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CHAPTER 3

CO-OPERATIVES AS SOCIAL INNOVATION – HOW OLDER MODELS OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISE ARE MORE RELEVANT THAN EVER

Gerard Doyle

Introduction

Ireland faces a number of socio-economic issues, including, an over-reliance on fossil fuels, inequality, unsustainable approaches to urban regeneration and unbalanced regional development. This chapter will demonstrate how social enterprise can lead to the implementation of socially innovative responses to addressing these issues. Social enterprise is a contentious concept and consequently there is a plethora of definitions cited. A broad definition of what constitutes a social enterprise will be employed which encompasses co-operatives, associations, mutuals and foundations. A social enterprise is an organisation established to achieve specific social objectives and which, in the process of achieving these objectives, is beneficial to the people, the environment and the local economy (Pearce 2009). Pearce (1993) cites a number of fundamental characteristics that social enterprises share which include: being democratic (one member one vote); being autonomous of the state and of external investors; being participatory in that its members control the governance and operation of the social enterprise; and they generate traded income from the sale of products/services. However, there is a growing cohort of social enterprises that do not place much emphasis on establishing participative decision-making structures. This can lead to the beneficiaries of this cohort of social enterprises not having any meaningful input in the social enterprises' strategy.

This chapter will first examine how social enterprises have developed socially-innovative responses to a range of issues: an over-reliance on fossil fuels; income inequality and unbalanced regional development. Case studies from a number of countries will be examined to highlight how social enterprises have made a significant contribution to addressing these issues which are affecting societies across the globe.

The chapter will conclude by detailing how the state and civil society can support social enterprise to perform a more central role in addressing the issues facing Irish society, rather than merely filling the residual role that it currently plays in facilitating the State's labour market objectives (Doyle and Lawlor 2012).

Social innovation can be defined as innovative activities and services that are motivated by the goal of meeting a social need and that are predominately developed and diffused through organisations whose primary purposes are social (Mulgan 2006). Although social innovation shares certain characteristics of the dominant concept of 'innovation' in the sense of new production processes or new products, its differences lie in the motivation for, and who benefits from the innovation (Mulgan 2006).

Social Enterprise and Renewable Energy

Pearce (1993) states that a core mission of many social enterprises is meeting the needs of their communities while not having an adverse impact on their community's environment. Hence, Amin *et al.* (2002) assert that social enterprises are ideally placed to engage in initiatives that promote environmental citizenship. Globally, renewable energy co-operatives (a form of social enterprise) are being formed. The rationale for co-operative renewable energy is that co-operatives:

- Can play an important role in increasing public acceptance of renewable energy, particularly wind energy (Walker *et al.* 2007) because the benefits to communities are visible;
- Can play a part in educating the public about renewable energy (Walker *et al.* 2007);
- Are an effective mechanism for generating employment and for rural regeneration (Barry and Chapman 2009);
- Reduce leakages from a local economy, generating a greater multiplier effect (New Economics Foundation 2002);
- Increase awareness of energy consumption (Bauwens 2013).

In 2008, Ireland imported 89% of its total energy consumption (SEAI 2010). This reliance on imported fossil fuels will have to be significantly reduced as Ireland is committed, by 2020, to

generating 16% of all of its energy from renewable sources. Although energy generated from renewable sources currently comprises only a small percentage of total energy consumption, Ireland has abundant natural resources suitable for renewable energy (Feasta 2007). Indeed, communities have ample opportunities to exploit renewable energy resources in the form of biomass, wind and solar (Connolly and Vad Mathiesen 2014).

Renewable Energy Co-Operatives

Denmark

A number of EU countries have experienced a significant increase in renewable energy co-operatives. In Denmark, a high proportion of wind power capacity is generated by guilds (which are similar structures to co-operatives with the exception that member liability is unlimited). In 2002, 5,600 wind turbines which equated to 23% of Denmark's wind capacity were owned by guilds (Bolinger 2001). A key factor in the growth of mutually owned renewable energy was the formation of the Danish Association of Wind Power Guilds (DV), a non-profit association of wind farm guilds. This structure is responsible for representing the interest of members with respect to local authorities, utilities and wind-turbine manufacturers. At the beginning of this century, guilds were being offered substantial sums of money to sell their windmills and many accepted these offers. Investors then traded the existing windmills for the right to erect larger ones. As a result, there were 50,000 people who co-owned windmills in 2009, down from 150,000 at the start of the century (Maegaard 2009). To address this shift to larger wind-farms in Denmark, co-operators there have forged relationships with non-governmental agencies, and the trade union movement to secure the necessary capital to build large-scale wind farms formed as co-operatives. For example, the Middelgrunden wind co-operative (which is structured as a partnership between its' members) is an offshore windfarm comprising of twenty¹ wind turbines generating 40 MW of power. There are 10,000 investors in the co-operative living throughout Denmark, approximately, 100 of the investors are

¹ A utility company owns ten wind turbines (www.middelgrunden.dk).

from outside of Denmark (Larsen *et al.* 2006). The Copenhagen chapters of The Danish Union of Teachers and The General Workers Union bought shares to cover the electricity consumption in their own buildings (www.middelgrundren.dk). The design of the Middelgrundren wind turbine employed facilitates low cost maintenance. Critical factors in the implementation phase for Middelgrundren were the high levels of time invested in awareness-raising with non-governmental organisations, the public consultations with residents of Copenhagen and the unique partnership arrangement with a utility company, whereby the development costs were shared between both parties. The co-operative produces sufficient power to meet the electricity requirements of 40,000 households (Larsen 2006). A number of commentators have stated that there has been less public resistance to co-operatively owned off-shore wind energy project in Denmark compared to privately-owned projects².

The following case study, also from Denmark, highlights how co-operatives can pilot new renewable energy technology. A co-operative was established to generate heat and electricity from wood chips for 20,000 households in the town of Hillerød, 30 km north of Copenhagen, which has a population of 45,000 people. The technology entails a bio-gasification process that uses heat and air to extract wood gas (the energy source), at very high temperatures (1,200 degrees Celsius). The co-operative was connected to the national grid in Denmark (which is State-owned) within two days of application, at no cost (Lalor 2014).

This project was initiated in 2008 with the support of a government grant from the Danish Energy Agency through the Energy Technology Development and Demonstration Programme (EUDP5) for start-up funding. Its first purpose was to raise awareness about the potential of bio-gasification. At the end of the initial awareness-raising project, the Danish Energy Agency agreed to further support the project in 2010. The co-operative devised a prospectus for potential members – this included candid details about the potential benefits and failures.

² These comments were made at an international conference in Dublin in 2014 on renewable energy co-operatives organised by the Society for Co-operative Studies in Ireland.

As this was a demonstration project it was relatively risky and success was not guaranteed. The emphasis in the prospectus was on the benefits which would result if it succeeded (including the creation of jobs). The grant secured from the EUDP in August 2010 included the condition that all shares (1,050) had to be sold to local people (€1,000 per share) before December 2010 (Lalor 2014). As a result, an extensive marketing campaign was undertaken in September 2010 in order to achieve this target. The marketing process involved explanations of the bio-gasification process and was accompanied by extensive media coverage and advertising (radio broadcasting and local newspapers). Greenpeace supported the project. The marketing process was started in August 2010 and completed by December 2010. By this stage all the shares were sold, and by the following April (2011), the capital of €3 million was in place. The project has been operational since May 2014 on a test phase basis. It will become fully operational in the Autumn of 2017. Important considerations include having the support of alliances (including Greenpeace as well as other environmental groups). It was also important to continuously communicate and outline its projects to those who were investing in the project.

The Middelgrunden co-operative wind-farm and the Hillerød bio-gasification co-operative demonstrate that renewable energy co-operatives need not be restricted to small-scale projects, and that they can deploy new technology. A key factor in their success was the galvanising of local community support: central to this was the initial provision of candid information on all aspects of the projects' design to allay community members' concerns.

Germany

An innovative co-operative in an urban setting is located on the roof of the Volkswagen plant in Emsden in Germany. The council have leased the roof (for twenty-five years) off the company for an annual peppercorn rent of €1 and have installed solar panels. The power produced is sold to the national grid. Over 200 of the employees have invested an average of €1,000 each in the renewable energy co-operative and in return it allocates them an annual dividend (Worker Institute 2015).

REScoop

Throughout Europe, community renewable energy co-operatives are being established with the aim of democratising renewable energy production. Many of them have become affiliated to the REScoop network. Although the member co-operatives all subscribe to the International Co-operative Alliance principles of co-operatives, their organisational structures have changed in response to the socio-political environment in which they are located (Mendoc *et al.* 2009). For example some co-operatives, referred to as 'multi-stakeholder co-operatives', now have representatives from a range of interest groups as members. While REScoop has demonstrated the significant increase in community renewable energy co-operatives throughout the EU, Huybrechts and Mertens (2011) have identified a range of barriers to the development of renewable energy co-operatives including access to capital, a lack of awareness of the benefits of the co-operative model, consumer inertia and a dearth of acknowledgement of the role that co-operatives can perform in reducing the state's reliance on fossil fuels.

Connolly and Vad Mathiesen (2014) estimate that between 30% and 40% of the total heating requirement of Ireland's buildings could be provided by district heating systems³. Compared to other EU countries such as Denmark, the proportion of Ireland's buildings heated by district heating systems is extremely low. Therefore, Ireland could learn much from how Denmark implemented and operates its district heating networks. Co-operatives play a central role in the operation of district heating systems outside of Denmark's major cities (Chittum and Ostergaard 2014). As a result of the Heat Supply Act 1979⁴ local authorities were obliged to formulate heating plans. This stimulated major investment in heating

³ A district heating system works like a domestic central heating system only on a larger scale. Water is heated using a boiler located in a central boiling plant. The heat is distributed to the customer via an underground network of insulated pipes. The water in the network is continually circulating and therefore always available to the householder.

⁴ The Heat Supply Act, 1979, stipulated that there would be municipal heat supply planning in each municipality, a new natural gas infrastructure, a substantial increase in district heating and that district heating would shift from fossil fuel boilers to combined heat and power plants and renewable energy.

networks, and local authorities were mandated to make households connect to new district heating systems⁵. However, to counterbalance being compelled to switch to district heating systems, consumer co-operatives were formed to manage them, thus ensuring consumer control (Chittum and Ostergaard 2014). As they are not-for-profit operations, heating costs were kept to a minimum: heating costs were calculated to cover costs only, prices are set annually, and any surplus is re-invested in improving the district heating system or in reducing prices. Furthermore, due to their democratic structures, members of the district heating system have an input into the running of the operation.

Ireland

An example of a renewable social enterprise district heating system is Camphill Ballytobin, part of the Camphill Communities of Ireland, which works with people with intellectual disabilities. Camphill Ballytobin provides accommodation to 85 people and includes a range of community facilities. Since 1999, the community has used biogas (produced from an anaerobic digestion plant) to supply heat to houses and the community facilities. The anaerobic digestion plant collects agricultural waste and delivers nutrient rich compost back to the farmers (Comhar and TCD 2011). Cloughjordan eco-village have installed a district heating system based on solar heat. However, policy makers could create a more supportive policy environment for communities to implement district heating systems. The above examples are the only two community-owned renewable energy district heating systems in Ireland. They are both small scale compared to their counterparts in Denmark, Finland and Germany that heat large sections of towns.

In particular, Chittum, and Ostergaard (2014) recommend the following key learning points for other countries in relation to the development and implementation of district heating systems:

⁵ The rationale for establishing district heating systems was to make Denmark less reliant on fossil fuels.

- Local authorities should have a central co-ordinating role in the establishment and operation of district heating systems;
- Cost effectiveness tests should be broadened to take into account the benefits that accrue to citizens, society and localities from district heating companies which are consumer co-operatives;
- Credit unions could provide low cost loans underwritten by the state.

In Ireland, there are over 30 community renewable energy projects either operational or at planning stage. Many of the community renewable energy projects are incorporated as Industrial Provident Societies (Comhar and TCD 2011). For example, Drumlin Co-operative Wind Energy (referred to as Drumlin in this chapter) has erected six wind turbines located in counties Antrim, Armagh and Tyrone through raising finance from a combination of offering shares to the public and by securing social finance. Members receive an annual dividend. Rather than solely benefiting its members, as is the norm for conventional co-operatives, Drumlin provides funding to community projects in the locality of each turbine. Energy4all, a co-operative based in Cumbria which specialises in supporting communities to establish community renewable energy co-operatives, played a pivotal role in organising the share prospectus. Unfortunately, the UK government financial schemes which make community energy projects financially sustainable have been terminated, therefore, it is currently far more difficult to implement renewable energy co-operatives in the north of Ireland.

Social Enterprise and Inequality

Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) provide ample evidence of the corrosive influence of inequality on societies. For example they demonstrate that the countries with the highest level of income inequality experience higher incidences of: mental health issues including anxiety and depression within their respective populations; illegal drug consumption; children and adults experiencing obesity; teenage births and lower literacy attainment. In addition, more unequal countries experience

higher levels of violence and homicide (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009).

Erdal (2011) debunks the myths prevalent among mainstream economists concerning co-operatives and employee-owned companies realising inferior economic performance to the dominant capitalist enterprise entity because senior management is not sufficiently rewarded. Furthermore, Craig and Pencavel (1995) provide evidence that worker co-operative are as productive as capitalist firms.

Co-operatives are an important mechanism for achieving more egalitarian societies (Ranis 2016; Wilkinson and Pickett 2009:253) assert, in the transition to more equal societies, a co-operative brings a number of socio-economic advantages when compared to a capitalist enterprise:

First it enables a process of social emancipation as people become members of a team. Second, it puts the scale of earning differentials under democratic control: if the body of employees want big income differentials they could choose to keep them. Third, it involves a very substantial redistribution of wealth from external shareholders to employees and a simultaneous redistribution of the income for that wealth. Fourth, it improves productivity and has a competitive advantage. Fifth, it increases the likelihood that people will regain the experience of being part of a community. And sixth, it is likely to improve social ability in wider society.

There is a wealth of research supporting the above assertions as illustrated by the following example. Erdal (2000) researched the impact of employment in co-operatives on communities in three Northern Italian towns. The research findings showed that indicators of health, education, social involvement, crime and social perceptions were significantly more positive in the town where co-operatives employed a larger percentage of the population.

Resilience of Co-Operatives

Many mainstream economists and policy makers criticise co-operatives for not being as financially resilient as capitalist enterprises. Regarding the survival rates of co-operatives, Birchall and Ketilson (2009:29-30) referred to the Quebec Federal Government's commissioned research in 2008 which highlighted that co-operatives have lower failure rates than capitalist enterprises. The report states that

More than 6 out of 10 co-operatives survive more than five years, as compared to almost 4 businesses out of 10 for the private sector in Québec and in Canada in general. More than 4 out of 10 co-operatives survive more than 10 years, compared to 2 businesses out of 10 for the private sector.

Furthermore, in Germany the failure rate among co-operatives is far lower than capitalist enterprises; in 2005, 1% of capitalist businesses were declared insolvent, while the figure for co-operatives was less than 0.1% (Birchall and Ketilson 2009).

Ranis (2016) argues that the precariat, comprised of unskilled labour, and the traditional working class would benefit most from the empowerment of workers which results from the participation of worker co-operatives. The author calls for public policy to support alternative enterprise entities and for communities and social movements to coalesce in demanding for this shift in public policy. The author asserts that co-operatives share core characteristics:

- They are formed to address a shared need be it unemployment or the economic marginalisation of their communities;
- They entail participatory involvement in the management of enterprises;
- Worker owners learn to take responsibility for their actions;
- They promote economic equality as the pay differentials between senior management and ordinary workers are significantly lower than in the capitalist firm. They have the potential to weaken the two-tier wage system which

discriminates against women, immigrants and low skilled workers;

- They have the potential to strengthen working class consciousness and solidarity. Citizens would no longer see themselves as passive and atomised;
- Co-operative workers are committed to participating in wider struggles against repressive state policies.

Ranis (2016) believes that working class communities in Europe and North America can learn from the process of worker co-operative development in Argentina. The alliances between Argentinian worker co-operatives, civil society groups and influential individuals have resulted in a social movement the objective of which is to influence state institutions to introduce more supportive legislation towards co-operatives. These social movements are also required to protect the nascent worker co-operative movement against adversarial interest groups such as employers' organisations and conservative trade union bureaucrats (Ranis 2016). Over time, a mutually beneficial relationship can emerge between co-operatives and communities in which the co-operatives are based as exemplified in the Zanon worker co-operative in Buenos Aires. Moreover, the co-operatives can contribute to strengthening egalitarian values among the body politic. Ranis (2010) emphasises the importance of 'eminent domain' (the expropriation of private property for public benefit) in allowing fledgling worker co-operatives in South America and the USA with the opportunity to secure the assets required to continue the manufacture of products formerly produced by investor-owned companies. These often-profitable capitalist firms move their operations to destinations with lower labour costs (Ranis 2016). Public policy needs to enshrine eminent domain in law to prevent capitalist firms moving their operations and leaving communities economically decimated (Ranis 2006).

The Italian Experience

State legislation, as exemplified by Italy, performs a key enabling role for the growth of the co-operative sector. The Italian constitution of 1945 recognised co-operatives (Zamagni 2010). This provided the bedrock for legislation supporting the development of co-operatives from 1946 onwards. The first law

introduced which defined the rules for cooperatives (one member/one vote, a minimum of nine members, a prohibition on members who had a private business in the same field, a ban on distribution of indivisible reserves, even in the event of liquidation of co-operatives). The legislation allowed co-operatives to be eligible for the subsidies that the national or local governments would distribute (Zamagni 2010). Subsequent legislation in the 1970's recognised members' loans as performing a pivotal role in increasing capital available to co-operatives. This enabled the co-operatives in Italy to achieve a dominant position in retail distribution in Italy (Zamagni 2010).

Legislation introduced in 1977 allows the surpluses of Italian co-operatives to be placed in indivisible reserves which are exempt from corporate taxation. This piece of legislation strengthens the capacity of co-operatives to become less reliant on external debt finance. Social cooperatives, which were governed by a multi-stakeholder board enabled this category to service the needs of communities rather than members alone by legislation introduced in 1991 (Zamagni 2010). Legislation in 1992 further galvanised the co-operative sector in Italy by allowing co-operatives to have members whose sole function was to provide capital. Another important piece of legislation was the introduction of an obligation on co-operatives to devote 3% of their surpluses to a fund managed by each of the umbrella organizations, described below. The purpose of this is to strengthen the co-operative movement through the creation of new co-operatives and the restructuring of some of the existing ones (Fici 2010).

Balanced regional development: Emilia-Romagna

A criticism levelled at co-operatives is lack of scale and the capacity to generate surplus income (Restakis 2010). The case study presented will demonstrate that co-operatives can achieve significant scale and contribute to regional economic development.

Emilia-Romagna is a Northern region of Italy with a population of 4.4 million (www.istat.it/en/emilia-romagna). After the Second World War, it was among the poorest regions in Italy. Today it has achieved the highest GDP in Italy and one of the highest in Europe. Its per capita income is 30% higher

than the national average and 27.6% higher than the EU average (Lappe 2006). Co-operatives have performed a vital role in the transformation of the region's economy (Thompson 2003).

In 1945, the infrastructure and economy of Emilia-Romagna was devastated. Many of the co-operative movement's leadership were killed fighting the fascist dictatorship. The socialist tradition, either in the form of communist or social democratic administrations, has had a profound influence over the region's co-operative development (Restakis 2005). There has been a continuous socialist administration since the end of the Second World War. According to Restakis (2005:2)

What has been most remarkable however, is the capacity of this North Italian brand of civil social democracy to transform the philosophical and operational character of the industrial firm by merging the values of civil society and community with the industrial requirements of small firm capitalism.

This unique relationship has led to an inculcation of co-operation and reciprocity between capitalist firms and co-operatives, often referred to as the Emilian model, which has led to co-operative networks being formed to export manufactured goods. This relationship was reinforced by the paucity of investment in large-scale industrial plants which led to small enterprises being established (Rinehart 2009). Income distribution is also among the most equitable in Italy, with the Emilia-Romagna region maintaining a GINI Coefficient of .242 (as compared to .370 for Italy as a whole. Cornia *et al.* 2005). The economy has attained high levels of diversification (Logue 2006). The enterprises utilise an approach of flexible specialisation whereby small and medium sized capitalist enterprises and co-operatives share expertise in various sectors of the economy. This enables the Emilia- Romagna economy to be more adaptable and resilient to changes in the external environment (Rinehart 2009).

Co-operatives are the other core component of the Emilia-Romagna economic success (Rinehart 2009). The sectors in which co-operative firms are strongest include retail, construction, agricultural production, housing, manufacturing,

and social services. In the first three of these sectors, co-operatives predominate (for example in construction, agriculture, and retail). There are about 2,700 worker co-operatives in the region, accounting for 6% of the total workforce. Worker co-operatives constitute a number of the larger manufacturing companies in the region providing a bedrock for smaller co-operatives to gain contracts, retaining employment in the region and ensuring wealth does not leak out of the Emilia-Romagna (Restakis 2007). Compared to other regions of Italy, there is a high level of consumer co-operatives. Of Italy's 43,000 cooperatives, 15,000 are located in Emilia-Romagna making it one of Europe's most concentrated co-operative sectors (Borzaga *et al.* 2015).

In Bologna for example, two out of three citizens are members of a cooperative, with most belonging to several (Thompson 2003). Co-operatives directly account for over 40% of the region's GDP (Rinehart 2009). Most public works, including large-scale engineering, construction, and heritage restoration projects, are carried out by building co-operatives owned by their employee members. Co-operatives in Emilia-Romagna are linked to the key co-operatives that trade throughout Italy:

- Coop Italia is the top retailer surpassing Carrefour in sales. It has 6 million owner/members, 55,000 employees, 1,200 stores, and €11 Billion in sales. It purchases a high proportion of its produce from producer co-operatives;
- The cooperatives have their own insurance company – Unipol, large investment funds such as Coop Fund provide loan and equity to start-up companies, and very sophisticated support organizations such as Lega Coop (P2P Foundation);
- 'Social Cooperatives' provide various services to people with mental and physical disabilities. They have secured 85% of the municipalities' social service budget for Emilia-Romagna (Thompson 2003).

The region's agricultural co-ops are Europe's leaders in organic food production and in the utilisation of environmentally-friendly pest control.

Since the start of the twentieth century co-operatives in Italy have developed along ideological lines, with one principal strand aligned to the socialist tradition and the other main strand influenced by Catholic social teaching (Zamagni 2010). The former is aligned to Legacoop Emilia-Romagna, which is part of the National League of Cooperatives and Mutuals (Lega Nazionale delle Cooperative e Mutue). Legacoop is the principal association representing co-operatives in Emilia-Romagna, with its 1,250 affiliate enterprises operating across industry, agriculture and services sectors of the economy. Its member co-operatives employ over 150,000 people and represent 2.8 million shareholders (producers, workers, consumers, inhabitants, users, retailers). It has several functions:

- Promotes co-operative values and identity in the region;
- Coordinates the activities of the different Legacoop territorial and sector associations;
- Advocates on behalf of its members co-operatives with regard to public institutions, business representative bodies and trade unions at regional level;
- Assists with the formation of new co-operatives and their development through the provision of advisory services, it supports innovation, and economic cooperation processes among cooperatives. The association is also in charge for monitoring the operations of co-operatives on behalf of the Italian Ministry of Economic Development (www.emilia-romgana.legacoop.it).

Co-operatives encounter a number of obstacles in trading in markets which are dominated by capitalist enterprises (Miller 2006). Lega Coop has formed a number of secondary co-operatives to address these challenges. Fincooper is a cooperative bank which is jointly owned by consortia, co-operative depositors and Legacoop. With regard to access to capital, Fincooper, through the provision of direct loans and financial guarantees, enables co-operatives to secure different types of finance below market rates. Istituto Cooperativo per L'Innovazione (LICE) which undertakes relevant research on behalf of co-operatives in construction, manufacturing and agriculture which can enable them to diversify their product and service offerings (Rinehart 2009). Another key function that Lega

Coop performs is fostering inter-co-operative purchasing of products and services. This has significantly strengthened the co-operative sector's sustainability.

Conclusion

The experiences of Denmark and Italy demonstrate the central role that social enterprise could play in a switch from a fossil-fuel-dependent economy; the creation of a more equal society and more balanced regional economies. In order for this to become a reality new partnerships between communities and other parties, including trade unions, the credit union movement and third level institutions need to be formed.

All of the political parties should have social enterprise as a core component of their economic manifestos rather than the residual role it is currently afforded. The various arms of the Irish State will have to take a more pro-active approach with regard to social enterprise development. In particular, it will have to treat social enterprise on a par with multi-nationals.

Perhaps the greatest challenge is to address the pervasive culture of individualism and consumerism which has taken root in Irish society. This cultural change will require, a number of interventions by community organisations, trade unions and progressive political parties to demonstrate that another Ireland is possible where the benefits of our economy are not unequally apportioned on the basis of class.