

NEW SKILLS FOR NEW JOBS? CHALLENGES IN ACCESSING THE LABOUR MARKET FOR MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES IN NORTH DUBLIN*

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Abstract

This paper examines structural challenges for people from marginalised communities in accessing the labour market. It is a reflection on the Irish situation and uses a case study area in north Dublin to illustrate the barriers to the integration of low-skilled local people into the labour market. It highlights two sets of groupings with low skills: those whose skill levels do not match the employment needs of local/regional economic growth sectors and those who cannot compete in an increasingly specialised and demanding labour market environment. Learning from the work of one Local Development Company in north Dublin, Northside Partnership, suggests that the provision and access of personal development, training and employment opportunities for low-skilled individuals requires a concerted local multi-stakeholder area-based response that links the local implementation of actions with national level policy priorities.

Keywords:

Labour market participation, structural disadvantage, low-skilled workforce, local development, area-based response.

* The opinions expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and not those of the Northside Partnership.

Introduction

Shifting global economic forces, technological advancements and increasing global competition from both traditional competitors and emerging economies increased pressure among trading nations to develop and build on their comparative advantages. In particular the introduction of new technologies in the production of services and manufactured products represent challenges for education and employment policies. Governments recognised the need to reconcile the emerging mismatch between the demand and supply of skills through re-training and up-skilling the labour force in an effort to secure economic stability and stimulate growth¹. Coping with these challenges means that people are increasingly expected to adapt to the skills needs of the economy, the resulting changes in the work place and in the production of services and goods technology. The newly coined term *mobication* illustrates the need to have coordination of labour market and education policies to ensure that competitive and dynamic economic environments exist (Andersen, Lubanski & Pedersen, 2011). The dynamics of employment, economic development and migration have resulted in a new set of needs in both education and employment policy development. In this environment it is vital that tomorrow's employment policies create the conditions for labour market mobility through lifelong education of the individual.

In this paper we will look at the difficulties faced by individuals from disadvantaged communities in accessing the labour market by means of a suburban case study area in north Dublin. These challenges are based on a review of local research and from the experiences of the work of a Local Development Company (hereafter LDC), Northside Partnership. This company was established in 1991 to address the issue of long-term unemployment and social exclusion in of the suburban areas of north Dublin. The LDC in north Dublin went about tackling this seemingly immutable problem in the early 1990s through the development of local education and labour-market interventions. Large parts of the area are characterised by limited access to quality public services and community, retail and social facilities. Often these facilities are of a different standard, and offer different product than those in more affluent neighbourhoods (NSP, 2011).

Poor areas suffer particularly if they do not have an economic core as exemplified by the situation in the north Dublin case study area. Even though they are located beside or near industrial estates and a number of local activation programmes that are aimed at ameliorating long-term unemployment and progressing people from a low income background into training, education and work, structural challenges act as barriers for the progression of people. Local people cannot find local jobs as their educational attainment and skill levels do not match local employer's needs and there is no overall design or national strategy in place that links employment opportunities with the needs of people who experience such circumstances. The economic collapse of the Irish economy in 2008 has exacerbated the situation for low-skilled job seekers from marginalised communities, particularly for those who have not progressed into employment during the period of economic growth and near full employment² who had previously been distant to the labour market and could not be placed into employment. Now, this cohort of people competes for a smaller pool of jobs with hundreds of thousands of skilled and semi-skilled workers with work experience who were made redundant since 2008 (Table 1, next section).

1 An example is the *ICT Action Plan - Meeting the high-level skills needs of enterprise in Ireland* that was published by the Department of Education and Skills in 2011. The report identifies Information Communications Technology (ICT) as an important growth sector for Ireland whose supply of experts, however, is dependent on internal migration. The action plan sets out to secure a domestic supply of professionals by means of up-skilling (short term) and build up a pool of skilled graduates based on collaboration among government departments, state agencies, the education sector and industry. *Pathways to Work* highlights the provision of conversion courses "to upskill/reskill unemployed people to meet skills shortages in new and emerging sectors. One example in this area is the range of new graduate ICT skills conversion programmes being rolled out from March 2012" (Government of Ireland, 2012 p. 17).

2 In 2007, unemployment was at 4.4 per cent (Table 1, next section).

The Irish Context

In order to understand the local aspects and challenges of labour-market interventions targeted at increasing access to jobs from marginalised communities in north Dublin, it is critical to provide a short synopsis of the national situation that impacted on the labour market since the economic downturn in late 2008. This section will, therefore, illustrate the current wider economic and labour market context within which local initiatives that aspire to progress low-skilled people into employment are embedded.

Looking back, during the boom-era of the Celtic Tiger the Irish Government missed an opportunity to address the more structural aspects of job creation for, and up-skilling of, the low-skilled segments of the labour market. Public finances were in order, fiscal income was high, unemployment low as Ireland had “experienced a spectacular increase in living standards and employment” (Kirby 2010 p. 45). Prior to the economic crisis in 2008, the societal costs of supporting those most distant to labour market via welfare transfers could be carried by Irish society and were of no great concern to the government of the day. Moreover, the administration of welfare was passive and lax toward fraud (NESC, 2011 p. 51). Indeed, as the intervention of the IMF / ECB / EC Troika³ highlighted, the state’s policy had exacerbated many of the problems now experienced in the Irish labour market, through overly generous welfare payments which were not targeted or supported by appropriate labour market interventions⁴.

When the housing bubble burst in late 2008, Ireland’s economy went into recession. The then government had banked on construction and physical infrastructure as key drivers for domestic growth, which also provided job opportunities for low-skilled segments of the labour force as well as ensuring there were very significant fiscal returns to the state. The economic collapse had severe effects on the domestic labour market. 261,000 jobs were lost in the Irish Economy between 2008 and 2010, the majority in the area of construction, manufacturing, retail and related but often high-skilled professions. About one quarter of the Irish GDP was generated in the construction sector and one in eight employees worked in the sector (Kirby, 2010 p. 48). The unemployment rate in Ireland more than trebled within 19 months, from 4.5 per cent in September 2008 to 13.6 per cent in April 2010 and was at 14.7 per cent in March 2012 (CSO, 2012c).

3 In the context of the current economic crisis, the term Troika is used for the three organisations – the European Commission (EC), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the European Central Bank (ECB) – that organised the loans to European states whose banking systems had to be secured from collapse: Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain. The Troika also monitors the implementation of agreed measures in the states that received loans.

4 Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton, TD, speaking at a seminar she organised on Social Protection on 3 March 2012 indicated that the Troika had homed in on a number of welfare payments, including the high level of unemployment benefits and the lack of a proactive approach to getting people of welfare.

Table 1: Changes in Irish Unemployment 2007 to 2012

May	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Unemployed %	4.4	4.8	9.3	12.9	14.2	14.7
Employed (Jan) '000	2,088	2,124	1,965	1,857	1,804	1,786

Source: CSO Quarterly National Household Survey (CSO, 2012c).

As the crisis unfolded, tax income plummeted, a considerable number of households were forced to default on their mortgages, welfare expenditure increased and emigration soared⁵. The banking system faced collapse and was saved by the state through a bank guarantee and, eventually, a nationalisation of the banks. A massive hole appeared in the State's budget with a reduction of taxation intake from just short of €56 billion to €33 billion in a year, with little immediate reduction in expenditure from €60 billion (Department of Finance, 2012). With the need to stabilise the banking system and to address an unsustainable fiscal budgetary position, the Irish state became highly exposed as it could not access capital on the international markets at interest rates that were tolerable. In November 2010, Ireland was bailed out by a troika consisting of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) the European Central Bank (ECB) and the European Commission (EC). Following the rescue intervention, the Irish Government introduced a series of austerity measures with a view to improving domestic finances and progressing the recapitalisation of the banking system. This resulted in a dramatic contraction of private and public sectors. The collapse in government taxation receipts required the reduction of public service, public sector redundancies/early retirements, public and private sector wage reductions, the increase of and introduction of new taxes and charges for services, as well as reducing government expenditure which in turn led to further contractions of the economy⁶. The disposable income of private households was reduced dramatically. Those who were left with disposable incomes reduced borrowing and turned to saving rather than spending money on consumer goods. This set of actions and reactions had a dramatic dampening effect on domestic demand resulting in negative economic growth (ESRI 2012). Ireland went through a period of two years of deflation and contracting retail expenditure (CSOa, 2012).

Between 2008 and 2011, employment in the public sector was reduced by 35,000 (8.2 per cent) and the number of employees in the private decreased by 154,900 (12.0 per cent). The unemployment rate stabilised on a high plateau of over 14 per cent and the number of long-term unemployed reached 182,100 at the end of 2011, which was 60.3 per cent of the total unemployment figure. The corresponding figures for 2009 and 2010 were 51.5 and 33.3 per cent respectively (CSO, 2012a). The numbers of people on the live register started to stabilise in 2011 holding into 2012. Youth unemployment of about 30 per cent (80,000) and increasing emigration⁷, especially among the young well-educated, nourishes notions of the lost generation (Irish Times, 19 May 2012).

5 The CSO (2011) reported that between April 2010 and April 2011 40,200 Irish people emigrated.

6 As part of the agreement with the Troika and the need to restructure public finances a series of four budgets delivering 15 billion budgetary corrections with a mix of tax increases and public expenditure reductions was established in *The National Recovery Plan 2011- 2014*. This was to deliver a reduction of 24,750 public servants by 2014. In addition, these reductions in staff numbers were accompanied by reductions in pay rates and increases in the contributions made to pension by all staff members at different graduated levels. These changes were agreed by the Government and various public sector bodies with the Public Sector Trade Unions under the Public Service Agreement 2010, more commonly known as the Croke Park Agreement (Department of Public Sector Reform, 2012).

7 See footnote 3 above.

Though job losses continued new jobs were being announced and created, particularly in the first half of 2012. These included Pay Pal (1,000 in Dundalk) BSkyB (800 in Dublin) Eli Lilly (500 in Cork) Abbot (175 in Sligo) HP (280 in Galway and Kildare) Allergan (200 in Mayo) Mastercard (130 in Dublin) (IDA Ireland, April 2012). Individuals who had lost their jobs in key sectors (construction, retail and other related service sector areas) make up large portions of the new long-term unemployed⁸. In terms of the skill levels, these individuals differ from those who already were long-term unemployed prior to the economic crisis and the collapse of the construction sector and related industries and services. During the economic boom between the mid-1990s and 2008, a large part of low-skilled long-term unemployed found work in the construction sector and related economic activities. These workers who were not up-skilled to a significant level are not likely to find a similar job in the same sector in Ireland in the near future.

The Irish labour market system did not seek to challenge those who were on the live register or who had been on illness benefit or in receipt of other welfare transfers for a prolonged period of time. Labour market activation and social policies of the governments between 1997 and 2011 did not sufficiently focus on supporting and incentivising those who have been considered most distant from the labour market (NESC, 2011). The integration of those low-skilled who recently lost their jobs and those who are part of the cohort of largely disengaged individuals who have not worked during the boom have little hope to find work. This is a huge challenge.

Following the intervention of the Troika⁹, these policies are now changing: a more active interventionist approach is being pursued as mirrored in the greater role for the Department of Social Protection (Social Welfare) (e.g. in the provision of labour market interventions such as Tús and the introduction of a new policy *Pathways to Employment* (see below).

With declining domestic demand for goods and services (Department of Finance, 2012), Ireland's economic growth is largely dependent on the performance of its export sector, which grew during 2011 and the first quarter of 2012 but is performing behind expectations (Irish Times, 02 May 2012). Currently, the Irish export sector is dependent on trade with the US and the European Union, which in 2011 accounted for 65.4 per cent of the value of Irish exports and the UK which accounted for a further 15.6 per cent (CSO, 2012b). Ireland is a small open economy and attracts considerable Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from in the areas of high-end manufacturing in IT, electronics, pharmaceuticals, biotechnology and related research and development activities. Ireland's main comparative advantage over its European competitors is a young, educated, English speaking workforce and a low corporate tax regime and Ireland is perceived by investors and transnational corporations (TNCs) as bridge head to the markets in the market and the euro zone and provides the European headquarters for a number of FDI companies such as Google, IBM, Intel, Facebook and Pfizer. Barry O'Leary (2012), CEO of the Industrial Development Authority (IDA), considers Ireland "a magnet for multinationals".

The economic growth areas require highly skilled professionals and the demand for (often multi-lingual) technicians, engineers, scientists and managers is increasing and Ireland has skill shortages in many areas such as electrical engineering, language skills and medical professionals, IT experts and financial experts as well as "niche area expertise" (FÁS, 2011 p. 3). Initiatives like *The Green Way* in north Dublin seek to develop a comparative advantage in

8 About 205,000 people lost their job in the construction and retail sectors and make up a large proportion of those who are long-term unemployed and will be in the focus of government interventions (Government of Ireland, 2012 p. 11).

9 See footnote 2.

Cleantech Industries over other regions, both nationally and globally¹⁰. Success will be dependent on having access to specialist workers and 3rd level graduates, particularly with a science and IT background, though not exclusively from these disciplines. The Greentech sector will, for example, provide scope for employment in traditional trades like carpenters, plumbers and pipefitters or sheet metal workers¹¹. Accessing jobs in these markets poses great difficulties for those who have the wrong skill set, and particularly for those who have poorly developed educational standards.

Some Reactions and Responses

Public discussion and commentators in the Irish media regularly refer to ‘Taxpayer’s Money’ that is being spent on costly welfare transfers and on paying senior executives of state-owned organisations. There is a sentiment that social welfare recipients and unemployed people belong to a group of undeserving poor as they are not considered taxpayers and, therefore, are a financial burden for those who pay income tax (though, currently, even the cohort of unemployed highly-skilled professionals or ‘Have-been Taxpayers’ cannot find jobs) (INOUE, 2012). The issues of individual dignity, societal cohesion and empathy towards jobseekers have come to the fore and have been highlighted as area of concern by the Irish President, Michael D. Higgins (2011) and the NESC whose Report *Supports and Services for Unemployed Jobseekers* states that “it is not just some individuals on the Live Register who need to be ‘activated’ but Ireland’s entire organisational and policy framework for supporting unemployed jobseekers” (NESC, 2011 p.3).

Commentators propose the development of strategic investments and real job programmes (Sweeney, 2012), the provision of education programmes that are responsive to the anticipated skills needs and developments of the economy (Campbell, 2011), and the wise use of existing fiscal resources. The latter could be achieved by first targeting those people who are most likely to find jobs and where interventions are most likely to be cost-effective (Hamilton, 2011). This is especially so against the backdrop of the interplay between austerity measures, low levels of domestic demand, fiscal constraints and an increased demand for welfare transfers. It seems that following the 2010 bailout, the loss of economic sovereignty and severe austerity measures taken by the Irish Government rule out the development of traditional labour market interventions and job creation programmes.

The magnitude of the job crisis in Ireland and the fiscal constraints of the Irish government require labour market activation measures that reduce the level of long-term unemployment and, thus, focus on supporting those who recently lost their jobs. Interventions consist of actions directed at upskilling unemployed people, the provision of supports to older jobseekers, measures that facilitate access to employment for lone parents and the provision of apprenticeship training for young people or those who were made redundant. On 23 February 2012, the Irish Government launched *Pathways to Work*. The objective of the programme is “to get Ireland working again” (Government of Ireland, 2012 p. 5) by creating 100,000 new jobs up to 2016 and to prevent people from becoming long-term unemployed. Another goal is to move 75,000 people from welfare into work (Government of Ireland, 2012).

10 <http://www.thegreenway.ie> Accessed last on 5 May, 2012.

11 These examples are taken from a report on the Greentech sector in California (Economic Roundtable, 2006).

This will be based on a series of measures that are targeted at improving the quality of engagement with the unemployed, incentivising the take up of jobs through workfare-type interventions – such as the *National Employment Action Plan* and *Tús* (Appendix 1) – and encouraging employers to hire unemployed people¹².

Apart from existing labour market activation policies – as for example outlined in the 2005 NESC Report *The Developmental Welfare State* – penal measures and workfare interventions, *Pathways to Work* is complemented by a restructuring of the institutional statutory landscape providing employment services, training and education. One major change has been the closure of the National Training and Employment Authority (FÁS) and the re-allocation of its responsibilities, partly to the proposed new further education and training authority SOLAS (Seirbhísí Oideachais Leanunaigh agus Scileanna) (in late 2012), and partly to the Department of Social Protection. These changes were identified in *Towards Recovery, The Programme for Government 2011-2016* (2011).¹³ Other planned arrangements outlined in *Pathways to Work* indicate that the Irish government pursues a range of different complementary approaches. Proposed measures include contractual arrangements with private employment services, utilising expertise of local development companies (LDCs) via their link with the Local Employment Service Network, the development of targeted educational interventions and the better coordination of interdepartmental efforts in addressing unemployment.

The low-skills issue

In an environment where the distance to employment of large parts of the population increased, social welfare measures did not meet long-term interest of recipients – as people were ‘parked’ on welfare incomes – and relative poverty could rise during a time of unprecedented prosperity (Kirby, 2010), large segments of the labour force became disillusioned and hard-to-reach. A significant poverty cohort of people developed, that now poses a huge challenge in terms of coping with the economic restructuring and debt management. Finding meaningful jobs for those low-skilled, who are distant from the labour market in terms of their level of qualifications and skill sets, is difficult. It is even more challenging for those who have other impediments such as health related or other debilitating issues (e.g. recovering drug misusers¹⁴) and those who had not been successfully incentivised by the state or by themselves to up-skill or engage in job seeking (NESC, 2011). This is a mammoth task for the new Irish government that came into power in February 2011, particularly as it addresses a significant fiscal debt, a bank bailout and very high unemployment rates while reducing the size and structure of the public sector. Regarding the role of the state in integrating low-skilled and long-term unemployed people into the labour force a number of challenges arise:

Firstly, skilled construction workers, crafts persons, labourers and people who had worked in the retail sector represent a high share of the unemployed and are not likely to find similar jobs even though current government policies focus on preventing long-term unemployment (Government of Ireland, 2012). Finding new jobs for people who worked in a sector and in jobs that are not likely to be replaced in the near future presumes that they have the

12 *Pathways to Work* also proposes the introduction of a profiling system of those who are firstly signing on for the first time and secondly analysing those who are on the live register for a prolonged period of time. This profiling system, Probability of Exit (PEX), allows the Department of Social Protection to direct job seekers to obtain the most relevant level of intervention. This could range, depending on the circumstances of the unemployed person, from the provision of assistance with CV and job seeking skills (for those who are job ready) to more complex interventions in education, literacy and other appropriate social interventions (Department of Social Protection, 2012).

13 Legislation for the establishment of SOLAS has been promised by autumn 2012 and it is expected to be fully operational by the end of 2012 or early 2013. The role of this new body and how it will differ will become clearer in due course.

14 Other examples for groups that face barriers in finding work are those with a disability, ex-offenders, older people who were made redundant and find it difficult to upskill and/or find jobs, lone parents or Travellers.

right set of skills, motivation and a degree of mobility to move on to new jobs between sectors, with little intervention and support from the state. This surely holds true for some, not for others.

Secondly, people that are considered to have low skill levels do not fit into one consistent category. In terms of capacity and employability there are at least two broader groupings that need to be considered, each of which requires different interventions and different levels of support. On the one hand, there are unemployed people who have a set of skills and work experience and can find work within a short period of time, if there was work available. On the other hand, there are those who have additional limitations and complex needs and who require a series of more specific interventions from a variety of support services over a longer period of time. This, for example, includes young people who left school during the last few years and could not find either work, an apprenticeship or afford to access to third level education. Individuals from families affected by intergenerational unemployment or recovering drug misusers are even further distanced from the labour market and from participation in active society.

Thirdly, job opportunities for those who do not have the right skill set, who do not have a sufficiently high level of skills mobility and who are not even considered employable are getting even fewer in absolute numbers as the growth sectors are in the area of high-end production and specialist professions. Projected employment change for Ireland between 2008 and 2015 suggests that jobs for people with low skills generally are on the decline, even in growth sectors (FÁS, 2011; ESRI, 2012). In north Dublin, for example, one of such growth sectors is the area of transport and logistics where the potential for low-skill employment is declining due to technology change and the introduction of IT-based chain management systems that increasingly require specialist knowledge (O'Brien & Van Egeraat, 2009). Other promising areas for employment generation that are less depended on high-end jobs are the agri-food sector, catering services and some parts of tourism. Some of these could be strengthened and develop as auxiliary services to the high-tech growth sectors – for example by utilising local initiatives such as labour market interventions provided under the umbrella of local development companies.

This brings up to two questions:

- ▶ What implications does this have for the integration of people with the “wrong” skill sets into the labour market through innovative labour market activation measures and targeted educational interventions?
- ▶ What can be done locally to address and reduce the mismatch between local skills supply and regional labour market demand?

The new diversity of those individuals who are recently added to the lengthening list of the long-term unemployed brings about a new challenge. With many highly qualified people (e.g. recent graduates from third level education providers) now being long-term unemployed and with an increasing pressure to get people back into work fast, there are notions to use the resources more effectively by focusing on those who are more likely to find a job and need fewer (and less costly) interventions to get back into paid employment (Government of Ireland, 2012). The development of labour market interventions by local development companies whose key focus is on addressing long-term unemployment and the integration of those who are considered most distant from employment has become more difficult. Yet there is an imperative to stop an increase in long-term unemployment, to return the new long-term unemployed back into the labour force as quickly as possible and to address the large fiscal deficit that has been created.

The discussion on the progression of low-skilled unemployed persons into work, however, needs to be de-coupled from notions based on the economic utility of people. Instead, wider societal questions such as the spatial dimension of unemployment, personal dignity, poverty and other structural issues need to come to the centre of attention.

A case study from north Dublin serves to illustrate these aspects.

Case study area: the example of North Dublin

The case study area in north east Dublin has a population of approximately 127,000. The area stretches from the city suburbs to the northern fringe of the city (Appendix 4). The area is diverse regarding its socio-demographic profile and contains some of the most affluent and most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the country, often in close geographic proximity. This contrast is mirrored in the educational attainment levels, which are a good proxy indicator for social status and income.

The more affluent neighbourhoods are located along the coastline and in the city suburbs. In these areas, educational attainment levels are high, which is also reflected in the occupational profile of the area with high levels of people employed in managerial and specialist positions (see the CSO's *Census 2006 Report*). The poorer areas are on the northern periphery of the city, an area dominated by vast low-density social housing estates. These parts of the city are characterised by high levels of poverty, a dominance of people classified as skilled or semi-skilled workers (Gleeson *et al.*, 2009), a declining manufacturing sector, intergenerational unemployment, disengagement from political issues – as reflected in low participation rates in elections (Kavanagh *et al.*, 2004) – and low educational attainment levels (NSP, 2011). Concerning the potential of availing of employment opportunities, there is a mismatch between opportunities in economic growth sectors and the educational profile and socio-economic status of people in disadvantaged communities (Map 1 and Map 2).

Table 2: Decline of the manufacturing sector in the case study area in North Dublin

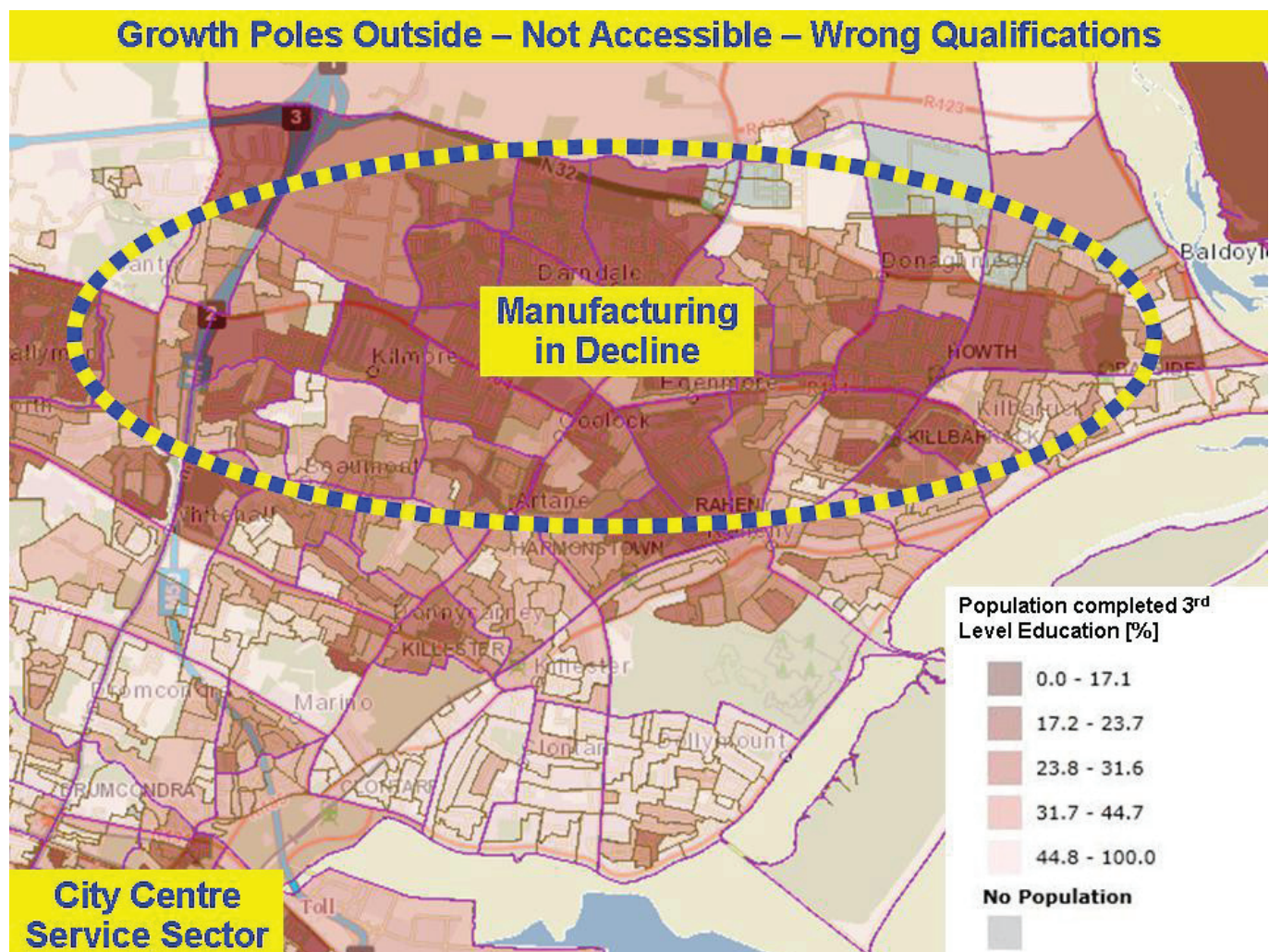
Year	Company affected	Jobs lost
1999	The US toy manufacturer <i>Little Tikes</i> closed its factory at the IDA estate in Clonsaugh with the loss of over 130 jobs. The manufacture of plastic toys for toddlers was relocated to England (Irish Times, 2 February 2000).	130
2001	US computer manufacturer <i>Gateway</i> closed its production in Dublin with 900 job losses and most of the workers employed by the company being from the Swords and Coolock areas of North Dublin.	900
2003	47 staff at Dublin-based <i>Saronix</i> , a US company that produced crystal clock oscillators for use in the telecoms and high-tech sectors lost their jobs when the company closed its operations. Reasons given for the closure were intentions to move parts of the production to China and the lack of demand the products (Irish Independent, 1 April 2003).	47
2005	The <i>Tayto</i> production plant in Coolock closed, with the loss of 98 production jobs.	98
2006	<i>Cadbury</i> in Coolock announced that the company planned to downsize its operation by reducing staff numbers by 450 (from 1,500 to 1050 over a 3-year period).	450
2007	<i>Chivers</i> in Coolock ceased its operations with the loss of 59 jobs.	59
2009	<i>Smurfit Kappa Cartons</i> , a company producing folding cartons for the healthcare and hi-tech industries closed its plant in Coolock with the loss of 140 jobs.	140
2009	The closure of <i>SR Technics</i> (handling aircraft and component maintenance) at Dublin Airport with a loss of over 1,100 jobs.	1,100
Since 2008	Closures of over 200 small businesses and self-employed people in the construction sector since 2008 had a devastating impact on employment and on families in the Partnership area (NorDubCo and the LES Network, 2010).	200+

Source: NSP (2011)

In particular, in the northern suburbs of the case study area are mainly dependent on employment in the remaining local retail and manufacturing sector, which has been on the decline since the late 1990s with no increase in or creation of alternative employment (Table 2). Also, access to job opportunities in business parks and retail and office locations outside the area is quite limited for many neighbourhoods as a result of poor public transport connecting communities with places of work and education (Map 1 and Map 3).

This reduction in local employment has been further fuelled by a series of company closures following the 2008 economic crisis¹⁵. The main reasons for closures were, firstly, global pressures on the Irish manufacturing sector, resulting in outsourcing operations into more competitive markets or countries with lower production costs (mainly in the Far East and Eastern Europe) and, secondly, the global economic crisis that started in 2008. These developments illustrate the adverse effects of global economic pressures and the economic downturn on the local manufacturing sector in Ireland. The case study area in north Dublin has been dramatically affected by these developments; and the development of the service sector in the area did not compensate for the job losses that occurred in the manufacturing sector.

Map 1: Educational attainment and job opportunities in North Dublin



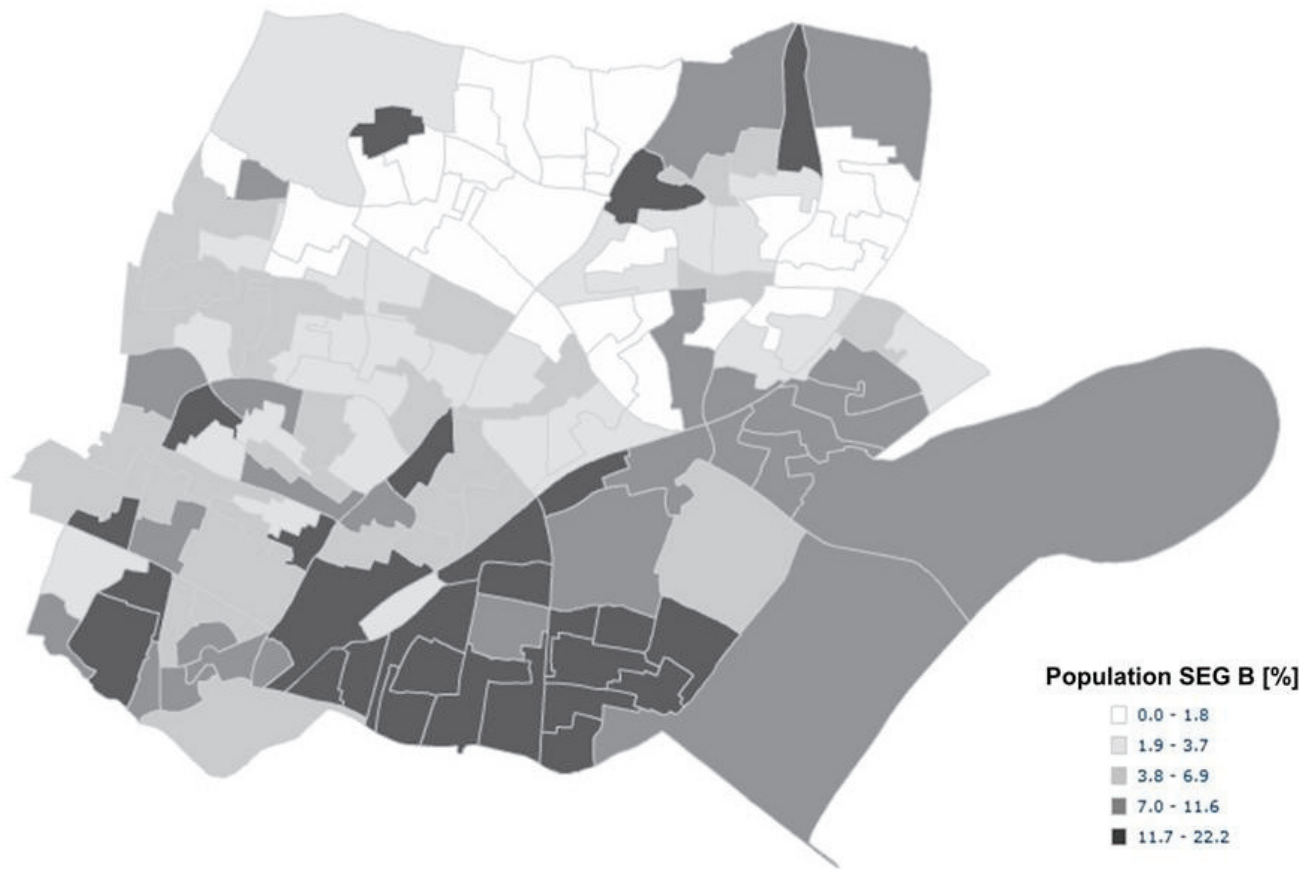
Source: Based on NSP (2011)

A study carried out in 2009 by the National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA) on behalf of the North Dublin Development Coalition (NorDubCo) pointed out an increasing importance and growth potential of the logistics, pharmaceutical and the biotechnology sector in the north Dublin region. The study points out that "Due to these developments, the study area and the GDA [Greater Dublin Area] are well endowed with strategic sites and other

¹⁵ The 2010 merger between Cadbury and Kraft Foods is expected to result in further redundancies in the local Cadbury production plant in Coolock (NSP 2011).

suitably developed sites, notably at Grangecastle, Adamstown, *Clonshaugh* [Industrial Estate], and *Coolock* [Malahide Rd] *Industrial Estate* (O'Byrne & Van Egeraat, 2009 p. 26)¹⁶. These industries, however, require mostly a highly qualified workforce with third level education (to a lesser extent in the Logistics and Transport Sector though, with some exceptions). The educational profile and professional status of people in disadvantaged areas in the north Dublin case study area indicates that only few people from these areas would be in a position to access jobs in those sectors¹⁷.

Map 2: Socio-economic Group B (SEG B)¹⁸: Higher Professional (2006)



This map provides complementary evidence to data portrayed in Maps 1 and 3. The above map shows that areas with a below average representation of people with 3rd level education (Map 1) also have a lower share of among the group of Higher Professionals, namely below 3.7 per cent. Areas with high educational attainment levels score between 11.7 and 22.2 per cent. The travel-to-work patterns portrayed in Map 3 support the view that low-skilled people in the northern suburbs of Dublin have a lower geographic mobility and less access to well-paid jobs than individuals than career opportunities.

Source of map: http://www.ildn.ie/private/Mapping/Northside_EAs/atlas.html, accessed on 15 June 2012.

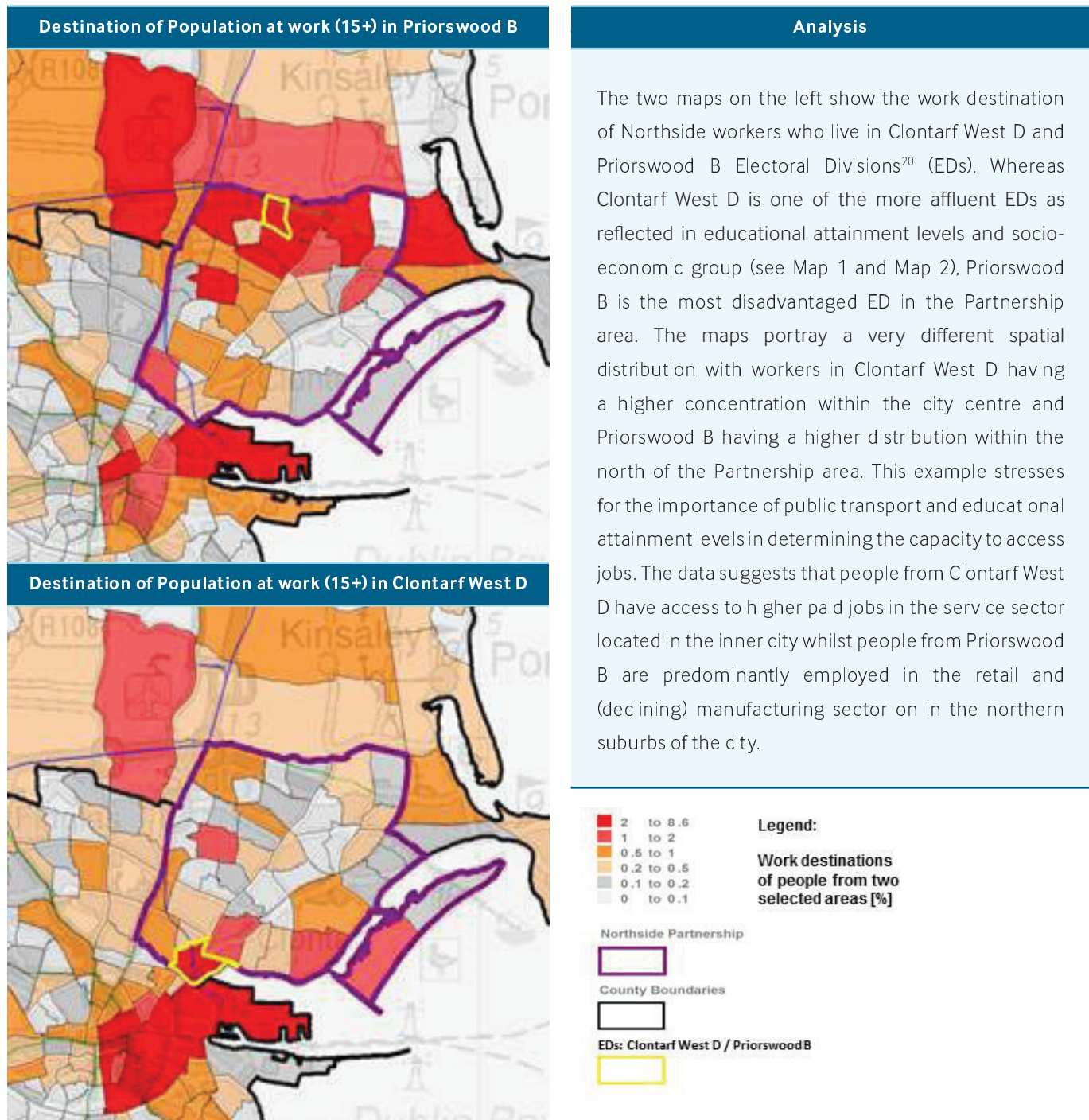
¹⁶ Estates highlighted are located in the case study area.

¹⁷ Traditional working class areas alongside the main orbital roads transecting the northern part of case study area from east to west show below average figures for socio-demographic indicators with some neighbourhoods being classified the most disadvantaged areas in the country (NSP, 2011; <http://maps.pobal.ie/#/Map> accessed on 25 April 2011). This suggests that these are 'low income areas'—especially if compared with the more middle class neighbourhoods in the eastern and southern part of the case study area.

¹⁸ The classification aims to bring together persons (aged 15 or older) with similar social and economic statuses on the basis of the level of skill or educational attainment required. The socio-economic groups used in the census are as follows: **A** Employers and managers / **B** Higher professional / **C** Lower professional / **D** Non-manual / **E** Manual skilled / **F** Semi-skilled / **G** Unskilled / **H** Own account workers / **I** Farmers / **J** Agricultural workers / **Z** All others gainfully occupied and unknown.

Map 3: Analysis of the POWCAR data¹⁹ set for two neighbourhoods

This data set links the residential address with the workplace address (CSO 2006) for two EDs in the Partnership area and thereby illustrates travel to work patterns. It illustrates the different destinations for work comparing an affluent and a disadvantaged area.



Source of maps: Gleeson et al. (2009) *New Ways of Mapping Social Inclusion in Dublin City*. NIRSA, Maynooth.

19 Place of Work - Census of Anonymised Records (POWCAR). Using the POWCAR (2006) dataset it is possible to show the percentage of the workforce within an ED that commute to a specific destination. The POWCAR dataset is an origin-destination matrix of all those employed in 2006 and contains detailed information on residence of worker and destination of worker (<http://airo.nuim.ie/category/keywords/powcar>, accessed on 15 June 2012).

20 Electoral Divisions (EDs) are the smallest legally defined administrative areas in the State for which Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) are published from the Census. There are 3,440 legally defined EDs in the State (http://census.cso.ie/censusasp/saps/boundaries/eds_bound.htm, accessed on 15 June 2012).

For example, only up to 17.1 per cent of the population has completed third level education in some of the northern suburbs; in contrast, the more affluent neighbourhoods in the large parts of the Dublin have completion rates of over 44.8 per cent. Map 1 illustrates spatially pronounced disparities concerning educational attainment levels in the case study area. Another indicator highlighting disparities in the case study area is the differentiation of the population by socio-economic group (Map 2). The illustration of travel-to-work destinations for the population for two selected neighbourhoods (Map 3) suggest that educational attainment and social class are main factors in determining sectoral employment and associated income opportunities.

Role for area-based responses

Having discussed the structural challenges concerning the integration of low-skilled people into the labour market, what contribution could local initiatives, and particularly local development companies (LDCs), make towards the development of an employment strategy?

In OECD countries, a myriad of local initiatives and pilot projects emphasise the spatial dimension of economic development and learning from these cases suggests that local solutions involving multi-stakeholder partnerships are, to a certain degree, capable of generating remedial effects and, potentially, can create models that could inform the development of national responses to the economic crises and the issue of long-term unemployment (OECD, 2010a/b)²¹. At the same time, the learning from local initiatives shows that wider structural forces and interest are powerful and that the utilisation of local assets and the formation of local alliances depend on structured support and the creation of a favourable framework by the state. Past experience (OECD, 1996; OECD, 2001; Lee, 2006; Borscheid, 2007), and current initiatives suggest that the Irish model of LDCs is viewed as a potentially successful model for the delivery of local benefits for marginalised communities in collaboration with partners from the state, employers, trade unions, public representatives and the local community. In 2011, for example, the European Commission launched the PARES (Partnership between Employment Services) Initiative, which highlights the need for intersectoral collaboration between the public, private and third (not-for-profit) sector with a view to complementing one another sectors' strengths for a concerted approach to tackling the issue of long-term unemployment. The initiative is progressed by partners from EU member countries representing all three sectors (European Commission, 2011).

In OECD countries, LDC-type initiatives play an important role in supporting marginalised communities. They generally deploy area-based strategies that assist individuals in progressing into education, employment and participating in society in a more productive and active way. This includes a range of activities such as linking individuals into quality and appropriate training, ensuring children attend school and progress as far as possible and enhancing bottom-up participation in civil society so as to create a changed future for disadvantaged communities (OECD, 2001; OECD, 2010a).

In Ireland, LDCs work to assist communities take more control over their own futures and to deliver services that are appropriate for them. In the north Dublin case study area, Northside Partnership has been playing a central role in the implementation of these initiatives. This LDC has worked on the principle that having a job is the best way

21 The OECD publication gives examples of national labour market interventions and schemes with a local dimension and specific local and regional schemes. These include the running of WorkSource Centres connecting students to jobs and further education (Los Angeles, United States), up skilling unemployed people with IT skills (Vukovar, Croatia), providing a scheme which offers contingency plans for apprentices that were made redundant in the economic downturn so they can complete their education (Northern Ireland), career development paths for people aged 50 and older (Flanders, Belgium) and supporting unemployed people in becoming self-employed (Ballyhoura, Ireland) (OECD, 2011 p. 8-12).

of overcoming poverty. Large parts of the case study area have been designated as severely disadvantaged²² and have been subject to targeted multi-stakeholder interventions²³. Northside Partnership works in collaboration with various bodies from the private, public and community sectors, to ensure that individuals receive quality training and education opportunities, eventually leading to employment. Targeted recruitment for local employers, the assistance of individuals to become self-employed and set up their own enterprise, the establishment of a social enterprise, or targeted training for unemployed youth (Irish Times, 19/05/2012) are just a few examples of this work. The north Dublin LDC has established one social enterprise company itself in the early 1990s, Speedpak, to increase the employability of 'the hard-to-reach' (Appendix 1). In the main, local initiatives have been geared towards progressing low-skilled and/or people from low income families into training, education or employment who previously did not engage with the state or who were not previously ready for progression²⁴.

A number of key challenges in the area have been identified in progressing people with relatively low skill levels into employment:

- ▶ A local culture of dependency on state support and state-funded services and poverty traps that disincentivise people to actively engage in activation measures and pursue job opportunities (NSP, November 2004; NESC, 2011);
- ▶ A poorly designed and serviced public transport network that limit accessibility of neighbourhoods in north Dublin to clusters of jobs and places of economic activity;
- ▶ The declining economic competitiveness of more traditional local manufacturing sites;
- ▶ The quality of the gap between local skill levels and those skill sets required by employers in the main regional growth industries: the transport and logistics sector, the high-end activities in biotechnology and pharmaceutical development and production (O'Byrne & Van Egeraat, 2009) and the Greentech Sector;
- ▶ The increasing number of highly-skilled individuals on the life register competing for jobs traditionally associated with low skill levels;
- ▶ A need for the development of cross-sectoral capacity between government departments to agree on overlapping policy priorities and an intermediate coordination mechanism that oversees the local implementation of national policies and that functions as a transmission belt between the local and the national level.

Against the backdrop of the above area-based programmes in north Dublin and the national objectives of the new government programme, *Pathways to Work*, it is worth exploring how the experience of local initiatives that have been working towards the integration of low-skilled into jobs can be brought together. Notwithstanding a clear priority of current policies on working towards fiscal stability on preventing people from becoming long-term unemployed, addressing the needs of those who have less sought after skill sets and opportunities is part of the national activation agenda.

22 Areas were designated for targeted investments and associated interventions by LDCs based on the *Irish Index of Relative Affluence and Deprivation* that is a composite measure. It is calculated by means of a complex statistical procedure (Confirmatory Factor Analysis) involving a number of socio-economic variables and demographic data (Haase, 1999; Haase and Pratschke, 2008)).

23 This [multi-stakeholder model] is mirrored at two levels: firstly, the board consists of representatives of the state sector (social protection, health, employment, probation services), local government (officials and elected representatives), the social partners (employers, trade union representatives and representatives from the Environmental Pillar) and the community sector (elected representatives from community-based organisations); secondly, the programmes and measures are funded and run in collaboration with partners from the private sector, international funders, the state, the educational institutions and the community and voluntary sector. Appendix 3 provides a visualisation of the complexity of relationships for Northside Partnership.

24 The impact of these initiatives in the case study area for 2011 is illustrated in Appendix 2.

Conclusion

Ireland has been strongly promoting education and, as a result, has a well-educated work force and a favourable demographic structure. Highly-educated job seekers and university graduates cannot, however, find jobs in Ireland in the current economic climate. At the same time, there is recognition that a sizeable segment of the labour force does not have skill sets that match the current and future labour market requirements in the economic growth sectors.

Creating meaningful job opportunities and realistic interventions for up-skilling low-skilled people requires a long-term strategy that must take into account and cater for differences within the segment of the labour market that falls into the category 'low-skilled'.

Measures also need to be cognisant of a spatial dimension. From the perspective of member states of the European Union, acknowledging the effect of global economic forces and the state of flux concerning economic power balances and their impact on the development potential of nations and regions, a strategy addressing the job creation for the unskilled or under-skilled needs go beyond the short-term needs of the economy. Already, a number of promising pilot projects exist in OECD countries, providing local solutions and approaches of "what works" locally (OECD, 2010a) – though often governance mechanisms translating learning from these initiatives into the sphere of political decision-making seem to be lacking or poorly developed. The NESC point out, "It is hugely important that the policy system enhances its knowledge and understanding of what works, what does not, and how policy design and delivery can be improved in a manner that generates positive outcomes for both clients and the state" (NESC, 2011 p. 5).

The case study from north Dublin serves to highlight local realities, the complementary role LDCs play in supporting job seekers and, more generally, the importance of the spatial dimension to the issue of unemployment²⁵.

The developments in north Dublin stress:

- ▶ That national labour market activation policies cannot succeed in increasing the scope for low-skilled people to find and access work if they do not take into account the potentially hampering effect of deeply embedded wider structural issues;
- ▶ That statutory activation programmes based on incentivisation and workfare work better if access to meaningful jobs, training opportunities and a collaboration of a number of policy arenas – involving a range of actors such as training and education providers, NGOs and social partners – can be achieved locally.

²⁵ The role played by Local Development Companies in this field is subject to change. The Programme for Government (2011) indicates that alignment will take place between Local Development and Local Government. It is clear from the Programme and from Statements from the Minister Phil Hogan TD, that Local Government will be reformed and policy papers on this are due out of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government in the coming months. Local Government will have enhanced powers and competencies, which – to date – have not been defined (The Journal, 2012; Dáil Reply, 18 April 2012). The concept of "alignment" and what it means may become more apparent in the coming months and years. Some clarification may come when the Minister produces his reform policies. Ireland is in a difficult economic situation and as part of the agreement with the Troika, and the requirements of developing an efficient and dynamic economy, policy and structural reform are inevitable and are to some extent laid out in the Programme for Government (2011). Changes are inevitable in most sectors. Once the Government has introduced its Local Government Reform Policies, SOLAS and the National Employment Entitlement Service (NEES) - its name will be changed - between June and December of 2012, the direction and role that Local Development Companies will play in this field may become clearer. It would be worth returning to part of this topic again in 2013.

Even if physical accessibility of nearby job and opportunities for training could be achieved in the catchment area by the provision of public transport links to places of work and education, the gap between the skill sets that are required to work in the growth sectors of the regional economy, on the one hand, and level of local skills in the case study area, on the other, is too big to be closed in the short or medium term. This could be achieved through the development of a wider strategic joined-up response, involving both national and local partners from the field of education, businesses, local communities and various policy arenas. These joint efforts could take the form of a national-local alliance, which is based on the agreement and pursuit of mutual objectives and which needs to be coordinated at local level and strategically linked into the national governance framework.

Learning from the development and implementation of programmes and initiatives in north Dublin that have been directed at increasing employability of low-skilled job seekers and those people who need more complex supports in addition to training and up-skilling suggest that labour market activation policies work best:

- ▶ If they are based on multi stakeholder arrangements supported by government departments linking multiple layers of governance between the local and the national level;
- ▶ If they include expertise from both private providers and specialist providers in the Community and Voluntary Sector to complement state interventions;
- ▶ If they create meaningful job opportunities for local people based on a progression plan that takes into account local realities and the socio-economic context within which people live;
- ▶ If they look beyond the local/national and are informed by “what works” at the international level and are open to experimentation and pilots.

Based on the experience in the case study area, this paper argues that the success and effectiveness of national labour market activation programmes must be measured against their capacity to bring a local perspective to the resolution of the issue of long-term unemployment. We argue that an awareness and understanding of local realities assists in the development of meaningful policy interventions. Such interventions should be targeted at reducing the gap between local skill sets of some people from areas worst affected by structural disadvantage and socio-economic marginalisation and the demand for labour in the regional growth sectors.

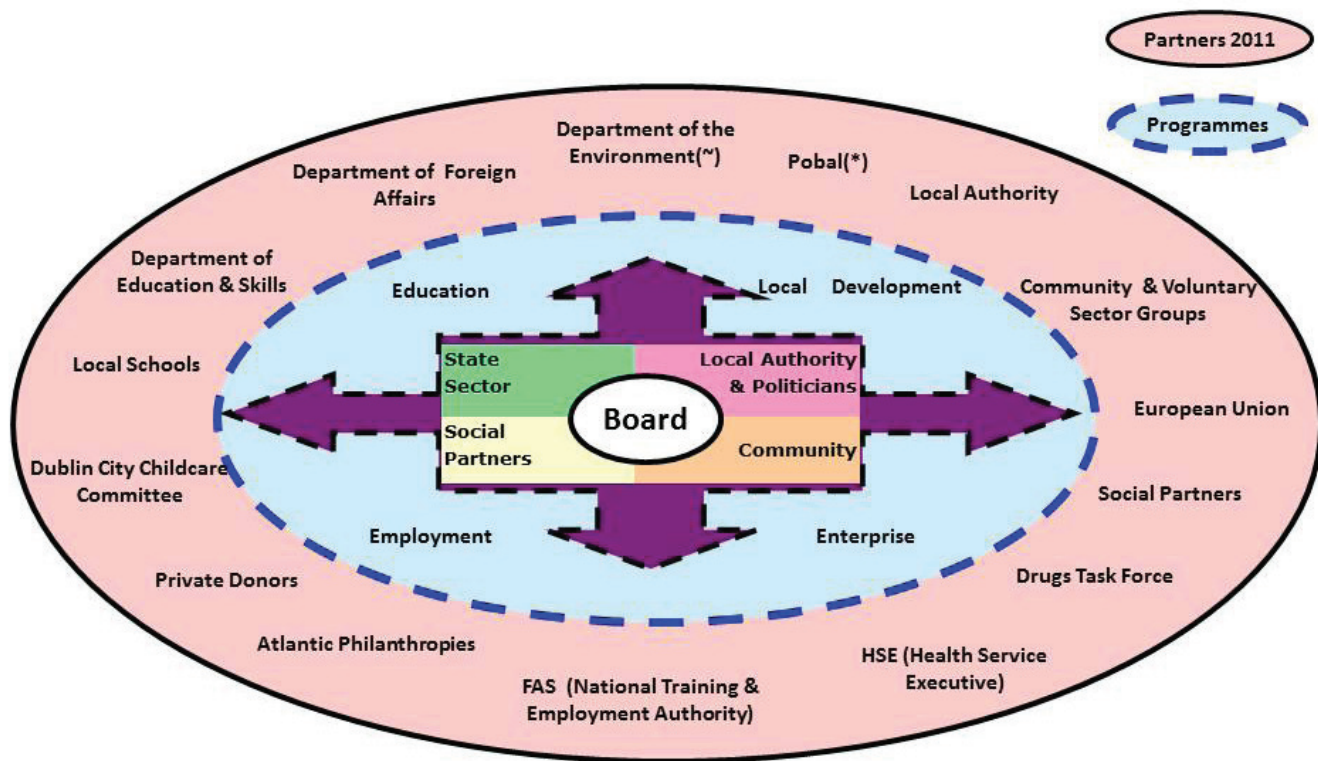
Appendix 1: Main Labour market interventions in case study area

Name	Description/Objective/Funder and 2011 Outcomes
Speedpak Ltd. Established in 1995	Established by Northside Partnership in collaboration with the local business community and with the support of FAS. Speedpak is a successful social enterprise in the business of contract packing and manufacturing of rosettes that is supported by Northside Partnership. Between 2010 and 2011, Speedpak developed a Work Accreditation Model (WAM) that provides work experience in a commercial setting with a focus on positive work behaviours, accredited training courses; and specialist one to one support. The WAM approach captures workplace learning that can be converted to a recognised educational qualification.
NSP Higher Education Support Scheme (HESS) Established 1995-97	Scheme piloted by Northside Partnership that became a national programme, the Millennium Fund in 2000. After the abolishment of the national programme in 2010, this programme is continued locally. It is accompanied by local educational interventions progressing young people from low income families into third level education. These have been quite successful at the individual level in terms of progressing people to access and complete third level courses.
NSP Local Employment Service Network (LESN) Established in 1996	Piloted by Northside Partnership in the early 1990s and established as national programme in 1996. Provision a range of labour market guidance and placement services, enabling people to move from unemployment and welfare dependency into the world of work and economic independence, as well as providing a free and confidential information and placement service to job seekers. The Service forms part of a national network throughout the country focused on working with unemployed job seekers to identify suitable, realistic work opportunities.
National Employment Action Plan (NEAP) Established in 1998	Unemployed people who reach the three-month threshold of unemployment are referred by the Department of Social Protection (DSP) to the Local Employment Service for an interview to encourage and assist them in re-entering work in form of a job, a training/education scheme, an employment scheme or work experience. The LES provides tailor-made guidance for clients.
NSP Labour Inclusion Programme (LIP) Developed 2000-06	This service was developed by Northside Partnership based on a model in Liverpool. LIP delivers a one-to-one training and career-path planning programme supporting the re-integration of ex-drug mis-users into employment. The programme provides information and assistance on accessing further education/training and ultimately getting back into suitable employment as well as settling back into the community.
NSP Business Network Customised 2001-03	Liaison with employers regarding employment opportunities and the identification of necessary skills needs. The Partnership matches both the employer and the unemployed people's training needs, which, to date, has resulted in the creation of a range of programmes that have successfully integrated clients of the Local Employment Service Network (LESN) into employment.
Tús Initiative Established in 2011	National activation scheme based on the random selection of long-term unemployed. Local Partnership Companies are responsible for the recruitment of participants on behalf of the Department of Social Protection. Selected people are interviewed for a 19.5 hour/week work placement over the period of one year with a community group for a top-up of welfare payments by € 20-150. In 2011, 5,000 unemployed people were invited to participate in the initiative.

Appendix 2: Examples of LDC interventions in case study area and their outcomes

Thematic Area	Outcomes
Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 497 unemployed individuals received one-to-one guidance and advice to set up their own business. ▶ 202 people participated in certified business training. ▶ 235 people became self-employed over a wide variety of businesses such as Plumbing, Beauty Salon, Transport, Carpentry, Newsagents, and Hair Dresser. In 2010, 203 enterprises were set up and one year later 160 of these were still in business (survival rate of 75 per cent). ▶ 80 women participated in certified business training under the Equality for Women Measure (EWM). 10 of these women exhibited their business at the North Dublin Chamber of Commerce (NDCC) Expo in November and each business was offered one year's free membership of the Chamber.
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 94 long-term unemployed people participated in training programmes aimed at keeping people engaged and motivated while job seeking. These personal development programmes help unemployed people cope with their unemployed status and assists them in looking forward to changing their lives. ▶ 67 new clients engaged on a one-to-one basis with the Labour Market Activation Programme (LIP) for recovering drug misusers. 8 people commenced full-time education, 15 enrolled in part-time accredited courses, 7 received placement on Community Employment Schemes and 5 gained full-time employment. ▶ 1,859 individuals were supported in accessing training and education and 495 people were progressed into employment.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 254 young people from low income families or from an otherwise disadvantaged social background were assisted to access third level education. They received career guidance and small financial supports (e.g. for transport costs, fees and learning materials) that prevents them from making ill-informed choices concerning their 3rd level education that are difficult to reverse. ▶ Over 700 adult learners and young people (18-25) received one-to-one advice on educational opportunities and career paths. ▶ Speedpak, a social enterprise initiated by the local development company in the case study area, has developed a Work Accreditation Model (WAM©) training programme which captures learning in the workplace and converts it into a full FETAC level 4 award (equivalent to a leaving certificate). Participants in labour market participation programmes (Community Employment Scheme and the Tús programme) take part in this training programme. Of the 41 people employed by Speedpak in 2011, 87 per cent were referred by the Local Employment Service. A total of 194 accredited modules (FETAC Level 4) were completed by this group and 14 of these employees will be awarded a full FETAC level 4 Award in 2012.
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ New measures are being developed that are designed to measure the impact of the above interventions on people's personal development and potential for their individual career progression: a research and evaluation unit was established within the local development company, Northside Partnership, to monitor outcomes of the company's interventions; Speedpak developed a Distance travelled model that sets out to measure the progression of people's competencies during their employment with the enterprise.

Appendix 3: Overview of main relationships and remit of Northside Partnership LDC



*Pobal is an organisation that allocates funding to the company and monitors progress on behalf of the main funder of local development companies, the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (~).

Source: NSP Presentation, OECD Pobal Conference on 13/14 October 2011, Dublin Castle

The map displays the Dublin region with a proposed rapid transit route in blue. The route starts in the north near Ballymun, passes through the city center (Whitehall, Temple Bar), and extends south through the Docklands and towards the south coast. Key locations marked include Ballymun, Whitehall, Temple Bar, Docklands, and the south coast. Major roads like the N1, N4, and N11 are shown. A scale bar indicates 4 Kilometers.

Source of base map: All Ireland Research Observatory. National Mapping Viewer. Accessed on 7 June 2012 at <http://airomaps.nuim.ie/flexviewer/?config=Census2011.xml> (Boundaries of case study area added by authors).

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