

## **The role of a government intermediary (diplomatic broker) in developing a network of relationships between Ireland and Newfoundland, Canada.**

### **Abstract**

This paper reports on the network brokering role of the Ireland Newfoundland Partnership (INP). The INP was set-up to develop relationships between Ireland and the province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Canada. The INP represents a new type of broker and we set out to examine the function and role of such a broker. The broker role is labelled as a diplomatic one as the INP is limited to a social intermediary role with persuasive power only with the added weight of its location in government which gives it additional authenticity. The findings combine data from 73 respondents of an email survey and 9 in-depth interviews of key actors in the Ireland-Newfoundland relationship. The findings confirm the impact and benefits/outcomes of such an intermediary. Using a range of qualitative and quantitative measures the INP was perceived to be central in the relationships brokered and was found to have added to the depth and density of ties between the two regions. Its benefit as an intermediary and the benefits of the projects, combined with the outcomes of the interaction, also confirmed the function and role of this type of intermediary. Although the study reports on relationships brokered during a 10 year period, many are still at an early stage. The question remains as to whether the INP can translate its ability to broker initial contact into systemic self-sustaining inter-regional networks in the future.

Key words: network broker; network intermediary; government intermediary; broker role; cultural relationship

# **THE ROLE OF A GOVERNMENT INTERMEDIARY (DIPLOMATIC BROKER) IN DEVELOPING A NETWORK OF RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN IRELAND AND NEWFOUNDLAND, CANADA**

## **INTRODUCTION**

At previous conferences at the IMP Group, there have been calls for more contributions to the industrial policy debate using the interaction between companies and the ARA model as the starting point for analysis. Håkansson et al (2009) examined the impact IMP Group theory could have on traditional industrial policy explanations and intervention around innovation networks. The drawback of existing approaches is that many do not take a long term view of the development of network effects and are constrained by narrow geographical and political boundaries. In this vein the authors of the current work examine the role of a government network broker, a domain in which little prior empirical work has been completed in general and by the IMP (see, [impgroup.org](http://impgroup.org)). This paper's contribution is to introduce a new role of network broker, the diplomatic broker, and to examine its perceived impact and benefits.

Due to a previous century's economic migration, mainly based around the fishing industry, close cultural ties, including, to this day, accent, bind peoples in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Canada and, primarily, coastal communities in Ireland. Most of the migration from Ireland to Newfoundland is pre-famine and from the south east of Ireland. Both islands have similar geology, marine industries and community-oriented cultures. Over 50% of Newfoundland's population is of Irish origin and these ancestral routes are still visible today. The basis of present day economic relations between Ireland and Newfoundland focus es largely on ocean industries, marine and geological resources, and information technology. The population of Newfoundland and Labrador came mostly from the south and southeast of Ireland and the southwest of England. Migration to the island was directly linked to the fishing industry and occurred mainly between the mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries. Many Newfoundland names are directly linked to their Irish roots, with names like Aylward, Byrne, Cahill, Doyle, Hogan, Kiely, Lawlor, Mooney, Murphy, Power, Walsh, and Whalen being the norm. Some Irish traditions that have been transferred to Newfoundland include mummers (wren boys), ballad and traditional music sessions, farming techniques, and storytelling. In 2001, the Irish Government set-up the Ireland Newfoundland Partnership (INP) with the objective of building on the historic cultural ties and enhancing trade between the two places. It is housed within the Department of the Taoiseach (Irish Prime Minister) with a sister organisation in Newfoundland called the Irish Business Partnership. The INP was established on foot of a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Government of Ireland and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. This agreement which was signed in 1996 by the then Taoiseach (Irish prime minister) John Bruton, together with the then Premier of Newfoundland, Brian Tobin, was reaffirmed in 1999 and 2004.

The first Irish came to Newfoundland following the voyages of John Cabot at the end of the 15th century. The first record of a Waterford ship on the Grand Banks in Newfoundland dates back as far as 1534. By the eighteenth century merchants and fisherman from the south east region of Ireland were travelling regularly to Newfoundland for the fishing season. One contemporary account tells of "25 sailing vessels waiting at Passage East, in Waterford Harbour, for the tide to Newfoundland". Although the majority of these early migrants returned to Ireland for the winter, later in the century some began to "overwinter" in Newfoundland. Early in the 1800s the

population of Newfoundland almost quadrupled. In the three decades between 1803 and 1836, the population grew from 19,000 to 75,000 persons. During that period there were two major waves of migration, each overwhelmingly Irish, between 1811 and 1816 and again between 1825 and 1833. Professor John Mannion of Memorial University, Newfoundland, has calculated that over 75% of all Irish migration to Newfoundland came from the South East of Ireland. Most of these migrants settled in the Avalon Peninsula, within 100 miles of St. John's, the capital of Newfoundland. This migration represents the most intensive recorded transatlantic migration from one small geographic area to another. It predated by over half a century the huge waves of Irish migrations that commenced during the Great Famine years of 1845-49. Between the 1840s and the 1980s, migration between Ireland and Newfoundland was minimal and the economies and cultures of Newfoundland and Ireland had no critical mass interaction.

The INP's range of connective activities spans business, education and research, and arts, culture and heritage. This work has focused on these activities through the following mechanisms: in the cultural area: concerts, festivals, films, art exhibitions, theatrical plays, poetry books and radio documentaries; in the business area: trade missions, joint ventures, collaborative research and direct sales; and in the education area: student exchanges, joint curriculum development, student scholarships and academic research. The INP, since its inception, has, in effect, become a network intermediary for encouraging relationships between Ireland and Newfoundland. This intermediary role is mediated by its staff and board. From a network perspective, the INP is interesting as it is missing many characteristics of the bilateral or systemic intermediary and acts mainly as a diplomatic broker. This brokerage role is new to the academic literature and involves the common brokerage role of contact making and knowledge and informational resources provision but with the credibility afforded by the status of the Office of the Prime Minister. The INP has no power or incentives to broker unlike other intermediaries. In this context of this type of role, can such an intermediary benefit and have impact? Obviously, the aim of the INP is the long-term creation of more tightly coupled action-oriented networks by others, with its ongoing support, which may have begun as a social tie initiated and created by the INP.

The paper is organised as follows: a review of the literature on the role of network intermediaries will demonstrate the nature of the challenge facing the INP. In addition, the case context will be detailed. The reader will rightly assume a limited trading pattern between Ireland and Newfoundland as the regions are geographically distant and not well connected logistically. The survey and interview methodology will be presented which will be followed by the findings on the INP's role to date. The discussion will attempt to assess the potential for a more limited mandated intermediary role such as the one outlined and consider alternative explanations for the INP's success to date. An example of the latter would be the importance of specific actors with missionary zeal, which given the INP's existence in the public realm, will such focus continue when these actors depart? Ideas for the future development of the type of intermediary presented in the case will be detailed in the conclusions.

## **THE ROLE OF THE INP AS BROKER**

### **Social network broker role**

Since its inception the INP has become a network broker for encouraging relationships between Ireland and Newfoundland. This broker function and role is mediated by its staff and board. Brokers connect actors together at a bilateral or multilateral, or network, level (Hargadon et al

1997; Sapsed et al 2007). They mediate social, information, and knowledge flows more generally in the way they create value but can also be part of the value creation process (Grandori and Soda 1995; van Lente et al 2003; Pollock et al 2004). In the case of the INP this latter, involvement in process, does not apply to its role. It has connected people, acted as an information broker and has provided a learning space between actors in policy/government, arts, cultural and heritage, education and research and business across the Atlantic. This learning space has enabled ideas to develop and new activities to be created.

The reason for the INP's set-up was political and related to strong historical and cultural ties. Much of its early activity, as outlined, was in the diplomatic sphere, signing agreements and engaging political actors including reciprocal delegations of politicians meeting in St. John's and in Ireland. For this political work to sustain it needed a wider social and economic impetus and connection. It appeared logical that if such strong ties existed then there must be a rationale for wider cultural and social ties between the two areas. The broker role in this case started with a blank canvass and was inspired by history rather than any plan rooted to trade or clustering as might be expected in brokerage situations or from policies led with a trade-orientation. Nonetheless, even though there was little trade between the two areas and little contact the potential had to be there in areas such as tourism, and all aspects of marine and ocean life. The logic of brokering across these areas is that any gaps in information and knowledge, if bridged, can create new value to organisations in both territories and thus new business opportunities. The classic space for a broker role in addressing structural holes (Burt 1972) was in place albeit with a proverbial mountain to climb. Ireland represents an important location for investment into Europe, and Newfoundland could act as a beach-head to Canada. For most of the period under review in this paper the Irish Economy was booming and the Province's economy was beginning to emerge from relative long-term underperformance.

The type of broker the INP represents is mainly in the social network domain that of connecting actors that may have a common interest (Grandori et al 1995). To the extent that it performs this function well will depend on its knowledge of the actors on both sides and their potential mutual interest in collaborating. The INP's mandate is solely political and does not have a parallel in the literature. There are few, if any, examples of what one might label a 'diplomatic' broker of this type. Usually, where government is involved as a broker it emerges from a policy plan, for example, at regional level in the form of an innovation strategy (Howells 2006; Winch and Courtney 2007), or at national level in the creation of international trade strategy for networks or clusters (Kirkels et al 2010; Levin 1993; von Malmborg 2004), or through the funding of trade agencies or knowledge transfer agencies in universities (Bramwell et al 2008; Dalziel 2010). In the private sector brokers usually have to appropriate value for themselves so that when they connect parties they can extract a fee for their services in creating the alliance or negotiating the property in the case of an estate agent. Since 2001, the INP has had the power to grant small seed funding to collaborative projects which has enabled it to attract actors to activate projects which involve them directly with partners in Newfoundland or with the territory. The INP's brokerage role is social and involves connecting actors whose connectivity does not depend on some formal agreement negotiated by it. It connects and aims to build trust and more tightly coupled exchange over time. As an intermediary form the INP is limited in its scope to purposively connect or use particular structures and is thus left with persuasive power only in its quest to develop transatlantic relationships. The INP does take the initiative and create links but only has persuasive power to push these links further or to get individuals to collaborate in the

first place as they all work for organisations that are independent of the INP. Its only resource has been the ability of its staff and board to connect people and a passion and drive to continue this dialogue. However, this resource has had information and knowledge which has had a value in making connections happen. Therefore, the INP has a distinct but limited, in the classic sense, social intermediary role which makes brokering contacts and facilitating flows of information and knowledge a challenge. It may represent a new form of broker and we will attempt to assess whether such a broker can have impact through the empirical work in this paper. We will also attempt to assess its role.

### **Diplomatic broker role**

Gould and Fernandez (1989) outlined 5 broker roles. The one that equates best to the INP's role is as a liaison broker linking actors and acting as a mediator between them but independent of them. Its intrinsic motivation is the common good rather than its direct transaction benefit/reward which means its contribution in this liaison role is dependent on the quality of its information and knowledge resource. In order to assess the benefits and outcomes of the role of the INP the components of the role need to be outlined. The role it has is a broad one and crosses many fields of endeavour and, as such, is defined as a diplomatic or political broker. It can only complement the work of other brokering agencies in trade, culture, and education, perhaps by influencing them to look towards and invest in the Newfoundland connection. The INP does not take on network coordination or representation roles (representing groups of actors) which, as stated, gives it a more limited role platform. Any direct action it takes is through others so if technology transfer, research and development clustering, or learning communities develop between Ireland and Newfoundland, the INP has only a facilitation role in creating any of these as indirect actor. Therefore, it acts as a liaison broker or as an honest broker that is having third party status connecting actors that may have common interests. To do this it has had to become an information and knowledge resource and this has been one of its major broker roles which it shares in common with many more traditional brokers and is the reason that it can be classified as a broker in the first place. The linkages formed are at both bilateral and multilateral levels connecting individuals, groups and agencies together across the geographic divide. Connection of actors happens at many levels both vertical and horizontal, for example between policy makers and practitioners and between organisations in similar places in the demand and supply chain that may have potential to add value if connected. The role of the INP is largely in the climate space that is creating the climate of goodwill that motivates actors to participate in bilateral or network activity across the two regions. Its broad coverage of areas helps in this regard as activities in the cultural arena can spill over in making business-to-business relationships easier. Its role as an advocate is further underlined when the type of resources it has at its disposal is considered. If one divides resources in 'hard' and 'soft' categories (van Lente et al 2003) the uniqueness of the INP's role is further highlighted. It has limited hard resources which can be used to encourage or gain initial participation, for example, incentives to engage actors, ability to prescribe initial participation, access to seed funding for bilateral or multilateral competency building; power to build and implement policy. It has much soft resource among which are its ability to persuade; contact making; information provision; acting as a sounding board for projects; initiating dialogue and debate; hub for knowledge resources. With the INP role, as delineated, being quite limited but its role as a social actor quite strong given its governmental backing, can it impact relations and what benefits/outcomes can it promote in such relations that is how useful has its role been? The methodology for evaluating

the impact of the function of the INP and the benefits and outcomes of its role will be presented in the next section.

### **METHODOLOGY**

To get a closer insight into the role of the INP as network broker an empirical study was conducted. As the overall relationship between Ireland and Newfoundland had not developed in an extensive interdependent way, most of the latter day relationship exchanges are associated with the work of the INP. One of the authors has had access to the board of the INP and the main political actors on both sides of the relationship for the period of the study. No systematic analysis is presented on this except to confirm the close cultural ties and the huge degree of goodwill on both sides. The geographic distance and relative small market size from an Irish perspective remains the biggest obstacle to engaging in business relationships and networks across the divide.

In order to arrive at an assessment of the more limited broker role of an intermediary such as the INP we were fortunate to be asked by the INP to assess the impact its small scale funding/grants has had on Ireland-Newfoundland relationships, and to conduct more in-depth work on its impact. A census of 117 funding recipients was used to survey the role of the INP. The survey was completed by e-mail. Non-respondents were followed up with 3 telephone calls. An initial letter from the INP was sent out requesting participation which was followed up by an e-mail request from the researchers. The final number of respondents was 73 which represents a 63% response rate. The survey was conducted between March and May 2010. The in-depth interviews were conducted with a sample of 9 key actors, 4 board members and 5 regularly funded grant recipients. The interviews were completed between September and October 2010. The e-mail questionnaire used the SurveyMonkey™s software and measured the INP as broker in 2 ways – impact and benefits/outcomes. The impact of the INP was assessed in terms of its perceived centrality and density of ties created. The key items of centrality were help in partner identification; importance; and criticality. Density was addressed through an assessment of the range of projects funded; relationship sustainability; continued contact after the project; stronger tie relationship emergence; and through an assessment of the case material the respondents provided in the study for a national repository. The role of the INP as intermediary was also assessed through perceived benefits/outcomes of the funded interactions on relationship and network creation. The relationship benefits were addressed in two ways – the respondents were asked about the benefits of the INP as intermediary and then about their relationship specific benefits with their Newfoundland partner. These latter included depth of contact during funded projects; ease of working with partner; an assessment of the strength of the relationship; and perceived friendship. The outcomes measured were range of outcomes projects achieved; success in meeting objectives; funding for other Newfoundland projects; and aid in funding for other projects (‘rippling effect’). The interview guides for the in-depth interviews were open-ended and addressed the impact and benefits and outcomes of the role of the INP. In addition, the respondents provided insights into the future policy role, in general, of the INP. This is used here to ground our discussion and conclusions about the role of the restricted diplomatic intermediary.

The respondent profile is presented in Table 1 as are the main project areas. Most of the funded recipients were in arts, culture and heritage and in research and education. Business development is smaller, as these actors, mainly, required connectivity rather than funding, and

also there has been less dyadic business-to-business transactions created in the overall relationship between the two regions. The main areas of collaborations are provided in Table 1. Given the areas of excellence in Newfoundland’s research and business environment – marine and natural resources, the aim to build relationships in these domains is to be expected.

Table 1: Respondent profile and areas of collaboration

<b>Arts, Culture and Heritage</b>	<b>Research and Education</b>	<b>Business development</b>
42%	47%	11%
Visual arts Music History Literature Folklore	Marine Geology Business Natural sciences	Market exploration Marine Information technology

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

When examining the role the INP as a limited political broker both its impact and benefits/outcomes were evaluated in an empirical study the findings of which are reported in this section.

### **Impact of the INP - centrality**

The INP was a central information and knowledge resource to those surveyed. The core resources the INP provided were networking contacts and advocacy for projects. The funding also aided many recipients. Half of the project participants identified their Newfoundland partner through a professional network and one third of project partners were identified through the INP. An example of a contact made through the INP was between an Irish engineering company, designer and manufacturer of waste water treatment products, and a construction engineering firm in St. John’s Newfoundland who ended up in a joint venture to manufacturing one of the Irish company’s compact prefabricated sewage treatment plants in Newfoundland for the North American market. 59 funded participants responded to an open-ended question on the importance of the INP’s assistance to proceeding with the project which illustrated its centrality. Some of the responses are short such as “*Essential*”; “*The INP was the glue that held the projects together*”; “*The project would not have worked without INP support*”; “*Extremely important. It allowed for travelling to Newfoundland to obtain the data and exchange expertise*” whilst others are longer but with the same sentiment, as follows:

*“The support of the INP is not only financial but crucially in the form of assistance and services. The regular contact with the INP greatly assists the coordination of the various initiatives that form part of the Ireland Newfoundland Programme. The connection adds a great deal of credibility to the programme”;*

*“The INP was very influential and without their support it would have been difficult to develop the relationships fully. The INP also provided a framework within which the bilateral relationships between City X (name disguised) chamber and the St. John’s Board of Trade could explore opportunities for synergy”;*

*“The INP was very important in providing a network of contacts among fellow grantees in Ireland, which stimulates out interest and opportunities for distribution. Furthermore, the nature of the INP as a statutory organisation representing the interests of government and*

*international cooperation, underpinned the value, authenticity and authority of our project – the INP imprimatur facilitated the production and dissemination of our project”;*

*“Funding was critical. Although the sum was small, it enabled preliminary research to be completed, allowed exchange of expertise, strengthened an existing Academic Network (name disguised) and fostered new research contacts. This resulted in a research grant application which was sadly unsuccessful, but continues to form the basis of ongoing research”.*

The one-to-one interviews, perhaps more obviously given their selection as key informants, also provided insight into the centrality of the INP in building Newfoundland relationships:

*“If you are supported by the INP it automatically gives you a line into Government. For example, if you are looking for a Government to host an event for you, like for instance this year we had the Minister for Trade and Commerce, ... performing the opening ceremony in Dungarvan, we had the Minister for the Marine, ..., hosting the Marine Conference in New Ross. So it helps when you need government support for events. And also, being funded by the INP gives you automatic access to the IBP, the Ireland Business Partnerships and ..., and that gives you an IN into the Newfoundland governmental departments. That is always helpful. And certainly <Name omitted> was always very involved in the projects, not only in the funding, but also a direct participant but also a mover and shaker in the all the projects too.”*

The volume of projects which used the INP to identify partners and the subsequent rating of the importance of the INP demonstrates its criticality in developing Ireland-Newfoundland relationships. The INP was able to use its Newfoundland government contacts (especially with its Newfoundland counterpart – the Ireland Business Partnerships (IBP)) as well as its own personal ones to put people in touch with each other in mutually beneficial ways.

80% of the respondents to the survey rated INP as critical to their project proceeding. Only 4 projects were on the negative end of this seven point scale. The Ireland-Newfoundland activity level without the INP would be minimal. In terms of open-ended responses to the criticality question the main issues coming through is the importance of the INP in creating contact and networking given its relative small grant aiding power. This is especially true in the business linkage area where the following quote from one of the in-depth interviews illustrates this success:

*“It’s very much, we would be one of the main players in the marine, the main national agency in marine innovation so we bring a lot of the experience of Canadian players, global players, European players and we can help build bridges between some of the efforts on both sides of the Atlantic and that’s really been a very fruitful area – the networking, the networking value from INP is tremendous.*

*Yeah for a really small amount of money for what has been available to INP their leverage value has been quite significant because they have helped introduce people, network people, the exchange of experience, knowledge itself is worth the investment that has been made. But actually they are facilitating much bigger initiatives that have been funded through other mechanisms, but the INP mechanism has helped to introduce partners. That has been significant added value that the INP, in what the INP can do in creating that networking opportunity and that partnering opportunity and building that trust bond, I mean we will be doing the guts of €3 million’s worth of business with a partner in Newfoundland in the next 3 – 5 years and the INP has been a very important ingredient in building that partnership.”*

The group that received non-financial support also viewed the INP as critical to the success of its projects which further reinforced its centrality. The respondents to the survey and interviewees

clearly identified the diplomatic broker role of the INP and demonstrated its impact through their evaluation of its centrality. It was an important and critical broker to their relationships. The INP's status within government and its role as persuader and social network creator fit the form described in our literature review and may represent a new type of liaison role not previously reported. The responses demonstrate the power a third party, honest broker, can have in relationship and network initiation even with limited resources.

#### **Impact of the INP - density**

Due to the work of the INP and its counterpart in Newfoundland, there are many layers of the density of contact that could not be reported here, for example, in September 2010 the Centre for Newfoundland and Labrador Studies at Waterford Institute of Technology hosted an economic conference on the relationship which brought politicians and business people from both sides of the relationship together. The survey respondents were asked to classify the main area of collaboration and were allowed to choose multiple categories. The main categories chosen are presented in table 2. What is interesting is that the main areas are related to areas of strength in the Newfoundland economy, for example, marine and geology (oil and gas industry), and to the culture ties that bind the common relationship, for example, art and music. In the latter areas some projects were of a one-off nature and had a definitive end and did not rely on a partner except as host for a show or an exhibition for example. This type of connection promoted culture awareness but not long-term relationships which seems to be evident reading through the project descriptions which indicate a lack of reliance on a Newfoundland partner. This has also come out also in our comparison of the sustainability of the relationship. Whilst 67% of the respondents rated their relationship as sustainable (that is in the top three categories of a 7 point scale) there was a significant difference between those in education and research (47% of sample) and in arts culture and heritage (42% of projects). This may be an indicator of the individual creative act inherent in some art forms.

Table 2 – Main Areas of Collaboration

<b>Area of collaboration</b>	<b>Times chosen by respondents</b>
Marine	17
Visual art	14
Business	13
Music	11
Geology	10
History	10
Literature	10
Tourism	10
Folklore	8
Multimedia	7

Some further combing through the data and narrative could lead to an interpretation that research and education saw the most relationship density develop. 92% of the projects in this field had a Newfoundland collaborating partner. If one were to reclassify marine, whilst not directly education and research, some of the bodies are State and Provincial bodies with a mandate to support research and would have a disposition to support international collaboration as government bodies. Therefore, the main colleges – Memorial University of Newfoundland and

Sir Wilfred Grenfell College - and the Marine Institutions have the most significant number of ties and depth of collaboration. However, this is a tentative argument given the overall levels of interaction which were very high during all the projects. Only 12% of the respondents, who had a collaborative partner, at the time of the survey, are never in contact with their partner and 26% were in monthly contact even though they are not working on any current project. Given the relative small size of Newfoundland and its urban population concentrated in St. John's, there are a limited and fairly identifiable set of potential partners. Therefore, there aren't a huge number of alternative contacts. We measured how many respondents had collaborations with other partners and we came out with 23% which may be good or bad depending on how one interprets potential. Of this 23%, 52% were in education and research which indicates that a level of density is developing in this area given its limited number of potential institutional collaborators but with ample possibility for developing critical mass.

A good exemplar of the density of collaboration is in the marine and ocean sectors with inter-governmental cooperation overlapping with academic research and business trading. This network goes outside the Newfoundland province into Atlantic Canada but is confined to Ireland in Europe. Contacts had been developing in the 1990s which, as a tangible example, were illustrated in a more formal way in 2001 when the Marine Institute (Ireland) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with their Newfoundland and Labrador equivalent, the Canadian Centre for Marine Communication. This was a significant step for both bodies as approval for same is a function of their boards which are controlled by the respective governments. The INP was facilitating similar contacts across universities, the main business players and other department of government that would have an interest in marine, ocean technology and oil and gas exploration. Significant joint conferences and seminars in these fields were supported year-on-year by the INP making it possible for people to travel and develop social bases for cooperation. Businesses from Newfoundland and Labrador and Irish companies combined as contractors and subcontractors in the Irish national seabed survey much of which is now being shared between the two governments as the geology of Atlantic Canada and the West of Ireland is similar. Indeed, these companies formed a loose alliance to go after other international work together to give them further critical mass. In 2005, one initiative of the INP was to bring government, academia and business together for a weekend workshop with the aim of seeing how the north Atlantic seabed might be further exploited for its oil and gas potential. This dialogue was a key factor in beginning a process which led to the establishment of the North Atlantic Petroleum Systems Assessment (NAPSA) group in 2007 to fund research into the exploitation challenges of the oil and gas resources in the north Atlantic. This group is funded by both governments and by business and engages all the main researchers and government bodies in the area. The research outputs funded by NAPSA are disseminated in a yearly conference the next of which is in October 2011. The INP has managed to continue to support the density of network contact across the marine and ocean sectors (these would include mineral exploitation as referenced, but also wind and ocean power, marine habitats and conservation, basic and applied research in all aspects of marine and ocean geology) over the period of this study's empirical work to the extent that there is an impressive range and depth to the contact and many examples of collaborative work being undertaken and joint trading opportunities between firms on both sides of the Atlantic. The density of network interaction is across different sectoral networks and facilitates organisations to develop activity links with wider networks if they were not already part of them.

The impact of the INP can be seen in the variety of contact made by the participants and in the depth of collaboration. The density of ties enabled means the potential for long term relationships and networks exist. The data may show emerging critical mass impact in education and research, and in the marine and geology fields. However, in most of the contacts created, the Irish partner felt that they were sustainable and they were in ongoing contact. The density of ties created supports the INP's role as diplomatic broker. Another way of explaining the ties created by the INP is to argue that they were due to the missionary zeal of a few key actors in the INP (1), on its board (1), and some other people (4) who would appear as central actors in many projects and activities to do with Ireland-Newfoundland relationships. The density of ties created appears to be beyond this group yet the advocacy they provide is critical. The INP is in a period of transition in its staffing and governance structures so it may be easier to answer this question in the next period. For example, if the INP's staff and board did not contain some advocates that were cause-oriented would it have been as successful at creating ties? If a diplomatic broker doesn't have staff that is mission driven, or have a passion for the cause beyond the job, would the role be achievable? Would an affirmatory analysis to the last question restrict the application of the diplomatic broker to another area?

#### **Benefits/outcomes of the INP**

The benefits addressed were those of the INP as intermediary and the relationship-specific benefits the participants gained through interaction. Both assessments affirm the Ireland-Newfoundland connection and the role of the INP as relationship broker. The benefits of the INP as intermediary were reported in an open-ended way and underline its diplomatic broker role. Some sample quotes from interviews are reported below. The core benefits were its role as contact source, as a government-level intermediary lending credibility to the projects and, of course, its funding which helped kick-start the projects. All three benefits of the INP came through strongly and support this type of intermediary role and perhaps its replication in other contexts. Some sample quotes illustrate the benefits of the INP as intermediary: *"Invaluable assistance with both contacts to Newfoundland and also with funding."*; *"The support of the INP is not only financial but crucially in the form of assistance and services. The regular contact with INP greatly assists the coordination of the various initiatives that form part of the Ireland Newfoundland Programme. The connection adds a great deal of credibility to the programme."*; *"The INP is a friendly, efficient network and played an important role in bringing partners together from both sides of the Atlantic. It was a major catalyst in bringing our work to a stage of publication."*; *"Well the endorsement that the funding from the INP gave effectively opened doors into the University. Because the INP was deemed to be a vehicle that enjoyed the support of the provincial government of Newfoundland and Labrador, and also the Irish government. So it was a quality status. So in essence I was playing the game with the wind at my back."*; *"Obviously there is the fact that hard cash is useful. I think there is also the case where that relationship with Ireland Newfoundland Partnership is important for going to other funding sources...that particular brief carries weight with other funding agencies...In that sense it is a very useful sounding board... Their first question will inevitably be 'have you talked to Ireland Newfoundland Partnership', what did they think of it and so forth. It comes back to that point of giving initial validation."*

For the respondents that had partners in Newfoundland (73% of respondents), the depth of collaboration illustrated by the number of times they were in contact during the project was very frequent, as stated. In terms of other relationship-specific benefits to the Irish partner, massively

positive ranking were given to ease of working with Newfoundland partners, overall ranking of the strength of the relationship, and in a measure of friendship with those that had a collaborative partner over 80% ranked their friendship as close (top three categories). These are clear benefits of working with Newfoundland partners for the Irish respondents which also indicates the success the INP has had as an intermediary in making the right connections. The benefits specific to the projects support the role of the INP as an intermediary capable of brokering significant relationships. Project participants have developed strong trust from interaction which is a major prerequisite of ongoing relationships.

The measured outcomes of the funded projects were project-specific and future oriented to other projects and collaborations in Newfoundland. There were a huge range of outcomes cited in the projects supported by the INP. These outcomes are summarized in Table 3. The outcomes are easily matched to the main areas of support but also illustrate the diversity of projects supported, and are indicative of the beginning phases of relationship development – supporting a wide base to see where traction might develop into future critical mass engagement.

Table 3 – project outcomes

<b>Project Outcomes</b>	<b>Number of times cited</b>
Conference item	16
Performance/musical event	16
Show/Exhibition	13
Article (non peer reviewed)	12
Teaching resource	11
Monograph	9
Experimental data	8
Dataset	6
Thesis/dissertation	5
Artefact/Artists work product	4
Audio sound recording	4
Video	4

82% of the respondents rated their success in achieving their project outcomes in the top 3 points in a seven point scale. 23 respondents received further project support for Newfoundland projects from other sources outside of the INP and 65% of these cited the INP as critical in being able to obtain this funding. A quote from one of the survey participants illustrates the INP support and collaborative benefit obtained from participation: *“We enjoyed our time working in Newfoundland and working with the INP and it really helped us to value our heritage and develop the ... Island Theatre Troupe.... It also helped us to value the learning and information sharing of transnational partnerships so much so that we applied and qualified for an EU INTERREG project in ... which comprised of visits to islands on four countries and through these visits we also received funding to develop a heritage centre on ... Island.”* The main partner in the further funded collaboration was in research and education and in particular Memorial University of Newfoundland. This indicates the strength of ties between education and research in Ireland and Newfoundland and perhaps some of this effort will enhance business collaboration in future especially in marine and ocean technology where there is a focus on collaborative exploitation of natural resources at a government level and with commercial

interests partnering the academic research. 23 projects receiving further funding is a high ratio which seems to indicate the choices made by the INP have created dense ties and embedded partnerships. This is the case even with some of the arts, culture and heritage projects being one-off and therefore would not recur every year and with business projects that would not be looking for other grant aid as they would invest their own money if opportunities were to be pursued. Only 42% of the overall projects were in education and research which means that a very high portion of these funded applicants went on to further projects with Newfoundland based on a solid starting support by the INP. The outcomes cited by project participants support the role of the INP and complement the findings on its impact on Ireland-Newfoundland relationships.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

This paper set out to describe the form and to examine the role of a limited network intermediary. The INP is an unusual network broker rarely reported in the literature, a government broker with a diplomatic role of improving relationships including trading relationships which is located in the Office of the Taoiseach (Irish Prime Minister). As a diplomatic broker, the INP has had to rely on persuasion and on its expertise as an information and knowledge resource. However, given its location in the office of the Irish Prime Minister, its ability to connect to those in power and use advocacy is strong. This form of intermediary and its position seem to work in this case. The INP's small budget, in the period under review, helped crystallise critical mass and more connectivity. Examining the role of this broker over a 10 year period through empirical data, both qualitative and quantitative, it would appear that the INP worked and its role did achieve results as a broker. Perhaps there is a strong role for brokers of this type, especially in the early stages of inter-country relationship building? Along all of the assessment reported in the paper in terms of both impact and benefits/outcomes, the INP had considerable effect in its role. It is possible to translate political goodwill into practical cooperation and begin building collaborative activity on a wider scale.

Many of the individual connections reported in this paper are at a dyad level, which is perhaps a function of their stage of development, although the political connections are dense and multiplex. Over the period reported, the links in education and research appear to have become more network oriented and to begin to take on more complex interdependent and self sustaining forms. One multiple actor network (business, government, government agencies, and academia) in the natural resources area also appears to have a broad and deep set of ties across both countries. Both governments invested time and effort to get companies involved in natural resource (oil and gas) exploitation together in a network to support research and development and shared commercial opportunities. Many of the companies involved have worked together in seabed surveys as contractors or subcontractors. It is currently undertaking a large research project surveying geological formations in Atlantic Canada involving multiple academic research institutions and the national geological agencies. This network is in an early stage of building commercial opportunities but has a large social net which will form the basis for future economic ties.

The role of the INP as a network broker is at a cross roads. It will not have a funding role in future and its key staff has changed. The board has become advisory and its new staff have a portfolio of other duties. It is in the process of creating a new strategy. The most obvious potential in this process is to further enhance its broker capacity. This can be done by focusing

its capability at a sectoral level (the niches that came through in the findings) and in partnership with other state bodies in Ireland and its partner body in Newfoundland. It can move to the next stage of broker development but its ability will be totally dependent on its staff and board that is using its social capital rather than any incentives that it can offer. It will be able to develop contact, add political weight to proposals, provide access to government agencies and attract attention to projects by hosting conferences etc. It has not been or will not be a decision maker in trade policy. In this regard it will have to influence those involved in this area to carve a space for Ireland's Newfoundland connection. It is well placed to do this. It has become clear that the main planks of sectoral effort for the next few years will be in the natural resource exploitation, and in marine and ocean technologies areas, and perhaps in tourism. From a Newfoundland perspective, Ireland's reputation in computer software might add it as a sectoral attraction. A base of social capital has been created in these areas and now must be pushed to another level to create sustained interaction. The greatest risk of having no funding will be in the arts, culture and heritage area, and in education and research which, at the best of times, will find funding constrains limiting joint projects. This may hit the arts, culture and heritage and the humanities research arena stronger than the other disciplines of research and education which have other avenues of funding open to them. If young students continue to exchange both ways in numbers then a future embedded tie is naturally created. Most universities should strive to keep this as a minimum as it is the basis for long-term friendships that will keep the shared traditions alive. Future research on the relationship and broker role of the INP might fruitfully follow the cases and networks to examine their long-term impact. This study covered 10 years but did not tell the total story. It does act as a base line for future studies but is limited by being a one-sided Irish perspective which did not, beyond the authors' knowledge of many Newfoundland counterparts, study what our friends on the 'other side' think of the potential of the evolving relationship. The most interesting areas to study will be the emergent networks in education and in business which had most traction in the study period. These will attest the strength or otherwise of constructing relationships on a foundation of history.

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