Application of futures methods in urban planning processes in Dublin

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In recent years, cities and urban regions have been increasingly applying various forms of strategic planning and future-oriented approaches in order to respond to the challenges posed by contemporary change, competition between cities, a sustainability agenda, the transformation of urban governance and others. Exercises employing futures methods usually vary as they are set in specific contexts, are driven by different motivations and objectives and use diverse methodological approaches. Despite the differences, many of these projects are faced by similar problems arising from the innovativeness and fragility of the procedures used.

This paper presents three exercises undertaken in Dublin, in which futures approaches were employed at the urban region, municipal authority and local community level. Through the demonstration and examination of these projects, the authors aim to contribute to the ongoing conversation about a more effective use of futures methods in urban planning processes. The exercises are discussed in regard to their origins, methodologies, participation, and outcomes and outputs. The authors attempt to critically review the exercises, and building upon the lessons learned, to draw together a range of practical recommendations for the application of futures methods in the urban planning process.

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Introduction

Over recent decades, cities and urban regions have been undergoing rapid and extensive transformations (OECD 1994). A range of fresh challenges and opportunities has emerged as a consequence of expanding globalisation, the accelerating pace of technological progress, profound social and cultural shifts and the emergence of new economic trends. Urban planners and decision-makers have come to the realisation that existing approaches and methods for planning the future are quickly becoming inadequate in addressing these prevailing transformations (OECD 1994; Hall & Pfeiffer 2000), and, therefore, they have been searching for new, more effective and innovative ways of thinking and acting about the future (Myers & Kitsuse 2000).

As a result, in recent years, cities and urban regions have been increasingly applying various forms of strategic planning and future-oriented approaches in order to respond to the challenges posed by these transformations (Albrechts et al. 2003). Futures, prospective, foresight, scenario planning and urban visioning are successfully being used to foster the sustainable development of prosperous cities and towns in a manner that favours a more holistic, inclusive, integrative and creative approach (Krawczyk & Ratcliffe 2004). They assist in the development of a widely agreed vision of where the place in question wants to be in twenty, fifty or a hundred years time (Gaffikin & Morrissey 1999), and they help to set a path towards this desired future. Cities such Lyon (EDURC 2000; EC 2002), Barcelona (EC 2002), Bilbao (EDURC 1999; TRANSLAND 1999), and

Vancouver (Cities PLUS 2004), became a flagship examples of how the futures approaches can be used, not only to examine the possible, probable and desirable future options, but also to motivate and facilitate a collaborative action for the future.

According to Parrad (2004), the shift towards various future-oriented approaches has been stimulated by three main motivations. First, cities and urban regions, more than ever, recognise a need to foster their competitiveness and attractiveness, so they can successfully compete for investment and labour at local, regional and global level (Brotchie et al. 1995; Cheshire & Gordon 1995; Kresl 1995; EC 1999; Van der Berg et al. 2004). Second, increasing fragmentation of urban governance and the growth in the number of actors influencing the development of cities has created a need for greater communication and collaboration by them in shaping the future, as well as a need for rethinking urban fiscal and other regulatory policies (Albrechts et al. 2003). Third, due to extensive urbanisation processes, the quality of life in many cities has been deteriorating. In order to reverse this trend greater care for the environment, an improvement in urban infrastructure, and greater social cohesion need to be achieved (Hall & Pfeiffer 2000).

Although the use of future-oriented approaches is driven by similar concerns around the world, individual projects, nevertheless, vary as they are: undertaken by different stakeholders; set in unique individual contexts; driven by different local aspirations; use diverse methodological frameworks; and involve differing actors in their implementation. Yet, though, each exercise is unique, project managers are challenged by similar problems arising from the innovativeness and fragility of the approaches used (Parrad 2004). In a number of studies, various organisations involved in the urban and regional planning processes pointed to the lack of specific skills within the organisations, both in terms of expertise in the use of futures methods and approaches, but even more so the lack of capacity to adopt new approaches and learning fresh ways of thinking, acting and collaborating (Puglisi & Marvin 2002).

There is a strong demand for better connections between academic research and the practice, especially in developing more practice oriented approaches to urban and regional futures. Puglisi and Marvin (2002) argue that an important challenge for the field of futures studies is building a stronger engagement with urban and regional policy practices. They propose three streams of work in addressing this challenge:

- the examination of the prospective work that is currently being undertaken and the analysis of different approaches to futures thinking;
- the development of an in-depth understanding of the specific context within which policy-makers are carrying out the futures work, and how political and structural circumstances are reflected in requirements and needs for territorial foresight; and,
- comparative analysis of the processes used to generate futures, the independent context of the visions that are produced, and the impacts they have on policies and decisions.

This paper presents three exercises undertaken in Dublin, in which futures approaches were employed at the urban region, municipal authority and local community level. Through the demonstration and examination of these projects, the authors aim to contribute to the ongoing conversation about the use of futures methods in urban planning processes and add to not very large, although growing, range of examples of practice. The exercises are discussed in regard to their origins, methodologies, participation, and outcomes and outputs. The authors attempt to critically review the exercises, and building upon the lessons learned, to draw together a range of general recommendations that could be of benefit for practitioners in their tasks ahead. It needs to be emphasised that the recommendation section draws upon the doctoral thesis ("Futures thinking in urban planning processes – the case of Dublin") completed recently by one of the authors (Ela Krawczyk), the consultancy work of the other (John Ratcliffe) and on the general work of The Futures Academy in the field[1].

Case studies

This paper specifically examines three projects carried out in Dublin in which future-oriented methods were employed: *Dublin 2020 Vision, Dublin – A City of Possibilities 2002–2012*, and *Development of Community Indicators in Ballymun*. Each project is discussed in regard to its origins, methodology, participation and outcomes and outputs. The main overall characteristics of each exercise are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Future-oriented projects for Dublin: the main characteristics.

	Dublin 2020 Vision	Dublin – A City of Possibilities 2002–2012	Development of Community Indicators in Ballymun
Initiative / leadership	Internal initiative of the Dublin Chamber of Commerce	Effect of legislation prepared by the Department of Environment and Local Governance	Ballymun Regeneration Limited (BRL) and "It Takes Two" Group
Methodology	Prospective approach	Strategic visioning	Visioning method
Design of the process	One workshop followed by a series of working meetings and work done in small groups	Set out by the legislation	Two workshops and a series of preparatory meetings
Participation	Business community, people invited by the initiators of the process	Bodies represented on DCDB, local authorities, state agencies, social partners, community groups, third level educational institutions, business groups, citizens	Global Action Plan Action Teams[1], Dublin City Council, Ballymun Regeneration Ltd. and local community groups and organisations
Time frame	Spring 2003 – April 2004	Approx. two years, starting January 2000 and finishing in April 2002	Started in late 2001 and is ongoing
Time horizon	2020 (17 years)	2012 (10 years)	2017 (17 years)
Project management	Project managed internally within the Dublin Chamber of Commerce, facilitated by The Futures Academy	Dublin City Development Board	BRL and GAP
Outcomes and outputs	Document with the vision for Dublin 2020 Proposal for the creation of a forum for discussing the future of Dublin	"Dublin – A City of Possibilities 2002–2012" strategy, a number of different local actions	A set of future scenarios and a set of environmental, economic and social indicators

[1] Action Teams are consist of groups of local residents interested in environmental issues as well as sustainability, with the purpose to decrease the negative impact on the environment on their own individual level.

Dublin 2020 Vision

Origins of the project

The *Dublin 2020 Vision* project was initiated and conducted by the Dublin Chamber of Commerce (DCC) with the facilitation of The Futures Academy at DIT. DCC is a networking organisation representing the interests of the business community in Dublin. Understandably, the Chamber holds a belief that if the city is working well it is a good place for business, and, correspondingly, if the business climate is healthy this is beneficial for the city. Consequently, for many years the Chamber has been an active promoter of policies and projects that would enhance the city's economic and social base. In this context, the *Dublin 2020 Vision* project was undertaken in order to set a new direction for the future development of the city. Over recent years (late 1990s and beginning of the 2000s) Dublin has been greatly transformed as a result of the economic boom popularly known as the 'Celtic Tiger' era. The DCC felt that after a period of unprecedented growth, the city had reached a 'plateau' stage, and that a new direction for its future development needed to be set. The lack of a suitable governance structure that would provide a long-term strategic view for the future of 'Dublin Greater Region' prompted the Chamber to show some leadership in stimulating strategic thinking. The organisation aimed to explore future possibilities and identify the most desirable path for the future development of the city. As one of the initiators of the project said: "We needed to know where the city is going in the future. We wanted to know how Dublin could look and what we wanted it to look like" (Pierce 2004).

Process and methodology

The project started at the beginning of 2003. It was initiated internally by the President and the Coun-

cil of the Chamber. Three main phases can be discerned in the overall process:

1. Preparation.
2. Exploration of possible and desirable futures.
3. Networking with other actors and stakeholders and the launch of the vision.

The first preparatory phase involved discussions on a number of issues. Among them were: consideration of the existing documents and projects which looked strategically at the future of Dublin, (e.g. *Dublin – A City of Possibilities 2002–2012*), and their relation to the Chamber's initiative; determination of the time horizon for looking into the future; clarification of the aims of the exercise and the expected outcomes; selection of the appropriate methodology for the project. At this stage the 'vision group' was also formed and the contact and cooperation with The Futures Academy at Dublin Institute of Technology was initiated. The Futures Academy prepared the methodology for the second phase of the project – the exploration of possible and desirable futures.

The second stage, in which the preferred vision for Dublin in 2020 was developed, was key to the whole process. The exploration of the future commenced with the SWOT analysis for Dublin in the year 2015 prepared by the Futures Academy in April 2003. The next step was the 'Prospective Workshop', which took place on 11th of June 2003. 14 people from the 'vision group' took part in the event, which was facilitated by three members of The Futures Academy. The structure of the workshop was based on the modified "Prospective Through Scenarios" process developed by The Futures Academy.

The workshop began with agreeing the strategic question, which was used as a 'guiding question' throughout the workshop. The question was formulated into: "What set of policy themes and key priority measures should be formulated to create a preferred vision for the Dublin City region in 2020?" The first step in the exploration of the future was the identification of driving forces of change within six categories: economy, society, environment, governance, technology and demography. The main group was divided into smaller subgroups, within which members brainstormed on the driving forces of change within categories assigned to them. Next, among the same subgroups and within the same six categories, the specific issues and trends arising from the driving forces of change were identified.

The whole group subsequently clustered the identified issues and trends into relevant themes. Initially 17 clusters were created. Then, the group brainstormed on the clusters formed in the previous phase and developed five policy themes:

- the knowledge city,
- the great European City,
- infrastructure,
- sustaining business competitiveness, and
- governance and leadership.

These themes then became the 'scaffolding' for the final vision. The last step in the workshop involved proposing action agenda that should be pursued in order to achieve the desired vision.

The policy themes developed during the workshop provided the basis for further elaboration of the vision. The main 'vision group' was divided into five subgroups. Each of these subgroups was working on one policy theme. The results of work of each subgroup were subsequently presented to the main group during three short meetings (approximately two hours duration) taking place on a monthly basis. Elaborated policy themes were discussed by the main group to ensure that they are stretched-out and elaborated as far as possible. The final step in the phase of exploration of possible and desirable futures was the development of a scenario illustrating a pessimistic future for Dublin in 2020. The scenario was created during a short brainstorming session attended by members of The Futures Academy and one member of the 'vision group'.

The information collected during the Prospective workshop was recorded by The Futures Academy in the document "Dublin Chamber of Commerce: Scenario Workshop". This document was later communicated to the 'vision group'. During the process one member of the Academy took on a secretarial role and was responsible for drafting the vision document, bringing together working documents produced by the subgroups and recording comments on the policy themes generated by the main group.

The last phase of the process involved networking with key stakeholders in the Dublin region and launching and promoting the vision. The networking with various actors in the region was parallel to the process of exploration of the future and development of the vision. The Chamber understood that in order to achieve the desired future state it was necessary to bring the main actors into the process. The organisation was seeking support for their initiative from the Dublin City Manager, the

Tánaiste (Ireland's Deputy Prime Minister), Dublin City Lord Mayor, Chambers of Commerce in the Dublin region, IBEC and other business organisations. Another activity in this phase was the identification of the channels for communicating and promoting the vision. Television and newspapers were recognised as possible means for making the vision known to majority of citizens.

The vision document was launched on the 10th of May 2004 at the Dublin City Council meeting. The Executive Team of the Chamber made a presentation to the Councillors and the City Manager. They described the vision as a starting point for a debate on the future of the city and called for the establishment of a forum that would facilitate discussions on the future of Dublin and be responsible for the implementation of a shared vision for the city. Although the Chamber's initiative was warmly welcomed by the Council, a number of concerns were raised. The councillors feared that this vision, as many others, would never be realised, and that the forum could become another 'talking shop', which would not bring any real change.

Participation

Participants comprising the 'vision group' were selected mainly from within the Chamber's membership by the project initiators. They were chosen because they: represented different sectors; had some experience in forecasting and strategic thinking; and, most of all, had a reputation for visionary ideas and were able to stand back and think 'outside the box'. The 'vision group' had 14, out of which 12 represented the business community. The two remaining members came from the academic and international relations areas.

Initially the Chamber considered inviting to the project representatives of all sectors, recognising that if the vision was to be realised it needed the involvement of all groups within the city. This idea was abandoned because a 'widely inclusive' process seemed likely to be too slow. Instead, the Chamber decided to start the process with a small group and try to engage other sectors at a later stage.

Outcomes and outputs

The main output of the process was the *Imagine Dublin 2020: Our Vision for the Future of the City* document. The desired vision which portrays the city as:

- "A knowledge city": in which life-long learning and personal and civic development are on the daily agenda; where civic and environmental attitudes are formed at the beginning of the learning cycle; and teaching how to think creatively and independently is a part of the curriculum.
- "A great European city": which is well-known in Europe for its distinct cultural identity and trademarks; where citizens feel and act as stakeholders; and where living is safe, comfortable and convivial.
- "A city that works": because growth is planned and managed, resources are utilised in an efficient way and public services, such as transportation, waste management, energy and water supply, meet the highest standards.
- "A highly competitive city": which attracts highly qualified labour and encourages R&D; where enterprise and entrepreneurial culture are promoted; and a fiscal regime and regulations support business and innovation.
- "A city wisely governed": by a directly elected Mayor, who ensures implementation of plans and enforcement of policies; a city with its own transparent financial system, in which central and local government powers are in balance; and where the business community and public authorities work together to ensure its optimal development.

The document also includes the Chamber's proposals of key policy measures and actions that need to be introduced in order for the vision to be realised.

To date no further developments arising from the process were observed. Although the document itself has been cited at many occasions by the Chamber representatives and in the media (e.g. *The Irish Times*, 8th May 2006, in article *Dublin's Rising*) no further actions were undertaken to create the city forum or develop a shared vision for Dublin-region.

Dublin – A City of Possibilities 2002–2012

Origins of the project

Dublin – A City of Possibilities 2002–2012 is a strategy for the economic, social and cultural development of Dublin City (the area governed by the Dublin City Council). The strategy was developed by the Dublin City Development Board (DCDB) over approximately a two year period,

from January 2000 to April 2002. City/County Development Boards (CDBs) were created by the Department of the Environment and Local Government (DoELG) in order to address the challenge of integrating local services at the county and city level. In Ireland, as in many other countries, there is a large number of different agencies and bodies responsible for different sectors of activity. The levels of 'horizontal' integration of these bodies, and the degree of their cooperation with other interest groups operating at a local level, such as business, local development and local community groups, is rather low. The establishment of CDBs, which brought together, in a mandatory manner, representatives of local government, local development, relevant state agencies functioning at the local level and the social partners (including the community and voluntary sector), created a platform for greater integration of different services and enhanced cooperation between various sectors (DoELG 2000).

The main purpose of CDBs is to prepare and manage the implementation of economic, social, and cultural development strategies. Such strategies should provide a 'shared vision' for the development of the city or county for the next 10 years. The legislation set out that the strategies would be implemented by the constituent members of the CDBs (state agencies, local authorities and local groups). Each of these bodies would deliver different elements of strategy through their own operational plans and services (DoELG 2000).

Process and methodology

The DoELG prepared relatively detailed guidelines for the development of CDB strategies (DoELG 2000). The guidelines specified the background, concepts and scope of the strategies; outlined a general approach, process and timetable, which should be used for their development; described how the written strategy statements should appear, what should they contain and what potential pitfalls should be avoided; they also portrayed how these strategies should be implemented in practice (DoELG 2000). Despite a rather specific directions for the development of strategies, City/County Development Boards were still left with a fairly large degree of freedom as to the practical application of these guidelines. As a result, the final strategy documents and the approaches and methods used for their development vary greatly from county to county.

The DCDB employed an approach which was described by its director as 'strategic visioning'. The focus of that approach was placed on change and improvements of current ways in which things were done and services were delivered, rather than, as in the case of other counties, on specific capital projects. The 'strategic visioning' approach was underpinned by a philosophical model embracing relationships between the past, present and future – the future has to be built upon the understanding of the past and rooted in the present reality. Such an approach aimed to encourage people involved in the development of the strategy to seek how things could be done differently, in a more effective and efficient manner, and to identify gaps that needed to be filled. This model placed equal emphases on the process and the final product.

The guidelines document outlined the recommended approach which should be used for the development of city and county economic, social and cultural strategies. The recommended conceptual framework of the process involved eight main steps:

1. Setting and agreeing the aims of process, its philosophy and values, detailed format and methods for research, consultation and consensus.
2. Identification and assessment of the relevant service provision, both public and other, in the city/county area.
3. Analysis of the present economic, social and cultural circumstances and trends in the city/county.
4. Examination of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis) facing a city or county.
5. Development of the 'shared vision' for the city or county and establishment of goals and objectives arising from the vision.
6. Identification of options and the establishment of operational strategies.
7. Establishment of quantified targets and identification of key result areas, which would reflect the goals and objectives determined in earlier phases.
8. Development of monitoring, feedback and evaluation arrangements, which would enable to follow the progress being made towards achievement of the vision (DoELG 2000).

The overall process, in which the strategy for Dublin City was developed, comprised three main phases.

1. Assessment of the current situation. This involved desktop research aiming to collect information on relevant policy and strategy documents that would effect the future development of Dublin, and also to learn from the past experiences – positive and negative.
2. Development of the vision. This phase, a key to the whole process, consisted of two main steps: (a) creating a platform for participation that would raise awareness among the stakeholders about the work carried out by DCDB, facilitate development of the strategy and also encourage the sharing of ideas, solutions and joint decision-making in the future; (b) carrying out a 'sustainability proofing' exercise that would help to ensure that the strategy is in accordance with the basic principles of sustainability.
3. Implementation of the strategy. This stage of the process involved the preparation of Implementation Plans by the DCDB with the assistance of the Office of the Director of Community and Enterprise. The Implementation Plans, covering periods of two years up to the year 2012, include: setting objectives, developing delivery plan, identifying resource commitments, linking commitments to NDP, identifying time-related qualitative and quantitative targets, committing to reporting progress and proofing the delivery plan against the sustainability-proofing criteria of the strategy (DCDB 2002).

Participation

The legislation that established City and County Development Boards was created in order to address the fragmentation of agencies and organisations responsible for local development and the lack of effective collaboration between community groups and other stakeholders at the local level. As stated earlier, "Guidelines on the CDB strategies" emphasised that the visions developed by CDBs should represent a common agreed view of the future, and, therefore, the active participation of a wide range of stakeholders, community groups and citizens was recognised as key to the whole process. It was also recognised that "participation in the early stages of the strategy development is desirable, as it is often the outcome of decisions made at this stage that have the greatest effect on peoples needs and chances to benefit" (DCDB 2002: 18).

One of the major problems faced by the Dublin City Development Board in relation to participation was the size of the city. The relevant area of Dublin City is inhabited by approximately 500,000 people and, according to DCDB, is used by about 1.7 million people on a daily basis. There is also a complex array of agencies operating in the area (for example, three Health Boards and four FÁS regions). DCDB was faced with a very difficult task of creating participation mechanisms, which would enable as many stakeholders, community groups and individual citizens as possible to take part in the process. Seven main mechanisms for participation were developed:

1. City Community Forum. The forum consists of 750 community and voluntary organisations. It is directly represented on the DCDB.
2. Five Strategy Development Working Groups. 90 individuals and organisations were involved in the groups including DCDB members, Community Forum members, main stakeholders and experts.
3. Consultation brochure. The brochure was sent to over 70,000 households, businesses, schools, libraries, organisations and agencies around the city. People were asked to complete a survey included in the brochure and when they finished reading it to pass it on to their neighbours and friends. DCDB received around 1000 replies to the survey.
4. 'Let's talk circles'. There were 10 sessions organised under the 'let's talk circle' name. They were attended by over 300 participants representing staff of different agencies and specific interest groups, such as the City Council, FÁS, Health Boards, third level institutions (students), ethnic minority groups, and economic focus groups.
5. Civic forums. Five civic forums were held within five different areas of the operational area of Dublin City Council. They were attended by 198 people including councillors, public servants, community organisations, local businesses and residents.
6. Consultation seminars. There were three consultation seminars organised. They brought together 250 participants representing voluntary groups, businesses, statutory organisations, councillors and citizens.
7. Meetings of stakeholders. Twenty three meetings of stakeholders involved the participation of 140 people (mainly holding senior positions within their organisations) from nearly

60 agencies and organisations, such as the City Council, FÁS, Department of Justice, Garda Síochána, Department of Education, Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation, Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment, Department of Health and City Councillors.

Outcomes and outputs

The main output of the process was the cultural, economic and social strategy (vision) for Dublin City published in the document *Dublin – A City of Possibilities 2002–2012*. The strategy is based upon a unique structure, which incorporates fifteen themes (Fig. 1). The whole strategy is built around its central theme – 'A city of neighbourhoods'. The ultimate objective of the strategy is to reconstruct or deconstruct the city into 14 to 15 neighbourhoods. The next four themes are the so called 'enabling themes': 'A diverse and inclusive city', 'Connected and informed city', 'An integrated city' and 'A democratic and participative city'. They underpin the whole strategy as they represent cross-cutting principles. The remaining ten themes are the outcome themes, which influence how and where people live in the city. The concept underlying the vision was based on the belief that a sustainable city of the future would need to be built upon four pillars of development: economic, human, cultural and societal. The vision was constructed in a way that would ensure a balance between these four pillars. The strategy attempts to look at the wider area, not only at the operational area of Dublin City Council. It takes into consideration the fact that Dublin is a capital city, and, therefore, tries to consider how the changes in the city could influence other parts of the country and national policy as a whole. The strategy identified a number of issues for the national agenda, over which regional and local agencies do not have control, for example income differentials.

One of the main outputs of the project was the creation of the website *www.dublin.ie* – an information portal about the community, cultural, political, and business life in Dublin. Also a number of projects at local scale are now being realised for each theme of the vision (DCDB 2004).

Development of Community Indicators in Ballymun

Origins of the project

The project *Development of Community Indicators in Ballymun* was carried out by the Ballymun
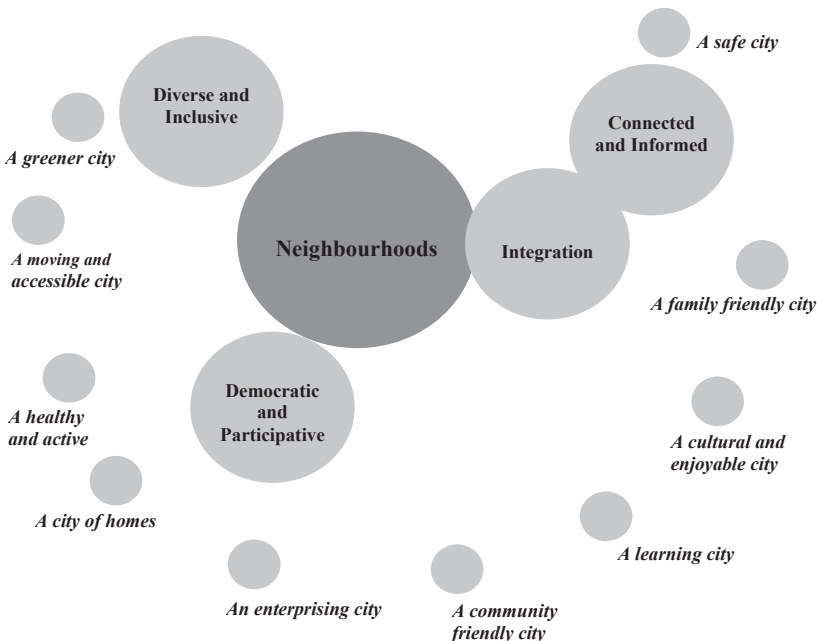

Fig. 1. The structure of the vision "Dublin – A City of Possibilities 2002–2012" (DCDB 2002: 5–6).

Regeneration Limited (BRL) in association with the Global Action Plan (GAP Ballymun) as a part of the large-scale regeneration of Ballymun in Dublin. The exercise is also a part of the European project "It-Takes-Two". The project aimed to develop a set of community indicators that could be used to monitor the progress of Ballymun towards sustainability. The visioning method was used to identify the wishes and fears of the community regarding the future of Ballymun, to create a shared vision of the future and to engage local citizens in the process of change.

Ballymun, which is Irish for Town of Shrubs, was built between 1966 and 1974 as a response to the housing crisis in Dublin. The development consisted of a mix of over 2800 flats in 4-, 8- and 15-storey blocks and 2400 houses concentrated in an area of 1.5 square miles (Community Action Programme Ballymun 2000). Three decades later, the area was designated for a regeneration programme, the biggest in Ireland. The decision of the Irish Government in March 1997 to launch the regeneration scheme was a response to the accumulation of a broad range of severe social, economic, infrastructural and environmental problems.

The regeneration scheme has been carried out by a special agency, Ballymun Regeneration Limited (BRL), which was set up by Dublin City Council. The project aims at the overall regeneration of the area with the extensive participation of local residents. Their involvement and support was recognised as crucial for the success of the programme. The Master Plan for Ballymun's regeneration was developed in close consultation and partnership with Ballymun residents (Ballymun Regeneration 1998). It addresses social, economic, infrastructural and environmental problems collectively. A variety of social, economic and environmental projects conducted within the regeneration programme is hoped to create linkages in the area, and build a healthy, viable community in the new town of Ballymun.

Process and methodology

The visioning method was chosen to be used for the development of community indicators from a whole range of methods and techniques recommended by the "It-Takes-Two" project. This choice arose from the need to assess the community's values and preferences, to encourage and involve residents of Ballymun in building a sustainable society, and to create a feeling of responsibility for change towards a better future, based on residents wishes and values. Visioning was a tool applied in order to identify the most severe areas of concern and the value systems characteristic for Ballymun's community, and further, to develop a set of community indicators that would reflect residents' concerns. The indicators developed through the process were to be used to monitor the progress of the town towards sustainability.

The process of development of the community indicators for Ballymun started in the second half of the year 2001. It involved the following phases:
1. the first workshop under the name *Visioning Day*;
2. the second workshop to develop community indicators; and
3. development of an action plan.

The first workshop, the *Visioning Day*, was aimed at the development of a shared, common vision of the future of Ballymun that would be underpinned by the community values, wishes and needs. Such a vision incorporated goals and targets for the future which needed to be accomplished in order to create the desired future state. During the first part of the workshop the participants were asked to write their ideas about how Ballymun might be like in twenty years time. These thoughts were subsequently collected and clustered, and led to the emergence of five themes. At the next stage, the participants were divided into five groups, which developed these five themes into five future scenarios. Then each group brainstormed around the goals that would help to avoid an unwanted future and to build the desired one. The last part of the workshop involved the identification of key benchmarks within scenarios that would indicate whether Ballymun was heading towards the desired future. These benchmarks became a foundation for the establishment of the initial community indicators (Scully 2002).

The purpose of the second workshop was to develop twelve indicators representing the most important issues for the Ballymun's residents, and which would be measured to monitor the change over time in these areas. At the beginning of the workshop, the continuity of the project was emphasised through presentation of the scenarios developed during the *Visioning Day*. The scenarios were demonstrated in a form of a local newspaper set in 2017. The articles in the *Local paper* illustrated the trends that emerged in the scenarios and showed what Ballymun might be like in the year 2017. Next, the concept of an indicator was ex-

plained in detail. Then, the main group was divided into three subgroups discussing indicators under three main headings: social, economic and environmental. The task of each group was to choose three indicators for each of the four subheadings from the indicators shown in grids. The grids with indicators, selected from three different sources (the Ballymun Masterplan, scenarios developed during the first workshop and the experts' indicators), were prepared in advance. The participants working in groups were also allowed to propose their own indicators, if they thought of better ones than the ones presented in the grids. At the end of this stage of the process, each group presented three indicators they had chosen for each subheading and the justification for their selection. The last phase of the workshop involved choosing one indicator from the three selected for each subheading.

The next stage in the process was intended to be the development of an action plan, which would specify the actions that needed to be undertaken in order to ensure the sustainable development of Ballymun. The first step at this stage would be the identification of stakeholders responsible for change in the areas covered by the chosen indicators. Then a number of workshops would be carried out in order to target all bodies responsible for change, to choose the ways of monitoring and communicating the progress, and to set up the goals, which should be achieved in the future. These workshops would bring together the local community and stakeholders. Initially, they were planned for the period of spring and summer 2003. However, due to organisational and management changes, work on the project was stopped for a period of approximately a year and a half. The first action, which was taken after the project resumed last year, was checking whether the indicators met the relevant criteria and identifying the ways in which these indicators could be measured. This was the last action undertaken within this project up to date.

Participation

The project was prepared and managed by the members of GAP Ballymun and BRL, who also took part in the two workshops organised as a part of the project. The participants of the workshops came from four different groups: Ballymun residents, who completed Action Team training, Dublin City Council, BRL and local community groups.

The first workshop gathered 30 participants from: Action Team (18), GAP (5), Dublin City Council (2), BRL (1), Housing Task Force (1), Agenda 21 Group (CAFTA) (1), Balcurris Forum (1) and the National College of Ireland (1). It is necessary to stress that some people, who were classified as the members of Action Teams were also representing BRL or local community groups. In the second workshop, 29 people participated. The numbers of participants from each of the four groups were not recorded.

Outcomes and outputs

To date, the main outputs from this project are: the set of five scenarios portraying the future of Ballymun in twenty years time; and a list of indicators chosen by the community, to be measured by BRL, in order to monitor Ballymun's progress towards sustainability. The scenario stories describe Ballymun as: *Characterless Suburb*, *Learning Centre*, *Successful Small-business Centre*, *Great Community Spirit*, and *Common Goals*, *Safe Place*. Four out of the five scenarios showed a positive vision of Ballymun's future. Only one scenario, the Characterless Suburb, had a negative character. This vision emerged as a result of the fear that the strong community spirit existing in Ballymun at present might be lost during the regeneration process.

The following sustainability indicators were chosen to be measured:
1. Economic: number of childcare places and jobs with a liveable wage; development of improved management and maintenance arrangements and the role of residents and local organisations; number of jobs (with liveable wages) available in the area; and number of sites available for economic/social use and their availability and use.
2. Social: increase in school attendance; percentage of pupils completing the Post Primary Cycle; number of voters in local and national elections; reduction in anti-social behaviour measured by number of broken trees, broken street lamps, fires started, dumped furniture/appliances, incidents of graffiti, and animals abandoned.
3. Environmental: number of people buying eco-products; number of facilities available for recycling, including composting, in Ballymun; number of homes with better insulation features and improved energy conservation awareness; and ease of access to key services,

such as number of public transport routes that serve Ballymun and link Ballymun to the rest of the city.

The range of indicators selected by participants enabled the identification of the most important issues for Ballymun's community, and the problems that should be addressed initially. Disinterested observation of the discussions around the choice of indicators allowed the capturing of the emotional weight put on the various concerns. For instance, one of the issues very passionately debated was the provision of a sufficient number of miscellaneous childcare places, which are crucial for enabling mothers to re-enter employment and education. This issue was debated in two groups: economic and social, even though the indictor was recognised as belonging to the economic category.

Lessons learned and general recommendations for practice

The projects discussed in this paper differ significantly; therefore, a direct comparison between their respective elements and characteristics features would not be really meaningful. Instead, this section aims to derive a number of lessons that could be learned from each project. The 'lessons' were derived on the basis of the analysis of the exercises, the observations conducted by the authors (actively involved in two out of three exercises) and conversations with the organisers of these projects. Recommendations for practice, presented in the next section are developed through combining lessons learned from the exercises presented in this paper with the authors overall experience in this field.

Lessons learned

The lessons learned are discussed under five categories: initiative and leadership, scope, methodology and the process design, project management, and participation.

Initiative and leadership and its impact on the project

The initiatives from which the projects originated varied significantly. The *Dublin 2020 Vision* was initiated by the Dublin Chamber of Commerce, a business organisation with limited resources, but more importantly, with no executive powers to implement the vision. The lack of participation of other actors with implementation powers has significantly reduced the chances of the vision being realised. The *Dublin – A City of Possibilities 2002–2012* project was a consequence of a governmental policy. Therefore, it received a full political support, as well as adequate time and resources were committed for the development and implementation of the strategy. In the case of *Development of Community Indicators in Ballymun* the exercise was initiated and conducted by the regeneration company, which had both resources and executive powers to influence the future change.

Scope

An important issue for the impact of futures work in urban planning context is agreeing the geographical and sectoral scope of a study. The *Dublin 2020 Vision* project explored the future of an entire city-region in geographical sense. Also all aspects of the urban development were examined: society/culture, demography, economy, environment, technology and governance. Similarly, the *Dublin – A City of Possibilities 2002–2012* exercise looked at all aspects of the city, with an emphasis on social, cultural and economic issues. However, its geographical scope was limited to one part of Dublin – the Dublin City Council area. This was dictated by the legislation. Dublin metropolitan area is divided between four local authorities. According to the legislation, each of these local authorities established its own City/County Development Board, which then was responsible for the development of a strategy for the area belonging to that local authority. This resulted in four different strategies that were developed and are being implemented in Dublin metropolitan region. The fact that the study does not look at the whole city, but its one part is being seen as its major shortcoming.

Methodology and the process design

In all three studies the methodological framework was clearly designed and suited appropriately to the tasks that needed to be achieved. However, it could be seen as limitation that in the *Dublin – A City of Possibilities 2002–2012* study there was no phase dedicated to the exploration of alternative futures. Such exploration is an important part of futures approach as it helps to broaden up the

thinking about the future before developing a vision of desired future. Similar comment can be made about the *Dublin 2020 Vision* project, where the process did not put enough emphasis on the exploration of alternative futures. No scenarios of alternative futures, for example, were created, but most attention was directed at the development of the preferred vision and identification of actions needed to achieve it. This begs a basic question of whether the examination of what is possible, probable and finally desirable was sufficient.

Another important part of the project design is incorporating mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the progress. In the case of *Dublin 2020 Vision* there were no mechanisms included in the process that would encourage and provide for the evaluation of the vision and establishment of indicators that could be used for measuring progress. The *Dublin – A City of Possibilities 2002–2012* incorporated well designed mechanisms for evaluating and future-proofing the strategy.

Project management

Both projects, *Dublin 2020 Vision* and *Dublin – A City of Possibilities 2002–2012*, had an established coordinating team that oversaw its completion. The major problem in regard to project management was observed in the *Development of Community Indicators in Ballymun* study. There was a lack of continuation of the process, which was a direct consequence of an absence of a somewhat coordinating team. Such lack of project continuation can undermine the trust of the local community and undermine their confidence in similar processes in the future.

Participation

Broad participation of stakeholders and community is one of the key requirements for future-oriented processes in urban planning. In the *Dublin 2020 Vision* exercise it was recognised that a vision produced for any city has to be a shared vision developed through a process, in which the various sectors of the society and multiplicity of actors within the city are represented. But, the vision was developed by the representatives of only one sector – business. Although the participants were trying to incorporate different points of view, it is likely that their views could be biased as they represented only one sector. Also the process could easily be perceived by third parties as "business-oriented". The very limited participation was the main weakness of the project. In the case of *Dublin – A City of Possibilities 2002–2012* all actors and sectors within the city were represented in the process. This created a feeling of ownership and enabled the development of a shared vision. Also, an active and extensive participation of citizens in the *Development of Community Indicators in Ballymun* exercise was ensured. It resulted in developing of a better understanding of community values, wishes, needs and fears, and led to the development of the vision based upon them. An active engagement of all actors responsible for making the change at local level, such as the Ballymun Regeneration Ltd. and Dublin City Council, provides some guarantee that the proposed actions will eventually be implemented.

General recommendations for practice

Building upon the lessons learned from the projects discussed above and the overall experiences of the authors in applying futures methods in urban planning processes elsewhere the following set of recommendations has been developed:

1. Establishment of a project team. Any project, regardless of scale and formal status, should have an appropriate team coordinating the process. The size of such a team would, of course, depend on the scale and complexity of the exercise. Naturally, it is important that this team would be adequately resourced. Its functions should include organisational matters, promotion of the exercise, secretariat duties, channelling communications between actors involved and the collection of all documents, reports and files produced during the project.

2. Provision of sufficient resources. The required resources usually involve funding, human capital, time and space. Quite obviously, the lack of adequate means can put pressure on people coordinating the exercise, and, the outcomes can seriously be compromised or the continuity of the project disrupted.

3. Leadership. The leadership of a prominent individual or organisation has an important role to play in initiating and the conducting of future-oriented exercises. Having a popular local champion on board helps to generate greater interest in the project and to gain the trust of those who have reservations towards new approaches.

4. Identification of individuals and agencies involved. One of the key issues for projects aiming to develop visions and strategies for the future development of cities is securing the inclusion of all relevant groups and significant sectors within the city in the process. This is required to ensure that a vision or strategy is as unbiased as possible, to create a feeling of ownership of such a vision/strategy, and also generate commitment towards its implementation. It is recommended that some formal method of selection such as 'concertation' is used in the preparatory phase of the project to identify and recruit the appropriate participants.

5. Design of the process. Time devoted at the outset of any project to ensure that the process is transparent, well structured and has an adequate time-frame is never wasted. The plan of each phase of the process should include the following elements: a clear explanation of aims and expected outcomes; a detailed description of the methods and techniques to be used and the tasks to be performed; and a timetable, and follow-up arrangements. Apart from identifying possible difficulties that can arise during the exercise, it creates space for participants to meet and to get to know each other, as well as making the whole process more familiar and understandable to them.

6. Pilot studies. It is worthwhile rehearsing different aspects of the process with a smaller group of participants in advance. This helps to prepare for unexpected turns of event and familiarise participants with the conceptual framework and methodology. The experience gained from the project conducted by The Futures Academy for the City of Lincoln[2] reinforced the importance of such pilot studies.

7. Promotion of the project. An important issue for all urban future-oriented projects is the dissemination of information about the initiative to as broad an audience as possible in order to encourage people to take part. As stated earlier, public participation is one of the key elements in projects aiming to develop visions of a desired future. The promotion should spread awareness about the process, define its aims and expected outcomes, and emphasise the importance of citizens' involvement. This process can be promoted through a wide range of channels, including the media (newspapers, television, radio), brochures delivered to door (mailing lists, electoral register) and distributed in public places like libraries and community centres, as well as through the Internet, outdoor advertisement, and public events.

8. Continuation issues. The projects discussed in this paper varied in terms of continuity. One of them was a once-off activity, and the other two had a continuous character. The authors believe that in order to be most effective such projects should be ongoing. Once a vision or strategy is developed, and its implementation has started, it is invaluable to monitor progress towards the desired future. Ongoing future-oriented activity allows the detection of new threats and opportunities and creates a space for revisions of the strategy when necessary. Continuation can be also considered in relation to a single exercise. Organisers are often faced with problems arising from a loss of project momentum and motivation, staff changes, withdrawal of partners, resources and so on. The issues related to continuation should be considered at the exercise planning stage and, if possible, addressed in the project design.

9. The choice of individual methods and techniques. In order to be most effective, particular methods and techniques should be chosen according to the aim that is to be achieved and the level of expertise of the people who would be using them. Among the techniques that are often used in future-oriented exercises are: scenario method, visioning workshops, strategic conversations, environmental scanning, futures surveys, brainstorming, and mind-mapping.

10. Engagement of national government in regional or local projects. It has been recognised that the engagement of national government representatives in the future-oriented exercises would invariably be very valuable. Often, the problems identified in the process require solutions that can be only introduced at the national level. It is hoped that involvement of national government representatives in the process would develop a better understanding of the issues on the ground. It would certainly also result in the communication of these problems to the appropriate institutions at a central level so that they could subsequently be addressed.

11. Communication issue – a common language. An important aspect of future-oriented exercises related to participation is the communication between different groups involved in the process. It is necessary to ensure that participants have a good understanding of the terminology and theories used in the process as well as a familiarity with each others 'jargon' or 'vernacular'. A fairly common phenomenon is that during the exercise, collective intelligence and language develops, which then is recognised and widely used by actors within the city.

12. Importance of the process itself. The examination of various future-oriented exercises has shown that the process in which visions and strategies for future development are created is as important as its outcomes. It helps to: develop a greater understanding of how the future can unfold; create stronger awareness about the existing and possible threats and opportunities; reveal stakeholders and communities aspirations and wishes for the future; clarify the main aims and principles of urban development; establish new partnerships and networks at local, regional and national level; and develop ownership and commitment to the solutions so they can more readily be implemented.

13. 'Hard facts' and 'soft emotions'. The information collected during future-oriented exercises should have an appropriate balance between factual information, often of a quantitative character, and information leading to the understanding of the 'emotional' side of urban life, community values, wishes, hopes and fears. This balance should especially be ensured at the phase when the understanding of the past and present is being developed. Frequently, the present situation is described mainly by factual information, while the more subjective 'emotional' side is far less explored.

14. Innovativeness, creativity and imagination. Innovativeness, creativity and imagination should be encouraged and fostered throughout to ensure that images of possible, probable and desirable futures are explored and 'fleshed-out' as far as it is possible. Fresh creative thinking allows the identification of innovative and effective solutions to many difficult problems. Any futures methodology should encourage the questioning of well-established ways of thinking and acting, and try to look at a given issue from many different perspectives.

A more detailed general evaluation of lessons learned from scenario planning exercises is provided elsewhere (Ratcliffe 2003).

Conclusions

The increased interest of urban planners and policy-makers in various future-oriented approaches that has been observed in recent years has created the need for a systematic examination of the issues related to the application of futures methods in urban and regional planning processes. Despite the fact that the use of futures methods in urban planning processes is driven by similar motivations in cities around the world, many of these exercises are unique as they are set in different contexts, conducted by differing actors and use diverse methodologies. The one thing, however, that many of these projects have in common is in the problems arising from the innovativeness and fragility of the approaches used. In order to address these problems, the development of a 'methodological knowledge base' for the application of futures methods in urban planning is required. Such a 'knowledge base' should provide information for practitioners about the available methodological approaches, such as strategic planning, territorial Prospective, and regional Foresight; present various futures methods and techniques with practical examples of how they can be applied; demonstrate projects in which futures methods were employed; discuss mechanisms for encouraging the collaboration of stakeholders and public participation; and address various aspects of projects organisation and implementation.

Through the examination of three future-oriented projects carried out in Dublin, this paper has attempted to contribute to the general knowledge about these types of ventures, and to develop a better understanding of various issues involved in conducting future-oriented projects. We recognise that a much deeper and wider exploration of the scope for the application of futures methods in urban and regional planning is needed to encourage and facilitate a greater number of future-oriented projects, but even more importantly, to promote a shift in the urban planners and decision-makers mindset towards a more future-oriented perspective.

NOTES

[1] Imagine Lincoln 2020 (2005), Dublin 2020 Vision for the Dublin Chamber of Commerce (2004), Development of Future Scenarios for Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor (2003), The Bratislava Raca Prospective – Towards a Preferred Future (2004).

[2] "Imagine Lincoln 2020: a vision for the future of our city" – the development of future vision for city of Lincoln carried out by the Futures Academy in co-operation with the University of Lincoln in 2004 and 2005.

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