of administration (Adshead and Quinn 1998). At the national level, there has been little institutional innovation and for the most part government departments have incorporated EU business into existing structures and through standard operating procedures. The county remained the main sub-national administrative unit, with sub-county municipal structures existing in eighty of Ireland’s towns. The administrative system also remains hierarchical with formal relations between local authorities and central government largely regulated through a single central government department - the Department of the Environment and Local Government - which has administrative, financial and technical control over the lower units (Callanan and Keogan 2003).<sup>2</sup> Major reform of local government structures has only been underway since the 1990s. Unlike previous reform blueprints (Callanan and Keogan 2003), the Department of the Environment’s *Better Local Government - A*

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<sup>2</sup> Because of the absence of local taxation systems subnational government in Ireland is financially dependent on the centre. Furthermore, the absence until the mid-1990s of any semblance of a regional tier reinforced the dominance of the centre.

*Programme for Change* (1996) has been implemented and has led to significant administrative and institutional change.<sup>3</sup> In response to EU requirements, regional authorities were established in 1994 and regional assemblies in 1999. A government decision was made in 1999 to designate Ireland as two regions for structural funding purposes for 2000-2006 with the two regions qualifying for different designations under allocation regulations. The two regions have been given responsibility for managing regional operational programmes under the current community support framework. The differentiated designation and the devolution of management responsibility have serious implications for institutional structures as well as national and regional administration.

#### *Social capital and co-operative culture*

Ireland's political culture has been influenced and shaped by the clientilistic/personalist approach that abounds. National politics have tended to be highly localised, with parliamentarians engaged in dense local networks built on personal relationships and acting on behalf of their constituents. This approach links citizen and state, increases involvement and ensures feedback (Gallagher and Komito 1999). Ireland's successful adaptation to Europe has been underpinned by a strong civil society, social partnership, and the country's distinctive political culture. Since the economic crisis of the late 1980s the consensual social partnership approach has been the dominant approach to policy-making. The strong emphasis on partnership incorporated in EU regional policy since reform of the structural funds in 1988 has reinforced and supported the consensual approach to policy-making in Ireland and has legitimised and entrenched the culture of concertation at both national and local levels. The community and voluntary pillar at the national level represents a wide range of organisations within the structure as well as in other fora for consultation and dialogue. These fora play a significant role in fostering and harnessing social capital and formalising the role of civil society. Thus, a number of epistemic communities and advocacy networks have emerged and play a significant role in policy making, with their role gradually being formalised within the policy-making structures. However, the networks cannot be said to have emerged as a direct result of Europeanisation but they have been influenced and often supported by the process.

At local level, the recent reforms have integrated local government and local development bodies and facilitated the establishment of community fora to feed into the work of County Development Boards, thereby institutionalising the contribution of the voluntary and community sector at local authority level. These fora comprise representatives from approximately 10,000 groups across the country (NESF 2003: 83). Europeanisation has further helped to reinforce Ireland's civic culture. The opportunities inherent in some EU programmes have given financial support and ensured legitimacy for local groups. The changing emphases in EU policy also supported the thrust of civic engagement in Ireland (Quinn 1999). EU anti-poverty programmes, for example, emphasised empowerment, participation and inclusion while the LEADER programme supported innovation and a territorial approach. This 'goodness of fit' between Ireland's socio-political needs and the EU's changing

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<sup>3</sup> As part of the reform, County and City Development Boards (CDBs) have been established since 2000 and bring together elected local government members, local development actors, state agencies and the social partners. The CDBs are playing a considerable role in implementation of measures under the 2000-2006 National Development Plan/CSF. A Local Government Act 2001 consolidated existing legislation and gave a statutory basis to the reforms (such as creation of Strategic Policy Groups and Corporate Policy Groups) which had already been instituted.

priorities whether economic, social or environmental has contributed to successful integration.

## THE CASE OF THE MID-WEST REGION

**Figure 1. Location of the Mid-West Region**

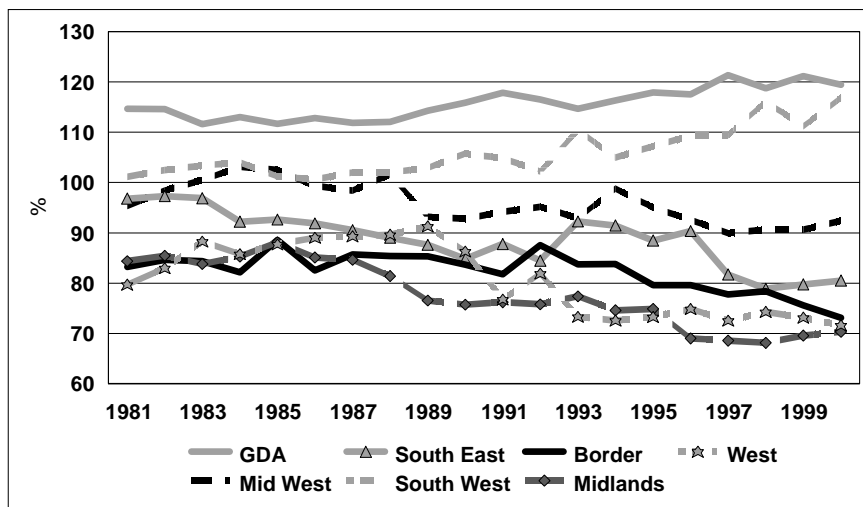


The Mid-West region<sup>4</sup> (which forms part of Ireland's objective one in transition region) is a relatively developed region, comprising Clare, Limerick County and City and Tipperary North (see figure 1). The region is located on the Atlantic Sea Board and is distinguished by presence of the river Shannon, Lough Derg and the Shannon Estuary. It has a total population of 339,591 and has a highly diverse mix of rural and urban areas, with 58% of the population located in rural areas, although much of the population is concentrated in Limerick City and County. The region has a strong foreign industry/service base, with such industry concentrated in the Limerick/Ennis/Shannon area. Development in the region is uneven, with rural areas

<sup>4</sup> The Mid-West region was chosen as a case study as it is regarded as having a proven capacity for learning, as well as a strong social capital base. It is also perceived as exemplifying strong European tendencies because of its international outlook. It should, therefore, have benefited from European funding and development opportunities relative to other less established regions.

in West Clare and West Limerick characterised by high unemployment and socio-economic deprivation, whereas much of County Limerick has good pastureland and strong farming. There is common understanding among the regional actors interviewed as to the development problems within the region, albeit with different emphases and nuances. It is a peripheral region and suffers from poor infrastructural development, which impacts adversely upon its development. Its growth is still behind that of East Region, around Dublin, and the South-West region, around Cork, as the index in figure 2 shows, the performance of the Mid-West has varied over time, although it emerges as the third wealthiest region on the basis of GVA per capita. The gap, however, between the Mid-West region and the Greater Dublin area has widened.

**Figure 2: Index of per capita gross value added, regional authorities, 1981-2000 (State=100)**



Source: ESRI, 2003

The Mid-West region has been a major beneficiary of EU funding, although in the first two CSF's (1989-1993 and 1994-99) this was largely delivered through a series of national-level operational programmes, rather than at the regional level, with central government retaining control over the operational programmes by designating central government departments as the programme managers. In relation to the Mid-West region, some IR£947.92m expenditure was planned under the second CSF, of which IR£444.18 was to be derived from the structural funds. The following table, which gives expenditures during the period 1994-99, highlights the continuing importance of the EU contribution within the region, which is equal to 43% of total expenditure. The total expenditure was predicted to be IR£1,154 bn, with IR£198 m of national co-financed expenditure and private expenditure of £205m during the second programming period. Expenditures in the region were concentrated mainly on industry (24.9%), transport (23.2%), human resources (21.3%), agriculture (17.9%), and to a lesser extent local, urban and rural development (2.8%), tourism (6.7%), economic infrastructure, (1.4%), environmental services (0.9%) and fisheries (0.8%) (Mid-Term Review, Fitzpatrick Associates 1997: 74).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Each of the nine Operational Programmes was subjected to ongoing evaluation, either through external experts, or an independent internal review. The CSF evaluation unit was established in 1996. See [www.eustructuralfunds.ie](http://www.eustructuralfunds.ie)

**Table 3: Structural Expenditure in the Mid-West Region (IR£m)**

	<b>EU</b>	<b>National Cofinanced</b>	<b>Non-Cofinanced</b>	<b>Private</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Productive capacity</b>	201	79	69	190	539
<b>Economic infrastructure</b>	158	88	61	10	297
<b>Human resources</b>	111	41	131	0	283
<b>Local initiatives</b>	20	10	0	5	35
<b>Total</b>	400	198	261	205	1154

Source: Coopers and Lybrand, 1999

By the end of the 1990s, Ireland's strong economic growth and the further reform of the structural funds as a part of the Agenda 2000 package directly impacted on the status and funding of the Mid-West region. The reclassification of Ireland as two regions, with the Border, Midlands and West benefiting from objective one status, whereas the Southern and Eastern region, which now included the Mid-West, effectively meant that the region was lumped in with the affluent metropolitan area of Dublin and the wealthier parts of the country. More generally, EU funding to Ireland is decreasing over the long term and it is noticeable that in the most recent NDP (2000-2006) there is a much greater reliance on national funding, both from the government and the private sector (in the form of private-public partnerships). The co-financed element in the programmes amounts to €7 billion of which the EU structural funds contribution is €32 billion out of total planned spending of the order of €57 billion. There is also a new emphasis on delivering such support through regional operational programmes administered through the two new regional assemblies, marking the first time that non central government bodies have been given responsibility for the implementation of such programmes.

The Southern and Eastern region, which includes the Mid-West, will receive €19,020m under the economic and social infrastructure operational programme, €9,924m from the employment and human resources operational programme and €4,631 under the productive sector operational programme. In addition to the benefits from the inter-regional operational programmes the Border, Midland and Western region and Southern and Eastern regions have identified priorities for the separate regional operational programmes. Table 4 outlines the priorities and the financial contribution to be allocated from both national and EU sources.

**Table 4: Regional Operational Programme for the S&E Region (€000)**

<i>Priority</i>	<b>Total OP Expenditure</b>	<b>Total CSF</b>	<b>Structural Fund Contribution</b>	<b>Matching Public Expenditure</b>	<b>Private contribution</b>	<b>Non-cofinanced Public Expenditure</b>	<b>Non-cofinanced Private contribution</b>
<b>Local Infrastructure</b>	3,045.12	785.46	273.77	246.75	264.94	1,812.38	447.28
<b>Local Enterprise Development</b>	625.50	375.71	110.03	101.55	164.13	158.09	91.7

<b>Agriculture &amp; Rural Development</b>	543.23	316.84	67.60	67.60	181.64	135.21	91.17
<b>Social Inclusion &amp; Childcare</b>	1,164.87	255.40	120.34	101.20	33.86	884.48	25.0
<b>Total</b>	5,378.72	1,733.41	571.74	517.10	644.57	1,990.16	655.15

Source: Southern and Eastern Regional Assembly, 2002

**Table 5: Key Actors at the National Level and in the Mid-West Region**

LEVEL	SECTOR	ACTOR
NATIONAL	PUBLIC	• Cabinet Committee on Europe
		• Joint Committee on European Affairs
		• Department of Environment & Local Government
		• Department of Finance
		• Other Departments
	PRIVATE	• IBEC
		• Environmental Resource Management
NGOS	• ESRI	
REGIONAL	PUBLIC	• Shannon Development
		• SE Regional Assembly
		• Midwest Regional Authority
		• FÁS
		• IDA
		• Forfás
		• Fisheries Board
		• Aer Rianta
		• Bus Éireann
		• Teagasc
	PRIVATE	• IFA Regional Office
		• ICTU Regional Office
		• Other _____
LOCAL	PUBLIC	• Limerick County Council
		• Tipperary NR Co. Co
		• Limerick City Council
		• Clare County Council
		• Limerick Enterprise Board (City)
		• Limerick Enterprise Board (County)
		• Tipperary Enterprise Board
		• Clare Enterprise Boards
		• Paul Partnership
		• Ballyhoura Development

		• Rural Resources Ltd.
		• West Limerick Resources
		• Nenagh Community Network
		• Tipperary Leader Group
		• Others _____
	PRIVATE	• Limerick Chamber of Commerce
		• Ennis Chamber of Commerce
		• Others _____
	NGOs	• Irish Hotel Fed
		• Travel Agents

In examining what happened prior to the most recent funding period what emerges is a picture of region that has a distinctive identity, with its own regional and local institutions and a strong social capital and civil society, which has a strong network of local and regional actors. The existence of Shannon Development, as a regional development agency, has placed the Mid-West in a strong position to pursue regional development initiatives, drawing on European funding and participating with other regions in European programmes (Callanan 2000). Shannon Development has also been a leading force in bringing together local and regional actors in projects and provides much of the direction for the region (see Coombes, Rees and Stapleton 1989). This central position of Shannon Development is also illustrated in the outcomes of the social network analysis.

Most actors in the region are of the view that involvement in EU regional policy led directly or indirectly to increased resources. In our interviews mention was made by a small number of interviewees of the resource pressures both human and financial (i.e., provision of matching funding) brought about by involvement in the EU regional policy process. However, the lack of specific knowledge (other than in local development bodies usually funded directly through EU schemes) on the actual level of resources originating from EU regional policy interventions was informative and somewhat disquieting. Yet, in an attitude and awareness survey carried during the same period as the interviews, awareness of the nature and purpose of EU funding programmes was comparatively high.

**Table 6: Awareness of EU funding in the Mid-West Region**

Question	Nationally		Mid-West Region	
Aware of EU funds	Structural Funds	43%4	Structural Funds	40%
	ERDF	9%36	ERDF	57%
	ESF	%22	ESF	39%
	EAGGF	%16	EAGGF	35%
	FIFG	%29	FIFG	23%
	Cohesion Fund	%	Cohesion Fund	26%

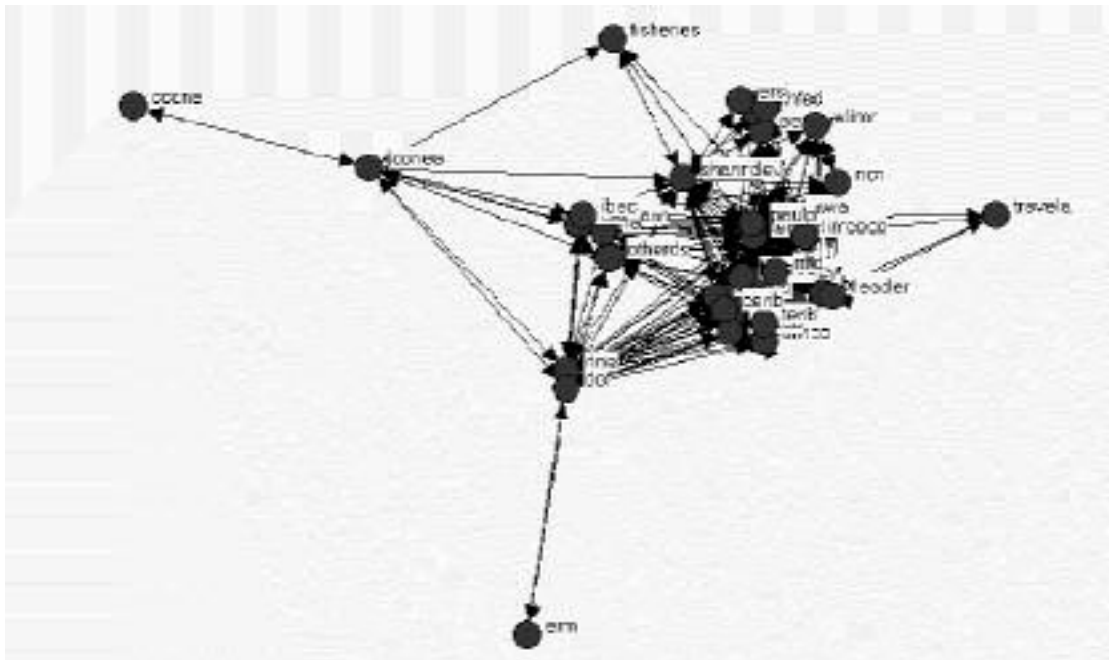
Source: NDP/CSF Information Office survey 2002

#### *The importance of local networks*

The importance of local networks as facilitators of development and learning is highlighted in the findings of the social network analysis which was carried out in the region. In looking at the valued matrix for the Mid-West region, the network centralisation measure was found to be 137.09 (Freeman's Degree of Centrality







In examining the common structural positions among actors with respect to their linkages the network was split into blocks of structural equivalence, whereby members of the same block are positively correlated, and members of different blocks are negatively correlated. Four blocks of actors are identifiable in the Mid-West (see figure 5).

**FIGURE 5: STRUCTURAL EQUIVALENCE MID-WEST REGION**

		2 1	2 2	1 3	1	3 2	1	3 3	2	1 1	3	2 3	1	2 1	2 1	3										
		1 2	1 7	5 5	6 9	4 4	7 3	3 3	2 3	2	2 1	5 4	6 0	4 1	7 8	0 6	0 9	8 9	5 6	7 8	8					
		s s	p l	i n	t t	d t	e r	l m	j d	b	i i	o w	i t	f c	f a	c f	t b	e i	l c	l l	e					
1	shanddev	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	3	2	1	2	1	2	1	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	
2	serega	3		2	3	1	1	2	3		2		2													
21	paulp	3		2	1	1				1	2	1	3	2	2	3	2	2					2	2		
17	limebcy	3	2	2	1	2	2	2		2	1	2					1						2			
5	ida	3		1	3	1	2	2	3		2	2	1	2			1									
25	ncn	3	3	1	2	3	3	3	3	1	1	3	1			3	1	3	1	3						
26	tleader	3	1	1	1	3	3	2	3	2	1	1	3		1	1	1	1			1				1	
19	tenb	3	1	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	1			2	2	3	1	1	2							
34	dof	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	1	2	3	2		2	2						1	1	2	2	
14	tnthco	3	3		3	3	3	3	3		3	3	2		3		3				1			1	1	
-----																										
37	erm																									
23	rrltd	2			1	2				1		1	2			2	3	3			2				3	
13	limcoco	3	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	3			1	1	3	2	2	3	2		1	1	2	1	
3	mwra	3	2	1	2	3	1	1	3	3				3	2	2					2	2	3	2	3	
32	jconea	1												3							1				1	
33	doe	2	2	1	1					2	3			1	1	3	2	3	2			3	3		3	
22	ballyh	3	3	2	2	1	3			2				2	3	2	2				2	2	1	2	2	
-----																										
12	ictu		2								1	3	1	3											1	
11	ifa				1	2					1	2	1	3	2											
35	otherds	2	2	2	3	3	2	3			3	3	3	3	3										3	
24	wlimr	1	3		1	1	1			2	2			3												
36	ibec	2	2	1	3		2			2	1	1	2												3	
10	teagasc	1			1	1	1			3	3	3	1	3		2	2	3	2	3		3	3		3	
4	fas	2	2	2	3	1	2	3		3	2	3	2	2											3	
31	ccone													1												
-----																										
7	fisheries	1									1	2	1													
8	aerrianta	3									1	2													1	
20	cenb	3		1	1		1	2		2	2	3	3	2	1	3	3	3	3		1	1	1	1	3	1
6	forfas	2			3		1	2		1	2	1	2												1	
30	travala						1			1	3		1													
9	beireann									1	3	1	2												1	
28	ecc	2								1	2														1	
29	ihfed	2								1	3		1													
15	limcico	3	2				2	1		3	3	3	2													
16	clcoco	3					2	2	1	3	3	3	2												3	
27	lcc	2	2	2						1	2															
18	limebc	3				1	2			2	1	2													1	
38	ersi	2																							3	

The first bloc of actors in Figure 5 includes five members: Shannon Development, the Mid-West Regional Authority, Limerick County Council, Clare Enterprise Board, and Tipperary Enterprise Board. This block includes three of the principal actors in the region, as well as two enterprise boards, which would share connections with many actors. In the second cluster of actors are the South East Regional Assembly, Tipperary NR County Council, the Industrial Development Authority, Teagasc, Tipperary Leader Group, Limerick, FAS, Nenagh Community Network, Paul Partnership, West Limerick Resources, Ballyhoura Development, Rural Resources Ltd., and the Irish Travel Agents Association. It is notable that many of the

actors in this group are either regional level state bodies or community groups. These actors are clearly closely connected but less central than in the previous group. The third covers Clare County Council, Limerick City Council, Limerick Enterprise Board, the Irish Confederation of Trade Unions, Forfas, Fisheries Board, Irish Farmers Association, Irish Business Employers Confederation, Limerick Chamber of Commerce, Ennis Chamber of Commerce, Aer Rianta, Bus Eireann, the Irish Hotel Federation and the Economic and Social Research Institute. The actors in this group include two county councils and many of the interest groups and associations. The anomaly, in this case the county councils, is explained by their failure to complete questionnaires, whereas the other actors do not share many links. Finally, the fourth comprises the national-level actors: the Department of the Environment, the Department of Finance, the Cabinet Committee on Europe, the Joint Committee on European Affairs, and Environmental Resource Management. Such actors are not represented in the region and therefore have the most distant relations with the local and regional actors.

**Table 7: Freeman's Degree of Centrality Measures**

No	Actor	Degree	NrmDegree
1	Shanndev	74.000	200.000
3	Mwra	73.000	197.297
13	limcoco	61.000	164.865
2	Ballyh	52.000	140.541
33	Doe	47.000	127.027
34	Dof	43.000	116.216
20	Cenb	41.000	110.811
14	Tnthco	41.000	110.811
25	Ncn	41.000	110.811
10	teagasc	38.000	102.703
19	Tenb	38.000	102.703
35	otherds	37.000	100.000
4	Fas	33.000	89.189
26	tleader	30.000	81.081
21	Paulp	29.000	78.378
17	limebcy	27.000	72.973
16	Clcoco	25.000	67.568
5	Ida	23.000	62.162
23	Rrltd	22.000	59.459
36	Ibec	21.000	56.757
2	Serega	19.000	51.351
15	limcico	19.000	51.351
24	wlimr	17.000	45.946
32	jcnea	16.000	43.243
18	limebc	15.000	40.541
6	forfas	15.000	40.541
11	ifa	14.000	37.838
12	ictu	13.000	35.135
9	beireann	10.000	27.027
27	lcc	9.000	24.324
7	fisheries	8.000	21.622
8	aerrianta	8.000	21.622
29	ihfed	7.000	18.919
30	travela	6.000	16.216
28	ecc	6.000	16.216
38	ersi	5.000	13.514
37	erm	2.000	5.405
31	ccone	1.000	2.703
Network Centralization = 137.09%			
Homogeneity = 3.99%			

The region is home to a well-developed cadre of civil society/NGO bodies. These local organisations seem to offer a widely accepted means of socio-political activism, a means that is gaining more appeal than the traditional alternative of local party politics. Because of the limited range of formal institutions for participation, local and community structures offer a means through which concerned citizens may play a role in seeking solutions to local problems such as unemployment, local resources or service needs. These epistemic communities and networks help to conceptualise and promulgate the interests and identities of actors and organisations involved in the region's development process. The importance of many of these community groups is highlighted in our research findings with the groups enjoying significant visibility relative to their size and resources. In the Mid-West as elsewhere, such groups grew in significance from the mid-1980s with many of them drawing funding from EU programmes. Initially, they worked outside of but usually in collaboration with the formal governmental structures. However, issues did arise about their 'fragile democratic legitimacy and anomalous administrative status' (OECD 1996: 96) and their role in the emerging system of governance. Importantly, many state organisations and the local authorities have recognised the need to provide support for such local initiatives. Since 2000, the community sector has been formally incorporated in to the County Development Boards and is playing an important part in political life in the Mid-West.

In summary, the Mid-West region shows a high degree of network centrality and a relatively high degree of density for specific regional and local actors. In relation to the structural equivalence of the policy-making network a number of groups were identified as holding strong relationships with other actors in the region. The regional bodies concerned with structural fund interventions were shown to have leading roles, whereas the national actors were seen as having more distant links with local and regional actors. The analysis of the data derived from the social network analysis highlights the importance of local networks and the growing centrality of the new regional actors established during the late 1990s, as well as the critical role of existing regional actors, such as Shannon Development. It is also notable that some local LEADER and partnership groups are also strong participants in the regional level networks. The region has benefited not only financially, but also in terms of considerable learning having taken place at an institutional level, although this has not always been evenly spread across all actors in the Mid-West region perhaps reflecting the different positions of actors in the networks.

### **ASSESSING THE 'GOODNESS OF FIT' IN THE IRISH CASE**

In examining the goodness of fit between EU regional policy and the existing structures within Ireland and the Mid-West region we consider the relative importance of the following factors as influential in affecting Ireland and the Mid-West region's learning capacity. What emerges in the Irish case is the depiction of a region in which actors in the regional policy process have become involved in formal and informal networks which assist them to fulfil obligations and exploit the opportunities inherent in EU regional policy. The interviews support the earlier contention about the dominance of the centre but also point to the degree of learning and adaptation that has taken place at local and regional levels.

There was consensus among interviewees that *policy-learning* (imposed and voluntary) and *policy adaptation* had taken place in the Mid-West particularly, in the social, environmental, and economic and agriculture/food policy areas. Welcome

adaptations include the movement to multi-annual budgeting and improved planning and evaluation processes. Other positive aspects of adaptation specifically identified include institutional reforms, increased knowledge and wider policy interest and awareness, increased public participation through EU programmes, growth of partnerships and networks, greater awareness of compliance and enforcement, more accountability and responsiveness, confidence to act facilitated by a growing culture of action, experimentation and innovation, access to EU resources (ESF, NOW, LEADER, EQUAL etc.), and improved and increased training. Nevertheless, not all impacts of Europeanisation have been positively perceived. It also emerged that there had been some *resistance to change* and that established interests were perceived as having slowed the pace of change. Some conflict arose between different state agencies and community groups about the nature and process of development and on issues of bureaucracy, representation and accountability. Occasional conflicts have also arisen between economic and environmental interests. There are intermittent tensions with regard to the distribution of tasks and responsibilities but roles and responsibilities have been clarified as learning has taken place.

#### *The existence of fora for dialogue and negotiation*

In the Mid-West region formal institutions, such as the Regional Authorities and the Regional Assemblies, serve as significant fora for dialogue/negotiation. This is not surprising since one of the tasks assigned to the eight regional authorities was to review and advise on the implementation of EU structural and cohesion funds within each region. Similarly, on their establishment the two regional assemblies were commissioned to monitor the general impact of all EU programmes of assistance under the CSF. Significantly, the regional assemblies have been given responsibility for managing regional operational programmes under the new community support framework 2000-2006. Interviewees attributed more significance to the Mid-West regional authority than to the Southern and Eastern regional assembly since they had much more frequent contact with the Regional Authority and also perhaps because it has existed for a longer time-frame. Similarly, Shannon Development was perceived by regional policy actors in the mid-West as being an important forum, which reflects its purpose and *modus operandi*.

#### *Institution building and the involvement of NGOs in policy-making*

The clearest evidence of institution building at regional level has been the creation of the Mid-West regional authority in 1994 and the Southern and Eastern regional assembly in 1999. These new institutions were established in response to changes in EU funding and a concern to ensure that Ireland continued to be eligible for EU structural funding. At local authority level significant innovations include the creation of county enterprise boards (given statutory recognition in 1995) and county development boards (2000). During the 1994-1999 funding period the county enterprise boards functioned as one of the four sub-programmes of the operational programme for local urban and rural development, a significant dimension of the CSF for that period.

The partnership approach adopted as part of the NDP has contributed to a widening of the range of actors involved in the policy process and this has influenced aspects of the reform of local government. County development boards, county enterprise boards and strategic policy committees now formally involve non-state actors within the local government system. These formal networks have expanded the range of actors and have structured and legitimised the involvement of the other

sectors within the machinery of subnational government. The networks of local partnerships involved in delivery of EU regional policy programmes are also significant (e.g. Comhar LEADER na hÉireann and Area Development Management Ltd.). These bodies serve to bring the constituent groups together to address shared needs and opportunities and to participate to some extent in agenda setting and policy-making. Actors interviewed in the Mid-West referred to the significance of both the micro-level branches of these networks and the wider significance of the collectivities. Local groups in the region tend to identify more closely with regional actors, rather than with other local or national actors, reflecting the support derived from such actors.

Among the actors interviewed there was a welcome for the formal networks and informal collaboration between the two sectors, which has been fostered by involvement in EU regional policy processes, but there was limited evidence of formal public/private partnerships for the 1994-1999 period. Private contributions did form a part of the investment in the productive sector (IR£190m) and to a lesser extent in the areas of economic infrastructure and local development. The current National Development Plan (2000-2006) includes provision of IR£1.85 billion (€1.47 billion) for public private partnerships, mainly in the public transport, water services and waste management spheres. The NDP also aspires to public private partnerships which would not require private capital investment (p. 22). Public private partnerships have recently been used for the construction of a small number of schools and certain road projects are being funded through public/private partnerships but these partnerships are not directly linked to the EU regional policy process. At national level some interviewees see involvement in EU regional policy as having brought about a significant increase in participation by fostering the notion of public private partnerships.

At national level a European structural funds information unit (now the NDP/CSF Information Unit) and an NDP/CSF evaluation unit have been created and operate as independent units attached to the Department of Finance. The evaluation unit analyses, evaluates and provides information on the operation of Ireland's CSF. For the current funding period a number of NDP/CSF information officers have been appointed. The monitoring committees for each operational programme under the different CSFs can also be considered as institutions built as a result of the EU's regional policy processes. Involvement of regional actors within the committees has increased incrementally with each round of funding, thereby expanding their role.

### *Social capital endowments*

Actors interviewed attributed a high value to social capital with all of them considering it either necessary or indispensable. There was an underlying welcome for the expanded range of actors and networks and the facilitative norms which have become an intrinsic part of involvement in the EU regional policy process. Such adaptation has come about more easily because Irish society has historically been characterised by a spirit of co-operation and self-help and a strong tradition of collective action. The range of NGOs involved in the recently established community fora serve to illustrate the level of civic engagement. The community and voluntary forum in each local authority area is formed around interest clusters. North Tipperary, for example, has six clusters (social inclusion/disadvantage/disability, economic development, heritage and the environment, youth & sport, arts/culture/Irish language and tidy towns) while in Limerick City there are eleven diverse clusters. However, levels of satisfaction with citizen participation vary, with the NGO sector expressing

most dissatisfaction while many state actors were satisfied with the degree of citizen participation. Actors interviewed attributed a high value to social capital with all of them considering it either necessary or indispensable. The issue of trust with regard to elected authorities was not a concern for interviewees. There was also firm agreement that a strong civil society is necessary. A majority of respondents believed that the social structure of the region had changed in recent years and this finding echoes the dominant discourse on the modernisation of Ireland which refers to the alacrity of social change.

Interviewees indicated a strong belief in the consensual approach to dealing with issues in the region and a view that there are no great differences of opinion on the region's problems. The most influence is perceived to reside with national party leaders with other leaders perceived as holding less power. Perceptions seem to vary between central level and subnational level actors and to an extent between the state and the NGO sectors. There is however agreement that local authorities possess either 'considerable' or 'great' influence in the political life of the region. Opinions with regard to the influence of local private actors, trade unions and NGOs varied considerably with each sector being assessed as having both great influence and no influence as well as moderate influence.

## CONCLUSIONS

Europeanisation of Ireland's institutional infrastructure has been an incremental and frequently a reactive and pragmatic process. The machinery of government, at both national and sub-national levels, has had to change and adapt in order to cope with the day-to-day management of the structural funds. Some of the adaptation has been rather symbolic reflecting demands made by Brussels, but Europeanisation was not, however, the only catalyst for administrative and procedural change as innovations such as the national social partnership process demonstrate. Ireland could be described as being astute in its adaptation. The structures and processes created in response to the exigencies of compliance with EU regional policy requirement have been tailored so as to maximise 'goodness of fit' and exploit funding opportunities. During the 1970s and early 1980s Ireland made only a limited and half-hearted commitment to regional policy and local development, reflecting the realities of Irish economic development and a prevailing view that as Ireland was a small state, regionalised structures were not necessary. The state apparatus, therefore, remained highly centralised. Much of this changed during the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, arising out of the implementation of the revised structural fund process. This process has contributed not only to stimulating a change in the basis on which intergovernmental relations operate but led directly (despite government reluctance) to the creation of new regional structures. However, the regional level still lacks authority and there is little public identification with this level of administration.

At national level, the learning accrued from the Europeanisation led to greater inter-departmental collaboration and co-ordination, a reduction in the strictly sectoral approach and the increasing use of outside expertise. These changes were further reinforced by the EU Commission's emphasis on concentration and a territorial approach and have resulted in increased integration of policies and processes as well as increased flexibility to adapt to regional/local circumstances. These modifications have brought about changes in the Irish actors' capacity for action and resulted in both policy and institutional changes. Other significant learning at national level included a

realisation of the importance and usefulness of multi-annual planning processes and the significance of evaluation processes, both of which are now the norm in Irish public administration. The strict regulations associated with structural funds fostered transparency and provided an antidote to the clientilistic approach but compliance with the regulations increased bureaucracy.

The EU regional policy stress on partnership dovetailed with national acceptance of partnership as the way forward. Thus, vertical partnerships fostered at national level have emerged, horizontal partnerships at national and sub-national levels have been put in place and ‘micro-partnerships’ at a local level have been particularly successful. However, there is also a more general problem arising out of central–local relations, concerning the degree to which such learning enables local and regional actors to pursue and direct their own development, in a context where much still depends on finance from the national level. The non-governmental sub-national bodies generated or revitalised as a direct consequence of EU regional policy (e.g., LEADER groups and Partnerships) did exhibit significant learning during the various funding phases. Both ‘single loop’ and ‘double loop’ forms of learning can be traced in their success in devising local solutions to local issues; their increased animation, co-ordination and implementation capacity; their progression from pioneers to partners; the widening of the development agenda to include social as well as economic actions; their ability to exploit and successfully manage the funding opportunities available as well as leverage extra resources from public and private sources; their integration into the formal decision-making and policy-making processes and their success in having some of their approaches mainstreamed.

Significant learning has also taken place via regional, supra-regional, national and international networks in which actors have participated as a result of their involvement in regional policy interventions (Rees 1997). Although networks have facilitated the learning and socialisation process the impact of the formally instituted networks has been less than satisfactory from the perspective of sub-national actors. Yet, the changed organisational cultures and social norms have effected a reconceptualisation of interests and identities, thereby demonstrating a logic of appropriateness within the adaptation process. Change is evident at both regional and local levels, but with little having changed at supra-national level. Contact between sub-national actors and Brussels officials is still sporadic and uneven. Ireland is not unique in this sphere, however. The EU Commission’s own analysis asserts that the decentralisation of responsibility for implementation of structural fund interventions ‘has highlighted the technical and managerial limitations of regional and local authorities’ (CEC 2001:146).

Concerns emerge about the viability of the regional bodies as EU funding is reduced and questions arise regarding their positioning within governance arrangements as well as issues over their legitimacy and accountability; the instrumentalist approach which underpins the structural fund interventions and consequently guides their actions; the multiplicity of organisations; the risk of fragmentation and duplication and the deficiencies in support structures at regional and national level. Thus, although Europeanisation has brought about differential empowerment of these actors, the institutional learning patterns at sub-national level in Ireland have been sporadic and uneven. Among the formal governmental institutions EU regional policy impacts seem to have been more indirect than explicit while among NGO’s the learning has been affected by the local context, the efficacy of networks and the calibre of local leaders. The SNA analysis suggests that some of these actors have done well, adapted and become more significant players, while



others have been slow to change and seem to have lacked the capacity to take on new commitments. It must also be noted that there was some resistance to change – on the part of administrators and elected representatives who feared that local development activists might usurp their roles and later, on the part of the development activists, some of whom resented being constrained by integration into the formal mechanisms of government.

In looking at the impact of Europeanisation in Ireland evidence has been found of both structural and institutional adaptation. Procedural and administrative change has been widespread if incremental and unevenly spread across the different administrative levels. Ireland's adaptation has been politically pragmatic, administratively ambitious and institutionally limited. Within the regions there has been evidence of innovation, mobilisation and experimentation, as well as increased competence, capacity and confidence. In effect, this represents institutional realignment to cope with new demands rather than radical institutional innovation and transformation.

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