

All Ireland Research Observatory

Putting authoritative data and evidence
into the hands of Ireland's decision makers



Challenge

The challenges researched by the All Ireland Research Observatory (AIRO) are among the most complex and most urgent in the country. Based at Maynooth University, the organisation investigates pressing issues ranging from how to decrease the pressure on the housing market and how to support the economic recovery of Ireland to how to protect the environment.

Taking one challenge at a time, AIRO compiles, analyses and visualises vast amounts of socio-demographic, economic and spatial data. It then shares this insight with policy makers and planners, enabling them to better understand situations and make the right decisions about where new services, housing and infrastructure should be developed, based on the best available evidence.

Solution

For many years, AIRO has had a Memorandum of Understanding with Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSi) and has used OSi mapping products as the backbone to its research work. OSi's MapGenie provides the essential background mapping layer for the majority of AIRO's tools.

Most significantly, AIRO uses the GeoHive platform, developed by OSi, to make its data and research available to public sector organisations and the general public. As the national geospatial data platform for Ireland, GeoHive provides a secure and easy way to connect decision makers with authoritative data. AIRO has collaborated with OSi and used GeoHive in the development of several data sharing initiatives, including the creation of a national COVID-19 Hub for sharing up-to-date data on coronavirus cases, hospitalisations and deaths.

Benefits

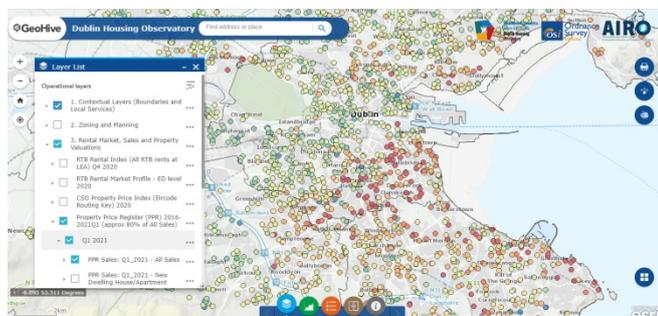
For AIRO, the benefits of working with OSi can be summarised as:

A sustainable platform for sharing AIRO research

GeoHive gives AIRO a sustainable platform for sharing its data and research with decision makers in the public sector. For example, AIRO has used GeoHive for the Dublin Housing Observatory, a decision-support tool for planners involved in shaping the future of the capital's housing market. "OSi is, without a doubt, a world leader," says Justin Gleeson, a director of AIRO. "It would be hard to identify another country that has such a strong handle on creating an accessible, national, geospatial data platform. Having the collaboration with OSi and being able to develop new solutions on the GeoHive platform is a huge benefit for us, as it enables us to get our work out there."

Analytical capabilities to support decision making

When AIRO solutions are made available via GeoHive, decision makers can not only view AIRO's data but also analyse it geospatially to better understand issues and evaluate evidence. One of AIRO's latest collaborative projects is a strategic environmental assessment tool. Developed in collaboration with University College Dublin (UCD), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR), this tool will help planners assess the impact of projects on the environment. "Previously it would have been a time-consuming process for planners to gather together all of the required environmental data and analyse it," Gleeson explains. "However with GeoHive we can put all the information into the hands of planners, in one place, so they can undertake their own analysis of any area of the country, in a matter of minutes."



"With GeoHive, OSi has removed the technical road blocks to sharing and using spatial data across the public sector."

Justin Gleeson, Director, All Ireland Research Observatory

Co-creation of innovative solutions

AIRO appreciates the support it receives from OSi and the insight it gains from working with OSi on joint projects. The close collaboration between the two organisations has led to innovation in many areas including regional planning. AIRO and OSi are currently working together to develop a Regional Development Monitor - a series of maps, dashboards and data that will enable people to understand how Ireland's three Regional Assemblies are progressing through the lifetime of Ireland's National Planning Framework (NPF) and the three Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) to 2031. "This is a really innovative project and will make a real step change in regional planning in Ireland," Gleeson says.

Optimised use of spatial data in the public sector

AIRO applauds OSi's recent advances in data visualisation and mapping technology, which it believes will encourage government organisations to embrace geospatial data more fully and use it to better understand their challenges. "Mapping technology has moved so fast!" Gleeson exclaims. "Never before has there been such a good opportunity for public sector organisations to get to grips with their own data. With GeoHive, OSi has removed the technical road blocks to sharing and using spatial data across the public sector."