

WELCOME BIENVENUE WILLKOMMEN WELKOM

An Invitation

The 21st Century brings serious challenges for the future development of north-west Europe. This Spatial Vision document is an invitation to take part in a dialogue about how these challenges should be met. It sets out some of the critical issues that need to be tackled through cooperation at the transnational level, and presents an agenda for discussion.

The Spatial Vision is part of a Community Initiative, Interreg IIc, which supports cooperation on transnational spatial planning. The starting point for the Vision process is the European Spatial Development Perspective of 1999.

The Spatial Vision has been drawn up by a group of experts helped by a team of multinational consultants. The Vision process is intended to provoke, inspire action and give some direction to the future spatial development of north-west Europe.

The process is still in its early stages. This Vision document has yet to be considered by national and regional governments. Consultation with them and others is now underway. You are invited to be part of the discussion.

This document is available in Dutch, English, French and German.

The text was originally written in English and has been translated into the three other languages.

A glossary of terms is available on the Spatial Vision website at: www.uwe.ac.uk/fbe/vision.

A leaflet summarising this document is also available in all four languages.

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Planning into the 21st Century

This section outlines why a Vision is being prepared for north-west Europe, what the Vision is seeking to achieve and how it has been produced.

Why produce a Spatial Vision for north-west Europe?

■ To stimulate discussion

The Spatial Vision process provides an opportunity for governments and other interests in north-west Europe to discuss and agree common long term goals for spatial development of transnational significance. The process has so far involved seven countries: Belgium, the north of France, the west of Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands (except for the north of the country) and the United Kingdom.

Cooperation has been assisted through the Community Initiative on spatial planning, Interreg IIc. The map below shows the area of the North Western Metropolitan Area Interreg IIc programme and how it is intended to enlarge it to encompass more of north-western Europe under Interreg IIIb. This document is being published so as to stimulate a wide debate among all interests at national, regional and local levels.

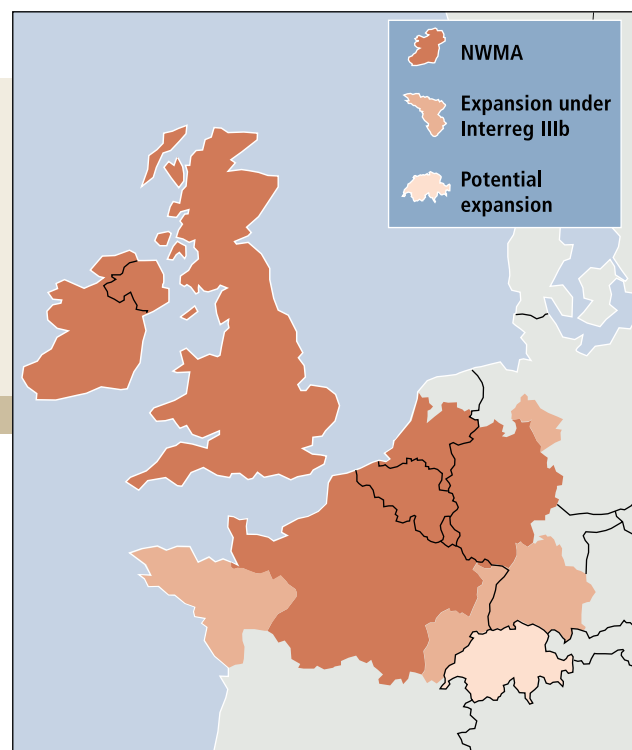


Figure 1.1

The NWMA Interreg IIc programme area and its proposed extension under Interreg IIIb.

Source: DG XVI

■ To manage the assets and development potential of north-west Europe in a sustainable way

North-west Europe enjoys an intense concentration of economic and social activity set in a diverse pattern of cultural and natural landscapes. It is a mixture of densely populated metro-

politan areas, smaller towns with their surrounding countryside and large areas of open land of great environmental value. A complex and intense communications network spreads across the region and links it to the rest of the world.

The great diversity and individuality concentrated in a small area needs to be protected, but there are also shared assets and opportunities of immense value:

- 143 million people live in the region with standards of living and consumption patterns among the highest in the world;
- a central economic core around the cities of London and Paris concentrates global economic command functions, with links to other major metropolitan areas and capital cities;
- a concentration of established industrial areas and economic restructuring in and around the core, such as the Rhine-Ruhr, South Wales, the Midlands and North of England, Central Scotland, northern France; the Saar-Lor-Lux area and Wallonia;
- a high level of growth in sectors of post-industrial knowledge and information technology based enterprises, primarily in the core, but also in other favoured centres;
- high quality countryside and extensive tranquil areas with many thousands of places that are designated for their special environmental or cultural value;
- the major share of the world's international trade and communications gateways are in the area, including the harbours of Rotterdam, Antwerp and Le Havre, and the four major intercontinental airports, London, Paris, Frankfurt and Amsterdam;
- extensive and complex transport and communication systems as a basis for internal and external mobility of people, goods and information;
- a wealth of cultural diversity built from the early mobility of Celt, Roman and Saxon populations, is now overlaid with cultures from around the world (Asia, India and Africa) creating a very rich multi-cultural landscape.

As one of the world's strongest economic regions north-west Europe must take the initiative to ensure a cohesive, balanced and sustainable development of its territory. The countries and regions of north-west Europe can cooperate to exploit shared opportunities and tackle common challenges at the transnational level.

■ To strengthen cooperation at the transnational level

Globalisation and European integration have reinforced the interdependencies between the countries and regions of north-west Europe, although this is not always widely perceived. The fragmentation of its administrative areas and the extensive borders create a patchwork of relatively small jurisdictions that need to cooperate in order to face the challenges of the 21st Century.

Cities and regions of north-west Europe even those very distant from one another, are increasingly interdependent:

- Competition among the cities and regions of north-west Europe has helped to create prosperity but there is a need to counterbalance the negative effects of competition with more cooperation.
- Many environmental and infrastructure systems are at or nearing their capacity, putting pressure on neighbouring countries and regions.
- There is considerable scope for sharing of best practice.

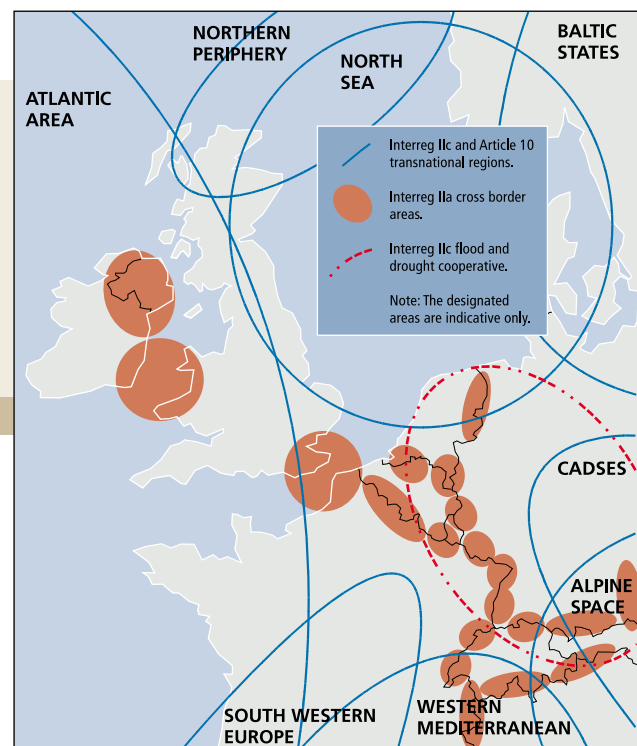
Figure 1.2

Existing transnational and cross-border cooperation in north-west Europe

Source: Operational programmes and LACE

Discussion

There is a danger that in concentrating attention on north-west Europe new boundaries and barriers are created around its perimeter. This is especially inappropriate for this region which has such extensive economic, cultural and environmental linkages with the rest of the world. How should the Spatial Vision address these global interconnections?



Discussion

Transnational city and town networks are emerging in north-west Europe, but their impact is uncertain. Where and how can such networks be organised so as to contribute to more balanced development, more fairness in the distribution of growth and more sustainable development?

Progress is already being made in developing cooperation networks among cities and regions. The networks benefit from specialised economies and political strength that individual cities could not otherwise have developed on their own.

For example:

- Belgium is developing networks of urban systems, including the Flemish Diamond, and networks of towns in Wallonia - known as the Central Belgian Urban Network.
- The area of cooperation Saar-Lor-Lux+ covering Saarland, Trier/Westpfalz, Luxembourg, Lorraine and Wallonia is sixteen times bigger than the territory of Luxembourg and has a total population twelve times larger. Cooperation brings together different levels of government involved from the state level (Grand Duché of Luxembourg), to the German Länder level (Rheinland-Pfalz, Saarland), to French and Belgian regional levels (Lorraine, Wallonia).
- The MHAL network (Maastricht, Hasselt, Aachen, and Liège) has reinforced its position over recent years. Cooperation between the cities is growing whilst the industrial character of the area is rapidly changing.
- The ANKE network (Arnhem, Nijmegen, Kleve, Emmerich) is another example of cooperation on joint marketing.

The increasing movement of people and goods across national and regional borders demands cooperation on transport axes and development corridors.

- Transnational cooperation is underway on both existing and potential new transport axes, so as to promote modal shift to more sustainable means and reduce the negative environmental and economic impacts of increasing flows and congestion. For example, the NWMA Interreg IIc project NETA is examining the potential for an alternative north east axis linking Ireland through the UK with the Netherlands and Germany.

■ To address the complexities of planning systems

- Cooperation at a transnational level has to address the considerable differences in the form and scope of the planning systems of countries. The national and regional planning instruments and the extent to which they address the transnational dimension vary considerably. Transnational cooperation is also influenced by the extent of involvement from the public and private sectors, with some countries much more public sector led than others. It is important to recognise and address positively the considerable differences among neighbouring countries in the organisation and purpose of their planning systems.

What is the purpose of the Spatial Vision?

The Vision process complements existing cooperation at the European and regional levels. The European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) promotes joint policy development and action at the Community level, while the Community Initiative Interreg IIc has promoted transnational cooperation among public and private bodies through projects at the regional and local levels.

The Vision process seeks:

- to transform the broad objectives of the ESDP into more specific operational objectives for north-west Europe;
- to provide a framework and focus for the individual projects under Interreg IIc so that there can be a synthesis of findings for the region as a whole;
- to provide a framework for national and regional spatial planning in member states;
- to help guide the creation and implementation of further transnational cooperation projects under Interreg IIIb and beyond.

The Vision process respects the principle of subsidiarity and is non-binding. It is concerned only with transnational spatial development issues, although there are different views about exactly what this means. Some countries wish to focus the Vision process on development issues where two or more countries must cooperate, for example, when the issue physically crosses a boundary, such as defining the line of a major transport route or ecological zone. Other countries do not want to exclude a wider range of significant spatial development issues that are shared by the countries of north-west Europe, for example urban regeneration issues or urban sprawl. In these cases transnational cooperation may assist in developing a common approach or strategy which leads to more effective action. The main focus of this Vision document has been on the former. The Vision process offers an opportunity to identify the issues where transnational cooperation would be worthwhile. The process is seeking to identify the issues on which there is a real need for cooperation, where cooperation will bring added benefits to national and regional planning and where cooperation will contribute to the overall strategy of the ESDP.

Discussion

The Spatial Vision process should be of value to policy making and action by national and regional governments, and in the strategic thinking of private corporations and NGOs. It should help to elaborate the spatial planning agenda set out in the ESDP for north-west Europe. Is the approach taken by the Spatial Vision process achieving this task, and how can its contribution be improved?

Discussion

Many of the critical spatial development issues are undoubtedly transnational in nature, such as the transport axes that cross national borders and common natural environmental assets. But the countries and regions also share other spatial development problems and opportunities that are not so clearly transnational, such as urban sprawl and declining small towns. To what extent should the Spatial Vision be providing an agenda and guidance for addressing such common issues?

The Spatial Vision process

The task of preparing the first Spatial Vision has been taken on by the Spatial Vision Group drawn from all member states of north-west Europe and the Secretariat of the NWMA Interreg IIC programme. The Spatial Vision Group was assisted by a multinational consultant team.

The Vision process so far is shown in Figure 1.3. The Spatial Vision Group has discussed the transnational spatial development goals for north-west Europe and identified priority topics. The process has taken into account transnational spatial development trends, the existing spatial development policies of national and regional governments and developments in other transnational regions. The Vision process and priority topics have been discussed at two international conferences at Noordwijkerhout (the Netherlands) and Antwerp (Belgium). A dialogue has begun with the projects co-financed by the Interreg IIC programme and other interests.

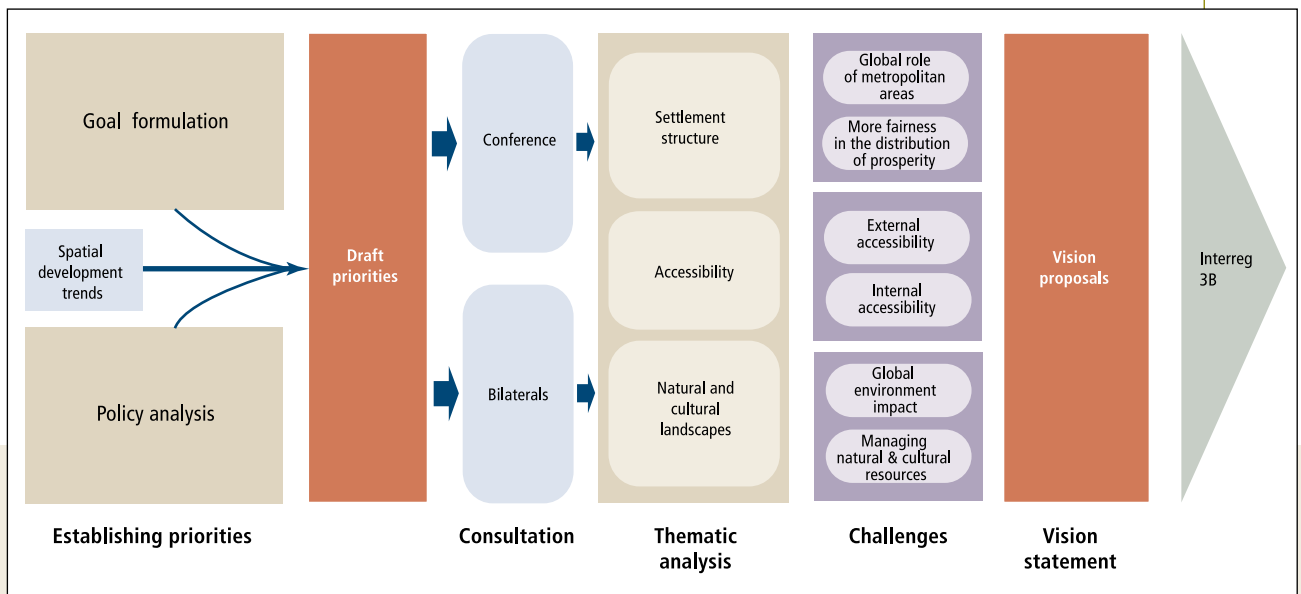


Figure 1.3
The Spatial Vision process

Six challenges

The Vision for the future spatial development of north-west Europe should help maintain and improve economic prosperity and social cohesion within environmental limits.

Sustainable development is central to these goals. It is understood here in an holistic sense, integrating concerns about environmental sustainability: living within the capacity of natural environmental systems; economic sustainability: ensuring continued prosperity and employment opportunities; and social sustainability: ensuring social inclusion, equity, personal well-being and a good quality of life. The Spatial Vision Group has explored the practical implementations of trying to achieve these aims through spatial development at the transnational scale.

It has identified six priority challenges on which cooperation is needed.

- How to enhance the global role of north-west Europe's metropolitan areas
- How to ensure more fairness in the distribution of prosperity throughout north-west Europe
- How to reduce the global environmental impact of north-west Europe
- How to protect and manage the cultural and natural resources of north-west Europe
- How to maintain a high level of access to and from north-west Europe
- How to improve internal access and mobility in a sustainable way

Each challenge presents a formidable task and they are often contradictory. The ultimate challenge lies in reconciling their competing claims. The Vision process needs to address the interrelationships between these challenges if it is to contribute to the overall goal for future spatial development of north-west Europe: to continue to support economic prosperity and social progress, but within environmental limits.

The remaining sections of this Vision statement take forward the challenges by:

- examining the nature of the challenges in more detail, particularly in relation to long term spatial development trends in north-west Europe;
- proposing general principles that should guide transnational cooperation on spatial development;
- translating the general principles into an agenda for sustainable and balanced development, illustrated on a Spatial Vision diagram;
- providing ideas for further concrete actions and highlighting important discussion points.

North-west Europe today

This section gives more concrete expression to the six challenges by setting out the main spatial development trends and issues. It draws on analysis undertaken for the ESDP, the EU Study Programme on Spatial Planning, the European Commission's "Europe 2000" studies, transnational regional studies and other sources.

North-west Europe's spatial characteristics and trends

■ The global role of north-west Europe's metropolitan areas

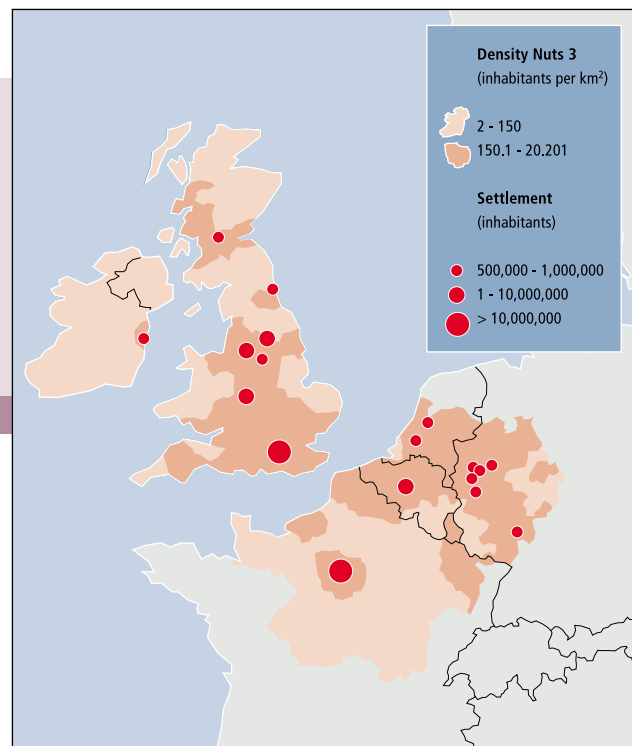
The urban character of north-west Europe is the overriding feature of the area. Even the more remote parts are strongly influenced by the global cities and other urban agglomerations. There is a wide range of urban areas: global cities, larger polycentric networks, monocentric cities and smaller settlements and networks. Three quarters of the population are located in areas with more than 500 inhabitants per km². As a result urban containment is a priority for spatial planning policy in all countries so as to prevent urban sprawl which leads to increasing levels of commuting, high energy consumption, and erosion of the countryside.

The average population density in north-west Europe is almost twice as high as the EU average.

Figure 2.1

Population densities in north-west Europe.

Source: GISCO



Most of the strong economic regions in the EU are located in north-west Europe. But in parts of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Wales, Cornwall, the Highlands, Hainault and Picardie and even in parts of the prosperous regions the economies have weaknesses.

North-west Europe hosts by far the greatest concentration of economic command functions in the world. London is one of the pivotal centres of the world economy. Paris, Frankfurt and Amsterdam are also gaining a similar status. But this global dominance needs to be examined against the growing importance and complementarity of other economic centres in Europe such as Milan, Barcelona, Berlin, Copenhagen, Basle and others elsewhere in the world.

Examples of the need for cooperation

- The global significance of north-west Europe will continue with a concentration of high level economic functions in the global cities and metropolitan areas, especially London, Paris, Frankfurt, and the Randstad. But continued competitiveness cannot be taken for granted. Other locations with existing global functions in finance, business, research, headquarters and political institutions will be favoured. Active cooperation on such matters as information and communications technology networks will be needed.
- The concentration of economic functions is accompanied by an increasing concentration of population in the accessible rural areas close to metropolitan centres. The cities' core areas will tend to lose population as people seek a better quality of life in smaller towns and villages nearby. Migration will also affect the more remote areas that are losing population due to decrease in employment. The overall effect is a polarisation of growth.

Discussion

The analysis of transnational spatial development trends is based primarily on previous studies. Does it properly reflect the current and future situation on urban settlement?

Other capital and regional centres have important international functions but they are also having to face growing competition.

In the face of global competition it is in the interest of cities like London, Paris, Frankfurt and Amsterdam to cooperate in order to promote their strong financial functions as one integrated entity. The recent merger and joint working between the stock exchanges in London and Frankfurt as well as Amsterdam, Brussels and Paris demonstrate a recognition of the need for stronger transnational cooperation. Larger polycentric metropolitan areas such as the Randstad, the Rhein-Ruhr and the Central Belgian Urban Network are also promoting transnational cooperation strategies to attract inward investment.

■ Distribution of prosperity throughout north-west Europe

By world comparisons, people enjoy very high standards of living in north-west Europe, although there is considerable variation, both within and between regions. In terms of wealth north-west Europe is 8% above the EU average. At the same time metropolitan regions face increasing problems of social exclusion with a high level of unemployment concentrated in deprived areas of urban centres. In response all member states prioritise urban regeneration to improve the physical quality of the urban environment, provide public amenities and housing, and improve social and employment opportunities through training and other schemes. North-west Europe was the birthplace of the industrial revolution and is now capitalising on

the opportunities offered by the 'new' post-industrial economy. It is expanding its savoir-faire in the sectors of post-industrial knowledge and information and communications technology based enterprise. The growth of the 'new economy' is concentrated in the financial centres of the core cities but is also clustering around other favoured centres linked to research facilities and high quality of life. More than 70% of urban employment is concentrated in the tertiary sector (1996).

It is in the interest of north-west Europe to support the establishment of innovation centres as well as the cooperation between higher education and applied R&D organisations and the private sector across the region.

In comparison, in 1996, EU 12 represented:

- 65.1% of employment in services
- 29.9% of employment in industry
- 5.0% of employment in agriculture

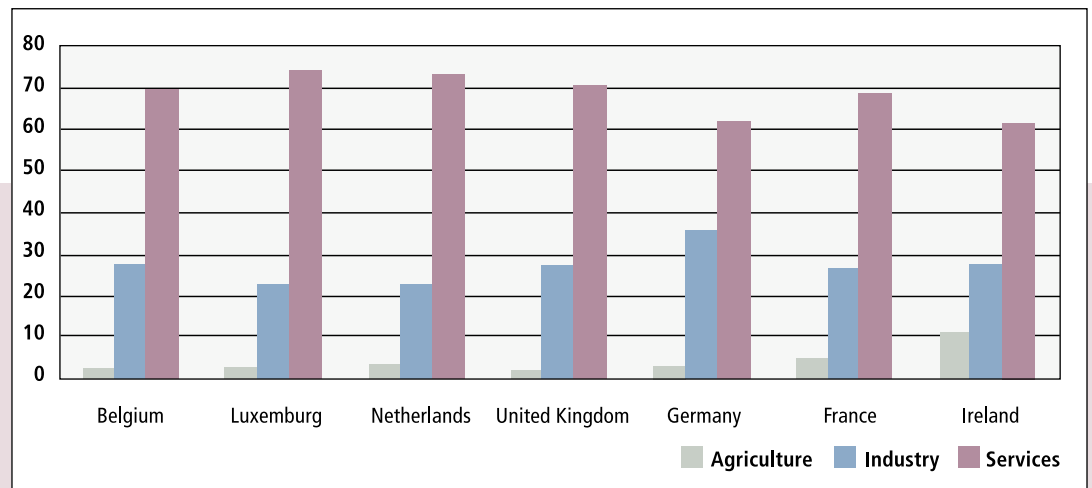


Figure 2.2

Distribution of employment amongst sectors (%), 1997

Source: Eurostat, Regional Statistical Yearbook 1997

North-west Europe also has a concentration of old industrial areas. Here, economic restructuring has led to a rapid decline in prosperity, social life and the physical environment as underlined in the Central and Capital Cities study (1996). However much positive action has been taken to address these problems with some success. For example, north-west Europe performs relatively well compared to the rest of the EU in terms of investing in knowledge and innovation. On average the 21,000 patent applications in north-west Europe account for

Examples of a need for cooperation

- Attractive metropolitan centres situated away from the major cities in the core area can benefit from growing opportunities created by the dispersal of economic functions. In a competitive environment businesses are offered increased locational options, which combined with problems of congestion in metropolitan areas, stimulate the growth of alternative economic centres. These centres need to capitalise on several factors such as the presence of skilled labour, adequate technological availability, the quality of the environment, the innovative capacity of firms, and the ease of communication with major centres. In north-west Europe cities like Dublin in Ireland, Edinburgh and Bristol in the United Kingdom, Delft and Eindhoven in the Netherlands, Cologne and Stuttgart in Germany, Rennes and Nantes in France and Ghent in Belgium are increasingly attractive for inward investment. Likewise urban networks of small to medium-sized towns such as MAHL and ANKE jointly exploit economic opportunities to attract investments to their area.
- Prosperity is weak and declining in some rural areas, especially in Ireland and France. Poor employment opportunities lead to rural desertification as the population moves away. The decline in the agricultural workforce in north-west Europe is likely to continue putting at risk those rural areas that strongly rely on incomes from agriculture; 3.9% of the active population in north-west Europe worked in agriculture in 1988 compared to 2.8% in 1996.

Discussion

Transnational city and town networks are emerging in north-west Europe, but their impact is uncertain. Where and how can such networks be organised so as to contribute to more balanced development, more fairness in the distribution of growth and more sustainable development?

The Spatial Vision process has concentrated on relationships between the global centres and metropolitan networks. Should the Spatial Vision also be addressing the role of intermediate city networks such as the MHAL or the ANKE network?

The long term effects on spatial development of progress on the European monetary union and Community enlargement are difficult to judge. What are the likely transnational impacts and how can these developments be used in a positive way for north-west Europe?

more than 60% of EU production. Opportunities can be seen for considerable economic and social changes in industrial regions in the future.

■ The global environmental impact of north-west Europe

The economic strength of north-west Europe in the world comes at some cost. High levels of production and consumption make enormous and unsustainable demands on natural resources and energy supply. Some resources are available within the region, but the greater share of most natural resources comes from other parts of the world. Extensive trade secures these resources, but the sum effect is that north-west Europe consumes far more than its fair share of world resources. Luxembourg displays a high level of energy consumption per capita, followed closely by Belgium and the Netherlands. Much of the negative impact of con

Figure 2.3

The environmental impact of consumption in NWMA

Consumption each day

1.65 million tonnes of fossil fuels
45.8 million tonnes of clean water
286,000 tonnes of food

Waste each day

42.9 million tonnes of waste water
229,000 tonnes of solid waste

Source: European Sustainable Cities

sumption is also effectively exported to other parts of the world. If the rest of the world's population were to consume natural resources at even a quarter the rate of north-west Europe, there would be insufficient capacity in the world's natural systems.

There is wide recognition of the urgent need to reduce consumption of non-renewable natural resources and its negative environmental impacts. Resources must be used more efficiently and the gains must be used to make improvements in the quality of the environment in north-west Europe and elsewhere. Actions are being taken (especially in relation to emissions) but they are not sufficient to keep consumption within global ecological capacities.

Cooperation could be particularly beneficial in ensuring that sustainability principles such as self-sufficiency, the protection of natural capital (or resources) and demand management are addressed at the transnational scale. Self-sufficiency means obtaining goods and services from the nearest sources which may be in neighbouring countries and regions. Competition among regions, for example in the expansion of gateway functions, tends to drive out concerns for managing overall demand in the interests of sustainability.

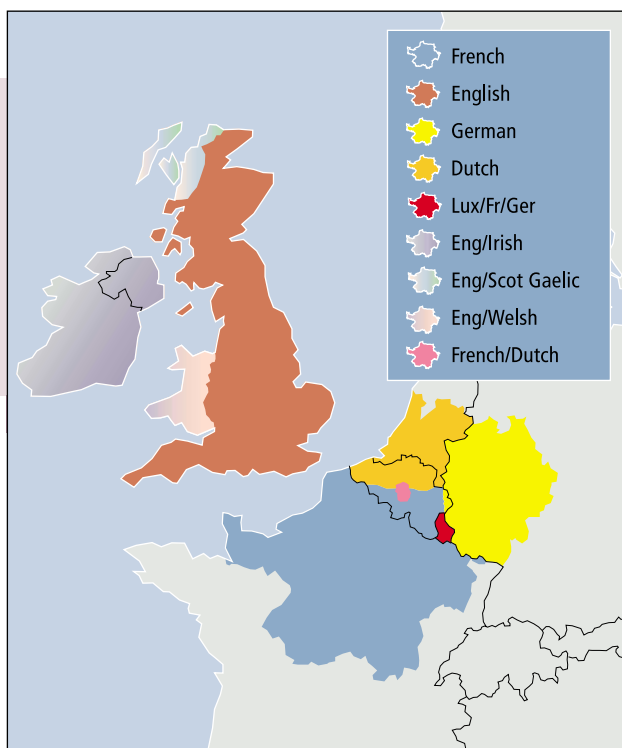
Examples of the need for cooperation

- High levels of production and consumption in north-west Europe increase the scope for effective demand management. For example, the distribution of waste for processing within north-west Europe is an important issue to tackle at transnational level.
- Impacts on our global environment can also be observed through climate change. It is still uncertain as to how much global warming can be expected. In north-west Europe, impacts could be far-reaching. Rising sea levels may lead to flooding of lowland areas particularly the Netherlands, northern Belgium, and the east and north-west coast of the United Kingdom.
- There is considerable scope for further sharing of energy resources (renewable or non-renewable) and for managing their distribution. The market dictates most of the transactions in this field leaving less room for negotiations to reduce north-west Europe's aggregate global environmental impact. National energy strategies have not always considered the environmental effects of their actions on neighbouring countries. The importance of developing the dense energy network by promoting transnational cooperation in north-west Europe has long been recognised.

Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom use considerably less renewable energy sources than the EU average. However, national and regional governments are starting to make progress on this issue. Some have expressed their intentions to promote the use of renewable sources of energy (solar energy, wave energy, wind-mills) in order to raise their level of self-sufficiency. For example, spatial policy in the Netherlands is aiming at "reserving sufficient space for commercially viable renewable energy facilities" and in Germany policies are focusing on the "promotion of wind energy". But this is one topic that is generally poorly developed at a transnational level. At cross-border level there would be considerable scope for cooperation particularly given shared natural resources (seas, coastlines and rivers).

■ The cultural and natural resources of north-west Europe

North-west Europe is characterised by its cosmopolitan character. The wealth of cultural diversity reflects the mix of indigenous groups, immigrant communities from former colonies and more recent immigrants from all corners of the world.



North-west Europe enjoys a rich diversity of ethnic languages from Arabic... to... Welsh.

Figure 2.4

Home languages in north-west Europe

Source: DG XVI

Discussion

The transnational dimension of natural and cultural assets of north-west Europe is self-evident. They do not respect national and regional borders. But how can transnational cooperation assist in ensuring that they are properly managed and enhanced for their own sake and to the benefit of north west Europe as a whole?

A long and rich history has left a considerable legacy. The landscapes of town and country are a living record of historical processes from pre-history through Roman and Medieval times to modern industrialisation and the growth of urbanisation. It is a shared heritage which is not confined by national borders and comprises the whole of the natural and man-made environment in which we live. Many thousands of archeological and historical sites and monuments are designated for their special importance as being worthy of protection and conservation. But the heritage is also an asset which is exploited to attract investments and tourists.

North-west Europe is the biggest tourist destination in the world. Consequently the natural and built heritage is under constant threat from new development and important parts of it are being, or are in danger of being eroded from visitor pressure and daily usage. It is important for the future of north-west Europe to safeguard the natural and historical integrity of landscapes through the development of common principles and standards of best practice. It is north-west Europe's interest to promote a common recognition of its shared and diverse heritage as a source of future attractiveness and well being. Also, cooperation could assist in creating opportunities for future generations to appreciate transnational elements of culture and history through new physical and technological advances.

North-west Europe shares extensive areas of high quality countryside and tranquil retreats - the shared green lungs for the region. Those open areas, accessible from the big cities, are under enormous pressure both for new building and for recreation. For example, the "Groene Hart", the green lung of the Randstad is losing ground to urban functions. The Interreg IIc NWMA project "Sustainable Open Space" is examining this issue in detail through case studies. The fragmentation of north-west Europe's ecosystems is leading to reduced levels of biodiversity. The EU Natura 2000 project provides a starting point for transnational cooperation on environmental protection by developing a "Community wide network of protected areas" linked by a network of buffer zones and habitat corridors. But the net-

Examples of the need for cooperation

- High levels of pollution and landscape alterations have occurred through intensive agricultural practices. In western Europe, the modernisation and the industrialisation of agriculture reached a peak in the early 1980's. Intensive production levels caused great damage to north-west Europe's biological diversity and traditional landscapes. In particular the south and the east of the Netherlands, northern Belgium and East Anglia in the UK are subject to intensive use of pesticides and fertilisers which decrease the quality of their soils and can damage groundwater aquifers.
- There is an intensification of pressure on accessible natural environments. Large areas are becoming isolated and can no longer sustain links with their original ecosystems. The result of this is the increasing fragmentation of valuable habitats. There is a particular threat to the quality of north-west Europe's coastal environments.
- Increasing flood risks could have enormous effects on both the natural environment and the level of economic activities. The growing degradation of the natural physical condition of rivers is one factor amongst others reducing rivers' capacity for self-regulation.

work will only encompass those areas designated under EU legislation - which are generally not the ones under most pressure for further development, and many natural areas cross national and regional boundaries.

Equally important is the sharing of environmental resources within north-west Europe, especially air and water. The quality of the water of the rivers Rhine, Seine, Thames, Schelde, Meuse and Shannon requires particular attention through controlled river management. Transnational co-operation is growing in the field of water resource management and problems of flooding supported by the Interreg IIc initiative. In particular transnational cooperation is underway in the Rhine-Meuse water catchments through the IRMA project. This base should be built on to secure more efficient management in the future.

■ Access to and from north-west Europe

North-west Europe enjoys an extensive communication network generating high levels of transport flows that are crucial to its economic functions. Its global significance is reflected most strongly in extensive communications network with the rest of the world - by air, sea,

rail and electronic means. It has the major share of the world's international communication gateways including dynamic ports and intercontinental airport hubs. The four busiest international airports in the world are located here: London Heathrow, Frankfurt, Paris Charles de Gaulle and Amsterdam Schiphol. On top of this the world's fifteen busiest international air routes are also in north-west Europe. Regional airports are growing fast too. For example, Dublin airport is expanding at a rate of one million new passengers a year and Brussels Zaventem similarly. There is a call for the development of new airport facilities at both major hubs and regional gateways because of the perceived benefits for economic development. Sea ports of north-west Europe are implementing or planning major investments to increase capacity.

Examples of the need for cooperation

- North-west Europe's international gateway functions continue to grow rapidly and are concentrated in the core area and global cities. This creates a situation of super-connectivity of the core area (to and from the rest of the world) favouring the development of international economic functions here as opposed to other areas. Whilst having certain advantages this contributes to the uneven distribution of north-west Europe's wealth, and to concentrations of heavily congested and polluted environments.
- The transport and distribution sector is very strong especially in the Randstad, Flemish Diamond, Rhein-Main, Rhein-Ruhr, Ile-de-France, and Greater London. It would be affected by any variation in the level of European transport flows. Intra-European trade still makes up for an important amount of exchange going through north-west Europe. Improving tangible and intangible links to growing economic centres elsewhere in Europe should continue to be promoted.

The economic benefits of expansion of gateway functions are undisputed, but continuing growth without exceeding spatial development and environmental limits is proving

to be a major planning issue in all countries. The collective impact of expansion of many gateway functions and the potential for complementary roles in different countries are not being addressed.

Global accessibility is a critical factor for certain economic sectors in the big cities. Economic prosperity and the fragmented geography of north-west Europe have also generated an extensive and very complex web of communications within the region by all modes, but road traffic still dominates, even for many transnational journeys. All governments are promoting accessibility as a means to maintain and improve economic prosperity and competitiveness, especially through the Trans-European Transport Networks, and by promoting links to other centres within the EU and to the major international gateways. Cooperation between public transport authorities and network operators could be developed for example to provide the best possible access to high speed train stations at transnational level. The question is of course of particular relevance for nodes located in border regions, such as Lille, Liège, Aachen, Antwerp and Arnhem. This idea for cooperation is being developed by the Interreg IIc NWMA project "Network of HST Urban regions". More progress has been made on cooperation on rail and road rather than on sea and air.

■ Internal access and mobility

In the first half of the nineties transboundary transport flows doubled giving rise to the development of networks connecting urban areas with important nodal functions. The most significant axes within the networks have sometimes been described as eurocorridors. They have greatly improved the level of accessibility especially between the global cities and other metropolitan areas.

However, road traffic congestion is constraining economic growth, which in turn has provided an incentive for governments to develop the capacity of alternative modes (but also in places new roads) and to improve the inter-operability of the transport system at the transnational level. National planning policies give priority to developing more sustainable modes of transport in order to meet environmental targets and improve quality of life. Projects aiming to develop rail freight use are being implemented as well as the development of the potential of

Example of the need for cooperation

- Transport volumes and congestion levels have increased steeply over recent decades in the European Union and north-west Europe is no exception. There is a constant danger of developing new infrastructure to improve accessibility that also jeopardises natural and cultural landscapes. The relative decline in accessibility of some locations is prompting the development of new infrastructure links that follow the curve of growing congestion levels (road, air and sea). New links and/or missing links need to be innovative and sustainable in their conception as north-west Europe's environmental capacity to accommodate more infrastructure works is decreasing.

inland waterways. The Netherlands, and to a lesser extent Germany, make significant use of waterways for freight traffic and they promote the development of multi-modal transport clusters.

Transnational cooperation could assist in the creation of more sustainable means of transport such as slow traffic modes (shipping, cycling, riding, and walking). Special emphasis on the transnational linking up of slow traffic networks could provide incentives for adopting alternative modes of transport. Tourism activities in north-west Europe should be geared up to exploiting such networks.

Discussion

The analysis of transnational spatial development trends is based primarily on previous studies.

Does it properly reflect the current and future situation on transport?

The long term effects on spatial development of progress in information and communications technology and e-commerce are difficult to judge.

What are the likely transnational impacts and how can these developments be used in a positive way for north-west Europe?

From analysis to a vision

In section 1 the six challenges identified by the Spatial Vision Group were listed. In section 2 they have been used as the basis for analysing present trends in north-west Europe. The following maps reflect the critical issues emerging from that analysis. These issues are transnational and need to be dealt with by all countries and regions in an integrated way. Figures 2.5 and 2.7 summarise the critical issues for two related sets of challenges. For the challenge 'how to reduce the global and environmental impact' further analysis is needed to understand what critical issues have to be addressed. Therefore - although this challenge is related to the one dealing with cultural and natural resources - only critical issues regarding the latter are reflected in fig. 2.6.

■ Global role of metropolitan areas

■ More fairness in the distribution of prosperity

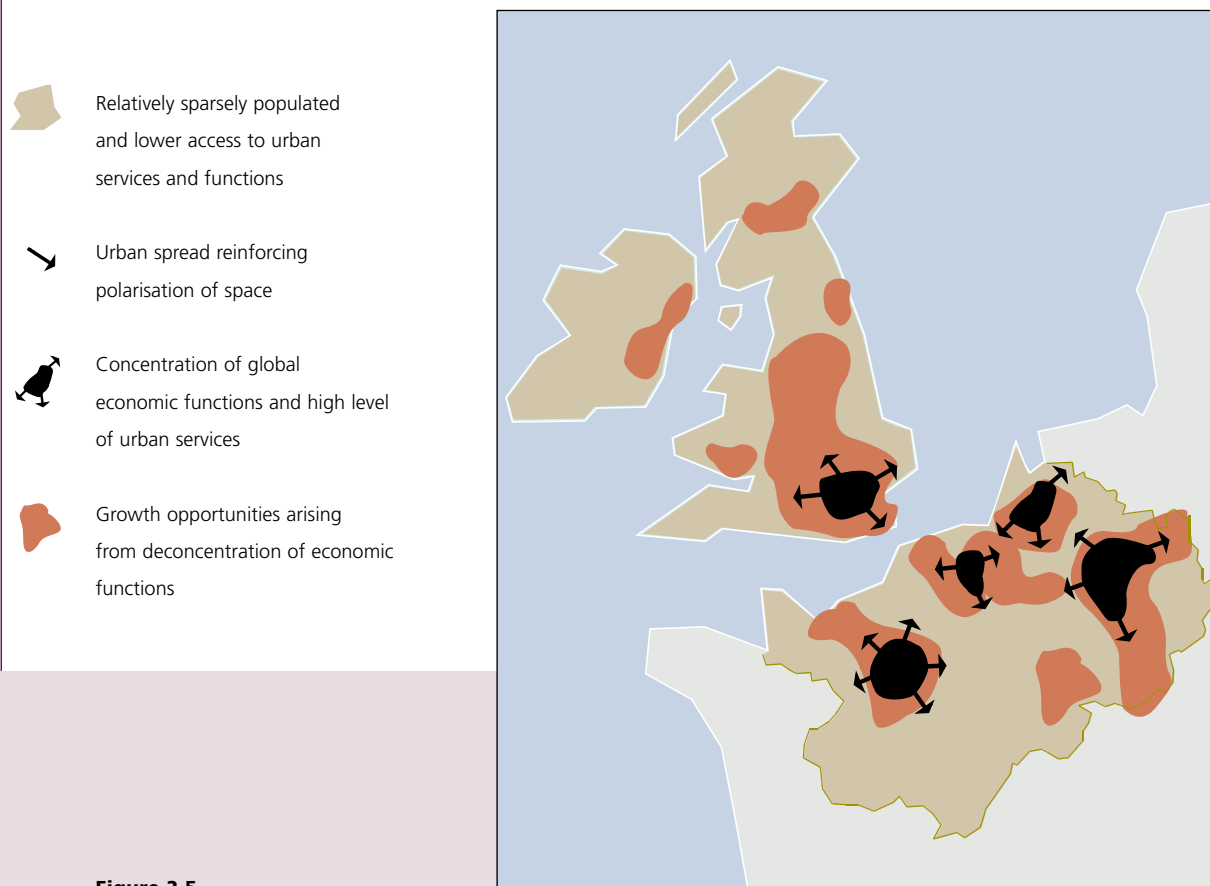


Figure 2.5

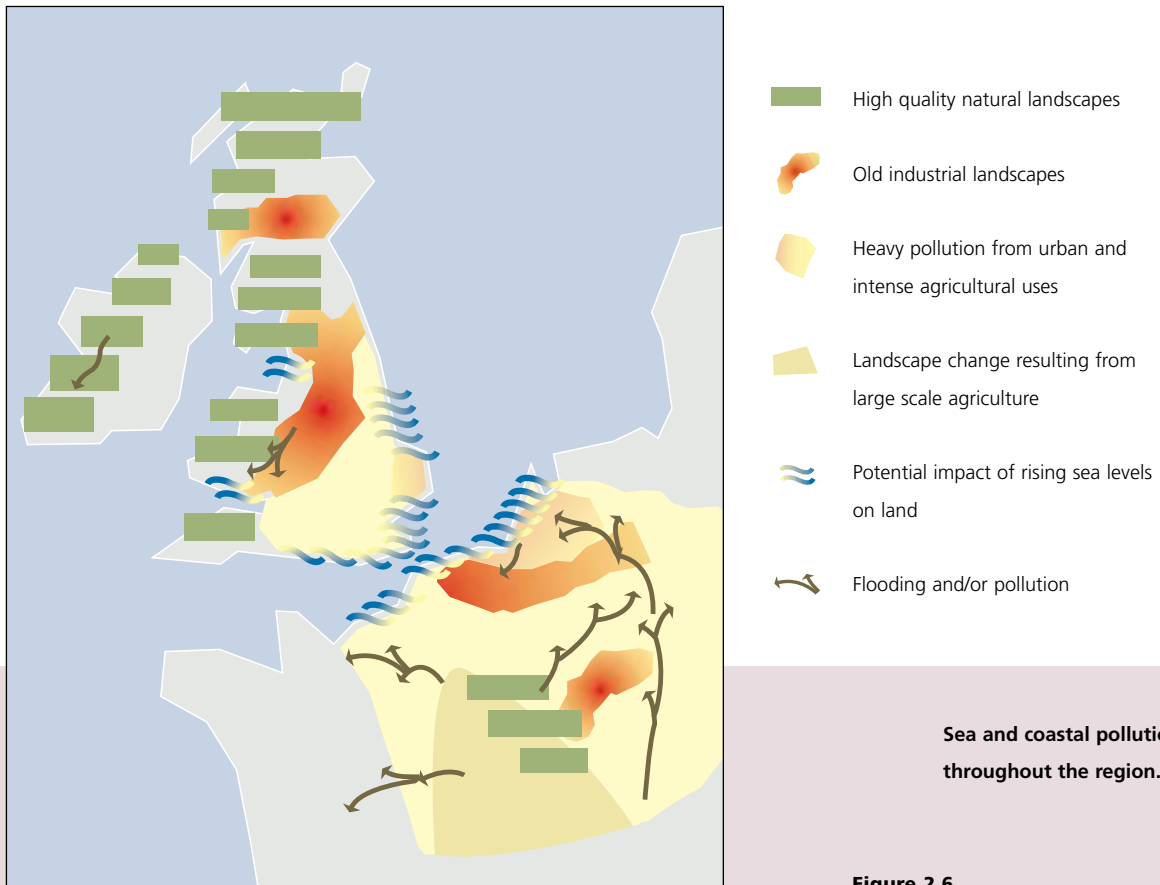
Global role of metropolitan areas
More fairness in the distribution of prosperity

Source: The consultant team

Discussion point, figure 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7

There is a danger that in concentrating attention on north-west Europe new boundaries and barriers are created around its perimeter. This is especially inappropriate for this region which has such extensive economic, cultural and environmental linkages with the rest of the world. How should the Spatial Vision address these global interconnections?

■ Cultural and natural resources



Sea and coastal pollution is a problem throughout the region.

Figure 2.6
Cultural and natural resources

Source: The consultant team

■ Access to and from north-west Europe
■ Internal access and mobility

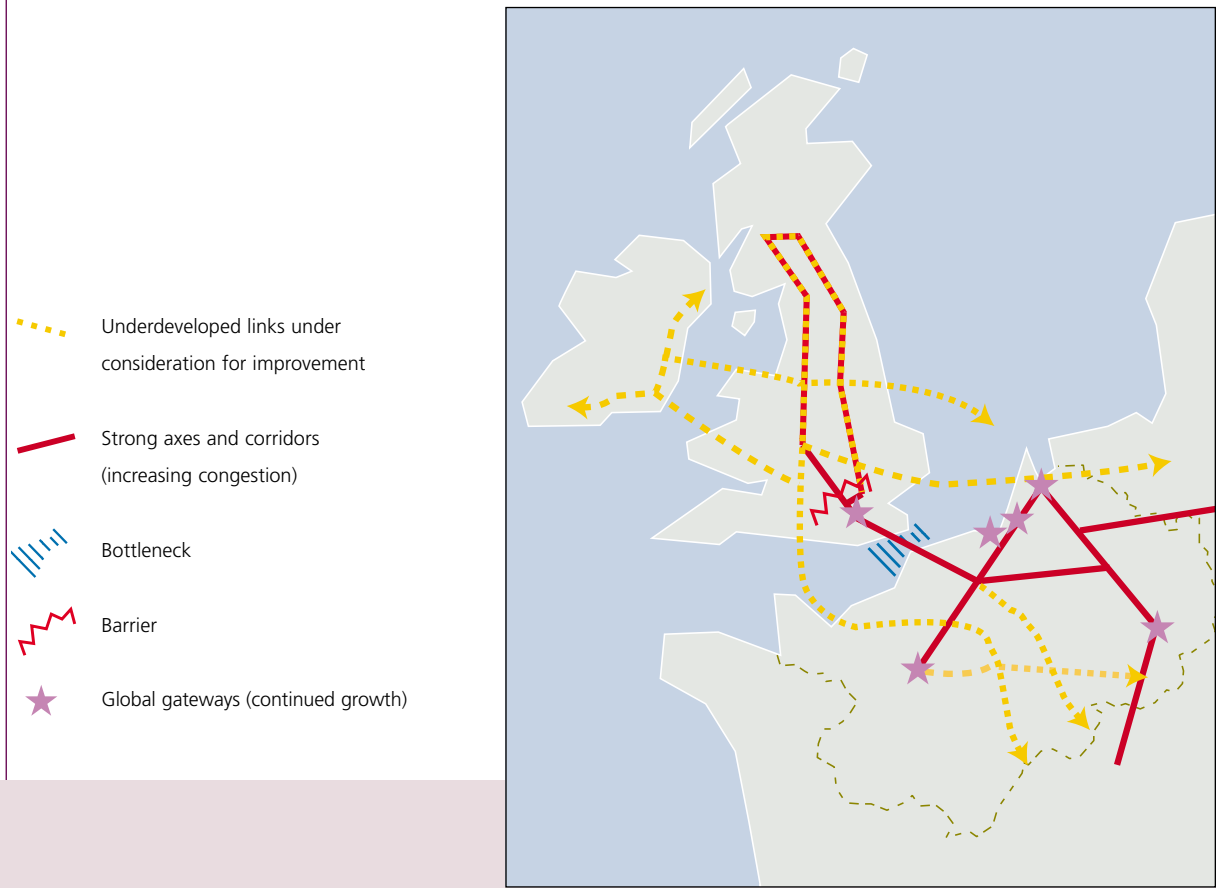


Figure 2.7
Access to and from north-west Europe
Internal access and mobility

Source: The consultant team

■ The need for an integrated approach

The issues shown on the maps are complex. They show considerable imbalance in the urban system and transport network. A strong but congested communications network will continue to develop between the global centres. There will be a further concentration of external gateway functions in a relatively small area, with underdeveloped links to smaller cities and rural areas. The network to the north and west will be hampered by the single congested terrestrial link to the continental network, and a continuing heavy reliance on road and air.

Imbalances in the urban structure and communications networks threaten economic performance and environmental sustainability. More balanced development will require careful coordination and promotion of strategic urban development opportunities with alternative gateway functions and transport corridors so that certain locations and links can act as viable counterweights. High level urban functions will continue to concentrate in the global centres and near gateways, putting urban development pressure on the accessible rural areas around them.

Even limited analysis at this stage shows that the high level of urbanisation and agricultural production in north-west Europe has had a profound effect in terms of its global environmental impact. The natural and cultural resources of the area need more investigation but from what is known there can be little doubt about their richness and importance across national borders.

A fundamental concern is the close interaction between spatial development policies and activities seeking to secure and distribute economic prosperity and those seeking to protect environmental capacities and manage north-west Europe's heritage. Achieving more sustainable and balanced development will depend on addressing these often contradictory objectives and resolving them through integrated policy responses, in part at the transnational scale.

■ Common characteristics

The analysis suggests that there are four large transnational areas that share common characteristics and the same critical issues. Because north-west Europe is so diverse there should be a different agenda for each area displaying similar critical issues; yet at the same time it should be recognised that some issues, such as cultural and natural heritage, are ubiquitous.

- An area centred on four global cities, gateways and large polycentric metropolitan centres dominates the urban structure. Around these centres are areas of intense economic activity and agricultural production where demand for new urban development will continue. This brings opportunities, but pressure on open land, environmental capacities and existing water management will be counter-productive for the economy as well as the quality of life. The well established network of high quality communications between the centres and gateways makes the area 'super-connected'. The contin-

ued growth of already massive flows of goods and people will increase congestion costs, lead to demands for more infrastructure, and exacerbate damaging environmental impacts.

- Beyond the central area parts of the UK and Ireland are also dominated by large urban centres with important economic functions. But this area does not have the same external connectivity and is not part of the strong continental transport network because of the relatively weak communications network and the barrier effect in the London-Channel area. The area has both labour and land and seeks investment and economic activities from the centre, but it needs to restructure its economic base. Nevertheless, it is most likely that the area will not be able to fully capitalise on its assets and opportunities in the face of competition from the centre.
- To the north and west is a sparsely populated area with high quality landscapes and natural resources that are an asset for north-west Europe as a whole. The area will continue to suffer from depopulation problems and weak links to the rest of north-west Europe. Indigenous economic opportunities will be difficult to exploit further in the face of both these trends and the need to maintain environmental quality.
- To the south-east, parts of France, Belgium and Germany are largely rural and agricultural in character, but face considerable change. This part of north-west Europe is bisected by three strongly growing transport axes that will contribute to increasing pressures for urbanisation from neighbouring urban agglomerations. The area will increasingly act as recreational resource for these agglomerations.

A Vision for north-west Europe

Transnational cooperation on spatial planning can help to ensure that the global economic competitiveness of north-west Europe is maintained, whilst avoiding environmental damage and promoting more sustainable development. Cooperation will involve choices about the future spatial development of north-west Europe at the transnational scale. Bearing in mind the challenges set out above, there is a need to consider the options for what, where and how spatial development proceeds at the transnational scale. Thinking about the options and discussing them will help to identify the critical issues on which transnational cooperation should be intensified. These are also the areas where Community attention and investment on spatial development would be most appropriate and effective. The Spatial Vision Group have begun to discuss how the challenges might be met. This section sets out some of the main options and the conclusions of the Spatial Vision Group so as to provoke discussion. It does that in two ways:

- by proposing principles that should guide decisions and action on future transnational spatial development;
- by proposing an agenda for future transnational cooperation and illustrating elements of this on a Spatial Vision diagram.

The Vision principles

The Vision principles suggest in some detail how the six challenges can be addressed to guide the future development of north-west Europe. They have been used to produce the Vision diagram which follows. They arise from discussion of the analysis and critical issues in section 2.

■ **Enhancing the global role of north-west Europe's metropolitan areas means:**

- developing the metropolitan areas as part of the global economy linked to the rest of the world, the rest of the European Union and the rest of Europe
- supporting and maintaining the concentration of global economic functions and seeking a more balanced distribution of high level urban services
- promoting specialisation and complementarity of city functions through cooperative networks particularly in respect of inward investment strategy, growth sectors and knowledge based industries

■ **Ensuring more fairness in the distribution of prosperity in north-west Europe means:**

- developing complementarity between metropolitan areas and medium sized towns
- developing transnational networks and cross-borders clusters that are able to exploit indigenous economic potential
- promoting more balanced distribution of investment in growing sectors, especially research and development centres in economically weaker regions
- assisting the development of transnational strategies aimed at exploiting economic potential

■ **Reducing north-west Europe's global environmental impact means:**

- containing transnational travel by meeting the other challenges
- promoting the sustainable use of resources
- maximising the use of less polluting energy generation

■ Protecting and creatively managing the natural and cultural heritage means:

- ensuring that development does not exceed the capacity of the environment to absorb it and reflects and respects the distinctiveness of the locality
- identifying and protecting sites of transnational significance
- establishing and extending the network of natural and open spaces
- promoting integrated management of water resources in transnational river basins
- securing and improving the quality of other natural resources including air, soil, biodiversity and tranquillity
- ensuring the creative management of cultural assets

■ Maintaining high levels of access to and from north-west Europe means:

- enhancing specialised and complementary gateways for air, sea and rail
- avoiding concentration in a few centres and inappropriate investment in underused infrastructure
- completing the HST network to provide external connections to the rest of Europe from all main cities
- making the best use of opportunities offered by new information and communications technologies and e-commerce to strengthen global connectivity
- avoiding the use of air travel for short journeys

■ Improving internal access and mobility in a sustainable way means:

- promoting the development of transnational public transport strategies
- ensuring that gateway functions are properly coordinated with internal communication networks and new spatial development patterns
- completion of the HST network to all major urban centres and improve associated public transport links
- maximising the potential for a more complete system of rail/water links (as part of TENS) to carry freight traffic
- promoting inter-modality and inter-operability and the avoidance of unnecessary air travel
- identifying how connectivity amongst the big cities and between them and their hinterlands can be improved through selective infrastructure improvements and the promotion of existing and new spatial development and transport nodes
- making best use of, and ensuring universal access to services through information and communications technologies

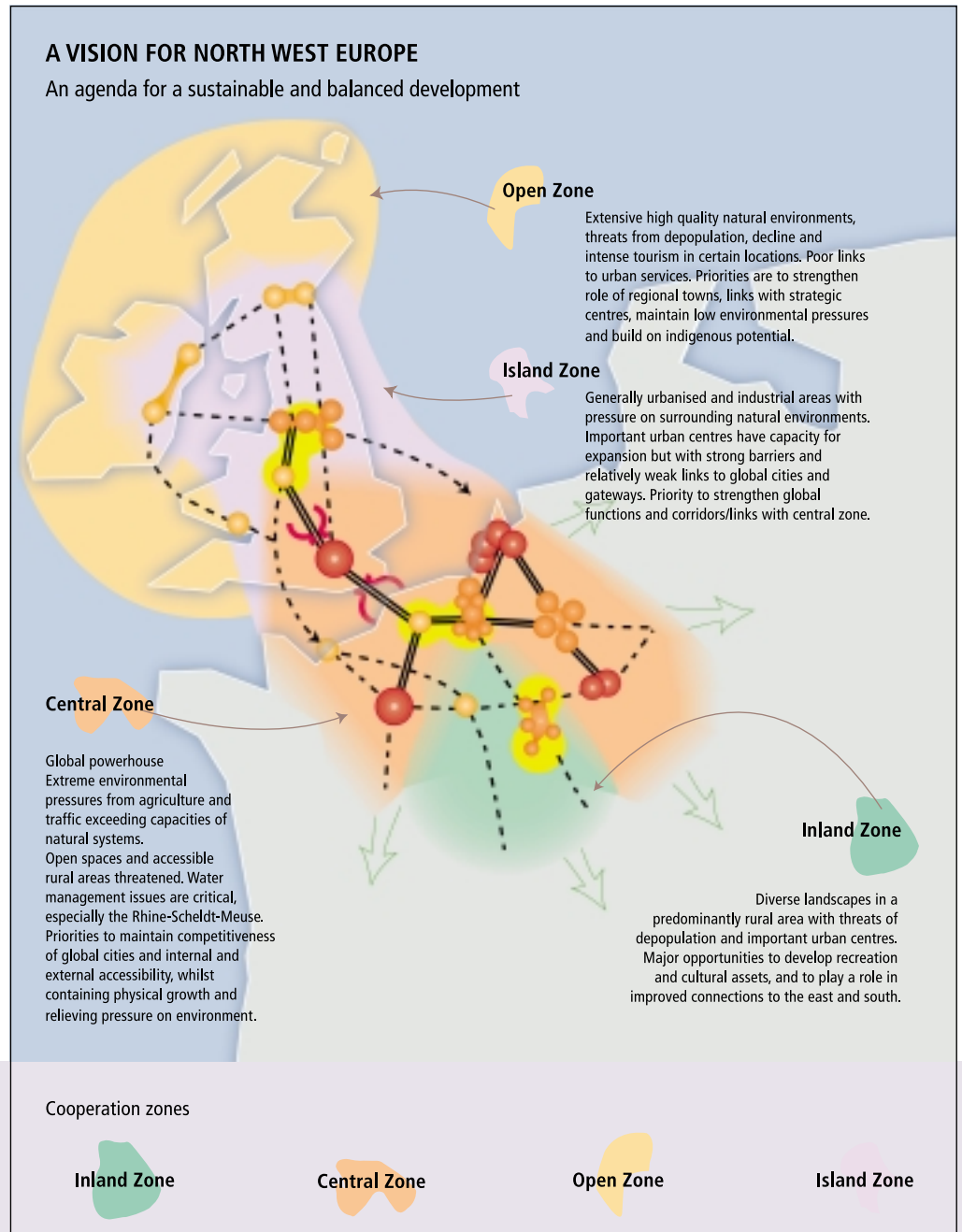


Figure 3.1

A vision for north-west Europe

Discussion

The analysis of transnational spatial development trends is based primarily on previous studies. Does it properly reflect the current and future situation on urban settlement?

The Spatial Vision process has concentrated on relationships between the global centres and metropolitan networks. Should the Spatial Vision also be addressing the role of intermediate city networks such as the MHAL or the ANKE network?



The Spatial Vision diagram

The Spatial Vision offers an agenda for discussion on:

- new transnational cooperation zones with specific needs and tasks on environmental, natural, cultural and economic issues;
- major transnational transport axes and development corridors;
- international gateways and investment zones.

These are shown on the Spatial Vision diagram and explained in the text that follows it.

■ Cooperation zones and their tasks

Four zones have been identified where specific transnational issues need more analysis and cooperation at a transnational level. These zones and their agenda of issues could provide a starting point for considering the need for new transnational projects under Interreg IIIb. Those involved in spatial planning within a zone can better solve such problems by cooperating. The four zones are:

The Open Zone

The Open Zone is relatively sparsely populated and has high quality natural environments, but there is a threat of depopulation and decline together more intense pressure from tourism in particular locations. The priority is to create more balanced development with the neighbouring zones and better connections into the central areas without jeopardising the quality of the natural environment. Cooperation is needed to confirm the status of a small number of regional hubs and to maximise linkages within the area. To counter the growing pull of the centre the development of indigenous potential is to be given high priority.

It is important that the need to preserve and maintain natural landscapes of importance to all in north west Europe and beyond is particularly recognised. Low environmental pressures can be observed in the Open Zone and this situation needs to be maintained. Measures by which this can be done need to be investigated and put in place. Many of the issues facing the Open Zone are similar to those being addressed through transnational cooperation in the Atlantic Area, North Sea and Northern Periphery, and cooperation will need to extend into those regions.

The Island Zone

The main challenge for the Island Zone is to ensure that it becomes unambiguously part of the core European economic integration area. The weak physical connections with the global cities along with the barrier effect of London need to be overcome. Cooperation should concentrate on a common strategy to establish physical and economic links with the global cities and to promote the zone's role as an alternative international gateway and economic centre as discussed below. This will require agreements amongst networks of regions and cities about

Discussion

The long term effects on spatial development of progress on the European monetary union and Community enlargement are difficult to judge. What are the likely transnational impacts and how can these developments be used in a positive way for north-west Europe?

where development should be concentrated, ensuring that it is coordinated with the development of alternative corridors to continental Europe. However, attention also needs to be given to connections to and through London which will remain the main link with the other central cities. Industrial heritage is widespread and the proximity of this zone to the centre gives opportunities for use of existing assets for leisure and tourism.

The Central Zone

The Central Zone is a world powerhouse. Continuing demand for land has taken the cities close to the limits of their environmental and physical capacity. The task is to maintain the international competitiveness of the cities whilst controlling their further development. Continuing economic growth provides an opportunity to create more balanced development at the transnational scale and so relieve pressure on the existing centres and countryside. This might be best achieved by encouraging certain forms of new development activity in other locations. There is considerable pressure on accessible rural areas within this zone. Open areas should be protected and enhanced through the creation of open corridors and spaces linked transnationally across regions. It is vital that agricultural practices in this zone respond to the ever increasing problem of agri-pollution.

This zone has important responsibilities in connecting north-west Europe to the rest of the world and has influence well beyond north-west Europe. The priority is to reach agreement on the improvement of strategic transport connections to central and eastern Europe, the Baltic and the Mediterranean economic integration zones. There is a need to maximise the potential of the Rhine development corridor and thereby maintain the international competitiveness of cities such as Dusseldorf, Cologne and Frankfurt.

The Rhine and Meuse river catchment areas are a major transnational resource. Cooperation already underway on the management of water resources, needs to be extended so as to address fully the threat of flooding and sea defences in the low countries.

The Inland Zone

This area could be described as the 'green heart' of north-west Europe. It is facing considerable agricultural and rural change. High quality landscape is threatened by rural desertification in some parts and movement to larger units of production in others. But the area has the potential to provide much more recreational and tourism opportunities for people from across north-west Europe. Changes need to be carefully managed so as to protect traditional landscapes and promote indigenous potential to halt decline and relieve pressure on urban areas nearby.

The area is crossed by transport axes from Paris to the east and from the Ranstad via Brussels to Switzerland, going through Lorraine and Luxembourg. Such a corridor could be exploited to provide a balance to areas in the Central Zone. The Saar-Lor-Lux network of cities could act

as a core of both industrial restructuring and service centres whilst Reims is also well placed to perform a strategic role in this zone.

■ Transnational corridors / connections

A lot of attention has already been given to transnational transport networks through transnational cooperation at the European scale. Transport axes have been strengthened and some of them are being promoted as national and regional development corridors. Further cooperation within north-west Europe can help to ensure that transport axes are further developed in the most sustainable way and that their potential as transnational development corridors is realised.

There are three types of connection where transnational cooperation will be needed to ensure access is developed both in appropriate locations and in a sustainable way.

Further development of existing axes into corridors

Much of the transnational traffic in north-west Europe is concentrated in three axes - the backbone link running from Ireland and Scotland through London and across northern Europe; Amsterdam to Paris; and the Rhine axes. Parts of these transport axes are becoming development corridors.

In these corridors the priorities for transnational cooperation are:

- to maximise the potential for switching modes from road to rail and waterways;
- to identify and build on development potential at particular nodes;
- to improve management of through traffic; and
- to promote effective connections between local networks and transnational networks.

Much has been done to develop the high speed train network along these corridors, but there is now also a need to make much more substantial progress on improving the communications between the main centres not linked into this network, and relieving existing and predicted bottlenecks, especially those around London and the Channel Tunnel.

Creation of alternative corridors

Three alternative corridors are emerging linking Ireland with the United Kingdom across continental Europe to the east and south. These are the North East Trade Axis (from Ireland-northern England-short sea crossing to the Netherlands and Germany); Le Havre-Rouen-Amiens-Reims-Lorraine (which should be extended north eastwards to Ireland); and the Brussels, Luxembourg and south corridor. These alternative corridors could provide a by-pass function for bottlenecks along the main corridors and also a stimulus for more balanced devel-

Discussion

The analysis of transnational spatial development trends is based primarily on previous studies. Does it properly reflect the current and future situation on transport?

Discussion

Alternative transnational transport axes and development corridors are suggested in this document and elsewhere. What is the real potential of these alternatives and have other possibilities been omitted?

opment at particular nodes. Cooperation is needed on the logistics and infrastructure needs of the alternative corridors and identification of locations that may become new nodes.

Improvement of external links to other parts of Europe

North-west Europe needs to be effectively connected to other rapidly expanding economic centres in Europe around the Baltic Sea, the Mediterranean and the in the east. Cooperation is needed to ensure that external links are improved or created to the benefit of the whole of north-west Europe, and that priority is given to the more sustainable options for both people and freight. Cooperation here will extend to neighbouring regions.

■ Counterweight global gateways and economic centres

The ESDP promotes the strengthening of metropolitan regions, the expansion of the strategic role of gateway cities and integrated spatial development strategies for city clusters. These policy options are largely directed at the peripheral areas but such an approach is also relevant within north-west Europe, so as to assist in creating of more balanced development and relieving pressure on the surroundings of global centres. The strengthening of alternative international gateways and economic centres will promote the more efficient use of infrastructure and widen accessibility to high level urban functions and transport networks. The alternatives should act as a counterweight to the economic pull of the global centres.

Discussion

Transnational city and town networks are emerging in north-west Europe, but their impact is uncertain. Where and how can such networks be organised so as to contribute to more balanced development, more fairness in the distribution of growth and more sustainable development?

Individual cities and regions are already vigorously promoting themselves as alternative centres for investment, but the emphasis here is at a different scale and with a different focus.

The promotion of counterweight centres is an issue of transnational significance for the whole of north-west Europe. Where there is real potential to establish global gateways and economic functions cooperation is needed among the constituent cities, regions and neighbouring rural areas. But cooperation is also needed at the transnational scale where the focus should be on the provision of international functions and services for north west Europe as a whole. It is also essential to ensure that expansion at particular locations brings benefits to smaller centres and rural areas, and that there is coordination with the gateway and economic roles of other major cities and strategic centres.

The effect of market forces in concentrating international economic and communications functions in only a few centres is very strong, but there are possible alternatives where existing centres are well positioned in the expanding and proposed transnational communications network. They have emerging international roles which can be reinforced through wider transnational analysis and cooperation. They are:

Midlands/ North England

This area comprises the regional capitals of the Midlands and North of England. They have

some international functions, growing communications functions and capacity for expansion. The region lies at the crossroads of transnational communication corridors proposed for growth. Existing urban networks in the region are limited and there is considerable competition among the cities. Cooperation is needed to coordinate the development of transnational functions and connections, and to consider the role that the region could play in relationship to other cities and gateways in the Island zone and Open Zone.

Brussels and Lille

Brussels is already a major political centre, and forms the pivotal point in the Central Belgian Urban Network, linking the Flemish Diamond with a network of towns in Wallonia. Lille is much smaller but is a very significant node on the expanding transnational communications network. The whole area lies at an important communications crossroad. These two cities are well placed to attract global investment and development. In the case of Brussels this can be linked to the growth of the Central Belgian Urban Network. Cooperation across the wider Brussels-Lille region may be needed to consider how the existing networks of towns and cities will develop as a major international centre. Consideration needs to be given to the linkages with the industrial belt across Belgium and France and the impacts of growth in this region for the MHAL network, which could develop bridging functions between the Brussels and Lille region and the Rhine-Ruhr area.

Saar-Lor-Lux

This region is well positioned in the expanding transnational transport network, and is at the crossroads of proposed enhanced communication axes. Cooperation is well established among the cities, and could be expanded to the transnational level. There are already high level functions located in the area which could provide a focus for developing a stronger international economic role. Growth needs to be coordinated to take advantage of the further development of nodes along the development corridors.

Actions: implementing the Spatial Vision

This section looks at ways of carrying forward the Spatial Vision.

■ Strengthening cooperation

Many of the issues identified in the Vision suggest that certain steps can be taken immediately. Whilst these steps might begin with studies, as in some of the suggestions below, there will be an increasing need for tangible results in the form of at least partial implementation of action plans. Future work on transnational planning and Interreg IIIb should address this.

The Vision challenges and agenda explain the priority topics on which further cooperation is needed. On many of these topics effective cooperation is already underway through Interreg IIc projects. The outcomes from these will be valuable in any continuation of the Vision process. For these projects, the Vision's comprehensive and long term perspective should assist in a systematic review of the outcomes and value of existing partnerships and how they may be taken forward. In particular it will suggest new directions that the partnerships and project objectives may take, in some cases beyond the existing project or programme area.

The Vision agenda should also be an important stimulus and reference for the creation of new cooperation partnerships and topics. National and regional governments need to be active to ensure that these issues are addressed by partners representing all relevant interests. These might include:

- planning authorities at the national and regional level;
- private sector decision makers who influence spatial development;
- non-governmental organisations with an interest in spatial development;
- partners working on other cross-border and inter-regional cooperation;
- experts engaged in research on spatial development at this scale;
- the institutions of the European Union and Council of Europe.

All actors need to consider how they can cooperate with others at the transnational level.

The Vision does not set out to establish particular priorities or measures for the next programme, but the Vision diagram and proposals should provoke some project ideas. Some suggestions that might be taken up are given below. It is expected that the debate on the Vision will bring out many more.

Examples of possible projects that apply to the whole of north-west Europe

- The formulation of a strategic framework and action plan on the positive transformation of the network of old industrial landscapes into a new major transnational ecological corridor. The emphasis should be on the old industrial belts, for example the main one running from central England through northern France and Belgium and into the east.

Discussion

Cooperation through the Spatial Vision process has certainly confirmed that there are critical spatial development issues that operate at the transnational level of north-west Europe. Current trends at this scale are not sustainable. There is a need to extend participation in cooperation both sectorally and geographically, and to improve understanding about the trends and their consequences. But there is also a need to move from understanding to action so as to turn around the most critical trends. How can this be done?

- A transnational study among national and regional governments and providers of energy on the spatial development implications of changes in the energy market. The study would consider the effect of the liberalisation of energy markets; the trend to more renewable energy sources and how it can be accelerated.
- The creation of a 'transnational institutional compact' (agreement) on the contribution of spatial planning to water management for major river catchments. The compact would be negotiated among all the relevant planning authorities and water management commissions, and set out and agreed code with obligations to apply to all partners.

Examples of possible projects to be taken up within the co-operation zones

- The creation of a spatial development network of the global cities and gateways in the Central Zone. The objective of the network would be to reach agreements aimed at the promotion of complementary functions and mitigation of counterproductive effects of competition. The scope of the network might cover global economic, cultural and gateway functions by air, sea, information and communications technology.
- The formulation of a strategic green plan for the Central Zone. The plan would address the problem of pressure on environmental capacities. It would review the locations where environmental capacity is exceeded ('hot spots') through agriculture, traffic or recreational uses, and where there is surplus capacity. The plan would make proposals for redressing the balance through joint measures on protection in certain locations and provision of recreational infrastructure in others, so as to manage and balance the demand on the environment.
- Establishing a strategy and programme for the revitalisation of medium sized towns in the Open Zone, focusing on the potential of improved transnational cooperation with strategic centres in the Island Zone. The project would examine the ways in which connections among towns could help to maintain levels of services and to find opportunities for economies of scale, through various mechanisms including communications technology.

Discussion

The transnational dimension of natural and cultural assets of north-west Europe is self-evident. They do not respect national and regional borders. But how can transnational cooperation assist in ensuring that they are properly managed and enhanced for their own sake and to the benefit of north west Europe as a whole?

Examples of projects related to the idea of counterweight global centres

- Undertaking a feasibility study into the development of the three potential new global centres through enhancing their international gateway and economic functions. The transnational significance of this issue would require collaboration on this project among the counterweight centres and the global cities network.
- Development of spatial development networks among the cities within and between the three counterweight zones. The extent of cooperation within the zones varies. The project should aim to establish appropriate institutional arrangements within each zone and between them.

Examples of possible projects related to the transnational development corridors and axes.

- Preparation of a strategic investment plan and associated transnational spatial development strategy for the three bypass routes. The project would establish both investment needs across the full route including such matters as short sea shipping facilities, and how these might be met through cooperative action.
- Production of management plans for the strong development corridors to ensure their most efficient and effective use. The management plans would integrate policies on the logistics of the network, linkages to secondary networks and potential and priorities for spatial development. The development plans may be linked to new informal institutional arrangements or 'Eurocorridor Commissions' involving all relevant interests.

■ Making future transnational cooperation easier

The capacity of countries and regions to engage in transnational cooperation varies considerably. With few exceptions, knowledge across the region about the transnational dimension of spatial development is weak. Some national and regional governments have considered the transnational implications of spatial development trends in their planning processes, and others have not. There needs to be explicit consideration of this in all national and regional planning instruments.

Some countries also need to make progress on strengthening planning institutions and instruments so as to contribute at this level. It is recommended that the member states collectively undertake an audit of their capacity to address transnational planning issues and the information and data available to support this work. This should incorporate not only 'spatial planning policy' but also policies in the environment, transport, agricultural and regional policy sectors.

The audit should look at how far the transnational implications of trends and policies is understood; the adequacy of the information available; compatibility of data among the countries and regions; the existence of institutional arrangements for collaboration; and the existence of joint instruments.

■ Next phase

This first phase of cooperation on the Vision process has been about identifying the main issues where transnational cooperation could be worthwhile. The Spatial Vision Group has provided a valuable forum for discussing long term and comprehensive spatial development trends and goals, and thus has contributed to the creation of the operational programme for Interreg IIIb. There has also been cooperation with the projects sponsored under Interreg IIc, but only a small number had reached a stage where the conclusions could influence this document.

The Spatial Vision Group recommend that this informal cooperation continues so as to allow for the further elaboration of the Spatial Vision with a wide range of interests, to draw together the findings from the Interreg IIc projects, and to provide a focus for the new projects under Interreg IIIb.

It is important that the ideas presented in this document are tested through cooperation in three ways - with experts in the field; with other interest groups who will be involved in actions, and with politicians. The Spatial Vision Group have four specific proposals.

- To present the Spatial Vision to national and regional governments, and invite them to undertake consultation on the Vision Agenda with relevant interests within their jurisdictions.
- To present the Spatial Vision to organisations at the European level representing private sector and voluntary sector interests and the other transnational cooperation regions through seminars, and invite their comments.
- To formally present the Vision to the European institutions with a view to informing Community policy and initiatives, and to invite their comments.
- To establish an informal group on the Vision for north-west Europe comprising government representatives together with private sector interested parties and non-governmental organisations. The informal contact group would consider the responses to the Vision Agenda and make proposals for its further elaboration.

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