

Nevin Institute



A new all island social settlement; An eco-social
contract a future of care and equality

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Acknowledging collaborations with many, especially Dr Pauline Cullen, Dr Fiona Dukelow
and Orla O' Connor (NWC) and Emeritus Prof Peadar Kirby and (Studies Model of
Development Sp Ed 2024)



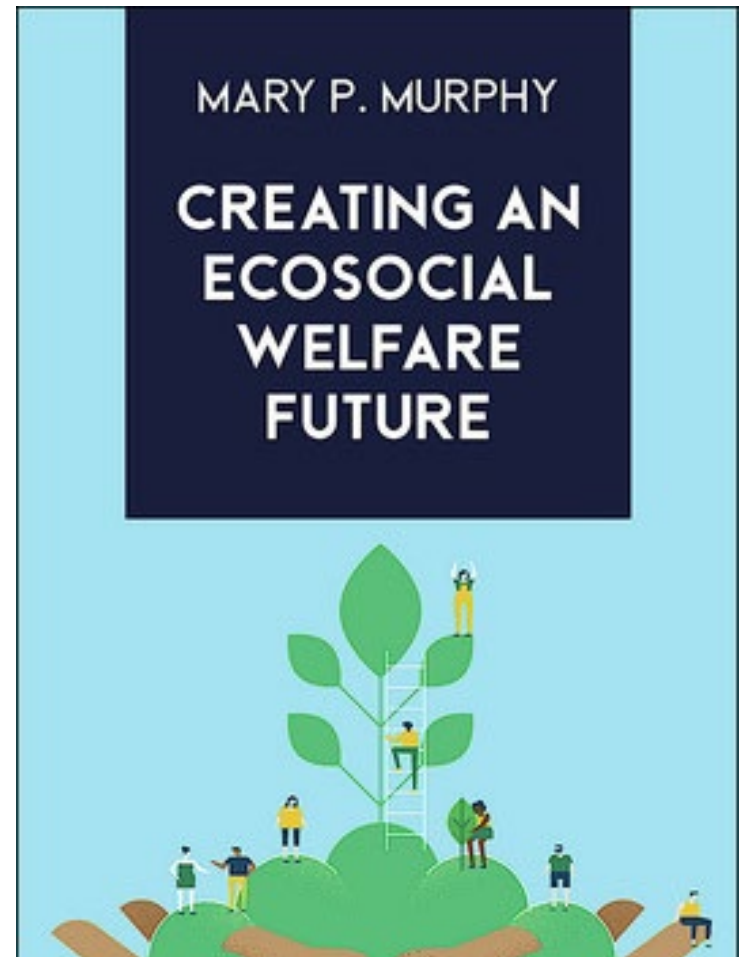
Introduction - Theory of Change

Part one - The conjoined problem of climate and inequality north and south **what is wrong**

Part two – Addressing insecurity through the logic of eco social welfare futures **what is the answer**

Part three – making change happen , role of Trade Unions and NERI **how to get there**

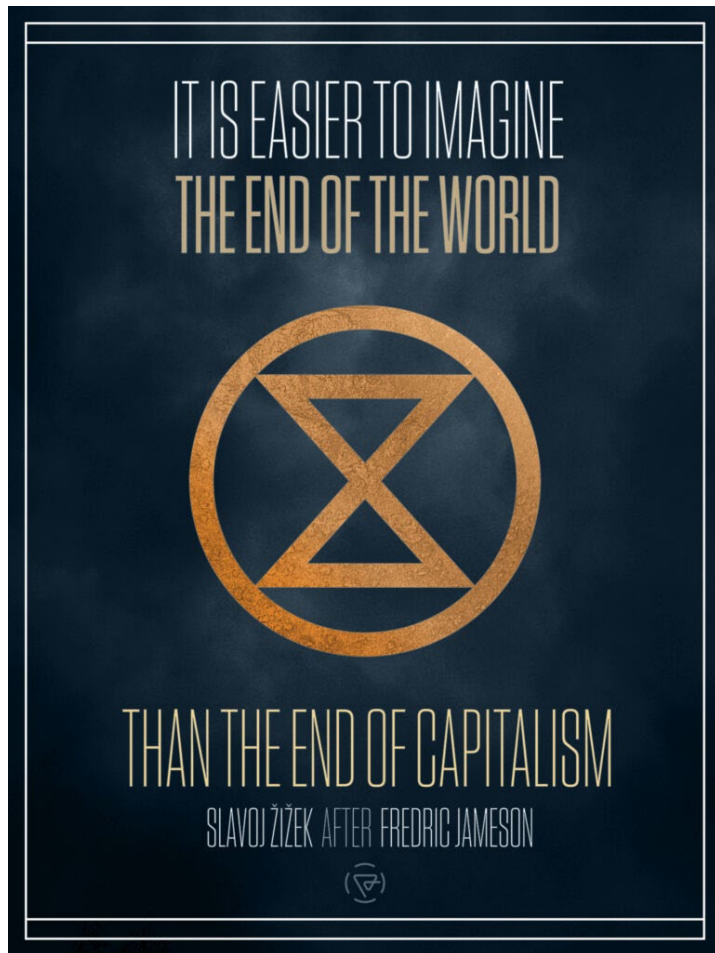
Conclusion – making it fair, fast and democratic



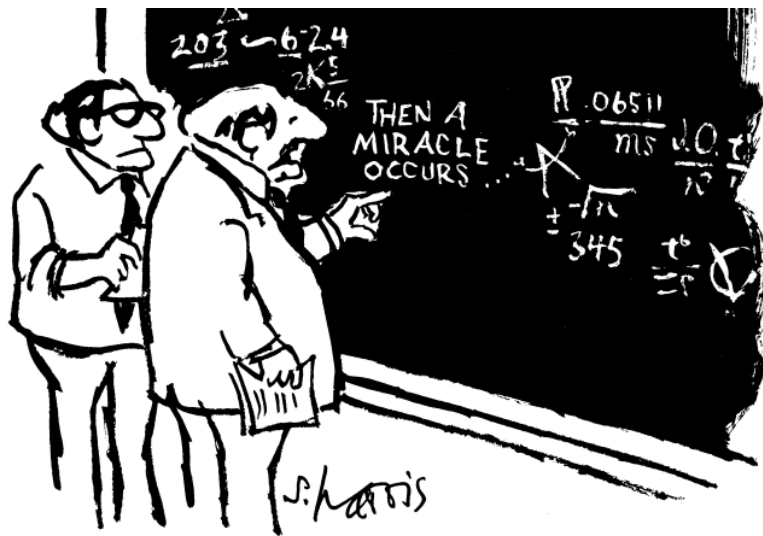
First an introduction ...

- Pracademic, Crossing Boundaries,
 - policy/politics, academic/civil society, others too
- Decades of change - ‘falling slowly’
- EU Social Policy, EGD JT, ETUI, key issues
- Just Transition as transformative tool for security and eco social innovation needed – fast!

The world is socially constructed, not inevitable.
Any human power can be resisted & changed by human beings.



How change happens (Green 2016)



"I THINK YOU SHOULD BE MORE EXPLICIT HERE IN STEP TWO."

Role of state - steering not rowing !!!



Theory of Change Transitions/Transformations

‘Glass ceiling’ on transformation

(Hammond 2020)

Critical ‘Problem Solving’ Eckersely 2022 –

Identifying the ‘next best transition steps’ ..with greatest long-term transformational potential

Revolutionary or non reformist reforms (Wright 2013, Gorz 1967 , Fraser 2023)

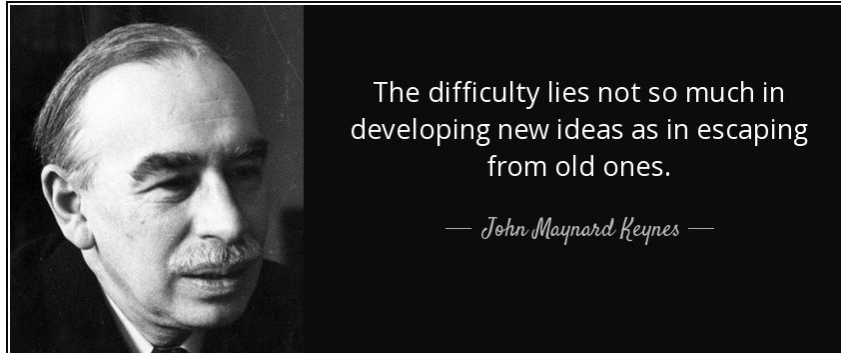
Create demand (politics from below)

- Framing/Ideas/Imagining
- Inclusive Mobilising
- Coalition building

Influence supply (policy or governance from above)

- Political processes
- Institutional imagination
- Multilevel/scalar/actor governance incl EU

Power of ideas to break cognitive locks (Blyth 2004)



Institutional or policy imagination
Inclusive processes – merging of
knowledges (workers and users)

Eco Social as North Star or Compass Bearing



Part one

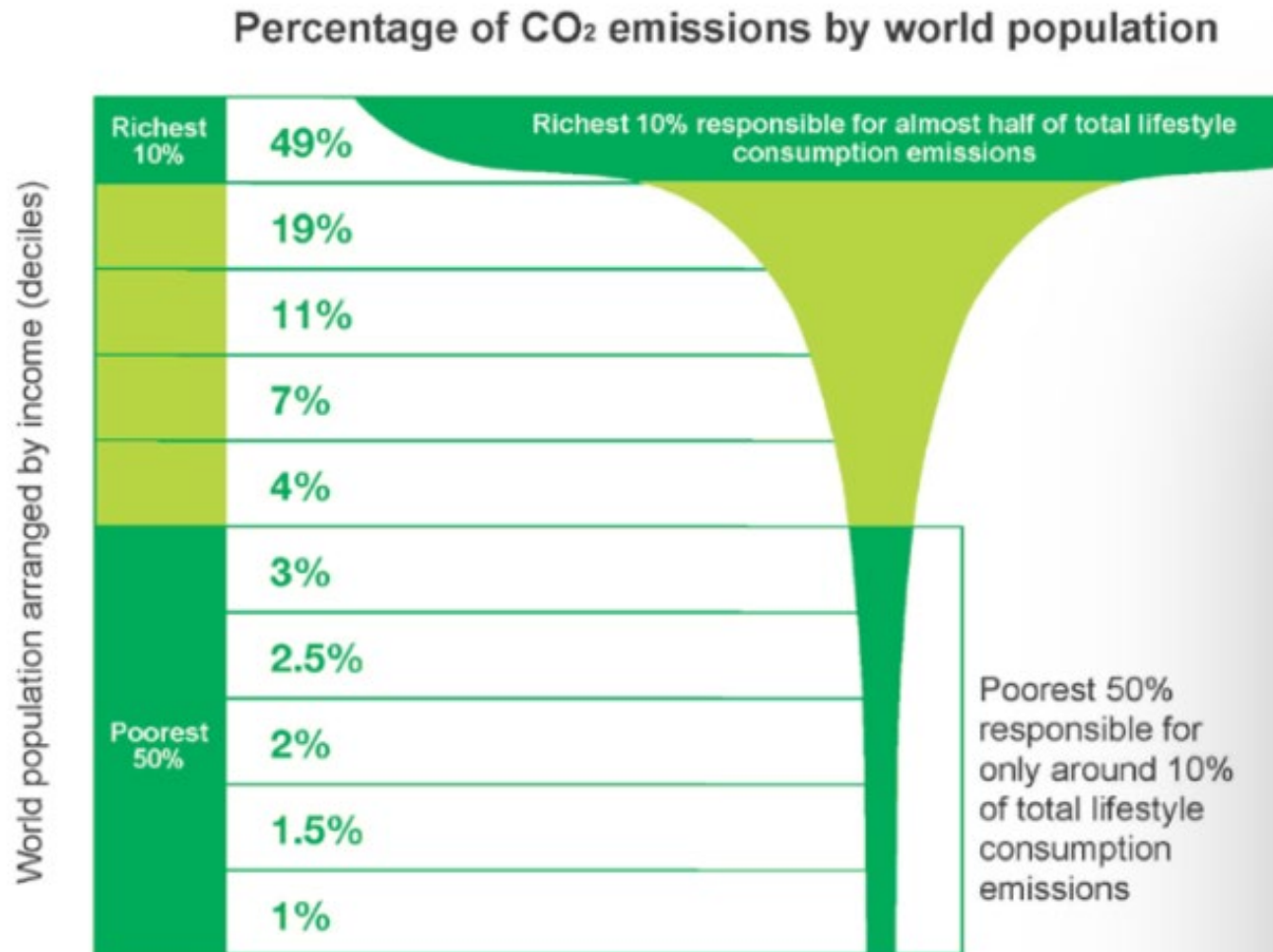
- The problem of climate and inequality, north and south of the island and globally
- Frame of insecurity

Inequality and climate conjoined, N&S

- Inequality and climate change, wealth as a cause and inequality as effect, those who did least, suffer most, gender +
- Inequality and wealth not inevitable an-outcome of our political economy, eras
- Argument for transformative institutional and welfare imagination to tackle inequality and climate together

Climate & Inequality 10:50 but 50:10

Figure 1: Global income deciles and associated lifestyle consumption emissions



Source: Oxfam

Those most and least vulnerable

Are the least responsible

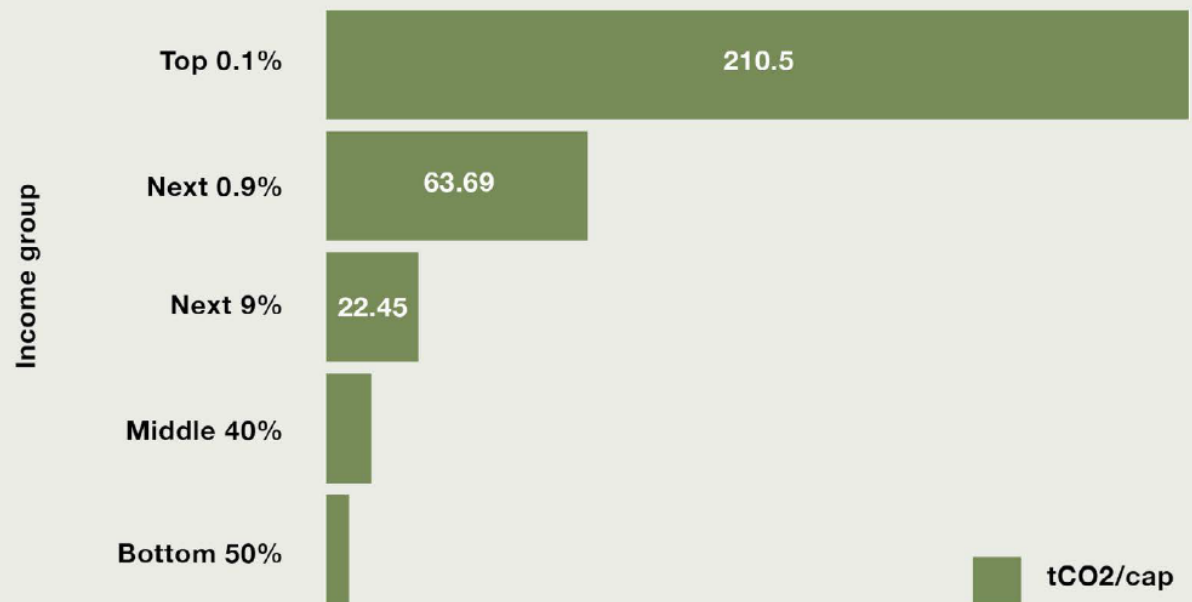
Are more vulnerable to impacts

Bear greater burdens in mitigation and adaptation

Benefit least from such policies;

Are least recognized/included in decision making

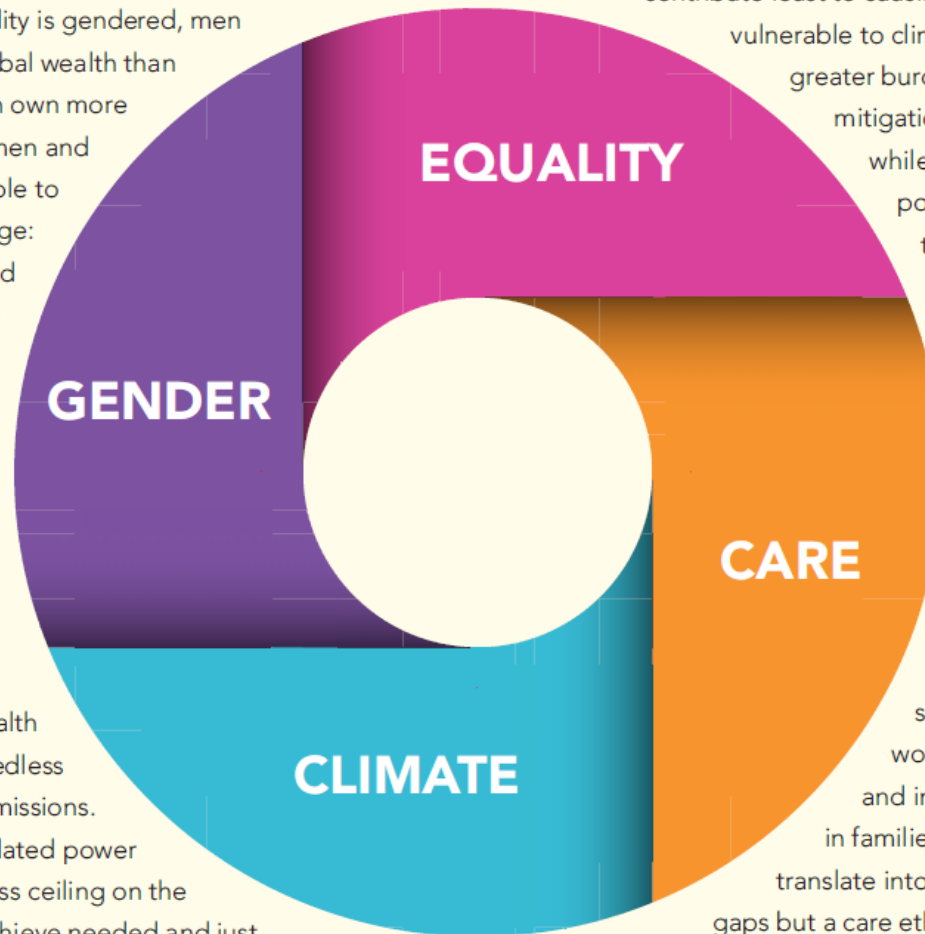
Figure 1.1: Irish income groups and per capita share of consumption-based emissions, 2019



Data source: Stockholm Environmental Institute Emissions Inequality Dashboard (2023)

GENDER: Wealth inequality is gendered, men own 50 per cent more of global wealth than women, the 22 richest men own more than all women in Africa. Women and girls are more vulnerable to impacts of climate change: Women's empowerment, and care equality is crucial to tackling inequality.

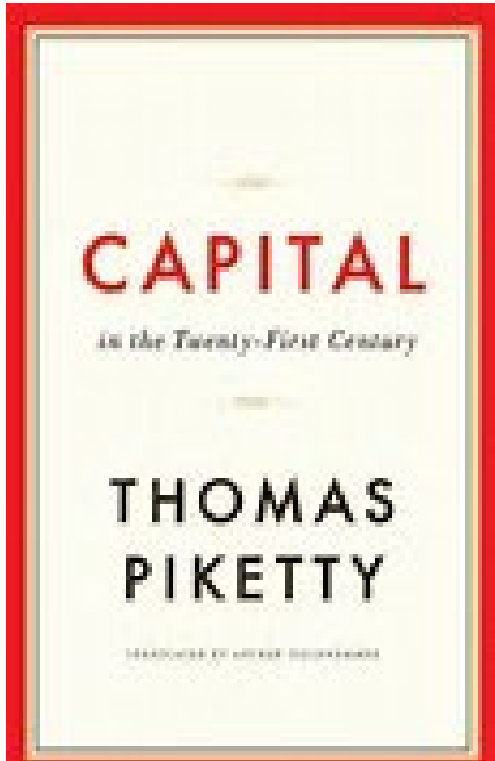
CLIMATE: Gendered wealth disparity drives needless consumption and carbon emissions. Gross inequality and the related power of the market acts as a glass ceiling on the capacity of the state to achieve needed and just ecological transformation that leaves no one behind.



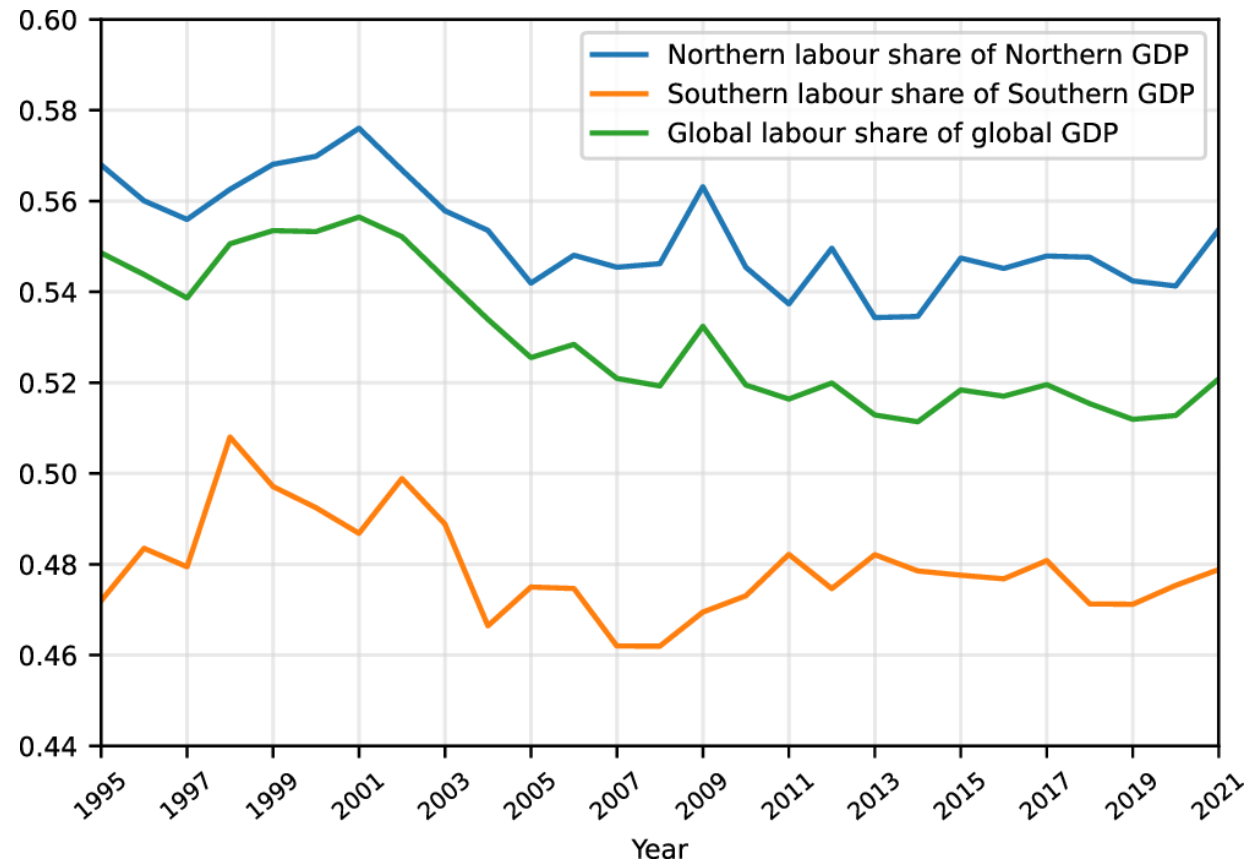
EQUALITY: Those with least income and resources contribute least to causing carbon emissions, are more vulnerable to climate impacts, risk bearing the greater burdens in terms of climate mitigation and adaptation policies, while benefiting the least from such policies, and having least power to influence change. Gender equality is key to tackling climate change.

CARE: A systemic care crisis impacts most on women, as we see a feminisation of low-paid care work in public and private sectors, and in informal and unpaid care settings in families and communities. Care penalties translate into gendered time, pay and pension gaps but a care ethic for human and the planet is essential for sustainability and well being.

Wages/salaries share of national income diminishing



Hickel, J., Hanbury Lemos, M. & Barbour, F. Unequal exchange of labour in the world economy. *Nat Commun* 15, 6298 (2024).

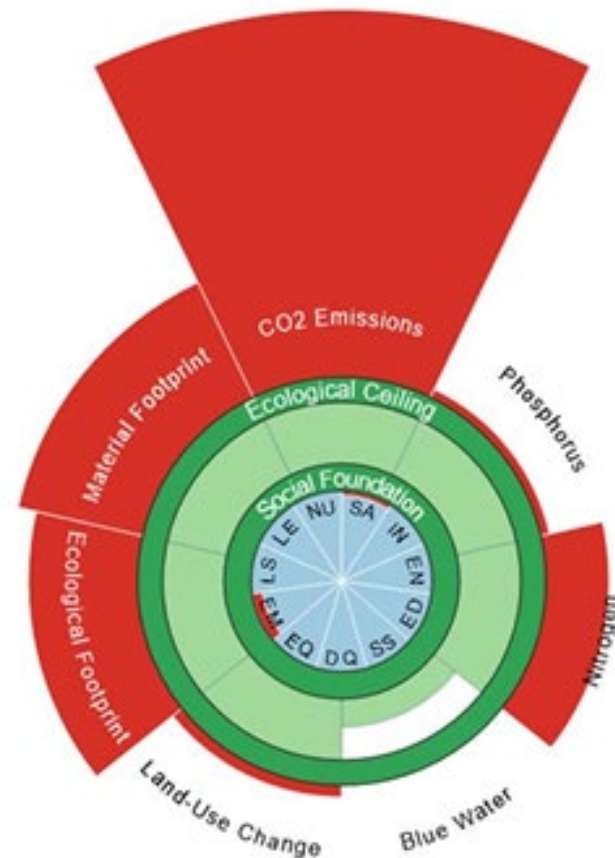


Undermining social cohesion and threatening revenue – social contract?

ROI 2024

Fig 1 Assessment of Ireland using Doughnut Economic Framework.
Source Raworth DEAL 2015

- ROI - reduction of up to 29 % by 2030, 51% % 2050 for net zero emissions (IPCC)
- Full implementation across all sectors ++
- Almost all sectors will exceed their national sectoral emissions ceilings for 2030 (including Agriculture, Electricity and Transport).
- Carbon budgets (2021-2030) will not be met and roll over, making it harder
- EU Effort Sharing Regulation target of 42 % by 2030
- 8b in fines (CCAC 2024)



Water quality and unemployment , in work poverty

NI Climate Change Act 2022

NI Climate Change Adaptation Programme)2) 2020-24 (2023 assessment)

NICCAP2 Key Priority Areas	NICCAP2 Outcome Objectives and Visions
NC Natural Capital, including Terrestrial Coastal/Marine/Freshwater ecosystems, soils and biodiversity. 	- NC1: We will have species, habitats and water bodies that are resilient to the impacts of climate change. - NC2: We have coastal communities, habitats, landforms and infrastructure that are resilient to impacts of climate change. - NC3: We have soils and woodland that are resilient to the impacts of climate change.
IF Infrastructure Services. 	- IF1: We have Transport & Network Services that are resilient to the impacts of Flooding & extreme weather.
P People & Built Environment. 	- P1: We have people, homes, buildings and communities that are resilient to the impacts of Flooding & extreme of weather.
B Disruption to Businesses & Supply Chains. 	- B1: We have businesses that can adapt to impacts of Climate Change & extreme weather.
I Food Security/Global Food Production. 	- I1: We have a food system that is resilient to impacts of climate change.

NICCAP2 – net zero 2050

- 7 key performance indicators
(vision centred but insufficient)

Further development, planning
at early stage.

Critical policy/planning
milestones missing

Only limited evidence of
delivery,

large data gaps a key
assessment barrier for 2/3
outcomes

Table 1: Key indicative macro indicators, Ireland, north and south

Indicator	Northern Ireland	Ireland
Employment rate (2021)	69%	63%
Child poverty (2020)	23%	21.1%
Gender pay gap (2018)	8.7	14.2
Inflation (2021)	1.4	.88
Basic adult payment (2021)	£76 (€88)	€203 (£175.16)
Pandemic adult payment (2021)	Upgraded UC £96 (€111)	PuP €350 (£301)
Non pandemic unemployment (2021)	4.6	5.8
Long-term unemployment as % total unemployment (2021)	34.1%	26%
Youth unemployment (2021)	11.2%	13.85%
Minimum wage (2021)	£8.72 (€10.11)	€10.20 (£8.80)
Relative Poverty (2018)	20%	15.7%
% food poverty (2018)	16%	10%
Gini co-efficient (2018)	25	31.5
Lone parents (2021)	21.3%	25.4%

NERI N/S Economic Security (Mc Donnell oct 2024)

- Assessing hard – data deficits - path dependencies
- Both ROI and UK ‘threadbare’ social security systems by European standards
- 2023 17.3% ROI enforced deprivation in the Republic of Ireland. UK absolute poverty (Hg) 18%
- Min wage UK target 66% of median earnings (21+ 2024). ROI 60% median earnings (2026) then 66%
- ROI and UK both low tax effort, SI, (PRB, PRSI (er))
- Pandemic analysis UK/ROI differed in emphasis
- Different services universal, infrastructural deficit

Eco-Social and Just Transition

An all-island Eco Social Contract –

- Eco Social
 - 'the explicit combined pursuit of ecological goals, such as fast decarbonisation, with social protection and social justice goals' (Ian Gough, 2008)
 - Policies that at the same time, or through the same process, achieve social and ecological objectives
 - Wider than about decarbonisation,
 - Degrees of transformative ambition
 - **Sub set - Sustainable Welfare**
- Just Transition
 - Trade union concept - workers
 - Transition to a climate-neutral economy while securing the future and livelihoods of workers and their communities.
 - EU JTF, SCF, 2026, limited despite obvious need
 - Elastic - transition beyond fossil – Digitalisation, Agriculture,
 - Extended to local communities and intersectionality. global. leave

Part two

- Addressing insecurity about the future through an 'eco social contract'
- A focus on welfare/work/ care nexus

Insecurity – Rep Lori Chavez De Remer

Incoming Secretary of Labour in Trump Administration

Robert Reich 1993

Great change demands great flexibility -- the capacity to adapt quickly and continuously, to change jobs, change directions, gain new skills. Sad irony is that massive change on the scale we are now facing may be inviting the opposite reaction: a politics of preservation, grounded in fear." 1990s –policy - IT transition

Reich 1993/7 SS Labour (Clinton)

If people don't have security about the future – they will look for security in the past - politics



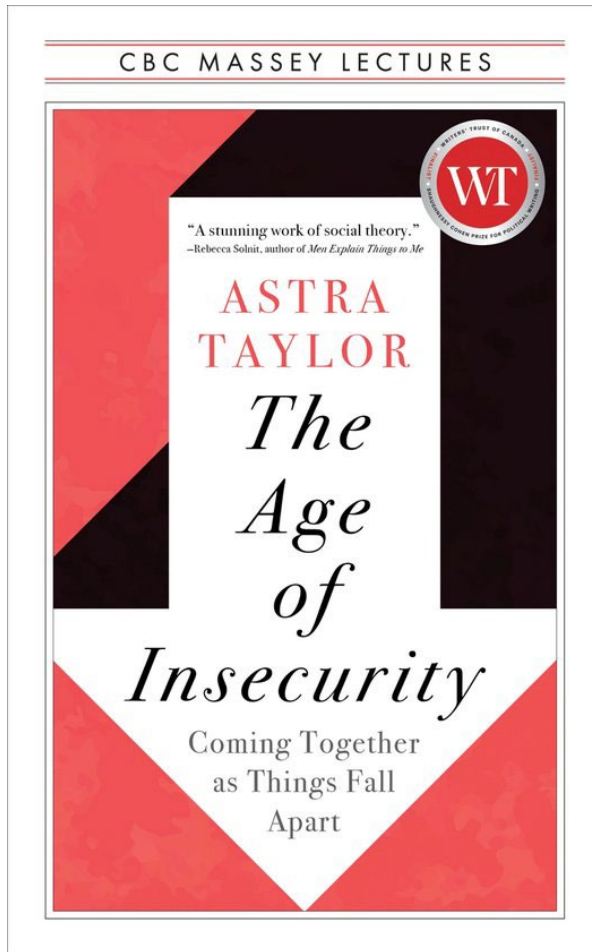
Frances Perkins 1933

- Witnessed death of 145 (123 women/22 men) in Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire NY, 1911
- US Secretary of Labour Roosevelt 1933
- Negotiating welfare & social security legislation – New Deal
- Kairos- Ready Now

know now is propitious moment for decision/action



Security at heart of social contract



- Insecurity as ability to look forward and make sense of past, present and future (Taylor 2023 p 64)
- Security/insecurity – profound impact on politics and culture
- Solidarity or Authoritarianism
- Populism - cultural struggle driven by **uncertainty about the future &** perception of personal (RP) or social unfairness (LP) (Hall 2024)

Ethic of collective security as taking care of humans and nature – careful & care economy –

Change inevitable - how to ensure transformative change
Political question and struggle about values/possibilities,
No policy blueprints

Economic Development Model to address economic security, inequality, income adequacy and well-being

ICTU Biennial Del Conf
Kilkenny 2023

4 mutually reinforcing pillars

N/S TU debate by June 2025

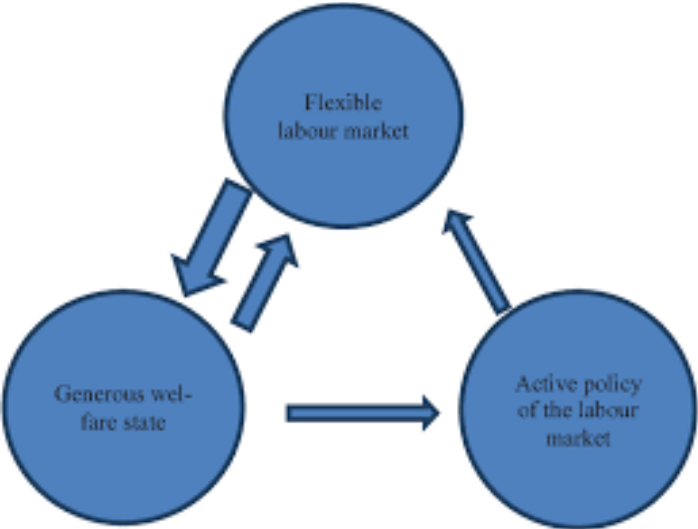
comprehensive long-term
model of economic
development for both
economies on the Island of
Ireland.

1. A Productive and high-value economy;
2. Participation and good or better jobs;
3. Economic Security
4. Economic dynamism, resilience and sustainability.

McDonnell, Oct 2024 .. 1/4

Beware welfare nostalgia – look forward,
but

Flexicurity or Flex Insecurity, EC 2023



Welfare leg dodgy

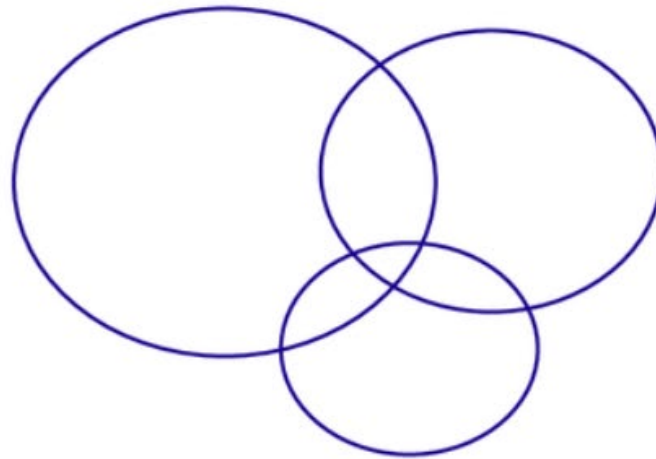


2005

THE DEVELOPMENTAL WELFARE STATE

Services

- Education
- Health
- Childcare
- Eldercare
- Housing
- Transport
- Employment Services



Income supports

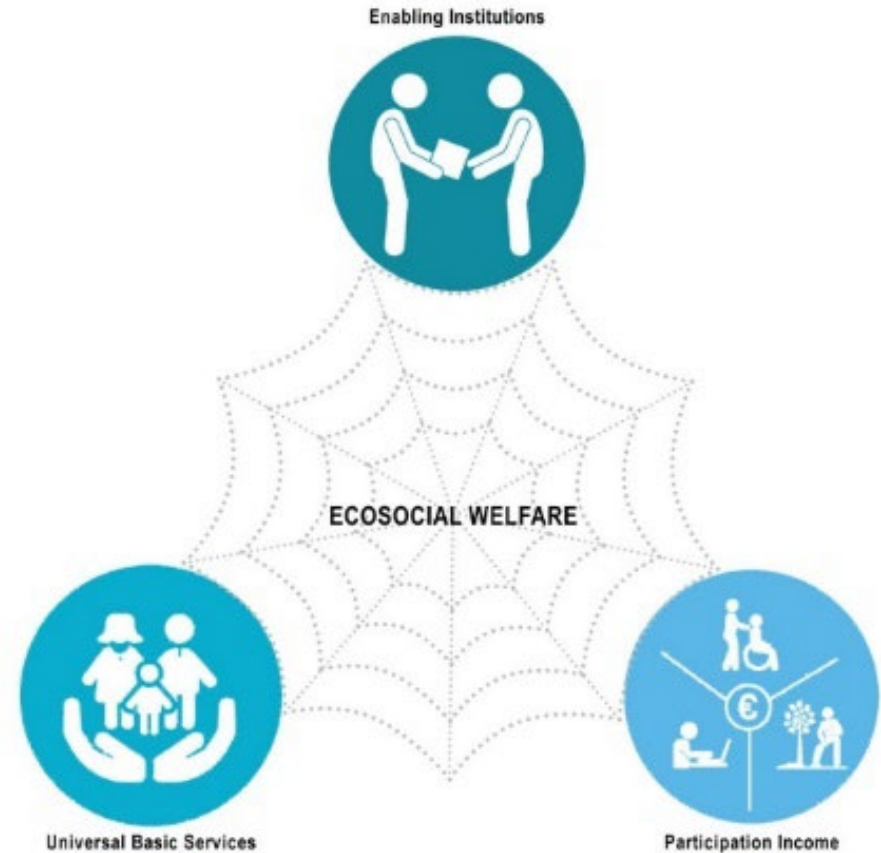
- Progressive child Income supports
- Working age transfers for Participation
- Minimum pension guarantee
- Capped tax expenditures

Activist Measures

- Novel/contestatory approaches
- Particular community/group projects
- Emerging new needs
- Outcome focused
- Evaluation and mainstreaming

Critiqued for absence of social reproduction as variable of analysis

Seeds of past models.. to eco social

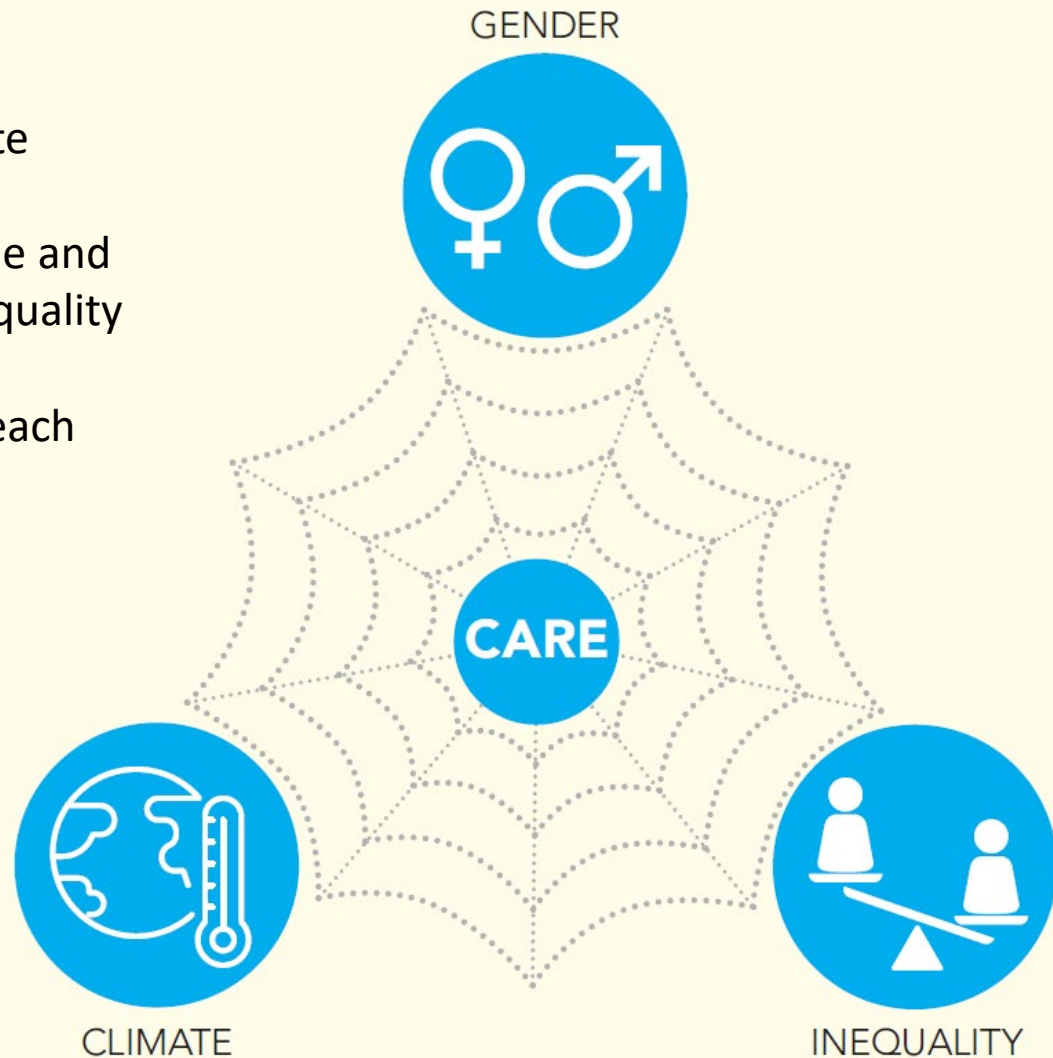


Taking gender seriously

Care Inequality and Climate

Redistribution of work time and
income needed for care equality

Taking Care of ourselves, each
other and the Planet



A (sh) eco social contract

A new model of development would rebalance of state, market and society and, rather than growth and finance, would place care, equality and well-being at its centre.



Social settlement

Eco-social logic,

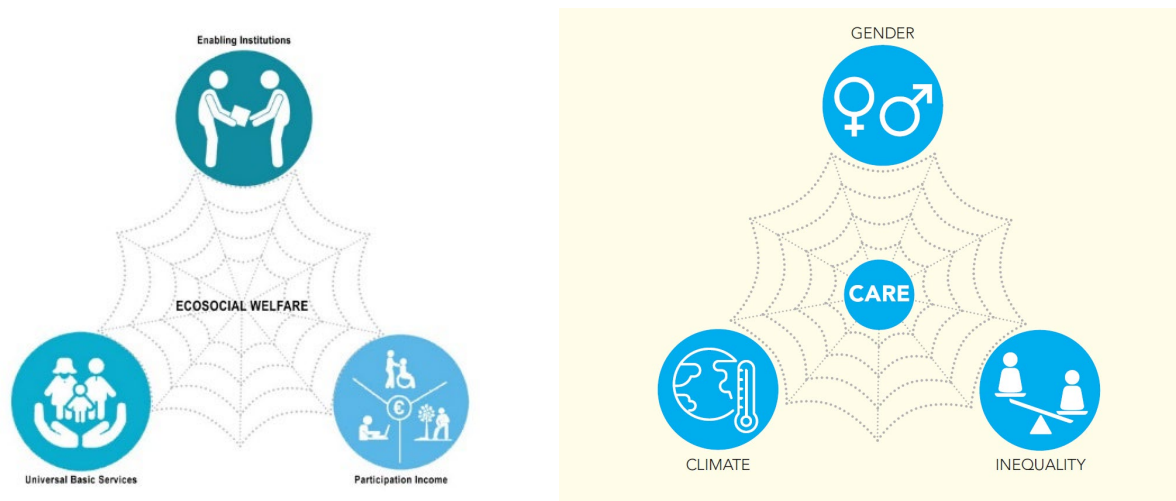
Steered by the intertwined goals of ecological sustainability and social equality,

Policies can do both

Promoting autonomy and democratic control	Redistribution	Social Consumption	Social Investment		
Enabling Institutions	Cash Income	Consumption Services	Distribution of paid employment	Distribution of non-paid work (care, ecological, democratic)	Active labour market policy
Capacity building and integrated delivery	Universal Basic Income Transition Income Participation Income	State services including care	Minimum/ Maximum incomes	Childcare infrastructure	Enabling Public Employment Services
Navigational agency	Social insurance and income tested income support	Free consumption goods	Paid work equality policies	Taxation policy and carbon budgets	Capacitating Education and Training
Community innovation, initiatives, institutions	Taxation (income, wealth, consumption and environmental	New forms of public innovation and ownership	Four-day week and reduced working time	Time equality parental care policies	Ecological and other sustainability projects
Local government/ local democracy	Quasi currency vouchers	Needs vouchers	Regulated decent part time/remote/ flexible work	Shift vouchers	Decent work, employment protection regime



Compass direction – enabling institutions, income & services, work /care/welfare nexus



- Collective consumption through shared services, more equality, less carbon
- Shorter working days/weeks/years/lives, redistribution of time, work and care
- More care, equitable, local, accessible, public - , care of for and about, less carbon
- Security – right to services and income – politics of transition require security
- Guarantee of job, income and socially valued participation – pension too.

5 steps for eco social state

working age nexus, non reformist reforms, gender analysis

- Enabling Institutions
- Universal basic services
- Participation Income
- Care
- Tax



Enabling institutions

- Laws, policies, agencies, services that support capacity and enhance citizens and resident's navigational agency
- Education, community development, active labour market programmes
- Local government and multi-actor local governance
- Redistribute time care, work and income – working time policies to better share roles – key to gender equality/well being

Universal Basic Services

- North and South relevance and basis for all island progress
- State regulates, plans, funds and monitors
- Plurality of diverse providers to provide collective services to meet needs (not profit)
- Transport, health, libraries, housing, local ecologies, education, social services

Income Support

- An income to socially value people's activity to secure humanity and the planet
- Universal but reciprocal actions of social value
- Paid as guarantee of income or employment
- Participation Income but Ecological Transition Income, Care Income, Conditional Basic Income
- Politically feasible -halfway house to UBI (politics)
- Seeds in present- Care, Culture and Community (QA, ABI, CE, TUS, RSS, BIF, Dukelow and Murphy 2025)

Care of, for and about

- Recognise, respect, redistribute, represent (redemocratised) and reward
 - Working Time – 4-day week to make time for care
 - Public childcare and elder care (not profit)
 - Care income – universal payment – no mean test
- Shifting central logic of growth/GDP -all-island genuine progress indicator
- Care/well-being - progress towards eco-social goal.

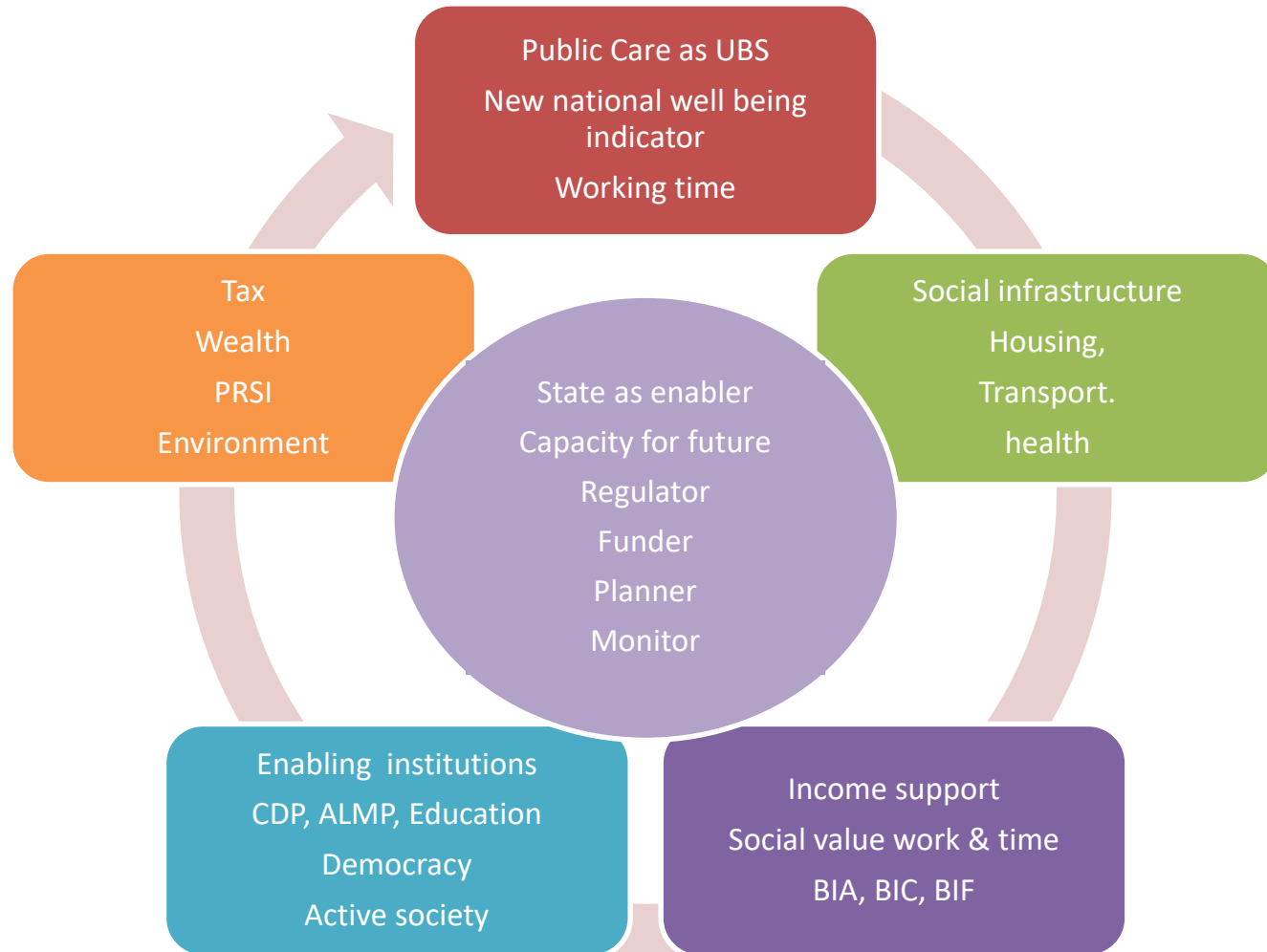
Taxation

- More revenue and tax effort
- New and alternative forms of revenue compatible with an ecosocial future
- Taxation of environmental damages and wealth inequalities (CTW, Mc Donnell 2024, Oxfam 2024)
- Corporate Tax Games (O' Cinneide 2024)
- Spillovers - global tax justice (Oxfam 2022)

Democratic State

- Role of state central but different, enabling an active society and embedded market
- Institutional imagination and capacity to govern towards a different north star
- Services – plurality of diverse providers, state regulating for rights, planning, funding, monitoring and governance
- Democratic – wider and deeper, local, economic, community
- Governance – multi level/actors and collaboration

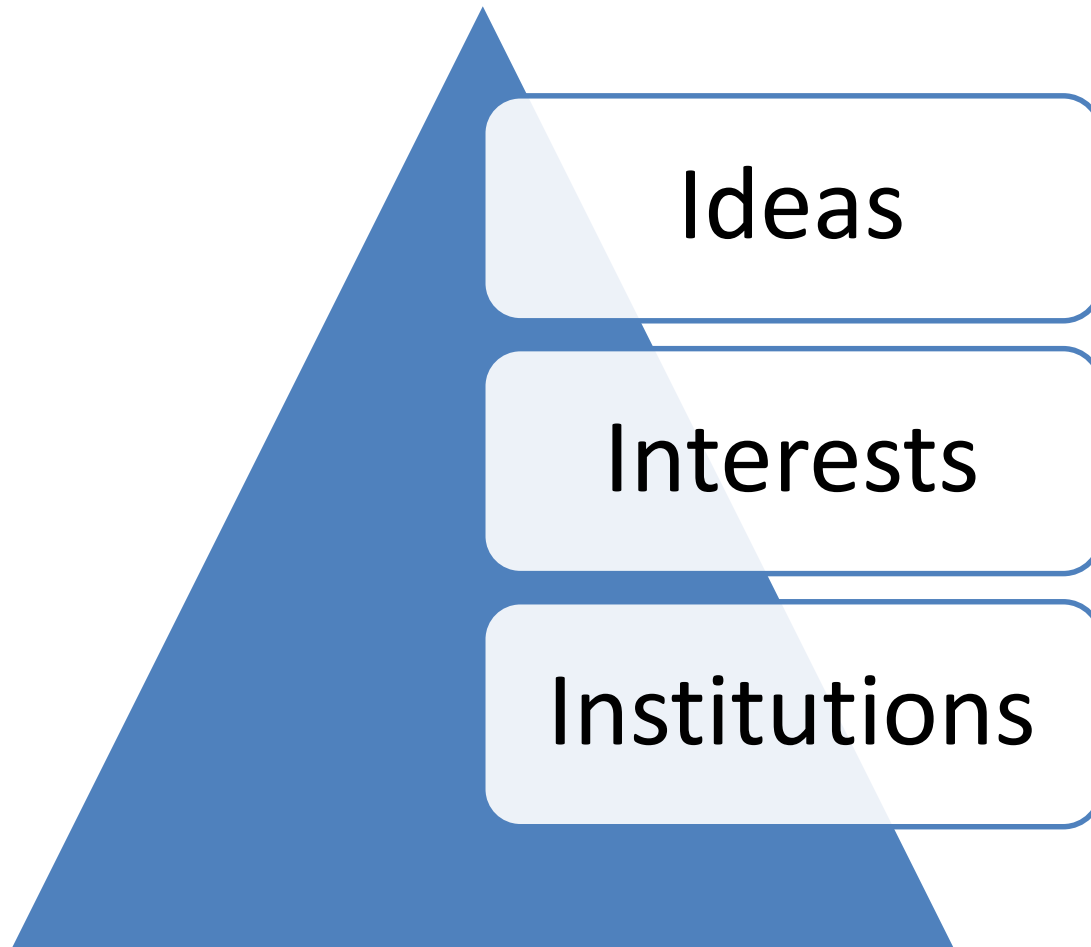
NERI Eco-Social Contract to enable transition in context of insecurity



Part three

- Getting There – role of Trade Unions and NERI

How – and role of unions



Ideas

- Ireland a leader? (Raworth, Stephens, 2024)
- Role of NERI – co-creating the future with...
- Fast and fair (role of economic democracy)
- Eco social frame, new eco social contract
 - Enabling Institutions, (WLB and reskilling)
 - Income Support, Transition (SI) , decent work
 - Universal Basic Services (health, transport, housing, care)
- All island constitutional change – eco social contract as a unifying frame?
- Welfare, poverty, gender and care as unity issues?

- Guarantee of security through participation, income and services
- Human need for autonomy, freedom and democracy
- New Economic Foundation (2022)
- Heinrich Boll Stiftung (2022)
- UNESCO (Policy Laboratory, UNRISD)
- ETUI/ETUC (2021)

The case for a Social Guarantee: Universal access to life's essentials

Paper The Social Guarantee refocuses progressive politics on human relations, on how we care for each other, and on the importance of investing in the social infrastructure on which the rest of the economy depends. It draws on current thinking about the foundational economy, the care economy, and sustainable economic prosperity. It offers a coherent, ethical, and well-evidenced basis from which to address such issues as investment, regulation, and carbon mitigation.

by [Anna Coote](#)

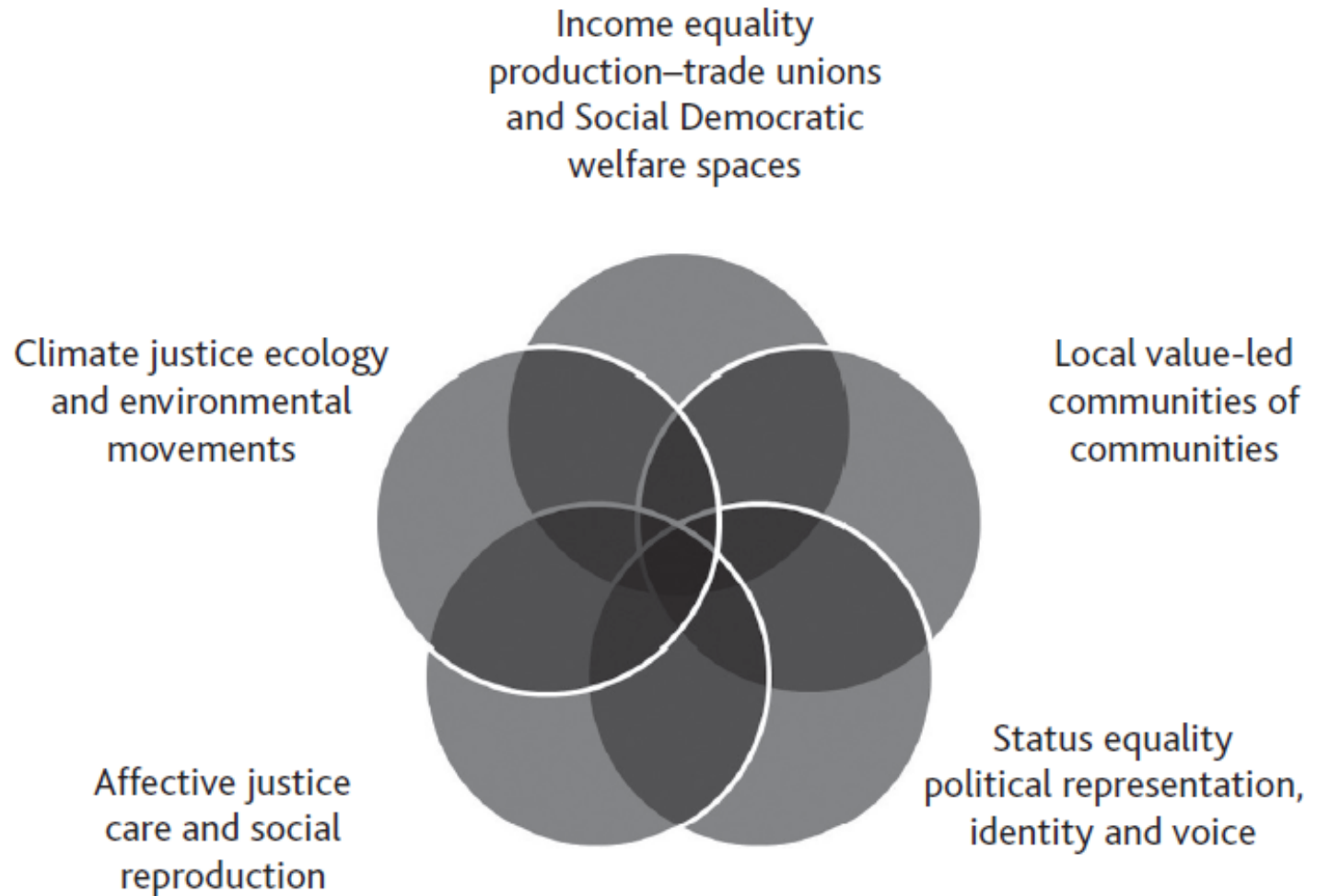


Interests

- Theory of change and role of trade unions
- International organising – important
- Trade unions as civil society - political society
- Memory and Muscle (generational collaboration)
- Inclusive mobilising campaigns, framing language that speaks to feelings/emotions of insecurity
- Trade unions as ‘sense of belonging’ – trust
- Triple movement – production/social reproduction and environment (Fraser 2014)

Achieving change

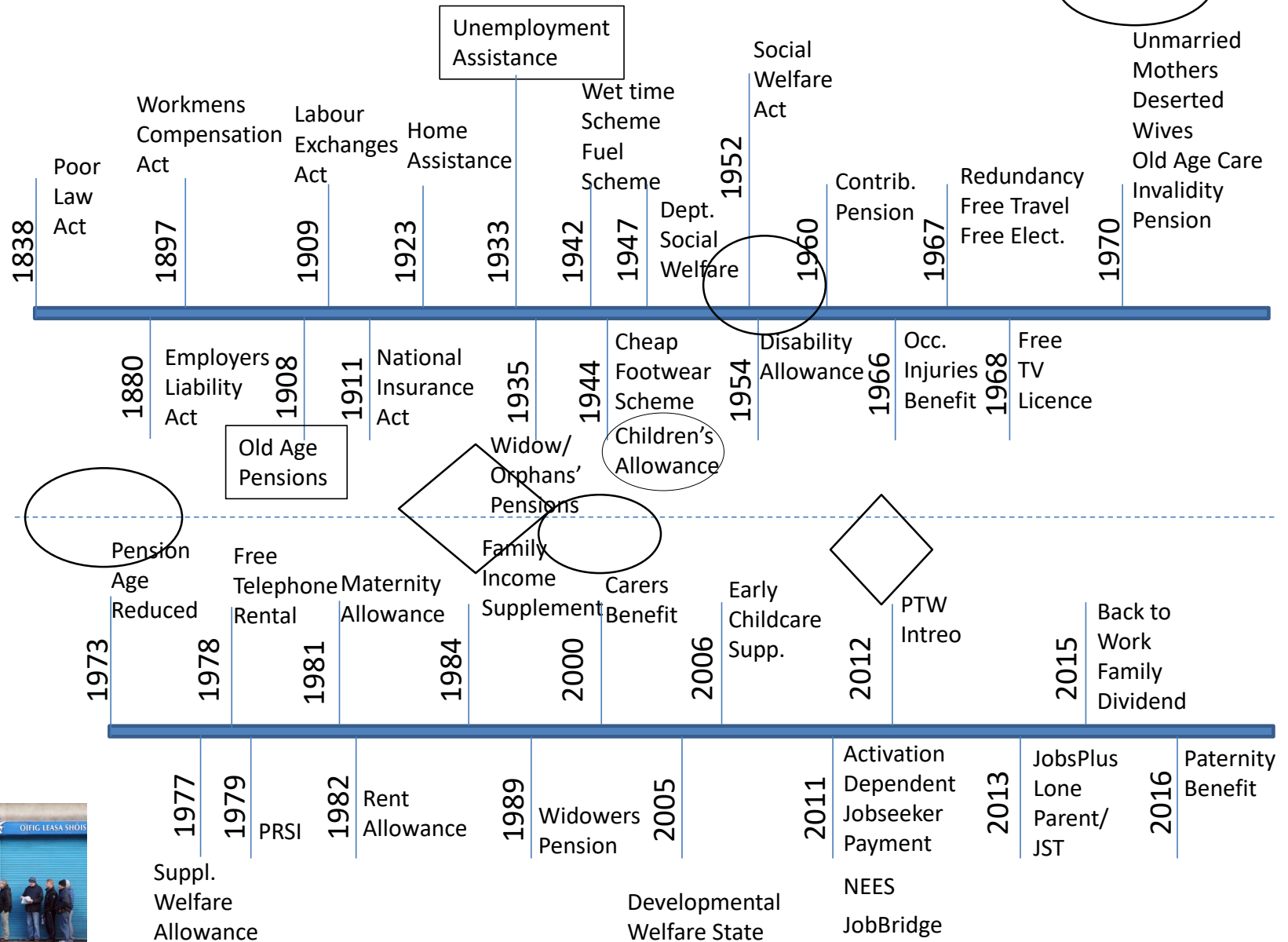
Figure 9.1: Five civil society spheres



Institutions

- Institutional Solidity – TU movement, fluidity
- Local, National and International engagement
- New research processes and methodologies
- Fit with higher and further education sectors
- Social Dialogue, LEEF, NESC
- Commissions, Low Pay, Just Transition, IHREC
- Future of the Island
- + State free spaces - imagining the future

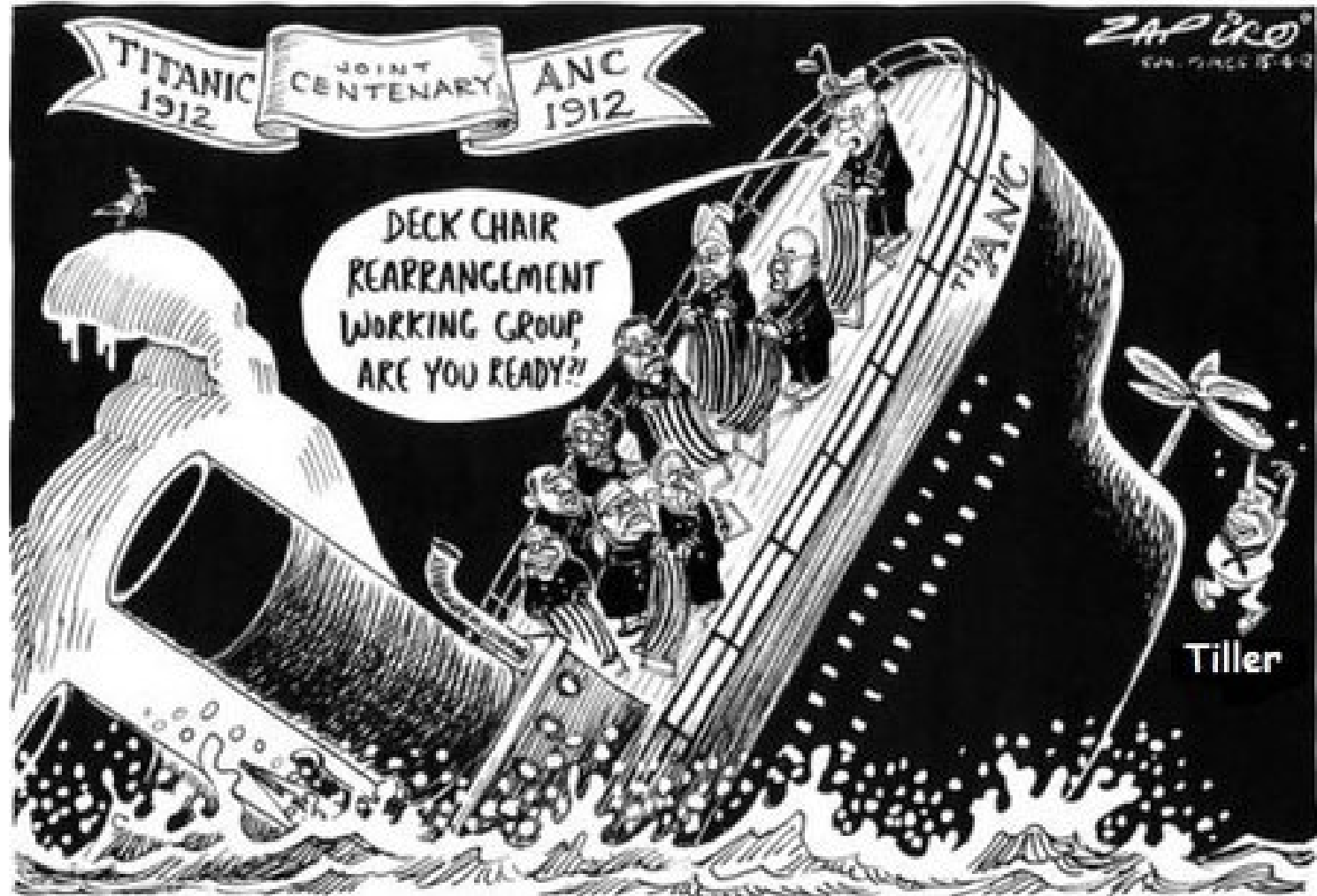
Institutions -Incremental Development of Social Protection in Ireland, N and S



Concluding thoughts- Power/Time/Scale

- Power of status quo - but history shows movements and people can change things.
- Take hope from our stories and find ways to translate that hope intergenerationally, culture
- Challenge of time – how to accelerate pace and scale of change from incremental to transformative

Stop wasting time rearranging deck chairs on the titanic –
institutional imaginations for systemic transformation



Social Acupuncture – small interventions in right place and right time-



HOPE - when ostriches take their head out the sand...
they can travel 70km an hour in 30 mins

Geese fly 'V' -distributed leadership gives 71% acceleration

Hope in the dark – society responding to crisis (Solnit 2017)

Trust in people - that our values and basic needs can be met



NERI Eco-Social Contract to enable transition in context of insecurity

